

Enslaved by Joe Doe & Watcher

My name is Elizabeth Parker, and I am a true American. From my father's maternal grandfather, a Boston Methodist minister, I inherited Yankee good sense and a powerful sense of right and wrong. From my father's paternal grandfather, a dashing Italian Duke, I inherited piercing eyes, curly black hair, and a complexion with a tinge of the Italian sun. My mother descended from landed gentry in the fair state of Mississippi, and I inherited her sense of grace and elegance, a love of the finer things, a romantic taste for adventure, and a strong suspicion that Boston thought far too much of itself.

I was born three blocks from the Boston in Common 1832 to wealthy but progressive parents. My father inherited the professions of law and banking and, upon his father's death, considerable fortune, which he made considerably greater.

Although my grandmother was a daughter of Mississippi my mother was born in Boston and was raised with a distinctly Yankee sensibility. Upon discovering that the local anti-slavery society was not radical enough to suit her my mother founded her own anti-slavery league, which she named the Boston League of Free Decency. In keeping with my mother's strong beliefs in female equality, the Free Decency League focused on the plight of female Negroes in the South, and their economic and (I must warn you of this if you are to read my tale further!) their carnal exploitation.

The latter, while seldom discussed in "polite" circles, is as prevalent as it is odious, for a woman in chains is as subject to her master's lust as she is to his greed. I say this not as a parlor reformer, hiding behind her teacup and petticoats, but as a woman with firsthand knowledge of an evil and debased system. How I earned this hard won knowledge is a tale to tell, and is not for the faint of heart.

But I get ahead of myself, and shall begin my story, as I must, at the beginning

Our society's particular fascination with female exploitation made us quite famous, or infamous, and we soon sported over 2,000 subscribers to our newsletters. Thousands who could not afford membership dues paid 25 cents to crowd into the Old South Meeting Hall for the privilege of hearing female slaves relate in great detail their tales of the debauchery of the slave power.

Authenticity was the watchword, and mother encouraged the escaped wretches to spare the audience nothing, from the stripping and shameful prodding they endured on the auction block to the lewd and lascivious acts they were forced to perform in their master's beds. Some accused us of sensationalizing the women's ordeals, particularly on those occasions where, for an extra fee, the now free women removed their clothing to demonstrate how they were paraded on the block. A few of our society's more prudish members objected to such exhibitions, claiming that we exploiting the tawny skinned beauties ourselves. It is true that our organization turned a tidy profit on our lectures, which pleased father enormously. But my mother countered her critics by explaining it

took exposure to expose, and in any event their pleadings were of no interest to the authorities, both because of my father's social standing and my mother's habit of granting Boston's political class front row seats at any event of their choosing.

Although I wholly approved of my mother's efforts I suspect that there were many in the crowd who attended these exhibitions for less than wholesome reasons. The Negro women did not object, for even on those occasions when they were hung up by their ankles and lightly paddled they realized it was better to be paddled at half force, and be handsomely paid for it and cared for afterwards, than to be returned to the plantation, where their escape would doubtlessly earn them far harsher punishments which featured neither recompense nor respite.

Three months after my 18th birthday I received a card from my Grand Aunt Veronica, my grandmother's sister, who invited me to visit her at the family's plantation in Mississippi. My mother was quite reluctant to show me the letter, for we had been estranged from what was referred to as "the other" branch of my mother's family tree since my grandmother had left Mississippi some years prior. The letter itself, however, was quite cordial and gracious.

Apparently my Grand Aunt's two daughters had both married, and had left the family plantation of Sugar Oak. My Aunt, "longing for the sound of young laughter" and hearing about me through my work in our rather famous Society, invited me to spend the summer with them. They also suggested (and this piqued father's interest considerably) that they might be interested in purchasing several ships along the coast. They wished to have a reliable banker whom could help them with the purchase of a ship in Boston and aid with the transfer of the considerable sums involved. Naturally they thought of my father, "for whom can one trust, if not family?"

My mother did not wish me to go, but father overruled her, and I was quite eager. I had read about slavery for years, and had heard the horrible stories from the slave women, and imagined all sorts of scandalous depravities. But how was I to know that these tales were true, unless I saw for myself?

Oh, how I dreamed of standing up in front of the crowd of the Old South Meeting House, with a switch in my hand and a dark skinned refugee at my feet, prepared to show them precisely how I had personally seen a handsome slave woman whipped, and put thru their paces. Oh, how the admission coffers would fill...father would be so proud! The applause would be thunderous, and it would be all for me.

I had an additional motive as well: true love! I had recently fallen in love with David, a poet who did not write very well but who filled page after page with odes to my "dark eyes" and "mysterious, tan beauty." For a poet he carried himself with such assurance, as an ancient warrior might yet he was no soldier. In fact I often had to wonder who it was that David supported himself. By his plain dress he was no wealthy a fact that weighed heavily on my father's mind. Such was the important that father gave to this fact that he forbade us to marry until David "stopped dreaming and got a real job."

Father knew I was too accustomed to servants and fancy dresses and balls to elope and live in poverty with David, and so I was checkmated. But if I could host a lecture that would earn my fortune my love would yet be mine.

And so I accepted the invitation and packed my trunks in preparation. Thru the miracle of the new railroads, my trip was quite rapid, and although I had to change trains several times I was able to travel in weeks the distance that would have been previously traveled in months. I was fortunate too, to be accompanied most of the way by Reverend Beecher, who had to part ways with in Natchez, where I was able to meet Aunt Veronica and the Colonel for the final leg of my journey.

I had been conscious of entering a new world from the time we crossed into the wilderness of Ohio, and the sensation of being far from the only civilization I had only known only increased as we made our way into the cotton south. In our private railcar we were quite sheltered, and I wasn't even truly aware of seeing any Negroes in what my Aunt Veronica would refer to as "their natural state" – slavery – until I reached the state of Kentucky.

By the time we reached the state of Mississippi there was no doubting the presence of slavery, as the port at Natchez swarmed with them! They loaded cotton bales onto ships, carried luggage, and drove carriages for their white masters and mistresses. I'm embarrassed to say that my own trunks were hauled onto the wagon accompanying my Colonel and my Aunt by the six Negroes who accompanied them. And so I was corrupted into the use of slave labor before I had scarcely realized what was happening.

Fortunately by this time I had ventured far enough South to learn of the hostility with which Southerners greeted anyone who had the temerity to question their "peculiar institution." To make matters more dangerous for me I was both a Yankee and a young woman with strong political opinions, both of which made suspect. I resolved to listen and become educated, remembering mother's admonition that one seldom learns while speaking.

I was surprised to discover my Grand Aunt Veronica, my grandmother's sister, was scarcely older than my own mother. She explained that my grandmother was twenty two years older than her, and had left Mississippi shortly after Aunt Veronica was born. My Aunt's husband, Colonel Rand, a well to do planter and a hero of the Mexican War, was more the age I expected, with silver hair and a silver mustache. My Aunt Veronica was actually his third wife, his first wife having died in childbirth, and his second of the water sickness. Or so I was told as we waited in the carriage for my Grand Uncle to finish his business in his elegant townhouse.

Aunt Veronica and I did not go inside his townhome which struck me as odd, particularly as we had to wait in the carriage for nearly two hours while he attended to what he described as "his affairs." Aunt Veronica explained cryptically that the townhouse was "a man's place, not for wives," and that most of the planters kept townhouses such as the Colonel's in the city.

At long last the Colonel came out, with the distinct scent of whisky on his breath, greatly refreshed from whatever business he had attended to. But if our first stop was strange and puzzling, our second stop left me stunned.

A few minutes ride from Uncle's townhouse we came to a cluster of rough wooden buildings, in the angle of two roads, in front of which several saddle horses, either tied or held by servants, indicated a place of popular resort. The muddy streets were crowded with carts as people sold produce, goats, cows, and other livestock. But my eyes fixated on the coffle of slaves being led thru a large gate in chains.

'This is the slave market,' said Aunt Veronica, pointing to the buildings, and leaving our carriage we entered the building, walking past several armed guards, while Uncle walked thru a large gate which seemed to lead into the main courtyard.

Aunt Veronica and I walked up an old wooden staircase, where she was pleased to discover several friends from several other plantations were there to watch their husbands at work. We watched from the balcony as below us a scene of a novel character was presented. A line of Negro slaves extended in a semicircle around the right side of the yard. There were in all about eighty, but as Uncle inspected them, a new coffle was brought in, and kept separate from the existing inventory, while the traders carefully checked to make sure each was in their ledger.

They slaves stood perfectly still, and in close order, while Colonel Rand and the other gentlemen passed from one to another examining for the purpose of buying.

I had supposed slaves were sold at auction, but my Aunt Veronica explained that the Forks in the Road was more like "a country store, where you may bargain for the merchandise without enduring the indignity of bidding."

During busy overflow seasons slaves could be sold within a few minutes of arrival, but in most cases they were held for 2-3 days, with a time being set for their general availability for sale. This allowed prospective buyers to check the papers or billboards for the announcement of new arrivals from Virginia or Tennessee, and inspect the merchandise before deciding on a price.

Gentlemen of standing could leave an offer "with the house", to ensure that the slave would not be sold for a smaller sum when the sales period commenced. Of course the slave could be sold for a larger sum, which encouraged the buyers to be present when the goods became salable.

Such a moment had apparently arrived, and the Colonel took full advantage of it, buying four handsome Negro bucks, all well muscled and in prime condition. I can say that with some certainty, for the bucks were stripped quite naked before sale, and my Aunt used a friend's opera glasses to make sure that each of the men was "fit for breeding."

"Since the Yankees in Congress saw fit to outlaw the African slave trade, breeding has become a key concern," Aunt Veronica said, making her contempt for Northern "meddling" crystal clear, even as her friends giggled and tittered at the sight of the men's dangling members.

I was a decent, virginal girl, so naturally I attempted to get a hold of the opera glasses, but Aunt Veronica kept them from me, much to my consternation. The Colonel walked through the doors directly below us, and I had supposed that we would meet him downstairs. However Aunt Veronica stopped me, explaining that the Colonel was going to enjoy a smoke in the smoking parlor, and that the ladies were to remain upstairs. This explanation struck me as odd, since the Colonel had forgot his pipe on the seat in the carriage, and even now I held it in my hands.

I waited on the balcony, but quickly became bored as my Aunt and her friends began to gossip about their hats, and the ball at Sugar Oak later that week, and which of their daughters would wear the most fetching gown. It was as horrible as Boston, tittle-tattle with a Southern drawl. Making sure my Aunt did not notice me I discretely headed down the stairs.

The establishment was not large, and it was not difficult to find the my Uncle, the Colonel. Suspecting that I might not be welcome in the men's smoking lounge, I opened the door to their inner sanctum slowly, and peeked inside.

In many ways the room was quite large but otherwise unremarkable: a long parlor outfitted with a hodgepodge of small reading tables, card tables, and comfortable couches and chairs. The room had two enormous fireplaces, one on each end, some bookshelves, and a great many books and newspapers scattered about. The room was well appointed, but lacked a woman's touch: The oriental rugs covering the floor were quite elegant, except for those spots where the gentlemen missed their ashtrays or spittoons.

The walls were papered with a light yellow paper, but the long walls were mirrored in manner less grand but still reminiscent of the Hall of Mirrors of Versailles. These mirrors served a practical purpose, though, which was to show off the rooms one truly remarkable feature.

The center of the room featured 8 square marble pedestals, ornately carved, each about two feet wide and two feet high. And on top of each of these pedestals, stood a naked African slave wench!

I say "African" but they were of mixed blood, with a variety of complexions. One had blonde hair, while yet another actually had blue eyes. It was clear that I had stumbled into the haven of the "fancy girls": fair skinned wenches charged with serving their master's basest needs.

The women stood on their pedestals like living statues. One close to me was undergoing a horribly intimate inspection by a dreadful little man with slicked back hair and a thick

French accent. He has his hand up between her legs, and upon his command was hopping from foot-to-foot on her narrow perch, trying not to fall even as each jump jerked his little fat fingers around inside her. Her face expressed her extreme displeasure at this, and it was hard not to sympathize with her, even though her kinky hair branded her as a creature far different from myself.

The scene a few pedestals down was no less shocking. A girl knelt on the stone block, her legs spread as far as the two feet of stone would allow. Behind her, the Colonel urged her to "stir her honeypot" with her fingers, "and show me how fast you can juice yourself."

I don't know if I was more shocked by what I was seeing, or the casual disregard of the other men in the room, who played cards, read, smoked, and chatted, seemingly oblivious to the depravity happening only a few feet away.

The men closest to me sat at a card table, and I watched as a wax seal was applied to a very official looking legal form. Apparently, under the law, "fancy girls" who could conceivably pass for white had to be "marked and registered" with the State of Mississippi, and I was privileged to witness as one of the registrars performed this unwholesome task to the law's full satisfaction.

As the Registrar did his work there was some small dispute among the men. Apparently fancy girls were kept on display for at least 48 hours before being offered up for sale, and although reserve offers could be made prior to the girl being added to the "general inventory" I got the distinct impression that auction-or-not, when the waiting period ended the fairest girls sold quickly to whomever offered the most cash. Apparently one of the men had put a pretty blonde girl up for sale, but then had a change of heart before the 48 hours expired. The registrar completed her registration regardless, for once a bureaucracy starts processing it knows no satisfaction until it finds the task complete.

The legal drama complete, my attention returned to the ugly little Frenchman, who had decided to encourage his wench to perform by slashing a handy riding crop across her naked fanny cheeks.

"Dance, you saucy wench!" he shouted. "Juice my fingers on your sugar meat!"

"Don't hit her!" I shouted. "She's doing the best she can!"

The world stopped as the slimy man turned and stared at me. I tried to run, but the horror of what I had seen left me frozen, and soon he was dragging me towards the center of the room.

"Let go of me! Let go of me, you filthy beast!"

"It seems we found a fancy girl still dressed," he sneered. "We need to strip her, and bring in another block."

"I'm not a fancy girl!" I shouted. "My name is Elizabeth Parker, and I am a lady of Boston, a place of decent society!" I thundered. "Colonel Rand is my Grand Uncle, and you will unhand me at once."

All eyes turned to the Colonel, who glared at me with eyes of fire. There was a pregnant pause, and for a moment I wondered what might happen if he denied knowing me, and I was mistaken for a slave.

"She is as she says, Jaques," the Colonel said finally. "Please release her arm."

The slimy man did as he was told, giving me the opportunity to slap his face as hard as I could. The cad actually raised his hand to me, but fortunately a look from the Colonel was enough to remind him of the ways of society.

"Why are you here, Elizabeth?" he asked sternly. "Surely you realize this is no place for you."

"I came to give you your pipe, Colonel. I thought you needed it to smoke, but I can see now that you are... otherwise occupied."

I turned and left, storming out in full dudgeon as behind me the Colonel rapidly made his apologies. He caught me on the stairs, and confronted me with his fierce, steely eyes.

"How long were you at the door, Elizabeth?" he demanded.

"What difference does that make?" I shot back.

"It makes no difference to me, but it might make a great deal of difference to you, for it would determine how severe your punishment would be. However, you are in my wife's charge, not mine, so we will make no further mention of this incident. If I acknowledged what you did here today, and the disgrace you caused, I would be bound to punish you. So you will say nothing to your Aunt about what you saw today."

"I understand your wish to keep your depravity secret, Colonel, but you cannot hide from God."

The Colonel's eyes flared, as I had insulted his intentions, his manhood, and his relationship with the Almighty in one fell swoop. For a moment I thought he was going to strike me, so fierce was his expression, but he did not.

Instead, he said. "Very true Elizabeth, but remember: you cannot hide either." And with that he sent me upstairs to retrieve Aunt Veronica. No further mention was made of the Forks of the Road, although the events of that day continued to play on my mind.

If my relations with the Colonel cooled, they were stronger than ever with my Aunt, who was plunged into preparations for the lavish ball she planned on holding at Sugar Oak three

days hence. When I showed her the gowns and jewelry I brought from Boston she was thrilled, and I lent her a string of my finest pearls and a set of earrings that had once been worn by Queen Isabella of Spain. I wore a beautiful red gown, which left my shoulders bare in a way that was quite daring yet also quite flattering to my figure.

I was a sensation! The town of Natchez boasts more millionaires per capita than town in America, but my jewels, gown, and beauty put every woman in Mississippi to shame. Every man there wanted to dance with me. I danced with them all, laughing and flirting, and having the gayest time!

I made a point of refusing dancing invitations from the men I had seen at the Forks in the Road slave market, telling my friend Jaques in particular that I did not care to take his hand, for "I know where that hand has been." My rejection of some of the men present caused something of a stir among some of the women, who were already seething at the way the Yankee from Boston was flirting with their sons and husbands.

I particularly enjoyed dancing with Mr. Butler, a tall, handsome barrel chested man with a thin mustache. This did not sit well with his fiancé, whose name was I did not know, but whose eyes were as green with envy as her gown was green with cheap dye.

I danced with a Mr. Porter, one of the town's wealthy planters, and complimented him on his ability to dance in spite of his girth, speculating that if we fell as we twirled his shape would surely allow us to roll to safety!

Mr. Rogers danced divinely, although I did tell him the shine from his bald dome cast an unpleasant reflection in my eyes.

I danced with Mr. Winters, the man with the gold teeth, and his son, whose stutter became quite pronounced as I teased him. I danced with several young men who thought the colleges in Mississippi were as good as Harvard, at least until I disabused them of their fanciful notions, and they retreated to their mothers like the sad, whipped little puppies they were!

I did not mean to be unkind, but I was the prettiest girl there, and quite in love with David, and the men were quite silly in thinking they could win my affections. Still each of them tried, only to crash in flames.

Towards the end of the evening, a group of the women formed a circle around me, and began to question me in a most accusatory way. Their leader, a tall slender creature who seemed to relish that her height allowed her to look down upon me, began the inquisition. I was later to learn she went by the name of Emily Davis and such was either her force of character or her standing in the community that I noted that even some of the men deferred to her.

"I hear you are a writer, and you have taken it upon yourself to write lies about our peculiar institution" she hissed.

"I am here to learn and listen, not judge," I said quietly.

"But you have passed judgment on us already, even as you dance with our men and drink our champagne. You call us degenerates and misery mongers, and accuse of the basest crimes, while smiling and trying to steal our husbands. You dance well. I wonder if you were schooled, or if it comes naturally in your blood."

"What does that mean?"

At this Emily spoke loudly, so loudly that the music in the room stopped, as everyone turned to listen. "Your grandmother left Mississippi in the state of wedlock. Do you know what color the baby was?"

"How dare you!" I hissed.

The Colonel tried to intervene, "Ladies, let us not have unpleasant words on such a pleasant evening. I'm sure..."

Emily would have none of it. "I seemed to have touched an old wound," the woman replied. "A wound that cannot be hidden, and which speaks to us now, through your olive skin and curly black hair."

I had gone into the evening determined to be diplomatic, but enraged by both her hypocrisy and her insinuations, I threw diplomacy to the winds.

"I have danced with most of your men tonight, and have seen the rest at the Forks in the Roads, acting in the most abominable ways. If this is the best Mississippi has to offer, small wonder if my grandmother did give her affections to a slave!"

I stormed upstairs to the room, and locked myself inside. The party ended soon thereafter, and through the bedroom wall I listened the sound of my Aunt Veronica sobbing herself to sleep.

The next morning I apologized to Aunt Veronica, who accepted my words graciously, even as she apologized to me. "It is supposed that all abolitionists have black blood, else why would they behave so horribly? That, and the women's jealousy of you, is the cause of this most tragic incident."

The Colonel, who began drinking early that day, was less charitable. "The cause is her sharp tongue, and her abolitionist ways. I should have punished her at the Forks. If I had dealt with her then, we would not have had the problem now."

I volunteered to leave immediately, but my Aunt Veronica insisted I stay for at least another few weeks, although "it would be best if you avoided town."

So it was that the next few days turned into a lazy routine of piano, reading, long hot baths, and elegant meals, social outcasts of a society not fit to be called such. My Aunt forgave me, but the Colonel remained cool, convinced as he was that I still needed to be "disciplined" for some heinous crime.

I found my mind constantly wandering back to the Forks in the Roads. I knew the spectacle I had seen there would make a wondrous, if brief, tale and would hold the audience at the South Meeting House in Boston captive for the short time that it lasted. I felt certain there was more to tell, but how was I to tell it? From my Aunt's reaction to the townhouse, and the whispers I had overheard at the ball, I suspected strongly that the Colonel kept his fair skinned wenches here, after purchasing them at the Forks.

The story, alas, was in town, and at the Forks in the Road slave market. But how was I to get there, when I was in exile at the plantation? Oddly enough, it was my Uncle's thirst to see me punished that provided the key to unlock my shackles.

Over the next several days a plan percolated in my mind, and as I mused on the matter I devised an ingenious scheme that would allow me to see more of the back room of the Forks of the Road, thus securing the sort of first person narrative that would fill the South Boston Meeting House and allow me to earn the money to marry David. The plan was simplicity itself, but it had to be handled delicately.

It started with my Aunt Veronica, as we sat on the veranda, casually sipping our morning tea as we watched the Negroes toil in the fields.

"I confess that I was shocked at first to learn of the registration process for the mixed bloods at the Forks, and the fairness of their skin" I said, holding my cup up so that Nappy, one of the black servants attending us, could drop more sugar into my tea. "However, upon reflection I must say I see the wisdom of the system. Some of those girls were quite white, and I have no doubt that some of them might pass, unless expected by experts. Best to have them registered, to clearly distinguish them from the decent women, lest honest ladies be mistaken for slaves, and spirited away for all sorts of depravities."

"Oh, I'm so glad you understand, Elizabeth" my Aunt said, quite delighted by my change in tone. "I must say your writings on our peculiar institution, and your mother's writings, which I had to smuggle past the postmaster, left me wounded. I was hoping that an in person visit might change your heart, and prove to you that what we do is indeed for the best of all."

"Yes," I said, "I have come to understand that slavery is the law, in Mississippi and at Sugar Oak. The law is our friend and guardian, and no honest person need fear it. Slavery allows us to sit on the porch and enjoy the finer things, while protecting our virtue, and the virtue of our families."

I repeated these sentiments at dinner in front of the Colonel, stressing again my admiration for the registration system "designed to protect us all." My Uncle was delighted, and

responded by toasting "his dearest niece, as lovely on the inside as she is fair without, which in her case is no small boast. To Elizabeth!"

Glasses were raised and my Aunt and Uncle let out several hearty "huzzahs!" I knew I had started to win him over.

The evening was quite festive, and the only pall came toward the end, when the Colonel announced that he would be going into the city on Friday, to spend the weekend at his townhouse in Natchez. I could tell my Aunt was displeased, but ever wishing to avoid a scene, she merely excused herself and retired early.

I joined my Uncle on the veranda, where he was enjoying his pipe, a pleasure not permitted him in the mansion.

"I'm sorry Aunt Veronica was so cross with you, particularly when she has no right to be. It is right that a master use his slaves, according to God's plan. The sin comes in judging the actions of another. I only regret that the laws of Mississippi do not protect me the same as the other women in your care, and leave me in such precarious peril."

My Uncle confessed confusion, and said he was unaware of any peril, and in any event he was quite prepared to protect me from any danger.

At this kindness I took his arm, and he patted my hand appreciatively, softly stroking it as I confessed my fears.

"That horrible shrew at the ball suggested that my grandmother bedded a slave, and that my mother was a product of their unnatural union. That would make me an quadroon, and an escaped slave, subject to re-enslavement and sale at a Sheriff's auction by any official who cares to shackle me."

"That's a dirty lie!" he said. "Emily Davis is a spiteful gossip with an adder's tongue!"

"In truth, I never knew my grandfather. But the charge was publicly made and the bell cannot be un-rung. Nor can it be refuted, and since it supposed that all abolitionists are of colored blood than it is supposed to be true. The paradox of the matter is that it is better for me now that it be proved, truly and incontrovertibly, so that I may be offered the proper legal protection."

The Colonel, while not slow, was also not quick, so after allowing him to express his bafflement I adopted the pose I had seen my father take in court, when arranging facts for a jury whose verdict he sought.

"Let us consider each case in turn. Let us suppose I am white, but am not believed to be so. It would be simple enough for any one of the attendees at the ball to kidnap me and bring me to Judge. Naturally, I would protest my innocence. But how much weight does the word of an escaped slave have in a court in Mississippi? Upon hearing the

evidence of my writings and any number of witnesses testifying about my grandmother's flight and my mother's birth out of wedlock (embellished, no doubt, by countless untrue details) the judge would doubtlessly condemn me to a lifetime of servitude. As a runaway I would be sold at the Sheriff's auction, and then put to use in the most unspeakable ways!"

At this I paused, as I let my words sink in, and permitted the Colonel to imagine the unspeakable ways I might be used. I had expected him to be shocked, but instead saw an odd sort of smile play out on his plump lips. I was surprised by his reaction, but having committed myself to my plan, forged on.

"Let us now suppose the other case. Assume that I stipulate to being a quadroon, and the property of my Aunt Veronica, with my grandfather being a runaway slave once in your employ. It is a simple enough matter for you to bring me to the slave market at The Forks of the Road, where we can obtain a proper and legal registration."

"From the moment the papers are filed, I am safe. 'Elizabeth is a slave?' 'What of it! I own her, and that is that.' If I am kidnapped I can tell the Judge who I am, and who my owner is, and I will be returned promptly to you. No longer the property of anyone who lays claim to me, I am as safe as the pearls in Aunt Veronica's safe."

"Your line of reasoning does have a certain logic to it," the Colonel allowed, measuring the matter, "but the paperwork you seek would only be prepared as part of the sale process."

"As part of the preparation for sale," I said, correcting him with the crucial word. "In the parlor the auction papers were prepared before the sale, and presented to the owner at the end of the display period. He then withdrew the papers, keeping them for another time."

"Yes, I suppose it DOES work that way," the Colonel allowed. "The necessary papers would be prepared in due course by the Registrar, assuming you went thru the display period. But..."

"There is more, Uncle," I said, looking earnestly into his ancient eyes. "You are right. It was wicked of me to right screeds questioning a tradition I scarcely understand. My behavior was immoral, and I deserve to be punished. Since I floundered in my attempts to understand the peculiar institution from your perspective, and slandered your honor, your home, and your entire way of life, perhaps it is only just that I be made to understand it from the other side."

"I confess that I did not go the parlor merely to return your pipe, but to see what was happening inside, despite my dear Aunt Veronica's admonitions that it was a sight no proper lady should see. I stood at the door much longer than necessary, and watched as 'the pot was stirred', relishing each moment of that wenches humiliation, even as I hypocritically condemned you for it."

"We in Boston thunder against your immorality, even as we sell you the ships for your cotton, and mortgage you the money for your slaves. Given the severity of our crimes

against you, a few minutes in the parlor would be a mere slap on the wrist. Insufficient as it is, restitution is due, and the debt must be paid. Will you deny me justice?"

It was a well-rehearsed speech, carefully crafted to play on years of sectional resentments and firm belief that it is the abolitionists who are in fact immoral. The last sentence, "Will you deny me justice?" was father's favorite closer, guaranteed to wrap the jury around his finger.

The Colonel paused, and gave his pipe several thoughtful puffs as he considered my plea. "You should know, Elizabeth, that I read those horrible pamphlets you and your little group of scandal mongers created, despite your Aunt's best efforts to conceal them from my eyes. It was wicked of you to write such things, and you do deserved to be punished. Out of respect for your Aunt I have decided to ignore your crimes, but if the matter is placed in my hands I shall deal with you sternly."

"Of course, Uncle. I should expect no less."

"You're an attractive young woman, Elizabeth, and I must confess that I wouldn't mind seeing you..."

At this his voice trailed off, and he took another puff of his pipe. The Colonel slowed, and chose his words carefully, closely studying my reaction. "You saw the goats and sheep at the market, did you not, Elizabeth? You know it is customary to sell livestock uncovered."

"Of course it is!" I said, laughing at the absurdity of it. "One would not buy a goat wearing a hat and trousers, or a cow in a ladies gown."

The Colonel smiled at my witticism. "Indeed. And you understand that the slaves at the Fork in the Road are livestock, and are displayed...and handled... as such?"

At this, I felt myself go flush, and bit my lip, looking at the floor. "Yes, sir, of course sir," I said. "I saw how they were handled. And I know it is how it must be."

"Quite," the Colonel said. "And you understand that I might, if my schedule permits, be present when that inspection is made?"

"Uncle, of course! You'd have to be there, to make sure that it was done properly, so the correct legal documents could be notarized and placed on file. Yes, it will be embarrassing, humiliating even, but it is vital that it be done. For this weekend, I think of you as my owner rather than a grand niece, and I shall think of you not as my Uncle, or the Colonel, even, but as a my rightful mas-sah."

I spoke the word "mas-sah" slowly, with a Negro accent. My answer seemed to please him, for he smiled broadly, and put his hands on my bare shoulders, letting his bony fingers lazily fall down to the back of my gown.

"You're a clever girl, Elizabeth. But you do realize that if we do this, you will not be in charge, and I will handle this matter as I see fit?"

"How could it be otherwise? I will be but a poor colored quadroon, and you will be my all knowing and powerful massah!" I teased.

My Uncle laughed heartily. "Elizabeth, you are a indeed peach of a girl! I will take you with me to Natchez on Friday, and I shall have your certificate by Sunday. May I trust in your discretion not to tell your Aunt of our plan?"

"Yes, but what if I am seen there?" I asked. "Won't Aunt Veronica find out then?"

At this, the Colonel chuckled. "You will be displayed in the parlor which, barring your unfortunate trespass, is a domain reserved for gentlemen only. It is understood among these gentlemen that nothing that goes on in that room is ever discussed with their ladies. Don't you agree it should be so?"

Ignoring for a moment my own unfeminine thirst for knowledge, I nodded vigorously.

"You see?" the Colonel said. "You are learning already. Mud is cleaned off one's boots before one enters the home. No matter what any man in town sees of you in that room, they will see nothing at all."

With this my Uncle kissed me, not on the forehead as he had done when we had first met, but directly on the lips, in a manner that left me quite startled. Then he smiling, he bowed to me, and left.

My Aunt said little about the trip, and I knew she did not approve of me going, although the matter was never directly discussed. Nevertheless she supervised the packing of several of my trunks, and the gowns she selected made it quite clear that she had no idea what in fact I would be wearing during my weekend in the city.

I had been expecting to go into town late on Friday, but the Colonel insisted we leave early. The ride into town went quickly, too quickly for my tastes. Despite the Colonel's charming, sunny manner and solicitous conversation the stylish carriage might as well have been a tumbrel. The trip was made that much longer, and more agonizing, when the Colonel forgot his pipe, and we had to return to Sugar Oaks to retrieve the sacred object.

I spent the entire journey mentally reviewing the plan to check for anything that could go wrong but there were no flaws that I could see. Uncle assured me that nothing went on in the Parlor at the Forks that was spoken of outside of the market. And even if it were, what would it matter? It wasn't like I was looking for a husband in the town.

I convinced myself it would be a delightful little adventure, and afterwards I would return to the safety of Boston to live amongst my abolitionist friends. I would finally be able to speak first-hand about the horrors of how the slaves were mistreated by the Southerners.

None of the others could boast that; their accounts came from escaped slaves or through second hand stories. I would be a sensation.

I knew I might have to leave out a few details to protect my family's reputation but even edited my accounts will set the North afire and make me the darling of the movement. Just thinking about it and the attention it would bring made me smile.

Yet as I saw at Natchez drawing closer in the carriage window my stomach began to flutter, and a sliver of concern crept back into my heart. Was I taking a foolish risk? I could not see how? My Uncle the Colonel was well regarded in the locality and he was a man of honor. True, he wanted to see me punished, but he most certainly could never let any harm come to me.

Upon entering town our first stop was the Colonel's townhouse, where I was surprised to meet not one but three fair skinned slave girls, about my age, who apparently acted as domestics when not servicing their master's baser needs. They eyed me quite suspiciously, and as the Colonel did not introduce me in any particular way it was clear that they viewed me as competition, for no decent lady would ever be brought inside the townhouse. Odd as it was, I found myself comparing myself to them, and wondering if I would be more or less favored than each of them if I were added to this, or to some other, household.

After the trunks were deposited and the Colonel had an opportunity to enjoy the morning newspaper and smoke of his pipe, we retired again to the carriage and the short ride to The Fork in the Roads. It was so close to the Colonel's elegant home we could have walked, if it were not for the muddy streets.

On the way to market I looked out my carriage window and noticed coffles of slaves being led to the Forks, for whom strain, dirt, and mud were not a concern. I felt a newfound sympathy for the wretched creatures, less abstract and more urgent, since I knew that in a few minutes I too would be inventory in the ledger of the same store.

As the carriage pulled to a halt at the Forks in the Road the Colonel climbed down and then like the fine southern gentleman he was offered his hand to me. Weighed down with stays and heavy petticoats mounting and dismounting from a carriage was no easy task, especially with no maid to attend me.

I kept my face calm but hidden in the folds of my substantial skirts I felt a pleasant tingling between my legs. I knew I would not have to worry about skirts or petticoats soon and just thinking about it sent my blood racing. Soon I would be put on display, and my papers prepared.

My unlady like excitement grew as my future took hold in my mind. I reassured myself that I was only doing it for the cause, and there is nothing written in the good book that says we cannot take pleasure in the path of rightness.

Arriving at the Forks in the Road we went not into the front entrance but thru a side door, directly into the offices of a Mr. Cochran, a rather unpleasant man with whisky on his breath and a beard that failed to hide his unpleasant encounter with the pox. The Colonel quickly explained that although I had been welcomed into his home as his wife's grandniece, it had been discovered that I was in fact the daughter of one of his runaway slaves, and thus I needed to be registered. He explained that he did not plan on selling me, but that placing me on the sales floor was an expedient way of filing the papers necessary to "establish proper title to the goods."

It was obvious from the tone of the conversation that my Uncle did not think much of Mr. Cochran's, but as my Uncle was a good customer and a respected citizen, the blighted flesh peddler was eager to please.

"I'll put her on the floor straight away, Colonel, and as per the house rules I will not sell her before Sunday at noon. If you return Sunday morning you can pick up her registration papers and review any outstanding offers that have been made on her. I for one hope you change your mind and decide to sell her, for I would very much like to have 7% of whatever coin she brings."

"You'll get 5%, Cochran, and not a penny more. Merchandise of this quality sells itself with no aid needed from the likes of you. Nor shall you charge me for the paperwork or your services. She is lovely peach, ripe for the picking, and I should charge you for the privilege of gracing your sales floor with her presence, and a commission for the extra traffic her loveliness will bring."

"Quite so, Colonel," the little man said, backtracking immediately. "No offense intended, I assure you. If you do sell her, will you be using your customary brand?"

"Brand?" I asked, my eyes opening wide.

"Yes, my dear," the Colonel explained. "Under Mississippi law it is necessary to mark fair skin wenches before they are sold, so they can be identified later if they attempt to pass. As I am your original owner, I have the first rights on your hide, although I may cede these to the seller, and he may choose his own brand, or rebrand you."

"Brand me?" I said, still struggling to wrap my mind around the concept. "Uncle! You wouldn't! You couldn't!"

"Come now, Elizabeth!" the Colonel said, chuckling at my naiveté. "In that wretched screed you wrote you mentioned branding, singling it out as proof of our depravity. How then can you feign ignorance now? Perhaps you're not as familiar with our ways as I supposed. Come, Cochran, fetch your book, so she may admire her Uncle's art."

Mr. Cochran fetched the book from his desk, and the image of the brand was quickly located.



The Colonel beamed with pride as he ran his finger over the insignia. "I designed it myself, and you'll find no prouder brand in Mississippi. An 'R' for RAND, with two stars added for my rank of Lt. Colonel. A beauty, is it not? I enjoy feeling it on the rumps of my slave wenches as I put them to use."

"The complexity of the brand requires multiple applications of the iron," Mr. Cochran noted. "Once for the R, and once more for each star; three brands in all. In cases such as this, when three irons are applied, it's best to use the leather bit, to keep the girl from biting off her tongue."

At this, I turned quite green, and I am quite certain that if I would have fallen if I did not lean against Mr. Cochran's desk. I could see the Colonel's anger was building as well, although the source of his displeasure left me aghast.

"I'll not pay for three brands, Cochran!" he snapped. "As for the gag, will you also sell me the coal used to heat the irons, and rent me the straps used to hold her in place? Is there no end to your chiseling?"

"I meant no offense, Colonel. For a gentlemen of your quality, the branding would be gratis. Would you care to show me where you would like her marked?"

"Later, perhaps. Right now I have an appointment for lunch with Mr. Nagels down at the club. I shall leave her in your care, Cochran, reminding you that she shall not be marked, or treated unkindly beyond that which is necessary to maintain discipline. This is a registration, not a sale, and I do not wish to damage the goods."

"Do not worry, good sir," Mr. Cochran said, oozing his oily charm, "She shall not be marked, but discipline shall be maintained," he added, smiling more than was necessary at the word, "discipline."

I had heard enough. "Uncle, you cannot leave me here, with this...this creature, while you go off drinking with your friends. You must take me with you."

"Must I?" he asked archly. "I think you are forgetting your place."

Sensing the Colonel's displeasure at my outburst, Mr. Cochran suggested a compromise. "If you wish to register the young lady without putting her on the sales floor. I can call the registrar. We can complete the forms now, and the young lady can leave with you. You can then pick up the papers at your leisure, or I can have them sent to your townhouse, or the plantation."

"Yes, that is much better," I said. "We shall do that."

"And miss my lunch with Mr. Nagals down at the club?" the Colonel said, taking his pipe from his pocket and headed towards the door. "No, no, that will never do. Put her on the floor, and let the buyers examine her freely. If nothing else, it will be a badly needed lesson in humility. I will be back to fetch her Sunday, after church."

"After church!" I gasped, nearly overcome with outrage. "I never!"

"You know, Cochrain, I think I might have been a bit hasty. She is far too uppity for her own good, carrying on like she was white to all my friends. She needs a good lathering but I don't want to lower her value too much with welts."

"You have my word as a gentleman, sir" Mr Cochrain assured him. "She'll howl like a wolf at full moon. But I will leave her bottom pink, not red or blue."

I shot my "master" the nastiest glare I could muster. The Colonel, amused at my umbrage, smiled as he headed towards the door. "Make sure her paperwork is organized Cochran, with the highest bids on top. If I can fetch a fair price for her, I might decide to sell her after all."

At this mention of selling me for "a fair price" I blanched, and the Colonel shot me a playful, mischievous wink, and began whistling the song "Dixie" as he headed out the door. I knew then he was joking, or perhaps trying to teach me a lesson, but still my heart raced at the thought that my future might depend on the price someone was willing to pay for me!

Feeling no small sense of panic, I headed towards the door with the intention of clarifying his remark and putting my mind at ease. However I had scarcely moved an inch when I felt Mr. Cochran's vice like grip on my arm.

"No, no, little girl," he teased. "We mustn't bother the Colonel. We need to get started on your paperwork. Now tell me about your whore of a nigra loving grandma."

Mr. Cochran sat at the desk, and I told him what I knew of my grandparents, both of whom had died before I was born. I confessed that I had seen but one picture of my grandfather, an oil painting. After sufficient prodding from Mr. Cochrain I confessed that due to the nature of the lighting and the medium, the portrait did make him appear to be dark. Mr. Cochran ignored the information about my Italian grandfather, except to note in his papers that my grandfather too might have been "passing." All information calling my racial identity into doubt was seized on, and all exculpatory evidence ignored, until by the time my papers were prepared I myself was wondering what race I truly was.

Documenting my predicament and preparing the papers for the registrar's review took only a few minutes. Mr. Cochran made note of the fact that I spoke both Latin and Greek, and played both the piano and the violin. "Men of quality sometimes desire a girl with such skills. Although it's illegal to teach a slave to read, you might be allowed to teach your massah's legitimate children, if not your own bastards."

The casual indifference of his tone, and his cruelty in condemning my 'bastard' children to a life of ignorance and servitude cut me like a knife, and I found myself despising the evil flesh peddler more with each passing moment. I was relieved when we were interrupted by a subordinate announcing the arrival of a new coffle of slaves.

It was a transaction large enough to warrant Mr. Cochrain's personal attention, and he turned me over to a toothless old black woman, who led me thru the final stages of my enslavement with a practiced air of authority that seemed strangely assuring. The old woman bade me to undress, and when I stopped at my drawers she bade me to continue with a beguiling, toothless smile.

The previous night I had stripped quite naked in front of the black slave woman who had drawn my bath, but although the actions were similar the difference in circumstance made this altogether a different affair. I don't think the old woman had any particular desire to see me naked, but I could tell that she did enjoy her authority over me, and that my embarrassment was amusing to her. I stripped quickly, determined to end the show as quickly as possible.

The old woman told me that the men would be touching me, and "feeling 'ya, real good!" and that I had to acquiesce, or they would be free to use one of the strops or crops in the room to whip my bottom. "Some of them like to squeeze you hard, just to get you to squirm away, so they can whip ya! Don't fall for their fancy tricks, and be a good girl, and do as yer' told."

I had supposed we were finished, but we were not, for she ordered me to bend over, and spread my legs, to see if I had "been busted." I assured I had not, but she insisted on seeing for herself, chuckling that "you'd best get used to touching your toes, Missy. Every man in the parlor is going to wanna finger that honey pot of yours, and get a good feel, whether they're fixin' to buy you or not."

After verifying my purity she led me out of the office and down a short hallway. She opened a door, and for the second time I stepped into the Parlor at the Forks in the Road.

The room was the same, but the sensation was altogether different, in no small part because this time I was naked from tip-to-toe. I could feel the softness of the Oriental Rugs rub against the soles of my bare feet as I was marched towards one of the two empty marble blocks near the far end of the room. I was grateful that there was only one empty block between me and the fire, for in my state of nakedness the room felt cold, and colder still when I stepped up onto the marble block that awaited my display.

The three gentlemen already in the parlor paused as I entered, looking me up and down in the way that men do. The gaze of men was not unfamiliar to me, but given my unclothed state I'm sure the results of their visual inquisitiveness was infinitely more satisfying to them.

One of the men was reading a book; the other two were discussing the evils of "the Yankee tariff" as they enjoyed a brandy by the fire. They glanced at me, and looked me up and down for a moment, then resumed their conversation.

At the ball, dressed in my elegant gown, I had been a sensation, and men had swarmed around me. My arrival on the sales floor, in contrast, while infinitely important to me, was only of modest interest to the men. No longer the belle of the ball, now I simply was another piece of merchandise presented for their perusal.

I wondered if the men had been at the ball; I did not recognize them, not them me. I hoped that no one from the ball would see me like this, or would realize how far I had fallen if they spotted me here.

I surveyed the room from my new vantage point. I could see the mantle on the fireplace was dusty. The room certainly had not been visited by a woman in sometime, at least a woman in the position to maintain it properly. I noticed that each of the tables around the room contained some item that could be used to discipline a recalcitrant girl: a riding crop, a short strap, or a small paddle. None of the items looked particularly vicious, as such items go, and I am sure they were designed to leave no lasting marks. But as I recalled Mr. Cochrain's promise that I would be lathered, my bottom cheeks clenched in alarm.

The marble was ice cold, and seemed to leach heat from my body, and after a few minutes I found that my nipples were hard and legs freezing. Following the example of the other slave girls, I shifted my weight from foot to foot, a movement that caused my breasts and bottom to jiggle proactively.

In an effort to distract myself I turned my attention to the beautiful grandfather clock in the corner. I had arrived at the Forks in the Roads shortly before noon, and was standing on the block by 12:45. How quickly my world had changed! The totality of my transformation became clear to me a few minutes before one when at six minutes before the hour Mr. Cochrain entered and placed a sign a simple handwritten sign at the base of my pedestal.

The flesh peddler smiled up at me, the let his eyes run slowly down my naked form. I instinctively tried to cover myself, but he picked up one of the riding crops off the table, and used the tip of it to whisk my pesky hands away. "Hands at your sides, Peaches. The gentlemen have to see the goods... and feel them, too. You let 'em, or you'll be feeling my crop on you bottom! You understand, wench?"

I nodded at stood ramrod straight on the block. He used his crop to lift my chin higher, and satisfied with my pose, left. In the mirror, I strained to read the sign that now proclaimed my identity to the world. Apparently "Peaches" was more than a playful nickname. It was who I was:

"Peaches "

1 8 Yrs OLD.

Born: Boston

Quardroon Virgin

4 Sale Sund Noon

The clock in the corner chimed one, and I felt a tiny chill run down my spine as I remembered the Colonel's mischievous wink. I hope it meant he was teasing, for if he was not in 47 hours I would be sold.

My squirming brought me unwelcome attention, as the man in the corner put down his book and began to slowly peruse the line of girls. There were 8 blocks but six girls, and as I was at the end of the row I was the last to earn his attentions. He did not touch me in a particularly rude way, but merely arranged the hair around my shoulders, and ran his hand over my thigh. I could tell that he appreciated my beauty, and that he simply enjoyed touching me. I smiled at him, and he smiled back, commenting that I was indeed, "as pretty as peaches."

And with that he picked up his book and left, leaving me to stand naked, staring at my image, and the images of the other five naked mixed blood Venuses, in the mirror.

#1 was lovely, but short, and a tad thicker around the middle than she should have been.

#2 had ripe, full breasts, but several faint whip marks across her back. In the South this was often considered proof of a rebellious nature, although from the look in her eye I suspect that the girl was merely the victim of a master who enjoyed using the whip. She also had a brand on her left thigh, a lazy J, with a cursive twirl at the end, rather like the R that decorated Colonel Rand's brand.

#3 was a surprise, quite fair, with blonde hair and blue eyes. I'm embarrassed to say that her skin was lighter than mine, although the card at her feet identified her as a mulatto. She was quite lovely, if a bit flat on top, and I felt a pang of jealousy as I wondered which of us would bring a better price on the auction block. The mirror behind her showed her lovely apple bottom, which bore a brand mark of three tiny triangles trisected by a line.

#4 was a classic quadroon in her early twenties: dark eyes, dark hair, and tan tawny skin several shades darker than my own. We could have been sisters, except I was much prettier, and much fairer, and had a better figure, particularly in the hips. I saw no brand on her, and she seemed quite distressed. I speculated her master in town had simply tired of her, and this was her first trip to Forks Road.

#5 was an octoroon, and she troubled me, for her hair was red, and her freckled skin was far whiter than my own. I strained to read the sign at the base of her pedestal: her name was "Irish Rose". Only her bottom, which bore a small brand in the shape of a stemmed rose, marked her as a slave.

Irish Rose was fair, and freckled, and quite beautiful. I found myself wishing that they placed me next to one of the darker girls, for I suddenly realized that I looked quite black standing next to her!

A gentlemen entered at the other end of the room, and each of us stiffened as he walked slowly before us, carefully reviewing the troops. I recognized him from the ball, where I had danced with him, as he attempted to charm me by bragging about the size of his plantation. He stopped before each dais, looking each girl up-and-down, and made notes on #3, #5, and, I'm pleased to say, #6. I wasn't sure what he wrote about me, but I found myself flattered to be considered worthy of notes.

It was pleased that he hadn't recognized me, but as he exited the room and I allowed my eyes to wander back over the other girls a horrible realization slowly sank in.

"He doesn't recognize me because he thinks I'm just another slave. I'm dark enough to be one, at least as dark as most of the girls here. Even now the papers are sitting on the desk, waiting for the registrar to make in official. When the forms are stamped and the seal put in place, Elizabeth Parker will no longer exist. I will be Peaches, the nigra slave girl!"

I'm ashamed to say that as I contemplated my new identity I felt my excitement mounting and an increasing wetness in my most secret spot. ***"I am a slave girl,"*** I thought. ***"My master can use me however he wishes. And I will have to perform for him, no matter what he asks me to do, because my body belongs to me."***

It was a horrifying realization, but also a liberating one. Peaches the randy slave girl, wet between the legs, with hot African blood pumping thru her veins, would be free to do any number of things that the prim-and-proper Elizabeth Parker would never dream of. I squeezed my thighs together, luxuriating in the feeling of freedom my slavery gave me.

The release of my sexuality, however, was followed by another insight that was far more disturbing. I allowed my eyes to slowly travel down the line of naked slave girls. The blonde girl and Irish Rose were fairer than I, but they both had brands that clearly marked them as slaves. The man with the notepad, walking down the line, had seen nothing amiss. He had not questioned what he saw, for there was nothing to question. Anyone with eyes who entered this room would see Friday's selection of mixed bloods at the Forks in the Roads.

I had been trying to deny the reality of who I was ever since that night at the party, when Emily had hurled her hateful accusation. But the seed had been planted, and that night I had laid in bed wondering why my grandmother would have left her comfortable life at Forks in the Road if she did not have to?

Why was I such a feverant abolitionist?

The ever growing wetness between my legs confirmed what I could no longer deny. The darkness of my own skin, so plainly evident in the mirror as I compared myself to the Octoroon standing next to me, damned me with my own eyes.

I was a Quadroon slave girl.

I stared at my reflection in the mirror; Peaches the quadroon slave girl stared back. She was lovely, to be sure, but also naked, terrified, and entirely helpless. But somehow, I knew, that only made her more desirable.

I listened to the two fools by the fireplace continue their endless discussion of the relative merits of Mr. Calhoun versus Mr. Clay versus Mr. Webster. Congress had recently debated a compromise to save the Union, and as part of the agreement our Senator, Mr. Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, had agreed to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act, which bound the people in Massachusetts to return escaped slaves to the South.

I had split with mother on this issue, agreeing with Mr. Webster that it was a compromise necessary to save the union. The law was the law, until we could change it, and the slaves, for the time being at least, should be returned. After a tumultuous debate between mother and I, the society agreed we would no longer shield any new slaves brought to us for the rest of the year, for fear of the harsh criminal penalties the law imposed, until the matter could be considered again.

The law, I had always said, must be either changed or respected, and it was a belief I felt to my bones. My triumph felt hollow now, though, since it meant that if I did somehow escape, my family and friends would be honor bound to return me to Sugar Oaks Plantation for punishment.

The Fugitive Slave Law now seemed wicked to me, for it would turn my mother and father into slave hounds, duty bound to slap shackles on me and return me to the whip master, or face jail themselves.

It was a mute point, perhaps, for how could I escape? My credo was respect for the law. I was a quadroon slave girl, and when the papers were filed at the courthouse it would be official. The people of Mississippi had determined I was a quadroon slave, and I was bound to accept their verdict. If I tried to escape, my entire life would be a lie.

Never, no, never! Some other way had to be found! I knew then that until my dear Uncle the Colonel or the law released her, Peaches would faithfully serve her master.

The Fugitive Slave act was still under debate in the Senate, and I hoped that it would not pass. For if it did my fate would be sealed forever.

My mind was awash in emotions: astonishment, terror, confusion, fear, and (I confess) my ever mounting carnal excitement. I was actually glad when the door to the parlor

opened, for I hoped that the visitor might at least divert my thoughts. But my hopes turned to mortified embarrassment when I saw the latest visitor walk through the door.

It was the Colonel, back from lunch. And from the way he was walking, it was quite obvious that copious refreshments had been consumed.

The Colonel was back, and I was standing on my marble block, stark naked. Wild with panic, I looked around, desperate for a sheet, a towel... something that might cover my nakedness! But there was nothing.

I bit my lip, and holding my head high stood ramrod straight, hoping against reason that me might not notice me.

My plan worked, at least at first. The Colonel paid #6 no special attention, but started instead at #1, walking slowly down the line, pausing and smiling as he surveyed each girl's beauty in turn. His manner was neither rushed nor hurried. Clearly he was enjoying himself, and was willing to take the time needed for a proper inspection of the goods.

When he reached me he smiled broadly, signaling he enjoyed the view. I blushed crimson, staring straight ahead as the old toothless black woman had taught me to do.

Amused at my obvious discomfort, the Colonel selected a large comfortable wing chair, and moved it so he could sit a few feet in front of my marble block. After placing an ottoman under his feet, he lit his pipe, and leaned back into the soft cushioning of the chair, perfectly positioned to enjoy my naked humiliation at his leisure.

Oh, what anguish it was! His eyes rested first on my freezing toes, then slowly slid up my calves, lingering for a long time on my shapely thighs. Then, his gaze rested directly on my crotch, and stopped to take inventory. I swore he counted every hair, with a gaze so burning it actually heated me, and nearly burned right thru me.

Worse still, the Colonel's minute visual inspection of my naked form caused me to become even more distinctly excited. And much to my shame, gentle reader, I squeezed my thighs together as I squirmed before him, like the randy slave wench my sign proclaimed me to be!

The Colonel took a newspaper off the table next to him, and began to read. Each page was densely packed with news, announcements, advertisements, and assorted trivia. At the conclusion of reading a particular item, he would look up at me, as if remembering I was there, and I would squirm in embarrassment.

The Colonel would smile, and move onto the next story.

For nearly an hour he sat in his chair, quietly puffing his pipe as he alternately read his paper and ogled my naked form. It pleased him when I shifted my weight for it caused

my breasts and bottom to jiggle. Soon I found myself doing it simply to attract his attention, when I felt he was tarrying on a story longer than I liked.

As a bonus, each shift gave me an excuse to squeeze my thighs together, which made my nipples a little harder and my sex a little wetter. Oh, how dreadful it was!

The Colonel turned the page and frowned. Something displeased him. Was it a news article? A cartoon? The weather? I did not know. I was a slave girl, and my master was displeased. That was all I needed to know.

I squeezed my thighs together and sighed, and the Colonel looked up at me. I do not know if the Colonel saw my excitement, or cared. His drunken smile may have been fueled by satisfaction, lust, ironic amusement, or some combination of the three. I know only that I felt deeply, shamefully aroused and I understood for the first time precisely what it meant to be a slave.

The Colonel showed great interest in each article, and the time between page turns was eternal. When I saw him return to the front page, to re-read an article that had apparently gave him great pleasure, I could bear it no more. Awash in shame I blurted out my horrible confession.

"Emily was right. I have black blood. I'm certain of it. I am an quadroon slave girl."

I had expected him to dispute my findings, or agree with them, or perhaps try to comfort me in some way, or at least acknowledge the gravity of the moment. Instead he simply smiled at me, as if I had told him that Natchez was hot in July. Then he resumed reading.

"Didn't you hear me?" I demanded. "I said I'm a quadroon."

The Colonel did not even bother to look up from his paper. "Yes, which is why your registration papers are sitting on the registrar's desk. When he applies his seal tomorrow, I will be free to bed you, brand you, breed you, or barter you, as I see fit. You will be a slave here, on my plantation, and, as this newspaper now informs me, even in the great state of Massahchusetts."

My heart sank. The Fugitive Slave Act was law! I was doomed.

The Colonel's smile broadened as tears of anguish and despair rolled down my cheeks. The Colonel said nothing, preferring simply to sit back and enjoy the show. But the twinkle in his eye spoke volumes.

After a while he moved his chair slightly, so that he could enjoy the reflection of my bottom in the mirror behind me. I have always thought my bottom to be one of my best features, full and firm and round, and it was obvious from the Colonel's attention to this portion of my anatomy that he shared my admiration.

I could tell the other girls were jealous, for although the Colonel had looked at all of us it was clear that I was his favorite. I felt a strange sort of pride wash over me, but that pride turned to horror as the Colonel got out of his chair, and toddled towards me.

"The registrar is coming tomorrow, Elizabeth. I'll watch as he takes you out into the yard, and races you thru the mud, and makes you run and jump, to see how fit you are. I'm sure the other slaves will enjoy watching you, particularly those randy black studs. Does that excite you?"

"What time is he coming?" I asked nervously.

The Colonel responded with a drunken chuckle. "Slave wenches have no need of clocks. You'll be in your proper place, no matter when we choose to come. Did you enjoy yourself at the ball, Elizabeth? Did you enjoy insulting my guests? Your Aunt planned that party for months, and you disgraced us both. You're a wicked, wicked, girl Elizabeth, and you deserve to be punished. And punished you shall be."

I stiffened as I felt his cold hand on my back. His fingers began to trail down the curve of my back following the line of my backbone and despite myself I trembled with excitement.

It was completely improper for him to be so familiar with any lady who was not his wife but as far as everyone here was concerned I was no lady. I was nothing more than his wife's slave and if he decided he wanted to take me then and there like one of his concubines I knew not a soul present would raise a hand to stop him.

His hand slowed as it reached the base of my spine but did not stop. It continued on brushing over my naked bottom cheeks. 'Soft as down, round as a pillow, perfectly upholstered' was how my maid had once described my bottom. From the time the Colonel's fingers lingered there it seemed clear that he agreed with the assessment.

"You have a lovely posterior, Elizabeth, but it would be lovelier still if it bore my mark. If I decide to sell you, the blacksmith will honor your posterior with the Rand Star."

The Colonel reached into his pocket, and produced two small metal objects which he held up for my inspection: a typeset engraver's mark of a tiny backward R, and another of a five point star. I watched him press the letter against a small pad of ink he had in his pocket, and looked over my shoulder as he moved behind me.

I was puzzled as to why he would be showing me letters off a printing press, but my confusion turned to horror as I felt the cold metallic letter press against my bottom. Looking in the mirror I could see the "R" of my shameful brand directly on the middle of my naked right bottom cheek. I realized to my horror he was marking my bottom to show the blacksmith where the real mark would go, and using the unheated branding head to test his aim.

The process was repeated with each stars, as the Colonel casually explained his preferences. "I have a friend, a Mr. Watcher, who likes to shave his girls, and place his brand directly on their mounds. A sound strategy, for when he loans you to his friends, as doubtlessly he will, they will know precisely who owns the sweetest and most valuable portion of your anatomy. If he buys you, you will bear his brand as well."

"Are you going to...sell me to him? You can't! You promised..."

"You want me to keep my word, then?" the Colonel said, slurring his words.

"Yes," I said emphatically.

"When you told me your plan, did I explicitly promise not to sell you?" he asked.

"No," I admitted. "But I thought..."

"However I did promise you that you would not be in charge, and I would handle you as I saw fit, did I not?"

"Yes," conceded. "But..."

"I did not promise Cochran that I would sell you, but I did assure him I would consider the matter after reviewing the bids, if you fetched a fair price. I was joking, of course, but your Boston schoolmarm scold that a man should always keep his word rings true to me."

I had seen this trick in court; father hanging a man with his own words. I stood on the block with a rope around my neck, waiting for the trap to spring.

"Do you think I should decide to sell you in haste, after I have been drinking, or should I give the matter careful, fair, and honest consideration?"

"Careful consideration, sir," I said. I knew the gallows was about to collapse beneath me, but what else could I say?

"Since you think a man should always keep his word, and give every matter before him fair and honest consideration, what do you think I should do?"

What choice did I have? Standing naked before him, shamed and humiliated beyond words, I let the trap spring. "You should decide on Sunday whether you wish to sell me, Colonel, but only after giving all of the offers fair and honest consideration."

I was hung! His work complete the Colonel looked up at me with the satisfaction of a job well done. "I said I would consider selling you if I received a fair price, and I suspect a pretty, naked quadroon who has insulted every man in town will attract many fair offers. Do you not agree?"

I stared at him, aghast!

"I suspect when word gets out of your presence here, everyman in town is going to want to have a look at you, and place a bid. On Sunday, I will review their offers, and after due consideration decide whether your name going forward will be Elizabeth, or Peaches. Perform well for the buyers, Elizabeth. One of them may soon be your new master."

The Colonel flashed me a devilish grin, and I knew that once again he did not intend to sell me, but he did intend to keep the possibility open for as long as possible, to punish me, and for the sheer pleasure he took in watching me squirm. I responded precisely as he wished me to, for as I watched my whistling master stumble for the door I gasped for air, my heart pounding like a drum!

The Colonel had left the two tiny branding heads on the ledge of my marble display block, where they could presumably be retrieved for later use. The heads seemed tiny and delicate. But I knew that red hot, and pressed against my bottom, they would feel very large indeed.

I looked at the fireplace, and wondered if the irons would be heated using the logs that burned before me now.

As I looked over my shoulder at my ink "brand" I noticed several of my jealous neighbors smiling at my distress. To be precise the girls who were already branded smiled; those who were not yet branded seemed to share my anguish.

At the doorway the Colonel paused, and had a brief conversation with a man entering the room. I did not recognize the man, at least at first, although I did hear the Colonel say something about "the tawny wench at the end."

I did not recognize the man until he drew closer, but it was clear from the expression on his face that he recognized me.

Then with growing horror I put a name to that face that bore that slick hair. I did not know is full name only that my uncle had addressed him as Jaques. How could I not have recognized him, I do not know. In my defense I had met a great many new faces in recent times and the thought that my uncle might see me branded had quite distracted me.

A wicked grin spread across his face at the sight of me and he all but ignored the other women standing beside me as he strode towards me. Only Irish Rose warrented a moment's hesitation but then his hot gaze returned to my naked form and even the red head's pale beauty could not hold his attention.

"So you're not a fancy girl," he said in a French drawl throwing back my statement to him when he had first laid hands on me. As with the Colonel he took his time running his gaze up and down my body, noting every feature. A low whistle sounded from his lips as he circled behind me and he caught sight of where my uncle had marked my bottom.

"You look fancy enough to me," he muttered. "Ripe and ready for the iron."

No sooner had the words been uttered that I felt his hands upon my bottom. This was no gentle caress as between lovers. It was not even the way a buyer might examine a mare he was considering for purchase. Instead his fingers dug into the soft flesh of my bottom, pinching and twisting my flesh. Such was the force of his touch that I felt my balance waver and it was all I could do not to stumble forward and fall from my pedicel.

"Good hind quarters," he remarked as if discussing some horse he was contemplating putting a bid on, yet I was sure his words were meant for my ears. For the moment he was alone in inspecting me and there were no fellow prospective bidders for him to be comparing notes to.

"They should take any whipping her master might care to give."

Then his inspection brought him around before me and any doubt I might have had as to his intent was gone. Perhaps he intended to bid or perhaps not but surely he did not intend to let the opportunity to humiliate the woman who had dared to slap him pass.

"Passable udders," he mused and then glanced down the line at the other girls on display. "But I have seen better."

I felt a flush gather in my face at this remark and this shocked me the most. What did I care for this vile little man's opinion? At the ball I had dismissed him with a flick of my wrist and a quick comment that told all present what I thought of the fellow. Yet I had been Elizabeth Parker then, and I enjoyed all the protection afforded to a lady of my station. Now I was Peaches, stripped of all rank and dignity not to mention of modesty. I was now the naked slave girl and this wretch might well prove to be my new owner if my uncle carried through with his idle threat to sell me if the offer was to his liking.

Taking a deep breath to steady my nerves I reminded myself that my uncle would never sell me. This was a game between us, a way that he could teach me the lesson he believed I needed and for me a way to learn firsthand the retched conditions inflicted on these poor slaves. Yet I could not shake off the lingering doubt. Had my Grandmother been a slave? Was I truly a Quadroon slave girl?

His grin widened and it was only then that I realized that by taking such a deep breath I had caused my breasts do dance a merry jig. Did he think I was trying to make my bosom seem more impressive after his unkind words?

"I believe you said you did not want to take my hand for you knew where it had been." As he spoke he raised his right hand slowly so that there could be no doubt as to his intent.

This was too much. I moved to close my legs pressing my thighs together as tightly as I could. The very thought that he might touch me in such an intimate fashion had my

stomach rolling. Yet I could not deny the dampness that was growing between my closely clasped thighs. I could feel nothing but revulsion that this man might fondle me yet at the same time it filled me with a terrible excitement that I had never felt with such intensity even when my beloved David had stroked my arm or recited his poems as he gazed into my eyes.

Elizabeth was a good upright woman, she could not flaunt herself so. Yet Peaches was a slave, to be displayed to the satisfaction of her master so that she might better fetch a good price and add to her master's pocket book. A slave did as she was bid and if that command was to spread her legs and allow a crude rough cad's like Jacques to amuse himself she had no reason for shame. She was bound to obey and if she found pleasure in that obedience where was the fault in that. She did but follow the law and standard of society that bound her to unquestioning obedience.

"Let's have none of that." From the grin on his face Jacques seemed more amused rather than angry at my defiance. Then I saw him move to one of the tables and my eyes widened in alarm as I saw him pick up the riding crop that I had observed earlier.

Surely he would not.... I began to think but before the thought could fully form in my mind, his wrist flicked out and the crop landed with a dull whack across my thighs, just below my secret place.

Never in all my eighteen years had either my father or mother had occasion to raise a switch to me for I was ever a dutiful child. So it is fair to say that even though my inexperienced eyes could see that he did not strike with the full force of his arm, it was enough to pull a cry of pain from my lips as tears quickly blurred my vision. A second blow came in quick succession, just below the first.

Even as the second cry of pain echoed through the room I moved to part my legs as far as the small pedicel would allow. Casting my gaze down I could see two thin red lines beginning to form across my thighs where the crop had fallen.

At the sight of those lines I felt my knees tremble and that warmth I had felt between my legs threatened to catch fire and engulf me in the throes of passion. It had been a mild admonishment, for I later learned that while bidders might discipline a girl they were not allowed to unduly mark her, at least until they had put down their cash on the barrel head. The marks would fade in a few hours, there might no sign at all of them by Sunday yet for the moment they were there, plain to see.

I had been whipped! Peaches the slave girl had displeased a potential master and she had been whipped. Even after he finally left me any of the others who came to observe me would see that I was a disobedient slave who had need of the whip to keep her in line. Would that drive down the price that might be offered for me or might the signs of my brief trashing enflame their passions. How often had I written of the base lusts of masters being aroused by the sight of a slave girl receiving the lash?

With the passage to my secret place open he tucked the crop under one arm and the very same hand he had used to explore the first girl I had first witnessed in this room so many days past dipped between my legs.

I feared that he might be rough as with his attention to my bottom but his fingers were if not gentle in their ministrations neither were they overly harsh. Back and forth he rubbed his hand pressing firmly against the lips of my sex and the heat I had spoken of earlier began to grow and grow.

As if sensing my arousal he drew back his hand and before I could stop myself I protested. Surely he could not leave me in such a state. Holding up his hand I could see that his fingers were glistening with my body's juices. Then as if my naked flesh was no more than some towel he took his time and deliberately wiped his digits across my belly leaving behind a trail of my excretions.

Dimly I was aware that others had entered the room but my attentions were quickly drawn back to Jaques for I had been wrong to misjudge him. He did not intend to leave me hanging so to speak.

At the sight of the crop being unfurled again I felt some degree of panic. Was I to be whipped again? Had I not pleased my potential master to his satisfaction? Then I realized that he had another purpose for the crop.

The touch of the cool leather brushing at the lips of my sex brought a gasp from me and some primal instinct guided me to clamp the muscles of my thighs together as best I could with my legs apart. Yet it was not with the intent that I might make some last effort to shield my modesty from this French fop, rather it was that I might grip the crop all the tighter as it moved between my legs.

I cannot describe the emotions that overcame me. His fingers had been warm to the touch, soft even but the leather of the crop was so delightfully cool and rigid but not without some measure of flexibility. Elizabeth Parker would have cried out in shame and sought the aid of any decent gentleman near at hand to come to her aid so that her natural dignity might be preserved. Peaches the slave girl ground her hips back and forth, back and forth so that Jaques had scarcely to move the crop at all.

The heat that had been gathering between my legs since I had first mounted this platform grew to a fever pitch and closing my eyes I arched my back as far as nature would allow, thrusting my breasts forward and my hips rode that rod over and over.

Even though I had clamped my teeth together a groan slipped from my mouth as that heat broke and a wave of pleasure the likes of which I had never known before washed over me.

For some time I was lost to the world as I basked in the warm glow of ecstasy that had set my blood racing. My feeble fumbling at night could not compare to this, no this was something far greater and like a thirsting man given a few drops of water and desiring more no sooner did the pleasure begin to wane than I felt a deep need for more of the same.

The applause drew me back to the room and my eyes snapped open. I realized that he room was no longer quite so empty as I had remembered. Dimly I recalled from the corner of my eye catching sight of other men arriving. Caught up in the moment I had barely registered their presence but now I was all too aware of them gazing upon me.

Jaques stepped back from the pedicel and held up the crop as if it was a baton awarded to some conquering Roman general recently returned from the battlefield. My juices were plain to see on the leather, the small flap or tongue at the end positively shone to say nothing of the rod itself.

"You see mon ami," he proclaimed still holding the crop up for all gathered to see. "Even if she has spent all her life passing her hot African blood cannot but respond to the whip."

I could only stare in disbelief at the crop. As my ardor cooled rational thought returned but I could not credit what had happened. I had stood there, naked before this rogue but instead of showing the shame any decent woman would, being displayed so, I reveled in my nakedness, flaunting my body. Worse I had ridden that crop like a mare in heat anxious for the attentions of a stallion.

How could this have happened? As I desperately tried to make sense of what had just occurred I could come to only one frightening conclusion. Had that viper Emily Davis been correct all along? Were my deepest darkest fears true? Was I in truth a slave girl who bucked in heat at the slightest whim of her master? Was this no longer a game so that I might retail my abolitionist friends back in Boston of southern barbarity?

Thank the heavens that the Colonel had not been there to behold such a wanton display. If he had seen, oh I did not think I could endure the shame. Then a realization struck me. Men are such terrible gossips as they smoke their cigars and slip their whiskey or brandy. Might the tale of how I had shamed myself yet find its way to my uncle's ear?

A Southern gentleman true and true I depended on his honor that he would not sell me. I know that he might tease and hint and he would see me shamed, stripped and displayed but never sold. It was to be our secret and I had been confident that he would see that the error of my registration would be erased before he set me on the train to return to the north.

Yet if he no longer beheld his niece Elizabeth but slave girl Peaches, her hot blood so easily enflamed where then would his honor and duty lead him? Might he not find it more proper and correct that Peaches should be sold to a master that could properly discipline her and take his pleasure from her?

Such thoughts filled me with a cool dread, enough that I felt the fine hairs on my arms stand up stiff. Yet at the same time as my heart pounded in my chest and I bit my lip there was no denying the wet excitement I could feel stirring between my legs. To be a slave girl in truth. How dreadful, how wicked.

Such terrible conflicting thoughts are no so easily shaken off but no sooner that Jaques departed , leaving the still glistening crop where it was readily available that other men of note began to make their way up and down the row of pedicles.

How men can call themselves gentlemen while displaying such callous indifference to the suffering of their fellow humans remains a mystery to me yet these fellows appeared to have no difficulty in remaining unmoved by what they say before them.

This is perhaps not entirely true for as they regarded me and the other slaves on display I was careful to study them. I dare not look them in the eye of course. Even after but a few hours in the parlor I knew that such an act would be taken as a sign that I was uppity, perhaps still passing for white. If these brutes needed an excuse to inflict further stripes on my poor naked flesh surely this would be cause.

Yet I did not need to meet their gaze or look in their eyes to gauge their reactions. In fact one hardly needed to look above the waist. As the day progressed and I grew more skilled in my observations I discovered that I could read the interest of a man in a particular slave simply by the bulge in his breaches.

It was with some relief that none were quite so forward as Jaques. That is not to say that I was ignored or simply observed. Over and over I had the feel of soft hands that had never done an honest day's labor in their lives run up and down my legs, over my arms. Between my legs received much attention but they seemed content to poke and prod.

Of course none spoke to me, at least not directly and I cannot do justice to the feelings that ran through me as they bent to examine my papers. Where I not a living breathing human being capable of speech? With Jaques at least I could understand. He had encountered me before and knew something of where I hailed from, what were my accomplishments but most of these fellows were strangers to me yet all took no time to address me where as each bent to look closely at the sign that gave my slave name and status.

It goes without saying that more than one eye brightened when they beheld the word 'virgin'. And no sooner would they see they word that they would have to test the veracity of the claim. Over and over I was ordered to widen my legs and they would grow angry when I could not open my thighs to their satisfaction. None appeared to care that the fault was not with me for the viewing stand was limited in the space it afforded me. A few not content would have me turn around and bend over double as if this provided them was a better view. One man who I thought might bite straight through the cigar he was smoking such was the pressure of his jaws on it even went so far as commanded that I grip the lips of my sex and hold them apart so that my inspection could be all the more thorough.

To think that I might aid and abet my own degradation was a troubling thought. Yet was I not an accomplice to the very system I decried? And again I felt that strange dark passion that Jaques and the crop had evoked still as I moved to obey.

As the day progressed I caught glimpses of faces half familiar from my time either in town or at the ball. Of course as soon as they saw and recognized me a wide grin of unexpected pleasure would spread across their face. A few could not contain themselves and rubbed their hands in glee before they moved to grope me to their hearts content.

It surprised me how it was that some took some time to recognize me. I had been the very center of attention at the ball. My dance card had been overflowing that night and whenever I left the floor they followed me like a pack of lost puppy dogs yet some saw me and a few minutes might pass before they would give a start and recognition would spread across their features.

I had begun to wonder if my face has somehow changed. Surely it was blushing with shame and embarrassment and secret excitement but my features were as before. Then the answer came to me. At the ball I had worn the finest of dresses the most expensive of jewels. My body had been draped in fine perfume but now I was naked, forced to shift my weight from foot to foot so that the cold marble would not leach all the warmth from my bare feet. How much of our identity is tied to how we dress?

Where I dressed as I had been at the ball I am sure they would recognize me but stripped of my finery I looked no different from any of the fearful wenches who presented themselves with me today. How easy it was to reduce someone to the lowest station in life. Strip them of their garments perhaps apply a few strokes of the lash and any could be a slave irrespective of race or creed.

It was a revelation to me and even as I shuffled and bent and bared under command I stove to burn that thought indelibly into my brain. When I returned to the North and began anew the abolitionist circuit that simple truth would be the corner stone of my story.

I had thought that all who came here were filled with dark lusts but who came to sample the wares of the parlor stood out for it seemed I may have misjudged again.

It was late in the afternoon when Mr Winters appeared. Him I remembered from the ball most clearly. How could anyone forget a man who had so many gold teeth that when he smiled one might be blinded by reflected light? He had seemed to me to be one of those creatures who to compensate for some deficiency in body or character must flaunt his wealth or power. It would not have surprised me if he had caused some dentist to remove so many of his teeth simply to be afforded the chance to display so much gold.

I expected little of him and was proved correct. When he saw who it was before him his comments were as unkind and crude as any I had heard that day. At his side with what appeared to be some reluctance was his son, William, the young man with the stutter.

I had not been kind to the young man at the ball and I expected now that my mockery would be hurled back in my face with interest. Yet William did not reply at first to his father's jibes and comments on how much Irish Rose was prettier than I, how much fairer

her skin was or how finer her mane of blazing red hair was that my own tan complexion and raven locks. When he did look up at me he glanced but briefly at my body so readily displayed and when his gaze came to rest on my face I beheld on sympathy in his expression.

“Sh.... s she should no.... noo.... not be there,” he protested to his father but softly so that his voice would not carry. I had cared little for the fellow at the ball but how things had changed in so short a time.

“Why ever not son, she is a fancy girl, a mare hot to trot”, the father laughed. “Look at the way she is juicing herself.”

Again I felt that mix of shame and wanton excitement. He was correct in his assessment. The fluids from Jaques hand were still spread across my body, only they had dried now and however much I might have wished to protest my treatment I could not argue that my thighs were not slick and damp with my body’s secret nectar.

“It....it.... its not proper,” the son declared and I could tell how much getting out a simple sentence in defiance of the stutter cost him. “None Of its....ri....right.” From the way he gestured to the row of slaves on display I could tell that he was not just referring to me but to all the poor women here.

A dark angry look flashed across Mr Winter’s face and his mouth opened as if to reproach the boy but then he took in the other men in the room. None had noticed what was transpiring but I judged that Mr Winter did not care to risk a scene before his fellows and he shot me an angry look as if the fault lay with me before he took his son by the arm and all but hauled him from the parlor.

I had viewed William as the least among the men who had presented themselves at the ball, young, shy and hindered with a stammer it had seemed to me that he would never amount to much. Yet as I watched him leave I felt such respect for the boy. Truly I had been mistaken. Of all the man at that ball, he had the greatest claim to the title of Gentleman.

Minutes passed and then another man appeared. He was think almost reedy and while his coat was of good quality he seemed more plainly dressed than some of the great planters who had graced the room. Whereas others had spent most of their time and focus on the area between my legs this man was more equal in his appraisal. He commenced at my toes and worked his way up feeling every tendon and muscle in my calms and thighs. My sex did not escape his attention but whereas most stopped once they had uncovered that treasure to their satisfaction he did not move on to the next girl that had caught his interest. My ribs were probed and when the height of my pedicle made it awkward for his to reach higher I was bid to kneel.

Once lowered the inspection continued. Each of my breasts were cupped in his hands one by one and I had the distinct impression that he was weighing them. I was even

ordered to open my mouth and press out my tongue as far as it would go. The man nearly prized my jaws apart entirely such with the intensity of his scrutiny.

Yet there was no lust in this man, either in his breaches or the way he held me. My stomach had rolled at the way some of these so called Southern Cavaliers had touched me so intimately but the impersonal nature of this man made my skin crawl. None of the others viewed me as a woman to be respected they saw only a creature that they could slake their base lusts with but there was not even this from this creature that resembled a man. It was as if he was at a horse mart and inspecting a mare he was considering putting a bid on.

Finally he finished his impersonal but thorough inspection and then to my great surprise he took a pencil from his pocket and began to mark notes on a piece of paper he unfolded from another pocket. I might not have existed at all for the only time he glanced back in my direction was to look at the papers that gave my name and particulars. Then with his notes taken he moved on to Irish Rose.

That most peculiar man was just about finishing at the end of the row when the clock began to chime and I saw my uncle returning with Mr. Cochran in tow. I could hardly believe that it was evening for I had lost track of time. It would be wrong to say that the day had passed in moments for I felt every second as if it were an year. Every indignity inflicted had to my mind gone on for an eternity until my humiliation was as hot as the southern son at midday. Yet after a time one event blurred into another and I had half convinced myself that the day would never end.

The colonel caught sight of the strange man who had been so business like in his inspection and his eyebrow rose for a moment. Then his lips curled up into an amused grin as he neared me.

"Well now, Peaches did you impress Mr Gibson?" With a nod to his head he gestured to the strange fellow who was leaving with the rest of the men. No sooner had the viewers departed that some of Mr Cochran's men were coming in to take the other girls away.

My uncle saw my confusion and this appeared to fuel his merriment even further. It was on the tip of my tongue to demand an answer but the day's events had taught me well. Elizabeth would have made haughty demands but Jaques had not been the only man to raise the crop to her, though most seemed to prefer the use of their hands to the seat or the inner thighs.

"She is not so forward now, Colonel," Cochrane assured him with the satisfied contentment of a man who had seen a job well done.

"So I see," the Colonel nodded as he traced his finger across several of the stripes that now adorned my thighs. He did not look displeased at the sight, for he knew that the admonishments I had received were mild and would fade quickly. Yet still he took his

time and I gasped when the back of his hand brushed against my curls when his fingers followed the top most welt.

Then he could not bear my ignorance any further. Looking straight into my eyes so that he could see my reaction he explained. "Mr Gibson is an agent for one of the largest brothels in New Orleans."

For a moment he stared at me weighting my reaction, basking in my mortification and sudden fear and then he turned to Mr Cochran. "I will be interested to see what bid Mr Gibson leaves,"

Even if I had dared speech I fear none could adequately convey my horror at what the Colonel was suggesting. Was it bad enough that a girl could be stripped of all rights and forced to please her master in whatever manner he might demand? Perhaps the slave would be given as a gift to a loyal servant for good service but to be sold to a brothel keeper.

Even in Boston we had heard of the great southern Babylon as it was called. Why it was common knowledge that the after income from its port the city authorities next largest income was from the fines levied on its women of the town. Prostitution was rampant.

A myriad of images flashed through my mind until my breasts were all but bouncing up and down so fast were my shallow gasps for air. I was yet a maiden, for while I had enjoyed David's caressed and we had kissed he was far too gentle a soul to force himself upon me until we were bound in wedlock.

What would happen if this Mr Gibson put down an offer on my body, an offer too high for my uncle to ignore? I could see myself dragged away from Forks, weeping and begging not to be forced to go.

How long might a girl such as myself expect to last in such a house of ill repute? Would I spend the days on my knees scrubbing floors and doing the laundry only to be crudely scrubbed down so that I would be fit to receive and then I would spend the evening and late into the night on my back with my legs parted to whatever man who had the coin to pay for my company?

Perhaps I might not be forced to labor for that might damage the goods so to speak. With a sinking heart I realized that I might welcome being worked to the bone like some dull drudge for if I were not I would be expected to earn my keep entertaining day and night.

My maidenhood would be a prize to be sold off for the highest bidder but once that was gone I would be but another slave whore. In the Abolitionist society we have learned that some men became aroused only when they had a whip in their hands and had left some poor woman stripped and stripped. There were some brothels that tailored for those of that bent. Who better to employ there to receive the crop and the horse whip night after night than a slave, a pretty quadroon slave girl?

It was all becoming apparent to me now. I was sure that the brothel keeper would take great pleasure in making my past known. Peaches who had once fancied herself as a white, a belle of the ball, passing for years in high society in Boston. With the growing friction between the north and the south I was not hard to imagine that there were southern gentlemen who would be more than willing to ease their frustrations and hatred of the north on Peaches who after she had been humbled by the whip would be so very eager to please lest the whip find its way to her flesh once more.

No, I knew that I could not bear such a life. Yet what choice would I have. I could not take my own life for the preachers said there was no greater sin and I could not run, not deep in the south. Even if I did somehow manage to escape, that twice damn Fugitive Slave Act would require my other father to clap me in irons and see me returned to my rightful owner.

How might I avoid such a fate? There seemed to me to be only one possible way. I would be compelled to throw myself on my knees before the first gentlemen of means that I could see. There I would abase myself, perhaps thrusting forth my breasts while I rubbed between my legs so that he could see I was a hot juicy wench ready to serve. I would beg and plead that he buy me so that I might escape the brothel.

Of course such a man might require a sample before he could be moved to part with his coin. My maidenhood would be sacrosanct but there were other orifices top and bottom in which a woman might strive to please a man. What if he was a true cad, who took his pleasure from me in the street and then having slaked his lust he might laugh to his fellows and say. "A fine rine to be sure but hardly worth the price of buying her." And then with his seed still wed upon my flesh I might be hauled away.

Tears began to form in my eyes as my mind conjured one lurid scenario after another. Yet my body continued to betray me. Such was the wetness between my thighs that I feared I would soon resemble a fountain from which hot honey gushed forth.

Then finally I saw that my fears were foolish for perhaps sensing that my distress had grown beyond what he had hoped for the Colonel took pity on my poor fevered imagination and winked in a reassuring way.

He had been jesting. Oh the beast, how could he do such a thing to me? I wanted to snatch up that crop and strike him across his face but I knew that I dare not. Why I was his wife's slave. By marriage he possessed all that she possessed therefore I was his. A master might have a slave who strung him up hung on the spot if he so desired. Or he might change his mind and see me sold to the brothel in a moment of spite.

Yet there was no denying the wicked excitement I still felt. How could one feel such abhorrence for a thing and at the same time be so aroused by it? This I could not understand.

In short order I was taken down from the viewing pedicle that had been my home for the day and through a series of side rooms far less ornate than the parlor. When I was forced outside through the courtyard my blood nearly froze in my veins. It was one thing to be naked and displayed in the intimacy of the parlor but to be marched bare arsed in the open was another thing entirely. With some relief I realized that it had grown dark with dusk and there were few about. Those that were to be seen were going about their duties and seemed to be men employed in the market. The ladies and gentlemen of quality had of course retired to dine, perhaps to go to the theater or attend some ball or party. The fellows that I could see paid little heed to my passage for it seemed that the sight of naked female flesh even pale skin such as my own was not so rare as to draw comment or attention.

The thought of how, were I still Elizabeth, I would be now dining was enough to make my empty stomach groan. Just yesterday I had been at my uncle's plantation seated at his table as the house slaves waited upon us. We had barely lift a finger for the slaves were there to fetch the next dish from the kitchen while other would quickly clean away our plates as we moved on to the next course. Fine wine would be flowing and if anything was needed, a simply crook of a finger would have a house slave by her side in a second to see to her wants.

Now her stomach was empty for she had received no food, no rations of any sort since her arrival. And that was not the only need she had. More and more the pressure of her bladder was making itself felt yet she saw no privy in sight.

"Please Uncle," I began almost by instinct and immediately I realized my error as both men glared at me with hard expression.

Immediately I bowed my head trying my best to look the very image of the humble contrite slave girl. It was troubling how easily that pose came to me.

"Please massah," I began doing my best to mimic the speech of the slaves I had seen, slaves who had called me 'Missus' less than a day ago. "I'm so hungry and I need the privy,"

My cheeks must have been bright red as I kept my eyes on the muddy ground ahead but I could not hold back much longer. Whatever shame I might feel at having to explain the most intimate demands of my body to a man not a doctor, those selfsame needs had to be met, and soon.

I saw Mr Cochrain exchange a look with the Colonel who immediately drew himself up to his full height as if expecting an assault on his pocket book if not his person. "You'll not be charging me for rations for this slave. Why there is plenty of meat on her bones yet. Let her be fed when she had begun to earn her keep,"

"Please massah," I begged with some considerable sincerity. "Please massah, I'm so hungry. I will work hard and earn my keep, I promise."

Again another aspect of my condition struck home. All my life I had wanted for nothing, not dress, no perfume not even a pony as a girl. Certainly I had never known hunger. To stand with a cramping empty stomach and not know when I would receive any food was a new and most unwelcome experience. Yet it was one any slave would be familiar with.

It was common sense for a master to keep a slave fed so that they were fit for work but to think that even simply scraps might be a privilege not a right was alien to me. Yet I knew with some certainty that any of the other slaves here knew too well the pangs of hunger.

With some relief I saw that my plea had moved the Colonel, or perhaps he was pleased that I had fallen into the role and speech of Peaches so well. With a start I realized that I had made no effort to cover either my breasts or between my legs since I had been taken from the parlor. Such quaint notions that a slave might possess modesty had been well and truly driven from me today.

After dipping his hand into a pocket of his waist coat the Colonel took out a few small coins and with a sigh handed them over. In the poor light I could not see the exact but it seemed to me to be a very small sum. Surely far too small an amount to provide me with a meal today and three tomorrow not to mention Sunday.

It seemed that Mr Cochran had the same observation but before he could speak the Colonel added "See to it that she is fed and watered tomorrow and as for Sunday if I sell her, let the expense of feeding her fall to her new owner."

I could not help casting an imploring look in his direction but it was clear that I was to receive no more mercy. Rumble and cramp as my stomach might, I would have to endure this evening as best I could.

"And the privy massah?" I hated to have to raise that most sensitive of topics again but my need had not gone away. If anything it had grown more incessant.

"Well," the Colonel demanded. "What is keeping you?" As he spoke he gestured to the dried mud and stone of the yard. In particular I could see where some horse had left its droppings. The wheels of a passing cart had flattened the leaving into the ground. I shuddered to think if the mud that was by now cracking my bare feet was no more than dirt.

Never before did I find myself missing the lost privilege of shoes as much as now. But of course only a house slave might expect such a great gift from her master as footwear and even then some owners reserved such finery as plain leather shoes as a reward to a favored slave.

It had been one of the first things I had commented on when I had arrived here. The Colonel had dismissed my concerns with a laugh. "Slaves have no call for shoes, it only makes them uppity and they won't get as far if they try to run away barefoot."

It took a moment for comprehension to sink in but then I realized that he intended to take full advantage of our arrangement. I would be spared no humiliation due to a slave he was displeased with. From the bored indifference on Mr. Cochraine's face he saw nothing out of the ordinary or unreasonable with the Colonel's expectations.

There was nothing to be done, I could not hold by the demands of my bladder any longer and I should have realized that a slave such as I could never expect to be allowed to use a privy. Those were reserved for ladies and gentlemen, certainly not for the likes of Peaches who was so uppity she had dared pass as a lady.

I closed my eyes for I could not bear to see them watching me as I relieved myself. If there was any mercy it was that I had but to urinate. I did not want to think what would occur when I required a bowel movement. It should have felt so heavenly to let that pressure in my bladder abate but how could I feel any hint of pleasure knowing that I was pissing into the ground before my Uncle and Mr Cochraine.

At last it was done and I all but bounded on the balls of my feet in my eagerness to be off and away from the scene of my shame.

"And where do you think you are off to?" the Colonel demanded.

He paused and waited for a reply but I could only shake my head in total bewilderment. I could not fathom what he meant?

He pointed to the muddy ground where I could see some vapor rising from the cool earth where my urine had soaked the ground. "Rub it into the ground. I for one do not relish having some slave piss sticking to the heel of my boot."

My mouth fell open. Sticking to the heel of his boot? There was a whole yard he could walk around. And in any event thought I did not want to think about it more than necessary I felt a growing certainty that the muddy soil here had been fertilized by both slave and beast countless times. Why in the distance I could see pens for slaves were not the only livestock brought here to be sold.

"Be about it," he snapped "Before I decide you should lick it clean."

There was nothing to be gained by arguing for I felt certain that while he might jest about my sale after the difficulties I had caused to both the Colonel and my Great Aunt he was fully prepared to carry through on less permanent threats.

Again I was forced to close my eyes and I began to press my bare feet into the soil and muck still wet from my piss. Like a mason spreading mortar I did my best to spread other dirt and soil over the damp patch. I could not bring myself to use my hands for they at least remained clean. To use my bare dainty feet, was bad enough and I quickly felt fresh damp dirt begin to cling to the soles of my feet and to my ankles.

A good five minutes must have passed as I worked. What would any of the women I had insulted at the ball have thought if they could see me now? Naked and shuffling like some peasant girl pressing wine grapes except this was no fine vintage in the making that I was forced to press down on. Not it was a far more common blend of slave piss with a few tears added for good measure.

At last the two men who now controlled my fate judged that my efforts were sufficient and I was allowed to move on to what looked very much like some stable or barn. With a shiver I saw that there was a forge nearby and even in the fading light I could not miss the sight of row upon row of branding irons neatly stacked and waiting for use. Nearby there were every type and size of shackle and chain not to mention collars but it was to the branding irons that my eyes kept returning like a lodestone to iron.

The forge was silent with just a few embers from the day's work still glowing in the dusk. Before I knew it I found myself pressing one of my hands against my bare bottom, where the Colonel had impressed the ink marks earlier.

With some effort I forced myself to look away. I did not have to fear the branding iron for registration would take place before a sale but the branding would only occur after a sale had completed. Come Sunday at noon my time here would be over and I would return to my old life and its dull safety. I could not help but grimace in empathy. I might not be standing here on Sunday afternoon but how many of the other girls who had stood beside me today would find themselves here? Would Irish Rose have her fair skin further marked?

Then I saw the purpose of why I had been brought to the barn and despite my best efforts not to show fear I immediately took a step back and then another and would have taken a third were it not the fact that I found that two of Mr. Cochrane's men had taken up position behind me unnoticed and before I could stop them both had a grip on my arms and were dragging me forward.

It resembled something akin to a saw horse with two diagonal legs arching up to an apex on either side and joined by a horizontal bar of worn aged wood. Yet this contraption had a weight about it more than just the bulk of its thick beams. Any fool could see that this was no carpenter's tool, not with the leather straps fixed to each of the four legs.

And then there was the center of the horizontal beam. It appeared to me to be far more smooth and worn than other parts of the timber frame and as I was drawn forward and bent over I was quick to put the pieces together and understand why this particular part should be so smooth.

It was the very spot that my hips pressed against it before I was drawn over and bent double as my wrists were fixed to the leather cuffs at the base of the legs. Then as soon as my wrists were secured my ankles were drawn apart and likewise bound to the second set of straps.

It was not a kindness that had made the owners of the market sand down this part of the frame but rather the countless passage of slaves bent for chastisement. How many nubile bodies had graced this very spot before me? I could not guess the numbers but they were enough for their hips and their bellies to have worn smooth this part of the horse.

A hand clamped around my hair that had spilled over my face and using that as an anchor my head was drawn back until I feared my back would break. They did not hold me there long, just long enough to fix a leather bit between my teeth, long enough to fasten it in place by means of two straps that buckled tight behind my head. Only then was the pressure of my back released and once again my head dangled above the ground.

My immediate reaction was to try to force the dreadful thing from my mouth even though I knew it was impossible. It had the most foul of tastes, of ancient leather and slave saliva with some other bitter liquid mixed into a soup of misery and despair. I could feel where previous owners had dug down with sufficient force to nick the leather. And the way it pressed down on my tongue did not silence me but I knew that intelligent speech was now impossible now. They had reduced me to the level of a dumb beast, a beast with its cheeks pulled back into a mockery of a grin.

"About time this filly knew the bridle," the Colonel commented as if he was making casual conversation to Mr Cochraine "She has been far too free with her tongue."

"I thought it for the best Colonel," the slave monger replied. "If she is new to the whip I did not want her to bite off her tongue. Far less valuable that way." Then an evil grin spread across his face as he suggested "We could whip her fancy talk right out of her if you wish but she would not be fit for sale for a few weeks."

For a moment there was silence in the barn and then I saw the Colonel shake his head slowly in a negative.

Aged fingers that could belong to no other than the Colonel descended on the top of my back and then slowly began to trace the length of my spine, down my back until they came to the swell of my bottom. Then his fingers dipped further down and I clamped down on my bit.

I had known that this would be coming but that did not fully prepare me for the reality of it. The Colonel had made it clear I would be stripped of all my finery and that he would enjoy the sight. To be touched and poked by those other men had shamed me to the bone but this man, my relation by marriage had called me his niece, had sat me down at his table. And now he explored those parts of me that should be reserved for my midwife, my doctor or my husband.

"Hot to trot," he declared and I could recall that I had been describes so earlier in the day as if I was some mare eager to be ridden. When he wiped his fingers on my back I could feel the fluid left there, fluid that could have come from only one place.

"That hot African blood always tells true," Mr Cochran said.

"You are lucky you are not a runaway Peaches," the Colonel told me. "Why I would have to set the hounds after you and there is no telling what they would do to you once they caught you. They can sniff out a bitch in heat like you for miles."

Then he moved in front of me and cupped my chin so that once again I was forced to arch my back to look up at him. "You came to my home, eat at my table, accepted my hospitality but felt free enough to belittled my great state and its way of life. You intruded where you had no business going, mortified your great Aunt and shamed her before all her friends. I promised that you would be punished and I believe that you agreed that you deserved it."

He released me and looked over at Cochrane. "She may deserve to be trashed without mercy but ..." I could hear the reluctance in this voice as he added. "I but I don't want to lower her value too much with welts."

Of course he could not outright reveal their game but I had to wonder. Was there a part of him that chafed at the honour that would require that I be set free? How much of that old planter was the war hero and a man of his word and how much the planter who saw an opportunity to ensure there was one less abolitionist in the world to cause trouble for the south and its peculiar institution?

"You have my word as a gentleman," Mr Cockrane assured him. "She'll howl like a wolf and a full moon but come noon Sunday she will be fit for sale." I could see the instrument that he now held in his hand. It was dark and made from thin leather longer than my forearm but thin enough to be flexible as he draped it casually over his shoulder. Like the horse it was worn and I doubted if I was the first to feel its bite.

"Do your duty Sir. Let me hear her howl," the Colonel ordered.

And howl I did. The first blow landed with an almighty crack and I wondered if a storm had broken overhead for surely that crack could only have been lightning, then the pain hit me and she knew that the only storm was the one beginning to gather in my bottom.

Then a second stroke came, lower this time near where my bottom joined my thighs. A third quickly followed filling in the gap left by the first two strokes. Each time it felt as if someone was spraying brimstone across my bottom cheeks and I felt my arms and legs go rigid as they tugged against the bindings to no avail. In desperation I tugged again and

again at my bond, and did not care that this caused the leather to pull at the tender regions of my wrists, somehow I had to free my hands so that I might shield my bottom. Somehow.

I thought I had the full measure of the strap, had a grasp on the pain it could inflict and then it fell on an area that had already received the attention of the leather and not even the bit could fully contain my screams. My poor rear cheeks already so tender from the first stroke sent hot stinging waves of pain into my very brain when the strap revisited them

My bottom was on fire. Never in my life had I felt such pain as this and there was nothing I could do to stop it. That sense of utter helplessness stung almost as badly as the strap itself. Over and over the strap fell and each time I could not help but to jerk forward, frantic to escape, knowing with a sick certainty that there was no escape.

I was a slave now and my master had decreed that I was to be strapped. Nothing I could do would stop it until my master was satisfied that the lesson had been learned and obedience instilled. Every day countless slaves laboured under the overseers lash, much worse than this but right at that moment I did not care about their suffering. I did not care that this was apparently to be a mild strapping and that those poor unfortunates might face a far more horrific whipping such as to scar them forever. Such was my own pain that I had no room in my mind for any modicum of sympathy for any other.

Always I had always marvelled at the meekness of the majority of the slaves I had encountered. Why did they not fight back, rebel? Now at last I understood. When one was a helpless subject to the lash one did not dare think of anything that might bring the lash back for another round. All I could think of was the dreadful pain in my bottom and the overwhelming need to be so obedient that my master might never have cause to discipline me again.

Finally it was over and for several minutes I lay there bent over thrusting my now well trashed bottom into the air so that the gentlemen could admire the handiwork of Mr. Cochran. I had been left utterly drained of strength, my body was drenched in sweat and I was unsure if I would ever stop crying. What was almost as bad was the fact that the fire in my bottom seemed to have migrated to between my legs. As when I had felt the crop touch my most tender regions I was overcome by an urgent need to be touched there so that I might achieve release.

"A fine display, a fine display," the Colonel congratulated him as his assistants freed my limbs. "I can see that she is in good hands for the night. I must be on my way. As diverting as this might be I fear I am missing a good game of poker in town."

Then he lowered his voice in a conspiratorial way as he added "And I fear that if I stay seeing her like this I might be tempted to put her to stud myself."

Mr Cochran laughed at this. "A temptation I face daily. I trust that you have the means to see your needs met? If not I might be able to interest you in some nice juicy Octrone that has come up for sale, hardly used at all."

It was so wonderful to be finally reach back and cup my aching stinging buttocks with my hands thought the gesture did little to douse the fire there. I felt sure I would not be sitting comfortably for a few days. I had to see the damage and immediately looked over my shoulder and was relieved to see that the flesh peddler had been true to his word. My rounded bottom boasted a fine pink glow but it was neither black or blue and no blood had been drawn.

"My needs will be seen to, I promise you," the Colonel chuckled. "Or I will know why. All I ever have to do is hint that it might be past time some of my girls were sent to the fields and they become most attentive."

Of course I knew that the Colonel got up to in his town house but before he had never discussed it so openly. At least not in my presence but of course he would have been embarrassed to speak so before a lady. Peaches on the other hand was but a lowly slave girl freshly strapped and no doubt would count herself lucky to be chosen as a bed warmer and not sent to toil in the hot sun from dawn to dusk.

I felt an odd mix of emotions when he left. To be in this state before a man I knew so well, one I had counted as family even if by marriage was mortifying in the extreme. Yet I knew that in his company I enjoyed a certain safety for I felt certain that he would not allow any serious harm to befall me. Even as dreadful as the strap had been some of the pain was abating and there had been something almost liberating to feel so helpless so at the mercy of another. I had been free to howl and cry. Elizabeth on the other hand would have been expected to maintain her reserve, her dignity as best she could. There were no such weighty expectations on the shoulders of Peaches.

Alone with Mr. Cochran and his men felt a chill that did not come from the fact that I was naked and the sun had slipped below the horizon bringing on the chill of the night. All that stayed their hand from taking me there on the barn floor was the fact that as far as they knew they would have to compensate my master for the loss of my maidenhood. What if they judged that the prize worthy of the cost?

I had given no thought to how I was to be put up for the night. I expected perhaps some rough beds pressed together in a drafty room with little amenities. When I saw what awaited me I would have given thanks on bended knee for such a crude resting place.

This chamber was near to the barn and for that I was grateful for every step caused the muscles of my bottom to shift and their motion brought fresh tears to my eyes. As I entered the holding area for a moment my brain no longer felt any pain for it was overcome with shock.

There were no beds, no wash stands, no pitchers of water and worn blankets and moth earthen pillows. All I could see was cage upon cage, all set beside each other.

They were not even those that one might find in Sheriff's jail. Instead they were little more than a latticework of bars which formed the sides, back and roof of each cage. Then as I had time to study them further I realised there were more than I had first thought.

Mr Cochran had doubled the numbers the room could hold simply by ensuring that each cage was no taller than just above my waist. A second cage could then be set atop the first, access to these higher cages being provided by a set of wooden steps that I could see resting on an adjacent wall but which could be moved to the desired cage easily enough.

With a sweep of his hand he gestured towards one of the vacant cages. "I hope your new accommodations are up to your usual standards your ladyship," he said and I felt rough hands propel me forward.

I stumped forward banging my knees on the rough stone before I could catch myself. Almost automatically I tried to sit up and succeeded only in striking my head against the bars overhead that formed the ceiling of my cage. Then the opening was closed and locked with a clang. Who could have thought that the simple act of closing a cage door could seem so ominous?

Mr Cochran lingered for a moment, long enough to take a stick of charcoal and mark the name Peaches and the number of the cage I occupied on a small blackboard hung from the wall by the door. And then without no more thought of my plight he left.

Try as I could I could not find any way to get comfortable. I could not stand, the cage was far too small to even allow me to sit. And even if it had been my bottom protested the moment any weight was placed upon it. Nor was my cage long enough or wide enough to allow me to lie full length on my stomach. All I could do was to lie on my side with my legs curled up and my arms wrapped around my chest.

The room was quiet and dark, for the balance of the cages were unoccupied. I wondered at that for the women displayed with me could not all have been sold. The only

explanation that I could think of was that there were more than one chamber like this and perhaps the Colonel had demanded that I be confined apart from the other slaves. Perhaps he feared that I would corrupt them with my abolitionist talk if given half a chance.

It was not fair to say there was no bedding for each of the lower cages was sprinkled with rough dry straw that provided some cushion against the hard unyielding stone of the floor but even that was a mixed blessing for the rough ends of the straw dug into my naked flesh whenever I so much as twitched.

And the smell, the terrible sickly stench, no matter where I might turn I could not escape it. Looking around I desperately sought the source of this foul odour. In the poor light it was not readily apparent but then with a sick realisation I found it.

The cage above had been occupied before, I was sure of it. And the poor slave who had been so confined had been driven by the demands of her flesh to relieve herself, sending a golden stream to the straw upon which I now rested.

From the strength of the pungent aroma I felt certain that more than once this very cage had been drenched in the piss of a slave. In all likelihood dozens of... no, I corrected myself. Given the great mass of suffering slaves that passed through this haven of misery, it might well have been hundreds had crouched above me from time to time. How many of them had been unable to contain their bladder? How many had soaked this very cage with their piss?

Enough for their urine to dry and cake into the straw and the very stones of the floor itself. I did not need to ask if Mr. Cochran or his men had bothered to clean out the cages. I doubt the need would ever have occurred to them. After all it was only slaves who were forced into such cramped confinement as the cages and who cared if they had to lie in a bed of dried urine. Perhaps the straw might be cleaned out from time to time but judging the mind of Mr Cochran I suspected that the straw itself probably came from the stable when it was judged to rank and dirty for the horses.

Looking up I could see there was no such comfort in the cage overhead. Any poor creature confined there would find only the cold flat iron of the bars to rest upon. Then it struck me. Anyone in the lower cage might enjoy the meagre cover of the straw but what if a slave in the upper cage found themselves with a need to empty their bladder in the night?

I doubted very much if the cages would be opened for any reason before sunrise and without some bucket or chamber pot the slave would be forced to relieve herself. Those bands of iron that formed the roof of the cage would provide no shelter to any slave unfortunate enough to be below. In point of fact I was glad I had emptied my bladder when I

did. I might not run the risk of drenching some poor unfortunate below me in my own piss but neither had I any desire to spend the night in my own waste.

Oh how this day had changed me. I had gone from a lady of wealth, power and influence, draped in the finest silks to a striped slave who had made a show of herself before Jaques and then had earned a taste of the strap before she had to be caged like a wild beast.

Now that I was truly alone I could not deny it. I had proclaimed it to my uncle and no sooner had I made my admission that my mind had swayed the other way. I might play the slave but I could not be one in truth. Yet good white women of breeding and privilege did not act like wanton harlots. They did not grind their sex against the crop, did not gush at the thought of being stripped and strapped. Even the indignity of the cage was arousing my blood. I found it hard to credit but a small voice in the back of my mind told me that I would be disappointed if a blanket had been given to me. How better was it that I was left naked in my cage with the bars close enough to prevent my escape but far enough that anyone who entered had full sight of my body, slick with sweat, my feet and legs caked with mud and urine and the dried remains of my body's own juices adorning various parts of my body?

Even as I pondered this I found myself shifting my position. Even the fresh shot of pain that shot up from my tender bottom was worth the effort and as if they had a will of their own my hands crept down my stomach to brush briefly against the thin lines that had been left by the crop and then they slipped between my legs.

That any creature should be kept in such conditions was an abomination but it did excite me so. Deny it thought I might surely there must be slave blood flowing in my veins. Perhaps I found such happiness in how I was treated because my blood if not my brain knew it was exactly what I deserved, what I needed. I could think of no other explanation save that I might be suffering some milady of the mind and I did not feel mad. In fact I felt a great sense of freedom. I might be caged but the dictates and requirements of my former position no longer held me. I was free to take what pleasure I might when and where I could. The crop had rounded my passions far more readily than my fingers could manage. Was it that my blood reacted better to leather than flesh or was it simply that before it was done to me without so much as a by my leave. I felt growing excitement from my own ministrations but I knew that I could stop if I chose. To have another do it to me, to know that I had no say in the matter, that made the passion all the sweeter.

SATURDAY

Morning came far too soon for my liking and when I stirred I found that there was scarcely an inch of me that did not ache for the cage had forced me to sleep cramped and bent over in a most unnatural posture. Yet I was not immediately taken from my cage and this surprised me. I had heard enough accounts from escaped slaves that they were driven to labor in the fields before the sun broke the horizon and as for house slaves they fared little better. There were always tasks to be done, silver to be cleaned, ovens scoured pans scrubbed so that they might not toil under the hot sun but toil they did and for as many hours as the field slaves.

I could not tell the time or even see beyond the chamber but from the light streaming in through the windows set high in the wall and under the cracks of the great door that sealed the room I guessed that sunrise had come and gone.

After some thought the answer became plain to see. This was not a plantation and certainly no man of quality would be up so early on a Saturday. If there were no bidders to entertain it made sense that the slaves be kept in their cages for they were far more secure there and easier to handle than if they were roaming the courtyard.

I knew that I was to be registered today but the Colonel had deliberately ensured that I had no idea when it would take place. It might be in the morning or perhaps late afternoon it was not my place to know. Only I prayed that I would be fed and given some water for my throat and mouth were parched and my stomach pained me greatly with pangs of hunger.

Finally the great doors swung open and I was almost relieved to see one of the assistants stride in. What did he hold in his hand? I pressed my face against the bars of my cage but before I could get a good view he hooked it onto his belt behind his back.

The hinges of my cage were well oiled and swung open without a sound and without even commanding me, he reached in and grasped my hair. Did he think I would resist? How? There was no room to escape in that cage.

I allowed myself to be pulled from the cage and as soon as I was out he shoved me to the floor face down. Then without a word he planted himself astride me and sat down so that his weight kept me pressed to the floor. My head was drawn back and I felt something cold but supple warp around. It was a collar of some sort, of that much I was certain and in quick order I felt it buckled snugly around my throat. I heard no lock closing but it did not take long for me to learn why I would not be slipping off that collar even without a lock.

From the back of collar I felt a cold length of chain settle against my back. The chain appeared to separate into two parts mid-way down my back and I felt more leather at either end.

When he pulled my right arm back and twisted it up behind my back I cried out in pain and alarm. That did not string like the strap but it was far from comfortable. I felt a leather cuff buckled around my right wrist and when I felt his fingers release their grip I discovered my right arm was bound firmly. In no time at all my left hand was likewise secured and it was almost as if I had raised my hands to pray but behind my back instead of before me.

They were not fully pressed together for I was sure my arms would have to be torn from shoulder to achieve such a pose but both forearms were left pointing up to the back of my neck, held in place by the leather cuffs. I felt the chain that joined them to my new collar go taut and for a moment I feared that I might choke but the pressure eased when he haled me to my feet.

Without a word he took me from the room and as we walked I could not help but notice that this posture forced my chest out and my breasts rode higher than usual. I must have been such a sight, a dirty sweaty slave girl thrusting out her teats in the hopes of attracting the attentions of a kindly master.

There were other slaves in the building beyond and I saw that each in turn was made to stand over a grill that covered some opening in the floor and without fanfare they relieved themselves. Those too slow to do their business felt an overseer switch across their behinds.

When it came my turn I feared that embarrassment would seal my bladder. To take a piss before the Colonel and Mr Cochrane had been shaming enough but here there were countless others. Yet none were paying me any particular attention as they went about their duties.

Why should they, I realized? Peaches was but one more slave, perhaps more uppity than most but far from outstanding. Why Irish Rose that waited her turn was more fair of skin and she was not the only striking beauty to be seen.

When I was done I was led over to another area where I joined a long line of slaves. Each was linked together with a length of chain that linked each of our collars. As soon as they were satisfied that they had enough on a coffer were led from the building and outside.

We passed outside into a covered wooden stall, whose end I could not see. Midway in the line I could see little directly beyond me save the broad back and sharply buttocks of the

slave directly in front of me. Like so many she bore her owners mark emblazoned on her rump, in this case a



Could this creature have belonged to Mr Butler, that tall dashing fellow I had met at the Ball and who seemed to think a lot of himself for all that he was quite charming to talk to?

I could feel my bare feet on the dirt as I moved rapidly forward thru the darkness, being pushed by the slave behind me and pulled by the coffle chain around my throat. The air stank of vinegar and ahead of me I could hear men whooping, shouting, and laughing. Every few seconds I'd hear a noise and laughter and the chain would jerk me forward another few feet. Enveloped in darkness, my mind flashed back to the night of the ball, and being lost in the music as the tall dashing planter twirled me in his arms.

"You're Miss Scarlet seems displeased we are dancing, Mr. Butler," I noted dryly. "She has not taken her eyes off of us, and she looks like she is sucking a sour egg."

"You have made your mark on the ladies of Natchez, that's for sure," he said laughing.

"Perhaps you should buy me," I teased. "That's how you do it down here, isn't? Aren't all the women in the South for sale?"

Mr. Butler laughed heartily. "You do have a sharp tongue, Miss Parker. But if I did buy you, it would be I who would leave my mark on you."

The handsome planters warning took on an ominous new dimension as I strained to examine the branded backside of the slave in front of me in the darkness. It was horrifying, truly, but somehow strangely beautiful.

Stumbling forward, I imagined myself in Rhett's strong arms twirling on the dance floor, happy, laughing, spinning, falling...

I heard the splash before I realized I was indeed falling, followed by freezing cold, eerie silence, pitch black, and a sensation of sinking. I tried to breathe in, and to my horror that I was underwater.

I was drowning. Panicked, I tried to use my hands to swim, or grab onto something, or raise myself in some way. But my arms were locked firmly together behind my back.

My mind flashed to the stories of "excess cargo" being unloaded off of slave ships, chained together and dumped over the side, left to drown in the sea.

I could see nothing, and I could not breathe. I kicked my legs, and although I could feel myself kicking the girl behind me, I could find nothing to stand on. With the little life left in me, I pulled on my arms and slave collar with all my might. I felt as if my head might come off, and my arms pull out of their sockets, but my shackles did not budge.

What had I done to displease my masters so? I prayed, repenting my sins even as I swore that I would endeavor to please my masters if only they would spare me now! I kicked and struggled, trying to grab onto something, anything. But soon my little fingers stopped writhing.

It was over. I had displeased my masters, and I was to be discarded, like a broken lamp or vase. Peaches name would be struck from the ledger, and her body used to fertilize next years crop of King Cotton.

I felt someone grab me around the throat, and pull me upward, upward---

The world exploded in light as I broke thru the surface of the dirty black water. I gagged, coughed, sputtered, and vomited the filthy, vinegary water.

I heard a man's voice laughing, and next to me saw a pair of muddy work boots. "This one's thirsty," he guffawed. "Looks like she thought she'd drink 'er way out."

"Igrant' nigras," another worker sneered. "They'd eat their own shit if we let 'em."

I realized that the "hand" around my neck was actually a metal hook, like a Shepard's crock, and I was being pushed thru a tank of stinking, putrid water. In their confusion the stupid workers above me had accidentally led us into a dip tank, like the type used to disinfect cattle and sheep, and now they were trying to get us out!

I tried to walk, but the tank was too deep, and my feet did not touch the bottom. My coffle chain pulled me forward, and the hook dragged me along the surface of the water, allowing me to catch my breath. I felt oddly grateful to the good Shepard for saving my life, indebted to him even as his metal crock dug painfully into my neck. I skimmed along across the surface of the freezing, putrid vinegar, frantically kicking my little feet and trying to gain my bearings as I struggled not to drown.

I tried to look up at man in the muddy boots, to thank him for his mercy, but I was already past him, and the metal hook prevented me from turning my head.

My gratitude was short lived. "Bon Voyage!" I heard him snicker. That, and the sound of the other men guffawing as the creak was pulled away, were the last words I heard as once again I plunged into the stinking darkness.

I sank quickly, but this time I knew where the bottom was, and was able to push off from the muddy floor with my feet. I propelled myself upward and broke the surface. Again I felt a piece of metal hooked my neck, propelling me on, as I passed a different pair of muddy boots.

I tried to look back at him, to establish eye contact, and move to the side wall so that he could rescue me from the freezing tank. But his response was to push me forward all the harder.

"Keep it moving, lamb chop, " he barked, in a manner that made it clear that it was a well rehearsed command. "This ayn't no soaking tub."

I felt him pull the hook away from me, and thought I would sink again, but to my surprise I felt my feet touch the muddy floor. Still pushing forward, my nose brushed against the buttocks of the slave above me, my lips briefly kissing the RB brand on her shapely fanny as she rose out of the trough.

Fighting to see, and shivering from both the freezing tank and the cool air, I struggled up the earthen ramp. If only I could wipe the burning vinegar and matted hair from my eyes! But I could not. My wrists and elbows ached from my exertions, but they were still pinned firmly behind my back.

I heard a mewing sound behind me. Still struggling to clear my eyes, I turned my head in time to see two lambs swimming across the tank as a "Shepard" guided them forward with a creak. Behind the sheep, a black slave shouted out as a laughing "Shepard" pushed her into the filthy brine. My mind struggled to comprehend what was happening, but a sharp sting across the back of my thighs and a crisp command to "move yer lazy ass" forced me out of the dipping shed and onto the next indignity.

Two old house slaves were there to greet me as I emerged from the shed. One I recognized from the slave who had undressed me when I had first arrived. Each carried a long armed brush with stiff bristles and when it was my turn to stand dripping before them I could attest to how those bristles scoured my naked flesh.

The slaves worked quickly and it seemed to me they had ample practice in scrubbing the dirt and sweat from the bodies of naked shivering slaves. Oh how my skin burned under the not so tender mercies of those brushes. And when they scrubbed across my engorged nipples and between my legs I could not help but cry out.

It was only when the last slave in the coffle had been scrubbed that were led back indoor somewhat cleaner and still damp and shivering. There the chains linking our collars were freed but like me each other girl wore a collar and the chains that bound her hands so high on her back. Those remained.

"Feeding time," one of the overseers shouted and we were taken to our breakfast.

I had thought that I was inured to all surprise by now but again I was disabused. There no table with warm nourishment waiting for us. Instead there was a trough, the sort that farm animals might be fed from. Remembering the pens I had seen yesterday meant to hold horses, cows or even goats and hogs, it occurred to me that on another day this trough might well serve such creatures. It made a twisted sort of sense in a way. Why pay for one trough for animals and then have to go to the expense of buying a second for the slaves? If ever there had been any doubt over the inhumanity of this peculiar institution surely this was enough to settle that argument.

One by one we were made to kneel down before it and denied the use of our hands we each had no choice but to bend forward as best we could and lap at the grey featureless gruel that filled that trough.

This went beyond all I had imagined but hunger drove me on and in no time I was lapping as eagerly if not with enthusiasm as the next girl, anxious to fill my stomach for I had no idea when I might be fed again. I could not help but wonder had I been foolish to refuse David's offer of freedom last night? There seemed little doubt in my mind now for all I felt at this moment was degradation there was no arousal but I had no choice. David had gone, perhaps he might even have returned to Boston and I had no option but to follow through and finish the course I had chosen.

I like the others had been bent over for some time doing our utmost to sup at the taintless gruel when I saw two house slave appear. Nor did they come empty handed for each carried a large dray upon which I could see were stacked several plates, the sort that might grace the table of a rich merchant or planter.

Puzzled by this sight I paused in my efforts to fill my stomach and then I saw. The plates were not empty, no instead the held the remains of a fine breakfast. The straps that remained were cold of course, but at the sight of them I could feel my very mouth water like some dog presented with a meaty bone.

The casual cruelty of the act roused my temper. Here slaves were forced to grovel at the trough, forbidden the use of their hands so that they had no choice but to mimic the manners of the beasts and for all that all were given was a drab tasteless gruel. The bare minimum to keep body and soul together at the minimum of costs to the market. And at the same time the straps from our master's table were carried past us. They of course

dined so well that they could afford to cast off such remains that to them were scraps but to us hungry slaves were treasures,.

Then I realized who wrong I had been in my judgment. The leavings were not there to taunt us. One by one the house slaves began to brush off those plates casting the self-same scraps into the trough.

It shames me to say it but I reacted no better than the other wretches who knelt beside me. At the sight of half eaten sausages, chicken bones with some tattered scraps of flesh yet attached to the bone, a wildness overcame us all. It did not matter if it was some piece of fat, or a quart of cold gravy we jostled most fiercely as we each strove to win some of this bounty for ourselves. I thought nothing of driving my shoulder into the side or back of the slave beside me if it would but win me a greater chance to snatch some tasty morsel from my master's table.

It was only later when that terrible frenzy left me and my blood cooled that I realized what I and the others had done. In a simple act we had confirmed to any onlooker that we were not equals of our masters. We had provided all the proof that might be required that we were mindless beasts who needed the collar and the whip to govern our lives. Otherwise why else would we react like some a pack of rabid dogs, snapping and growling at each other simply that we might gain another's leavings?

At the same time I felt a certain savage pride for while many who knelt at my side had been born and spent all of their lives in bondage while I had lived the soft life of a pampered lady, I managed despite the weakness of my upbringing to seize a half-eaten slice of ham. From the teeth marks upon the meat it was apparent that some master had found it far too tough and cast it to one side in favor of more choicer truffle.

It was so tough that I feared that I would not manage to devour it and again Elizabeth Parker would have cast it from her plate with a note of admonishment sent to the cook who had dared prepare such tough stringy meat. Peaches devoured it with relish.

Nor did the slaves have the trough to in the midst of the feeding frenzy that overcame us several of the overseers entered laughing at the sight of us. Nor were they alone.

"Looks like Hercules is hungry too," one of men said, chuckling as an enormous beast of a hound sauntered over and stuck his snout in the trough.

"Don't let him get too friendly," another man warned. "Remember, Old Herc here has gotta run 'em down if they try to bolt."

"Yeah, well I sure as hell ayn't going to try and pull him away from food. The bastard will bite off my damn hand."

Hercules was enormous, and looked to be part wolf, part bloodhound, and all mean. I winced as I watched his teeth sawing through the scraps of meat, and shuddered as I imagined him skillfully hunting me down as I fled barefoot and aimless through the woods.

As soon as the gruel was gone and the feeding frenzy had passed a pail of water was poured into the feeding trough and we were allowed to drink as best we could manage while striving ever to keep a keen eye out for Hercules. Thankfully the beast took his fill but seemed content to leave us to our business. So this was Mr Cochran's idea of how slave girls should be fed and watered.

I knew something was afoot when I was led away but not back to the parlor and the pedicles. The room was small, empty save for a single chair and a small table at one of the room and a few chairs along the side of one of the walls. When I was taken in I could see that the Colonel was already there. He was sitting smoking his pipe and taking his ease. And of course there was Mr Cochran, he would not want to miss this.

The third man was a stranger to me. He looked to be just entering his middle years, perhaps a touch overweight and a set of wire framed spectacles perched on his thin nose. As I was pushed in he looked up and fixed me with a cool stare over the rim of his looking glasses. He had the look of a man who spent more time indoors at his desk than outside in the sun.

I bowed my head and let my long hair fall forward to cover my face as I came to a stop before his desk. A heavy ledger was open on the desk before him and I could see an quill and inkwell as well as what looked like a heavy seal and a small jug which I presumed was filled with wax ready to be warmed by the open fire that blazed away behind the fellow.

From his dress, and the books before him I could only surmise that he was a Notary, here to complete the registration papers that would formally declare and confirm my status as a slave. My knees shook and my heart fluttered as I shuffled from one foot to the other. It was about to begin. Soon the Colonel would hold the sealed script that gave him power of life and death over me. A second copy would be recorded in the local court house and as of course the market would retain its own record of my time here and what bids were received for me. And of course was I really to be sold the details of the sale would likewise be recorded, my new owner, how much was paid when title passed to the new master.

With his pipe clamped between his teeth the Colonel puffed contentedly as he moved to stand by my side. With a grin he brushed his hand across my left nipple. Clearly he had noticed how my bindings forced my breast out so that they might better be displayed. It was a gentle caress but with my heart pounding loudly in my ears from nervous anticipation it was enough to make my nipples swell and stiffen until they stood out.

Then his gaze shifted to study my bottom and the tender pinkness that lingered there from the scrapping I had received. His hand soon followed his eyes and he gave me a playful slap on the left cheek. It could not be said to be meant to punish but with my bottom still tender is stung and was more than enough reminder that I was his to do with as he pleased. If he felt that I needed another strapping he had but to give the order.

“Has Peaches learned not to be uppity?” he asked.

“Yes massah,” I answered meekly.

“Good, let us begin gentlemen, the day is a wasting.”

“Name,” the Notary asked as he picked up his quill.

“Peaches, property of Mrs Veronica Rand, of Sugar Oak Plantation” the Colonel supplied as the process began.

So I learned how it was that a slave could be reduced to a set of cold facts and figures on a registry. After my name and that of my owner was marked down the Colonel supplied the name of my grandmother and when it came to name my grandfather he was recorded simply as Tom, property of Chester Arthur, of whom Veronica Rand is the only legitimate child and natural heir.

Great care was taken to record the exact nature of my slave ancestry and the claim Great Aunt Veronica had on my person for this would be key evidence if there was any challenge to my status in a court of law. Of course once that seal was placed on the registry and my details entered I had no right to the protection of the court. Our great constitution and all its protections applied to free men and women not frisky fancy girls like me.

As soon as those details were taken they moved on to my describe in great detail my every feature. Great import was made of my olive skin though it was described as dark olive and my raven locks were marked down as black and curly. No one had ever said I possessed a flat negro nose but in the eyes of these worth gentlemen that was how I described.

Mr Cochrane was on hand when measurement were required. I gathered that this role might normally be fulfilled by some of his many assistants but such was his interest in my situation that he would let none attend to the task save himself.

To my true horror I found that my night in the cage had not left me unmarked. He ran his hands through my long hair, grown tangled and snarled for the want of wash water and a brush and I swear I heard amusement in his voice when he informed the Notary that my scalp was infested in head lice.

Head lice! I could not believe it for I was almost most meticulous in my grooming and my maid took great care to brush out my hair each morning until it glistened. If he spoke true and I was infested with lice they could only have come from the cage in which I had been confined. A pig sty might have been cleaner.

It did not trouble him at all and

Using his measuring rope he gave the measurement of my neck, my waist even my thighs and ankles before he cupped each breast to give his expert opinion on their individual weight. Then they too were measured and recorded.

Had any tailor or seamstress ever taken such careful note of my dimensions, I thought not. Even the distance between my bellybutton to the top of the bottom cheeks was recorded. For this the a measuring rope was but up against my stomach and Mr Cohcrane took great pleasure in drawing the rest of the rope down over my mound, over the lips of my sex and then up the crease of my bottom. When it was in place he gave it a sharp tug sharp enough to nearly knock me from my feet. Certainly hard enough to justify the gasp of surprise and shock that escaped my lips.

Still the man was not satisfied the measurement was accurate and I was ordered to spread my legs as far as I could without falling and then once so exposed he began to saw the rope back and forth, up and down so that it worked its way deeper and deeper between the lips of my sex and brushed against my tightly puckered back passage.

The feel of that rough hemp between my legs was nearly enough to drive all though from my mind. The sensation was different but as it rubbed against my most sensitive regions I was minded of the feel of the crop between my legs. I had thought I had disgraced myself but now I understood better. As a slave girl it was natural that I could flame to the touch of the whip. How was it that the Colonel had put it yesterday before I was strapped?

For a moment I struggled to recall the words he had used and then they came to me. 'Hot to trot.' As that rope sawed against my nether regions I did indeed feel like some mare in heat, hot and very much ready to trot. As if he sensed my arousal

"It occurs to me Colonel, Mr. Webb, it is a fine day outside," Mr. Cochran remarked. "Might we not continue our business under the blessings of the Mississippi sun?"

Having felt the great searing heat of the Mississippi sun I was far from eager to leave the shelter of the room but of course my opinion counted for naught. The Colonel shrugged his shoulders and after a moment the Notary Mr Webb nodded his agreement.

When I saw the courtyard I made to pull back. Last night the yard had been empty but today it was a hive of activity. Yet it was not that that sparked my rebellion but rather

the sight of men and women, fine ladies and rich gentlemen taking their ease on the verandas and balconies of the various properties that circled the yard. With dread I realized that they would all see me for the yard was not so large that I could escape from their probing gaze. Only a blind man could not fail to note my every detail from those vantage points for the distance was indeed little to speak of.

If that was not enough I caught sight of the glints of more than one spy glasses as the great people of Natches strove to ensure that no morsel of the misery below escaped their scrutiny.

They would see me, they would all see me naked as a jaybird and helpless in my chains as I was registered.

My rebellion was short lived and quickly quelled. A rough hand grabbed the chain at my back that linked my wrist cuffs and my collar and a moment later I heard something cut through the air and then a thin line of fire sprang to life across the center of my bottom.

Landing on my fanny still tender from the strap I jumped in pain and did not need another reminder that the assistants were well versed in the use of the switches they each carried.

Shame or no shame I had no choice but to advance into the yard. Immediately I felt the hot sun beating down on me like a hammer hot from the forge. How anyone could work in such heat amazed me. Yet all around me there was a hive of activity with slaves loading and unloading wagons.

"Perhaps over there," Mr Cochran suggested as he pointed to one area of the yard. Without waiting for a reply he gave orders to the slaves who were to set up Mr. Webb's desk to put it there.

My heart sank as I saw the gaggle of ladies who were sitting on the balcony directly overhead of the spot Mr. Cochran had chosen. They were listening to a young mulatto slave who was playing a fiddle but as fans were lowered to afford the ladies a better view I recognized most of them. They were the women from the ball, and there with pride of place was my nemesis, Miss Emily Davis.

Oh how it burned to be paraded so. When last I had faced her it was as an equal if not superior but now she was the grand lady and I the barefoot and naked slave about to have her registration finalized. She would see the whole thing. How more complete could her victory over me be that to see me like this?

I tried to put her and her cohort out of my mind. It was easy to forget the others they were of little consequence in my mind. Of course it was not pleasant to be seen so but there was something about Emily's eyes, a dark hunger as she watched the sweat begin to

break out all over my body, it was enough to make me shudder whenever I glanced up to her position.

Yet it was the very act of being seen so, of being so humiliate that my slave blood craved and even as I raged against being forced to parade about so, my thighs began to grow damp with warm fluid other than sweat.

If I had thought that my registration was nearly finalized I was sadly mistaken. Apparently it was not enough that my dimensions had been recorded. No this record must be more complete for they demanded that my fitness and responsiveness be likewise measured and graded.

And of course Mr. Cochran was ever ready to assist. Two overseers were made to stand some distance apart in a line with each other and once they were in place I was bid to run between them. I could see no scientific measurement that might be recorded by making me run to one of them and not stop until I felt the touch of his switch held out beside him only to make me turn but then wait until that selfsame switch tapped against my bottom. Then I was to run as fast as my legs would carry me to the second assistant where the process was repeated.

At first I feared this was some new and twisted way of switching me but my fears were allayed. When I ran I felt but a light tap on my thighs as one brought me to a halt and again there was but a mild stroke that set me running to his fellow. Each was hard enough that I could feel it but not so hard as to mark the skin or bring more than a winch to my face.

Of course like any good slave I was learning to fear the whip of my master or his overseer and every time I wondered when I turned and presented my bottom if this stroke would be delivered with the same biting force I knew those strong arms were capable of delivering.

Over and over I ran this course, and with my arms bound so uncomfortably behind my back my breasts were free to dance wildly as I raced. By the time I had made my third circuit under that relentless sun I was sweating freely and by the tenth I was panting and a fine coat of perspiration made my olive skin glisten as if I had bathed in oil.

Yet there was no reprieve. Between gasps of breath and a pain in my side that threatened to double me over I could only glance at the party for whom I was running. Neither the Colonel or the notary or Mr Cochran appeared to be taking note of my speed. Certainly I saw no pocket watch to record the time it took me to run from one assistant to the other. Yet no order came to stop and I dared not halt until given permission.

Minutes passed and soon my legs felt as if they were wrapped in lead weights and the muscles of my calf's and thighs were protesting. I wanted to double over if not fall to the ground entirely but event was denied me. While I stood upright the chain from my wrist

cuffs was taunt to my collar so that it was snug around my neck. I quickly discovered that if I leaned too far forward the chain tugged at the back of my collar to such an extent that it clamped hard enough the windpipe of my throat. Clamped hard enough to restrict my gasps to take in air.

As my limbs began to fail my pace fell off but immediately I discovered there was to be a tradeoff for this reprieve. When I reached each overseer and turned the rod no longer tabbed my bottom, it cut with must more force that before. The slower I went the harder I was switched. Oh such a quandary. Was I to run myself into the ground and possibly pass out from heatstroke or was I to take a switching?

Finally the order came for me to stop and there was nothing I could do to remain upright. Even the dirt and mud of the courtyard was welcome as I fell to the ground thought I could feel what I hoped was earth alone cling to my sweaty skin.

"Fleet of foot," Mr. Cochran stated to the Notary. "But lazy and needing the whip to drive her on."

I was allowed to recover for a few minutes but long before I felt ready I was pulled to my feet for my next test.

"Is she as nimble as a gazelle or is she a lumbering hippopotamus?" At the sound of Emily's voice I felt my heart sink even further if such a thing was possible. She was standing now, leaning over the balcony railing to such a degree that I would not have been surprised if she tumbled down into the courtyard. Yet despite her unseemly interest in me being put through my paces she still possessed a certain natural elegance, a grace.

The Colonel flowed up at her. It appeared that his opinion of the woman had not improved and like so many men he did not approve of a woman showing interest in the inspection of slaves. Oh the man could watch as many nubile wenches stripped and shown to good effect but woe betide the world if a woman might show similar interests in the fit young bucks of her plantation.

And there were plenty to sample here. Most of the male slaves who were loading the wagons across from the loading bay were stripped to the waist and in another area new males were being brought in on a coffle. In other circumstances the sight of them being having their meager clothing stripped away as they were lined up for inspection would have caught my interest as it did most of the fine ladies I could see.

Not so Emily. Her eyes never left my naked form. In fact she was looking at me the same way I saw some of the fine gentlemen regard me. Yet that made no sense to me. Did she hate me so much that the bucks could not draw her interest?

Finally looking back at me for a moment the Colonel shrugged and Mr. Cochran clapped his hands together. "Let us find out."

He took one of the overseers rods and drawing back his arm he flung it across the yard as hard as he could. Then looking at me he smiled coolly as he uttered a single word. "Fetch."

I closed my eyes in resignation before opening them again and I started to run. I did not need to be told that if I did not comply another rod would be found to encourage me.

As soon as I reached the rod I faced a problem. It lay nestled in the dirt within easy reach if I had the use of my hands but there were secured. How then was I to pick up the stick and return it like the faithful dog I was required to act?

There was nothing to be done but for me to kneel down awkwardly and trying to keep my balance I was forced to use my teeth to pick up the rod as any animal might. A dog indeed!

Burning with shame I trotted back to my master and Mr Cochran. As with my earlier efforts once was not judged sufficient. As soon as I returned the rod was taken from between my jaws and thrown to another portion of the yard.

I quickly lost track of the times I ran and fetched like the obedient dog eager to please her master. My face was streaked with mud from when I was forced to bush my face to the ground to seize the rod and I felt certain I would never get the taste of the mud from my mouth. Try as I might I could not avoid taking some for the mud clung to the run when it fell and when I bit it, some fell loose onto my tongue. I could not even spit it out for fear of spitting out the rod which I would have to pick up again. Only when I arrived back at the table and the rod was taken from me could I try to rid myself of the soil in my mouth.

At least three times I lost my balance as I bend over on the ground to try and scoop up the rod with my teeth and tongue. Without use of my arms it was so hard to keep my balance and regaining my feet was a struggle in itself. Yet for all my efforts at my first fall all I earned was a direction to the Notary to mark that "I possessed a typical slave dullness of mind."

"Let us see if she can dance," was the next suggestion to come from the balcony. Even the men appeared confused at this request but it became clearer when Emily had the young mulatto with his fiddle descend to the yard.

As he struck up a reel I began to dance but it was unlike any of the waltzes I had learned in Boston. In fact it was little more than the sight of me naked and ripping with sweat raising first my right leg until my thigh was parallel with my waist before dropping it and raising my left to a similar position.

My legs were so very tired from my earlier exertions but no accounting was made for my exhaustion. Instead Mr Cochran took directly behind me. I complete lost my rhythm and nearly my balance as I felt one of the rods come up between my legs with the tip jutting out just beyond my curls.

On and on the slave played and it was in a lively tune that he played. Nothing could compare though to the feeling of me dancing as one leg then another leapt up and all the while the rod grew slicker and slicker from the emission that seeped so freely from my sex.

This earned me the final description of “hot frisky wench, quick to juice up.” Finally a comment I could agree with. Yesterday for such a remark I would have slapped Mr Cochran so hard he would have been seeing stars for a day. Today I knew it was the truth. I was hot and frisky, my blood positively boiled at the touch of that rod there. It was so very cruel of them to withdraw the rod before I could find release. The urge, the overwhelming need to achieve climax was such that I would have happily fingered myself even before the hated Miss Davis, if it gave me release.

“The fiddler deserves a reward,” Mr Cochran said but only after a glance to the balcony above. “Perhaps we might see how well this wench can work her tongue.”

The slave’s eyes widened in surprise and delight at this suggestion. My own expression faltered in sudden dread. I had no desire to go down on my knees to service the slave. His race meant nothing to me for were we not both slaves but I had so wanted my first act with a man to be with David. I knew that they did not mean for me to lose my maidenhood. To the slave monger it would mean a lost in my value and his commission if I were sold but a slave girl might be force to take another slave in her mouth and there was no risk of her losing her maidenhood or finding herself with child.

The Colonel appeared thoughtful for a moment then with some hesitation he shook his head. “I think not.” Instead he reached into a pocket and flicked a coin towards the young man. There was some surprise at this from the others for a slave can own no property but with a faint smile and an incline of her head to the fiddler Miss Davis appeared to give her consent to him keeping it.

All that remained was to have the Notary sign the register and the copies as well as fixing the official seal in place. That took little time and when the Colonel held up my deed, complete with the ribbon impressed into the court seal I felt as if the earth had shifted beneath my feet.

It was done. I was now legally a slave and would remain so until the day I die or I received emancipation. With some satisfaction the Colonel folded the deed and slipped it into the safety of the inside pocket of his jacket.

"Come," he gestured to the men. "Now that business is done let us eat and I feel the need for a good whiskey. After we have taken our fill we can put the slave back on view and I think I will examine what offers have been received for her."

At the suggestion of food and drink neither man needed to be asked again. As I was dragged away to be scrubbed down again I could not help but look over my shoulder. What I saw there sent a cold chill running down my spine. There was Mr Cochran standing at the side of Miss Davis. Perhaps I was mistaken but I could have sworn I saw a small pouch pass from her hand to his, the sort that might hold a tidy sum of money and almost immediately he bowed his head before taking his leave to rejoin the Colonel who deep in conversation with Mr. Webb appeared oblivious to what had just transpired.

There was of course no food for me and only a quick mouthful of water to slake my thirst. After all had I not been fed already this morning and yesterday the Colonel had made it clear that he would not pay for me to be overindulged. As a slave I had not yet earned my keep and until I began to pay my way I could expect little. Now that I had been registered and certified I knew that my sole role in life was to please who ever held my deed.

It might be that I might earn my way through hard work. Perhaps I might be sent to the fields to pick my master's cotton. Or I might spend my days on my knees scrubbing the floors of the house I had so brazenly called home. Oh how would that feel to return to Sugar Oak not as the niece of the owners but as their slave? I might expect no finery there, I would could myself lucky if I was given a simple shift threadbare and worn and perhaps cut high on the thigh and low in the bosom so that my best features were displayed. If it was rank with the dirt and sweat of the slaves who had worn it before me would not the stench confirm to all that I was but a dirty slave who could not even groom and wash herself without instruction. And in no time at all my own perspiration would be added to the sweat dried in and baked in by the harsh sun.

I might long for some more modest covering but secretly I would know that it was pointless. Either in the field or the house the oversees would see that I was worked hard and my fancy lazy ways beaten from me. If I was not draped in sweat surely I must be shirking and in need of the whip. Anything finer than the coarse sackcloth and surely my own excretions would rot clean away.

And if the cloth was rough to the touch and chafed at my nipples, well all the better for Peaches if she was kept hot and frisky, with her nipples erect and sensitive. In this manner she could better serve her master if he summoned her to his bed chamber where on his knees she would take his great member in her rough hands before opening her mouth and licking her tongue against the length of his shaft until he came. And she would

be so careful to take all of his hot salty seed in her mouth, swallowing without complaint and when the master's needs had been met she would bow her head and give thanks for his generosity in allowing her to drink of his spunk.

Given that I had spent so long passing who might blame the Colonel if he saw the estate blacksmith rivet leg irons about my ankles so to reduce the chance that I might try to run. And of course it would be so very hard to adjust to my new status in that place where I had been second only to the mistress and master. Surely my uppity nature would earn me a whipping.

A clear image of one of the Colonel's barns appeared in my mind. Yet in this image it was occupied by that dull witted slave girl Peaches. She had defied her master again and there was nothing to be done but for her to shuffle to the barn in her leg irons where she would be hoisted upwards by those very fetters so that her hair brushed against the dirty floor.

If Peaches had been fortunate enough not to be stripped it would avail her little for strung upside down, her legs well apart the shift would fall down and bunch at her armpits.

What a sight I would be, sweating in fear and anticipation. Would my bottom receive the strap or might my defiance merit a sterner admonishment? Yes, the master would be strict and the strap would fall but not on my well-padded bottom but between my legs. It would fall and the tip would brush against my mound, while the body of the strap would find its way to the lips of my sex. Perhaps my puckered rear hole would even feel its caress for my legs would be so obscenely spread that no part of my body would be spared.

And how I would juice under its sting! There would be no call to oil the strap for my randy slave sap would provide all the lubricating that it might require. The ladies of the town might be there, to witness that the brazen hussy that had tried to pass as one of them was put in her place. How they would smile as I howled and screamed and gasped.

And then when it was done perhaps the shift would be taken from me so that I might learn humility. I would be left with no choice but to parade before the ladies as God had made me and as they took afternoon tea and cake I would kneel on all fours by the seat of the mistress, her obedient dog eager to show her devotion.

I would not speak of course, what would a dirty lusty slave like me have to say to such fine folk. Yet given my defiant nature no chances would be taken. I nodded in sudden certainty. The overseer would know what was needed even if the mistress's kind heart balked at the required discipline.

I would carry the very strap under which I howled for an hour ago, in my mouth, between my teeth like a dog with a bone. And if any of the great ladies so elegant in their finery

beckoned I would crawl forward and offer the strap before turning still on all fours to present my hind quarters for correct.

Once it was done the strap would be returned to my waiting jaws and I would return to my mistress's side to wait for the next belle to call me over.

Opening my eyes I looked around me suddenly fearful that I was making another show of myself. Thankfully no one seemed to notice for there was a lull in the viewers. Standing on the platform it was so easy to become lost in wicked imaginings.

Why oh why did such day dreams overcome me? And where did such base ideas come from? I had answers to neither but glancing down I could see a trail of my juices slick on my thighs beginning to run down the inside of my right leg. I felt such need to pleasure myself. Thinking of returning to Sugar Oak like that had set my blood quivering in my veins and my heart was pounding almost as hard as it had when I was run in the yard earlier today.

Of course it was a pleasant distraction for I had discovered that standing like some living statue of flesh and sinew rather than Greek stone upon the marble pedicle was terribly boring. Why it was enough to rot the brain. Of course the tedium was broken by the inspections and I suspected that the crowds would return in the same great numbers after they had dined and taken their ease.

Forks in the Road was one of the greatest hubs for the selling and transportation of slaves in the Americas. With the great Mississippi river so near at hand a buyer or seller could ship their chattels with ease. From the overheard remarks uttered by some of the potential buyers I had discovered that many considered the current crop to be of the finest quality seen in several months. Nor was this the only viewing room but it tickled my pride when I chanced to hear that the parlor was reserved for the showing of the finest of stock.

Word had spread through the town of the fate of the hated Yankee who had so offended all the good folk of this town. Yesterday I had faced men who had come to see what was on offer. Today I was confronted by those who came simply to see my fall from grace. And they reveled in it. The only relief had come when they had moved to eat. In their absence there was no distracting inspections where I was made to squat or dance or hold my breasts up for inspection. One fellow had snatched up the ever present crop and flicked the tongue of leather at the end of the rod down against my nipples, first one and then the other. Another demanded that I take hold of my nipples and pull up my breasts until the tension on my apple round breasts brought tears to my eyes. In this position I felt the crop give a tap to the underside of my teats.

All to see who I reacted to the whip or as one gentleman remarked to his friend "Let's see how those tits dance." He even had cause to complain that he could not give me the full force of the crop for fear of damaging my value. I did not doubt that if he had his way I would have found out how hard a crop could be brought against my breasts.

As before to be handed like some dumb animal left me feeling a shame that sank deep into the very marrow of my bones. And the greater the shame the more the wetness grew between my legs. It had been so in the yard as well. Where I not struggling to stay upright and draw enough air into my starved lungs I would have swooned in pleasure at my treatment.

Even my day dreams were not safe. I could recall yesterday when I had learned that one of the men who had taken such careful notes might bid for me on behalf of a whore house I had known that the Colonel would never allow such a fate to befall me but I could not help but imagine all the terrible indignities that might be heaped upon me.

Tomorrow I would leave this place and it would not be in a collar but in a fine drawers and petticoat covered by one of my better dresses. Perhaps I would wear the sapphires that Papa had given me for my eighteenth birthday. When I arrived at Sugar Oak, slaves would be there to greet me and the Colonel, with damp towels in hand so that we might brush the dust of the road from our brows.

Despite this near certain knowledge I felt some regret at the prospect. Would Elizabeth Parker ever know the same hot steamy happiness that came so naturally to Peaches the randy quadroon. And as soon as I closed my eyes for even a moment the images would form and it was all I could do not to reach down and use my recently freed hands to press between my thighs until I convulsed with ecstasy

When the crowds began to return all eager to see the slave Peaches and put her through their paces I found myself welcoming it. If they say that I was dripping wet with excitement at feeling so many bidders hands on my flesh what of it? Was this not the natural condition of a slave like me? One of the many reasons given to justify the institution of slavery was that that those like me needed a master to keep me on the path of rightness's.

Finally the crowds began to trail off again as evening fell. My stomach rumbled for some food and were I offered the chance I felt certain that I would happily compete with the master's hounds for a chance at their feed. How many of those men who had so been happy to remark that my present condition suited me would be returning to their townhouses and a waiting steak dinner, washed down with some fine French claret? And then the ladies would take their leave while the gentlemen treated to the study where there would be a selection of choice cigars and a fine brandy.

It was probably prideful but I liked to think that the topic of conversation on many lips this evening would be how fine that slave Peaches looked once she had been stripped of the finery she had no right to.

When the last few stragglers had gone as before the other slaves were taken away all save Irish Rose who had again stood beside me and who had attracted as much attention as I had but for far differing reasons. I was not surprised when I saw the Colonel return for I felt certain that he would savor every moment that remained of my slavery before he was compelled by family allegiance and his honor to return me safe and sound and once more free.

It occurred to me that I no longer thought of him as my uncle, even by marriage. I was his wife's slave, and for any slave to be so familiar with their master to consider them a relation even by marriage was unthinkable. Now he was the Colonel, my certified master whose every whim was the law of my existence.

It did not take me long to see that he was not alone for Mr. Webb was there and of course Mr. Cockren. There was a red flush to the Colonel's cheeks and the faintest of unsteadiness in his gait and as he drew closer I could discern the smell of whiskey from his breath. It was not for the likes of me to judge my betters but the Colonel did seem over fond of hard whiskey at times.

Mr. Cochran appeared to be equally filled with good spirit but I did not detect any slurring of his voice and his gaze was clear and sharp as he looked upon me. They had barely entered the room when one of the assistants entered carrying a leather folder which he presented to his employer before leaving to take up a post as the door to the room.

"You wished to see the offers we have received on for this slave," Mr. Cochran said as he opened the folder and nodded in my direction.

My attention snapped back to the moment and I could have jumped from the pedicel and snatched that very folder from his hands such was my eagerness to learn the contents. I could see the stacks of paper that were contained within. Each would have a figure for what a potential buyer thought I was worth and below the details of the prospective purchaser or their agent.

"The average bid we would receive for a fancy girl would be in the region of \$500." Mr. Cochran explained as much for the benefit of Mr. Webb the Notary as the more experienced Colonel.

"Do you mean to try and tell me my business," the Colonel snapped? It seemed he did not take kindly to be spoken to as if he was new to the trade. And when he had drink taken he could be quick to anger, quick to rash decisions.

Mr. Cochran shook his head quickly ever the slick trader anxious to keep all customers happy. "I certainly never meant to imply that you did not know the trade. Stories of our skill at trading for horses and slaves are the talk of the state."

He inclined his head to Mr. Webb. "Our friend here has seen many a registration but I do not believe he has the knowledge that years of trading have gifted us with Colonel."

Mollified by the stroking of his ego the Colonel waved off the apology. "Of course, of course. Pray continue."

"For finer stock you might expect upwards of \$900. Some have been known to reach even \$1,500." The slave trader said to the Notary.

"The largest sale price I have ever seen was for \$1,900. Oh she was a prize to be sure. Cool blue eyes and golden blond hair and ripe generous breasts. Certified pure she had never known a man. She had been brought up as the daughter of a small plantation owner but when her father died the plantation was deeply in debt and it was discovered that the girl was in fact the daughter of one of the house slaves. The mother was an Octoroon, a fine specimen herself. All were sold to settle the estate debts."

His lips curled up in a mockery of a smile as he remembered the details. "What a sight she made when she was stripped on the block on New Orleans. She had been engaged to marry a fine young fellow heir to a neighboring plantation and she begged him from the block to save her."

He shook his head at the apparent folly of such a request. "The fool boy actually tried to buy her so he could free her." The snort that came from Cochran spoke volumes of what he thought of that. "There was such a bidding frenzy but in the end a suitor she had rejected outbid the lot of them."

"I can't say who was crying the louder, the girl or the fool boy when she was dragged away to be branded." Suddenly his expression darkened. "After near a month pleasing her new master she ran. She had to have help getting North and most folk figured it was the boy. Last I heard she was living in Canada. Damn Yankees and their twice damned underground railway."

My heart swelled in happiness when I learned that the girl had escaped. In Canada she would be safe and it would be a lesson for her master to spend such a sum only to lose her so soon. Yet as safe as she might be in Canada she could never come home. With the Fugitive Slave Act the moment she crossed the border she would be prey for the slave hunters. And Canada, it was so cold there and the people there so different. Why they still bent the knee to a foreign Queen.

Still muttering under his breath about the evils of busybody Northerners and their meddling way he began to hand the sheets of paper to the Colonel who took them with an eagerness that matched my own to know what the people of this fine place thought I was worth. Would the outrage I had caused drive the price higher as some of the men I had insulted perhaps saw a chance to take their revenge if they could buy Me? I could not help but glance to Irish Rose who stood meekly to my left. If only she had not been my shadow on the viewing stands these last days surely I would have been the main prize. Yet with here there I feared that my slave features that I had received so many complements for in Boston might appear plain.

"Very fair" prices," the Colonel muttered with apparent surprise once he had leafed through several of the pages before him. Then he looked up at me and making sure I was meeting his gaze he went on.

"So fair in fact that I think it would be an insult not to consider!"

At this my heart began to beat a little faster and I could feel sweat begin to gather under each arm pit before twin streams of sweat began to run down my sides. He is having his fun, I told myself. Tomorrow I will be Elizabeth again and he will have to treat me accordingly. This is his last chance to teach me the lesson he thinks I so richly deserve.

Yet what if I had misjudged the man? I could not drive that nagging doubt from my mind. Had I put myself into the power of a man who might in truth sell me to the highest bidder?

"\$1,050 from Mr. Gibson, our friend from New Orleans." He shook his head in disbelief. "Why to receive a return on such a sum they would have to have you humping day and night. Perhaps you might welcome that."

I stiffened in a mixture of fear and anger. The thought of being sold to the whorehouse frightened me in a way that even the thought of going to the plantation did not. Perhaps it was because I had never known a man in that way. I had heard it said that it is easiest to fear the unknown.

What surprised me was that I felt some anger as well. Was the man blind? Did he not see the way my nipples were quick to pucker? Apple round breasts was how Cochran had described me to the Notary. Some of the other girls had larger breasts to be sure but my own were surely the firmest the most pert. And yet he thought me worth no more than just over a thousand dollars! I could not believe it.

"\$1200 from old Beechwood, eh?" the Colonel snorted. "Yes, he does enjoying cracking the whip across a white bottom. And there are few bottoms finer than Peaches!"

At this, my bottom cheeks clenched in anticipation, as I remembered Mr. Beecher from the ball: a sinewy man with a rose in his lapel that failed to hide his general odor of extreme cruelty.

“Ah this is a bit more like it. \$1,300 from Mr. Butler.”

I found that my own lips curled up in a measure of satisfaction equal to the Colonel. I remembered the man a Mr R Butler, his first name escaped me. He had carried himself with a natural arrogance that had done little for my opinion on the man but he had not been overly cruel in his inspections from what I could remember. There had been so many leering faces, so many probing hands it was hard after two days to remember who had done what.

My master chuckled. “Isn’t he engaged to that spitfire Scarlet?” he asked Cochran. The slave trader nodded and the Colonel laughed again.

“Miss Scarlet is not the sort to tolerate any rival. Why I declare if I sold you to Rhett Miss Scarlet would have you out in the fields servicing the bucks just to keep you away from her man.”

A frown burrowed across the Colonel’s face as he came to the end of the pile of offers. He began to recheck, flicking over the pages he had already glanced at apparently searching for something he may have overlooked. He shook his head when his scrutiny brought him back to the top of the bundle of papers.

“They are good to be sure but I half expected better, he muttered as he shut the folder with enough force to show his displeasure.

Mr. Cochran was at his side in an instant, the oily smile that he wore would not have looked out of place on a snake oil peddler. “But Colonel Rand, the offers only close at noon tomorrow. Some folk like to play their cards close to their chest and put in their offers at the very last minute after sounding out their rivals. And you cannot ignore the matter of...”

“Out with it man, the matter of what?” the Colonel roared when the other hesitated.

“I don’t mean to speak ill of your property Colonel but you have to agree the real prize here is Irish Rose.”

Oh how I would have liked to see him horse whipped at that moment. Yet as I dared another glance at the girl beside me I knew there was some merit to his words. When I had come here first I had been so certain that I would be star attraction, the slave wench that drove every man wild with desire. Surely they would pay a small fortune just to sample my charms. Yet the highest bid for me had been \$1,300 and Mr Cochran had said

himself the finest of stock might achieve a price of \$1,500. I had fallen far short of that, let alone the near two thousand that had been paid for the blond runaway.

The Colonel looked over at the girl beside me and I could see that he was considering the man's words with far more weight than I was comfortable with. Why did she have to be there, with her fair skin that made my olive hue seem so dark. Almost as if I had spent my life laboring the fields under the hot Mississippi sun.

Seeing that he had my master's attention and spotting the chance to drive the bidding for Irish Rose and his commission even higher Mr Cochran snatched up the crop which had become so familiar to me.

"Look at her Colonel and tell me that she is not a fine catch. Skin so milky white and silken to the touch. Why I am surprised that your wench was able to pass for as long as she did. Anyone can see that dark skin of hers could only be from some African savage. And compare their breasts"

The tip of the crop was brought up under my breast and used to lift it before he let it drop suddenly then Irish Rose received the same treatment. Her breast was indeed larger and even I could admire the way the flesh shuddered as it dropped back to her chest.

"Fine pink nipples compared to those dark cones," he went on. "And look at her hair, so fiery like a morning sunrise." Tucking the crop under his armpit he reached up and without having to be told Irish Rose obediently bent at the waist so that he could take hold of those red locks. Unlike my own tangled matted hair it seemed that she had been groomed like a prize mare. Her hair had known the brush and as he lifted several stands towards the Colonel to sniff, I was sure I detected the fragrance of sandalwood.

"Your own girl is ridden with lice," was the only comparison he cared to utter as he gestured at my tangled mane. The words cut like the lash for they were true. It was all I could do not to fidget and try to scratch at my scalp for it itched something fierce. It must have been that filthy cage that I had called home for my scalp was clean before I came here yet somehow lice now infested my hair and the terrible need to itch was driving me mad. They had even noted this on my registration papers. Peaches was a lice infested wench.

Despite myself I felt my head sink down until my chin rested on my chest. All my pride and presence had been deflated so quickly. Both Elizabeth and Peaches had one thing in common. Each thought themselves the belle of the ball. Now the bitter truth was being revealed and I could not escape it any more than I could escape my slave blood that forever tainted me.

Cochran was right. Irish Rose was the true beauty here and I a poor second. She was splendor and grace and scented beauty all rolled into one whereas I was the dirty grubby

lice ridden wench. She belonged in the house perhaps in the master's bed where as I, I belonged in the fields where my blunt features and crude countenance need not offend the gentle folk.

"Your wench is frisky I will grant you that, but look at Rose here. So meek, so obedient ready to serve in any position." He shifted his stance to address the girl directly. "Are you eager to please?"

With her eyes still respectfully downcast she replied with a "Yessa Massa,"

A grin spread across Mr Cochran as an idea suddenly occurred to him. "Shall we have a small test Colonel?" Let us see which of these two wenches creams up the fastest."

My mouth dropped open in shock and from the corner of my eye I saw my rival's lips twitch up into the barest hint of a satisfied smile even though her eyes never shifted from the stop on the floor she was fixed on.

Surely he could not be suggesting.... Then I dismissed my foolish notions. Of course he could. We were not people, we were animals expected to perform upon command. And I could feel prim and proper Elizabeth slip further into the back of my mind retreating from the very idea of making such a show of herself. Properly young women of breeding and education simply did not do such things even in the privacy of their bedrooms at night let alone before three men.

Peaches was there instead eager to impress the master by showing what she could do, eager to have her fingers down there and to feel that particular bitter sweat pleasure that only came when she was put through her paces. Peaches would show this girl, she would show them all. There couldn't be a more hot frisky wench than Peaches.

And of course the Colonel nodded his agreement as if there had ever been any doubt what he might decide.

"Shall we have a little wager between Gentlemen?" Mr Cochran asked. "Say One Hundred Dollars that Rose here will cream before your harlot?"

I saw the Colonel's eyes return to me studying me intently. He was not so drunk that he would risk money without first giving the matter some thought. I nodded and did not try to hide the eagerness from my face. I would show them. Peaches would cream up real good.

"Done," the Colonel agreed after a moment and there was a quick exchange of hands before Cochran took out his pocket watch.

When the second hand had reached twelve he snapped. "Begin."

My hands darted down to my legs like a plunging bird of prey and I began to rub for all I was worth. My lips there were soaking wet, so sticky but slippery at the same time and a small cry of frustration escaped me. If only I had more practice at this or I could use the crop. I tried to imagine what it had felt like to feel that stiff but pliant rod there and the memory helped. That tingling in my loins that now seemed a constant and pleasant companion intensified.

Other images flashed into my mind of being stripped before all the slaves who had served me at Sugar Oak perhaps made to please the bucks as the Colonel looked on. Perhaps being sent to fetch the local doctor and being forced to tell him from my knees that his down payment was to take me as he pleased with the balance to be paid by my flesh when he had seen to the needs of the plantation mistress. There were too many images to count as my imagination ran riot.

Yet the strongest image, the one that fueled my passion the most was also the most simple. How we must have looked, both slave girls standing with our legs apart as far as we could manage on the pedicel, with our hands grinding against our sex as we bucked our hips like wild beast rutting in the jungle. And the three men looking on amused grins on their faces as they offered a running comment of the skills and progress each wench displayed. We were debasing ourselves and all for their amusement.

I began to groan I could feel myself near the edge. That hot wicked pleasure was growing and growing like a river in flood about to burst its bank, to shatter the dam that strained to hold it back. I was so close now I could almost taste it as I threw back my head and exalted in the glory of my sexuality, in the ripeness of my hot quivering sex.

A scream of ecstasy sounded loudly around the nearly empty room, echoing off the walls and dumbly I realized that Irish Rose had come first. That fact meant something but I was far too lost in the heat of my lust to comprehend it. Then the crop landed against my hands with a loud crack, hard enough to grip my hands up clutching each other for comfort as I cried out in pain.

Ignoring the stinging pain I began to reach down again. I was so close, so very close all it would take was just a few more moments and...

"Get your hands out of that filthy honey pot," the Colonel roared and such was the anger in his voice that it cut through the haze of my arousal. I saw that he was holding a second crop, the one that he had used to whip away my hands.

I had failed. The realization hit me like a musket ball between the ribs, knocking the wind from my lungs. I could not believe it but a glance over at my rival confirmed it. The girl had her head thrown back, her long red hair like a streaming river of fire flowing down that

so perfectly smooth and milky white back. She was still bucking but her hips were slowing as she rode the way of passion and success.

I had failed. That simple fact descended upon me and I wanted to cry but greater was the demands of my sex. I was so close. Surely they would want to see how long it would take me to juice myself.

"Please massah, Peaches is juiced up something fierce. Peaches can cream..." I began desperate now for release. So desperate in fact that I began to lower my hands again towards my mound.

A look from my master stilled the motion. Why was he being so cruel? Could he not see that I had tried my best and I needed to cum. If he wanted to be rough I would not mind. Let his grate that crop between my legs as if he was going to saw me in half, anything but I could not be left hanging like this so close to release.

"I believe the bet was a hundred dollars," Mr Cochran reminded with some effort to sound diplomatic.

Without a word the Colonel dug into his coat pocket and began to peel off the bills before handing them over through gritted teeth. It could not be the amount. One hundred dollars was a considerable amount but it was pocked change to a man of the Colonel's wealth then it hit me. His pride had been wounded. He did not care much for Mr Cockren and he had now lost a wager to a man he judged an inferior.

The Colonel took a deep breath and then forced something akin to a smile back on his face. "It seems you were right about Irish Rose. Truly she is the prize here, no other wench can hope to compare to her."

"It is not too late to put a bid down. We can still accept new offers until noon tomorrow."

I began to see why Cochran was so successful in his chosen field. The man was a born salesman.

"It would take a might steep offer to secure her," the colonel mused. "Might high and all for some wet slit. I'm not so sure."

"Oh she is fit for far more than that," the slaver assured him as he moved closer. All trace of the hundred dollars were gone, secreted away into a pocket. Perhaps he did not want a reminder of the Colonel's defeat so visible as they bartered.

"That tight little porthole wriggles so when a man takes here there and as for that tongue. Why I might be tempted to buy her myself just to feel those ruby red lips wrap around my shaft."

The Colonel looked up to those lips and Rose puckered them before she opened them just wide enough to run the tip of her tongue around her lips in a slow sensuous motion. As I looked at her I realized that for all my false pride Peaches was a newborn in the art compared to this creature who had known from birth it was her place to please.

The Colonel rubbed his chin, the way he always did when deep in thought. "It's mighty tempting but the cost. Why I could probably get two if not more field hands for the price I would have to pay for her."

"Could a field hand give you all the pleasure this fine filly can?" Then he changed tack and immediately I felt a cold sliver of fear slide down my spine.

"If you were to sell Peaches here, she would make a fine down payment on Rose."

My master's gaze returned to me and I found that I could not read his intent no matter how hard I studied his expression. "That she would, and she did cost me a Hundred dollars."

He looked over at Rose and then back at me before going back to look at Rose. Not even during my registration process did I feel myself being so weighed and measured as I did now. Worse was the cold fear that had crept into my belly, the fear that I would be found wanting compared to the beauty on my left.

Then the Colonel nodded. "That seems a mighty fine idea to me. Put me down for a bid of Sixteen hundred dollars on Irish Rose. I'll think on selling Peaches overnight. If I'm not here by noon to withdraw here consider her sold to the highest bidder."

"Massah?" I began fearfully. I could not believe what he was saying. Was he joking, having one last jest at my expense? Yes that must be it. He knew that I had endured all that had happened over the last few days safe in the knowledge that Elizabeth would be safe and sound back in Sugar Oak come Sunday evening.

It was true that behind all my lurid fantasies, all my lust fueled imaginings was the safety net that this was not real. I might think of myself as a slave for the weekend. In fact I could act the wanton slave to my heart's desire without having to fear the terror of uncertainty that came with really being a chattel, a thing to be sold, leased or mortgaged.

It was a game and however many times I deluded myself that my title deed had been registered and certified I knew in my heart that I was safe.

How else could the Colonel teach me the lesson he thought I needed to learn that to pretend to really sell me? He was testing me, toying with my nerves before he lost his power and ability to do so.

Yet what if he was not?

"Silence wench," he growled. "Or I will accept Beechwood's offer and let his horsewhip teach you to mind your betters." Then he turned to Mr Cochran, dismissing my fear as immaterial.

"Have her shaved down below. Why would anyone buy the little sow if her twats infested with vermin?" he said, his voice oozing a disgust I could tell was genuine. "I'd shave her head, too, if I thought I'd get a nickel for her after."

"If it can be done see to it that those curls don't grow back, ill cover the cost. Perhaps if some folk can get a better look we might coax a few more dollars out of them for her scrawny hide. And see that she is restrained tonight, I don't want that lazy minx juicing herself when she is alone. If she can't do it when needed I'll not see her doing it for her own pleasure when my back is turned."

With a grin of a man who had just been handed everything he might ever have wanted Mr Cochran inclined his head. "I will see to it personally."

"Good, I've wasted enough time here as it is. Some gentlemen have been kind enough to invite me to join them for a night of wine women and song." And with that he thrust the folder with its stack of bid papers into the waiting hands of Mr Cochran. In his wake the Colonel left me feeling far more fearful and uncertain than I could ever remember in my short life.

A small smile began to appear on Mr Cochran's face as my master stormed away. As soon as he was certain the Colonel was gone I saw him reach into the inside pocket of his coat and withdraw a carefully folded letter, the sort that bids for a slave might be marked on.

What was this? Strain as I might I could see no detail beyond that there was some crest adorning the top of the page. Alas I could not make out the crest. What was apparent enough was the way Cochran smiled secretly to himself as his eyes flicked over the page ever so quickly before it was slipped into the mass of bids that my master had so recently considered. Then the folder was closed and for the briefest of moments I met the slave monger's gaze. There was a satisfaction there, the sort of contentment one might wear after successfully completing some challenging task. The sight of such emotions chilled me to the bone.

How can I describe that night or the events that were to follow? Even now they are burned into my memory, seared there for all time in more ways than one but I get ahead of myself.

My cage awaited me, but before I could be thrust within its confines for the night there was the matter of my master's orders to be attended to! Restrain her, he had bid them and restrained I was. I would never have credited that they could work with such effortless speed and yet be so effective. Practice, I decided could alone account for such skill.

In short order I was forced to the ground, face down and sturdy rope was brought to bare, wrapping first around my arm as they were bound behind my back. At first I thought that my wrists were simply to be bound together but such did not satisfy them and no sooner were my wrists secured that I felt more rope wrap around my arms just above my elbows.

I cried out in protest as the rope was pulled thigh for immediate my shoulders began to protest as my elbows were drawn closer together in the small of my back, closer than nature had ever intended.

At the sound of my pain I hear the assistant laugh and I knew that any further cry for relief or mercy was folly. Had I not learned by now that most of them cared nothing for the suffering that surrounded them and to a few such suffering was actually a sweet melody to inspire them to further depravity.

Then more rope was applied this time at my ankles and as soon as they were locked together the last measure of rope was used to bind my ankles to my wrists. If I had thought that my bondage was painful before I quickly learned that it was but an interlude, meant to whet the appetite for more of what was to come.

Even amid my discomfort I had my wits about me and was able to discern what had been done to me. I had been hog tied! Then rough strong arms picked me up as if I was so much ballast and I was thrust into my cage. I could not see the cage door shut but of course there was no escaping that ominous clang as metal met metal and then I was alone.

That stinking putrid cage with its rotting straw caked with dried piss and slave lust was no better the second night than the first. Last night some small measure of freedom had been left to me. Confined by the narrowness of the cage my options of movement had been limited but tonight there were none. All I could do was lie there with my face and nose thrust down into the rank straw with its mixture of dried piss and slave cum.

It did not take me long to realize that my bondage had indeed satisfied my master's demands. There would be no creaming tonight, no playful teasing as my fingers slipped into my wet oozing slit to set my heart pounding and my slave honey flowing.

Oh how cruel the Colonel had been. To drive me so close to the edge of release and then like Moses I had been given sight of the promised land only to be denied admission. My sex ached with the need to be touched, to feel my own fingers or even better the touch of my master or his crop.

To think that I might have fallen so low that I longed to have the Colonel return and probe my groin with his whip. If he had cause to let me have a few choice cracks across my meaty bottom cheeks in the process so much the better. Everything conspired against me. The fell of the rough straw stabbing against the tender flesh of my breasts or the inner slopes of my thighs, even the feel of the ropes, so rough but firm against my arms and legs drove me on.

I was living proof that slave blood drove all reason from the brain. All those years of education where I had learned to read and write, where I had studied the classics, all had been wasted. I was a slave in heat and as I lay there helpless to reach that final measure of pleasure I knew that it would have been far better had those wasted years been spent instructing me in how to please my master. For then surely I might have been rewarded with his whip between my legs and simply thinking of it brought a small grasp to my lips.

It was so easy to picture, the coiled whip, black as an adder cold to the touch pressed between my legs. Like a snake it would brush against all my secret places and in turn I would see to it that it was well oiled. My master would laugh as I bucked my hips back and forth but I would care little for I was a slave in heat and such actions were the birthright of my condition. A slave need not feel any shame from rutting like some barnyard hog, but however much that freedom beckoned I could not reach it and I knew that it was destined to remain just out of my reach for the balance of the night.

Perhaps it was only right. I had failed my master, failed to cream and that in turn had caused him to lose a considerable amount of money to a man who's company he endured but who he considered a social and moral inferior. With such failure heavy on my shoulders Peaches did not deserve to cream. She deserved only to lie there frustrated with pent up passions and needs that would not be met so as to drive the lesson home. Such failings could not be tolerated.

As the minutes passed and my blood cooled I could not help but wonder at the last few hours. Why had Cochran taken that bid from his pocket and slip it in with the rest of my papers? Why had he not shown it to the Colonel? It was clear that if it was a bid which he had received should he not have been duty bound to advise its contents to my master.

Such questions could not hold my attention for long however. There was a far more pressing query that returned over and over no matter how much I strove to drive it from my mind. Had my master been jesting, determined that I should learn one last lesson while it was in his power to teach it or had he spoken the truth?

"If I'm not here by noon to withdraw here consider her sold to the highest bidder."

Over and over I replayed that scene in my mind and each time I struggled to interpret that careful expressionless mask that had settled over his face as he had spoken those words. Surely he was not serious? Tomorrow evening we would both be back at his table and he would tease me over how I had looked so very afraid and timid as he uttered those words and I in turn would proclaim that I of course had known that he would never carry through with such a threat. To sell his own grand niece as if she was some mare he no longer had any time for. It was unthinkable.

Yet I could not escape the simple fact. I no longer quite saw him as my uncle, but rather as my master, the man whose every whim ruled my existence. What if a similar transformation might have occurred to in his own mind? What if he no longer saw Elizabeth Parker, the troublesome niece down from Boston who caused so much trouble with her ignorant Northern abolitionist ways? What if in his eyes I had become Peaches, the hot frisky slave ready to cream and fit only to be some master's fancy girl. Could he countenance having such a creature at his table as an equal, eating his food, drinking his wine when she deserved nothing more than to be crouched naked and in chains beneath the table as she wrapped her lips around his throbbing member and licked his shaft until she in turn could drink a hot sickly sweat vintage of his own making.

Over and over I wrestled with the problem. I would remember his words, fear that he had been pronouncing what was to be done with me and I too stupid to understand, and then reason would assure me that it could not be so. Tomorrow at noon he would appear. Perhaps if he wished to be particularly cruel or desired to drive the lesson home he would wait till the clock began to chime twelve before he would sweep in and declare that I was to be removed from the sale much to the consternation of Mr Cochran and those cads who had so groped and abused me in the expectations that I might soon be their property to do with as they pleased.

No sooner would I begin to relax and the pounding of my heart would slow to a more normal rhythm that that question would return like a thief in the night slipping darting from the dark terror filled recesses of my mind. What if he say me as Peaches the slave who he could not in good conscience keep for while a slave could claim no kinship with a white woman like my great aunt how embarrassing it would be for her to have me always within sight. How many times had we in the abolitionism movement heard the accounts of runaways who gave testimony of how some fair skinned slave born of their master's lust might be sold when the master's wife refused to have reminders of his habits loitering about the plantation. If a father could sell his own offspring how easier would it be for the Colonel, to spare his wife's blushes, sell me a woman only recently acquainted to him and not bound to him by the bonds of blood and family?

Over and over my mind played out these questions. For hours it seemed that I lay there wondering and when sleep finally came it was a fitful rest filled with dark nightmares of the gravel coming down with that final sentence that sealed my fate. "Sold to the highest bidder."

It was without a doubt a relief to see the assistants when they came for me in the morning. It no longer troubled me that such rough common brutes as these might see me naked. I had come to accept that they viewed it as part of their due that they could fondle my breasts or tickle my thatch or even deliver a quick slap to the rear whenever the fancy took them. At least they were a distraction to take my mind off that terrible uncertainty that gripped me.

I half expected that this morning would be a repletion of yesterday but this was not to be. They cut the ropes from my body and I cried out when my blood began to flow freely once more and terrible pins and needles stabbed at my limbs. Then I was taken not to the pit but to a small featureless chamber where a house slave awaited me.

There was no recognition in the woman's eyes even though she had been the one who had first greeted me and give me advice on how to act. Perhaps she did not recognize me for hundreds if not thousands of slaves might have passed through the market in her time here. Or perhaps she saw no reason to talk to a creature who would soon be gone never to be seen by her again.

The overseer ordered that I stand with my hands on my head and my legs outstretched as far as they would go. To spread my legs so wide for a strange man would have outraged me but a few short days ago but such was the transformation that had overtake me that I thought nothing of parting my legs. Apparently it was not enough.

"Dumb wench," he growled. "I said spread those legs and let's see that honey pot". A moment later his rod flashed out to raise a painful welt across the tops of my thighs. As predicted the welts I had received from the crop while being inspected and then tested in the yard had all but faded but I knew immediately that I would spend my last few hours on the viewing stand with a clear sign of how Peaches, the frisky slave still needed the whip to keep her in line.

"Yessa Massah," I cried out "Sorry Massah," How easily the dialect of a slave now rolled off my lips. I could have replied with a more formal 'Yes sir, sorry sir,' but I knew that this would only be a further sigh of me being uppity. Such mocking imitation of my betters could not be tolerated and could be answered by nothing less than the whip.

So it was I spread my legs until I thought that the muscles of my upper thighs would pull apart from the strain and I might split in two. When he was finally satisfied he gave a curt nod to the house slave and she began to wash me.

Perhaps wash me is not the best description for that implies hot soaking water and scented soap with damp cloths rubbing away the sweat and dirt that I had picked up. The water was lukewarm at best and the soap was carbolic. And in place of a damp cloth she used the sort of scrubbing brush that looked as if it would be better employed scouring the floors rather than the tender flesh of a young woman.

Oh how those bristles stung as she set to work. From neck to toe she set herself the task of scrubbing every iota of dirt and sweat and dried slave cream from my flesh. I could not help but gasp when those stiff bristles drove into my tender nipples but there was no hiding the grin that formed after the brush had moved on. I could see how my breasts had reacted, with my nipples standing proud and erect, two brave soldiers at attention and eager to do battle.

Then my arms were drawn down, scoured then I had to raise them to my head as the slave moved to below my waist. I would be most pleased to say that I abhorred the way the brush with its stiff unyielding bristles was brought to bear on my lower body but that would not be a true accounting. It was painful for no care was taken by the house slave to be gentle or careful. She moved with a steady speed. Yet when those bristles found their way onto my mons I felt both discomfort and excitement in the same breath.

Alas she did not linger there long enough for me to finish what I had started before the master with Irish Rose and was denied in the cage. Then the backs of my legs were done and my bottom cheeks. So that no area would escape I was bidden to bend over and grip my ankles and in such a humiliating pose my bottom cheeks were prized apart as far as nature would allow and my crack and the lips of my sex were the last to be purified.

There was no towel of course, for why should such considerations be given to a mere slave. Rather I was left to dry naturally. I confess I regretted the absence of a mirror for I would have loved to see how I looked standing there my skin freshly scrubbed with the wash water yet slick on my naked flesh. What would David have said if he saw me like this, my nipples still engorged as rivulets of cold water trickled down from my throat, down through the valley of my breasts, over my firm stomach to finally gather in the jungle between my legs.

While I dried I was not permitted to shift my position with my legs prized apart as far as could be managed and the house slave carried off her pail of water and her strict brush. Seeing the lust in the overseer's eyes I shivered and not from the feel of the cool fingers of water trickling all over my exposed flesh.

"I here your frisky," he remarked after a moment.

I knew better that to respond with anything other than a "Yessa Massah, Peaches be mighty frisky."

"Passed yourself off as white is the ways I hear it," he went on moving closer until I could feel his rank breath against my face. "Now what sort of place is this Boston where fancy girls are tough to read and write so they can spread all those lies about us southern folk?"

From his rough features and accent I guessed that he was not one of the great planters but rather much more common. Yet at this moment however meager his circumstances he occupied the heavens while I languished far below him. He was free and I but a slave. Again it burned that my condition had been so reduced. Why not two three days past had we met I would have expected him to bow before me where as if he were fortunate I might simply acknowledge his existence with an imperious glance.

"Well, answer me wench,"

I bowed my head lower anxious now not to attract further ire. "Isa don't know Massah. Peaches is just a stupid fancy girl. Isa don't know no better Massah."

It seemed my reply pleased him for his switch stayed at his side. Instead his free hand darted between my legs and I felt his fingers curl around my patch there. He tugged at the tuft of hair he had hold of just short of yanking out my hair with his hand.

"This here dirty little patch is a coming off. Let everyone see if you are frisky. Lets see..."

His fingers stabbed into my sex and immediately I could feel how rough and covered in hard calluses his hands were. This brute would have counted himself fortunate to be a stable boy in my home in Boston yet now almost by instinct I thrust my hips forward then back so that my slick sex could rub against those fingers.

For a minute or more he did not move keeping his hand between my legs as I ground my groin against him. Oh I so needed to cum.

"Why your nothing but a dirty humping whore, aren't you?"

"Yessa Massah. Peaches likes humping," I did not care how I sounded, how the words were the truth. Ever since I had been denied last night I knew that I needed some relief. That fire that was raging between my legs demanded nothing less.

"No need for the water," he said and with a start I realized that I had never noticed the house slave return with a small brush and razor as well as a glove and some sort of salve. "She is lathered up already."

With a little laugh he pulled his hand away and I groaned in disappointment. If only he could keep his hand there just a bit longer! Instead he held up his hand with his first two fingers glistening with my juices. Then with a slow deliberate motion he began to lick those fingers dry. Was I never to be allowed to please myself? Was this to be my punishment for causing my master to lose the hundred dollars?

Kneeling before me the slave said nothing as she took the brush and not withstanding the overseer's comments she proceeded to work up a fine lather all over my mound and between my legs. I could scarce breathe when she started to work with the razor. It shone so brightly and looked so very sharp. Why a simple slip of the hand could ruin me all together.

The master had said I was to be shaved and I felt my face turn bright red at the very idea. I could not remember what it was like to look down there and not see the dark forest of my patch. The last defense a woman had to guard her modesty and mine was being sheared away stroke by stroke.

The slave knew her craft, I will grant her that. Several times she stopped to clean the razor before lathering some other area that she was not satisfied with. Then the razor would soon follow. I had thought that perhaps only my mound might be shaved but no area was too spared, no nook or cranny too well hidden to escape the razor.

I had thought her nearly done when I was ordered to bend over and grip my ankles. Such a posture was so very difficult to keep and I could feel the muscles of my calves and the backs of my legs tremble and shudder with the strain but somehow I kept my position.

Of course the overseer could not allow such an opportunity to pass him by and he moved to my rear. There he was graced with a perfect view of not only the ripe curves of my bottom but the lips of my sex and the puckered clenching orifice that was my anus.

Again my mind and body betrayed me. As I felt the slave take hold of the lips of my sex so that she could reach some errant hairs my mind returned to the accounts of escaped slaves I had heard. One of my very first duties in assisting my mother had been to take down the details of a poor slave who serviced her master in the most obscene manner. Anxious not to have any bastard offspring for fear of the scandal it might cause this gentleman had developed the practice of having his slave wench kneel on all fours, legs well spaced and her back arches to provide ready access. Then in the manner of the dog that he was he would take her from behind thrusting his manhood into her snug back package, over and over until his lust was spent and his seed trickled down her naked thighs.

In this way he ensured that no seed of his would ever take root and return to haunt him in nine months later. Strangely the slave had said her master was a kind man. Before each night she was permitted to visit the cook and take a dollop of bacon grease to ease the passage of his shaft in her rear. If her master was pleased with her he would sometimes send her back to the kitchen and there with his seed still glistening against her flanks she might beg a portion of the bacon itself from the cook.

Most masters were not so generous either with the grease or the bacon later, or so she told us. I could remember it well for my dear sweet mother felt it important for the cause that we record ever single detail of the encounter. No element however small of the tale could be allowed to escape scrutiny even if the slave was hoarse with the recounting of the story, over and over. Safe in the knowledge that such inquiry were for the cause of freedom and justice I took extensive notes and so that I might better be armed to speak on the abolitionism cause I even sacrificed sleep as I lay abed at night with my notes to hand flickering in the candlelight.

The colonel was particularly fond of bacon as I recalled but after I had disgraced him in the wager I wondered if he would see his way to show me kindness if I was still his slave. Yes, I decided, he was a kind man after all. I would be sent to the kitchen. I could only guess at the shame I would feel at having to ask for the grease, for I could not simply look for it. I would have to explain to the cook what it was needed for. And I would need help of course. I might even have to bend over as I was now holding my bottom cheeks prized apart with my own hands so that the cook could work it in real good. And all the while the kitchen helpers would be looking on.

Only when I was well greased could I scamper back through the house to where the colonel was waiting. If I took too long to return it would be the crop for me and I would take position first as he raked my fanny with the riding whip. Why my stripes would be fresh

and stinging something fierce when I felt his body press against my bottom and then his shaft would slide into that snug dark purse where he would deposit his treasure.

Even if I had been whipped I felt certain that he would be kind. I would kneel by his chair as he took his breakfast. He would take his time of course for breakfast cannot be rushed and I, I would clench my bottom cheeks together as tightly as I could as his hot seed rolled around inside my back passage. I could not let any of it escape beyond perhaps a trickle on my flanks and thighs. As long as it dried there I was safe but if any fell to the floor, staining the fine Persian rug or the polished Maplewood of the floor I might be consigned to the fields for a week or more.

But of course that would never happen for Peaches was a good wench and knew to keep her master's seed safe and sound. And if she had given good service when at last the Colonel had finished breaking his fast he would throw the scrap of bacon to tough to finish that remained on his plate and I would devour the salty succulent meat.

A slap to my bottom roused me from my imaginations and regretfully I straightened. The rest of my body had dried but I was so wet there, so tense from the shaving brush and the feel of the house slave's impersonal fingers that I could not help myself by give a brief cry of frustration, must to the amusement of the overseer.

And then I saw my mount and what a sight it was. All my hair all my private curls were gone, stripped away by the sharp razor and the skill of the slave. I could not believe how smooth I looked, how very, very open and vulnerable. Why there was no hiding the lips of my sex and as I bent over to stare in wonder and amazement I could see those lips pucker and swell with my excitement.

Oh I felt such shame. The last covering that nature had given me was gone and now I felt truly and utterly naked. There could be no hiding my loins now the forest had been cleared and the ground was ready to be plowed.

Yet at the same time I felt a measure of satisfaction even pride. I could see those swollen lips glisten with my honeyed juices. Peaches might not have creamed as fast as Irish Rose, but there could never be any doubt that she was frisky and ready to serve. A single glance between my thighs would make that apparent to all but the blind and they would have a clear run to feel what their deadened eyes could not see. At least until my hair began to grow back for I knew that just a man might trim his beard each day if left unattended the hair would always return.

I would enjoy this feeling even when I left this place. In fact I could not wait to see how it would feel to be so bare beneath my drawers and petticoat. And even if Peaches had to

come to an end soon Elizabeth could allow herself this one indulgence until her forest re grew burying the last vestige of Peaches.

For a moment I was allowed to study what had been done to me but before I could run my fingers over the smooth contours of my newly denuded mount I was ordered to cross my wrists behind my back and as soon as I had done so I felt him wrap a strip of leather around my wrists. He pulled the leather strip tight and knotted it securely leaving my hands crossed over the swell of my bottom.

Then the house slave took to work again. This time she donned an old leather glove, worn and stained from long use and using then using this glove she scooped up a great amount of what seemed to be a creamy salve from a small jar. With the same care she had used to shave me she began to spread it over all the areas the razor had visited.

From my waist to down between my legs and up the crack of my ass she covered me in this cream. It was cool to the touch at first but cool as in a gentle summer's breeze rather than the biting frost of winter. That was to change soon for as if it were reacting to the heat of my body it began to grow at first pleasantly warm. It put me in mind of how wonderful it had felt to slip into a freshly drawn warm bath that had been allowed to cool just long enough to be comfortable without either scalding the flesh or chilling it.

Minutes passed and the heat grew hotter and hotter until it had turned into a burning inferno to rival the blaze evoked when my plump bottom had oiled the strap my first night here. I howled and cried for with my hands secured there was nothing I could do to rub or scrape the cream away. The house slave simply stood out of the way waiting and the overseer, he laughed and suggested that I should dance.

And dance I did. It was almost as if I was back in the yard with the young mulatto fiddler striking up a merry tune. I shifted my legs into the air one at a time all in a vain effort to rub some of that cream from my no longer secret place on to the sides of my legs. Over and back, up and down I shuffled, dance and leapt to no avail.

I cannot say I long I endured this agony for it was in truth far worse than the strapping I had earned myself. The strap had burned and stung and mastered me immediately but at least it had left some areas of my most tender regions alone. The house slave had gone to great length to ensure that the dreadful salve was everywhere.

At last I was given relief and taking a small towel she began to rub me clean. It was only later that I learned the reason for the cream. In the midst of my agony I thought it might be a punishment or perhaps applied to see how I could dance to the delight of the bidders with the overseer a trail audience. Nothing could be further from the truth thought I do not doubt he enjoyed the show. Instead the pain I had felt was the cream seeping into my

very pours and attacking the roots of my pubic hair. That burning had been their death throws thought I knew it not at the time. It was only as the days turned to weeks and no fresh growth sprouted that I realized the terrible truth. Never again would I possess the covering of a proper woman. Until the day I died if I were ever to remove my drawers I would be hence force doubly naked.

When the cream was brushed away and my hands freed I tried to comfort myself as best I could but there was no chance of pleasure now. I felt far too sore down there for any such delights.

Then scratching my head for the umpteenth time I dared greatly and asked. "Massah, Peaches hair is mighty dirty and itches something fierce."

The overseer peered down on the crown of my head and quickly ran his fingers through my long black tresses that had grown slick with grease for the want of a wash. He could not have failed to see the nits.

"Lord almighty, your swimming in lice," he proclaimed and quickly stepped away lest he become similarly contaminated. Then his lips parted in an amused grin. "That's what you get if you lie down in dirty bedding. Dirty vixen"

The injustice of it. Here I was being blamed for the condition of my hair and all the while it was from that filthy cell to which I had been confined. I had been given no choice where I was put to rest each night nor was my opinion sought on the state of the straw bedding and the stains that covered both the straw and the stone. And yet I knew that like so much else the fact that I could not groom myself would be used to justify my enslavement.

I know not what vial concoction it was that was mixed with the bucket of cold water that was brought but the smell was memorable for all the wrong reasons and how it stung on my scalp when I ducked my head into the pale. Several such treatments might be required if the condition was to be stamped out, or so the house slave warned as I finished. At least my hair was somewhat cleaner if still not any less tangled.

Standing on the pedicel without the covering of my hair I was sure and certain I felt some errant breeze brush past my now very sensitive mount. The room was closed, no open window to be seen yet I could not shake the feeling.

Viewing was slow today, far slower than yesterday and a glance at the clock told me why. Most of the more upright folk would be at church listen to the pastor preach on the good book. The less virtuous were probably still abed perhaps nursing a pounding head from a night of overindulgences.

Another small tremor ran through me as I recalled my master's last's words. The Colonel had said he was for the town and a night of 'wine, women and song'. My eyes flashed back to the clock across the room. 10.30 and no sign of the Colonel.

It was early yet, I told myself as I struggled to control the small sliver of panic that was threatening my composure. The Colonel might only be rising if he had decided that his soul could withstand the absence of the good Reverend's Jackson and his thundering sermons. I had been forced to listen to the man and I had wondered if my bottom would ever recover from the rigors of sitting so long on the hard wooden seat as he raised the roof of the church tallying against the heathen northern abolitionists who strove to undermine God's ordained state of slavery.

And if the Colonel had attended the service might some new outrage have awoken the wrath of Reverend Jackson? It was the Colonels practice to sit to the front so that he might better hear or so he claimed. I suspected that a great many slave owners sat there so that all could see they were godly men, at least on Sunday, at service. Such was the force of the preacher's voice I suspected one might have heard his sermon in the next parish if not the next state.

If the sermon dragged on overlong would the Colonel dare rise while the Reverend was in mid flow? The entire congregation would see him leaving and what excuse could he give for such poor manors? That he had to stop his slave from being sold to a master who might teach her discipline and obedience? It hardly seemed cause enough to leave off from the ministering of his soul.

No sooner had that idea occurred to me that I had a picture of another calamity and then another. What if the colonel's carriage lost a wheel? Might that not delay him? If he chose to ride as he sometimes liked some serpent might appear to spook his mount and throw him. He might be injured, concussed and the good people of the city would of course take him immediate to the care of a doctor. But what of poor Elizabeth Parker standing now as naked at the day she was born with her fate hanging by a delicate thread indeed?

Again I glanced at the clock and with horror realized that half an hour had passed and it was now 11 O'clock. The chimes of the timepiece had never sounded as loud to my nervous ears. Eleven I had but one hour remaining, one hour before the chance for fresh bids closed and the owners would return to consider what bids their possessions had warranted and contemplate how much fattened would their bloated accounts be by the disposal of unwanted slaves.

Not so with me. The Colonel's orders had been clear. There was to be no debate, no careful study over the merits of each offer. I did not merit such thought. I was to be sold, cast to the mercy of the auction and delivered to what ever man or beast was prepared to part with the most money.

I could not help but remember how his breath had stank of whiskey even before he left. A hard drinker, and no longer young, perhaps the Colonel lay abed in a drunken stupor in his town house. His house slaves would be there and his fancy girls but would they dare rouse the sleeping master. Like any man after a night of hard drinking the Colonel could

be irritable when the morning came and they were roused from their slumbers. What slave would dare risk a whipping simply so that another slave would not be sold?

No, I knew with certainty that would not happen. Born and bred in this system the slaves knew through bitter experience that they were but chattels to be bartered or sold as their master saw fit. The bonds of husband and wife were irrelevant as were those of parent and child. How often had they heard of a small boy or girl being torn from its screaming mother as it was dragged off to market like a calf or fowl? Any of them might find themselves sent here to be disposed of or perhaps shipped down river to New Orleans and the great slave blocks there. No slave would risk the master's wrath to stop what to them must have seemed the natural order.

The clock gave but a single chime to signal the half hour mark but I nearly leapt from the cold marble at the sound. 11.30. There was but half an hour remaining. Half an hour!

It took two strokes of the crop across my front before I realized that a straggler wished to inspect me. It was all I could do pull my eyes from the ticking clock and focus on the demands of this potential bidder come late to the show.

"Clearly dull witted," he told another man who was with him. I did not recognize either man or if I did I could not summon up the memory for my mind was a cauldron of fear and hope and imagination gone wild. Where was the Colonel? Was he coming at all?

"But good hips," the friend countered. I did not even blush as they ordered that I should take the folds of my sex and prize them apart so that my petals could be opened and my purity established.

"A good breeder," was the agreed consensus after nearly ten minutes of debate between the two. Apparently it was to my credit that I took my intimate handling so well, never blushing or demurring as some slaves who pretended modesty were apt to behave. Did they not see that I cared nothing for them, they were a distraction at most. Let them grope as they wished only please do not come between my line of sight and the clock as it ticked down.

Left and right I looked, examining every face every man who so much as popped their head into the room. It need not be the Colonel, perhaps he would send another in his place. I saw Mr Cochran slide into the room like the oily toad he was. With arms folded across his chest he took up position on the far side of the room and almost immediately became engaged in conversation with other gentlemen who had completed their inspections. My gaze swept across the room and came to the far end without sight of anything that might give me hope. A glance to the clock and then it I was looking back the way I had come, straining, searching for any sign, any hint that might offer some hope of salvation.

11.50. Never had the hands of a clock seemed to me to move so fast. Surely the mechanism must have been faulty for time did not pass so quickly. As I watched the face through the clear glass I would have sworn on the holy bible that the hands were racing around that dial.

I was wet again but this was not the harm honey of my sex stoked by wicked excitement. This was perspiration evoked by a growing sense of panic. Where was the Colonel? I tried to tell myself that he would not allow anything to befall me but growing doubt gnawed at my stomach and heart. My brow was glistening and from the volumes of sweat trickling down over my ribs from my armpits I wondered if the great falls of Niagra had uprooted and made their home in my armpits.

11.55. Still there was no sign and I tried to rationalize what might be going through the Colonel's mind. He need not come in person, it would be enough to send a note, a message, any script bearing his signature and seal. Once delivered into the hands of the market and its manager Mr Cochran it would be sufficient to withdraw me from sale. That did not mean that I would be taken down any earlier. No the Colonel would want me to sweat, to feel my heart pound out like a panicked drum. Yet I could see no messenger arrive, frantic that their missive be accepted before the appointed hour.

11.56. Perhaps it was delivered earlier before I saw Mr Cochrane enter. Had I not seen him carry notes in the inside pockets of his jacket? Might my salvation not rest there even as my blood surged and my heart raced so loudly that I feared my heart might leap from my chest.

11.57 David might come. He was rich or so he said and I had no reason to doubt his word on the matter. Ill gotten gains or not he had taken the returns that he had earned from his smuggling ventures and invested them in steel and railways so that he now possessed a considerable fortune. And it was a fortune of coin, of money on account. So many of the peacocks who pranced through the parlor in the last few days were accounted rich but their money was in the value of their slaves, on the return their cotton might bring. On the strength of these they borrowed and traded. Why even slaves could be mortgaged like any other chattel but if pressed how many of these planters could lay their hands on hard gold. Given time they might leverage some assets but if the time was short and the sum great they might find themselves just as helpless as the poorest beggar on the streets.

It would be a story to be told over and over, how the great and terrible smuggler captain arrived at the last moment to defeat the evil slave trader and rescue his true love. It would be the stuff of legends and the telling would bring thunderous applause as the audience climbed to their feet.

There was no sign of David, and I knew in my heart that there would be none. Had I not made it clear to him that this was a venture I intended to see through to the end. I had been so buoyed up by the knowledge that we could be together, that he did not care if I had tainted slave blood flowing in my veins that I had felt sure I could conquer this retched institution.

11. 58 I had been a fool. I should never have trust the Colonel or fate to see me safe. How difficult would it have been for me to ask that David remain close by so that if anything were to go awry he would be there to see me safe and free. But I had sent him

on his way. He might well have returned to Boston, and his interests there expecting to call on me when returned home.

11.59. Tick tock, tick tock. My hands were trembling so badly that I had to hold them together behind my back for fear that anyone would see. I felt a great warmth on the inside of my right thigh and when I looked down I saw in horror that I had wet myself. Hot steaming pungent urine was trickling down my thigh to gather on the cold marble. I should have been mortified, humiliated beyond all measure.

Yet all I felt was a desperate sense of fear and panic. The room had grown sweltering hot without any reason and the air, it was so very hard to get air into my lungs. My breathing came in short brief gasps but with each gulp I felt the need for oxygen grew more intense rather than diminish. Surely my heart could not continue to beat at this pace. It must give out soon like a spent horse driven past exhaustion to oblivion. If it were to stop I felt it would be a mercy. How could anyone endure such fear and hope to go on with their lives? Perhaps now only at the end did I understand the real existence of a slave. To live in constant fear without hope beyond that death would bring a kinder existence.

Watching the hands of the clock turn, ticking away the last few seconds to my doom I saw all my plans all plots fall apart. I had misjudged the colonel badly. I had taken him for a hide bound traditionalist who could not see that the institution in which he had been reared and nurtured was poisoned at the core, a poison that seeped into the very soul of the nation. Yet I had thought him a man of honor, a man who once his word was given would die to keep any pledge made, any promise given. He had proved himself a capable tactician but for all that he was not a devious man. If the Colonel saw an enemy his way was the open challenge, the honest contest of bone steel and sinew. He was not a plotter and schemer. Why had I not been the one required to work out the details of our plan? Or had I been played by a far more dangerous player of the game that I had given him credit for.

It seemed so. How amused he must have been, how he would have struggled to keep a straight face and hold back his laughter as thought out our little charade I seemed so self assured and confident all the while I walked willingly and openly without coercion to the doom engineered for me. I might as well have built my own gallows, tied the hanging knot and wrapped it around my neck before handing the end to a sworn enemy.

The clock began to chime. One, two, three, four each tolling out my doom. From the corner of my eye I saw someone enter the room and for an instant I felt renewed hope only for it to dash on bitter rocks as I saw it was a slave come with a brandy and cigar for some owner waiting for proceedings to close.

Seven, eight, nine. Mr Cochran had taken out his pocket watch and flipped it open almost as if he feared that there might be some discrepancy with the clock. Ten, eleven, Twelve!

For a moment there was a hush in the room as the last chime echoed before it died away. Mr Cochran flipped the cover of his pocket watch back into place and let the device slide back into his waist coat pocket.

“Gentleman, it is now Sunday noon and all offers on our current lot of merchandise is now closed.”

As soon as conversations resumed the slaves on display began to climb down from the pedicles and shuffle under the guard of the overseers to the holding pens. There they would wait until their owners decided if any bids were sufficient to part with them. With my feet still slick with my own fear driven pee I all but lept to the floor. Perhaps if I could mingle with them, slip away before anyone noticed the Colonel might yet appear, he might yet change his mind and show mercy.

Or perhaps once free of this room I might shuffle forward to the yard head down, obedient a slave resigned to her fate but once the courtyard beckoned I would run, flee into the city as fast as my bare feet could carry me. If needs be I would leap into the great Mississippi river so that I could make good my escape. They were foolish thoughts but fear clouded my mind and dulled my senses. Where could I go naked as I was? How far could I run without shoes? Could I even survive the mighty river and if I did what reason did I have to believe that my fate would be any kinder when I washed up to shore.

Then Mr Cochran’s voice sounded out for he has seen me trying to flee and he gave his orders to one of his assistants, words I dreaded to hear. “The slave Peaches has been sold. Secure her while I have her owners papers sealed.”

The slave Peaches has been sold. As the realization struck I felt the world go dark and I knew nothing more as I tumbled to the ground.

The horror that came next and with it the pain haunts me to this day. Even after years had passed I will still awaken in the middle of the night my body covered in the sweat of night terrors whimpering "Please don't brand Peaches, Peaches be good Massah."

Yet I have promised to give a true accounting of those dreadful events and how else might gentle men and women far removed from Forks in the Road and the plantations learn of the terrible cruelty practiced on our brothers in sisters in the cause.

"Rise and shine, princess," an unfamiliar voice called out as I began slowly to return to myself. A moment later any last vestiges of blessed sleep were snatched from my grasp as a bucket of icy cold well water was dumped liberally over my prone form. Looking up I was left shuddering and gasping under the impact of the water.

For a second I still thought that I was far away, back safe and sound in dear Boston but then the reality of my surroundings set in and I saw that while I was unconscious I had not traveled far at all for I now lay in the all too familiar yard where I had first been raced so that my papers might better reflect my abilities and attributes.

One might have thought that on a Sunday, the Lord's Day of Rest there would be little activity here but a great many slaves had been sold and there were formalities to be observed.

A second later, apparently deciding that I was disobedient in my slowness to respond the speaker of the voice raised his switch and brought it down full force against the vulnerable curves of my bottom so exposed as I lay face down on the ground.

I had thought I had felt the switch before and taken its measure but I was to learn that what I had known were but taps, lover's caress compared to what I would henceforth face. Oh those first strokes had hurt but in my sheltered ignorance never having faced the switch or the paddle at home I felt as if my world would end at another stroke. I had been a fool for while a fancy girl was being offered for sale care would be taken not to unduly mark her skin so as to reduce her value.

Now that I had been sold I was afforded no such considerations. Even thinking of what had happened, I had been sold, was enough to make me shudder and feel ill. Yet when I felt that switch slice into my tender bottom cheeks I howled and cried and immediately scrambled to my feet clutching my bottom cheeks as I danced from foot to foot at the pain. How could anything hurt so much, it had felt as if that rod had near cut me in two?

"Look at the randy wench dance," the all too familiar voice of Mr. Cochran remarked. "Did I not tell you she was a lively little monkey?"

Still clutching my bottom I turned to the source of his voice all the while keeping an eye on the overseer who seemed to be new, or at least I had not encountered him before. He was a giant of a man and from the way he held the rod which in his great hands almost

resembled a small twig, I could tell he would not be sorry if occasion granted him further cause to add more stripes to my lazy ass.

There indeed was Mr. Cochran, sitting at a small table taking his ease as he sipped from a glass of some liquid which I very much doubted was sarsaparilla. There were several stacks of formal looking papers beside him together with the usual instruments of writing and several seals but it was his companion that drew my attention.

There sitting at his side, sipping English tea in a fine porcelain cup was the hated Emily Davis. I saw her glance towards me as she raised the cup again to her lips and there was no missing the pleasure I saw in her eye at the sight of me naked as a jaybird and dripping wet from the water used to rouse me.

"I do declare Mr Cochran, these nigras are a lazy bunch, why I can scarcely get a day's work out of their indolent hides without taking the whip to them."

"A common complaint," Mr Cochran agreed as if he had ever known a day's honest labor under the blazing sun of Mississippi.

"Well with the money I paid for this little wench, she best be delivering or Ill see her in the fields servicing the bucks." Her lips twitched in a small smile and while she was looking at her companion at the table I could see how her eyes occasionally twitched to my direction.

Then the import of her words sank in and I realized that I now stood before my new owner. How could the fates be so cruel? Of all the people into whose hands I might fall why did it have to be her?

From the first day I saw her she had made me uneasy, so tall and graceful like a slender willow. Like me her hair was dark and drawn back to leave the perfection of her face plain to see. And those eyes, a crisp light blue that could sparkle one moment or chill to the bone the next. And now she was my owner! Almost instinctively I brought my hands around before me trying desperately to cover my nakedness.

With my mound shaved bare I felt doubly naked before this woman who looked so very magnificent in her scarlet dress. Oh what would I not have given for some dress, some scrap of garment to cover my nakedness. She was a goddess secure in her power and position and I the naked fearful wretch finally come before the throne of Judgment finally to be judged for my many faults and flaws, for the taint of my black blood and frisky ways.

As the realization of who my new owner was crossed my face I could see her smile widen for a minute then she looked to the overseer. It was but a glance but immediately the switch fell again, slicing deep and true just above where the first had fallen.

"Don't you be eyeballing Miss Davis," he growled and he drew back the switch as if to deliver a third blow.

Heedless of my shaved mound of how I looked to my new mistress I clutched my bottom in a vain effort to ease the pain of that stripe and to guard against any others.

"Please massah' I cried as tears from the pain welled up in my eyes. "Peaches is sorry, Peaches don't know no better." How easily I slipped into the dialect and speech of the slaves but I knew that proper English would be but a further sign of my uppity rebellious nature and that it would not end well for me or my bottom which was already throbbing painfully.

"I have her papers ready," Mr Cochran said as he held up a formal looking document, one of many that lay before him. "Its all done, signed and certified. She's your animal now bought and paid for in full." Then he reached for more documents, a considerable pile by the looks of it. "And the copies you have requested. There must be enough here to give out to half the state," he added with a little chuckle.

Miss Davis looked over at me and despite the warmth of the sun on my naked flesh I shivered. I felt so very small before her, almost like an ignorant child before her governess but I knew that it was far worse. I was her property now, her living chattel to do with as she pleased. For as long as she owned me her whim would be the law of my existence and there would be no playing games as with the Colonel. There would only be a demand for obedience and I suspected a certain pleasure for Miss Davis as she watched me slide further and further into my new role until finally I was a slave not only both in body and law but in mind as well.

"Would you like to see your papers?" she asked addressing me for the first time directly. "I know that you nigra's can't read or write but you can look at the pretty pictures."

Seeing my desire she he held up one of the forms between her first two fingers and then even thought she must have been familiar with the contents reading it again brought a fresh smile to her face. I could not help but shift my weight from foot to foot with impatience. I so wanted to see my papers. I was almost hopping with pent up excitement and dread. What would they say? How would I be described? Would they say how much I was worth? These and a dozen other questions raced around in my head.

As I shifted I could feel my breasts begin to sway and not wanting to make more of a show of myself I forced myself to go still.

"Don't stop princes, dance those titties," the overseer urged in a low voice that would not carry to the table and I bowed my head in the shame of it.

"A pity the Colonel is not here to see her off," Mr. Cochran said with undisguised mockery.

This quip brought another chuckle from my owner. "Oh I fear Colonel Rand is indisposed." She shook her head in mock sympathy. "I fear that some fellow of low

intent may well have slipped some brew or concoction into his drink last night. Why I would not be surprised if he does not stumble awake for a few hours yet."

My mouth dropped open but a glance over my shoulder to the overseer who held that switch poised to deliver yet another brisk cut to my ass at the slightest hint of rebellion I wisely closed it again.

The Colonel had not betrayed me! Like me he was a victim of this venomous spider who had spun her web and trapped us all. There was open triumph on her face as she finally slid my slave papers across the table. I shot forward as fast as my bare feet could carry me and all but snatched up the page.

It was embossed and sealed and had all the formalities that the law required. My hands shivered as I started to read, taking in every detail. My slave name, my measurements all described in intimate detail. Even my mother was named, though I frowned when I saw how she was described as an escaped slave at large in Boston. Even the grandfather of whom so little was known was described. I flushed when I saw how I was described as frisky and even in my degradation this was enough to bring a small-pleased smile to my lips. My satisfaction was short lived for I was described as lazy and most ominously said I would work if whipped.

And then my eyes reached the last part and my blood ran cold in my veins. In utter shock I looked up to my owner desperately searching for some sign that this was a joke, a piece of paper put together to show me my proper place. In a way it was, but as I looked into those cool eyes I knew in my heart that this was no cruel jest.

Emily's eyes narrowed as she smiled a cruel smile. "Mr. Cochran suggested I add my family crest to the bottom of the certificate, so if you run away the slave catchers will know what your brand looks like. I like the term "mons pubis", but Mr. Cochran was concerned the Sheriff or the slave hounds might not know Latin. He wrote a more prosaic description, in bright blue letters, telling everyone exactly where to look."

I stared at the document in horror. The words "Pussy Branded" were scrawled in bright blue ink at the bottom of my form, in huge letters, with an arrow pointing to my shameful brand.

"Of course everyman I show the form to is going to want to see it," she giggled. "I imagine it will be quite the conversation piece. You should be quite honored, Peaches. I don't brand every wench. The Davis brand marks you as Grade A sugar meat."

"And of course every time she spread her legs there will be no doubt in who ever takes her that she is a common slave no matter who she might pretend to be some high and mighty lady, added Mr Cochran.

I could not breathe and my eyes were riveted to the bottom of the Certificate. No effort had been spared to ensure that the brand was fully described. A two sided axe that was called a Labrys and flanking it with graceful text were the letters *C* and *D*.

I was to be branded! Of course we heard of such things, I had in fact seen the ravaged flesh of escaped slaves, where the hot iron had been pressed to give them their mark. Yet never in my most feverish of imaginations had I ever thought that I would join the long list of women who had known its touch. By all accounts nothing could quite compare to the agony of the branding iron for a slave wench could still be moved to tears years later at the mere mention of the iron.

And the location, my 'mons pubis', my shaved mound or as Mr. Cochran put it with his southern eloquence 'pussy brand'. Of how cruel to mark that most tender and sensitive region of my body. I would not have welcomed the iron to any of my flesh but least of all my tender sex. Mr. Cochran was correct. Even if I somehow achieved the impossible and escaped and was able once again to pass as white, I would be undone in the very act of passion for there would be no concealing the brand.

I cast my gaze to my mistress for my fate now rested in her hands and even as I began I feared that I knew the answer. Yet I had to try, I could not go to my branding without some effort to escape.

"Please Miss Davis, Please don't brand me. I will be good I promise. I will be the best slave you ever had, I will work hard and never complain or try to run away and...and if you send word to Boston to my father he will pay you for my release. Please."

Emily shook her head sadly then reached down on the table and lifted up a small pamphlet. As soon as I saw it I recognized it for at least half of it had been penned by myself the other by my mother and sister.

"Just as it is the duty of all right thinking men and women to aid the brave soul who flees from their bondage," Ms Davis began reading from the text before her. "It is the duty of every slave to strive ever for freedom for on the day that they accept the condition of slavery they give that more peculiar of institutions a legitimacy it does not deserve."

She lowered the pamphlet again and handed it over to Mr. Cochran, finishing without having to look at the page. "A byword by Miss Elizabeth Parker."

He took the booklet for a second then cast it aside in much the same way some one might if handed a dead rotting snake. "Nigra's," he spat. "Lying little monkeys you can't trust a word out of their mouths."

Miss Davis looked down at the cup before her as if suddenly had great interest to her and then in such a casual way asked. "Are you thinking of running away Peaches? Thinking of stealing my property?"

I shook my head in a desperate negative. "No Miss Davis. Peaches is a good girl."

"A good nigra slave should be proud if her owner puts her brand on her worthless hide. That way she need never get lost; never forget who her owner is. Are you a good nigra Peaches?" At the last she looked up from the cup and fixed me with those cool eyes that pierced me to the very soul.

"Or are you a bad girl, a runaway. We brand runaways so they can't pass," she added.

Her logic trapped me. No matter which way I answered I would face the iron. Torn I hesitated and Miss Davis laughed. "As if you had any say in the matter." Then her smile brightened as she looked past me.

A moment later I saw the source of her satisfaction as Irish Rose was escorted to my side. I felt a pang of envy at the girl, she was so fair skinned, so graceful in the way she moved. Almost as if she was dancing to music only she could hear. That ready smile and her freckles suggested a sunny disposition and the way she stood, she seemed almost proud of her nudity, or at least far less uncomfortable that I was.

For the first time Miss Davis rose from her chair and left the table to walk around and get a closer look at her latest acquisitions standing side by side. Her attention to detail was considerable for she must have spent more than ten minutes weighing and measuring us in her mind comparing us. Recalling how some of the men who had come to bid had judged us one off against the other I felt a fresh sliver of fear. Would Irish Rose once again outshine me? Even in my slavery I yet possessed some lingering remnants of my vanity.

From the corner of my eye I saw Irish Rose glance ever so quickly at me before she returned to her usual accepting passivity. Was she wondering how we stacked up against each other? If she was, from the faint curl of her lips I suspected she was certain she would emerge triumphant from any contest.

I had the beginning of my answer when after slowly circling the girl Miss David returned to stand before her. With one hand she gently brushed away those long lustrous red locks of Irish Rose that had fallen over her chest to reveal those shapely breasts in all their glory.

"Very nice," she murmured softly as she trailed her forefinger around the pink nipple of one of the slave's breasts. Then that hand dropped and I thought for a moment that she meant to rip and pull at that thatch but instead her fingers curled very carefully almost playfully around those red curls. "And such a delicious thatch."

"I see what you mean Mr. Cochran," Miss Davis said when her inspection was finally completed. It was surely my imagination but for a moment I thought she was regarding us much as some of the bidders had done. That was surely impossible for she was a woman, perhaps far removed from lowly slave wenches like us but a woman none the less. Yet a faint flush had entered her cheeks when she lifted Irish Rose's breast to judge its weight and I felt certain her breathing was quicker than usual when she ran her hand across my shaved mound, the same spot where she planned to have me branded.

"There is no comparison. Irish Rose outshines her in nearly every way." I bowed my head in shame for once again I had been found wanting and now that I knew I was a slave in truth I knew that any little happiness to be had was in pleasing this woman.

"Aren't you glad you had your owner's mark?" she asked my rival. "Glad everyone knew who owned that fine ass of yours?"

Her smile widened showing a flash of pearly white teeth but she kept her eyes modestly downcast. "Yessa Miss Davis."

Then those cool eyes returned to me and I felt trapped like some butterfly pinned to the board before a collector about to unravel all of its secrets. "You never answered me Peaches. Are you a good girl who wants her brand or a bad Nigra who wants to run away and needs a brand and a good whipping with the horse whip to settle her down?"

The cruelty of this woman knew no bounds. I could either ask to be marked for ever as a lowly slave or it would be done to me regardless and then I would be strung up to get my licking." I was trapped and both she and I knew it.

For a moment longer I held out and then I sighed in defeat. How easily she mastered me. Could there be any doubt that I deserved to be her slave?

"Peaches is a good girl Miss Davis," I began but had to swallow twice with bitterness, shame and dreadful fear of what was to come before I could force the rest out. "Peaches should have the massas brand."

Miss Davis chuckled and clapped her hands together in delight. "And so you shall but you can't be impatient Peaches. I think you should watch the other fancy girls get their marks first."

I could not stop trembling as I glanced to Irish Rose. Surely she would understand, Her brand was plain to see, the mark of a stemmed rose crisp and livid on her flank. Once, perhaps not long ago she had faced the same mind numbing terror of going to the iron. She would understand, she would sympathies for I knew I would get no such consideration from any of the others.

Yet to my shock I saw no sympathy, no empathy for another woman who would soon scream under the iron. What I saw there was a wry amused satisfaction. It took me some time to process this for why should she bear me any ill will? I had done nothing to her save compete to see which of us could cream the faster. That was done at the bidding of our masters so why the smug satisfaction.

Finally it came to me. Had I not see a certain bitterness on some of the branded slaves on show in the parlor towards those of us yet unmarked? Why had they had to suffer under the iron while the rest of us swanned around with smooth unmarked flesh? Of course she would be happy to see the uppity wench who had dared to think herself so fine, so much

better than her, finally get her hot searing brand. Once I had been marked there would be no doubt I would be no better than her just.

Never had I thought that there was an art to the way the branding iron was employed but that day I received an education the likes of which few women can boast. Mr. Cochran arranged everything to my mistress's satisfaction. A temporary forge had been established for the occasion. It might not rival a blacksmith's shop but everything that was needed for the marking of the slaves was there.

And at my owner's suggestion that I should have a good unobstructed view I was taken past the line of fancy girls waiting their turn. As I passed the head of the queue I began to whimper for I feared I was to be the first to have the honor but thankfully I was taken past the blazing embers of the fire.

The large wooden post driven into the ground was set with ringbolts high above my head from which metal fetters were secured. In no time I found myself with my back pressed against the wood and my arms raised high to be secured. With a sick certainty I realized that had I not asked for my branding I would be here as well but with my back facing away from the post and under the lash. For surely this could be nothing other than a whipping post of which I had heard so much. At the realization I felt my bottom cheeks clench in sympathy for all the slaves who had hung here before me.

I had expected some crude operation, a quick heated iron pressed into the naked flesh and then on to the next victim but as I hung there my chains gave me no choice but to look upon the craft. And I confess a certain dread fascination came over me.

As always once the initial shock passed me by I began to wonder how exactly it was to be done. By virtue of my certificate I already knew the form of the brand I was to receive and were it not to be marked on my naked flesh I would have found the crest of my owner to have a certain grace and beauty. The strength of the axe balanced by the graceful almost feminine way the letters were formed, a most appealing family crest. But the Labrys, I felt sure I had heard once that it had some special meaning. For a moment I struggled to recall what but to no avail.

Not only were the fearful slaves there waiting their turn but their new owners were there as well. They clustered together talking amiably as men of business and wealth are wont to do when surrounded by men of like mind and background. I could hear their talk of course for the whipping post was quite close to the events. Close enough that I had already begun to sweat from the heat of the burning coals.

The topic of choice varied. Some were discussing the price of cotton, others tariffs and sales duties. As in most things they agreed on some, argued on others. The one item they all appeared to agree on was the devious nature of politicians especially when they went to Washington. As for the senators from the North, to hear them talk one might think the Prince of Darkness was but a poor second to their iniquity and depravity. Their one redeeming feature was the passage of the Slave Fugitive Act that met with much approval.

Sooner or later they all began to compare the quality of their products pointing out which trembling fancy girl now called him master. Had they no shame, the way they discussed the poor women . one might almost think that the slaves were but walking orifices to be used for their master's pleasures. I cast a glance back over at the table where Miss Davis was observing proceedings from a more lady like distant.

It was almost strange to think but I began to think that matters might have indeed been worse. I was a naked slave due to receive her brand but at least I did not belong to these lust filled men. My mistress was a woman I would never have to satisfy my owner in the way these other wretches would.

And of course talk of the slave inevitably led to the discussion of the iron. I hardly dare breath as I listened but they made no effort to keep their voices lower as they discussed matters. It seemed that the market employed the services of the master of the iron a fellow skilled in long use of the iron. Not only that but they also possessed a considerable number of branding irons of their own that were available for selection. Looking at the rack of waiting rods of misery I shivered. A veritable forest of suffering waiting to be selected.

A small book was nearby and thought I could not see the contents I learned that the pages held a graven image of the brands available for selection from the Market. They had though of everything it seemed. A master might come here to the market with nothing but his pocket book and provided that his currency was good all he need do was to bid and buy what ever slave caught his eye. The market would do the rest providing a fine selection of irons.

If a master found himself with doubts on the matter the man was on hand to give the benefit of his knowledge. Without any thought to the terror and revulsion they might evoke in their waiting audience they openly discussed where best to place a brand and if a particular design was suitable given the dimensions of the target.

What troubled me more was that some masters were not content with the range on offer. Some brought their very own branding irons. What manner of creature would take the time and effort to design and have crafted their very own branding iron?

The center piece was branding table of course, a simple wooden table sturdy but light enough to be moved as needed. At one end there were a set of leather straps that might be fastened around the wrists and from the thin but sturdy chains attached to them so they could be drawn up the table. At the other end was a flat metal bar of dark iron or steel. I could see that it was hinged at the edge of the table so that it could be raised. At either end of the bar the metal was curved into two semicircles and I did not need to have it explained to me that this was where a girl might find her ankles secured.

I did not have long to wait for the selections were made and the chosen irons were thrust into the fire to heat. I was not the only slave who could not wrest my eyes from the fire.

The master of irons took care to study the rods in his care taking them from the fire and holding them up closely to his eyes to study the color. And then with a grim smile he nodded.

The first girl screamed as the overseers took hold of her arms and dragged her forward to the table. She was thrown down face down, ass up and quickly secured. Then I began to understand the art involved. Crude field hands might receive a quick messy brand but this was prime slave meet. A brand poorly applied could mar forever the wench's beauty and would more importantly reflect poorly in her resale value. Once the chains attached to the leather bindings were drawn tight and with her ankles fixed in place she was drawn taut and thought there was a slight quiver to her bottom cheeks her position allowed her no leeway to wriggle or otherwise upset her marking.

With one last look at the iron the branding smith was finally satisfied and the iron was pressed into the waiting girl's right buttock. She screamed a sound I will never forget yet the iron was held to her bottom cheek for a count and then finally withdrawn. And then it was done save for the slave who moved to tend the wound. Before she could cover the wound with some soothing salve I saw the mark clearly for this master had clearly been cruel and cared little for the comfort of the slave.

Two triangles meeting at their points, the brand covered a considerable amount of slave flesh and it took the house slave several minutes to work the healing salve over all of the wound. When she stepped back the slave was freed and an overseer was quickly there to lead the girl away weeping and limping she would have fallen had not the overseer half carried her.

And then it was the next girl. She shirked from the table for at the head of the line she had almost as good a view as I and I could see blind terror in her wide eyes as she shook her head. The overseers were accustomed to slave wenches reluctant to kiss the iron and in quick practiced movements she was dragged forward and secured. A few moments passed and then her scream sounded out to rival the first girls.

It shocked me to see how fast matters proceeded once it had begun. How many times had these brutes carried out this operation to have learned such quickly efficiency in their craft? The third was crying pitifully but either she lacked the strength or the will to resist and needed but a guiding hand on her arm and with a slap to her bottom she mounted the table.

Apparently her submission earned her a measure of kindness for one of the overseers remarked "Don't cry, little one. Your massah's going to mark your bottom, so you never, ever, ever get lost."

The flow of her tears only increased but of all the girls weeping her master was far more considerate than the others. His brand was small, almost delicate with two wavy lines falling diagonally in parallel. The house slave had her brand covered with her salve in no time at all.

The next was a marvel, a slave with fair skin to match Irish Rose and with high cheekbones framed by sun kissed blond hair. As she was dragged forward she kept muttering in broken English "no slave, no slave," over and over. She was laid on her back and when she felt the leather bindings fix around her wrists and draw her out she began to cry in a half familiar almost guttural tongue.

"Ich bin kein Sklave" she cried. Ich bin kein Sklave." And then staining her neck to look over at the branding master she went on with even more urgency. "Bitte nicht...!"

"None of that African gibber jabber," the overseer growled thought I felt certain she was speaking German.

We had retailed accounts of poor but pretty emigrants coming to our shores in search of a better life. Had she made port in New England with beauty like that she would have found work as a house maid in less than a day even if she had no skill. Give her a year and if she could learn more English there was a fair chance she might have found a good match.

Unfortunately for her the voyage had taken her further south and no doubt some flesh monger like Mr. Cochran had spotted her before she had even stepped off the boarding ramp. While my own hand may well have signed my slave papers had I come here without the protection of my family wealth and the Colonel Miss Davis's simple repeated rumor would have been sufficient to see me declared the slave I was had someone of influence been moved to act. This poor creature without any protection was easy prey.

Her brand was placed on the inner slope of her right thigh a simple design of one oval intertwined with two others. Her master was obviously kindly for it was a small brand, the smallest I had seen so far. No sooner had the house slave finished her ministrations and the overseer released her that a man well dressed was at her side waving off the overseer. With his own hand he held her and helped her limp away. As I watched I could see that he even permitted her to rest her head on his broad shoulder as she continued to weep.

My own breath began to quicken as the line awaiting the iron shrank for I knew that when that last wench was taken from the table it would be my turn.

I had determined to be brave as best I could but when I felt the fetters at my wrists unlocked and the strong overseer take me by the arm I could not hold back the whimper that escaped my lips.

"Hush now," the overseer murmured into my ear. "Your massah's marking you real nice. Don't you know a nigra without a brand don't get to go to Nigra heaven when you die." He said it as if I should feel some sort of gratitude for Miss Davis and while a wide range of emotions flashed through my brain, gratitude was not one of them.

The table was slick with sweat and the remains of some of the wenches who had gone before me and had wet themselves but I barely comprehended this as the iron bar descended on my ankles and my wrists were drawn up. For a moment I wondered if they intended to pull my arms from my shoulders such was the extent to which I was stretched.

As the branding master reached for the iron, my very own iron crafted and created to sear my lovely pussy I hear a familiar voice ring out like the archangel Gabriel come to deliver me from perdition.

"Stop," the Colonel's voice sounded out and I could barely believe my luck. Somehow the colonel was here. I was saved for surely he would see me freed and unmarked.

When he drew closer, I could see that he looked drawn and pale as if just recovering from a great illness but his voice still held that ability to command as the branding master stopped in his tracks.

"Colonel Rand, to what do we owe the pleasure?" Miss Emily asked sweetly. She had risen from her table and accompanied with Mr. Cochran she walked over to us.

"What are you doing to my niece?" he demanded and as he drew even closer I could see the measure of concern and anger etched across his face. Nor could I miss that while he was not drunk it seemed that it was taking all of his strength to keep himself on his feet with his back ramrod straight.

"Your niece?" Miss Emily asked again in that cool controlled voice. "Whoever do you mean?"

The Colonel's face darkened even further. "You know damn well who I mean."

"Oh, you mean little Peaches, She is just a slave about to get her brand all nice and shiny and new." I could almost hear the pleasure rolling off her tongue as she spoke of my proposed branding. Yet why did she sound so confident? Surely the Colonel could put matters to right.

"She was never meant to be sold." His glare switched over to Cochran. "Is this your doing?"

"I but followed your instructions Colonel Rand," he protested as if he was an innocent party in this saga. "You told me that if you did not withdraw her she to be sold to the highest bidder."

"And you know damn well I was not serious,"

"You sounded serious to me. And just to be certain I spoke with our friends the Notary who was a witness. He assures me I had your full authority to sell the wench and sell her I did. And for a tidy sum as well. Two Thousand Six hundred dollars bought and sold."

Mr Cochran somehow managed to keep a smile from breaking out on his face but his voice the way he stood all shouted that he was more that satisfied to have outmaneuvered the old campaigner. Then as if to make sure there could be no doubt as to his victory he held out one of the many copies of my papers that they had prepared and extended it to the Colonel.

He snatched it from the slave trader's hand but I could see an expression of concern begin to creep across his face as he read down the docket.

His fingers curled around the paper gathering it into a ball of paper and like so much refuse he dropped it to the ground before glancing down at me. For once he did not drink in my naked form displayed to good effect on the branding rack. He might not even have noticed my denuded thatch between my legs. Instead he looked straight at my face and from what I saw there was enough to bring tears to my eyes.

He looked worried, the Colonel, my only possible hope was afraid and if he was afraid surely I must have caused to be terrified. Surely the almighty could not offer me up hope at the last minute and then snatch it away again.

"As you can see, all legal and certified." Mr. Cochran finally allowed some of his satisfaction to slip into a grin. "Why there's not a court in the land who would uphold your claim to the slave, Colonel."

Colonel Rand ignored him and turned to look directly at Miss Emily. "Madam, can we not come to some arrangement. I am happy to refund you the full purchase monies you have paid and any expenses you have incurred."

"Oh my dear Colonel Rand, why ever would I do that? This animal is mine bought and paid for. I intend to keep her at least until I tire of her. Perhaps if you return in a few years I might consider it but until then this little trollop belongs to me body and soul..." she smiled and then chuckled as she caught herself. "Silly me, everyone knows these Nigra's don't have a soul."

He hesitated and again he looked at me before turning to confront our mutual nemesis. "This girl is under my protection. It is a matter of honor that I see her returned to her family. I am prepared to double your investment."

At that moment my heart swelled with admiration for the Colonel. I had not been wrong about him after all. His honor was misplaced at times hidebound and wrapped in the past but there was no questioning his given word. But the costs. Five thousand two hundred dollars. That was a kings' ransom for any slave. Such an expenditure would strain Royal Sugar's finances of that I had no doubt but he made the offer without hesitation.

Miss Emily looked impressed but once glance at her and my heart froze. She would never let her prize go, not for any amount. Our gaze met, the mistress and I and I felt the last vestige of hope flicker and die. I was hers and would remain so.

“My, my that’s a tidy sum to be sure.” Emily made a show of thinking it over but I did not even bother to dare hope. I knew what her answer would be.

“I am not an unreasonable woman,” she began slowly. “And it’s clear that you feel some affection for this nigra wench misplaced as that might be. “I might find some use for a matching pair of two wenches. Sell me the title for the mother, the Mulato Eliza and I’ll let you have first choice of her litter when she is put to stud at no cost. I’ll even bear the costs of swearing out the warrant and retrieving this Eliza back to where she belongs.”

She wanted my mother! I could not believe even with all that had transpired that this could happen. Surely my ruin would not drag down the others of my family. I had never considered that my own slave registration could be used against my dear sweet mother. If it had been certified before a court that I was a nigra and the daughter of Eliza then she had to be of slave blood as well.

“Eliza,” she murmured and then shook her head. “I don’ think I care for that name. It will simply not do.” Then she looked down at me and I could see her picturing the two of us there before her, mother and daughter stripped and at her mercy.

“Peaches, peaches and ...” she thought for a moment and then that thin smile returned. “Peaches and Cream, that’s a right fine name for a mulato. I’ll even let them share the same cage and when they start dropping you can have the choice from both litters. I can’t say fairer than that.”

One might have thought the Colonel had been struck he quivered with outrage and for a moment he appeared lost for words. Then his face turned grey as he looked down at me with genuine sorrow. We stared at each other for what seemed an eternity and then finally I nodded to him.

He had done his best, fought to the end against enemies far more devious and cunning and ruthless than he could ever be. No fault rested with him. I could see what it cost him to finally turn and stiffly walk out the way he had come leaving the slave Peaches to her fate.

“Well times a wasting,” Emily said brightly. “Let’s be getting her marked.”

I closed my eyes unable to bear the sight of that blazing iron but even with my eyelids clamped shut I could feel that terrible heat from the iron crafted to achieve my ruin. And then there was pain, searing agony that went on and on and on. Compared to this the switch was simply a mild reproach and the scream I gave out matched any that had come before me.

Surely my shrieks must have carried to the street beyond but none came rushing to my aid. The only aid that I was given came from the house slave and I felt the cool cream that she rubbed onto my mound take away some of the pain, enough that I could once again register my surroundings.

I had been branded, marked with the hot iron for all eternity. If some miracle occurred and I were somehow able to escape, if I managed to destroy all the papers that declared and confirmed my slavery still I would carry her mark. I could run as far as my legs could carry me but I could not evade that brand.

Seared into my flesh I would feel it whenever I was allowed to cream, whenever I squatted to pee or relieve myself. If any doubt ever arose to my status, if it was suggested that I might be anyone other than the slave Peaches I would of course have to strip and submit to inspection even assuming I was ever again allowed the privilege of clothing.

Even the location had been chosen to humiliate me. Did Miss Davis some who known how my tainted corrupted slave blood made me hot and frisky? Of course she did, was it not marked on my papers? Perhaps it was fitting that my pussy, my hot wet slit that ached at the touch of the whip, at flaunting my nudity and the very thought of being taken should proclaim my true identity. Just as it was the center of my hot blood, the focus of my slave heat so to it would be the centerpiece of Miss Davis claim upon my flesh.

The rest of the day passed in a haze. Irish Rose and I were loaded onto a wagon, chained to the very floor of the cart so there was no chance of us slipping free. Behind us came the cartons and boxes that contained the fine dresses and gowns that Miss Davis had chosen to purchase while in town. Another time I would have stared longingly at such finery, just beyond my reach but every jolt of the wagon, every rut in the road over which we passed sent a fresh wave of pain through the very center of my being. Alone in my misery I was lost to the world until finally I beheld our destination. Miss Davis's estate, the famed plantation 'Pussy Willow. My new home.

On the Riverboat

We were awoken early in the morning, and for reasons I did not know Irish Rose and I were given sack dresses and marched out to the front of the Davis mansion, where we were manacled and chained to the back of our mistresses carriage.

Although it might seem strange to some, even in our degradation Irish Rose and I were still attractive women, and still competitive. Our so-called dresses were converted feed sacks. I was pleased that Irish Rose was taller, for it meant that dress covered a good portion of my thighs, almost to my knees, while her dress left her fairly decent.

The dresses were converted sacks, and while they could have simply cut a hole for our heads, instead the seamstress had chose to cut the entire top off the sack, leaving our shoulders bare and exposing the tops of our breasts. The dress was held up by a piece of twine, which we tied in a bow around our necks.

Although cutting a hole for our arms and heads would have been quicker work, the dress as designed was much more alluring, rather like a slave version of shoulderless gown. Both Rose and I giggled as we attempted to catch our reflection in the carriage window, allowing ourselves a moment of girlish vanity.

For her part I could tell Rose was pleased that her dress, although worn, had no clear logo, while the back of my dress bore the image of a several pigs munching happily at a trough. It was a humiliating reminder of my status, and how we were fed. But it was also strangely appropriate, as the nits in my hair were starting to return in force. I scratched myself when possible, trying to remove the lice I could, using my finger as a comb. I was careful not to do it when any of the white folks could see me, lest I get another "treatment" but Irish Rose saw, and her disgust for me was evident in the sour look she gave me. I responded by playfully flicking the extracted bugs at her, and laughing as she jumped away, only to be jerked back by the manacles around her delicate wrists.

I was surprised when we were given rough shoes to wear, for normally we were barefoot, and assumed that this meant the carriage would be going faster than normal, and the Mistress did not want to damage us if we fell by dragging us behind. I expected a short trip into town, and wondered if my Mistress had purchased a townhouse, or what might be in store for us there. However I soon realized that a longer trip was in store for us, as numerous steamer trunks were loaded atop the carriage in preparation for what appeared to be a long trip.

I felt relieved that Irish Rose and I were not being taken into town to be sold, but anxious as to where our destination might be. My Mistress provided no information. Looking like a beautiful Goddess in stunning high collared travel dress, she did not even deign to look at

Rose and I and instead chose to fuss with her beautiful long white gloves as she exited the front of the mansion and the white overseer helped her into the carriage. Her indifference to us did not surprise me, as I'm sure Rose and I were simply on the manifest of things to be packed for the trip, listed as simply another piece of cargo.

The driver cracked the whip, and Rose and I jumped. The overseer laughed at our panic, but the whip was for the horses, and Rose and I were soon running behind our carriage, struggling to keep our wind as we were run into town.

We were exhausted as we arrived at the blacksmith shop, a busy and bustling place adjacent to the nearby stables. The white people around us seemed to be indifferent to the place, but Rose and I looked upon it as a chamber of horrors, for once a girl has been branded it is an experience she never forgets.

Terrified that we were going to be branded again, Irish Rose struggled, but the slave manacles around her wrists, and the enormous size of the overseer, assured the struggle was brief. Grabbing her by the scruff of the neck, the laughing overseer dragged her into the blacksmith shop, while my Mistress stood on wooden sidewalk, smiling slightly as she admired the pearl buttons on her beautiful new gloves.

It amused me to see Irish Rose handled such, and secretly hoped that she was to receive the brand that I now wore, the Davis family crest on her mons pubis. I could hear her crying as she was dragged into her doom, and remember my own branding, knew that even from the street I would have the pleasure of hearing her scream.

My pleasure was short lived, however, as the overseer returned, and unhooked my slave manacles from the rear of the carriage. "Your turn, Princess!" he sneered as he grabbed me by the back of the neck and pushed me in thru the barn door of the blacksmith shop.

"Please Miss Davis, not the iron!" I shouted. "I'll be good! Peaches do ANYTHING you say!"

My mistress chose not to respond, but smiled broadly at my pleas, flashing her lovely white teeth as the overseer dragged me to the forge of hell.

In the barn the overseer used a rope to hitch our manacles to a wooden post, and stood behind a horse waiting to be branded, the iron already hot on the forge. My Mistress entered a few moments later from the other side of the room, thru the "people" entrance, being careful never to step on the dirt floor, and keeping her distance from both us and the blacksmith.

"How 'ya do, Miss Davis!" the blacksmith said. "How can I help you today?"

Our mistress smiled pleasantly. "Oh no, good sir! The horse was first, and it would be wrong to move my animals in front. Proceed with the branding, please. I'm sure Irish Rose and Peaches would very much like to watch."

And so it was that we stood watching as the iron finished heating, and was taken from the forge, and examined by the blacksmith. I trembled in fear, and I was quite sure that Irish Rose was going to be sick. During this entire proceeding our Mistress did not watch either the horse or the blacksmith, but instead watched us, smiling pleasantly as jerked and twitched with anguish.

At last the horrible torture ended, and the brand was driven into horseflesh. Rose screamed, as if the brand was touching her. My reaction, which I was unaware of at the time, was even less dignified.

"Why Peaches, I believe you have wet your sack!" my Mistress said, chuckling as she pointed at my crotch with her beautiful gloved hand.

I looked down, and saw that I had indeed lost control of my water, and now stood in a little puddle at my feet.

"Don't worry none, Miss Davis," the blacksmith said, as I quickly attempted to bury the piss with my foot in the manner in which the Colonel taught me. "Animals pee themselves all the time in here, when the iron sizzles them. Of course, this might be the first one who peed from watch'in!"

There was much laughter at this, from the overseer, my Mistress, the blacksmith, and the treacherous Irish Rose, who clearly relished the chance to join with the white folks in making sport of my humiliation. As I watched her freckled face cackle at me, I hated her more than anyone, for she knew what I was going thru, and should have been my sole source of empathy.

The blacksmith's voice shocked me back to life. "What you need today, Miss Davis? Fancy branding? Did you bring your own irons, or did you want me to pick some out."

The Mistress let the question hang in the air, clearly relishing the look of horror and panic on our faces. After a long pause, she spoke. "No, kind sir. We are going on Riverboat voyage, and the Captain of the ship, a Mr. Thomas Leathers, insists the girls be riveted into leg irons before the journey begins. I was wondering if you might assist."

"Sure 'nuff. Yeah, old Cap'tin "Push" is a character all right. "Always wants the fancies riveted in, and locked up nice and tight. Make sense. Sometimes they'll jump overboard, or even steal clothes and try to pass for white."

"Yes," my mistress said, shaking her head, "Nigras are natural born thieves. It was a concern to me, too, but Captain Push said he's never had a slave escape on the Natchez."

Our mistress turned to Irish Rose, "Only casualties," she added with a sad, wistful smile.

"We're actually getting a bunch of slaves riveted in today, then taking them out to the Riverboat. If they don't mind a little walk, I can link these two on the coffle chain, and take 'em out on my pickups. That way you don't have to lug 'em around."

"That would be very kind of you," my Mistress said, clearly pleased. "I'm sure Irish Rose and Peaches would simply love a morning constitutional around our fair city!"

The overseer undid the rope binding our manacled hands to the post and led us to the blacksmith.

"My, oh my. They look mighty white," he said, licking his lips as he looked us up and down. "I can see where they could pass."

"Oh, they're both black as the ace of spades, I can assure you," my Mistress replied. "Hot, frisky wenches, with the veins positively teeming with African blood. Here, le me show you."

Turning to the overseer she gave the command. "Strip them. Strip them both."

The overseer undid the strings holding our sack dresses up, and they soon pooled into two sad little puddles around our feet.

My Mistress reached into her billfold and proudly produced our slave papers. "See their brands?" she said. "Peaches on front, Rose on back. Spin for him girls, slowly. Lovely are they not?"

"They sure are. Both of them!" the Blacksmith said. But his eyes were not on the brands.

The humiliating inspection finished, I was ordered to the anvil. I reached for the dress, to retie it but my mistress interceded. "Leave your dress where it is, Peaches, and take off your shoes. We don't want any stray sparks to start you on fire, do we?"

"No stray sparks, Miss," the Blacksmith said. "We're not heating the rivets, just pounding them on."

"Take off your shoes, Peaches. You've soiled your dress, and the overseer will leave it outside to dry. You too, Rose. Everything off! Spit-spat!"

I wasn't sure why Rose had to be stripped, since she had not soiled herself, or why our shoes needed to dry, but it was very clear that our Mistress very much wanted to separate

us from our clothes. Or, to be more accurate, not our clothes, but the clothes she had graciously given us to wear.

We handed our tiny shoes and slave sacks to the Overseer, who disappeared out the door with them, while the blacksmith fetched our leg irons.

"So you're not going to weld them on?" my Mistress said, her voice noting a trace of disappointment. "Will they last."

"Forever, Miss," the blacksmith replied, holding up the irons. "These here are the shackles they use at the Jethro plantation. I pound 'em on when he buys the slaves, and he never takes them off. He buries 'em with 'em still shackled."

"Hmm...that is a good idea. I'll keep that in mind. But it is something of a waste," my Mistress sighed. "Of the shackles, I mean," she added, clarifying her sympathies.

Raising her gloves to once again admire her pearl handed buttons she said, "Well, let's get this over with. I have a lot of other things to do today."

The blacksmith worked quickly, not wanting to keep my mistress waiting. I sat in the dirt, quite naked, as he carefully positioned my foot on the smallest of the three anvils. It was still caked with the dried mud of my accident, but he didn't seem to mind. However he did move the anvil about two foot over, and then repositioned my foot again, a gesture that confused me until I realized that it allowed him to look directly up between my legs at my exposed sex.

"Nice pussy," he said, whispering so my Mistress couldn't hear. I blushed heartily, for his eyes never left my crotch even as he quickly fitted the shackle around my slender ankle, and took the inch long rivet out of his pocket, fitting it thru the bottom, so the steel tube was exposed to his mighty hammer.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

With 4 quick and experts blows the shackle sealed itself around my ankle. I felt my heart beat in time with the hammer, as I wondered whether I would ever remove the shackles, or whether I would die in them, and be wearing the shameful irons when I arrived at "Nigra heaven" the special heaven I had heard my masters promise was set aside for slaves who had served their masters well.

My other foot was next, and as he placed it on the anvil he ordered me to "spread the chain," an act that required me to move my riveted foot as far as I could to the left to take out all the slack of the chain that bound my ankle to the other shackle. I glared at him, because I knew his real motive was to once again expose my pussy to his inspection.

"Don't look so sad, Peaches," he whispered. Chain spreads 3 feet. You're still fuck-able."

Although my Mistress couldn't hear him, the overseer did, and I blushed all the harder as he let out a guttural laugh.

His aim was steady, and with 3 bangs of the hammer, I was now permanently riveted into the slave chains I feared I might never take off.

My mistress seemed pleased, and smiled broadly as I shuffled back to the hitching post to stand next to Irish Rose. "My, those are lovely," she gushed. "I can see why the Jethro plantation just leaves them on. And the make such a nice jingling sound when you walk. The brand is wonderful, of course, but difficult to see unless I keep you naked. With the shackles on, everyone who sees you will know EXACTLY what you are!"

My Mistress laughed and clapped her hands, actually jumping up and down in her merriment. "Hurry now!" she said, giddy with excitement. "I want see how Irish Rose looks in hers."

Irish Rose sobbed softly, the tears running down her freckled cheeks, as the shackles were riveted into place. For his part, the blacksmith again used the shackling as an attempt to ogle his captives sex, remarking, "Isn't that all pink and purty!", which once again caused the overseer to laugh. My mistresses eyes gleamed with each blow of the hammer, and I could see that she was genuinely excited to see us reduced to such an abject and servile state.

As my Mistress retreated into the office to pay the Blacksmith for his service, Rose and I were led out into the courtyard, where our ankle shackles were easily hooked to the end of a coffle consisting of 6 other slaves. Some were well dressed, and were obviously domestics, while some of the black men wore pants and shoes only and from their musculature were obviously field hands or roustabouts. We were the fairest of the group, and also quite naked, a remark that caused the overseer to remark that "You best keep your hands off these wenches, boys, or you won't like what my Mistress does to you." The overseer left us, but the other slaves in the coffle said nothing, and made no attempt to approach us, although Rose and I were quite nervous for the massive Negroes did look at us with hungry, devouring eyes.

Over the next six hours 5 more slaves were added to the coffle, and Rose and I found ourselves roughly in the center of our little caravan. A man on horseback entered the courtyard, followed by another man walking behind him. The eyes of slave in the coffle immediately focused on the leather riding crop in his hands.

The blacksmith entered, and signed some papers, presumably transferring our ownership to the men. I marveled at how easily I could be traded!

The gate to the street swung open, and we ordered "To 'git going!" I was shocked, was Rose who spoke first, but she spoke for the both of us. "What about our clothes?"

"Your Mistress took 'em," the Blacksmith explained. "Guess she forgot, and left 'em on the carriage. Anyway, you'll get 'em back on the boat."

I looked thru the gates at the bustling street, filled with carriages, vendors, and ladies in their elegant hats. "But we're NAKED," I cried.

The man on the horse quickly rode over to where I was standing, "What's yer name, girl?"

"Peaches, massah," I said, fearing that I might have crossed the line.

"Well, Miss Peaches," the man said, tipping his hat to me as if were a beautifully dressed Southern belle instead of a naked, chained slave. "We have a lot of stops to make, and I don't have time to take you to the dressmakers to get you and your friend proper attire. Papers Miss Davis showed me said you're a nigra, and it anyn't like you were wearing clothes in Africa. You're a nigra, and that means I'm going to drive you through the streets nigra naked!"

With that the other overseer brought his riding crop down hard on my bottom, and I jumped and yelped as tears fell from the stinging blow. I did not long to comfort myself, though, as the coffle shuffled forward, and I soon found myself walking stark naked towards the streets of Natchez!

I wish I could say no one noticed us, but the fairness of our skin, and our brands, and our shameful nakedness made us the target of every rowdy in the town. They hooted and hollered at us, offering the man on the horse "a new nickel, if he'd give us all a ride!" I shuddered, for I wasn't all together sure that he would not. In the house of my Mistress I was an expensive fancy girl, a prize to be treasured and preserved. But the way the blacksmith had left me out in the yard surrounded by several strong black bucks made it clear that he paid my virtue no special mind, and the savagery of the whip mark across my bottom made it clear I was just another nigra.

At that moment, I wish I were more Negro, darker still, and permitted clothes. Irish Rose, being fairer, drew even more attention than me, although we both endured the lustful stares of the men and the hateful gazes of the women.

"Filthy beasts!" I heard one well dressed woman sneer. "Parading themselves thru the streets naked."

"Probably trolling for a master," her well dressed companion snickered. "Although from the looks of them, they'll spread their legs for anyone who gives them an old corncob to chew on."

I recognized them from the ball, although they did not recognize me. Why should they? At the ball I had been an elegant lady, dressed as they were, flirting and dancing with their husbands. Now, I was a naked, shackled slave girl, an animal to be humped, whipped, and kenneled.

"Look at that pussy brand!" a grimy toothless man remarked as I walked past.

"Can't blame 'em," another rough man remarked. "If I owned pussy like that, I'd sign my name on it too."

Everyone laughed, even the overseers, even the other slaves. Everyone except me and Irish Rose.

An elegantly dressed young woman in an open carriage paused to look out at us with her opera glasses. Tugging on her male escorts arm she said, "Look charles, at the one in the center, with the shaved mound. She looks like that statue, "THE GREEK SLAVE!"

They young man looked me up and down with cool, appraising eyes. "Indeed she does. Except she has ankle shackles too, and is branded," he noted casually.

"Yes, but I mean the shame in her eyes. She looks just like the statue!"

The woman laughed, and the carriage rolled on. I blushed at the comparison. "The Greek Slave" was a marble statue, and it had been exhibited in Boston, to records crowds who came to marvel at the girl's beauty. The slave girl depicted in the statue was quite naked, which was considered quite scandalous, and caused much debate wherever it was shown. The naked girl was in chains, presumably about to be sold to the Turks, or the Romans, or some one master who would doubtlessly put her to some depraved use. She was the picture of helpless beauty, destined to be ravaged by lustful masters.

Our antislavery group had gone to see the statue, and stared at it for sometime, marveling at its graceful form. I felt strongly that the statue should be exhibited publicly, to the largest crowds possible, and spoke on the matter at the Old South Meeting House.

"Really, Elizabeth, " my mother teased. "You were so passionate I half expected you to strip down naked and stand on top of the podium!" It had been a joke, of course, but I had felt a tiny thrill at the thought. Imagine! Being made a show of, naked!

For hours we walked, up and down, back and forth, often traversing the same streets two or three times. Occasionally we would stop in front of an elegant townhouse, and a new slave would be added to the coffle. I was pleased to see that two or three other fancy girls were added, although unlike me, all were dressed.

At every street there were new people to snicker, hoot, or holler some assessment of my naked form. Men would follow us, making the most obscene offers and proposals, as my fingers twisted helplessly in front of me. My wrists were manacled in front of me, which did allow me to cover my pubis, but the short chain holding my legs together and the rapid clip at which we were marched made exposure inevitable. After a while I stopped trying, exhausted to my shame.

Being both the first on the coffle and less use to long walks than the other slaves, Irish Rose and I both faltered at times. The pace was maintained, however, by the crisp application of the overseer's switch to our bare backsides.

"Swish!"

"Briskly, fair ladies!" the man on the horse chortled. "We have many stops to make, and we've no time for mint juleps or rest stops on the porch!"

The reaction to us was divided by gender, with most of our male audience greeting us with leers and smiles, while most of our own gender simply looked away in disgust. My nakedness did earn the cruel attentions of two women standing on the sidewalk, who watched closely as our coffle trudged down the muddy street.

"Looks like our Boston Abolitionist friend has been found out," one lady sneered.

"They all have nigra blood...everyone of them. No better than apes!"

"Yes; I'm just glad they marked her, and in such an appropriate place. Now, at least, the men who use her will know what they give her. "

"Dirty Nigra!" one of the women hissed, spitting in my face as I passed. "That will teach you to insult our beloved Dixie!"

And so it went, a lazy afternoon of being paraded thru the town, with men making rude comments about my "big nigra bottom!", or comparing my mound to Irish Rose's, or hurling a hundred other obscenities at me too graphic for me to repeat here. And the women, either ignoring me, or using my nakedness as an opportunity to express their disgust for me, for abolitionists, and for the North in general.

When at last we arrived at the Riverboat, exhausted and muddy, I was relieved. Little did I know the true horror was yet to begin.

Our coffle was led to the river's edge, where the man on the horse ordered us "fine ladies and gentlemen to do your business here, so you don't stink up the ship!" And so it was that I loosed my water and my bowels, wiping myself with grass and washing my hands in the river as best as I could. Several men with rifles, who I assumed were riverboat

security, moved closer to watch, and my ablutions were made no easier when one remarked, "See? They look human, but they're all really just jungle monkeys."

We were then allowed to go into the river, briefly bathe, or to be more accurate, wipe off the mud from our journey. Any thought we might have had of diving in the river and swimming away were rendered absurd by the coffle chain that left me linked to 15 other captives, and by the abundance of men on the shore with rifles, watching our every move. I contented myself with washing the dried spittle off my face. As I looked in the faces of the other slaves I could see that they too were wondering if Steamboat Natchez and Mississippi might indeed be a road to freedom.

Herded ashore, Rose and I were separated from the coffle, and the chain pulled out from the shackles that had been riveted around my ankles. However the chain that connected my two leg shackles together remained. So although I was freed from the other slaves I was still very much in bondage.

Even this "freedom" was short lived, as a huge metal ball was quickly attached and locked to my fetters, as well as the ankle chains of Irish Rose.

"Pity to put these balls on 'em" the man who was fastening them said. "If they have to drag these around, they'll get ball sores, and we'll have to saw off their pretty little legs."

"Captain's orders," the man with the rifle said unsympathetically. "Don't worry, they're not going to be moving with 'em. That's the whole point. Captain Leather's wants to keep 'em nice and still."

I looked up at the massive riverboat, and after some searching saw the great man they spoke of standing at the bridge. He was tall, elegantly dressed, and had a long white beard and mustache that hid much of his face. He stood on the deck of his ship, supervising the loading and unloading, occasionally pointing at someone on the deck and barking out an order. To me, a lowly slave, my Captain looked like an old testament deity, if not Jehovah himself, looking down at his people with harsh and judgmental eyes.

A large, muscular slave came up behind me, and picked up my ball, carrying it for me. It was fortunate he did so, for I am quite sure I would have been unable to move if I had to drag such an enormous burden.

We waited in line at the stern to board the ship, while close to the bow, the ladies and gentlemen in their finery, the riverboat gamblers, and various members of the crew walked up the banistered gangplank that connected the ship to the shore. The ticketed passengers paid little attention to us, the cargo, although I did notice that one or two of the gentlemen, upon noticing the nudity of myself and the other female slaves, did take up a vantage point on deck where they could sit, smoke, and enjoy the view.

The cargo entry was far less grand – a large wooden plank with no handrails. It was a practical decision, as the lack of handrails allowed the slaves to push enormous bales of cotton much wider than the ramp itself up the ramp, provided of course that it was balanced correctly.

The importance of balance quickly became apparent when my turn to enter the ship came, and I walked up the steep gangplank with the slave behind me holding my enormous ball. My bare feet were wet from the river, and I was wet and shivering, and the gangplank was slippery. I do not remember slipping, but I clearly remembered the sensation of falling.

In that brief instant, I knew that I was going to die. I could see the water rushing towards me. If it were shallow, I should surely plunge to the bottom and drown as the metal ball making any attempts at swimming or rescue laughable. If the water were shallow, the speed of my descent and the weight of the ball behind me would crack my head open like an egg on the river's bottom. As I did during my near drowning in the dip, I quickly said my prayers, begging God to send me to the Nigra Heaven, filled with watermelon and kind massahs and riding crops that barely stung, that my white overseers had promised me.

A few feet from the water I felt a sharp pain in my leg as my descent ended and I stood suspended in time. I thought at first that God had frozen me here, in the moment before death, for my final judgment. But the raucous laughter I heard around me as I swung back and forth like a pendulum from my ankle shackle proved that I was very much alive.

"Clumsy little monkey!" one voice yelled.

"You won't get any bananas climbing that way!" another man yelled.

There was much laughter as I was hauled skyward, naked and upside down, and set back onto the ramp. The huge slave who had been holding my ball had, by some miracle of strength, had held onto me, and in doing so, saved my life. I looked up to him, my eyes wet with tears, thanking him for my life.

"If you git to New Orleans, and you meet a slave called Sarah Jones, you tell her that her husband Tom is coming for her, as soon as he can escape," he said quietly. I was confused at first, until I remembered that slaves on riverboats held privileged positions, as we were the only ones capable of sending messages to families splintered by the cruelty of the auction block.

I stood buck naked on the deck, with everyone laughing at me, for my clumsiness, my nudity, and my general all around foolishness. Men called out rude appraisals of my udders; women joked that "he caught the monkey by it's tail!" From his mighty perch high above us, I could even see that the great Captain Leathers had taken notice of me, and was laughing along with his officers at my near death experience. But as I was into the

ship, my eyes remained fixed on Tom, as I quietly vowed to do anything I could to get his message to his beloved wife Sarah.

Still quite naked, Irish Rose and I were led below decks, and after we were given a rag to wipe our feet with, were ushered into the cabin of our Mistress, Emily Davis, Queen of Pussy Willow Plantation.

The cabin was luxurious, a vision of polished oak, red velvet, and crystal. Given the meanness of my surroundings the previous days, the luxury with which I was surrounded now made me feel weak in the knees.

Our Mistress sat at her desk, writing, not deigning to notice the two naked slave girls who had been led into her chamber, or the two crewman who were holding the enormous steel balls that were bound to the chains that hobbled us. Her command to the crewmen to "Wait outside," was the first sign that she was aware of our presence.

The crewman obeyed, shutting the door behind us, and leaving Irish Rose and myself in the presence of our all powerful owner.

Eventually she stopped writing and rose, walking around us slowly, surveying what she owned. "I'm going to New Orleans because of the money you cost me," she said, looking us up and down. "It seems I need to secure a mortgage. Would you like to make it up to me?"

Irish Rose and I, both confused, said nothing. But then much to my surprise she began tickling Rose, about the ribs, in a playful, girlish way, and Rose laughed and tried to evade her tickling fingers.

Rose laughed and giggled, even when Miss Emily's fingers moved between her legs and began stroking her, in a way that reminded me of the way the men had examined me at the Forks in The Road.

Rose didn't stop laughing, but seeing the shock on my face, my Mistress stopped. "Would you both like to sleep here, with me? It is a big bed, and large enough for three."

Irish Rose nodded eagerly, as it was an enormous bed. But there was something about the way that my Mistress had been handling her that told me in my heart that sleeping in her bed would not be right.

Sensing my hesitation, my Mistress asked again, "And what of you, Peaches? Would you like to sleep in this soft, comfortable bed tonight, with Rose and I too hold and caress you, and keep you warm?"

Irish Rose giggled at this, but I felt quite queasy, standing stark naked before a woman who was looking me up and down as if she were a man!

"No Mistress," I said quietly. "Peaches sleep on the floor, in the corner, if it pleases."

My Mistresses eyes flashed with a blue fury, and I flinched, for I felt sure she was going to strike me. "How dare you!" she shouted. "How dare you refuse..."

She turned away, and faced her desk for nearly a full minute, recomposing herself. Irish Rose looked at me, angry, fearful, and with an expression that made it clear that I had made an enormous mistake.

But to my surprise, when my Mistress turned, her face was calm, and a smile crossed her lips. "Of course," she purred. "It was foolish of me to think you might be comfortable in a human bed. Dogs have their dens, and pigs their sties. And slaves..."

Her voice trailed off and she smiled at us. Then she summoned the guards.

"Captain Leathers was secure that you might escape, or that if we left you below decks the male slaves might be driven to a lustful fury at the sight of your naked slave flesh. And so I selected a special transport for you, which you both will share, and in which Rose can teach you the duties that are expected of a slave at Pussy Willow Plantation."

At this she nodded to the crewman, and our ball and chains were raised, and we were marched down into the lower deck of the ship. We walked bales of cotton, crates, and luggage, until eventually we came across a sickening and grotesque sight. Three coffins, in a row, lying side-by-side. Two of the coffins were closed, and from the writing on top were obviously occupied with deceased passengers making a final voyage home. The third coffin was open, as if waiting expectantly for another guest.

"Get in," one of the seaman said, nudging Irish Rose.

At this, Rose began to scream, and howl, as she begged not be buried in the coffin. And so the men grabbed her and dropped her in, then dropped the ball on her stomach, pinning her down. I was dropped on top of her, but opposite, so that my face was in her crotch, and hers in mine. I was forced to straddle her, and bend my legs back, so they could get the lid down on top of us.

Irish Rose and I screamed for mercy as the latches of our coffin were closed from the outside. The coffin was, thankfully, old and not well made, and thru the slits I could see the boots of the two men who had so cruelly consigned us to our fate.

"Let's hope Miss Davis claims 'em," one crewman said. "Leaving in there is a waste of good pussy."

"Yeah," the other crewman said. "If they unload them at Vicksburg they'll bury them. Down in 'Orleans, they'll probably put them in one of them crematoriums, and just let 'em burn."

With that horrifying thought Rose and I were left in the hold, trapped together in our perfect hell.

I was aware of the rats outside of our coffin, but fortunately the cracks, while large enough to allow for air to enter, were not so large that the vermin could feast upon our helpless flesh. Rose and I were small, and the coffin was large, but the placement of us, and the fact that there were two in a space designed for one, made our consignment in the ship a perfect hell.

I screamed as one of my legs began to cramp, and I struggled in vain to straighten it. The pain was intense, but was eased as I became conscious of a strange flickering sensation between my legs, on my most sensitive of spots.

It took me nearly a full minute to understand that it was Rose's tongue.

I tried to stop her, but the more I squirmed, the more insistent she was, and the more pleasure it became. I lay there helplessly, panting and gasping for air, as her tongue worked its magic on my most secret place.

"Stop!" I gasped. "It isn't right! It isn't...DECENT!"

But it was right, or at least, I must confess, it felt right. Gradually, as the pressure in my loins grew, Elizabeth Parker, the righteous lady from Boston, was buried, and Peaches, the randy slave girl, took over. Still I resisted.

"No!" I gasped. "Don't...don't...Don't stop! Don't STOP!!"

I exploded with pleasure once, twice, three times. But still, it took at least a full hour of ministrations from Irish Rose before I broke down and used my own tongue to return to her the favors she had so freely given. My training in the way of female love had begun.

I do not know how long it takes to reach Natchez to New Orleans, for my trip was an endless spasm of cramping, squirming, terror, and pleasure. There was a storm that night, and as the ship tossed back and forth Rose and I clutched each other tightly, for we both knew that if the ship were to take on water the two of us, locked in the cargo hold and imprisoned in our tiny coffin and with heavy weights around our ankles, would be the first to go. We prayed for the skill of our seafaring Master, Captain Leathers, to guide us safely to port, even as we attempted to distract each other from our terror with our fingers and tongues.

Nor was their relief when at long last the hold was unlocked and unlatched, and the vermin scurried about, and we were hoisted out from the rot.

It was early morning at the Port of Orleans, and Rose and I saw nothing of it, for after our hell in the hold sunlight was intensely painful to us, and we both covered eyes. Our pain was quickly eased, when we were made to face each other, and our Mistresses voice ordered us to wrap our arms around each other, as if in a lover's embrace. So positioned, one of the slaves put a large, long flour sack over our heads, covering us both entirely. The sack was lashed shut around our ankles, leaving only our riveted chained feet visible.

The iron balls were detached from our feet, and Rose and after being carried down the gangplank our sack was hoisted skyward, and laid flat, with Rose directly on top of me. The bag was at least somewhat opaque, which was a small mercy, as it allowed our eyes to adjust somewhat, but the burlap was scratchier, hotter and stuffier than even our coffin had been. Rose decided to pass the time by kissing me, and working her fingers over my sex, and I, in an effort to maintain the neighborly reciprocity we established onboard, returned her ministrations.

I felt Rose press tighter against me, and could feel the Ropes tying our sack down, but I was unaware that were on top of our Mistresses carriage until I heard the voice of the man below us helping her into her carriage. I hoped it was a fine carriage, elegant and refined, although of course tied in a sack on the luggage rack, it was impossible for me to say.

The carriage stopped, and Irish Rose and I were unloaded, and carried up a series of steps. I was surprised when our sacks were removed, and (still in a partial state of light blindness) we found ourselves standing in a rather gaudy parlor in front of a plump white woman with fierce, calculating ideas.

"Good morning, ladies. My name is Madam Marie, and you are standing inside one of New Orleans finest Houses of Ill Repute. Your Mistress has ordered you bathed and washed, and dressed, so that the gentlemen may accompany you towards your next appointment. You will be dressed like ladies, but he has a rather formidable revolver in his jacket, and is under strict orders to shoot you in the head if you try to escape. Since I know the man, and know that he is quite capable of the task, I request that you refrain from any such attempts until you leave my house, less your brains get on my walls and carpet. Questions?"

I felt confusion, followed by a rush of panic. A House of Prostitution? Had we been sold? Who was the man? What was happening?

Reading my expression, Madam Marie laughed. "Do not be alarmed, Peaches. Your virginity is safe here, although later on today there will be a great many men downstairs who would pay a pretty penny for it. You are both here to be prepared, and nothing more. Sophie will take you for your bath."

Our bath was lovely, with scented water and colored soaps, and Rose and I giggled like schoolgirls as we splashed in the tub while Sophie rubbed us gently with soft colored sponges.

The man assigned to us stayed in the room as we washed, but paid us little mind, keeping his attention focused on the door and window, our only two avenues of escape. He did not seem unkind, which was a relief after the cruelty we had suffered, but I had no doubt that if our actions prompted him he would have cheerfully murdered us, and then gone down the stairs for hearty breakfast.

We were not given drawers, since they could not put them over our shackles, but we were given hoop skirts, beautiful gowns (mine white, Rose's blue!) and feathered hats. Rose and I giggled as we squirted each other with cheap perfume, and laughed with delight as we were dressed, and as the skirts hid our feet, which were still chained together. Looking at us one would have thought we were true Southern Belles.

It has been a short while since I had been treated as a human, but it seemed like eons ago as Rose and I promenaded down the street. The first time a man tipped his hat to us, we didn't know what to do, and turned to our guard for guidance. He was impassive, and was without expression, so when it happened again a few paces down Rose and I smiled pleasantly and nodded to the gentlemen, and then burst into laughter!

New Orleans thought we were ladies! Rose and I felt quite wicked, and we knew our Mistress would have been quite enraged to see us "passing" so, but our guardian did not seem to care, and seemed interested only in walking us to our destination via a path that did not get our lovely new dresses dirty, and in making sure we never left his sight.

We walked two or three blocks in what is known as the French part of the City, our journey ending at a not overly large but quite lovely structure with a façade of Greek columns, and a white portico. The pediment identified it as a bank, which puzzled me, until I remembered that my Mistress had journeyed to New Orleans for a loan.

When we entered, my Mistress was already in an office, seated, talking to a bloated old walrus of a bank manager. Seeing Rose and I, he smiled broadly, and bade us inside, offering us seats next to our Mistress.

Our guardian with the gun stood far away, content to stand at the entrance of the bank. Every window of the building had bars, and there was only one entrance, so he felt no need

to follow us about. It would be as convenient for him to shoot us in the doorway as anywhere else.

I sensed my Mistress did not like having us sit next to her, dressed as equals, and her eyes flashed with anger as the manager gushed that his office now "boasted three of loveliest flowers in the South!"

"Peaches and Irish Rose are slaves, not flowers, Mr. Potter," Emily said curtly, smiling through clenched teeth. "And now that you've seen my collateral, I trust our business here today is concluded."

Mr. Potter smiled at Irish Rose and I, and we, giddy from our walk, smiled back. He seemed lost in thought for a moment, enchanted by our beauty, but glancing at the paperwork in front of him, quickly returned to business.

"Not so fast, Miss Davis," the Walrus finally said. "Bank procedure requires that I verify the condition of the collateral, and make sure it is the same – and as valuable – as your papers claim. We have a man experienced in such assessments, a former trader, as well as a new man, whom I am trying to train. I would like you three ladies to meet them both."

At the term "three ladies" my Mistress grimaced, and Irish Rose and I fought the urge to giggle.

The Walrus disappeared for a moment, then returned, and we were led into a large room with an Oak Conference table. Mr. Potter handed our paperwork to a poch faced man, who, from the cruel, greedy look in his eye, was obviously an experienced flesh peddler.

"Mr. Sneed, I need you to assess these women. Make sure their papers are in order, and give me the price we'd get for each of them, if foreclosure were required."

"There's only two sets of papers here," the flesh peddler said.

"Those are the papers we have," the Walrus replied. "Please make the assessment, Mr. Sneed, and get Pickford to do one of the girls, too. The poor things afraid of his own shadow, and we simply have to bring him up to speed on how things are done in New Orleans."

At that, another clerk entered, and tapped Mr. Potter on the shoulder, telling him that his urgent attentions were needed elsewhere. Mr. Potter argued the point for a moment, since it was clear that he wanted to stay and watch our assessment, but relented when the clerk explained the import of the matter.

So caught up was I by the little drama that I didn't recognize the clerk until the door closed, leaving myself, Irish Rose, Emily, Mr. Sneed, and the new clerk, who somehow seemed strangely familiar to me.

"Elizabeth?" the clerk asked. "Is that you? What are you doing in New Orleans?"

So unexpected was the face, in this time and place, that my brain struggled to register what was happening.

"Walter. Walter Pickford!" he replied. "Don't you remember me? I worked at your father's bank. I kept asking you to dance with me, don't you remember?" he added with a laugh.

Walter Pickford! Painfully shy, asthmatic Walter Pickford! Oh, the poor darling was so in love with me he could hardly stand to glance at my shadow. Even now, I could see he was blushing.

"Walter?" I said, still trying to wrap my head around his presence. "What are you doing here?"

"Transferred down here...father thought the warm weather would cure my asthma. Bloody malaria swamp. Did you know my predecessor died of tuberculosis? Some rest cure," he laughed.

"Works good, and the people are all very nice," he continued, "although now they want me to do some sort of bloody slave assessment. Can you imagine?"

At the words slave assessment, the horror of the coincidence hit me like a bolt of lightening as Mr. Potters words echoed in my mind: ***"Please make the assessment, Mr. Sneed, and get Pickford to do one of the girls, too."***

I stood there aghast, as my Mistress picked up the slack. "Oh, you too KNOW each other? How delightful!" she gushed. "How nice it must be for you, Peaches, to see an old friend! And you, Mr. Pickford...how nice you will get to see so much of the girl you used to dance with!"

"Uh...Elizabeth and I never actually danced. I asked her, but..."

"Well!" Emily gushed. "You and my little Peaches will get to know each other VERY well today!"

Walter stared at her, confused. Mr. Sneed, the flesh monger, handed him my bill of sale, and Walter read it incredulously.

"A slave? Elizabeth a slave? No! No! It can't be!"

"Please, Walter," I begged. "Don't make a scene. You will get yourself arrested, and will do no good for me, or for the cause."

"But how can this be?"

"I don't have time to explain, but it is true...I am an Octoroon slave. David is in Natchez, and if you get word to him, or to father, they can help me. But you cannot. Trust me, you cannot."

"But..."

"No butts, Walter," I said. "This will go easier for the both of us if you no longer regard me as Elizabeth, the bosses daughter with whom you were hopelessly in love. I am now merely Peaches, the Octoroon slave girl."

After a long pause, and a pleading, beseeching look from me, Walter nodded. "I understand," he said reluctantly.

"Oh, this will be wonderful!" my Mistress gushed, clapping her hands in unbridled happiness. "You can do the assessment on Peaches, Mr. Pickford, after Mr. Sneed shows you how to, by demonstrating on Irish Rose!"

Satisfied that the introductions were over, Mr. Sneed took the riding crop off his belt. "We'll do the one with out her papers first, since she'll take the longest."

"Which one is that?" Walter asked.

"The one on the end, with the blue eyes and black hair and the smart mouth."

All eyes turned to Emily as the overseer pointed his crop at her. "Strip!"

"I'm not a slave!" Emily laughed. "Peaches! Rose! Tell him!"

"Like I'd listen to them!" Sneed sneered. "Boss man gave me mah' orders. Said I needed to do 'yall, but he only had papers on two."

"What he meant to say...what he should have said..."

Mr. Sneed was having none of it. "SHUCK, you saucy wench! Before I take this leather to your backside."

Mr. Sneed, enraged, raised his crop as he moved towards my Mistress, but stopped short as she started unbuttoning her dress. Anxiously, she stared at the door, hoping Mr. Potter would return.

"Hurry up!" Sneed shouted. "We don't got all day to watch you fiddle with you frillies!"

Emily's rapidly began unbuttoning her dress, no easy task given the number of buttons. Used to a slave to help her undress at her leisure, she stumbled now. Mr. Sneed, anxiously smacking the riding crop against his palm, had enough, and when she was down to her last three or four buttons, ripped the rest of the garment from her back.

"Move, you blue-eyed devil!" he shouted. "You'll put on no airs in front of me!"

At Sneed's direction, Irish Rose and I began to help her, which greatly speeded the process. Emily was too upset to undress herself properly, while Rose and I were as cool as cucumbers. And as ladies, we knew what had to be undone, and what could be merely loosened and slid off. I must say that it was not an entirely unpleasant chore, and after being paraded naked thru the streets all day Emily's tears gave Irish Rose and I no small degree of satisfaction. Irish Rose actually began to whistle "Dixie" at one point, causing Mr. Sneed to laugh.

"That's right!" Mr Sneed cackled. "Make the little slut dance, and strip her down, birthday bare. She's got a purdy face...let's see if she's as purdy all over!"

She was indeed! Sneed ordered Emily to place her hands atop of her head, and used the tip of her crop to lift her gaze from the floor, revealing her beautiful blue eyes. I am proud to say Mistress Emily was quite lovely, with white alabaster skin, slender hips, nicely rounded breasts, straight dark hair on top, and curlier dark hair below.

Irish Rose and I smiled at each other, as we exchanged a wicked, unspoken thought. Emily Davis would look fine standing naked on a marble pedestal at the Forks in the Road Slave Market, and Mr. Cochrain would no doubt take great pleasure in pocketing 5% of the proceeds from her sale.

Walter remained silent throughout this, but I had become wiser to the ways of men since my time at the Forks, and I could tell from the bulge in the front of his pants and the gleam in his eyes as he stared at Emily's naked body that despite his fervent anti-slavery credentials, earned through countless hours sitting as near as he could to me at the Old South Meeting House in Boston, at this moment the Peculiar Institution appealed to a part of his brain that had nothing to do with his intellect.

The realization both excited and sobered me, for I knew that if I were standing naked on the block in Boston the crowds in Boston would gather about me as they did THE GREEK SLAVE, or train their opera glasses on me as I was put thru my paces on stage, as we did with the escaped slave wenches during our standing room only lectures.

Men like Walter, too shy to even take my hand, would watch with eager eyes as the whip was CRACKED in the air over my head, and I was stripped naked as a newborn babe.

Mr. Sneers lesson was quite interesting, really, for although at this stage I had been inspected countless times before, I had never known the reasons for some of the moves, until I heard them explained to me by a master of his trade. Walter was given a notepad, and ordered to take notes on the goods, as Mr. Sneed expertly examined the wares.

"Check the hair for richness, fullness. It shouldn't be brittle, or crack in your fingers. That might mean she's sick or starved. Look for brands or scars on the shoulders or neck, or ulcerations from the collar around the throat. Sometimes they'll grow the wenches hair long to hide that."

"Look at her eyes. Are they bright and lively? Saucy? Defiant? Do they follow you when they move. Eyes tell you a lot. If she's a rebel, can you whip it out of her? If she's a dolt, did the drug her, to keep her calm, or is she an imbecile. No man wants a fool in bed, at least not more than once or twice, even a pretty fool."

"Check her ears for notching, or lobes cut off. That may mean she's a listener, and likes to gossip with the other slaves. Look for cuts in the tongue or missing teeth. Sometimes they look young, but half their teeth are gone. Look for sores in the mouth or around the tongue. Don't buy 'em if they're going to die on 'ya, or at the least, don't pay top price."

"Run your hands along her shoulders. Is she a hump back? Is her skin smooth or rough? Is she hairy?"

"Give her udders a good squeeze, like this... If her boobies are all swollen up with milk it might mean she just dropped a litter. Try and coax a little milk out and see if anything comes. This one's dry, but I'm betting titties like these could feed at least two or three little suckers, once we got her knocked up."

"Stroke her nipples...see if you can get 'em hard. That's a good sign that she's a frisky wench. This one doesn't respond much...have to say that's kind of odd for one her age. Makes me wonder if she's ever been with a man before. We'll see soon enough."

"Check her feet. No fungus or worms... that's good. Her sole's are all smooth and dainty, which means she's crap for walking. No blisters or marks on her hands, which means she'll be shit for field work too, until she gets some calluses built up."

"Nice calves. No sores or ulcers around the ankles, so she hasn't been hobbled yet. At this point, I usually like to make 'em jump and run a bit, to make sure no one has cut their Achilles tendon, on account of 'em trying to run. All right girl, hop to it. You two...whistle up Dixie again, so this wench has a lively tune to dance too!"

And so it was that Mistress Emily was danced, running around the room, her hands still atop of her head, while her massah urged her on, giving her quick flick with the crop as she

passed. Irish Rose and I urged her on, whistling Dixie and clapping our hands, even as her massah flicked his crop across her bottom to urge her on.

She did 10 full circuits before he was satisfied, and by the time he bent her over the conference table for the final inspection her wind was gone.

"Use the tip of the crop to lift up her butt cheeks, and bounce 'em around a bit, to see if they got any spring. Make 'em jiggle, like this.... See? Bounce real purdy, don't they? Like two little bags of flour!"

"This one's going to be a fancy, which means she's going to be spending a lot of time moving that sweet little ass of hers around her master's bed, giving up her pouch real sweet. So you wanna make sure her ass is tight, but not bony so it still has some spring in it. And of course her hips have to be broad enough to let her drop a few suckers, if her massah decides to put her to stud."

"Okay, up on the table, wench, on all fours. Head down, ass up. Legs apart!"

The imperfection in Emily's pose was rewarded with a quick flick of the crop across her naked behind. "Head down, wench!" Mr. Sneed barked. "Sniff the varnish. I want to yer ass, not your face!"

Impatiently he tapped the crop against the inside of Emily's thighs. "Spread your legs!" he ordered. "Knees apart!"

Emily spread her legs another couple of inches, but not enough to satisfy Mr. Sneed. Her reluctance was rewarded with a loud SWISH and a stinging blow across her fully exposed bottom cheeks!

"Spread 'em, wench!" he snapped. "Show me what you had for breakfast!"

Rose and I flinched, surprised that he would actually strike her with a blow that was already raising a welt. I wondered if for a moment he was mentally unbalanced, or if there was some other reason he did not fear damaging the collateral.

Emily had no time for such considerations, Obeying the tapping of the insistent tap of the crop against the insides of her thighs, Emily spread her legs to shoulder length.

"Wider!" he snapped.

Emily obeyed, and spread herself wide, until all of her female parts, and her bottom hole to, were opened wide to the men's eager gaze.

Emily, still stinging from the blow of the crop, flinched as Mr. Sneed's pudgy fingers ran teasingly over the sensitive hairs covering her most delicate place.

"Please, kind sirs," Emily said, sobbing softly. "I've never been touched there before...by a man..."

"Well 'yer gonna be touched today, purdy wench!" Mr. Sneed snickered. Warming to a favorite subject, he turned to Walter to explain. "Some like to use spit on their fingers to loosen a wench, while others like to use a bit of grease. I like to use their natural juices, even if it takes a while, 'specially if it's a breeding wench or a fancy, or like this one, both. It let's you see how responsive she is, and how quick she juices, so you can tell the buyers what they'll be getting in the hay. Nobody wants to fuck a block of ice!"

With surprising gentleness the vulgar man began to stroke Emily's sex, teasing and caressing, trying to coax a response. He was quite skillful, actually, but there was no response, at least until Irish Rose wordlessly stepped forward and volunteered to help.

Under the touch of her own sex, Emily responded quickly, and as Emily groaned thru her final stages of pleasure Mr. Sneed wrily ordered Walter to note that "these two might best be sold as a pair."

Mr. Sneed's inspection of Emily's hindquarters went quickly, as she was well lubricated, and he was able to verify her virginity with expert quickness. "Nice and tight," he said, causing her to gasp as he slid his fingers into her bottom hole. "Fore and after. Butthole grips 'ya like vise, if you wanna do her and not have a sucker pop out nine months later!"

The inspection finished, the attention turned to me, and Walter's eyes widened as Mr. Sneed ordered me to undress. Emily started to close her legs, but a sharp smack of Mr. Sneed's crop and a gruff order to "keep 'em spread" froze her like a statue.

I was wearing no underwear, or jewelry, and far less underwear than my Mistress, so my unveiling was, in comparison, a comparatively brief affair. "You wanna do this one Walter?"

I stood before him, naked, my hands on top of my head, the vision of his fantasies revealed at last to his gaze. He said nothing, but merely gazed at me.

"You wanna do this one or not?" Sneed repeated, impatient with a moment Walter clearly wished to last forever.

"It's okay, Walter," I whispered softly. "Do your job."

Why did I tell him this? To this day, I do not know. Perhaps because I knew this horrible thing was TO BE DONE, and WOULD BE DONE, regardless, by him, or by Sneed. Perhaps because I preferred his hands on me, the hands of a kind and gentle friend, the shy asthmatic who brought flowers when I spoke at the Old South Meeting House, to the hands of the evil flesh peddler.

Walter did his job, and did it well, checking my skin, my neck, my ears, my mouth and tongue. I blushed with shame as he discovered the lice in my hair, and he smiled sympathetically.

He took a long time with my breasts, kneading them, squeezing them, evaluating their ripeness and responsiveness to his touch. Sneed allowed him this indulgence, for he knew that no matter what his protestations might be, the outspoken abolitionist was now learning the joy of owning desirable female flesh.

My inspection went quicker, as my papers were in order, and I was only made to lap the conference room twice before Walter and Mr. Sneed were satisfied by my fitness. Walter did take considerable time comparing the brand on the paper to the brand on my mound, slowly running his fingers back and forth over my marks as if to verify that this vision of female bondage was actually real.

The virginity test was next, and soon I was next to my Mistress on the conference table, legs spread wide, nose pressed against the varnish, three feet to the left of her, so "the lice don't jump."

It did not take me long to reach a shattering peak of excitement, even under Walter's inexperienced touch, as watching Emily being put through her paces as if she were a slave had been horribly, dreadfully, wonderfully exciting.

Irish Rose was next, and Walter did her examination as well. Her examination was briefer than mine, partially because Walter was experienced, and partially because his hands trembled less when he caressed her.

Soon there were three of us on the conference table: me on the far left, Emily in the center, Rose on the right, with our bottoms raised high and our legs spread wide. "Ayn't that a pretty picture," Mr. Sneed snickered. "Now you girls hold position, till I tell you to move. If I come back, and you've moved in inch, I'll skin your hides."

Rose and I knew that as a mere appraiser Sneed would do no real damage, but Emily, not experienced with the receiving end of such threats, flexed her bottom cheeks in nervous anticipation.

The door of the conference room was left open, and pastries and chickory coffee were brought in, in what I supposed was a tradition of Southern hospitality at the bank. People who came in for refreshments were surprised to discover three naked fancy girls kneeling naked on the table, their legs spread wide, with all their charms on full display.

I wondered where Mr. Potter was, and why he had not returned to rescue us, and release Miss Emily and ourselves from our shameful display on the table. From the conversation

of the clerks, as they enjoyed their sweets and coffees and assessed our naked hindquarters, I learned that Mr. Potter had left to run an errand, leaving the three pieces of choice collateral in a very vulnerable state until his return.

"So which of them do you think has the tightest winker?"

"Tightest or cutest?" the man next to him replied. "I'd slip it in the redhead first, but the one in center looks the tightest?"

"Let us see, girls. Pucker your blow holes at us. Get to it: wink, wink!"

All three of us, conscious of the riding crop still laying on the conference table, endeavored to please our munching masters.

Each conversation was as humiliating as the last.

"So which one is the virgin?" one man asked.

"Two of the three are," a third man said. "But the proof is in the popping!"

"Men will believe anything," I heard a woman say. "Those little whores would hump your pen, if you held it out for them."

And...

"So which one would you buy?"

"The one on the end," his companion replied. "Although it would be a pity to breakup the set!"

Throughout this, I noticed that my protector Walter lingered, endlessly fussing with his coffee, thru the longest break in banking history. I am quite certain he stayed to protect me, although I also noticed that the enormous bulge in his pants never shrank.

"Is the owner coming back soon?" a female asked. "If they're unclaimed, we should really take them down to the St. Louis Exchange, as unclaimed."

"Unclaimed" today meant "auction" tomorrow. I saw my Mistress shudder at the thought.

For my part I felt my stomach knot up in fear at the prospect of being sold yet again. One might have thought that having enduring the humiliation of Forkes the block would hold no terror for me but sadly that was not the case. The thought of having to mount those well-trodden steps, to be stripped of whatever covering the slaver saw fit to temporarily bestow on me and flaunt my naked flesh for all too see filled me with a quiet dread.

Would the slave heat take me? Would I shame myself beyond any hope of redemption as I creamed again and again to the touch of the slaver's lash.

The thought of such a spectacle alone was enough to trigger my shameful condition. I felt my loins begin to ache and throb from the attention I would receive on the block. Perhaps it was un-Christian of me but I did allow myself a small smile at the thought that Miss Emily would be bending and stretching and squatting right alongside me, just as naked as a jay bird. Would she take to being a plaything of some rich master as quickly as she had to being my mistress? Time would tell.

"Miss Emily?" a familiar voice gasped with astonishment and then no small measure of delight. "Is that you?"

I felt both relieved and oddly disappointed when I recognized the voice of Mr. Potter. The Walrus had finally returned. Like a herd of deer sensing a prowling bob cat the employees of the bank who had been happy to linger and admire the view fled in a flurry of activity. Realizing the mistake that had been made Mr. Potter quickly offered his apologies but much to Miss Emily's disgust and my secret delight it seemed to take some time for her to be reunited with her garments. A true pity that. Perhaps having walked in a slave's footsteps Miss Emily's cold heart would be moved by empathy.

Seeing my amused smile as she desperately tried to cover herself Miss Emily's eyes darkened and her glare hardened. Something told me that my trials were far from over.

Return to Royal Oak

Most of our journey had been spent perched precariously atop the carriage with the luggage and the rest of Miss Emily's possessions but now that we were close she had ordered the carriage to stop. Ever the considerate mistress she wanted her animals exercised.

I had hoped that once we left that dreadful river boat behind I might be freed from the leg irons but Miss Emily had taken one look at the steel fetters snug around my ankles and with a smile shook her head.

"I cant deprive my slave of such pretty jewelry,"

I had become almost used to them but still I would occasionally misjudge my stride. The chain would snap taunt, the fetters dig into my well bruised ankles and it was all I could do to maintain my balance as we ran as best we could behind our owners' carriage.

The pace never went beyond one that we could match, if barely but it left little time for thought or even to take in the surroundings. My world had become fixed in the moment, of putting one foot in front of the other. To think that I actually missed the time on the riverboat! Trapped in the coffin had been terrifying but at least I did not have to fear falling and being dragged to my death. And in the coffin I had learned to appreciate the comfort of Rose's wicked tongue between my legs.

Finally the carriage slowed and at last I had enough strength to look up and study my surroundings. I knew almost instantly where it was that Miss Emily had taken us. Sugar Oak, we were almost at the Colonel's plantation.

Within minutes we had arrived and Miss Davis was helped from her carriage. We may as well have been her part of her travel trunks for all the attention she gave us and no sooner had she disappeared up the steps to the porch and inside than the carriage was in motion again, driving to the rear of the great house where the luggage would be lifted down carefully by the house slaves and the horses tended to.

Putting one foot in front of the other had suddenly become far greater a trial and I kept my head bowed so that my hair might fall and cover my face. Was there to be no end to my shame? I had been probed and prodded branded and shaved and somehow I endured but to be brought back here like this? I felt my courage waver on the verge of breaking and it was all that I could do to hold back the tears.

I had called this place home! I had glided through its halls attended on hand and foot. That summer seat on the porch had been my favorite spot to watch the sun go down and now I was a slave, branded with my owners mark, clad only in rough shoes and a sack dress that stank with my dried sweat and the dirt of the road. To be displayed and parade among strangers was bad enough but here? How could I possibly endure this?

Was this her revenge I wondered? I had enjoyed her being taken down a notch at the bank stripped as we were and put through her paces. The look on Miss Emily's face when she realized that if the banker had not returned we all might have been taken as unclaimed slaves to be sold at public auction was priceless. To think that this mighty pillar of the south could go to the block just as easily as any other had been a revelation. Yet now I regretted ever mocking grin I had given her, every whistled Dixie tune I had uttered. How foolish could I have been not to realize that there were consequences to be had when I displeased my owner?

Irish Rose was at my side of course and I drew some comfort from her presence. I no longer considered her a rival rather she was a companion in adversity. Yet she had never known the life that had been mine. A life of luxury and privilege and now it was gone.

She too was a slave but for me the fall had been far longer, the landing far harder. She had never graced these fields as mistress.

The horses were freed from the harness and taken to a hitching post until a groom could attend to them and a few moments later both Irish Rose and myself found ourselves likewise chained to the post and left to wait until someone decided what was to be done with us.

The sun rose slowly overhead and I sweated freely until I feared that my slave dress would rot away but still no one came. Even when the horses were led away we remained until I began to wonder if we would ever be freed from the hitching post. Around us the plantation was a hive of activity. In the fields beyond I could see slaves picking the cotton crop but closer to the house there much occurring.

Slavery has few qualities to recommend it beyond a certain freedom to take carnal pleasures without guilt but I discovered that slaves are often seen as simply part of the background and others, even slaves talk freely around us. By listening carefully to the talk of those that passed I was able to discover that there was a great many ladies of quality in residence. It seemed Aunt Veronica had invited her 'friends' and there was hardly a woman of note in the locality who was not present.

Had Aunt Veronica or the Colonel invited Miss Emily? I learned from the brief conversations that I heard that the Colonel was absent on business. Word was that he had returned to Natchez and at this I wondered how he was entertaining himself with his fancy girls. The whole house was a stir with the appearance of Miss Emily. She had not been expected for no one had known that she had returned from her trip to New Orleans.

Finally we received attention but not the sort that either of us welcomed. The familiar overseer that Miss Emily had set in charge of us appeared and with a smile as he passed us by pausing only long enough to bring the crop he carried down hard on my bottom. My dress helped cushion the impact somewhat but the pain was still sufficient for me to yell and my bottom cheeks clenched in fear that more was to come.

"Time to earn your keep princess," he growled as he began to free us from the shackles that bound our wrists.

"Let's be having those," he added as he seized our shoes. "You'll not be needing them where you're going."

I exchanged a puzzled look with Irish Rose but she shook her head equally mystified. Perhaps Miss Davis was summoning us to the house so that we could attend on her. I had no idea how Aunt Veronica would react at the sight of me but at least indoors I would be out of that searing sun that I had come to loath. How foolish I was.

Instead of the house we were led barefoot and in our leg irons to the nearby fields and surrendered into the custody of the overseer who ranged over the field on horseback, a musket slung on his back and a lash in his hands.

“Put these dirty nigras to work,” our escort told the man who was looking up and down at me and Irish Rose. A lusty smile quickly spread across his face but he did not appear to recognize me. I knew him for I recognized that wicked scar that ran down from the corner of his left eye to his jaw.

I did not know his name but I had seen him whipping a slave once and with righteous anger I had cried for him to stop. I had even gone as far as to snatch the whip from his hand and strike him about the shoulder calling him every foul name I could recall. My education then had been lacking in vulgarity.

His eyes had blazed with anger in response more to the lash than my words and even though I wore a fine dress and was obviously a lady for a moment I thought he would take the whip to me when he yanked it from my hand.

Thankfully Colonel Rand was nearby and his presence was barely enough to restrain the beast.

“Miss Davis does not want them scarred or this one,” that with a nod to me “to lose her maidenhood.”

The scarred man looked disappointed at this but he nodded all the same.

“There both uppity lazy wenches,” he added. You’ll need the strap to get a scrap of work out of them” the overseer warned as he turned to leave.

We were put to picking cotton with the rest of the slaves as despite the ache from my back or the sweat that ran freely down my face and onto my dress I kept my head down and did the best I could to work hard at this unfamiliar task.

Our presence did not go unnoticed among the other field hands for it was uncommon for fancy girls like us to be found in the fields. Some masters did occasionally send their fancy girls here. A week picking cotton under the hot sun and the even hotter sting of the overseer whip tended to cure any impertinence or uppity ness that a girl might have. And for a time that scarred overseer paid me no more attention than any of the other slaves. If anyone received special attention it was Irish Rose. Like so many before him he was drawn to the uncommon paleness of her skin and the blazing mane of coppery red hair.

Then what I had most feared occurred. Another overseer rode up. From the direction he came I judged that he had been recently up at the great house and no sooner had he pulled up along side the first than they were in hushed communication.

I hazarded a glance up and saw that he was riding towards me with an eager knowing expression. He might not have recognized the finely dressed arrogance of Elizabeth Parker in the form of the much more humble and chained Peaches but obviously word had begun to spread of my return and the chance in my circumstances.

"Well lookie here," he said in a low southern drawl as he pulled the horse up before me. With the tip of his whip he reached down and used it to tilt my head up so that he could look clearly at my face.

"What ever do we have here?"

I said nothing for I could think of nothing that would suffice. My heart was beating fast now for I could remember still the look he gave me when I took his own whip and struck him with it. It had been a glancing blow delivered over a shirt and coat but it was not the pain of the blow but the pain to his pride that had stung the greater. And now I no longer enjoyed the protection of the Colonel. Worse than that while I was not a slave of the plantation I was still a slave and he my overseer. Miss Emily's instructions that I neither be ravished or scarred seemed thin enough protection.

"You look mighty hot there Miss Elizabeth," he mocked. "You needs to cool down a bit."

Had I misjudged this brute? For a moment I hoped that this was so. "Thank you massah," I replied and I was his grin widened to hear the well educated sophisticated Boston woman use the speech of an ignorant slave. "Peaches be mighty glad for a hat."

I had seen the other slaves wearing wide brimmed hats that looked like they were made from straw. They were crude but they did keep the sun off the face and give some protection to the head. I had longed for one but not wishing to draw undue attention to myself for fear that I would be recognized I had said nothing.

He laughed at the top of his voice as if I had just said the most funny comment he had ever heard.

"I'll be having that," he said and then from the saddle he reached down to grip the neckline of my dress. I could feel his rough hands between my breasts but a moment later they were gone as he pulled the dress clean up over my head and off.

"There you should be a lot cooler now and you'll darken up some in the sun." As he spoke I could see his eyes drinking in my nudity, my helplessness. He let out a whistle as I immediately tried to use my hands to cover my breasts and shaved sex.

"Let's not be having any false shyness out of you," he warned. "I heard all about how you Nigras run around Africa without a stitch on." Then something occurred to him and he pulled his horse around and rode off for a bit, still clutching my dress.

The scarred overseer was not gone long and when I returned I learned that even the slowest of wit can have imagination. When mixed with a streak of natural cruelty it can be most painful combination.

He brought with him a yoke, the sort that fixed around a man's neck so that they might carry two buckets or baskets on either side. He practically jumped from the horse in his eagerness to deal with me and in less than three minutes I found myself wearing that yoke around my neck but with my wrists lashed to the end with strips of leather.

In this way I was put to work unable to shield my body in any way as my arms were drawn up and fastened to the ends of the wooden yoke. He took his time admiring the view and was particularly impressed with my hairless mount and the brand there that proclaimed my owner for all to see.

A short period of rest was granted to the slaves, a time where they were given water and some rations to keep them strong for the balance of the day. Two buckets of water were hung from either side of my yoke and then the overseer tied a cord around my neck but loose enough that it actually brushed against my nipples which despite my shame or perhaps because of it here erect.

A hooked long ladle was then hung against my chest from the hook that clipped around the rope. In this way naked as the day I was born, my body slick with sweat and unable to shield any of my modest I was set to watering the field slaves.

I thought at first it was simply a means to humiliate the woman who had dared take the instrument of his oppression and turn it against him for the field slaves took every advantage of the situation. Each would take their time lifting the ladle off my neck rope and not a one managed to lift it off without first rubbing rough dirt stained hands against the sensitive skin of my breasts.

Yet as each drank their fill of both the water and the sight of my glistening naked flesh I could see their trousers bulge and a hot look of frustrated hunger would fill their faces. It was only then that the overseer was a lot smarter than I had believed. He had found a way to degrade me by allowing every field hand in this field to paw at me as he wished. Yet at the same time how frustrating must it have been for those field slaves. Here was a woman who looked as if she were white, stripped completely bare and deprived even of a decent thatch to cover her sex and while they were free to pinch or kneedle or caress my flesh they could do no more.

I did not know what punishment a field slave might face if he decided to take his pleasure and ravish me there and then in the dirt but from the fearful looks they gave the overseer I shuddered to think what it might be.

Even when the food and water had been taken and the slaves return to their duties I was not freed of the yoke. Instead of water bags of collected cotton were tied to either end of the yoke and I was given the task of carrying them from the slaves who had collected them to the wagon waiting to be loaded and hauled away.

Every step was a strain for the bags of cotton were heavy and without the use of my hands the struggle not to trip up over my legs irons took on a greater urgency. Yet I did not slow for the scarred overseer seemed to be back with me every few minutes.

Each time he passed I felt his strap flick out from the back of the horse and a moment later I yelped and almost fell as the hot searing pain of the strap filled my brain.

“Step lively now wench,” he would order after delivering the blow and then ride off to torment some of the other slaves. Yet he seemed hardly to be gone when I would catch sight of his horse trotting back. And then it would be

“Move that fat lazy ass of yours,”

The strap did not cut or scar as a more formidable whip might but oh how it stung and as the day went on my poor bottom when from olive white to bright pink and finally hot red as the strap kissed it over and over.

When at last evening began to fall and Miss Emily’s overseer returned to us my bottom was a sea of fire from the strap. I was freed from the yoke but even when my slave smock was returned to me I winched at the feel of the rough cloth brushing against my scarlet cheeks. There and then I vowed that I would work much harder and prove to Miss Emily that I was the perfect slave, her most obedient possession. Anything would be better than a full day in the fields.

Heedless of the activity around us Irish Rose and I never dared look up from the great tub of boiling water before us. On our return from the fields to the great house each of us had been given a washboard and carbolic soap to clean our slave dresses for we had been ordered to make ourselves presentable.

There had been no choice but for each of us to strip off our scant covering. We could not appear with our dresses rank with dirt sweat and lord knows what other foulness and for the last half hour we scrubbed for all we were worth. There would be an inspection we have been warned, and if either failed to pass inspection we would face a switching he promised we would not soon forget.

With my cheeks still red and tender from the overseer’s strap my bottom quivered at this threat. So heedless of our nudity or the whistles of appreciation that passers by gave us we never looked up from the back breaking labor of scouring all the dirt and sweat from our dresses.

At last we judged that they were as clean as we could make them and had to leave them to hand out to dry. Thankfully the sun was still warm even though it would soon slip beneath the horizon for the evening. It would not take long for the sack dresses to dry.

We washed in the same tub we have used to clean our dresses as best we could. Rose scrubbing my back and then we turned and I returned the favor. Without towels there was nothing we could do but to endure the crude comments and whistles of passing overseers as we waited for the water to dry naturally from our bodies. Even then we still had to wait until our smocks had dried sufficiently that they might be donned.

I was glad when I was finally dry. I had become used to being stripped and displayed. Do not misunderstand me it was an experience I did not care for but when it was done so often it almost became second nature. What was an unexpected distraction was the way my shaved mons reacted to bathing. Without any towel the bath water ran freely down between my breasts and over my stomach. Before my thatch would have gathered the water like any good forest but with that covering gone I found that little streams would continue on over my mound and hugging the contour of my body they inevitably found their way between my legs where it did not quite tickle my sex but it did cause it to tingle something fierce. I found the sensation quite distracting.

Perhaps we were slaves but like any women we were determined to appear our best. As a child I had always enjoyed playing dress up and this was no different. My gown was not so finely woven and left enough of my legs bare to scandalize the good people of Boston but we laughed and giggled as we tied and retied the drawstrings of our dresses so that as much bare shoulder and the upper slopes of our breasts could be revealed without running the risk of the smocks sliding off entirely.

This did happen once and the devil that she was Irish Rose insisted on tickling me without mercy as I tried to pull the dress back up. She left me so that I could hardly stand for laughing.

For a time I was almost happy for my body and hair were clean, the lice that refused to be driven away completely from my hair seemed to have abated and even my dress was clean and the smell of carbolic soap is not so bad when one had time to grow accustomed to it. Yet my good humor began to abate as our overseer arrived to collect us and we were taken to the house.

Like a little girl venturing into a strange new school for the first time I was glad when Irish Rose took my hand in her own and to the rattle of our leg irons we were escorted into one of the great drawing rooms. My heart caught at the sight of the room for I could remember taking my ease on one of the recliners with a book. I had though myself accustomed to the leg irons but at that moment I hated the way they forced me to shuffle and even worse was the rattle of iron that announced the coming of a slave. Barefoot I might have hoped to slip in unnoticed but not with this cacophony of steel sounding with every step I took.

Aside from the usual house slaves who were dressed far better than either Irish Rose or I the room held no males. There, center of attention as was her way sat Miss Emily and all around the room I could see the ladies from the neighboring plantations that I had last seen at the ball.

"Elizabeth," Aunt Veronica gasped wide eyed in shock when she registered my presence and I saw her raise a hand to her mouth to hide her look of shock.

Immediately all eyes turned to me though a few did briefly flick over to Irish Rose who still holding my hand gave it a small encouraging squeeze.

"Elizabeth?" Miss Emily asked as she climbed to her feet and almost glided across the floor to stand before us. She shook her head and taking my arm she led me away from Irish Rose to stand in the center of the room. The thick carpet was felt lovely beneath my bare feet but I was conscious of every eye in the room upon me. It felt almost as if I was back on the viewing pedicle at Forks. Perhaps I was not entirely naked but under those smug haughty surprised eyes I felt as if I had been stripped to my very bones.

"Now don't be shy," Miss Emily crooned. "What is your name, your proper name?"

I kept my eyes on the carpet for I could not meet their gaze. At the ball dressed in my rich dress that put their finery to shame I had felt so confident, so assured. But now my toes freshly scrubbed but once again dirty from the walk here curled into the carpet and I felt so small so little before these fine ladies. I had no business here among them, this was a place for women of refined birth and breeding and I was but the dirty ignorant fancy girl the slave wench the sort that their fathers or husbands kept in their townhouses to slate their lusts. Even though I had been brought here by the overseer I was filled with a dreadful certainty that I would be punished, and punished mightily for daring to intrude. Could I not be allowed to scuttle away back to the slave quarters where I belonged?

"You will note the way she looks away, shifty as any Nigra I ever did see," Miss Emily explained to much laughter and amusement. I never saw the overseer who lingered at the door behind him his crop but I felt the tip of the whip press under my chin forcing me to raise my head.

"Emily I really must insist that you let the girl put on decent clothes and those chains are they really..." Aunt Veronica began as she took a step towards me. It was almost as if she intended to put herself between my owner and I.

Miss Emily's smile widened and I could tell she had been hoping for such an outburst. The eyes of the other ladies had shifted now suddenly to my aunt and she must have felt how they suddenly had the feel of a pack of wolves ready to tear down and devour at the first sign of weakness.

"Why Mrs. Rand I am surprised. I thought you had this fancy girl sold because of the shame she brought to you prancing around likes she was white, insulting your friends. Don't tell me that you have some feelings for the wench." She chuckled while fanning herself with her lace fan.

"Why next, you will be telling us her chains should be struck and perhaps one of us should lend her a gown so she can sit down with us at table?"

The question hung in the air and Aunt Veronica opened her mouth to reply but then she caught herself and looked slowly to her left and her right. They might have been a pack of hyenas, these fine ladies from the way they eyed her, almost sniffing the air for the scent of blood. Aunt Veronica saw it as well and then slowly, reluctantly she shook her head and took a step back.

"No of course not," she murmured and even thought she was the mistress of this great house and I the lowly slave I saw that she could not look me in the eye.

If she was annoyed that my Aunt had failed to give her the confrontation she had sought Miss Emily gave no sign. Instead she slowly circled me tapping the crop against her skirts as she did. "I believe I asked you what is your name?"

I eyed her nervously but did not hesitate to answer. That crop was far too close for comfort and I knew that Miss Emily would not hesitate to use it if any of my answers did not please her.

"I be Peaches Miss Emily," I murmured softly.

The lip of the crop brushed against the back of my dress, not striking it more a caress and despite myself I jumped at the feel of it. Of course this set off a chorus of a laughter.

"Louder," Miss Emily demanded.

"I be Peaches," I exclaimed loud enough that even the hard of hearing would have heard.

"And what are you?"

"Peaches is your slave Missa Emily."

"And what do you have to say to these find upstanding ladies, coming down her and pretending your white. Supping with them and mocking them and all the while you nothing but a dirty fancy girl?"

My mouth felt dry but Miss Emily was just behind my shoulder tapping away with her crop against the bottom of my dress

"Peaches is mighty sorry Missa Emily. Peaches just a dirty Nigra and not known no better."

Even with my head bowed and my eyes on the carpet I saw the way they smiled at my language and the way I shuffled my feet nervously every time that crop but brushed against me. I had heard that most southerners believed that all abolitionism were nigra's passing for white and now standing before them was living proof that all their beliefs were correct.

"Are you uppity peaches?" she asked and I hesitated. What was the correct answer, I did not know. With fearful eyes I looked towards my owner seeking guidance like a lost schoolgirl seeking her all-knowing teacher to point the way.

She said nothing but lifted the crop before her to examine it with great care.

"Peaches try not to be uppity Missa Emily," I ventured after a few moments of frantic thought.

"And what happens when you are uppity?"

It was impossible for me to pull my eyes from that crop. The rest of the room might not have existed, not Aunt Veronica, not the rest of the vipers who called themselves ladies. There was only that crop and the threat it posed. My hind quarters were already bright red and aching from the strap I did not what to think what would happen if I displeased my mistress and she chose to use that crop.

I had always thought that I was brave, that I could meet any challenge but looking at that riding whip I knew that that the fear of that slender rod had mastered me more thoroughly than any papers.

"Peaches is given a whooping Missa Emily." I replied. Even saying the words made my tender bottom cheeks clench. A shiver ran through my entire body and I almost fell to my knees when I felt the crop slip under the hemline of my dress and left it back to bare my bottom.

"Oh my, someone was a lazy little Nigra," she almost purred at the sight of my bottom so pink and tender from the strap the overseer had used. I expected for her to make me show off the effect of the strapping to the assembled guests. Then to my surprise she let the back of the dress slide down. Some sights it seemed were for her alone.

Others were not however. As she moved around to my front I saw a gleam in her eye. It was the only warning I had before the crop tapped my groin. "Show these nice people your brand."

Our eyes met and I could almost see them brimming with pleasure as she savored the moment of her triumph. Now I fully understood the reason she had brought me here. It

was not enough for her to have won, it was not enough that she had destroyed me. She wanted everyone to see how low she had brought the abolitionist from the north.

With trembling hands I reached down and drew up the hem of my dress, pulling it up past my waist until my shaved mound and the telltale brand was there for everyone to see. There were gasps around the room and shocked intakes of breath. More than one set of fans were set to fluttering as the women tried to hide their shock and perhaps their interest.

With the crop tapping me on the bottom Miss Davis drove me forward like some herder driving a cow to market. She did not stop until I was stood before each of the seated ladies present and allowed each and every one to take as long a look as they wanted. Even Aunt Veronica was not spared. She took one look at the brand and then quickly turned her head away in disgust.

Miss Emily was not content however. As soon as I had completed my slow circuit around the room she directed me back to the center and then with a grin that nearly split her face she gestured with the crop. "Show us how frisky you are Peaches. Show us how you cream up"

Mutely I cast a silent appeal to my mistress but there was cool steel in her eyes as she shook her head. Her smile took on a cruel cast and she took the crop in both hands at either end and began to bend it slowly. I could see the blood drain away from her knuckles at the pressure she exerted on the crop. The warning was clear.

Nothing would please me more than to say that I stood my ground and refused her foul command. Yet that was not the case. My hands slipped down between my legs and what shocked me was that I was already wet. I hated the way she displayed me, humiliated me before these creatures but there can be no denying it. Some part of me enjoyed having another command me, dominate me.

If only it could have been David! I closed my eyes blocking out the sight of my enemies and let my fingers play with my secret place. David had never been anything other than tender with me, the perfect Gentleman but as I bucked my hips back and forth grinding my lips against my fingers I tried to imagine that the room was empty save David and the lowly slave girl who strove to attract his interest.

"Look at that dirty monkey," one woman gasped in shock.

"Humping herself like a bitch in heat," another remarked.

"I declare I think she would ride that crop if given half a chance."

"No shame at all. Those hot blooded Africans sure do juice up quick."

Truer words had never been spoken. It came with surprising quickness as I pictured myself here in this dress my fetters digging in to my ankles as I performed for David. I pictured him there taking his ease on the great armchair with a glass of brandy in one hand a smoldering cigars in the other.

He would be cool, commanding showing but a trace of amusement at my antics. And I, I was Peaches the hot blooded slave wench who juiced and creamed at the touch. I would show him how hot my blood ran how my wet slit ached for his touch. But of course he would not be moved, at least not at first.

Instead he would ask in a bored almost disinterested way could I do no better? I would show him! I could feel the heat radiating from my sex now igniting my blood with the slave heat that I had first discovered when I played the slave. Now I no longer played and if anything that loss of comfort, that absence of a net there to safely catch me made the passion all the more real, the pleasure all the more rich and vibrant and throbbing. I was so close now, so close.

Heedless of the spectacle I was making of myself I threw back my head and cried out as I arched my back and thrust my hips up as far as nature would allow. Over and over I drove my fingers back and forth across my groin and with a scream of pleasure I came once, twice and then finally a third time as wave after wave of pleasure washed over me, each more intense than the last.

I do not know how long I stood there with my fingers thrust into my sex crying in the throes of pleasure.

"Free the slaves?" one of the women asked in scorn and disbelief. "Why they would be rutting like barnyard animals all day and all night if we let them."

"Disgusting creature!" another fair maiden of the south intoned with heat in her voice. "She should be locked away from decent folk."

"Is this our equal?" Miss Emily asked and I felt her place her hand on my bare right shoulder. Her touch was surprisingly light but there was no disguising the familiar way she handled me, handled her property.

Immediately there were a refrain of "No" and "Never," mingled with "filthy beast." Yet strangely some of those fine ladies appeared to be blushing from the stain of red in their cheeks and one or two appeared to be having trouble catch their breaths. Perhaps their stays were too tight. And when I turned to Miss Emily I could see that for all her voice was but mildly out of breath her eyes were afire with desires that still seemed if not as incomprehensible to me were at least uncommon.

Apparently she was satisfied that the display had achieved its purpose. I had been humiliated, my Aunt had been cowed and the slave had been made to achieve a state of

lustful pleasure that showed beyond all argument that any with slave blood could not be trusted with freedom.

My owner turned to the overseer who had never left and as I looked back at him I could see from the bulge in his trousers that I was not the only one who had had daydreams. What, I wondered had he imagined himself doing as I performed?

"The stables I think," Miss Emily told him. "A nice clean stall if one can be found. I am sure both will be far more comfortable with their own kind, the beasts of the field that they would be here."

Yet for all her harsh words there was no anger in her voice and her hand moved very slowly to release me. Her soft fingers almost caressed my bare shoulder before trailing down my arm and finally letting go. And I was sure that I detected regretful longing in her eyes when finally Irish Rose and I were led away for the night.

A Night in the Stables

The stable might have been warmer and we certainly had not been graced with blankets but it was clean, the straw thick and fresh with far less of the stench that one might have expected. Ever the old Cavalry officer, the Colonel spared no expense on the care and comfort of his precious horses. When I had first come to the Sugar Oak I had reproached him for how could it be right and proper that he cared more for the upkeep his horses than his slaves. As I lay there exhausted from the day's events I wondered if this was but a foreshadowing of the Nigra Heaven I had been promised if I was a good slave wench.

Across from me Irish Rose sat with her back to the stall wall with her legs drawn up tight to her chest and her arms wrapped around her knees. I could not help but notice that even in the fading light her bare legs shone, so pale so smooth. When bathed in sunlight those same slender legs appeared as if they were bathed in oil, glistening to the eye.

The sound of the latch opening to the stall drew my attention and immediately I stiffened. I had seen how some of the field slaves looked at me when I toiled alongside them and as the latch was raised dreadful thoughts of being ravished there on the straw, sprang into my mind. As the door swung open I saw that my fears were unfounded but the figure I saw there was surely the last person I had expected to see at this late hour.

There framed by the door, was Miss Emily, dressed in a light silvery white night-robe and slippers, holding a lit lantern with one hand as she pressed the stall door closed behind her. For a moment she simply stood there, regarding her property and what she saw must have pleased her for I saw a small smile spread across her face before she turned slightly to hand the lantern from a nearby hook.

I scrambled forward without delay and from the corner of my eye I saw Irish Rose match me as we both went down on our hands and knees taking care to ensure that our backs were perfectly parallel to the ground beneath. Like the obedient dogs that she required us to be we arched our necks to look up at our mistress but I could not help but shiver.

What fell deeds had we done that required her to come at this hour? Strangely I did not see any of the overseers with her, was she intend on disciplining us by herself?

"Stand," she ordered and we climbed to our feet both wondering what was going to happen. She shook her head in mild disapproval at the sight of our slave dresses, for brief as they were we yet wore them for some measure of warmth.

"You take your dresses off when you go to sleep," she chided us and at the tone of rebuke my bottom cheeks clenched fearfully in anticipation. Would it be the switch or the strap?

Yet for all the reproach in her voice that thin smile actually widened. "Take them off," she ordered and as we quickly moved to pull the drawstrings that held them up she quickly raised a hand. "Stop."

Turning to Irish Rose she fixed her with that pale blue stare that made me feel so weak before it. "Take it off, slowly. Dance for me as you undress"

Irish Rose exchanged a confused look with me but then she widened her legs as far as her shackles would permit and began to sway her hips in a slow circular dance. Her shoulders quickly followed suit and even with the drawstrings being undone I saw the opening of her sack dress shift and slide the naked flesh beneath. By the light of the lantern hanging on the wall, her breasts already shown to good effect by the way our sacks left our shoulders bare became even more apparent.

Her motions were slow, sensuous and I could see her eyes grow distant. It was almost as if she was somewhere else listening to the music only she could hear. One slender arm went up and pulled at the left drawstring and immediately the left side of her slave smock began to slide down revealing a pink nipple that had grown rigid and erect from the feel of the rough cloth rubbing against it.

Irish Rose was smiling now and I could see that she was indeed somewhere else at least in her own mind. Her hands went up to briefly cup her breasts one on show the other barely concealed and then slowly her hands began to slide down her side, emphasizing the narrowness of her waist. From there they dipped down even further to her bare thighs shown to good effect with the short nature of her smock.

I could hardly credit what I was seeing for Irish Rose had been transformed from a pretty freckled slave girl proud in her sackcloth to a creature of sensual beauty and breathtaking grace.

A look to my mistress and I saw that Miss Emily was likewise moved. She had both hand pressed against her loins and her mouth was open enough for me to see the tip of her tongue slide around the inside of those luscious lips.

Then shockingly I saw her reach up to the fastening of her night-robe and with a deft movement she opened it and the robe slid off her shoulders and down her back to pool in the stray at her feet. Beneath she wore only the most scandalous of night dresses, so thin as to be almost transparent.

Certainly it did nothing to hide the twin peaks of her breasts which thrust out against the thin fabric that I feared would split under the strain of containing such a pert and ripe bosom. The robe hinted and tempted, revealing the outline of her trim body and the dark triangle between her legs. This was a garment for a new bride to wear on the night

of her wedding as she took her husband to bed for the first time. If he possessed a heartbeat surely it would drive him to the heights of wild passion and unrestrained lust.

Nor was Miss Emily content at this for I saw her slide out of the slippers she wore and with a flick of a dainty toe she cast them to one side. She was barefoot now and as goose bumps blossom along the length of the arms and lower legs left bare by the nightdress I could see her toes twitch and curl as she savored the feel of the dry straw beneath her bare feet.

For a moment I wondered in my slave heat had passed to her for the way she held up one foot and curled her toes to scratch as the straw reminded me of how I had pawed at the straw to better feel the stiff bristles of the straw against my bare feet. Even my dull slave mind could see the need for those rough shoes we were given when we ran behind our owner's carriage as Peaches I much preferred to be barefoot now. That was how the Mistress wanted me and with the feel of the honest dirt beneath my feet I knew it helped me from straying and becoming too uppity again.

Yet I was a slave, cursed with black blood and a slave heat between my legs that I could not quench. Miss Emily was a fine proper white woman, one of the folk who knew right from wrong unlike me. She could never feel slave heat I was sure of it.

She must have become aware of my scrutiny and again I feared that I would earn myself another dose of strap oil but instead she beamed at me. With a small nod of her head she gestured towards Irish Rose. The slave had her arms held high above her head now, hands together as her body continued its swaying dance before she began to lower them pressing her hands down against her chest and onto her stomach before sliding over the cloth at her groin.

"Dances for me Peaches," she ordered thought her voice was uneven and there was a flush of red staining those sooth alabaster cheekbones. Her own bosom had begun to dance as her breath came in quickly shallow gasps.

My own motions could not compare to that of Irish Rose but I stove with all my heart to match my sister in slavery. As I became caught up in the moment I chuckled as I heard the jingle of my chains join that of Irish Rose. And perhaps most surprisingly I could feel the heat between my legs return spreading outwards to fill me with slave lust. Soon my own hands were ranging over my body, smoothing my smock in places caressing and playing my breasts until they ached.

Seeing the eye of my mistress upon me I lowered my hands and taking hold of the hemline of my short dress I pulled it up so that my shaved mound and brand was bare. Only a few hours ago I had been pared before the very ladies who I had so offended at the ball and to

each I had been commanded upon pain of the lash to raise my skirt and display my mistress brand.

Oh how that had shamed me, it had cut like a switch to see those smug southern belles regarding and my branded flesh with satisfaction. The interloper had been put in her place with the other beasts, safe now, contained and marked forever for the beast that she was. Now my fingers played with the smoothness of my sex.

I had been distressed when there had been no sign of the return of my big girl curls but now I savored the smooth sensitivity that came with the shave. At this moment as I danced in my shackles and rubbed my fingers over the contours of my brand I fear that I felt truly alive as never before.

A hand not my own but that of my owner dipped beneath my branded mons and into the lips of my sex. I gasped at the feel of my mistress there. It was unnatural I know, against all that I had been taught as a young girl. Yet it felt so good to have those fingers there. Hers were not the callous rough touch of the buyers from Forks, her skin was so soft to the touch and when I felt her brush against my sensitive spot I threw back my head on the verge of ecstasy.

Before I could achieve release I felt those same fingers slide out, and then they were raised to before my face glistening with my nectar in the flickering lantern light. I did not need to be bidden and obedient to a will not my own I opened my mouth and felt those slick damp fingers slide between my lips and brush against my tongue. Then when I pressed my lips carefully down on her fingers Miss Emily drew them back from my mouth allowing me to lick my own hot juices from her digits.

Time ceased to have meaning as we danced. Our smock dresses slid the straw but the stables no longer felt quite so cool. The heat burning insistently for release between my legs was all the warmth I required. Even the Mistress must have felt it for her nightdress, sheer enough before now clung to flesh slick with sweat.

Finally as exhaustion threatened our graceful gait we were bidden to stand still with our hands clamped together behind our necks and our legs as far wide as our slave shackles would permit. Perhaps this was Nigra heaven after all.

Had the overseer not promised me like some bible thumping preacher that good Nigras went to a land of watermelons as tasty and ripe as my breasts as wet as my slit. My massahs would be kindly with crops that barely stung at all. And when the sun slipped below the horizon, after I had finished picking cotton for the day I would hump and hump and hump until the cock crowed and it was time to shuffle in my slave chains back to the fields whistling Dixie in my joy.

"Your good nigra wenches now, aren't you," Miss Emily asked as she stepped closer to me and began to trace my brand with her first finger. She looked down at my sex almost as if she could see how wet and swollen those lips were. Perhaps she could for the overseer said my owner was to me God almighty, all powerful and all-knowing.

Even as we quickly reassured her that we were good Nigras she moved to stand before Irish Rose. The same fingers that had pressed between my legs twined around some of her blazing curls and Miss Davis sighed.

"I'm going to miss those curls," she said sadly.

For the first time Irish Rose's smile began to falter with sudden confusion. "Massah," she asked hesitantly for Miss Emily liked to be addressed so, almost as if she was a master rather than a mistress.

"I've been far too cruel to you Irish Rose," Miss Emily explained as she stroked that thatch determined to remember the feel of those fiery little hairs beneath her fingers. "Letting Peaches here alone have the honor of my mark while you have to make do with this little rose."

With her free hand she reached around to stroke Irish Rose's flank and the brand there but her eyes never left the girl.

It took me a moment to comprehend what the mistress was implying for from the way she was looking at Irish Rose it was clear that she was the mistress's favorite. A proper white woman like Miss Emily could never love a slave of course but affection shone through those sparkling eyes.

"Massah?" Irish Rose began again but there was the beginning of fear in her voice now.

"Hush there," Miss Emily said pressing a finger against the slave's mouth to quiet her down. "I just could not abide the thought that you might think I valued you less than Peaches here. Those curls will have to go but once you're nice and smooth you can carry my crest as well and everyone will know that you're grade A sugar meat."

I could not believe what I was hearing and from the growing look of horror spreading across Irish Rose's face I was not the only one. Miss Emily thought she was showing a kindness to her slave girl!

"Massah," I began but a raised hand warned me to silence.

"Now don't be going all jealous Peaches. It ain't right Irish Rose doesn't have my brand. She'll think I don't like having her as my slave as much as you."

Tears began to well up in Irish Roses's eyes and with a rattle from her shackles she shuffled back away from the mistress until her bare bottom and back were pressed against the far wall of the stall. As I looked on I saw her body crumpled to the ground as she began to cry.

"Please Massah, please don't take the iron to me. Irish Rose is a good Nigra, I can suck your honey pot just the way you like it but please don't be taking the iron to me."

I could well understand the terror she felt. My own branding was far recent, Irish Rose had been marked long before fate took her to Forks but from firsthand knowledge I could attest to one simple fact. Once a slave girl felt the iron she never forgot no matter how many years that may have passed. There was no balm that could ease the recall of that terrible agony.

For a moment I half hoped that Miss Emily would be moved to pity and would take the sobbing whimpering girl half blind with fear into her arms and would tell her that she was a good girl, and that she could keep her curls and the iron, that device that so quickly could turn you from a woman to a beast, was to be kept cool and packed away.

Instead she quivered as if someone had just slapped her across the face. I saw the twinkle of her eyes vanish in a heartbeat. For a moment her very body trembled with rage and then she took a deep breath and held it for a moment before letting the air slide from her lungs in one slow exhale. Then that all too familiar look of cold cruelty settled about her face.

Before she could say anything I flung myself forward and to my knees at her feet. As someone who would still taste the bitter tears shed when the iron had seared that Labrys with the flanking *C & D* into my flesh I could not simply do nothing. Somehow I would have to move that icy rock that Miss Emily called a heart.

"Please Miss Emily. Irish Rose is a good girl, she doesn't need no iron, she is a good Nigra. Please don't brand her. "

Hardly daring to breath I risked looking up at my owner. I had to see her face to see what her reaction was. There was a calm intensity about her as she regarded me. Even at the ball I had sensed that she liked that her height allowed her to look down on me. With me on my knees before her, naked shackled and branded I knew she enjoyed looking at me this way.

"You knows you likes Irish Rose massah, You don't want to do this."

Those red lips pinched together for a second and her slap across my face sent me tumbling back onto the straw with a ringing in my ears.

"I offer you the privilege of my brand, MY BRAND," she shouted at Irish Rose who shrunk back into herself even further if such a thing was possible. "And you throw it back in my face. I should have you horsewhipped."

With some effort she gathered her temper. "I should have known a feeble witted wench like you wouldn't know what's for the best. That's why the almighty gave you Nigra's masters. Those curls are coming off and you'll be branded whenever I decide. That pussy belongs to me."

Then it was my turn and if I had thought that she was cold when she looked at Irish Rose my owner was glacial now when those twin orbs of pale blue pinned me to the floor.

"And I'll have none of that sass from you. Telling me what I want and don't want. Telling me what I can and can't do with my own property." She might have been a ravenous wolf from the way she growled those last few words.

"I thought I had cured that of you but you still think your some high and might 'fancy pants' down from Boston to tell us hillbillies what to do. I won't be having some uppity Nigra like you telling me what I can and can't do!"

Those cold eyes ran up and down my naked flesh and I felt certain that for a second they paused between my legs. Thrown back onto my back by her slap my legs were wide open and my owner had a clear view of my pussy. Then she nodded to herself grimly but then I saw those thin lips curl up into a pleased grin.

"I know just the way to teach some uppity wench her place." Still nodding to herself she bent over to snatch her night robe from where it had fallen and then her slippers. She rubbed her arms suddenly for not that both passion and anger were fading away she would be feeling the cool air of the night, even here in the stables.

"You'll not be needing these either for the night," she growled with petty spite as she snatched up our slave dressed and without another word she reclaimed the lantern and stormed out, bolting the door behind her.

Deprived of the light of the lantern and with the last of the sunlight gone now I was blind but Irish Rose's whimpering drew me to her like an iron to a lodestone. The girl could not stop crying as she wrapped her arms around her chest. All I could hear was a pitiful cry over and over between sobbing tears. "Please don't brand me please don't brand me."

Try as I might nothing I could say could bring her any comfort and in my heart I knew that were I her facing a date with the hot branding iron my words would have sounded hollow. At last remembering how she had comforted me when I cried in terror after being forced into the coffin atop her on the riverboat I rested my hands on each of her knees. As gently

as I could I prized her knees apart as I lowered my head between her legs to kiss the inner slopes of her thighs. From there I worked upwards to the secret of her sex and I set my tongue to work teasing and tantalizing her bud until at last I heard her cries change from terror to pleasure.

Perhaps this was wrong but it was forbidden to proper white folk not the likes of us. Both Irish Rose and I were but branded slaves, chattels in the eyes of man and God. Did not a slave follow her nature just as the beasts in the field for the overseer had said so countless times? When morning finally came it found two slaves curled up snug against each other sharing the heat of their bodies and the comfort of the other's arms.

It seemed that we were not done with unexpected visitors for our stall for it was yet early in the morning when the stall door was once again unlocked and my Great Aunt appeared. Clearly she was taken aback to see me curled up against Irish Rose with our bodies pressed against each other for the night had been cool and there was a shared warmth as well as companionship in our embrace.

Yet if the sight troubled her she it appeared that this was but one of many troubles that lay on her shoulder. She had been so distant to me since I had arrived and I could understand why. Thought my actions I had caused her and the Colonel some difficulties socially and we had arrived in the midst of her effort to rebuild that reputation I had so carelessly tarnished.

I knew just as well as Miss Emily that my Great Aunt's standing in the community would be destroyed beyond all repair if she showed me any sign of kindness. She was a great lady, the mistress of a plantation and I a slave who had disgraced her. As society here in the south was ordered there could be no relationship between her and I other than as former mistress. In some ways she was as trapped as I in our respective roles.

"Elizabeth," she began and I could see the hesitation in her heart. A lifetime of customs and practices told her she should not be here interfering with another woman's property. But we were kin all the same.

For a moment I wondered which would win out, her affection for her family or the demands of her upbringing. Then her face crumpled into tears and as she held out her arms to me I had my answer.

I am unsure who wept the more, her or I but there we stood arms wrapped around each other, one the planter lady, the other a naked slave yet in that moment we were but two women pleased not to be rejected by the other.

"I am so sorry," she said at last and there was no doubt in my heart as to the truth of her words. She looked utterlyretched.

"I should never have asked you to come here, or let you go with Chester that day."

I shook my head and tried to reassure her that I attributed no blame to her for my fall. Was it not my own hand that had set this wheel in motion? I had been the foolish spider who had spun a web and thought herself so clever but in the end had been strapped by her own spinning.

We held each other for a time and in her arms I felt almost as if I was Elizabeth again rather than the slave Peaches. But as the minutes passed I knew that she could not linger for she had already taken a considerable risk coming to me like this. She was mistress here but with the hours so full of the most prominent ladies and most importantly Miss Emily, her every action towards me would be weighed and measured.

Finally we had to part but before she left she took me by the hand and looked me straight in the eye. "Chester has not been well since.... since that day. I fear he may have been poisoned. The doctor says he needs bed rest but he has said he will not rest until this great evil done to you has been undone."

Then she leaned in close and kissed me gently on the forehead as a mother might her child. "Your father has learned of what has transpired and even that young beau of yours David has been about asking for you. He was gone for some days, down river on some business but he is due to return in the next few days." With all the confidence she could muster she went on. "We will see you free."

That my father knew was of no surprise to me for Walther had promised to send word. That the Colonel continued in his efforts warmed my heart for I had not expected that. David, my precious David would never rest until I was safe. What they could do I did not know for even if they spirited me away from this place the full force of the law would descend upon them.

Yet for the first time since I had heard that dreadful "The slave Peaches has been sold," I felt some measure of hope. Perhaps one day I would shed these slave manacles and return to my old life as Elizabeth. Little was I to know that I had not yet known the full malevolence of my mistress and this thin thread of hope would be all I had to cling to in the dark days that were to come.

Our slave dresses and shoes were returned to us and as soon as we were dressed the overseer saw us secured and chained and led to the house. There I saw the Mistress's carriage waiting and looking at Irish Rose I knew that soon we would be racing as fast as

our shackles would allow to keep up as we were chained to the carriage. How long would she run us?

On shorter journeys, those of no more than three miles or so the carriage would be kept to a pace that we could just barely match as she ran us to exhaustion. On longer trips the pace of the horses made it impossible for us to be run but ever thoughtful for the animals she valued our mistress would order the driver to slow and of course as soon as the pace dropped out we were chained to back and exercised as she liked to call it.

Given her fury last night I feared that Miss Emily might well try to run us all the way back to Pussy Willow even if we had to be dragged on our bellies all the way to the plantation. If only her revenge could be so simple.

All the great ladies were assembled as Miss Emily made her goodbyes. Perhaps they were there to see her off but I wondered if the prospect of seeing the hated abolitionist in her shackles and slave dress might also have drawn them. As if they had not seen enough of me yesterday.

My eyes met those of Aunt Veronica for a moment and I quickly looked away less I drew the attention of Miss Emily or the simpering vipers who so often surrounded her.

"I do declare Mrs Rand it is always a pleasure to visit with you and the good Colonel I am only sorry that business deprived us of his company."

As she spoke I hoped that I might catch the attention of my owner and perhaps even judge her mood. She had been enraged last night but perhaps the pleasure she would derive from parading me like this would be enough to salve her wounded pride.

Aunt Veronica inclined her head ever so slightly in acknowledgement but said nothing. This appeared to suit Miss Emily. "And as you have been so kind as to entertain me I think it only fair to invite you all to Pussy Willow next week where I have some sport planned that might interest you all."

I heard a murmur of interest pass over the crown of assembled belles though they were quick to hide their attention behind fans quickly unfurled and set to fluttering.

"Sport?" Aunt Veronica asked warily. Like me she did not like the sound of where this was headed.

"Why yes," Miss Emily beamed and for the first time that morning she turned ever so slightly so that while not facing me she could see my reaction.

"I have recently acquired a new filly from up north. This filly has few enough quality's to set her apart, yet despite her many short comings she thinks far too much of herself. I have

always found that the best way to curb a virgin filly like this is to rid her of her troublesome maidenhead, to put it to stud. Once it has been well used ...”

Her smile widened and I could see the gleam of pleasure in her cool blue eyes. “It learns its place and can be far more accommodating.”

In some ways this was as bad as when I learned that I was to be branded. My brain struggled to deny the import of her words but I knew to what filly she was referring. Peaches and been uppity and she was to be put to stud.

There were shocked murmurs and demure protests from the crowd of ladies that this was far too scandalous for any woman of standing to oversee yet the words were barely out of their mouths when they began to allow themselves to be convinced.

If the gentlemen could have their town houses and fancy girls where was the harm in some of the ladies calling upon a friend as she oversaw the breeding of two animals. In stunned disbelief I heard first one and then the rest waver and quickly agree that it would be rude to turn down such a fine invitation. Only my Aunt showed no enthusiasm to witness such a spectacle.

As the whip cracked and the carriage began to pull away dragging me behind by my slave shackles I could still hear the excited giggles from the ladies as they contemplated what should be a fine show.

Irish Rose and I slept in the barn that night, without slave shackles chained to a bolt affixed to the wall. The night, I confess, passed rapidly, for by this time Rose and I were close friends, and knew how to comfort each other in ways only women understand.

“They’re in here, Sir,” I heard the overseer’s voice say. “But I really think I should wake the Mistress before I let you see them.”

The door opened, and I wiped the sleep out of my eyes. The overseer entered first, and then behind him, illuminated by the brilliant sunlight of the doorway, stood the love of my life, David.

I gasped and leapt to my feet, running towards him. So great was my excitement that I forgot altogether about the chains around my ankles, and was jerked short by them, as if I were a dog tugging beyond the range of her leash. The overseer laughed as I fell into the straw, but both David and Rose raced forward to see that I was all right.

"You shouldn't be touching her, sir," the overseer said. "She still has the bugs, you know. We've been scrubbing her, with carbolic soap, but it won't go away. May have to shave 'er, I say."

"I'll take my chances," David replied. "That will be all my good man," he said, dropping several large coins into the overseers greedy palms.

"I shouldn't really be leaving you alone with her, sir" the overseer said, grinning at the glimmering coins in his palm. "She's a virgin, you know," he added.

"I won't be soiling myself on the likes of her," David replied, dropping a gold coin in the overseers hand. "But I wish to see her alone."

"Very good, sir," the man replied. "I'll let the Mistress know you're here when she awakens."

"You do that," David replied, in a voice that made it clear he really didn't give a damn what the man did or didn't do.

I looked at David, dressed in his fine suit, with his silk top hat and walking cane. Wherever did my poor poet get the money to purchase such fine clothes? Had Colonel Rand loaned him money to affect my rescue? My mind raced with questions, but I waited, looking thru the barn slats, until I was sure the overseer was out of earshot.

"Oh, David, my David," I cried out. "You've come at last to rescue me!"

"Unfortunately not," David said, matter-of-factly. "For the mess you've made is far too big for that. If I attempted to rescue you, I would be imprisoned, and you would be whipped, and that would be that."

"I don't understand," I said staring at him with enormous eyes.

"What's not to understand?" David said. "You're a slave girl, Peaches. Slaves are not rescued. They are bought, and sold, and worked, and – if I understand your Aunt's story correctly – put to stud. Or was there something I missed?"

I tried to race into his arms, only to fall short as once again my chains held me back. "No, no! Dear, sweet, David! I am Elizabeth, the love of your life, the girl you would die for!"

"Die for you I would, if I were foolish enough to acknowledge the elaborate fantasy that the woman who passed herself off as Elizabeth Parker was anything but a frisky mixed blood slave wench. No, no. I'm afraid Elizabeth Parker no longer exists. The only question that remains is what is to be done with Peaches, the frisky slave wench?"

"Your current owner, Miss Elizabeth, seems inclined to mate you with several large African studs, selected for their small intellects and huge endowments. You would take the seed of several, one after the other, lest you have any real certainty of whom the father is. Best if slave wenches not form too many emotional attachments."

"After you were put to stud, and birthed your baby out here in the barn, lying in the straw like a mare, your milk would be tested. If it were found pleasing, you would be made a milk maid, and provide milk for your sucker, and for other mother's whose product was less sweet than yours, and who instead had to work in the field."

"Oh, David, how can you talk to me so!" I said, tears in my eyes. "Have you no feelings for me?"

"Oh, contraire, my love!" he replied, laughing at my tears. "It is my feelings for you that bring me here from Boston, and compel me to speak to you in this way. For I assure you that Elizabeth Parker will never leave the state of Mississippi alive."

I felt my heart sink. Falling to my knees, I began to sob.

David, walked forward and smiled down at me. "But Peaches the slave girl, might...if she found a kind master willing to purchase her mortgage.

I watched as David reached into his pocket, and removed a billfold filled with papers. I recognized them immediately as being the papers prepared at the bank, and felt my heart surge with joy!

"Oh, David, you bought me!"

David smiled. "I did not buy you, but I own your mortgage," he said, correcting me with a lopsided grin. "And as for my name, I think you'd best get used to calling me "Master.""

"I don't understand," I said.

David patted me on the head. "Of course you don't! Oh, Elizabeth, you are such a child. Whatever am I to do with you? And what possessed you to be so foolish?"

"Don't you see? Papa will never let us marry and if we ran away together with no money how would we live? I planned to go home and publish an account of how slaves were treated, an account that would be heard everywhere. Such will be the demand to hear my accounts that I can earn more than enough to keep us, enough that we can marry. I can earn enough that you can write your lovely poems, and we need never worry about money again."

It was his turn to lean back and he looked as if a horse had just kicked him between the eyes. "You did this for us?" he asked. "So that we can be together?"

I nodded. "My love for you drove me. But I also wanted to strike a blow against this horrible and wicked institution. But I discovered that I belonged here, because I was indeed a slave wench. Oh, David, I have slave blood, I know it! I'm Peaches, a hot and frisky slave wench, and your fair Elizabeth is gone forever! I'm a virgin, still, at least until Mistress puts me to stud. But I am a whore, a hot juicy slave wench, eager to spread her legs for her master's touch!"

There was a long pause as David drank in my confession. His eyes did not judge me, but they were not entirely sympathetic either. He seemed to be carrying his own burden, and his sympathy for me was less for my randiness than for my need to bare myself to my love, and risk losing his love. "I ... I do not know what to say," he said finally. "I have a confession to make Elizabeth. "My real name is not David Smith, it is David Sparrow. I am not from New York, my family comes from New Orleans and for the last three generations we have been ... let us say that we do not always pay excise duty or trade tariffs on the goods we ship or deliver."

I listened to him for a moment then my eyes widened. "You are a smuggler?"

He shook his head. "I was. I sailed with my father since I was seven and made a fortune in the trade but I wanted something else. So my brother runs the family business now."

"Why did you not tell me?" I demanded.

"I loved you from the first day I saw you but I have met so many women who will cry love but all they care about is money. I wanted to be sure that you loved me for me, not my fortune."

Our eyes met and I leaned forward to take both his hands in my own as best I could. "So you see there is no need for you to endure this anymore. I never thought I would ever find a woman who would endure so much just to be with me. Come away with me and I will explain matters to your father and we can be married. I have taken the money I earned in my trade and invested it wisely in steel and railroads. We need never want for anything I promise you."

"You would marry Peaches, a slave wench?" I asked, looking up at my handsome master.

He threw back his head and gave a deep throaty laugh. "Oh Elizabeth I have sailed the world and let me tell you something. This business of race is foolishness of the highest order. I have seen good men and bad, of all colors' and creeds. People are people."

I felt my heart swell with fresh love. I had so feared that he would turn away from me and my tainted blood. "But what if your kinfolk, your friends, your neighbours." A man of the north might be willing to marry a Quadroon but he was of the south so where those he called friend.

"We will live in Boston, and you will publish what you wish, if you choose to, and that will be that. Assuming, of course, I can wrest you from Miss Emily."

Speak of the devil and she will appear. I shuddered as I heard my Mistress's voice in the distant, soft and shrill but closing in on us rapidly. "Oh, David, you must buy me from her! You must end this nightmare, today!"

"I will do my best. But she will resist selling you, and may well call the Sheriff to run me out, if she thinks I am an abolitionist. If I am to buy you, I must treat you like a slave."

David, my beloved, gentle David, would have to treat me like a slave! Oh, what a horror. Could this nightmare really be happening?

"But...if you own the mortgage, couldn't you simply foreclose? Or send Colonel Rand to the bank to..."

David's voice became stern. "More foolishness! It's your feeble understanding of such matters that got you branded and fettered, and into a mess I'm still struggling to get you out of. Let me handle this my way, for I cannot save Peaches if Elizabeth gets in the way!"

"But Miss Emily doesn't want to sell me!" I explained.

"Well, you'd better do your best to make yourself desirable in my eyes, and impress me, so I can plausibly offer her a bid big enough to get her attention. You've made a mess of things, Elizabeth, or should I say "Peaches?" Let's see if you can do something right."

"Buy me too, master!" Irish Rose shouted. "Save me!"

David looked startled, for Irish Rose had not said a word as she had listened in our conversation, and I suppose David had thought her mute.

"Yes!" I said, my voice rising with excitement as I saw Miss Emily thru the slats of the barn, approaching with the overseer. I shuddered as I spotted the riding crop in her hand.

"Be reasonable, Elizabeth," David pleaded. "I cannot buy the whole damn plantation!"

"Buy her, David, or leave me!" I said. Irish Rose looked at me, shocked at the sacrifice I had just made on her behalf.

The door opened and my Mistress entered, riding crop leading the way. "Who are you? What is the meaning of this?" she demanded.

David removed his hat and bowed suavely. "Ah, Miss Emily Davis, I presume. My name is David Smith, and I purchased the mortgage on these two slaves from the bank yesterday morning."

"Purchased their mortgage?" Emily hissed. "Don't be preposterous! I only made the loan a few days ago. Surely it can't have been factored out already."

David laughed as he handed Emily the papers identifying Irish Rose and myself. "This is America, Miss Davis. Surely you realize that, at the right price, everything is for sale."

Miss Emily was not pleased. Slapping the loan papers back into David's palm she asked pointedly. "Very well, you purchased the loan. My first payment is not due for four months. Why are you here?"

"I have come merely to inspect my collateral," he said. I swallowed hard at the word. I had become used to thinking of myself as a slave, but somehow, having David refer to me not even as a person, but as "collateral" was unspeakably humiliating.

I looked at him with new eyes. David looked magnificent and powerful in his elegant gray suit, a silk top hat, carrying his gold tipped walking cane. I, in contrast, was wearing nothing save a short slave shift that only covered half my thighs. Barefoot, dirty, shackled, and standing in straw, I looked - and felt - precisely like the slave chattel that the cruelly accurate word "collateral" described. Awestruck by David's power over the situation, I stared in awe as my magnificent knight did battle with Emily.

"You've seen your collateral, Mr. Smith," Emily said. "You will receive payment in the mail."

"Will I?" he asked. "From what I hear the crop isn't good this year." He turned, and gave me and Irish Rose a disapproving glance. "Perhaps you are too lenient with your slaves."

I was startled as my furious Mistress strode towards me, riding crop in hand. For a moment, I thought she was going to strike me, but instead she spun me around, and pushed my neck down hard.

I stood in the straw, bent over at the waste, as my Mistress roughly raised the hem of my garment and threw it over my back, revealing my bottom to my beloved David's gaze.

"Does this look like I've been too lenient?" she shouted. "Perhaps I should add a few more, and a few more after that, to prove that I know how to handle my slaves!"

Looking back over my shoulder, I saw my Mistress raise her crop high in the air. Ever the obedient slave girl, I arched my bottom up slightly, raising up on tip-toe as I had been taught to, to offer the whip a better target. Closing my eyes and clenching my teeth I awaited the whip.

No blow came. Opening my eyes and looking back over my shoulder, I saw David's long cane blocking Emily's arm, holding it aloft. But David's eyes were fixed firmly on my naked backside and I flushed with embarrassment as his eyes ran freely over the contours and curves of my naked backside.

"Magnificent," I heard him say softly. "Gorgeous."

"For a slave," my Mistress said

David had never seen me naked before, and I felt deeply humiliated to have him see me this way now! I started to rise, stopped as I felt the cold tip of his gold cane on the back of my neck. "Head down, wench," he huffed. "You'll rise when your master tells you to."

David's cane tip pushed my head down, raising my bottom cheeks higher, until my nose was practically touching the straw. The cane's attention shifted to my bottom, and I shuddered as I felt the cold gold tip trace one of the whip marks on my bottom cheeks with lingering delight. "I see she's been....punished."

"Yes, like many fair skin Nigras, from time-to-time Peaches gets uppity, and starts to act white."

"The whip cures that," David replied, tapping my welts with approval. "I'm sure she deserved it, and when she needs it again you lay her stripes on with vigor. Does she have a smart mouth?"

"Not particularly," Miss Emily replied. "Actually, like many of her kind, I find her rather slow witted."

"Yes, I could see the dullness in her eyes," David replied. "Along with the flatness of her nose, and the slight fullness in her lips, stupidity and stupor are the surest sign of Negro blood. But she understands the whip, I presume?" he asked, using the tip of his cane to lift up and under my bottom cheeks and jiggle them. Behind me, I could hear Irish Rose laugh as my fanny cheeks bounced up and down for my master's pleasure.

"Yes, she whips up well, and squeals and cries like a little piggy caught in a fence. Most amusing, actually."

David's cruel chuckle chilled me to the bone. "Yes, I'll imagine her big nigra bottom will whip up nicely, and I'll look forward to seeing her wiggle it," making a promise that caused me to shiver in nervous anticipation.

David's cane pressed on the back of my head, pushing my face into the straw. "Actually, with her curly, almost kinky dark hair, and her slow wits, and her general nigra ugliness, I'm amazed she was able to pass for as long as she did."

Tears filled my eyes. I tried to tell myself that David was merely playing a part, haggling for my price, and attempting to convince Miss Emily he had no feelings for me. I stood there, face almost in the straw, staring at the muck on his boots out of the corner of my eye. He was using his cane to hold me down, "in mah place", as Mr. Cochrain might say, with my bottom cheeks raised high and my shameful welts on display. As his cane dug into the back of my head, forcing me down, I knew he was no longer acting. In his eyes, I was a piece of livestock to be poked, prodded, and appraised.

David's cruel comments cut to the very soul of all my festering insecurities, and fed on me as surely and insidiously as the lice in my hair. I was well educated, yes, and a published author. But was I really as smart as a man? Since coming to Mississippi, I certainly didn't feel smart or educated, for my experiences as Peaches the slave girl, with the constant admonishments for my "slowness" and "stupidity", had badly eroded my self-esteem. David's proclamation that my Negro blood had rendered me imbecilic dashed my last tiny hope that I was anything but a nappy headed nitwit.

Satisfied with my humiliating and awkward position, and his cane tip digging into the back of my skull, David returned his attentions to Emily, and the business at hand. 'A good whipping now and then is just what a girl of her sort needs. On the other hand I do not wish you to have you damage my merchandise, Miss Emily. When you default on your loan, as surely you will, I expect to have a fit price for them.'

"You presume to much, SIR," Emily hissed.

"Perhaps you're right. Or, to put it more succinctly, I could make you right. What would you say if I offered you a price for these two?"

"Irish Rose and Peaches are not for sale."

"This is America, Miss Emily. Everything is for sale."

"You assume too much. You're money is no good here, Smith, or whatever your name is. Now I will kindly ask you to leave."

"I will, M'am, as soon as I have checked my collateral, as is my legal right."

"You have seen it, sir. No GO."

By craning my neck I could barely see what was happening. David reached into his pocket and handed Emily a third set of papers. "I have not. There was a third slave, named Emily, listed in the papers. A lovely Octoroon, or so the papers say. Alabaster skin. Piercing blue eyes. A half sister, or a cousin, the result of an uncle's indiscretion, perhaps?"

My Mistress looked at the papers in horror. "This...this is a dreadful mistake!"

"No, Miss Emily," David replied calmly. "This is the law. Cruel and unjust, perhaps, but the law nonetheless. I am legally entitled to inspect my collateral, and if you do not entertain my offer of a fair price for Irish Rose and Peaches, I will fetch the Sheriff, and he will assist me in doing so. I will not leave these grounds until I see the slave girl known as Emily naked, and squatting before me to do her business!"

At this, my Mistress again raised her crop, only to have my laughing love effortlessly push her back into the straw with his cane.

"I may make you an offer...if they prove themselves worthy. To aid you with your debts, out of the kindness in my heart."

Emily, sitting in the straw, was not convinced. "You have a Boston accent. Indeed, you sound not unlike our little friend Peaches. I wonder if the kindness in your heart is for her, and not for me."

"I'm quite sure I do not understand," David said, faltering for the first time.

"Perhaps we should fetch the Sheriff. I'm sure he would be interested in talking to an abolitionist attempting to free a Negro slave!"

To this, David said nothing, but merely took the crop from Miss Emily's hand.

David looked down at me, awkwardly craning my neck back to see him. He looked so masterful, so powerful, towering over me, and I attempted to beguile him with a wan smile. The smile was not returned.

"Eyes front," he snapped. His tone was harsh and cutting and wounded me to my core, but to make matters worse my beloved David punctuated his command by flicking the riding crop sharply across my naked fanny cheeks.

I yelped, and turned my face away and down. The posture was unspeakably humiliating, as it forced me to stare at my dirty, chained feet, but also arched my bottom further upward for any additional discipline my master might deem necessary.

"Spread your legs, wench," David commanded, worming the riding crop between my tightly clenched thighs.

Spread my legs? While half naked and bent over? Oh, how could he ask such a thing of me? I had dreamed of revealing my most secret treasures to my beloved in our honeymoon suite, in a soft feather bed, while he showered me with kisses. Instead, I was standing in straw, waiting to be assessed like a farm animal in heat!

And in heat I was! David's power, his strength, and the enormity of my humiliation had worked their evil spell on me. I was slave wet!

I obeyed and spread my legs, but David wishing to see more, tapped the insides of my thighs with his crop. Closing my eyes in a vain effort of hopes of blinding myself to the degradation I was feeling, I spread my legs to shoulder width.

My shame did not go unnoticed. "See?" Mistress Emily cackled. "She's wetter than the Mississippi! All juiced up and ready to go! Have you ever seen such prime sugar meat?"

Even staring at the straw, I could sense David's eyes staring at my wet, exposed sex. But affecting the pose of a disinterested buyer, feigned a casual disinterest. "I'll need to check her virginity," David said. "I won't pay for a virgin if she's been busted. I might give her a little test run, too, although naturally I won't pluck her flower, at least until we come to terms."

"That seems quite reasonable. Of course, if we can't come to terms, I should still be compensated in some way for her use," Miss Emily said.

"I could give you a month's payments, for free," David offered.

"Two months would be better," my Mistress replied.

"Two is TOO much," David said, chuckling at the pun. "For two I'd need a first dibs on that sweet sugar meat of hers. One month for her mouth or butthole, two if I decide to see if she's as tight and wet as she looks."

I felt the lips of my sex spasm as David ever so gently flicked them with the crop. Oh, how excruciating! How could David be so cruel? Haggling for my virginity, while forcing me to hold up my wet sugar meet up his gimlet eyed scrutiny!

My gaping sex quivered as David lightly, absent-mindedly tapped it with the tip of his riding crop.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

"Are you sure she's pure?" he asked skeptically.

"She's been up and down the river, you know."

Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap.

"No telling what the bucks did to her below decks."

"Free feel... I mean, feel free, to examine the merchandise," Miss Emily replied.

The merchandise. The inventory. David continued to tap, weighing the value of the goods presented for her perusal.

The tapping stopped. There was a pause, then I gasped as I felt David's finger slowly, gently run his fingers down my sex.

"Juicy little slut, isn't she?" Miss Emily chortled. "Give her a little rub. I'll bet she humps your fingers!"

David's fingers were soft and kind, but insistent. My breathing quickened and he opened the lips of my sex, and gently eased them inside. It did not take long for him to verify the purity of my wet, juicy sugar meet.

David's thumb move down, down, to my little button, slowly teasing and tickling my most sensitive spot. I sighed in pleasure as he rubbed me closer to the edge.

"Look at the little whore!" my Mistress hissed. "If you don't buy her, Mr. Smith, I swear I'll put her to stud. She'll drop her suckers two at a time!"

David's fingers, and the utter degradation of my womanhood to piece of inventory in my mistresses' slave ledge, drove me on. Soon, as Miss Emily predicted, I was humping David's masterful hand.

"That's it, you little bitch!" Emily cackled, as I struggled to stand on my weakening knees. "Show him what a randy wench you are!"

"Are you sure she's an octoroon?" David asked. She seems awfully juicy for being so white."

"It only takes a few drops of nigra blood to pollute the system," Miss Emily replied. "I've seen hexadrooms, mustees, even...juice up like the duskiest Hottentots, and dance lively to the crack of the whip. She's the best of both worlds, Mr. Smith. White on the outside, and moist and dark inside!"

"Did you ever consider selling her in New Orleans?" David asked. "Fork in the Roads is a big market, but New Orleans is still the biggest. Sugar meat like this would fetch top market, if you put it up for inspection, and let the buyers get a good feel."

David's thumb began to work little circles around my fully exposed button. I quivered like jelly between his fingers, even as the discussion of the mercantile value of the 'sugar meet' between his fingers continued.

"Yes, she'd fetch an excellent price," Miss Emily agreed. "Buying her here and now would be a bargain, Mr. Smith. Our sweet little peaches might get a couple of thousand fingers up her holes if I put her in the rotunda of the Saint Louis Exchange."

I shuddered at the thought. Oh, how could my sweet David suggest such a horrible thing? As I wiggled on his fingers I imagined myself in a enormous rotunda in New Orleans prior to my sale. A huge line of men in silk top hats forming behind me, waiting to caress me,

squeeze me, watch me juice in their hands as they laughed at me, joking about my wetness and eagerness for a masters touch.

"Her slave papers say her mother is an escaped mulatto, and she has a Northern accent. I assumed she tried to pass, then?"

"You're a very observant man, Mr. Smith," Emily replied, flattering my prospective buyer. "But I've had her marked now, and passing is no longer an issue. No decent man would have her as anything but a slave, when he sees her sweet pussy meat bears the proud brand of the Davis plantation."

I groaned in humiliation as my brand, which David had not yet seen, was brought up for his attention. I still couldn't fully believe that the mark was permanent, and that such a cruel thing had been done to me. The David I knew from Boston would have rushed to my defense, and chivalrous as he was, struck Miss Emily down at the mention of this outrage. But the David whose fingers were assessing Peaches' sugar meat was of a different mind.

"Yes, excellent!" he chortled. "Good to have her marked. Took some of the starch out of her too, I imagine. Must have smarted a bit. Fortunately, they don't have the same pain receptors in their brain that humans do. That's why you can paddle them on their rumps for hours."

David slapped my bottom hard with his free hand. "See?" he chuckled. "She hardly felt it. Heck-fire, they even like it. You liked that, didn't you pretty wench?"

"Yes, Massah?" I gasped, ignoring the stinging in my behind and concentrating on the building pressure between my legs.

"How did you capture her?"

"I didn't. She came trotting down here, spouting abolitionist nonsense, begging for the collar. Can you believe it?"

David laughed heartily. "That's the Negro blood. Obviously, she has shit for brains. That, and the flat nose, and the stupid look in her eyes. Oh, she's a wench all right. Isn't that right, Peaches?"

"Yes, Massah!" I gasped, my sex pulsating under his fingers. "Peaches is a randy wench!" A few seconds more was all it would have taken, but David stopped short. I groaned in disappointment as his fingers pulled out of my wetness with a humbling PLOP sound.

David wiped his hands dry on the hem of my slave sack. "I'll try her out after breakfast, but I want the bugs off her first," he said dismissively. "I saw on her slave papers these two bitches both have lice. I don't want a wench to give me nothing but pleasure. Clean the other one up to. Won't buy the redhead lest she's clean as a whistle."

"Of course, good sir. Let me accompany you indoors, and introduce you to our cook, who were serve you a wonderful breakfast. And then I shall return to deal with THESE two."

"I brought some special soap for you to use. They call it the bug burner. Some call it the Devil's Fire. Smarts a bit, not that it matters, cuz like I said Negroes can't feel it none. But it kills the lice once and for all. One treatment."

"One treatment, you say?" Miss Emily responded. "Would it work on a white woman?"

I could hear Irish Rose giggle a bit at Miss Emily's thinly veiled reference to her own infestation.

"I suppose, if properly applied," David said. "But what would a white girl be doing covered with slave cooties?"

Irish Rose giggled again as Emily attempted a recovery. "It was merely a hypothetical, kind sir. Now let us retire, and get this marvelous magical potion of yours, while my cooks fetch you a wonderful breakfast!"

The Mistress and David left, leaving me the chance to finally straighten up, and Irish Rose and I alone again in the barn. As soon as the door closed, Irish Rose tried to relieve my suffering, but my fingers were too quick for her. Within seconds, I drove me into an indescribable state of ecstasy.

There were no clocks in the barn, but it was only a few minutes later when Miss Emily returned, with two bucks holding three sets of wooden slats with oddly shaped holes, and three of the house servants holding a stack of tubs. These were followed by several very attractive wenches, some totally black, others dark brown. None had a skin tone as light as Rose or I, but all were beautiful and well proportioned, and from their clothing and general appearance I guessed that they two were "fancy" girls who were used by my Mistress for something other than fieldwork.

Quickly the bucks and wenches hauled in a dozen or so buckets of waters, numerous scrub brushes, and one of the other bucks locked the contraptions around our necks and heads. The men locked us into a sort of punishment yoke, basically a hinged wooden board with round holes for our necks and wrists. It reminded me of the pillory in the Boston Common, although it was unattached to anything, so Irish Rose and I could still move around, at least as far as our chained feet would allow us.

"What is this for, Mistress?" Irish rose asked. 'Are we to be punished?"

"No, Rose," Miss Emily said. "Devil fire burns, and we need to leave it in for a full 10 minutes. I have to bind your hands so you don't try to rip out your hair. And I'll need to gag you, so you don't bite off your tongues."

Miss Emily's voice was oddly sad, and I thought it peculiar that for once she actually seemed to empathize with us as we stared at her, our necks and hands immobile in the thick wood. The yokes required no lock, but were merely latched, more than sufficient considering the latch was out of the reach of our wiggling fingers.

When we were latched in, Miss Emily ordered the slave men to leave, and the women filled the row of tubs with water to begin our scrubbing.

I noticed an unused tub in the center of one of the rows. "What is the extra tub for, Mistress?" I asked. "Each of us only has one head."

Irish Rose laughed, amused by my question, and used her yoke to nudge me, so my attention was refocused on an unused yoke on the floor.

Miss Emily looked nervously at the barn door, then reached for the top button of her dress. "Gag them," she ordered. "Then, when I'm yoked, gag me. Scrub me hard, and whatever you do, or however much I scream into my gag, don't release me until the times up, and you're sure the lice are dead."

The Negro house slaves with the scrub brushes exchanged sly grins as Miss Emily quickly disrobed. Rose nudged me again, and my attention was drawn to the far wall, where dozens of pairs of male Negro eyes peeked thru the slats in the barn. Miss Emily didn't notice. Anxious to finish the ordeal, she stripped down quickly, and soon stood naked before us.

Miss Emily stood naked before us, a vision of loveliness, watching as we were fitted with our yokes.

"What do you think, ladies?" Miss Emily said, holding her hands out proudly as she modeled for us. "Would I fetch a good price at the Forks in the Road?"

"You're a little flat on top," Irish Rose said, appraising Emily's breasts eye with a cold and unblinking eye of a girl used to life in a slave market. "Turn around, so I can see your butt."

Emily's eyes flashed with anger, but she obeyed. Miss Emily nodded to one of the slave women, and Irish Rose focused her attention on Emily's bare bottom cheeks even as two of the house slaves fitted the squirming Emily into her yoke.

"You have a flat butt...like a boys," Irish Rose said squinting at Miss Emily's bottom. "Your massah will like more cushion, so you can bounce around a little while he's pleasuring you. Bedding your bony ass would be like diddling a washboard."

"How dare you!" Emily said turning around to confront Rose. But her attention was soon diverted as the yoke was locked into place around her wrists and neck. "Owww, you idiots, this is too tight. It's hurting me. It's chafing my wrists. And how am I supposed

to walk around with this? It's too heavy! I can feel my knees buckling. Don't you have a lighter one? Undo the..."

Miss Emily's complaints were cut short as the slave bridle was stuffed into her mouth. She shouted as it was locked into place, and tried to shake it off, causing Irish Rose, myself, and the other unbridled slave girls to laugh. Our Mistress had much to learn about slavery.

Irish Rose and I did not resist as our bridles were fitted, and ignored the taste, and kneeled obediently by our buckets as we awaited our scrubbing. Our Mistress, on the other hand, had to be led by the ear to her bucket by a grinning house slave.

There were nine of us in all, and eight of us knelt quietly in front of our buckets awaiting our fate as the house slaves dumped the soap into the buckets and prepared the lather. The five slaves who were to do the scrubbing were all older, and plump, and I could tell from the smiles on their faces that they were looking forward to punishing the younger and prettier fancy girls, and in punishing the Mistress most of all.

I was one of the lucky ones, in that I went first, and didn't have to wait. The fat negress dunked my head into the bucket, and held me down for longer was necessary. When I came up for air she batted me on the side of the head with the wooden scrub brush and began scrubbing.

"I do you'se harder, Miss Fancy britches, cuz youse the source of the pests!" she hissed. Don't gotta go between yer' legs, cuz you ayn't got no hair down below, and that brand probably burned the bugs outta that tight little snatch of yers. But yer a dirty little bitch, and Iza gotta get the fleas off ya, fore' ya infect the whoel plantation. Miss Emily's going to put the bucks on ya', and once that starts she won't stop till youse get tapped by every black man for fifty miles that gotta stinger between his legs. You'll be humping 'da world!"

The words burned, and the chemicals burned, but at this point I was used to pain. The brush did not hurt as much as the whip, and the slave woman's cruel words about my dirtiness did not sting me anywhere nearly as bad as David's words had. Nothing could sting me as badly as that.

My Mistress did not take it nearly as well. She screamed lustily into her gag, and spit water out of her nose each time she was dunked, and shook her head like a dog shaking off water after coming out of a particularly unpleasant bath. She misbehaved so badly that the woman scouring her hair actually called in one of the bucks to hold her down, which was easy enough to do, given that so many of the male slaves were peeking in and watching as the naked beauties where scrubbed like cattle.

The buck was wearing only a loin cloth, and since the yoke prevented Miss Emily from seeing his face, he used the opportunity of holding her down to rub his manhood into a turgid state by pressing it against her naked backside. "Bony" as it might have been, the

slave sighed with pleasure as she bucked into him, and after a few minutes of struggle I noticed a telltale splash of white cream splattered broadly across my naked Mistresses' bottom.

Needless to say, having a muscular, near naked African slave dry hump her naked bottom cheek did little to calm my Mistress. Her antics were so fulsome that some of the girls, led by Irish Rose, actually laughed thru their own scouring, so completely were they entertained by Miss Emily's hysteria.

I heard a male voice in the distance, and one of the scrub brush slaves shouted, "It's Mr. David coming back from the house. We gotta hide the Mistress!"

"No time," another one of the wenches said. "Y'all keep your head down, so Missah David don't see ya faces. We'll just have to make Miss Emily blend in with the other pretty wenches."

It was a good strategy, for we were arranged in no particular order. I was in the third slot, Irish Rose was in the 5th, and Miss Emily was in the 8th. The girl to my left was coal black; the one to my right a pleasing coffee colored. Miss Emily was situated between a lovely black girl with a full round bottom and sandy, straight hair that would have looked quite at home in Boston, and a somewhat darker specimen with blue eyes as piercing as Miss Emily's own.

Looking down the row, I knew that when the barn door opened David was going to be treated to the amazing sight of eight gorgeous slave women of all shades and varieties, kneeling in the straw as they presented their naked and beautifully round bottoms up for his inspection. What a sight we were to behold!

Miss Emily seemed to blend in to the extent that three of the bottoms where white, and two others brown. But the negress standing behind Miss Emily found fault. "Rose & Peaches got whip marks, and you ayn't got none Miss Emily," she observed.

It was true enough, for although Miss Emily had been struck in the bank, she had not been whipped since then, and her wounds had doubtlessly been carefully salved, and had quickly healed. So different than Irish Rose and I, who had been whipped cruelly on deck, and then tossed into the hold with only our tongues to comfort us!

The housekeepers solution to the problem was both simple and direct. Miss Emily shuddered as she picked up Miss Emily's faithful riding crop from the floor next to her clothes. "Issa sorry, Miss Emily, but you 'sez I gotta treat youz' the same. A few switch marks will help hide 'ya from Mr. David, so stick your butt up in the air and we'll get to it."

Miss Emily shook her yoked head no, but as David's voice grew louder her resolve seemed to weaken. "Hurrys up, Miss Emily. Massah David's comin', and we need to get that bottom of yers whipped before hes gits here. Keep arg-you-n', and he'll find you in a yoke, in the all together, and just might execute them slave documents he got!"

I had been unaware that the Miss Emily's slave documents were common knowledge, but I was not surprised, as Irish Rose loved to gossip, and in truth there were no secrets from the slaves on a Southern Plantation. Infidelity, fraud, murder...they knew their masters better than they knew themselves.

Miss Emily did not want to be switched, but as David's voice grew louder she quickly resigned herself to her fate. Irish Rose's eyes twinkled with delight as Miss Emily put her face in the straw, and raised her bottom high, biting down into her gag as she prepared to be punished with her own whip.

The housekeeper, a squat woman in her late forties, raised the switch high in the air. Her name, I latter learned, was "Kettles", so dubbed because of her excellent cooking skills. But those very skills tethered to Miss Emily's financial difficulties had forced Miss Emily to literally sell Kettles up the river to another plantation 40 miles north of Natchez.

Kettles had actually just been turned over to her new owner's overseer on the front porch, but then Miss Emily, in her frantic hunt to find house wenches to help in the barn, told the overseer to wait by the gate until Kettle's final task was done.

Miss Emily had already broken Kettles' hearts, for she had sold off Kettle's children a few months before, and her beloved husband long before that. Naturally, Miss Emily did not care about this one whit, as if slaves did have emotions Miss Emily certainly did not feel bound to respect them.

But oh, what a tangled web fate weaves! Who could have foretold that such a bizarre series of events, from my enslavement, to my purchase by Miss Emily, to the Kettle's sale the day of David's arrival would lead to this bizarre twist of fate.? Kettles had enjoyed scrubbing Miss Emily's head, and had dunked her head into the bucket with vigor. The vengeful slave had gagged Miss Emily with the oldest, gamiest gag, and had applied the soap and coarse bristled brush to her head with sadistic glee.

Now Kettles was free to punish Miss Emily as she saw fit, for she knew as soon as she walked outside of the barn door the new overseer would take her to see her new master. The stern look on Kettle's face chilled me to the bone, and echoed the enraged look Miss Emily always had on her face when she disciplined a slave.

WHOOSH!

The first stroke was strong, sharp, and bitter, making the strokes she had received at the bank seem feather flicks in comparison. She bit so hard into he gag that I thought it might give way, and I could only imagine what sort of dried and long putrid ugliness her teeth marks must have released.

Miss Emily started to rise, but Kettles would not be denied. She put her foot on Miss Emily's yoke, pushing her head down and her bottom up in time for the second stroke.

WHOOSH!

Miss Emily screamed obscenities into her gag, and tried to shake Kettles foot off her yoke. Kettles responded by placing her foot directly on the back of Emily's head, pushing her face into the dirt for the third stroke!

WHOOSH!

WHOOSH!

As Miss Emily was whipped, the other house slaves relieve Irish Rose, myself, and the other girls of our gags, a blessing that allowed both Irish Rose and I the luxury of speaking. We did not speak, of course, but took the opportunity to spit the foul taste out of our mouths as we enjoyed the sight of Miss Emily's bottom dancing under the Kettle's vengeful whip!

Outside the door of the barn I could hear the voice of David as he discussed his corn muffin with one of the slaves, ironically commenting that Kettle's muffins were some of the finest he had ever had.

It seemed odd that David could not hear Miss Emily's whipping, as we could hear him quite clearly, or see not the barn into gaps of a barn thru which a dozen pairs of male Negro eyes were now peering. And yet he continued to discuss the corn muffing, commenting on the flakiness, texture, and moistness, until Kettles finished toasting Miss Emily's muffins, and tossed the crop aside.

When David opened the door he was treated to the site of nine slave bottoms of various shapes and hues. Most bore the sign of some recent discipline, but Miss Emily's bottom was a checkerboard of welts, blotches, and scratches.

Kettles had to hold Miss Emily's face in the dirt with her boot as she ladled the vinegar across Miss Emily's freshly scourged butt. It was a fortunate posture, for it allowed her to shield her face from David, and pretend to be a slave, and left Irish Rose free to laugh as the vinegar caused her bottom to sizzle as if Kettles were frying it in her skillet.

David ignored her frantic howls into her gag, choosing instead to walk the line, and inspect the row of black, white, and brown bottoms. His inspection tour was slow and thorough, and occasionally he would stop and press one of the bottoms with the tip of his cane, remarking on it's "fullness", "slackness" or "fine color".

He noted Irish Rose's bottom was "tight, but a bit pale", a description that caused the vain Rose no end of pouting. But David was that way with all the girls; everyone experienced a compliment followed by an insult, or visa-vera, and I wondered if David was going to buy all of us, and was again haggling on price. I alone escaped criticism, for with Miss Emily screaming into her gag as Kettles rubbed the vinegar home David apparently felt no need to

impress her by abusing me. Instead I heard him quietly whisper the word "magnificent" as he flicked my bottom with his walking stick.

David stopped to watch Kettles scrub the vinegar into Miss Emily's welts, coolly observing her agony as he finished off his corn muffin. Again he slowly walked up and down the line, munching, and occasionally poking at a bottom or an exposed quim with his walking stick.

"Now that's what I call a good muffin!" he joked as he stood behind me. I could feel his eyes staring directly at my bottom, and up between her legs. I wanted desperately to close my thighs, and tried to, at least until I felt his walking stick impatiently tap them open.

"Now, now, Peaches," he said. "Slaves have nothing to hide from their massahs."

"Are you the slave woman they call Kettles?"

"Yes-em, Massah," Kettles replied, nervous as to David's inquiry.

"Scrub hard," David said, "and work the vinegar in thoroughly. It will prevent mortification. She'll bring a better price if her bottom's unscarred."

At this, Miss Emily wailed into the dirt, and Irish Rose laughed out loud. I thought it ill advised for her to display so much joy in her Mistresses' misfortune, although Miss Emily was too caught up in her own agony to focus on much else. In truth, though, I think Rose's laughter was more reflective of her fearlessness, and her relish of each every moment than a strategic decision. I noticed David smiling at her, and I felt a small pang of jealousy as I saw that she met his approval.

David dropped his half eaten corn muffin on the ground, and it rolled past me in the dirt. I grabbed at it, but the girl next to me was too fast, and I we ended up tearing the muffin in half. A few crumbs fell onto the ground, and anxious to butt our rival out of the way, we both stuck our faces in the dirt, going after the crumbs like hungry pigs jostling at the trough.

When I looked up, I saw David looking down at me. What a sight I was, with dirt on my face and lips, greedily munching on the scraps he had discarded on the ground. He didn't smile, or frown, but merely observed, like a farmer watching his cow chewing her cud. And that, dear readers, is what I was.

When Kettle's finished David left the barn with her, ushering safely from Emily's wrath to her new Master's overseer. Kettle's was leaving friends she had known for years, with no hint of what her future would hold. I wished her well, although I knew that friendship, family, or plans for the future were not for slaves. The "peculiar institution" that now held me so firmly in it's iron grip made all such human concerns mute.

Miss Emily sobbed bitterly, and it took her some time to dress, as it was quite difficult for her to tighten her petticoats and arrange her skirts over her vicious welts. Rose was

careful not to smile, at least when our Mistress was looking, but in truth our Mistress was too consumed with the agony of walking to pay either of us much mind.

We were sent to work in the cotton fields that day, hard grueling work. I was used to being barefoot by this time, but I wasn't used to working with my hands, which were soon chaffed and cracked. Once or twice I got a hard swat across my backside from the overseer, for being "lazy" although I got the sense that being new to the fields he wasn't sure precisely how far he could go with me or Rose. I also got the sense from the way he looked us up-and-down in our short slave frocks that he would like to go very far indeed.

It was hot, sticky, grubby work, and I was soon very thirsty. I looked longingly to "the Big House", the huge white antebellum mansion that served as Pussy Willows center. I knew that David was inside, enjoying some tea, perhaps, as I toiled in the sun.

I had moved away from the house and was working in the South field when I spotted David riding up to Irish Rose and I on his horse. In his fine clothes and with his top hat and walking stick, he looked every inch the gentlemen, even when riding his massive white stallion.

He stopped at the overseer, who immediately pointed out where Rose and I were in the field of slaves. I felt my heart surge with hope as my love walked towards me, followed by the overseer, who had exchanged his strap for the riding crop he kept hanging from his belt, another tool of his trade.

Those hopes were quickly dashed by a single word. "Strip" the overseer said, pointing to me and Irish Rose. "Butt naked in front of the massah, right now."

Irish Rose quickly stripped off her dress. I simply stared at David, trying to understand what was happening.

"I said strip, wench!" the overseer said, raising his riding crop in the air.

Again, David's cane blocked the blow. I looked at David, hoping for a respite from the humiliating order. But he stared at me impassively.

I saw David's eyes widen as he saw for the first time the shameful brand of my mound. He looked surprised, and stared at it for several seconds, as my eyes filled with tears.

The brand marked me as nigra wench. How could David ever marry me now?

After recovering from the shock, David moved to Irish Rose. He gave her a quick and rather perfunctory examination: teeth, hair, eyes, breasts, and bottom. Even when he asked her to bend over and spread I could tell his heart was not in it. David was there to examine me.

And examine me he did! I bent, and jumped, and smiled, and frowned, and pouted, all at his command. His crop was everywhere, tapping me to raise my foot, bow my head, lift up my breasts by the nipples, so he could run his finger underneath. No part of my person was unprobed.

My brand got special attention, of course. He ran his finger over it slowly, feeling the indentation, as if he couldn't believe it was real.

"Personally, I think they should all be branded," the Overseer said, shooting the nervous Irish Rose a glance. "Makes 'em remember that they're owned."

"Yes, it's clear she's a slave," David agreed, filling my heart with daggers. "And it's clear who owns her, too. Unless, of course, I put my family crest on the top..."

I gritted my teeth. I had heard of "superceding" brands at the auction house, the practice of placing a newer ownership mark above the mark of the original owner. But it had never occurred to me that David might do such a horrible thing to me.

"Miss Emily said before I bought 'em, I could try one of them out," David said, talking to the overseer as if Rose and I weren't there. "Mind if I do it here?"

"Not at all," the overseer said. "The fields are as good a place to do 'em as any."

"Emily wants a pretty penny for these two wenches. In fact, she wants..."

At this point, David stopped and whispered in the overseer's ear. Irish Rose and I leaned forward to hear, but we could not.

The overseer let out a long, slow whistle. "That's preposterous! Nobody pay that for a wench! Not even these two."

David laughed. "Yes, I think she was testing me. She has some ridiculous notion that since my accent is the same as Peaches, I must have some sort of feelings for her."

David looked down at me with an evil smile. "Well, she's right I have feelings for her. But that's why I suggested I go out in the fields, to make it clear what those feelings really are."

I didn't understand what David meant, even as he pressed down my shoulders until I was kneeling in the dirt. It wasn't until he unzipped his trousers that I realized what was expected of me.

I simply stared at him.

"Come on, now, Peaches!" he chided. "You do a good job, and show me you're worth some of the money that Miss Emily's asking. Otherwise, she's not going to believe my

intentions, and you may just be standing out in this field, picking cotton and dropping pickannies, until you up and dry out!"

David turned his back on the overseer, and shot me a look, a mixture of insistence and pleading, and I realized instantly what he was doing. My Mistress had asked an outrageous price, and David wanted to pay it, but if he paid it straight out without a demonstration of my "talents" she would know that it was a sham.

He didn't want to do this, and neither did I, but what choice did we have? In the horrible, topsy-turvy logic of the world we were now trapped myself in unspeakable degradation was the only way out.

With my hands trembling, I parted his fly. I jumped back a bit as I saw the head of his manhood pressing thru his under shorts, already hardening in readiness. David might hate this, but I had seen enough of men by this point to know that the soldier in his pants when called to duty would storm into battle ready to fire!

As I looked up at him, David nodded at me, not cruelly, but insistently.

I did what I had to do. I reached into his pants, and fished his rapidly hardening member out until it stood only inches from my face.

I held it loosely in my hand with the single eye of the purple headed Cyclops stared back at me. Before a few months ago I had never seen a male member, but since coming South I had seen numerous heads, although mostly on male slaves. I had never dreamed I would see David's kneeling in the dirt of a cotton field, in the abject pose of slave.

I knew what to do; Rose had schooled me in the arts of oral pleasure, and although I had never pleased a male, the tongue movements and techniques, at least as she had described them to me, was not dissimilar. Rose had tutored me in pleasing men, how to use my tongue and lips and mouth to drive them into ecstasy. I intended to use all of these tricks now.

The overseer came over with a bucket of water, relief for a slave girl with a mouth dry from picking cotton. I drank it down greedily and asked for another. He gave me another ladle, and I tried to save some in my mouth, warming the water I would use to please my master.

I stared at the pulsing, unblinking eye, and slowly reached out to kiss the tip. It quickly extended, pushing against my face and squirting a small amount of clear fluid against my lips. For a moment I thought David's pleasure was about to end before it began, but then I realized the tiny squirt was merely a precursor, "the rain drops before the flood" as my teacher Rose phrased it.

I took David's member in my mouth, just the head, and gave it a first, satisfying suck. Satisfying it was, for David groaned in pleasure.

"That's it, pretty wench!" he moaned. "Suck it good. Suck it down good!"

How often I had dreamed of David holding me in his arms, on our wedding night? I wanted to know him in a biblical sense, but in our wedding bed, after we were married, in the presence of God, and my family, and the finest people in Boston. Now, I felt only shame.

But I also felt excitement, and a certain peculiar pride, as I allowed my lips to slide down his shaft, taking more and more of him in my mouth.

"That's right, wench. Wrap those big puffy lips around it. Get some suction going. When I give you a load, I don't want you to miss a drop of your master's seed."

I vowed that I would not as I slid him out of me and twirled my tongue around the bulbous head.

"That's it, tease it. Tease it you hot little tongue. Your massah's building up a nice big surprise for you! It won't be long now."

I sucked harder, and faster. He pulled back a bit, not wanting his pleasure to stop. "Slow down, pretty wench. I know you're hungry for your master's cream. But it's better to give than to receive. And I intend to give you a richy, salty load!"

"That's right. Cup my sack. Those eggs are working overtime on my swimmers. My swimmers are delicious, and they'll knock you up right good if I decide to plant a pickaninny in your belly."

"That's it...rub your tongue right under the head. Tickle it sweet. Tease it like it's you're mamma's titty."

At this point the overseer, too excited to merely watch, bid Irish Rose over, and ordered her to her knees. She moved quickly, and I watched out of the corner of her eye as she licked the overseer's rapidly expanding member, spitting on it as she pulled on it with her hand.

Watching my mentor closely, I imitated her movements as closely as possible, earning a sigh of pleasure from my master and the rude laughter of the overseer. "Looky there at Peaches. Running her tongue up and down just like Irish Rose. It's monkey see, monkey do!"

I looked out in the field and noticed the darker slaves watching us. Some looked upon us with amusement, while some of the older black women glared at us with utter contempt. Some of the younger with undisguised lust. The latter, with their thick bulges in their loin cloths, alarmed me the most.

I was fearful that if I did not entirely please David he might arrange for me to practice, lining up the male slaves me to satisfy one at a time. Reading the fear in my eyes, my all powerful massah looked down on me, encouraging me to suck more vigorously. "You do a good job there, Peaches, or I might have to call over some of those big studs over for you to practice on. If I stick in you in one of the breeding shacks with the bucks tonight by morning you'll have a tummy bulging with gooey, sticky seed, and probably a pick-a-ninny or two grown' in there. So get sucking, girl!"

I slobbered over my master's tool vigorously, aping Rose's trick of swirling my tongue around the base of his shaft and licking the vent with my tongue. It was during one of these lollipop licks that I heard David groan, and felt a hot wet blast hit my face.

"Suck it wench!" he ordered. "Don't waste your massah's seed! Swallowing is a privilege for a girl like you!"

I quickly took it in my mouth, swallowing all I could. David, groaned as I sucked it down, but looked down at me scornfully as I liked the last few drops off the tip!

"I got more of it on your face than in your mouth, you stupid monkey," he hissed. "And that was way to fast. You're supposed to tease it! Don't you know anything, bitch?"

My eyes welled with tears as David harranged me. Next to me, I heard the overseer groaning as Irish Rose tickled and teased, keeping him on the very edge of ecstasy.

David, grabbing me by the hair, dragged me over to the tree. "Get me some rope boy," he said to one of the slaves. "I'm going string this wench up, to teach her a lesson!"

There was a gasp from the slaves, and I saw a few of them reach for their throats in sympathy. Was David going to solve the problem of "Peaches" once and for all? With no trap door or even a bucket to stand on, he would have to haul me up and let me strangle. It would be a terrible way to die! Even Rose, sucking away, looked alarmed.

My eyes welled with tears as I started to wipe my face. "Leave it, wench" he shouted, shaking me by my hair. I want the seed to dry on your face all afternoon, so you can be an example for everyone, of what happens to lazy whores who are too stupid to even swallow without making a mess!"

The rope arrived, and David tied my wrists in front of me before tossing the other end over the branch, pulling it taut until my toes barely touched the ground. "I'm going to leave you out in the sun to tan up a little, while I go have talk with your Mistress. I want you to feel that cum dry on your face, and think about how you might please me better next time."

David gave my rump a hard SLAP causing me to dance and sway in the breeze. "Your udders jiggle good, slave," he snickered, before turning his back on me and walking back to the house.

I hung there, struggling to use my toes to stop my spinning, agonized but still grateful the rope was cutting into my wrists instead of my throat. The knowledge that David or Miss Elizabeth could have put the rope around my neck, and might still, terrified me, as did the lustful looks of the slaves in the field ogling my naked, spinning form.

Fighting my dizziness and nausea I finally stopped struggling and simply spun in ever slower circles until finally I stopped. I watched Rose pleasure the overseer, in part to learn her technique, in part to distract myself from the lustful ogling of the slaves working in the field. Even the overseer's lash, it seems, couldn't distract them from the temptation of staring at my breasts and branded pussy.

At last, the overseer, almost too exhausted to stand, ordered Rose to finish. She made quick work of it, swallowing his load. I thought she was finished, but then another overseer came, and another, thru the long morning.

When the sun was directly overhead the plantation bell rang, and Miss Emily and David came out to have lunch on the veranda. They paid little attention to me, but I, swinging in the burning sun, eyed their pitchers of cool ice tea and lemonade longingly. Miss Emily, I noticed, at her lunch standing up.

I did notice David looking me up and down occasionally, and wondered if he might come over to cut me down and end my agony. He did not. Instead, he spent a lot of meal eyeing Irish Rose, who was still pleasuring one of the endless line of overseers. Rose, at least, had a bucket of water to drink from.

As David left to go inside, I saw him whisper to one of the old house slaves. A few minutes later the house slave returned with a knife and cut me down, gently helping me limp into the barn thru the agony of the sunburn I had endured. The slave said nothing, but shackled my feet to one of the supports, and then, to my surprise, gave me a bucket of water, two oranges, and a jar of cream to rub onto my reddened skin.

I slept, somehow, and when I awoke I could see the moon thru the slats of the old barn. A few minutes later the old slave returned, unshackled me, and led me into the big house.

I was ushered upstairs to the master bedroom where, to my surprise, a naked David was already in bed with Irish Rose. "I've made an offer on both of you, which Miss Emily is considering," he explained. "Of course I may only be able to afford one of you, depending on the final price, so Miss Emily agreed to allow me to have a sort of audition."

At this, Irish Rose giggled, and pulling back the covers began to eagerly lick David's shaft. "Hurry up Peaches!" David laughed. "You don't want to lose by being lazy!"

I ran over as fast as my sunburn would allow, jumping up onto the bed and eagerly wrapping my mouth around the tip of David's penis. "Do a good job," I heard David whisper. "Emily may be watching us, and if he suspects I'm trying to rescue you both, you'll rot here forever."

Irish Rose and I increased our efforts, as David moaned with pleasure. "Oh, not so fast, girls!" he laughed. "You're going to spend me in 90 seconds! Why don't you both get on the rug, and pleasure each other, while I watch."

Oh, how often I had dreamed of my honeymoon night with David, in our bedroom, with his strong arms around me. Instead, Irish Rose and I pleased each other while David looked down on us.

"You know, Peaches, I think a second brand would be for the best. I wouldn't want you returned here by accident if you escape. And when the burn heals you'll brown up nice, so you'll look more like a darkie when I file your papers with registrar back at my family's plantation in Louisiana."

A second brand? REGISTER ME? My eyes filled with tears as Rose licked me to a delicious orgasm.

Then it was my turn to slip my face between Rose's legs. At the musky female scent of her I felt myself become slave wet again but as tempting as it was to play with myself I knew that I owed Rose the same pleasure that she had given me. I am proud to say that I had grown much more skilled at the art of giving a female pleasure since the boat ride. I still had a lot to learn in the use of my tongue, something Irish Rose had shown earlier in the day but I am happy to report that in no time at all Rose had flung her arms wide as she arched her back and trust her groin into my face and cried out in ecstasy.

When my head came up I saw that David was lying on the bed stroking his shaft which had grown hard again at the sight of the two slave girls licking and rutting each other. He wore a pleased grin on his face and while he was in good form I ambled over to the bed and knelt between his legs

"Please massah," I began taking care to keep my voice low so as not to carry should there be any eavesdroppers. "Please don't say I got to be branded." Acting the good and eager slave girl and hoping to keep David agreeable I began to slide my tongue along the underside of his shaft which soon began to stiffen even further under my ministrations

"Peaches is a good slave, Peaches knows to obey her massah." I told him as I slowly circled the head of his penis with my tongue. Like an adder testing the air my tongue flicked in and out dabbing against his shaft. "Peaches don't need the iron massah"

"If I have to pay good hard earned dollars for you Peaches I want to see my crest on your honey pot every time you have the privilege of your massah's bed, not some other woman. Why Peaches after that show you gave me with Rose I am wondering do you want to stay with Miss Emily? Do you like the feel of her crest down there every time you cream up?

I looked up at him with alarm. Stay with Miss Emily? Never.

“Did anyone tell you to stop?” he growled at me. Then his eyes flicked to Rose. “My crop is there,” he told her nodding to the corner of the room. “Let’s see if you have the makings of a good overseer Rose? Encourage this slave how she should be using that pretty little mouth of hers instead of sassing her massah.”

From the corner of my eye I saw Rose naked and still glistening from the orgasm I have given her run and fetch the crop. Surely she would not be so cruel at to...?

WHACK

Rose did not hit as hard as the overseers did, perhaps she was trying to show her sister in slavery a kindness or perhaps she lacked experience being on that end of the whip. All the same when the crop landed across my bottom already striped from the overseers strap not to mention my sunburn I let out a yelp that you might have lifted the roof and quickly I returned to the task at hand. Keeping that smile on David’s face.

Rose slid behind me and I lost sight of her as I licked and sucked at massah David’s prick.

“No it’s the iron for you if I can prize you free of Miss Emily. That way if you run away or get lost the slave catchers won’t bring you back to Miss Emily by mistake. I’ll not have some woman claiming rights to my property paid for fair and square.”

I felt a cold shiver at the thought of the branding iron for the pain of my first branding was still fresh in my mind despite the time that had elapsed. Then I felt Rose slide the tip of the crop between my legs and I paused for a second in surprise as she began to rub me.

Oh Rose, how could I ever have doubted you? Yet you whipped me but that was at the command of David. She had no choice in the matter but now she was turning that instrument of correction into an instrument of pleasure.

“Ah, oh,” David called out. “Yes suck your massah, rub and work that wicked tongue of yours,” as I took him in my mouth and despite the fact that I had though him milked dry from our earlier efforts the wellspring of his manhood was not yet empty and in no time at all he was pumping his precious seed against the back of my throat.

At the same time the leather tongue of the crop between my aching wet slave slit did its work and as David spent his seed I felt my own flesh rock and shudder as another orgasm drove rational thought from my tiny slave brain.

When we were both done David beckoned me to climb higher in the bed and I felt my vision blur and my cheeks became wet with tears as he guided me to lie down on the bed beside him as he wrapped his strong arms around me.

"If I could spare you this Elizabeth I would," he whispered as he leaned over to nuzzle at my hear. Not even Irish Rose standing at the end of the bed making good use of the crop could hear what he said. This was for my ears along.

"But Miss Emily is still suspicious of me, despite all I've done to show her that I have no feelings for you. It is the only way."

With the comfort of his arms holding me I sank into his embrace while I felt my will and with it all my fears dissolve into the intensity of his eyes. "Massah's knows best," I murmured in reply and I felt such love from him as he leaned over in the bed and kissed me gently on the forehead. "Yes he does," he replied.

Nothing would have pleased me more that to spend the night there lying in David's bed with his arms around my back. I even beckoned Rose to take position on the other side for it was a big bed and my sister deserved the comfort of clean sheets. That was not to be for after a few minutes had passed there was a knock on the door and one of the overseers entered to fetch the two fancy girls back to their place in the barn.

I cast one long look at David as we were led away back to the all too familiar bleak cold features of the barn. I had grown almost accustomed to the straw and with Irish Rose in my arms, the heat of her body pressed against mine the night would pass quickly enough. And if David's ploy worked I might never again have to spend a day laboring in the fields.

"And where do you think you're going?" the overseer demanded with a sly leer as I shuffled to the familiar stall. With a gesture I was drawn back and ordered to surrender my slave smock.

I had grown not comfortable but used in a way to having my body displayed for the pleasure of others but there was something about being naked in front of this brute that still made my stomach role and my skin scrawl. He was cut from the same cloth as Miss Emily I think. Some in the South were cruel to their slaves but it was a cruelty born of calculation and intent, all designed to keep the slave population subservient and compliant.

Others however enjoyed cruelty and the infliction of pain and degradation simply for the pleasure that such acts gave them. I felt certain this excuse for a man would have worked for Miss Emily without a wage simply for the enjoyment he took in wielding the whip. Miss Emily had that same streak of malice at her core but it was well wrapped by finer manners and a certain playfulness.

So when I was stripped I immediately tried to cover myself much to his amusement. He fetched a rope and secured my wrists then flung it over a sturdy wooden beam in the roof of the barn and pulled it so that I was left dangling by my ankles with my toes just brushing against the floor.

I whimpered at the pain and strain of the rope biting into my wrists but greater was the fear that I was to be whipped. I had been strung up like this before but that was outside so that I could slowly bake in the hot sun and the olive tone of my skin could darken to a more slave like brown. There was no sun here and then a moment later Irish Rose was likewise stripped and secured by her wrists. Like me she was left standing on the tips of her toes to try and ease the strain on her wrists.

"No playing with each other tonight," he laughed as he fondled my breasts before he turned to go. "Mistress's orders, says you may not be playing with each other ever again so your to have all night to look at each other."

Oh the cruelty of it. I was left facing Rose, and she I but unable to touch each other, to hold each other. We would share no comfort of the other's touch tonight and what had he meant that we might not play with each other again?

A dozen scenarios ran through my tormented mind and from the worried expression on Rose I could see that she too had concerns. Perhaps one of us was to be sold and the other kept. Or perhaps one of us had caught the mistresses eye and was to be restored to the privileged status of house slave while the other would be exiled to the fields until she died. If that was the case I had little doubt it would be Irish Rose who would be enjoying Miss Emily's attentions and her bed. She was by far the prettier girl, her skin so much whiter than mine. Tanned by the sun I did not look out of place wearing a slave smock but even after all her labors in the field Rose could still pass for white with no difficulty.

My heart was torn for I wished Rose only the best but the thought of endless days in the fields filled me with horror. And I might never know the sweet scent of Rose, feel her cleaver fingers play with me, have her delicate tongue lick and caress all those secret places that brought me so much pleasure. I had known her only a short time but it was as if I was never to see a beloved sister again.

I could find no words that would ease the ache of my heart and so we stared at each other fearful for what the future might bring. Then we heard the bard door open and there was Miss Emily and with her an old house slave.

I was so afraid of what was to come that I dared not utter a single word to my mistress. She gestured for the house slave and the old negro began the delicate work of shaving Rose between her legs.

I saw the look of fear and horror that crossed my sister's face as the slave bent over and began to strip her of her last covering. I recognized the cream that had been used upon my flesh, and sure enough when the last trace of coppery red hair had been stripped away from her sex that cream was rubbed over her mound and then the lips of her sex and even around her puckered opening of her anus. Tears began to stream down Rose's face as she watched the operation. She had seen how that cream had affected me. To this day my womanly places were bare to the touch with no sign of my girl curls ever returning.

There could only be one reason for such a treatment. Rose was to be branded as I had. Perhaps it was David's doing or perhaps not. Had not Miss Emily threatened such a branding before? Only to the warped way our mistress looked at such things it had not been a treat but a great honor.

As soon as the slave had done her work Miss Emil dismissed her with a gesture. Since entering the barn she had said nothing and had been content to watch proceedings in silence. It was only when the three of us were left alone that she moved between myself and Rose and she began to speak.

"While you have been taking your ease slacking off with the overseers and Mr. Smith instead of working I have been studying the plantation accounts." A faint frown marred the beauty of her face and once again I marveled at this woman. I hated everything she represented, everything she had done to me and Rose yet there was no denying that in her present the sterner her expression the more I felt the almost overwhelming urge to surrender my will utterly until I was the perfect slave before her, compliant and submissive and so very eager to please.

"Mr. Smith has been quite keen to tell me at great length that I have overextended my finances in buying you. He may have a point," she admitted. "And there has been some terrible mistake with the mortgages and for some reason that fool banker has marked me down as..." she stopped and realized what she was about to say. Her frown became a grimace.

"We'll let us say that the consequence of defaulting on the mortgage do not bear thinking about no matter how much I enjoy the company of both of you." A shudder ran up and down her body and I could imagine what she was thinking about for her right hand slid to caress her bottom and the welts that Kettle had raised there. A default would see her stripped of that fine dress and her nice underthings and then when she was butt naked she would shiver for real as she was paraded around the auction room, just another slave waiting to be found out who her owner was to be.

"So Mr. Smith has persuaded me to part with you both. The papers are already being drawn up."

I had to struggle mightily to contain my joy at this news. David had succeeded. We were both to be sold to him. Then I remembered that this happy news was to be tempered by the searing hot branding iron that would soon be kissing my flesh yet again and it became a lot easier not to smile.

"Both of you are to be marked with Mr. Smith's brand. " With one hand Miss Emily reached up and began to stroke the raised impression of her brand against my mons. It had healed nicely but the scar tissue would never fade, I would carry the mark of the iron to my grave.

Then shockingly her hand trailed down from my brand to slip into my sex. Were I not already on my toes the touch of her fingers in there would have had me up on my toes but strongly she was quite gentle in her way and a low moan escaped from me after a few seconds had passed.

“And you Rose, do you wonder what the Iron will feel like on your nice pussy?” she asked as with her free hand she stroked Rose’s mound. A moment later as Rose shook her head in a fearful no Miss Emily slid the fingers of her left hand into Rose.

“The branding master has already been summoned. Tomorrow he will be here with the Sheriff to witness the transfer of title to Mr. Smith. Of course there is a way that both of you could avoid the iron,” she added almost as an afterthought as she skillfully played with both of us at the same time.

“If either of you were able to tell me anything about Mr. Smith, anything that I could pass on to the sheriff I would have no need to sell either of you. There is a generous reward for the arrest of any abolitionist, more than enough to pay for both of you. You could stay here with me. I will even bring you back to the house, I think you’ve both learned your lesson on what I expect from my slaves?”

She looked at me and I nodded as I bit my tongue. Her fingers lacked Rose’s skill or perhaps Miss Emily was unaccustomed to caring much about the pleasure of others while her own were being met but I could feel my sap seeping down over her fingers as she played with my clit.

“Just think of it. Every night you could stay in my nice warm bed and there would be no dirty disgusting men pawing at you. Just your mistress who knows what you both need.”

A smile suddenly sprang into being as something occurred to her. “If I had evidence not only would Mr. Smith be arrested but the Judge would be sure to sentence him to hard labor. I could buy his convict lease and have him working here at Pussy Willow, all nice and secure in his chains and leg irons.”

“He would have to find some way to trade for a loin cloth of course. I’ll not waste a single cent on clothing an abolitionist.” Miss Emily’s smile was threatening to split her face and I knew with a cold certainty that she was imagining what my beloved David would look like laboring as a convicted convict. Locked in leg irons perhaps naked for the amusement of the overseers and the pleasure of Miss Emily.

“He might make a good breeder,” she mused to herself. “And if he was not up to the task well there would be no reason why the Vet could not...” she did not continue whatever she was thinking of. Then her attention returned to her slaves both on the edge and with a wicked grin she coaxed us to orgasm.

She gave us some moments to recover before she spoke again. "You see your mistress knows how to look after good slave girls." Then looking me squarely in the eye she added "but if I were to find out that my property lied to me, well I have a special branding iron for that, shaped at a simple 'L' for Liar and it goes ...," she reached out with one of her fingers dripping wet from my own sap and traced the letter 'L' on my forehead just above the bridge of my nose."

I was nearly sick with terror at the thought of having a branding iron pressed into my temple. At least my pussy brand was out of view most of the time but on my face.... I felt my bladder give way and hot wet piss began to trail down my leg to the stable floor.

"So, Peaches, Rose do either of you have anything you want to tell your mistress?"

I was wrong, the overseer was a petty petulant child compared to the cruelty of this woman. With one hand she offered me a life time of servitude with the promise that I would be a house slave, perhaps even better I would be the mistresses' fancy girl sharing her bed. I would pleasure her as was my duty but in turn my mistress would see that my one slave heat would be quenched from time to time by her own hand. And I would escape the branding iron, there would be no second searing hot mark burned into my flesh.

All that was required was for me to give her the evidence that she could use to condemn David to virtual slavery. There were few convict laborers about. Most were freed negroes who had been brought up on charges and quickly convicted and sentenced but they were treated no differently than their enslaved breather. White men were imprisoned but I had little doubt given the mood of the land that many would find it fitting that a man who wanted to free the slaves could labor alongside them, white or not.

Yet if I said nothing I would be sold to David and feel that terrible agony of the branding iron yet again. Worse if I said nothing but Rose spoke I would be marked as a liar for everyone to see and it went without saying that I could expect to spend the rest of my life in the fields pleasing the overseer, servicing the bucks and picking cotton for the enrichment of Miss Emily.

It was the hardest thing I have ever done for I was so very afraid that Rose would reveal all to escape the branding iron and thought it shames me to say this I felt drawn to this cruel monster in female form. Yet I gathered what little courage I possessed and gave my answer.

"Please Miss Emily Peaches just a dumb monkey. Peaches don't know nothing but you tell Peaches what to say and Peaches say it. Peaches be a good slave. Peaches does what she is told massah."

Those cold penetrating blue eyes regarded me for a moment then she spun around to study Rose and I hardly dare breath. One word from her and I would be branded on my temple as a liar.

"And you Rose. Do you have anything to say or are you mighty eager to have a nice pussy brand like Peaches? You saw her getting her mark and how she screamed. It must hurt something fierce but there is no need for you to be marked. Your mistress will look after you better any man could."

I could see Rose staring wide eyed past Miss Emily to between my legs at my brand and I would not have blamed her if she broke down and confessed everything. "Irish Rose never met massah David before," she replied. "Please don't let him brand me. Save me Mistress."

I saw a muscle twitch in the side of Emily's face and then without a word she spun on her heel and strode from the barn, leaving us dangling by our wrists for the night.

When morning came and we were cut down Rose and I would happily have curled up on the floor together to sleep. Dangling by our wrists we had managed to snatch only a few brief minutes of sleep before the pain of the rope digging into our wrists would wake us. We were however revived when one of the overseers roused us by throwing a pale of cold well water over us, drenching us and leaving us shivering in the process.

I expected us to be given our slave smocks but instead a length of rope was produced and naturally we both shied away from it for the overseer quickly knotted two nooses. I opened my mouth to protest that we were to be sold and Massah David would not pay for two carcasses but at the back of my mind was the thought that Miss Emily spiteful to the end might have us hung rather than see her prize possessions in another's hands. It would not even be a lynching, it would be perfectly legal. She had as much right to have us put down as she did her dog or her horse.

Thankfully we did not have to find out if we had been good enough to warrant passage to Nigra Heaven that day. Instead the nooses were pulled snug around our necks and extra length of rope was left to fall down our backs where it was used to bind our hands together in the small of our backs in a reverse prayer position.

To say that it was uncomfortable was an understatement but I learned quickly not to struggle no matter how my arms might ache at the unnatural position. If I struggled it only pulled the noose around my neck tighter and threatened to strangle me.

Once both of us were secure we were directed out of the barn bare and dripping wet. At least the warm southern sun did not take long to dry us as we were marched forward to our fate.

Closer to the house I saw David taking his ease with Miss Emily. Both were taking their breakfast on a veranda overlooking the yard. There were several men with them that I did not recognize and as I looked around I could see that my fellow slaves were already hard at work in the distance in the cotton fields.

"Shall we attend to business," one of the men who was unknown to me asked when Rose and I were ordered to stand before the table.

In the distance I heard the unmistakable crack of the overseer's whip being used on a field slave and my own naked bottom cheeks clenched in fear and sympathy much to the amusement of the fine white folk eating their breakfast. My own empty stomach growled at the lovely smell of fresh bacon but of course I kept my head down, my eyes respectfully on the ground before my betters. Even the irrepressible Irish Rose always ready with the most ill advised comment was silent and somber today.

"No need to hurry Sheriff," I heard David remark. "It's a fine morning here in the shade. Take a moment to enjoy this most excellent coffee and enjoy the view."

There were murmurs of approval and I felt their eyes drift our direction. There was only one view these men cared to look at and that was the ripe breasts and shaved mounds of the two slave girls who stood naked and compliant before them waiting for a command. They did not care that the sun was already up and beating down on us for we were left to stand out from the shade. It went without saying that they cared not one whit that both our arms were screaming with aches and pains from being bound so high behind our backs, they cared only for the way the position forced our breasts up and out, an offering to please our massah's.

"Fetch," I heard David call out to us after some time had passed and daring to look up I saw him throw a rind of bacon onto the lawn before us. Irish Rose and I exchanged a look at then we were both scrambling after the bacon.

Nimble Rose got it first and like a trained hound she was on her knees in an instant so that her eager jaws could clamp around the prize morsel. I would have swallowed it in a few quick bites for I was hungry. Aside from my massah's spunk I had been given nothing to eat in some time and my stomach was rumbling something fierce but Rose had been a slave far longer than I and was as a consequence far better trained.

Bowing my head in shame at the embarrassment of not having won the prize I followed her back to where we had been standing.

"Good girl," David said approvingly at the sight of Rose with the bacon carried safely between her teeth. "Eat," he ordered after a moment and Rose quickly swallowed her succulent prize.

"Rose is well trained," I heard Miss Emily say to the men. "But still I doubt if any northerner knows how to fully control slaves. They just don't know that's required to master the brutes."

Again there were murmurs of agreement from most of the men who by their accents I took to be southerners. David exchanged a thoughtful look at the others and then he climbed

to his feet and snatched up his riding crop. "You will find gentlemen that some of us know exactly what is required to control unruly slaves."

I took a step back from David as he strode towards me crop in hand before I could catch myself. It was David, my beloved but he wore such a stern expression and the way he held the crop I felt a slave's natural fear of the whip. My poor bottom was still sore from the strap of the overseers to say nothing of the sunburn.

David grabbed me by the shoulders and then in a low voice so that the others could not overhear he spoke. "Don't ruin everything now, I need Peaches, the good and obedient slave girl not Elizabeth the high and mighty lady from Boston." Then in a rush he told me what he needed me to do.

I could only stare open mouthed and wide eyed at him in horror for a moment. How could he ask this of me? Then I glanced past him to the table where Miss Emily still wore suspicion like a shawl wrapped around her and there were faint frowns on the faces of the men, they had the look of men who were weighing and considering David's every action, to see if he was, despite his northern accent, one of them.

Elizabeth the proud rich resident of Boston would have slapped David's face on the spot and stormed off but Peaches knew better. Peaches was a slave and David was soon to be her master. If her master gave her an order she had no reason to feel embarrassed or humiliated. She was just a slave an instrument of her master's will. A good slave obeyed without question and if those orders were less than gentle the fault lay with the master who gave the command not the slave who did what she was bid.

With my arms bound behind me it was awkward but I sank to my knees before him crying out loudly enough that my voice was sure to carry to the table. "Please massa, Peaches is a good slave, Peaches knows how to obey. Peaches do anything you tell her to do."

"And do you want your master's brand seared into your flesh?" David asked in an equally loud voice.

"Oh yessa massa, please brand Peaches, please let Peaches carry your mark," I replied. "Peaches needs her massa's mark on her pussy pot so she knows who to cream for. Peaches cream up real good, Peaches keep the massa real happy."

David helped me back to my feet by taking hold of me behind the neck and guided me not towards the table but near the smith's shop. Another stranger was there, not so finely dressed as those at Miss Emily's table. From the sturdy muscle of his arms and the weather beaten features as well as the obvious thick calluses on his hands this man worked for his bread.

"And this fine gentleman is Chester Lassiter, the finest branding master in these parts," David introduced us. "He's already heating up the irons for you. What do you have to say to Mister Lassiter?"

I looked fearfully from David to this Chester and a sliver of fresh alarm crept into my heart. Did David say irons rather than iron? Surely I was not to be branded more than once? Then recalling my instructions I looked up fearfully at this Chester Lassiter who was taking his time to run his eyes along my body.

"Please massa," I begged. "Please brand Peaches real good."

"Be my pleasure," he replied.

"Good," David said clapping his hands together. "Peaches here wants to thank you specially for getting the irons just hot enough. Run along Peaches but don't be too long. We don't want those irons getting cold now do we?"

I could see that Miss Emily and the others had left their table to come and observe proceedings but I ignored them as I ran across the yard to the rear of the great house and to the kitchen. I knew my way around Pussy Willow now and in no time I found my way to the kitchen.

"Well lookie here," one of the cooks called out when she caught sight of me. "It's Miss Emily's fancy girl." I flushed from the heat of the kitchen but more from the knowledge that all the slaves knew me as a fancy girl now, the mistress's plaything.

"Please can I have some bacon grease?" I asked keeping my head bowed for I could not make myself meet the cook's eyes as I made my request. I was sure she would want to know what I wanted grease for.

"I don't know," the cook mused. "Miss Emily not say anything about her fancy girl earning a treat." I felt the cook's hand cup my chin forcing my head up so she could look at my face. "Did you give Miss Emily a good time, fancy girl?"

"I'm to give the branding master a good poke," I explained on the verge of tears.

"The fancy girl is going to stud," she said and there was a ripple of laughter from the other slaves working in the kitchen. I could not fault them, their own lives were filled with misery and suffering, was it any wonder they took delight when the mistress's ire was falling on someone else for a change.

"You too good for the bucks in the fields?" the cook demanded. "The way I heard it Samson was looking forward to sticking his dick into that tight little slit of yours."

"I am... I'm to take the branding master in my ... back passage," I finally explained as I struggled to form the words. Like some dog in heat I was to be taken from the rear in the dirt and dust with my betters looking on.

A sly grin spread across the cook's face. "Don't you be eyeballing me missy, face on the ground ass in the air," she commanded as if she was the mistress. Then I saw her turn to

one of her helpers, a house slave, he was young and fit but could not have been a day over nineteen. Unlike his brethren in the fields he wore trousers and shirt but I could see that his breeches could not contain his male excitement at the sight of my nudity.

"You there boy," the cook snapped. "Get to greasing this fancy girl," I moved myself into position with my forehead resting on the kitchen floor and my bottom stuck up into the air and a moment later I felt the excited boy work the bacon grease into my back passage.

My body naturally tensed at this invasion but I took hold of myself and forced my cheeks to relax and welcome the attention. The kitchen slave took to his task with great vigor and in no time I was well oiled and greased ready to receive the branding master's member. It shames me to say it but the feel of his slick fingers there so close to my slit was very arousing and I could feel myself getting wet despite my fear of what was to come.

Not was I the only one getting excited it seems. I felt the slave's free hand brush against my secret lips and always wishing to be helpful I parted my legs as far as my leg irons would allow to ease his passage.

"Enough of that boy," I heard the cook snap. "Miss Emily don't like no slave playing with her fancy girl less in she says so." Still I felt his fingers caress both of my openings.

"Lessn you aiming to get yourself cut," the cook warned. "Miss Emily knows how to calm you down if you can't mind your place."

I was unsure of what exactly was being threatened except that the cook sounded almost eager to see it and it must have been fearsome indeed for I immediately felt the kitchen slave pull both his fingers from my openings leaving me quite unsatisfied on the kitchen floor.

"Away with you girl," the cook ordered once I had climbed awkwardly back to my feet. "There's work to be done here and I'll not have the likes of you flirting with all the slaves." She planted a firm slap on my right bottom cheek and sent me on my way.

When I returned to the yard I saw that Rose was on her knees before the branding master who had his breeches around his ankles as she worked her tongue on his member. I could imagine no better slave to tease and tantalize than Rose for her skill with her tongue was exceptional. Sure enough this Lassiter looked ready to burst when I threw myself to the ground and like I had in the kitchen I put my forehead on the ground and arched my back to present my hind quarters.

"Might fine ride there," I heard one of the men who David had called the Sheriff earlier.

"She is good for nothing but rutting in the yard with the hogs," Miss Emily said scornfully.

"Brand me massah," I cried out as David had instructed. I felt Lassiter's rough hands around my waist and then I felt his stiffness against my bottom. Instinctively my cheeks clenched together and I felt another hard slap delivered to my flank.

"None of that," Lassiter growled. "Lessin you want the irons to cool and I got to hold them in real long and hard to make a mark."

"Oh massah, please brand me good," I cried out as I opened myself as best I could.

Even with the bacon grease coating my passage my tight little sphincter strove to keep the intruder at bay but I felt Lassiter thrust forward and his member forced itself into me. It felt so big, far too big for my back passage that nature had intended for other uses yet there was no denying him and the very snugness made it all the more exciting as my flesh gripped his shaft.

"Tight little thing," he murmured as his hands on my waist drew me back towards him.

"Please brand me good," I cried out through gritted teeth. David's instructions were clear and I intended to follow them as best I could. And there was the fact that I could feel my slave heat grow higher, more intense. Here I was face down in the dirt, my hands trapped midway up my back with a coarse rope biting into my throat, threatening to strangle me if I struggled too much and the branding master was riding me like a fine filly as Miss Emily, David and the Sheriff looked on. It was enough to almost make me cum without the surging member of the branding master.

"She's might eager for the branding," I heard the Sheriff say. "How ever did you encourage her?"

With my head pressed into the dirt I could not turn to see David's response but his voice carried over Lassiter's foul breath and panting exertions.

"I told her I had no time for a rebellious slave," David told them. "Either she proved to me that she was a good slave who wanted to please her Master or as soon as I had paid for her I was going to have a noose around her neck and she could do a rope dance from the branches of the whipping tree. Let the buzzards get some use from her if I couldn't."

"I may have misjudged you Sir," Miss Emily said sounding surprised and pleased at the same time.

"Good show," the Sheriff agreed. "We need to string up some of them from time to time to keep the rest in line."

"And I still might," David said. There was some surprise from the others but he quickly added, "Only after I've had a good ride myself you understand. A man's got to get some return on his investment."

This sentiment was met with all round laughter from both the men and Miss Emily but I ceased to care as I felt Lassiter spend his seed deep inside my flesh and I felt my own body shudder in turn. It could not compare to the feel of David or Rose playing with my secret places that was heaven but this rougher rawer pleasure was not without its merits and for several minutes both Lassiter and I were lost to the world as we lay intertwined and panting.

"I trust that your feeling up to the job?" David asked Lassiter as he pulled up his breeches.

"Yes Sir," the branding master replied cheerfully. "She was like a bucking bronco, real fine ride. I'll have your mark on her as clear as day. And the other one?" he asked nodding to where Irish Rose knelt trying to keep out of the way.

David made a show of thinking about it and then gestured for her to stand. "Peaches is an uppity wench that needs the iron to reminder her of her place but... this fine creature" he reached out and carefully lifted away some strands of Rose's hair that had fallen over her right breast. "... is a true beauty and so compliant. See how she moves to her master's touch, like a plant seeking the sunlight."

Sure enough Rose had leaned forward to present her erect teat for David to play with.

"I think it would be a crying shame to mar such beauty as this with an unsightly brand." Playing with her nipple and breast he looked over to the others, mostly at the Sheriff but Miss Emily was not left out. "What say you?"

His hand dipped down over her stomach to stroke her denuded mound. "There's something to be said for a nice bare but smooth mound. Like silk it is."

"The slaves yours once the papers are signed," the Sheriff told him. "Let no man tell you what to do with your own property."

"And Peaches?" Miss Emily demanded with just a faint hint of suspicion. For a second I had dared hope that I would escape with Rose without having to feel the iron again but I should have known better. Miss Emily was not about to see the abolitionist who had competed with her at the ball so many weeks ago escape a second appointment with the iron.

"Well she's asked for it so sweetly," David told them. "Would be a shame to deny her my brand."

This was met with another round of laughter, only Rose gave me a sorrowful look at Lassiter took hold of my arm and led me to the branding rack that had been set up. This was no simple table like I had seen in the market when I had received my first brand, this resembled a medieval rack but set up diagonally and even at a glance I could see a myriad of straps that could be used to secure a body in any number of positions.

I whimpered when I felt the touch of the cold wood press against my back and bottom but I knew there was nothing to be done but go along with proceedings. So Peaches allowed the branding master to fix leather straps at my ankles, above my knees, waist and wrist. A band of leather was even locked around my throat so that when he was done my legs were well parted and I could not move so much as an inch.

"Bite down on this my pretty," he told me as he produced a worn leather bit and slid it between my jaws. "Don't want you biting off your tongue, do we?" I was grateful for the bit for as my eyes were drawn to the blazer I felt my courage waver. Were I not gagged I was not sure I would not have cried out and revealed all to save myself from the iron.

Then Lassiter drew out the iron and held it up close to his face for inspection. Apparently he was satisfied as to the heat of the metal for I saw him turn and holding the iron he advanced towards me.

Wide eyed I tried to break free of my bonds but it was useless of course. I could only lie there propped up against the rack and watch as that searing hot metal came closer and closer. I could see the shape of the brand and it was two wavy parallel lines shaped in a undulating circular pattern. Yet this was no simple twin ring for I could see what looked like small thorns emerging inward and outwards from the rings. It was a ring of thorns!

Then the iron was pressed between my legs and I felt that familiar searing hot agony and I clamped down hard onto my bit. Lassiter held it there pressed into my flesh for what seemed an eternity and when he finally withdrew it I would have fallen were it not for the leather binding me in place.

My agony meant nothing to them of course though I did detect a hint of concern from David, quickly hidden when the others drew close. Perhaps they wished to inspect my new brand or perhaps they simply wanted the chance to look over my sex.

"Might fine," the sheriff muttered as he bent over at the waist to peer between my legs. "And still a maiden." He looked up at David and took the time to light a cigar before he went on. "I'll understand that you will want to be the first to plow that field but once... she's broke in I wouldn't mind an hour or two with her."

"You can put her to stud here," Miss Emily suggested. "I've already lined up some fine buck ready to knock her up. "You can have her covered at no charge if you give me an option on the first of her litter."

David glanced at me then reached into his coat pocket and pulled out a considerable wad of notes which he handed over to Miss Emily. "The sum we agreed on. If you will sign the Deeds and Sheriff Dearborn will witness them." He smiled at the sheriff. "I trust that you understand that neither of them might not be available for some time. I intend to get my money's worth from them.

The Sheriff sighed then straightened. "Damn, business before pleasure." He reached out and ran a hand down the side of my right inner thigh before grinning at me. "Mighty fine." Then he turned and started walking over to where Miss Emily was already signing official looking papers.

"Say Lassiter," I heard the sheriff say. "I have two wenches who sure could do with your particular skills. What say you we talk on the way back to town."

The branding master nodded as he joined him and it was left to Rose to release me. I could barely stand and I felt sure I would have fallen without her arms around me but I had to see. Looking down I could see that the circle of thorns perfectly circled the axe from my earlier brand while at the same time blotting out the hated 'E' and 'D'.

"I'm real sorry to see you go."

I looked up to see Miss Emily standing before me and despite the pain from my branding I took a step back from her. Behind her I could see the Sheriff and David signing and sealing documents, our slave papers I presumed but even now that she was no longer my owner Miss Emily still had the ability to frighten me.

"I had such plans for you," she murmured almost to herself as she reached out and stroked my hair and then the side of my neck before her hand cupped my left breast. "Still Mr Smith has shown he knows how to deal with trash like you. I thought for a time that he might try and take you back to Boston but I think he's a man after my own heart."

She chuckled as she glanced over at him. "Once he's tired of you I might even buy you back. I'll don't care for used meat but the bucks in the fields won't care."

I could endure no more, the pain between my legs and the feel of this woman's hands on my flesh finally pushed me over the edge. I felt my knees begin to fold and distantly Rose was calling out as sweet oblivion descended upon me.

There is little more to be said. When I woke I was far from Pussy Willow and was lying on a soft bed with clean sheets and a fine pillow beneath my head. Rose was leaning over me gently rubbing some cream over my freshly branded pussy. I hardly recognized her dressed as she was in a beautiful emerald green gown. Even her hair had been washed and hung about her neck in a wave of red curls.

I sat up with a start but Rose smiled reassuringly at me and then David was at my side promising that I was safe and that everything was well. I fell into his arms and began to cry both with relief at finally being free from Miss Emily and safe with my beloved David. I do not know how long I lay there sobbing into his chest as he whispered murmuring reassurance to me.

Finally I regained enough strength to leave my bed and what ever cream Rose used did its work. My brand was still sensitive to the touch but looked to be healing quite nicely and now that the pain was beginning to pass I found that I quite liked it. One could almost look at it was a wedding ring, but one lined with thorns to show the great trials I had undergone before I could be reunited with David.

He had spared no expense and a fine red dress was waiting for me. It felt strange to be clad in such finery and I confess that I found it tedious how long dressing property took for there were drawers, corset, chemise and dress all to be put on to say nothing of stockings and ankle boots. Peaches had been able to dress in the space of a few seconds. Walking freely without any leg irons was likewise strange for I had grown accustomed to measuring my stride to match the length of the chain.

When I was fit to travel we took the train back north and I enjoyed a joyous reunion with my family. They were ecstatic to see me delivered to them safe and relatively sound. My mother and sister wanted to hear everything that had happen to me in the smallest detail and I promised them that I would soon put pen to paper and give a full recounting of all my adventures. When she heard some of what had happened my mother pledged to redouble her efforts in the abolitionist cause for such a terrible institution could not be allowed to endure one day, or so she said.

As for my sister, she was as eager as my mother to hear what had transpired though her reaction was not quite what I expected. She looked horrified of course as well she might but I detected a certain gleam in her eye and a barely noticeable hunger in her voice that reminded me of my own interest in the peculiar institution. When she did not think I was listening I even happened to hear her remark that one day she intended to travel and have just as exciting an adventure as her big sister. She worries me at times, my dear bold beautiful sister.

David was received with great fanfare and I am happy to say that my father's attitude to him has changed remarkably. Perhaps it is because he went to such lengths to see me back home or perhaps it is the fortune he commands but were as before my father would tense at the mere hint of his name now he is most welcome in our house and when he sought my father's consent to take my hand in marriage I was overjoyed with he granted us his blessing and wished us both every happiness.

The wedding was a grand affair for all my friends and acquaintances came as well as all our abolitionism colleagues. Even Colonel Rand and Mrs. Rand made the journey. It was wicked of me but I took a certain pleasure from his discomfort at being surrounded by so many abolitionist. I thought he was going to have a convulsion when Mr. Douglas a Negro gentlemen of my acquaintance from New York sat down beside him.

I took no small measure of satisfaction when I sat to write a letter to Miss Emily Davis and told her of how Elizabeth Parker was to be married to David Sparrow who she knew at David Smith her fiancé who had rescued her from the clutches of evil bondage. I thanked her for her kind introduction to southern life, which was soon to be the subject of my new

book, which I felt certain, would greatly aid the movement to abolish slavery. There was a nice irony there I think, that a slave holder and her excesses would help contribute to the freeing of the slaves.

That night as I lay in bed fingering my brands I liked to imagine the rage that would have contorted that beautiful alabaster face as Miss Emily realized that her prize had been whisked away from under her nose and she had helped to further the cause which she hated so.

As for Irish Rose she took the name of Rose Willow and I cannot do justice to the joy on her face the day David gave her, her papers of manumission, all properly witnessed and registered. For the first in her life she was a free woman.

She almost upstaged me on my own wedding for she drew every eye as one of my bridesmaids and there was scarcely a single man of age there who did not want to speak to her and her dance card was full afterwards. I am pleased to say that Rose has taken to freedom as a fish to water. She does not lack for suitors and she has become quite the orator speaking out against slavery. Her meetings never fail to sell out and already she has accumulated quite a tidy sum which I gather she has invested most wisely.

Nor had I forgotten the slave who saved my life that day as I was forced to board the river boat in Natchez on the way south. Were it not for his quick wits and strong arm hauling me up from the river my adventure would have ended at the bottom of the Mississippi river. I have received a considerable advance for my book and a small part of this fund went to see Tom and Sarah Jones reunited as free husband and wife.

So David and I are married and now I am Mrs. Elizabeth Sparrow. My book has been finished and the early reviews are promising. I have changed the names of those involved to avoid any scandal attaching to my kin but in every other respect it is a true accounting of what transpired.

David and I are off now on our honeymoon and once again I leave Boston behind for we are to tour the country from the Atlantic all the way to the Pacific and after that David has hinted that we may visit the wilds of Africa thought I shivered at this for I have heard such dreadful tales of the barbary pirates and their practices.

It is a strange thing but in some ways I miss Peaches. I do not miss the back breaking laboring in the fields or the fact that my owner might decide to hang me for a misplaced look or on a whim and the lash, the dreadful lash of the overseer is not missed at all. Yet as Mrs Elizabeth I am required to act so prim and proper, for society expects certain standards and manors from those of my rank and class. As Peaches I was a lowly slave but free to act on my desires for carnal pleasure and certainly I could dress and undress a lot faster.

I have tried to put such feelings behind me and become the dutiful wife that David deserves. Certainly I have no desire to bring any scandal or discredit to his name. Yet

the longing remained, especially when our journey took us south to the slave holding states.

"I just realized something," David remarked to me one morning as we woke from our slumbers. Resting in his arms I was slow to stir but my curiosity forced me to ask.

"What is it dear?"

"I never filed Peaches manumission papers and we are south of the Maxon- Dixon line that means that you are...."

He did not need to finish his sentence for I knew exactly what he meant. In Boston and elsewhere in the North we were husband and wife but here in this state there was no Mrs. Elisabeth Sparrow, there was only Peaches the slave girl.

"What you doing dressed like a white woman?" he growled at me but with a twinkle in his eye that took the sting out of his words. "You getting uppity on me?"

I was fully awake on the instant and a second later I had scrambled out of the bed and flung off my fine silken nightdress so that I stood naked and exposed before David. As I had been taught I crossed my wrists behind my back to force out my breasts and stood with my legs well parted so that my private places were well exposed.

"Open that trunk," he ordered and when I obeyed I could hardly take hold of the smock for the shaking of my hands. It was my slave smock and resting atop it was a set of lockable leg irons, the sort that might be used to make sure a slave did not run off.

There were tears of joy in my eyes as I turned to face David holding my slave smock. I moved to slide the rough hemp smock on but he stopped me with a curt gesture and then he beckoned me back to him. From the drawer beside the bed he produced a band of dark metal and trembling I walked forward so that he could lock his collar around my throat.

At the feel of the metal there, snug against my throat I shivered and I could feel that Peaches may have been away for a time but she was still as hot blooded as ever. I traced the collar around my throat with one hand while my free hand slipped down to confirm if there was any doubt. Peaches was slave wet!

"I'll teach you not to be uppity girl," my massah told me as he took hold of my arm and pulled me down over his lap when he sat down on the bed. I let out a yelp at the surprise but I was soon squirming and writhing with lustful abandonment and I could feel his hardness tenting his night shirt. Then I felt his hand land firmly against my bare bottom.

"Up north its all well and good for you to carry out as Miss Elisabeth but down here you best remember your name is Peaches, and I've paid good money for you. I expect a return in my investment."

Listening to his words was hard as most of my attention was focused on the growing warmth of my bottom and the slave heat between my legs which was threatening to explode.

“Perhaps I should rent you out to the local whore house,” he suggested as he continued my spanking. “I’m sure the madam there could get you trained up real good on looking after a man’s needs but first things first. We got to get you properly registered so after you’ve had your spanking and you serviced your massah then you can put on your little smock and follow me to the Court office. You’ll have to strip off so the clerk can properly verify your brand and all your features but I know you slaves prefer to be butt naked anyway.”

“If there’s any doubt about you being slave stock, I might just order you to cream yourself in the courthouse with everyone looking on. “

On and on he went laying out one scenario after another but I was no longer listening as I had worked my fingers down under my body and between my legs. In no time at all I was bucking like a wild bronco in the full throws of a slave orgasm. Peaches was back with a vengeance and she finally had a master who knew exactly what she craved and what she needed and was happy to supply both. I am happy to report this was not her last slave orgasm that day let alone in the weeks and months ahead.

Some might even say that Peaches went out of her way to delay their progression through the south. Her threats of running away forced poor Master David to take her to every county seat in every state they passed through so that she could be properly inspected, made to show off her brands and then to perform before finally being registered as the property of Massah David. With all the detours and delays a journey that should have been weeks turned into months but there were no complaints.

As for the trip to Africa and the feared encounter with the Barbary Pirates, what my sister got up to when I was gone or how Miss Emily finally met her downfall, well those are stories for another day.

THE END?