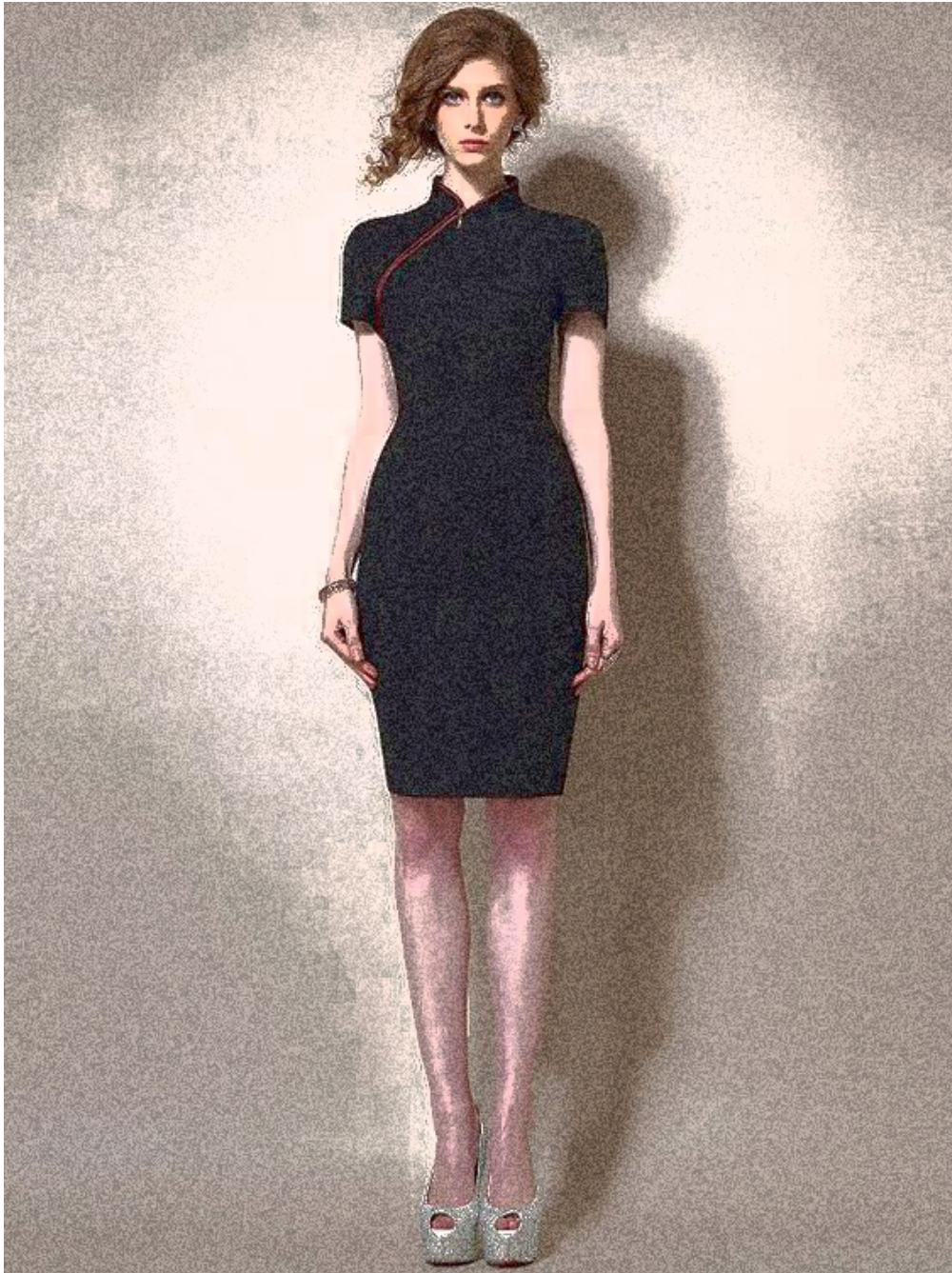


# The Quest For The Black Qipao



**By**

**Freddie Clegg**

**A New Order Story**

## Acknowledgements

I am often inspired by the artistic work of others. I am a particular fan of the femdom drawings by the artist, Nimrod. His vision of eastern dominatrixes is one that I am fond of. Many of the scenes in this story and, in particular, the characters of Madame Chao and Bernard (who also appeared in the story "A Well Trained Man") were inspired by his images. You can find his work at [www.studio-oridomain.com](http://www.studio-oridomain.com). It's recommended!

When creating a tale like this, the contribution of a first-rate editor cannot be over estimated. J Spe and his team of elves (as he calls them) did sterling service for much of the story correcting my misspelling, highlighting my inconsistencies and pointing out many potentially fatal plot flaws and opportunities for the reader to descend into a state of terminal muddle. Ill health prevented him completing his task and I wish him a speedy recovery.

I also thank wickids\_pet who stepped up to the task for the last third of the story and provided the same high quality assistance at very short notice so as to keep the publishing on-time.

The patience of all helpers, in the face of a drawn out (and some times meandering) creative process, has to be applauded. Any errors that remain are, of course, my own.

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## Introduction

The New Order party was elected to Government in the UK fourteen years ago. As a result of pro-female policies attracting women voters and political cynicism, indifference and divided loyalties among men, the New Order Government found itself installed with a majority that allowed it to put its radical manifesto policies into practice.

New Order governs ostensibly for the benefit of all but in practice with significant restrictions on men. Men and male values, as well as (what they see as) woolly minded ideas like consultation and openly allowing dissent, were seen as being the cause behind many of the previous government's failures. By establishing a society in which women have the governing hand and in which Government sees its role as to get things done, New Order has created a more stable society that is popular with all women and even with many men.

Re-elected again after two five year terms (having eventually completely disenfranchised males politically), New Order's approach to gender politics continues to dominate the political agenda – and the men. As time has passed, women have become used to their new found power and take for granted the position they now enjoy. Most men have come to accept their position in society and try to make the best of the situation they find themselves in. A few are not happy with their lot. Some try to live beyond the reach of the system. A very few are actively trying to subvert it.

This story is, in some ways, a sequel to "A Well Trained Man". In that story, Bernard Lewis thought he had a comfortable position working as a station cleaner for a railway company but his (relatively) comfortable position was disturbed when he was told to help out with an exhibition at the station. The events in this tale occur after that and Bernard reappears as a character but you don't really need to have read "Well Trained Man" to enjoy this story.

The characters are, of course, fictitious as is the Chinese art of domination that forms such an important part of the plot.

Other New Order stories from Freddie Clegg include:-

**New Order, New Opportunity**

**A Well Trained Man (the prequel to this tale)**

**A Night in The Gynarch Hotel**

**An Inspector Calls**

You can read Freddie's femdom stories at:

<https://freddiestales19.wordpress.com>

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## **Dramatis Personae**

### **Politicos & Their Hangers-On**

Florence Daniels: Minister for Home Affairs  
Daphne Takely: Foreign Office Minister  
Claire Dobel Bull: a fixer  
Jackie Maygood: an ambitious back bencher  
Lady Justice Catherine Stearns: a maintainer of order, a judge

### **Foreign Influences**

Madame Chao: head of UK operations for Sunrise Industries  
Tsai Linn: a Chinese girl of dominating ways  
Liu Wei: a similarly enthusiastic man tamer  
Mary Tang: an exemplar of Kòngzhì Rén  
Wan Yu: whose name means gentle jade but isn't.

### **Beneficiaries of the New Order Regime**

Phyllis Dangerfield : a New Order mother  
Fara Dangerfield : a teenage daughter who's never known anything else  
Corey Preston : a friend indeed & a lobbyist too  
Marianne Higgs : someone who hasn't really got behind the New Order programme.  
Collette Donaldson: a trainee that could use less cream cakes  
Anna Carson: another student dominatrix  
Daphne Steel: another trainee but of a sporty persuasion  
Valerie Haste: Detective Sergeant in the MCF  
Margery Dennis: a Police Constable  
Victoria Fleming: a broadcaster looking for historical perspective

### **Those Who Might Think New Order Doesn't Do All It Can For Them**

Harry: Phyllis's live-in sponsored male, her "house-boy"  
Barry Haste: once upon a time Valerie's husband, now a household appliance.  
Jim Wheeland: a boyfriend who's having an easy time of it.  
Bernard Lewis: a hapless railway worker, unlucky enough to attract attention from Sunrise  
Stephen Higgs: Marianne's husband. Yes, such things do exist.  
Gary Sumpter: an office dogsbody with unusual taste in clothes

## 1 Young Love

“Well, I don’t pretend to understand it.” Phyllis pushed away the plate that held the remnants of her pudding. It had been a good meal and she was always happy to entertain her friends. “It just seems like cheap sensationalism. Pointless and unnecessary!” As so often after dinner, the discussion with her friends Corey and Marianne had turned to the latest television programmes.

“You’re probably right about sensationalism but unnecessary? I’m not so sure.” Corey picked up her wine glass and took a thoughtful sip. Marianne said nothing.

“Well, how long has it been since New Order came in? Ten years? Twelve?” She pushed a newspaper, open at the TV programme reviews, towards Corey. “And the BBC thinks we need a series on ‘Man Taming’? Please!”

Marianne pulled a face with a look of distaste.

Corey reached for the paper. “It’s fourteen years. I remember exactly. They were first elected just after I left college. I can still remember what a thrill it was, how much of a relief that I didn’t have to put up with those gruesome boys trying to date me, or worse. After what I had to put up with some of the great unwashed student body, I was pretty pleased when New Order got in, I can tell you.”

“Well, of course. We all were. So, what makes the television think we need telling how to manage men now? I think most of us have worked it out. Don’t you, Harry?” Phyllis aimed a playful kick at the man curled up beside her feet under the table.

“Yes, M’m,” came the quiet reply from Harry, Phyllis’s houseboy. He knew what a privilege it was to be allowed to be where he was during the meal and he knew the consequences of disagreeing with the head of the household. Harry would be twenty-five on his next birthday. He’d never known anything but the way things were under New Order, really. He’d only been ten when they first came to power. Mind you, these days things were a lot easier than they used to be. He remembered how, when he was in his teens, it was almost impossible to get a sponsored placement and how hard it was to get any sort of work if you were a man. Now, though, with so many government work programmes open, it wasn’t so difficult to find something as long as you were prepared to toe the line.

If you did that, life wasn’t so bad. You could go where you wanted – well apart from the women-only areas, naturally and anywhere after curfew and, oh yes, anywhere outside the area designated on your Ident Card. The government housing programmes meant you had a roof over your head as long as you were on one of the approved programmes. You didn’t have to worry about somewhere to live. Healthcare was pretty good these days and so were unemployment benefits – as long as you could show it wasn’t your fault that you lost your job and you kept yourself available for placements. There were those that grumbled but, that said, the Government could only afford the benefits because the men were prepared to work for the minimum male wage. Harry didn’t care. He’d read about how previous governments had collapsed because they failed to balance their books and besides, he was all right. A placement like this – a comfortable, well to do household; fair treatment; good

accommodation – that needed to be clung on to. Sure you had to do as you were told and make sure you didn't upset your sponsor but, if you kept your nose clean, you were OK.

"We have, yes," Corey responded, ignoring the voice from under the table and thinking that she didn't really know if Marianne agreed. Corey wished Phyllis would leave her toys in the kitchen while they were eating. She found it distracting at best. None of her other friends let their houseboys into the room during meals unless they were waiting at table. The last one - what was his name? Corey couldn't remember - had tried to ingratiate himself by nuzzling at her feet, unbidden. It had been obvious that he knew he was about to be dismissed and was just looking to find another sponsor. Pathetic really, just a disturbance to a pleasant evening.

Corey went on. "But think what things must be like for someone that's, say, twenty years old. They never had to put up with what we did when we were young. They can't know what it was like before New Order came in. They'll know how to keep a man under control; they've seen it every day. But they won't know about taming one in the first place or the consequences of leaving them untamed."

"Can they really be that naive? I mean, why do they think all those laws were passed? All those changes made?"

"Maybe they just take it for granted. After all, they didn't have to fight for it the way we did. And they get some mixed messages these days, too."

"What? With what you hear about the Government camps for any male that doesn't have a sponsor?"

"Well, not from the Government, no, but just look at some of the things you read in the papers: how some of these footballer's wives carry on, for example. Letting their men go off training unsupervised, team-only parties, that sort of thing. You've seen the pictures in the tabloids. If a woman with one of the country's leading sportsmen on her leash lets a man behave like that, why shouldn't anyone?"

Finally, Marianne joined in. "I'm sorry, I know you think I'm very old-fashioned about this, but I can't say I like any of the ways that these things are going now. Are Stephen and I the only conventional married couple in the country? We haven't needed any of the bright ideas that New Order brought in. He's happy and I'm happy, too."

Corey shook her head. "I don't know how you do it." To herself, she thought that Marianne had really settled for less than she might have expected. Maybe equality was a very laudable goal but it must mean that Marianne was losing out.

"Well, without any help from the Government! Because Stephen isn't formally registered as sponsored he gets all sorts of trouble. I don't get a Sponsors grant and he still has to conform to all those foolish regulations. He's no danger to society, he's just my husband."

Phyllis shot a look at Corey to say, "Don't!" The last thing she needed was Corey trying to justify the Male Control Orders and she knew Corey would feel obliged to defend her friends in the Party.

Luckily their debate was interrupted by the sound of Phyllis's daughter, Fara, returning home.

"Hi, Mom – Ms Preston, err, Mrs Higgs." Fara stumbled over Marianne's unfamiliar title as she bounced into the room with all the energy of an eighteen year old and headed off towards the kitchen.

"What are you looking for dear?" Phyllis called after her. "Harry will get it for you."

"S'allright," Fara responded before she reappeared, clutching a can of drink. "I've got it."

"Where's Jim? I thought you were out with him tonight."

"He'll be along in a bit. There were a couple of his friends that he wanted to talk to."

Phyllis looked completely incredulous. "Fara! For heaven's sake! You can't just leave him wandering around on his own! What will happen if he gets the idea that he can just mooch around unsupervised? I wouldn't dream of letting Harry out like that without it being very clear when he has to be back. I can't believe they encourage you to do things like that at New Opportunity, do they?"

"No, Mum. I'm sorry." Fara enjoyed the New Opportunity meetings. New Opportunity had been set up by the government to promote New Order's ideals among the young and to encourage girls to build the socially supportive networks that it felt would strengthen the party in the future. The main benefit from Fara's viewpoint was that the meetings gave her the chance to get together with girls of her own age out of school to gossip and have fun. She had made some good friends through the meetings. To Fara, the only trouble was some of the political stuff. It seemed to her that the New Opportunity leaders sometimes seemed a bit old fashioned, the way they were so much driven by New Order party dogma. But, some of the stuff they came out with made sense, even if she and most of her friends pretended it was all a bit lame. There was a knock at the front door. "Look, that will be Jim now. Don't worry, I'll sort things out."

"Well, mind you do. He'll just get confused if you don't keep him well reined in."

Fara disappeared off to answer the door. From the hall, Phyllis and Corey could hear Jim's raised voice saying, "What?" and "Oww!" before there was the sound of the two of them disappearing upstairs.

Phyllis breathed a sigh of relief, happy that Fara was doing something to re-establish control. "All right," she said to Corey. "Maybe you do have a point after all. Though I'm still not sure if television is the way to solve it. Let's have some coffee." She dealt Harry a prod with her foot to push him out from under the table.

Corey Preston smiled as the almost naked man scuttled away. Marianne looked on with less than whole-hearted approval "Yes," Corey said, "let's." She was thinking about what her friend had said, though. Maybe it was something she should mention to her friends in the Party.

"Me, too," Marianne added. "I'm sure Stephen won't mind if I'm a little late back."

"Good, that's agreed," said Phyllis, all the while wondering at why on earth Marianne would continue with her relationship with Stephen in the face of all the challenges that the Party put in the way of them and the benefits she would enjoy by having him under a sponsorship programme or at least treating him like the man he was.



## 2 Harry The Houseboy

Harry's life as a Phyllis's houseboy had turned out to be better than the situation of many of his contemporaries. A sponsored male in New Order Britain wasn't under the sort of constant surveillance, harassment, and suspicion of subversion that un-sponsored males had to put up with. And besides, Phyllis had turned out to be a reasonable sponsor.

The dream at school had been to be picked out as some girl's life-partner but, realistically, that didn't happen to more than a handful of men. Harry knew that most women these days preferred to be able to pick and chose a man when and where they wanted. There wasn't any need to stick with one for longer than they met your needs. There were still some like Marianne Higgs and her strange "marriage" thing but, apart from pensioners and fringe religious believers, hardly anyone did that sort of thing now.

No, he'd been content enough when he finished education at sixteen to be taken into sponsorship by one of the service companies. Inevitably, that gave them a lot of control over his life but it meant the police and the rest of the State didn't worry about him, as long as he kept his nose clean.

Then, he'd been put on placement with Phyllis. Harry didn't know what had happened to her last houseboy but sometimes sponsors just got bored with their charges and moved them on.

Harry remembered his first introduction to her. He had been twenty years old, just over four years ago. He'd been called to a meeting in the office. He'd thought that, at least, would make for a quieter morning than usual. His supervisor had been there and so had Mrs Phyllis Dangerfield. His first thought was she'd come to complain about some of the work he'd been assigned to the day before. She was in her early forties, he guessed, smartly dressed in a rather conservative dark suit. Expensive hosiery and shoes, Harry noticed - he tended to spot things like that. She had long blond hair piled up on her head. Darker traces at the nape of her neck suggested to Harry that the blond wasn't natural. She looked at him without much expression and then flipped over some of the pages in the folder she had on her lap.

"Hmmm," she'd said to the supervisor, warily "he looks like he'll do. Assuming the usual 'return-if-unsatisfactory' arrangement applies."

His supervisor nodded. "Up to 3 months, yes. After that, well...." Harry understood. At twenty, he was thought to be more of a problem to manage. Most of the service company sponsorships were kids not long out of school.

"All right then," Phyllis had said, pushing the file into her bag as she got to her feet. "Come with me, boy." She had stopped and turned as she got to the door of the office, looking back at his supervisor. "Sorry," she said, "what was his name again?"

The supervisor looked down at her notes, failing to recall it herself. "Harry," she said.

"Fine," Phyllis had replied. "Harry."

Thinking back, Harry was almost surprised that she had asked. Phyllis rarely used it.

He thought about it afterwards. Should he have resented the impersonal way in which his reallocation had been dealt with? Maybe, but that was just how things were. And Phyllis had turned

out to be a better sponsor than the service company. After all, he only had to worry about how she liked things and making sure he did his work to her satisfaction. With the service company, it always seemed he had at least two people on his back: the company and its client.

Still, at the service company he had pretty much developed all the skills he needed as a houseboy. Cleaning and house maintenance, laundry, cooking, everything needed to keep the house going; he could manage all of that. Phyllis's house wasn't too big for him to manage on his own. The work load hadn't been too bad until Fara had come back from boarding school which meant all the mess of a teenage girl to clear up after. Even with Fara around he felt he was on top of his work.

The accommodation wasn't too bad. He had a room up at the top of the house under the roof. It tended to be hot in summer and cold in winter, but at least he got a bit of time to himself. He even had a television that Phyllis had set up. It only got the stations coded to his Ident Card - that was just the way of things - so it meant he didn't get to see much apart from the propaganda that the State thought suitable for males, but it was much better than many others had.

Naturally there was the inevitable matter of s-e-x. Phyllis enjoyed it and expected Harry to deliver when she felt the need, but she was less demanding than his supervisor and some of the other women at the service company had been. Of course, there was no question of prick-sex. Phyllis was way too conventional for that, Harry thought, but she was an enthusiastic bed partner as long as his tongue was in the right spot.

At least she hadn't thought about having him cock-caged. Plenty of men on sponsorship programmes had to put up with that. The argument was that men couldn't be trusted not to let their baser instincts run away with them. Harry thought it was pretty unfair. Women were free to dress as they pleased and men were expected not to respond, except perhaps with a look of chaste gratitude that a woman should deign to appear sexually alluring in their presence.

Some women made a science of it. New Order had sponsored plenty of sociological research on the sexual conditioning of the male to accept a subordinate position in society. The results had showed up in women's fashion, behaviour and lifestyle choices. Women took enthusiastically to their new freedoms and wanted to make sure they reinforced them. For women that enjoyed fetish fashion, or just showing off, the new social norms were a gift. And for manufacturers of leather and rubber clothing, bondage and other fetish items, it had had been a time of unparalleled demand.

Phyllis had read some of the research material - as a sociology major. she'd found it interesting - but she was pretty sure that it was all much simpler than the research made out. There were certain sexual triggers that affected men and by and large, they were simple souls, unable to think of other things if their dicks were stiff.

Take Harry, for instance. Phyllis had realised quite early on that he had a thing about women's shoes and feet. That was fine with Phyllis. She'd invested in a few pairs of fetish shoes and kept him on all fours for a few days following her around at home. He'd soon got the idea that that was where he belonged and he was happy to do as he was told in the hope of being allowed to curl up at her feet later. She suspected he was masturbating at the thought of it whenever he got a free moment but that suited her; it just reinforced his sexual response and made him all the more pliable. She'd thought about cock-caging him but, in the end, had decided against it. It was a lot of trouble and anyway, what did it matter? It seemed to Phyllis the best thing she could do was to let him reinforce the triggers and desires that kept him compliant.

### 3 Ministerial Efforts

Florence Daniels, Minister for Home Affairs in the New Order Government, had decided that she'd had enough for the week.

There had been long nights in the House, pushing the Government's legislative programme through, turning up to Committees on this or that manifesto commitment, trooping dutifully through the lobby for every vote, and sitting in Cabinet while the Prime Minister chivvied them all to make sure they were delivering on the party's commitment to go on being a government of women, for women.

On top of that she had needed to put in long days in her own Department, trying to stay one step ahead of those that thought she should never have had the job in the first place. And that was without the particularly full post bag of letters from her constituency raising issues of local concern. It was the same for any Cabinet Minister, she thought, but even so, by Friday evening, she felt it was time for a drink.

Florence felt the bars that clustered in the streets around the Houses of Parliament were far too close to work, with too many opportunities to bump into people she really didn't want to have to talk to. Her preferred watering hole – something she didn't share with any of her team – was across the river in Lambeth Palace Yard. Once the residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the red-brick, Tudor buildings had been converted long ago into a shopping mall and leisure precinct. There were restaurants and bars that offered a chance to relax. The other benefit of the location was that she could be back in the House or in her Marsham Street office quickly enough if she needed to be.

She walked through the entrance to the complex. The signs on either side, a male symbol, inverted in a red ring with a red diagonal bar through it, was universally recognized now. "No Males" it said. Florence couldn't remember when it had first appeared. It wasn't something the Government had introduced, she thought, just something that had sprung up. Now it was quite common.

Of course, there were men in the complex, waiting at tables, serving in the bars, things like that, but they came in through a rear entrance for the staff and they all had a reason to be here. Florence looked around. She couldn't see a single one apart from those that were obviously waiting at table.

Mondo Bondo was in part of the main building. Florence liked it because it was the complete antithesis of anything the party apparat-chicks (as she called the Prime Minister's young, go-getting, conformity chasers) approved of. It was noisy, it was dark, and it was sleazy. Florence hadn't been entirely surprised, when New Order came to power, how quickly women had taken on many of the characteristics traditionally associated with the male. Alcohol-fuelled women displaying rowdy behaviour, echoing the scene in the nineteen nineties – "ladettes," they'd called them then – had become commonplace in recent years. It wasn't uncommon for women to openly display sexual interest in men and the odd bit of kinkiness was neither illegal or particularly remarked on.

Mondo Bondo catered for those that liked to see their men in chains. While Florence told herself she went because of the music and the atmosphere, the amusement from being served by shackled and ball gagged waiters naked from the waist up appealed to a part of her that she knew stretched back to her adolescence.

"2010 Retro Disco" the poster's outside had announced and sure enough the speakers inside were blaring out Kesha's *We R Who We R*, practically pinning the bar's customers to the walls with the volume.

Florence found a table. A waiter approached. "Vodka tonic, straight up," Florence announced. The waiter nodded and disappeared in search of her drink. Florence watched him go, following the roll of his buttocks as he walked back to the bar, his steps impeded by the chain between his ankles. As he stepped behind the bar, Florence caught sight of someone she knew sitting on a stool. The slim young woman with short, dark, spiky hair lifted her drink in recognition and came across to greet her.

"Hello, Florence. I thought I'd find you here."

"And I thought I'd get some peace."

"Is that any way to greet someone that wants to do you a favour?"

"Corey Preston, I've lost count of the number of favours you've tried to do me that have somehow ended up being to your benefit.

Corey smiled and sat down.

"Join me, why don't you?" Florence reacted acidly.

"That's no way to greet an old friend. Especially one that has an idea that might be of benefit to you."

"You're still lobbying, then?" The constant parade of people trying to get you to steer government policy for their benefit was one of the down sides of being in the Government, Florence knew.

"Yes, and I'll declare my interest straight away. I've been asked to look at helping the Chinese Trade Delegation with some of the practical issues of their trading relationships with the UK. Nothing related to public policy, of course."

"Do we have to do this now?" Florence looked up at the clock. She had time and just occasionally Corey's ideas were of use.

Corey shrugged. "Not if you don't want to. I can always try to see you in the office."

Florence shook her head. If this was a waste of time, she'd be better off kicking it into the long grass here and now. The music changed. Katy Perry's *Teenage Dream* churned out. Florence wondered if a 2010 retro disco was actually a very good choice after all. "All right, tell me what you're thinking," she said.

"The Foreign Office is all over the Sunrise relationship. You know that, don't you?"

Florence nodded. Daphne Takely had been looking smug at yesterday's cabinet, basking in the approval of the Prime Minister for the work her department had been doing "cementing relationships with our Eastern allies."

"I thought of a way that Home Affairs might benefit from it."

Florence wasn't sure if she was interested or not.

"Look, hear me out; if you don't think there's anything there for you, I'll go away. But, .... You'll know how keen the PM is on making sure there's no danger of things slipping back to how it was before New Order was elected."

Florence nodded. There was no doubt about that. Johannsen spent half of every Cabinet probing departmental plans and legislative suggestions, making sure there was no risk of things being turned back to a time when men could vote, make decisions, borrow money, or any other of the foolishness that used to be allowed. And, if there was one thing Florence had learned, ideas that cemented Johannsen's view of how the world should be were a sure recipe for political advancement. Maybe this was interesting after all. She gestured to one of the manacled waiters and ordered another drink for herself and for Corey. If there was one thing she was careful of, it was to never be on the wrong end of the hospitality game – that way lay all sorts of accusations from outside and inside the Cabinet.

“Well, have you thought about young people and how they are taking forward the New Order ideal?”

“Sure. I mean that was why we set up New Opportunity. They carry the torch for the next generation. We’re starting to see more and more party members come up that way.”

“Party members, yes, but you know that’s not the whole story. What about the others, the youngsters that aren’t really interested in the politics? Suppose they feel New Opportunity is just a bit old fashioned? Dealing with yesterday’s problems? If the youngsters aren’t engaged in the New Order programme and don’t develop the skills they need to deal with men when they start work or relationships, where is New Order going to be then?”

“I see what you mean,” Florence said slowly, thinking about what Corey was saying. Actually, it chimed with some of her own concerns. Some of the problems they had in public order were definitely because of young women’s problems with managing males.

The drinks arrived, the waiter placing them carefully on Corey and Florence’s table. He stood waiting for a moment. All the waiters hoped a customer might notice them and leave a tip or, better still, ask for the key to the locked ball gag. Polite conversation was all that was permitted in the club rules but it wasn’t unknown for guests and staff to end up in places and situations that were both frowned on by society and proscribed by law. Florence waved him away but noticed Corey’s gaze following the man’s buttocks as he left them.

Corey’s attention returned to her task. “So, if I could point you at a Sunrise programme that would help girls to acquire better man management skills, I imagine that might be relevant? Or, maybe, it’s more suitable for the Department for Education & Skills? I suppose it would be on their patch really, do you think?”

Florence was interested at once. The political sense that had got her to her ministerial chair told her that this was worth exploring. She certainly wasn’t going to let Education & Skills get their hands on this. “No, I don’t think so. I’ll look at it. Edu & Skills haven’t done anything about the problem yet, so I think we can assume that they’re not likely to; can’t we? Besides, the outcomes definitely affect Home Affairs. I imagine this programme will help with improving social cohesion, reduce male antisocial behaviour, and offending rates?”

“Of course, Minister,” Corey responded, recognising the politically correct terminology.

“Silly question, I know, but I don’t suppose you could set up a meeting to explore this Sunrise idea, could you?”

“I think I could,” Corey responded, feeling that her objective for her trip to Mondo Bondo had been achieved.

## 4 Married Bliss

His bus from work had been delayed, but Stephen Higgs thought he would just manage to get back home before the time for the male curfew. Being out after curfew had two perils. Getting stopped by the police would end up with a night in gaol and a fine or worse if they decided they wanted some "amusement" before letting due process take its course. Getting stopped by a bunch of women who weren't affected by the curfew would be just as bad.

That was something every man had to worry about.

Stephen had other problems, though. The trouble was, because of his relationship with his wife, he also had to put up with barracking by men that knew him. That was the problem: the fact that he had a relationship with his wife. The fact that he had this anachronistic thing called a "wife." They thought he was in some way betraying his sex by not being subject to the same privations as the rest of them. He thought it was pretty unfair. It wasn't his fault that his wife held the views she did.

As he turned into his road, one of his neighbours was standing beside a car waiting to open the door for his sponsor so she could head into town. He had a bored look on his face. From what Stephen knew of him and his sponsor, the man would be busy all evening while his wife was having fun. "Off to your cosy nest, cuckoo?" the man had hissed as Stephen walked by. Stephen didn't stop. He knew there was no point in getting into an argument. He wasn't even sure he understood the allusion. "Least you'll be getting some prick-sex." Nothing could be further from the truth, Stephen thought, glumly. Marianne might support traditional marriage, but it was more of the "Not tonight, dear, I've got a headache" kind of tradition that she favoured when it came to sex. Marianne was deeply conventional – she certainly wouldn't indulge in anything that was as socially proscribed as prick-sex was, even with her enthusiasm for traditional marriage.

Ten yards along the street, Stephen saw Fara Dangerfield just outside her front door, calling back to her mother. "I'm just going to get a coffee with some of the girls from New Opportunity. It'll be past curfew by the time I get down town, so you needn't worry. See you later."

Stephen stepped off the path into the road to let her pass. Fara looked at him as some sort of curious oddity. He knew his wife had to put up with a lot of comments from Phyllis and her friends because of the way she chose to live her life. They were too polite to use any of the popular terms of abuse for a woman with a regular husband. Even so he guessed that Fara would be aware of his circumstances. He wouldn't be surprised if she and her friends in New Opportunity had a good laugh at his expense. "Can you imagine? Married? Yeukk!" he thought of her saying.

"Good evening, Mister Higgs," she said as she drew level with him.

Was the "Mister" sarcastic? Stephen wasn't sure, but he just nodded in acknowledgement as she went by. He was careful not to do anything more. He knew he needn't reply. The last thing he wanted was to be thought to be reacting to an eighteen-year-old girl in a short kilt and a tight white sweater showing off her titties, least of all by the girl herself. Fara carried on down the street without giving him another glance.

Stephen reached his home.

"I'm back," he called to his wife as he opened the front door.

"Just in time, too!" Marianne responded. "There's only ten minutes to go to curfew."

"I know. Still, it's quiet out. You don't often see patrols down here. Let me just check my Ident in and then we can have some dinner." The Ident thing was an irritation. It wasn't just that you couldn't be out after curfew, you were supposed to be in an "approved, personally designated, location". You slipped your card into a reader, usually connected to a television set, wherever you were. Maybe the Government checked, maybe it didn't. Certainly, sometimes there were location prosecutions so Stephen thought they must check, but how often? Who knew?

The screen remained blank except for a spinning hourglass. Stephen bit his lip, anxious that his card should be recognised and registered.

"Confirmed," the message on the Higg's television finally said. That was a relief, at least. There were times when either the reader didn't seem to work or the system at the other end seemed to be malfunctioning. He supposed it must get heavily used just before curfew

"I felt like cooking. There's a stew in the oven."

"Great." Stephen knew how unusual this was. In any other household, he'd be coming home to fix dinner and clean the house, but his wife's pre-New Order upbringing meant they had quite an equal relationship. At least, inside the house.

"How was work?"

"OK. We've got a new supervisor. Fresh out of New Opportunity, a bit gung-ho but she seems all right so far, I guess." Stephen's job collating sponsorship statistics for the Home Office was dull, uneventful, and paid at the minimum male rate but at least Stephen could console himself with the fact that it was so unimportant that it didn't attract ambitious managers or outside attention. He remembered complaining once about the Head of Section to a co-worker. "She's useless; they should post her to an unimportant corner of Government where she can't do any damage."

"Yes," his colleague had responded. "But can't you see, that's exactly what they have done."

Marianne had laid the table and the two of them shared their meal. In one corner of the room, a radio played quietly. The intricate chords of a Chopin piano piece provided the background to their talk. "I had coffee with Phyllis," Marianne said.

"Uh huh."

"She's still worried about Fara."

"Worried?"

"You remember, I told you. Boyfriend problems. Phyllis doesn't like how she treats Jim. I tried to tell her that maybe they need to just – well – be friends, but she was having none of it."

"Yes, there's a lot of pressure on girls to conform. You can't blame Phyllis for being worried, though. That's just the way the country is these days. She just wants the girl to fit in."

"Well, she seems so young to be being encouraged into this whole girls-on-top view of the world. I know they have to do gender politics even down at primary school level these days, but is encouraging her to bully Jim a good idea?"

"I can't see that you're going to convince Phyllis that she should try to get Fara interested in sexual-equality, even if she thought it was a good idea herself."

"No, I guess not. Heaven knows I'm no evangelist for that, but I just think we have a better way of living."

Stephen nodded. He was certain his wife was right, but it didn't matter. That wasn't the course that the country had set itself on. They had to live in the place as it was, not as they might like it to be. Maybe Fara would be one of a generation that would overturn the current way the country was being run. He allowed himself a moment's fantasy of an energetic bout of prick-sex with Fara before shaking his head and thinking that it really wasn't a sensible thing to be spending time on. "I saw Fara as I was coming in. Heading off without a care in the world. I'm sure Phyllis hasn't anything to worry about. These things have a way of working out."

"You're probably right."

Stephen smiled. He wondered how many men would have the woman in their life say that to them tonight.



## 5 Managerial Attention

A confrontation was taking place in an office overlooking the platforms at Euston Station.

“Do you have the slightest idea how much trouble you have caused, Lewis?” Bernard Lewis stood in his supervisor’s office, looking sheepish as she harangued him. She was sitting behind her desk, waving a wad of papers at him. “Confusion over the Sunrise demonstrations, unauthorized absence, broken curfew, two police officers to bring you back, absence from your lodgings. Do you want me to go on?”

“No, Ma’am,” Bernard responded as respectfully as he could. She had evidently had a stressful day. It was clear that she would need little excuse to take out her frustrations on Bernard.

His supervisor was a bulky woman. The weather had been hot and Bernard couldn’t avoid noticing the sweat stains spreading out under the armpits of her blouse. A half-eaten pork pie sat on a plate on her desk. Knowing her enthusiasm for food, Bernard guessed that its unfinished state was the most eloquent evidence possible of a day disturbed by events and activities not of her choosing. The way that her ankles seemed to swell over the edge of her shoes, as if only the strength of her stockings prevented the ankles bursting out to twice their size, told of a day in which she had failed to even sit down for long. She hadn’t even managed to find time to take advantage of one of the station staff to take on the role of her footstool.

The stifling atmosphere in the room was hardly alleviated by the sulky creaking of a fan, moving slowly, over-head. Across his supervisor’s shoulder, Bernard could look down at the station with the first of the evening’s commuter trains starting to leave. The women would be all right in their air-conditioned carriages, Bernard thought, but the men having to travel in coaches that were little more than cattle trucks would be finding the conditions oppressive. Bernard was starting to wonder if he would end up having to look for a job that meant he would be travelling like that.

“Good. Well, it seems that in spite of all the problems, we are not going to sack you.”

Bernard’s relief was immediate. Losing his job right now would be a disaster, he thought. There were few sponsorships available for someone of his age and the life of an un-sponsored male was an even more depressing prospect than being in service as he was.

“No, we’re not going to sack you, but we are going to transfer you. It seems you made some sort of impression on Madame Chao. She’s asked for you to be assigned to one of the Sunrise projects. Quite frankly, I can’t see any reason to keep you here, can you?”

In spite of the fact that he was very disturbed by the idea, Bernard could not think of any reasons that his supervisor was likely to think relevant.

There was a knock at the door. Ordered to enter, another male came in carrying a tray with a single mug of tea and a plate piled high with biscuits. The newcomer gave Bernard a sympathetic look as he put the tray down but said nothing. He obviously knew what was going on. Bernard’s supervisor waved him away and then fell on the plate of biscuits with the enthusiasm of a vulture on a newly dead corpse.

Bernard stood, waiting to be dismissed.

"The only trouble is," Bernard's supervisor got to her feet, biscuit crumbs spilling from her lips. She closed in on him., "I had high hopes for you. I thought we might get on so well. That you might move up from working on the platform to being more helpful around the office." As she spoke, she gripped Bernard by the scruff of his neck and dragged him forward, pulling his face into the strained cotton stretched across her gorge-like cleavage.

Bernard struggled to breathe as his head was clamped between his supervisor's substantial breasts. The woman, appreciating the sensation of his head clamped against her, grunted pleasurably, spraying biscuit crumbs across the back of his neck.

"But we can still have a little fun before you go, I think." Bernard was surprised by the way in which in spite of her bulk she seemed able to move so easily, swinging him from his cleavage suffocation to being clamped under her arm, the smell of her sweat-drenched armpit full in his nostrils, as she wrestled him down to the floor. "Or, don't you want to play?"

He had no opportunity to object. With Bernard forced down on his back, his supervisor slid her ample buttocks, barely contained by her seat-polished, seam-stretched skirt, down on his face. She gave a contented sigh. Whether this was because of the pleasurable sensation of a man's face pressed beneath her, or because of the satisfaction derived from another male conquest, or simply from the relief of taking the weight from her swollen ankles, Bernard couldn't have said, even if his mouth hadn't been clamped shut by the woman's weight on his face.

Bernard had almost asphyxiated by the time he heard words that he would never have imagined would represent deliverance. "You have round-eye ready? Madame Chao insist that he come now!"

Oxygen rushed into his lungs as his face was freed; his supervisor's arse moved off him with the inevitable slowness of the end of an eclipse. He gasped to recover his breath and then looked around to see Tsai Linn, smart in her Sunrise uniform, smiling down at him.

"Pink-face round-eye, you close your mouth and come with me," she ordered.

Bernard certainly didn't feel able to object. Quite the reverse, he was grateful to escape from the attentions of his supervisor.

Parked at the front of the station was an ornately decorated rickshaw. They weren't common in London but the Chinese Trade Delegation used them as a matter of course. Tsai Linn pointed to it as she and Bernard emerged from the booking hall. "Madam Chao's!"

Another male stood holding the shafts of the rickshaw. The man was clad in a leather suit that strapped his arms to his sides, was wearing a leather hood with blinkers that meant he could only see directly ahead of himself, and was silenced by a thick rubber bar locked across his mouth as a bit; clearly, he had been left waiting.

"You get in!" Tsai Linn ordered Bernard, pulling open the door of the rickshaw. Inside, Madam Chao was dressed exactly as she had been when Bernard had first encountered her: pencil skirt, v-necked sweater, and broad, studded leather belt. Her black leather skirt contrasted with the bright red leather of the rickshaw's seat, her leather jacket stark against the stuffed satin of the seat back.

Madam Chao barely looked at Bernard as Tsai Linn pushed him inside to crouch at Madam Chao's feet. "Fix up mule," Madam Chao said to Tsai Linn. "Minister and I go back to Gerard Street." For Bernard, the only acknowledgement of his presence was a dig in the ribs from a spiked heel as Madam Chao reminded him to keep still.

“Sorry to keep you waiting. Good of you to give me a lift. I've no idea what's happened to my car.” Bernard recognised the voice of Daphne Takely, the Foreign Office Minister for the New Order Government. She had introduced the Demonstration Programme at the station when he had first got caught up with the Sunrise crew. As she climbed in to the rickshaw, her own heels dug into Bernard's side.

“We have time, Minister,” Madame Chao responded. “No difficulty. Not far and rickshaw is rapid transit in city like this. I have to go to office but then you take rickshaw to Westminster.” Tsai Linn had finished strapping the rickshaw's slave-mule in place between the shafts. “Mule!” Madam Chao barked. “Gerard Street. Move fast!” The slave-mule, encouraged by a crack on the back of his legs from Tsai Linn's bamboo cane, set off, leaving her standing by the side of the road. Bernard, subdued under the feet of the two women, curled up on the rickshaw's floor and kept still and quiet as the rickshaw was pulled through the streets.

Although the rickshaw rattled as it progressed over the streets, he could still hear the conversation between Madam Chao and the Minister.

“While we are on our journey, Minister, I wanted you to have this.” Madame Chao spoke quietly as the rickshaw headed towards Soho. “Just a small token of appreciation for all you have done in helping to get Sunrise established here in UK. The quick granting of multiple-sponsorship licenses was a great help. I realise foreign companies may not always get such good treatment.”

“Madam Chao, really,” Daphne's voice chided. “You know I cannot accept gifts; it would be most inappropriate. It could even be thought of as bribery. Oh, such a lovely object.”

“Please – no insult is implied. This is of sentimental value to me. You see what it is.”

Bernard could see nothing from his position except the dusty floorboards of the rickshaw as it was pulled through the streets. The rickshaw came to a halt as the man pulling it seemed uncertain of the best route to take. “Down Bond Street, fool,” Bernard heard Madam Chao snap to the mule and the rickshaw set off again.

“It's beautifully carved. Some hardwood. Ebony?”

“Yes, from late Qing Dynasty, belonged to Empress Dowager Cixi. They say she used it as personal amusement.”

“Oh, good heavens. I have just realised what it is! It's a dildo. It's carved in the shape of a male member and the top is the head of a male slave. It must be a valuable antique. Madam Chao, it would be very difficult for me to accept this. Perhaps you do not know, but the New Order Government looks down on anything that promotes penetrative sex. It would be very difficult for me to accept this,” she repeated, turning the smooth wooden object over carefully in her hands. “But it is a delightful object.”

Daphne's wistful tone told Bernard that, somehow, she might be persuaded to accept the gift.

“I understand,” Madame Chao responded, “but, please, it would upset me for you to refuse and so much has been done to set good relations between your country and mine. Let this be a personal gift. Its value is of no matter.”

“A personal gift? Well then, I accept.”

“Here, this silk bag is to keep it in. The embroidery is even earlier, possibly Yongzheng.”

“Extraordinary. What does it say?”

“These characters here? Ah yes! ‘I am still – I am silent – I am hard.’ Useful attributes for any slave, ha!” Madam Chao gave Bernard a playful kick as Daphne giggled girlishly in response.

The rickshaw bounced heavily over a curbstone and came to a halt. “Ah!” Madam Chao exclaimed. “We arrive! 我们 - my office . Put your gift in your bag, I will not have it back. Now you can take rickshaw on to Westminster. Rickshaw slave need more practice.”

Bernard didn’t know what he was more disgusted by; the fact that the minister could be bribed so easily or the fact that she was prepared to be bribed while he was crouched, listening, at her feet. It just went to show, Bernard thought, how unimportant men are politically these days.

“It’s a fine day. I’ll walk from here. It’s not far,” Daphne said. And besides, she thought, maybe it’s best not to be seen arriving at the House in a rickshaw emblazoned with the Sunrise logo.

His side was spiked again by their heels as the two women climbed out of the rickshaw. Madam Chao and Daphne Takely stood chatting on the pavement for some time before shaking hands. Daphne gestured across Chinatown towards Westminster where her offices were. “Give my regards to Florence Daniels when you see her. She will be very keen on the programme you have planned.”

Madam Chao smiled as Daphne left her. Perhaps, she thought, she should have mentioned that Florence Daniels had already agreed to support the Junior Mistress programme. On the other hand, Daphne’s department would be briefing her about it, she was sure.

Bernard recognized the name of Florence Daniels. She was the New Order Minister for Home Affairs. She was responsible for things like policing, the administration of the male curfew, and the prison and detention service. He wondered what she had to do with the Sunrise business.

He didn’t have long to think, though. “No time to lay there! You get up, round-eye!” Bernard’s thoughts were interrupted by another voice that he recognised. He looked up. Liu Wei, one of the other Sunrise girls, smart in her yellow and blue uniform, was staring down at him with a look of disapproval.

## 6 Chinatown

As Bernard was half-dragged from the rickshaw by Liu Wei, he found himself on the pavement outside a brightly painted shop front which declared itself "The Sunrise Tea Parlour." Smartly dressed business women hurried in from the street and out again clutching paper cups of their preferred infusion as they set off for their work. None took the slightest notice of Bernard as he was hustled towards a side door.

Behind the door, a flight of stairs led up to a corridor and then on to a small room with eight wire cages ranged in two rows, one above the other against one wall. "New accommodation, round-eye. Better than railway carriage, ha!" Liu Wei laughed as she showed Bernard one of the small cages on the lower row. "Work first, rest later! Clothes off!" she ordered.

Bernard thought about objecting but soon realized there was little alternative. What would he do? Overpowering the dumpy Chinese girl was a physical possibility, he supposed, but then he would have to get out of the building and then where would he go? He really couldn't imagine. There was no alternative. He would just have to do what he was told.

Liu Wei stood arms folded, watching as he undressed. She looked bored. Bernard didn't blame her: he was no Adonis. Even with all the physical effort of his work at the station and the limited food rations, he still managed to carry a bit more fat around his waist than he would have liked, and he knew that the way his belly spread out made his prick look even smaller than it really was.

Liu Wei was unimpressed but still seemed to be appraising him physically. Maybe, Bernard thought for a moment, she fancies me a bit and she'll make things go easier here. His hopes didn't last long. "So! You are size we call Extra-Large. Here," she pointed to a cupboard on the wall, "fetch out things and dress."

Bernard opened the cupboard to be confronted with an array of female clothing. It was hardly a shock; there were plenty of placements where men were expected to dress as women. There were always good excuses given for it, but Bernard knew it was just another way of letting men know who was in charge. It wasn't a surprise, but he hated being made to dress that way.

"Start with corset and bra," Liu Wei ordered. "Need you to have something like woman shape."

Bernard followed Liu Wei's instructions, dressing first in the girdle, feeling its boned form pressing his waist in, and then pulling on seamed black stockings sheer enough to show the hairs of his legs through them. Liu Wei grimaced at the sight. "Panties now. Then bra! Cups go in front, stupid," Liu Wei snapped as he fumbled with the garments. "Find padding in closet, make big tits shape, understand?"

Bernard nodded, humiliated by the process he was going through, and did as he was told.

"Now, qipao."

Bernard was puzzled. He'd expected to be put into a maid's uniform. He'd seen a lot of that: men forced to wait on women, while being dressed as maids. There were plenty of restaurants where men were dressed as waitresses. There seemed to be plenty of women that liked seeing men humiliated in that way, although he found it a bit of a contradiction. If women were so superior, how was it a humiliation to be forced to look like one?

This was different, though. Why was he being asked to put on the traditional Chinese dress with its high collar, short sleeves, and slit skirt? Of course, he didn't argue but took the dress from its hangar. It was heavy, made in the usual style but of thick leather and styled so that, when the toggle fasteners at the neck were closed, it fitted tightly across his artificial breasts, his belly and hips. It was only where the skirt was slit to one side that he had any freedom of movement. That didn't last long. Liu Wei gave him a pair of hobble straps to fasten around his legs just above his knees. She then had him put on a pair of plain black high heeled shoes before standing back and contemplating the results of her efforts. Finally, she fastened Bernard's hands behind his back with a pair of leather cuffs. Bernard was still no wiser as to the purpose of the cross-dressing, but most of his attention was focussed on trying to avoid falling as he teetered precariously on the unfamiliar footwear.

"You play part of implacable, oriental dominatrix, la!" she exclaimed, puzzling Bernard even more. "Here, you try your acting skills!" She reached behind her for a large box and pulled out what looked at first to be a rubber hood. Bernard suddenly recognized that it was, in fact, a face mask, fashioned with the features of Madame Chao. Liu Wei fitted the mask over Bernard's head, the thick, moulded latex curiously stiff against his own features beneath. Two small pinholes allowed him a little vision but as Liu Wei tightened the straps designed to hold the mask in place, Bernard realized that moulded into it were a series of steel bands that kept his face quite rigid and certainly wouldn't allow him to move his mouth to speak.

"Next thing," Liu Wei announced, pulling from the box a black wig in the bouffant style that Madame Chao always seemed to wear. "Ha! No one mistake you for Madame Chao, but will do for what we need."

Behind the latex mask, Bernard's sense of confusion was complete. Whatever the point of the exercise was, the result was that he felt ridiculous; clad in woman's clothing, masked, silenced, hobbled and cuffed.

"Now, we need to make sure you stand properly." Bernard wasn't sure what this meant. The stiffness of the leather qipao, coupled with the boning of his girdle, meant that he had precious little freedom of movement at all. Liu Wei meant to restrict it still further, however. In one corner of the room was a metal pole with various clips and straps attached. Stepping behind Bernard, she slid it between his cuffed wrists and his back, fastening it first to the links of his wrist cuffs and then to a ring at the back of his mask. Sliding the bottom of the pole out like a telescope, she added ankle cuffs linked to the pole and finally finished things off by cuffing Bernard's elbows close together and fixing the links from that to the pole, too. Now Bernard could do nothing but stand stiffly, his head tilted slightly back in just the same arrogant pose that Madam Chao used to peer down her nose at lowly slaves.

"La! Now come with me." Liu Wei smirked at Bernard as he started to shuffle towards her. It was almost impossible, Bernard felt; hard enough to walk in heels, harder still with his ankles and thighs cuffed, and that was without the fact that he couldn't bend his body at all to get his balance. Liu Wei led the way and Bernard followed, terrified that at any moment he would miss his footing and fall. She showed the way down the corridor and into another room where, to Bernard's astonishment, six naked, chained and ball gagged slaves knelt, waiting under the watchful eyes of Tsai Linn.

"Ha! Here she comes. Your goddess and mistress, Madame Chao. All Madame's slaves must learn to kow-tow to her, but she too busy to spend time with you. You practice all kow-tow with this Madame Chao." Tsai Linn paused for a moment to allow the kneeling slaves to take her instruction in. Seeing that they all had failed to start bowing their heads and grovelling before Bernard's imitation of

Madame Chao, she reached for her cane and laid about each of them in turn. Bernard, for his part, could only stand and watch with some sympathy as the six were beaten until they were forced to pay their respects to his bound and helpless form in the approved manner. He even suffered a few blows himself when he almost overbalanced at one point.

Liu Wei smiled at the scene. "Excellent idea, Tsai Linn," she said approvingly, "now slaves will all perform better when we come to real training sessions. All much easier!"

What on earth are the "real training sessions," Bernard asked himself as he tried to keep his balance standing still on his high heels as, in turn, each of the other slaves came forward to bow and touch their foreheads to the floor just in front of the toes of his shoes. This seemed real enough to him.

"No! Too close!" snapped Tsai Linn at one, cracking the cane down across his back. "No, too far forward. Keep head square, not place face to one side, stupid round eye.. No one want to see your face; get it in dirt for your Mistress!"

The whole process went on for an hour or more until the backs of the six slaves were all criss-crossed with the bright red welts from the cane. Bernard, stiff and exhausted, felt himself close to collapse but, finally, Tsai Linn announced that the session was at an end. "Back to cages!" she called and the six scurried off obediently. "If you not in place when I get there, you'll sleep in the yard!" Then, turning to her partner, Liu Wei, she said, "And let's get our pretend Madame Chao here back to his cage, too. I hope the others aren't too hard on him."

## 7 Opportunity With New Opportunity

"Fara! We need to talk." Phyllis Dangerfield called to her daughter.

"What is it, mom? I was just getting some things together for the New Opportunity meeting tonight. They're collecting old magazines for a fund-raiser."

"Well, what would they say about this?" Phyllis was holding up an empty bottle of vodka. "This was full last week, Fara. You know I don't mind you having a drink. You're eighteen, after all. But a whole bottle? In a week?"

"But I didn't, mom. I wouldn't take it without asking. I don't even like it that much. I can't ... oh!"

"What is it?"

"I've just thought. Last night, I thought Jim and some of his friends had been drinking. I wondered where they'd got it from. He must have taken it when he was over here last. I'm sorry."

Phyllis was inclined to believe her daughter. She knew she was usually truthful and she remembered seeing Jim, the last time he was over, slipping furtively out of the lounge where the drinks cabinet was. Even so, it was still her daughter's responsibility. "Fara, it's really not good enough. If you're going to have Jim or other boyfriends round here, then you've got to be able to keep them in order.

"Don't worry, I'll see he doesn't do it again." Fara sounded determined.

Phyllis wasn't completely convinced that she was going to be able to solve the problem but was keen to give her daughter every possible encouragement. "I'm sure you will," she said, "but you've got to let Jim know who's boss. He'll be looking to find a sponsor soon and if he isn't used to being kept in place it will hardly be fair to him, will it? Why don't you have a word with the New Opportunity people? Maybe they've got some ideas or a course you could go on or something?"

Fara's face took on an unconvinced expression. "Maybe. I'll see what they have to say."

"Fara," Phyllis went on. She could tell by the way her daughter looked that she wasn't happy with the idea. "What's the problem with that?"

"Oh, you know how it is with New Opportunity. It's a Government thing; none of the girls think New Order is cool. And all the leaders, they're all so – well, dykey."

"Fara!" It wasn't so much that Phyllis disagreed with her daughter, but it just wasn't the sort of thing you said about Party organisations. "And what if they are? It's a lot safer than messing around with boys if you can't control them."

Fara shook her head. "I know, mum. I quite like being with the girls anyway but the New Opportunity people don't really seem to know how to deal with the Jims of this world any more than I do. There's no real system or method; it's all just 'don't let him do this' or 'see he doesn't do that.' I mean, it's all a bit feeble, really."

She could see the trouble, thought Phyllis. When New Opportunity started, the leaders had a real reforming zeal. Plus, they'd been through all the hurt that men used to be able to hand out. Now, Phyllis could understand that they might sound out of touch. She thought back to when she had got started, learning how to keep the man who had been husband, then, under control. There had been



plenty of self-help books around then. *Ball Breaking – Your Guide to Continuous Control* had been her favourite. She wondered if you could still get it. Mind you, the illustrations would look pretty odd now, she thought. The man in the book had seemed to be some sort of throw-back to the seventies: a pony tail, beard, and moustache, she remembered with a smile. Nowadays most women insisted on their men shaving: and that didn't just mean the chin!

"Jim's coming over later. I'll have it out with him then. And I will think about the New Opportunity stuff."

It was some time later, well after Jim had arrived, when Phyllis was about to leave that she knocked on her daughter's bedroom door. "I'm off out now, Fara. Have fun at the meeting."

A muffled grunt came from behind the door.

"Fara? Are you all right? What's going on in there?"

"It's OK, mum, really. Come on in."

Fara was sprawled on her bed with her college books. A pile of magazines was stacked in one corner of the room, ready to be taken to Fara's meeting. On the far side, Jim sat tied helpless in the chair at Fara's dressing table. His trousers had been pulled down and Fara had tied the vodka bottle so that it was dangling painfully from a rope tied around the base of his prick. It was all Phyllis could do to stop herself laughing. Jim looked up at her with a pleading expression.

Fara got up and walked across to Jim. Wrenching off the tape that gagged him, she pulled cloth from his mouth and slapped his face. "You owe my mother an apology."

Jim almost sobbed. "I'm sorry, Ms Dangerfield, really I mmphhh."

Fara, satisfied that Jim had said enough, pushed the cloth back in, smoothed the tape down again and smiled at her mother.

"I'm proud of you, Fara. Well done." She shook her head at the unfortunate Jim as he continued to struggle. Just as she was about to leave, Phyllis noticed a leaflet with the Party logo emblazoned on it, lying on the pile of magazines. She assumed that her daughter had brought it back from the last New Opportunity meeting. "What's this, Fara?" she asked, picking it up.

"Oh. Yes. They passed it out at the last meeting. I was going to show it to you. It's a new scheme they've got going on. It sounded like it might help."

Phyllis looked at the brightly coloured leaflet. "JUMIST – the Junior Mistress Training Plan, Sponsored and Supported By Sunrise Industries" the title read. Phyllis looked inside. It offered a residential programme in London where participants would have the chance to learn from experienced trainers and – offering something that sounded just what Fara needed – get a coherent method for man management.

"This is interesting Fara," Phyllis said. "I think you might apply for this. You're obviously not short of ideas when it comes to keeping someone like Jim here under control." Jim scowled up at Phyllis from his chair. "I think it's just as you said, you need a method, a framework. Perhaps this will help."

Fara looked again at the leaflet as Jim struggled and grunted, ignored by the two women. There was a phone number for applications. Attracted as much by the opportunity to spend some time in London as by any real expectations from the programme, Fara agreed to sign up. "All right, I'll talk to the New Opportunity leader tonight."

Phyllis looked at Jim and shook her head. "Were those your panties you took out of his mouth, Fara?"

Fara nodded.

"Well, make sure you get them back before he goes home. I'm going out. Have a nice evening.

"Thanks, Mum," Fara smiled.

Jim whimpered as his one hope of being freed any time soon turned on her heels and headed for the bedroom door.

As Phyllis reached the foot of the stairs she encountered Harry.

"Have you got your plans for the evening? I'm just off out. Fara will be out later."

"Yes, ma'am," Harry replied respectfully. "Laundry to finish, then tidying downstairs, as usual. Then I wondered..."

"Yes, all right. When you finish that lot — and I mean finish properly — you can have an hour's television upstairs. And no more than an hour — I'll check."

"No. Of course. Thank you, Mrs Dangerfield." It was a small concession but he was grateful for it.

It was later, after Fara and Jim had left as well, and while he was tidying up, that Harry noticed the newspaper. The headline couldn't be ignored. "Increased Penalties for Anti-Social Activities — Daniels Claims Deterrence Works" He read the article quickly as he was carrying the newspaper to its correct place in the magazine rack in the living room. The report said Home Affairs Minister Florence Daniels was determined to stamp out curfew violations, absconding from sponsorship, and other contraventions of Male Control Orders by using increased detention terms and stricter sponsorship licensing. It didn't surprise Harry. He knew of some fairly lax sponsors. He knew of some others, too, other groups that hadn't accepted the Government's view of the way that men should be treated. Daniels was right, he thought. Cracking down on people like that would make life for people like him safer. He knew that others might think him mad, but he hoped, when the next round of elections came, that Phyllis and all her friends voted New Order back in again.

## 8 A Ministerial Visit

By the time Bernard had been freed from his bondage, made to undress, and taken back to the cages, the others were already installed in the cramped confines of their padlocked wire boxes. They looked up sullenly as Liu Wei pushed Bernard towards the open door of the one empty cage on the bottom row. Liu Wei responded with a crack of her bamboo cane across the front of the nearest cage. The other occupants returned their heads to the bowed position that they were expected to maintain.

With Bernard locked inside his cage, Liu Wei left.

“You the smart-arse in the qipao?” the man in the cage above him hissed.

“Shut up,” another urged. “You know we’re not supposed to speak.”

“Yes, there will be trouble if they hear you. Keep quiet,” a third responded.

Bernard didn’t know what to do but, when the man above him didn’t continue his questioning, Bernard felt able to keep quiet. Looking up he could see the man’s naked buttocks criss-crossed by the wire frame of the cage. Between the wire framing, he could see that the man bore the welts of repeated beatings. “I’ve had to put up with a lot here,” the man muttered quietly so only Bernard could hear. “Don’t think I’m going to put up with that sort of th...” He stopped suddenly.

Bernard heard a noise from the corridor outside. Voices, some of them English, some of them Oriental, warned of women returning to the room.

Bernard watched as Madam Chao, Tsai Linn and Liu Wei came in with a group of three western women. “So, Minister, these are the resources to be used for the JUMIST training programme.” Madam Chao pointed towards the cages where Bernard and the others were held. “Perhaps you can let us know when you expect our trainees to be arriving?”

“I’m sorry?” the woman addressed as Minister seemed to be confused by the request. “Is that not already in hand?”

“No, Ms Daniels,” Madam Chao responded. “We have our facility here and our resources. Contracts all signed but no trainees. We understood Government was anxious to make progress, but so far nothing.”

Ms Daniels turned to the other two women with her. “Can someone tell me what’s going on? We’ve announced this policy, the funding is in place, Sunrise have obviously invested in being ready to carry out the programme. Why don’t they have any trainees?”

The slim dark-haired woman nearest to her looked embarrassed and took some papers from her briefcase. “It’s been a problem with the Department of Learning and Skills. They think it’s their domain and they’ve been blocking...”

Daniels interrupted. “If you think I’m taking this to the Prime Minister or even worse to Dobell-Bull to get it solved, you’ve got another think coming. Let me make it quite clear. Home Affairs, my Department, — your Department — is responsible for this programme. We are only going to reduce the levels of absconding, curfew offences, and other dissident male behaviour if we improve the ability of women to deal with the men in their care. That’s our responsibility, not Learning & Skills.

Get it sorted. I want whatever applicants you've had screened sent on the programme as soon as you can." She turned back to Madame Chao. "My apologies, Madam Chao, I had no idea that this had happened. If there are any further obstructions please come to me directly." She scowled at her two aides, convinced that they had failed to stand up for the department adequately in the various implementation discussions. "You will have an initial batch of four trainees by the end of the week." She ignored the dark-haired woman's attempts to object. "And we will have a review of their progress one month after that. I think you said that was the time needed to see if some improvements could be made?"

Madame Chao nodded. "Thank you, Minister. I am encouraged. Now, perhaps I can show you how we accommodate males here." Liu Wei led the group towards the cages.

Tsai Linn, keen to show how well prepared things were, scowled at the way the men were staring blankly out at the group of women inspecting them. "Attention," she barked, slapping a bamboo cane against Bernard's cage inches from his face. "Don't think you will have no work to do! Slaves with no work get wrong ideas. Busy makes happy, so we will make you very happy indeed!"

Tsai Linn walked up and down the row of cages haranguing the occupants. From where Bernard was crouched in his cage, he could only see the hem of her skirt, her calves, ankles, and dainty feet in their high-heeled court shoes. He had always had a thing about women's feet and his mind needed little prompting to take him off into fantasies of worshipping Tsai Linn's feet and ankles.

Suddenly another blow from the bamboo cane to the front of his cage snapped him back to reality. "Hey! New boy! You pay attention when Mistress speaks! You spend time dreaming, you find you end up with stripey back, quick-quick. Understand?"

"Yes, Mistress," Bernard responded respectfully, keeping his head bowed as required, a position that still allowed him to contemplate Tsai Linn's delectable ankles and feet.

Florence Daniels took great interest in the slave cages, complementing Madame Chao on the care she evidently took over security. "Not so much security, Minister," Madame Chao responded. "Little chance that these males would defy me by trying to escape. More important is to remind them of their status. If you are kept in cage, you must be slave. If you are slave, you must obey your mistress. We try to make things simple, then slaves know what they are."

"This must help. If you can help our young people with these simple ideas, then I am sure this scheme will be a success."

"It will be, I assure you, Minister. We base our scheme on traditional approaches used in China. We give the trainees simple goals to aim for. A good structure to their learning. They know when they are doing well. All those with them know when they are doing well. This encourages them, so they learn better."

As Madame Chao finished speaking, a stunningly beautiful Chinese girl wearing a black silk qipao appeared in the doorway to the slave cage room.

"This is who our trainees will aspire to be like. Mary Tang, Minister, is one of the most highly regarded practitioners of our method - Kòngzhì Rén. You can see she is black qipao."

"Oh, her dress. Yes, it's very beautiful."

Madame Chao shook her head. "It is," she said, "but is also indication of status. Black qipao is highest level in Kòngzhì Rén."

"Ah." Florence Daniels kept thinking she understood what was going on but then kept discovering that she didn't.

Mary Tang made her way along the length of the cages to join the ministerial party. Bernard could just see her from his crouched position. She carried a thin black whip in one hand. The other hand sat loosely on her hip, inches above the end of the slit through which Bernard could catch the occasional glimpse of the girl's thigh. Her jet-black, straight hair hung loosely to her shoulders framing a face that carried an expression of innate superiority to all around her. She was, Bernard thought, in her early twenties and was possibly the most desirable woman he had ever seen. She stopped immediately beside his cage, her black high heels inches from his face, blocking out his view of the rest of the room, the tail of her whip snaking down, right in front of the bars of his cage. As she turned, he saw the bright red leather of the shoes' soles – Louboutin's. Bernard had spent so long being conditioned to respond to the classic trappings of the dominant female that it was all he could do to stop himself from moaning quietly. Recognising, though, that the very least that would result was to have a ball gag jammed into his mouth, he wisely held back.

Madame Chao and the Minister were soon deep in conversation. Florence's aides occasionally interjecting, asking for points of clarification or stressing their enthusiasm for the successful outcome of the project – a response to the Minister's earlier disapproval.

As far as Bernard could tell from his position, crouched uncomfortably in his cage, Mary Tang didn't say a word.

## 9 Slaves of the Sunrise Tea Parlour

It was obvious to Bernard that while Madam Chao might have to wait until the end of the week for the participants in Florence Daniels' programme to appear, she didn't intend to let the occupants of the wire cages sit around contemplating their misfortunes.

"Slave work hard, earn meals. No work, no meals. No work, bamboo beating. Understand?" she had snapped when the men had been taken out of their cages the next morning. English might not be her first language but she managed to make herself understood perfectly well. The men were assigned to a variety of task under the direction of the Sunrise girls in the yellow and blue uniforms.

Bernard and one of the others were taken down to the basement and told to unload vans bringing in wooden chests of tea to be used for the Tea Parlour on the ground floor. It was hard work but no harder than the work he had to do at the station. It had, however, none of the elegance that might have been promised by the appearance of the exotic Mary Tang. It was just hard work overseen by an unsympathetic, sarcastically chiding, supervisor.

Two other men were made to sit at a bench pouring the dusty loose tea into small paper packets ready for sale. For them, the least indication that they were working less hard than they should earned the attentions of Liu Wei's cane. For encouragement, every so often the cane would crack down on the bench, sending clouds of tea dust rising into the air. By the end of the day all four were sweat streaked and tea stained as a result of their efforts.

Liu Wei took them to another room, tiled in white, to clean up. There was a shower cubicle big enough to take half a dozen. The four were herded inside. Liu Wei stood outside with a hose. A jet of cold water splashed over each of them in turn, the dust of the tea staining it red brown as it ran off their bodies. No soap, just cold water but they rubbed themselves as clean as they could until Liu Wei turned off the hose and handed each of them small scraps of towelling to dry themselves with.

"Slaves use toilet, now!" Liu Wei ordered gesturing to door-less cubicles at the other end of the room. Having sent the men off there, she patrolled up and down outside while they did as they had been bid. All four could guess what would happen if they were suddenly to decide that they needed a toilet later on. It was embarrassing to sit there with the Chinese girl walking up and down in front of the cubicles. What was worse, Bernard felt his cock stiffen at the thought of this imperious woman supervising his squatting. By the time they were told to finish and get moving, Bernard's cock was sticking out in front of him like a flagpole. Liu Wei simply gave a laugh at the sight of it.

"Time for tea," Liu Wei announced and took them, still naked from the shower room down stairs and into the Tea Parlour's staff rest room. Other Sunrise girls looked up at the new arrivals with distaste. Liu Wei sent them to sit in a corner of the room while she went to speak to one of her colleagues. The four men sat silent, not ready to run the risk of speaking when any of the girls around them might choose to pick up a bamboo and lay about them with it. They were just happy to have some rest after the morning's efforts.

"Fat Boy!" Liu Wei called across. "You!" She pointed at Bernard. "Come fetch tea."

Bernard got to his feet and went across to where she was standing. Four bowls of luke-warm liquid sat on the counter beside her. He put them on to a tray and took them back to the others. The tea didn't look much. It was a scummy, brown, stewed, foul-smelling liquid without milk or sugar but at least it was warm. He took a sip. It tasted as foul as it looked and smelled. He became aware of something in his mouth, put his hand up and spat out a dark curly hair. It was then that realization set in.

He looked across to where the tea had been prepared. A tap on the wall provided the water that had gone into the pot for boiling. The pipe from the tap ran straight up the wall into the ceiling. Bernard knew where they were. The pipe was directly beneath the shower. They were drinking their own shower water, stewed up with the tea dust washed from their own bodies. No wonder it tasted awful. He was relieved to see there was no pipe down at the other end of the room.

## 10 Political Manoeuvring

Corey Preston made a point of spending some time each morning working her way through that day's papers and the blogs of a couple of political analysts she followed online. Social media and the popular press sometimes provided an insight into the sort of things that Government and party officials ought to be worrying about. Unlike some of her colleagues, she spent time on the so-called quality press too. That often provided the nuggets of who was in and out of favour and which issues might present an opportunity for lobbying on behalf of Corey's clients. In the Express, there was an approving account of how one MP had been objecting to Sun Rise establishing a factories in her constituency. She claimed it would encourage an influx of corporate sponsored males and that would certainly lower the tone of the area. Corey smiled. Once upon a time MP's had been falling over themselves to encourage local industry. Now it seemed things were different. More important though, Corey's eye was caught by an article in the Times.

"Stearns Questions Policy on Supervision Orders" the headline read. 'Stearns' was Lady Justice Catherine Stearns, a high court judge, prominent for her role in cases brought under the various Male Control Acts introduced by New Order. Apparently, Stearns was calling for new measures in relation to the tracking of male found guilty of offences that weren't serious enough for prison. While it was reasonable for them to be in sponsorships, Stearns argued, it was clear from the number of instances of previously convicted males re-appearing before the courts, that more needed to be done to ensure rehabilitation. There was even, Stearns suggested, some evidence that re-offenders were more likely to be involved in some of the more dangerous examples of subversion.

Corey drew a ring around the article and set it to one side. "I wonder," she said to herself, "if Madam Chao's resources might have application in the management of discharged offenders. I will have to give her a call."

Corey wasn't the only one considering political issues, however. At the same time, Jackie Maygood, a recently elected Member of Parliament, was finishing a conversation in an office tucked away at the rear of the Prime Minister's residence in Downing Street

"I'm glad you're seeing things differently." Claire Dobell-Bull's smile - unlike the rest of her - was thin. It had been a difficult conversation but these things had to be done. One of the problems with a parliamentary democracy was that you had to go on winning votes in the House and there were always people that needed to be encouraged to see things the same way that the Cabinet did. This one would be all right though, she thought. She's new, still got her ideals. She just needs to understand how things work at Westminster. "It's been good to have this talk."

Jackie Maygood wasn't sure she agreed. It had been daunting when she'd received the call from Dobell-Bull's office. As the Prime Minister's fixer, Dobell-Bull had a formidable reputation for getting things done and for not worrying about who she trampled on in the process. Bull-Dog, as she was known in the corridors of Whitehall, had been among the founders of New Order. In the days when she and Johannsen, the Prime Minister, were at University together, with her enthusiastic promotion of a pro-female/anti-male agenda she had even been known as Bull-Dyke by a smirking few who would find it difficult to be quite so amused these days. Claire Dobell-Bull was a ruthless operator; pursuing any Member that showed the slightest tendency to move away from the party line.



Independence of thought could be admired in Members but there were ways to get things done and Claire's job was to make sure they were done in ways which didn't upset the party apple cart.

For Jackie the interview had been short and good humoured but with the clear intimation that if she ever expected to progress in Westminster then she had better start supporting the Government trade initiatives. Behind Dobell-Bull's careful explanation of just why Jackie would be ill advised to oppose the setting up of the New Start corporation site in her constituency had been the unspoken implication that another speech against the proposals in the house would be very unwelcome.

"There's one other thing I'd like to discuss." Dobell-Bull took a cigar from a leather case, clipped it cleanly and lit it carefully. "Assuming the Sunrise proposals on New Start go through, we're going to need a ministerial brief covering inward investment at Trade. I'd have thought your deep understanding of the potential conflicts of interest with the local economy would make you a good choice." Claire drew deeply on the cigar. A cloud of blue smoke sat heavily above her.

Jackie was confused. The last thing she had expected was to be offered a job. "Well, thank you. I'll need to think about it."

"Don't worry. Let me know in a day or two." Dobell-Bull was already pretty certain what the answer would be. Like many new MP's, Maygood was completely incorruptible, except for the offer of power and influence.

Jackie gathered up her papers. As she did so she picked up the knife Claire had used to trim her cigar. "That's unusual," she said, turning it in her hands and looking at the polished stone handle and the ancient steel blade with its silver mounts.

"Mmm," said Claire, taking another puff. "An izmel." She turned to her own papers, indicating that their conversation had ended.

Jackie looked blank and left. It was only later when she asked her secretary Rebecca if she had ever heard of such a thing that she learned of its original purpose. It was just what you might expect a stalwart of the party to have on their desk.

Meanwhile Florence Daniels was back in her flat, contemplating her Red Box. A badge of office for Government Ministers and an continuing curse; the red, leather covered case held those papers that required her immediate attention. Filled by her Parliamentary Secretary, the box embodied the pressures of running a department. No sooner was every item read and dealt with than others took their place.

Florence thumbed through a report of progress on the Sunrise project. It looked as though that, at least, was back on track. That was a relief.

Then there was a document from the Department of Health & Welfare discussing, as the paper pompously announced, "Legislative Issues Arising from Gender Identity Concerns". It was, she knew, just the sort of thing Johannsen would want to go through in detail at the next Cabinet meeting. The Prime Minister was always keen on making sure legislation stayed one step ahead. She knew she had better read it thoroughly. It turned out to be an analysis of the problems raised by males claiming female gender status. Where once that had been solely a social issue, it now raised serious legal

questions. Could a trans-gendered male avoid the need for sponsorship? How should curfew and detention arrangements apply? What about the rules on asset ownership and the recent changes on suffrage? It was minefield, Florence felt. The trouble was she wasn't sure what she thought was the ideal solution. She had sympathy for those mistakenly assigned to the wrong gender and for many individuals a medical assessment would provide the appropriate resolution. But those that the report classed as "genetic males, self-identifying as women"? They were more difficult. On the one hand, Florence conceded, it was only reasonable that they should aspire to be classified as members of the superior gender but, on the other hand, surely they couldn't simply be allowed to chose? Those opting for gender re-assignment surgery complicated things further as did the fact that some women used gender inversion as part of their male-management regime. How on earth could you differentiate in law between a man cross-dressing for the purpose of gaining unlawful access to female benefits and a man compelled to cross dress by his sponsor for the purpose of reinforcing some aspect of his behaviour management. It ought to be easy but Florence could see all sorts of hurdles that any legislation would have to leap.

She put the papers to one side. The best course, she decided, was to see what came out in the Cabinet discussion.

## 11 Kòngzhì Rén & The Culture of Dominance

“You come with me!” Liu Wei barked as she unfastened the door to Bernard’s cage. The others had already been taken. Bernard wasn’t sure where they had gone, only that ten minutes ago three other girls in Sunrise uniforms had come and unlocked the the others’ cages and taken them away. All that had been said was one of the girls asking “Where’s Liu Wei? She should bring fat one.”

Liu Wei had obviously just arrived at the Sunrise Tea Parlour. Her hair was wet from the rain outside and water spatters covered her rain coat. From the way in which she clipped the leash to Bernard’s collar and set off quickly along the corridor outside the men’s cage room, Bernard could tell that she was late for whatever she had planned for the morning. She hurried into the Sunrise girl’s locker room dragging Bernard behind her. “You kneel, wait there,” she ordered, hooking his leash on the back of a chair.

Tsai Linn was in the locker room already. She was just finishing putting on her uniform, buttoning her bright yellow blouse. “Hurry up,” she said to Liu Wei. “Madame Chao not happy if we are late.”

“That why I got stupid round-eye for first session on way in. Too much trouble with bus in rain,” Liu Wei said pulling off her raincoat. She threw it at the chair Bernard was kneeling by. It landed across the chair back, showering Bernard with spray from the street. “Stupid taxi splashed my legs, too!”

Bernard realised that he would have to kneel while Liu Wei changed out of her street clothes and into her Sunrise uniform. She went on chattering with Tsai Linn as she got out of her rain-spattered black trousers. Bernard tried to keep his mind on other things. The trouble was, even after years of mistreatment and disdain from women (or perhaps because of it, he was honest enough to admit) he still found himself aroused by the sight of a woman’s body and, at the first sound as Liu Wei pulled the zipper on her trousers down from the waist, he could feel his cock stiffening. Liu Wei strutted across to her locker, her chubby thighs slapping against each other as she did so. Bernard tried to look down at the floor, as he was supposed to, but the sound of her heels rapping on the locker room floor only served to conjure the same image in his brain as if he was looking straight at her.

“Do hurry,” Tsai Linn urged. “You make me late, too.”

“Cha! No worry. We blame stupid round-eye.”

Bernard looked up. Liu Wei had kicked off her shoes and was pulling on a pair of sheer black stockings, fastening them to the girdle she used to try to control her pudgy waist. His cock was stiffer than ever. Liu Wei caught him staring but, instead of cursing him, she simply laughed at his engorged member and turned to the locker to grab her blouse. Tsai Linn, waiting impatiently and getting more irritated by the minute, turned her frustration with Liu Wei’s tardiness to Bernard. “Stop staring, pervert,” she snarled, grabbing a bamboo cane from the rack on the wall and cracking it across Bernard’s belly only inches from his offending member. Bernard doubled up with the impact. The cane had left a burning welt across his belly. He managed to choke back a cry of pain. He knew that any sound would only lead to him being gagged. He certainly didn’t want that; his jaw still ached from the last time that Tsai Linn had wedged one of the wooden plug gags into his mouth.

By now, Liu Wei had managed to pull on her skirt and was busily trying to button her blouse over her rather over-sized breasts. Tsai Linn looked on envious of her friend's figure. Although she was happy with her own slight build, she sometimes wished she had bigger breasts. Liu Wei's pair wobbling in the underwired constraint of her black bra only added to Tsai Linn's jealousy. Liu Wei stuffed the bottom of her blouse into the waist band of her skirt. "There, all done," she exclaimed, "we not too late."

Tsai Linn wasn't convinced but jerked Bernard to his feet and set off, pulling him along behind her as she and her friend hurried to start the day's sessions. Bernard almost choked as he was dragged along by his collar. Bernard's sneaked look at Liu Wei wrestling her breasts into her blouse had aroused him. The shameful memories of his recent submission to being clutched to the station supervisor's sweating cleavage and the glimpsed sight of Liu Wei's pale nipples drove lustful thoughts. His cock was soon fully erect and dripping with pre-cum. Now, as he followed the two girls along the corridor, he had to contend with the sight of Liu Wei's substantial buttocks struggling against the seams of her skirt and of Tsai Linn's slim figure swaying as she stepped forward on heels that guaranteed her walk would further enrage his manhood.

They reached the room at the end of the corridor. Inside, Madame Chao was waiting with three other Sunrise girls each with a collared and leashed male slave kneeling quietly beside them. On the opposite side of the room stood four young western women, in their late teens or early twenties. The four were dressed in identical white silk qipaos.

"Stupid round eye make us late, Liu Wei announced. "Sorry, Madame Chao."

Madame Chao gave Liu Wei and Tsai Linn a careful look but chose not to pursue it, preferring to blame Bernard. "Cha! Typical, no consideration for any but themselves. Ladies," she turned to the girls in white, "this is one of worst kind of men. Thinks he is submissive and will do as told. Underneath, just as disobedient as others. Cannot be trusted."

Bernard looked down at the floor. He knew it was best not to show any sign of defiance to Madame Chao.

Madame Chao passed along the line of the four girls, shaking each by the hand in turn and greeting them according to the name badges that each wore pinned to their chests. "Miss Collette, welcome... Miss Anna.... Miss Fara, too... and Miss Daphne. You will learn much here over the next few weeks. Here we teach Kòngzhì Rén," she pronounced the words carefully ' ren - kong - gee', "You learn, you have much more comfortable lives. Sorry about disgusting males. Best we could do. You learn with these but after — well — you able to dominate any man you want. You chose them, they obey you."

Bernard crouched as low as he could, trying to blend into the background, desperate not to attract any sort of attention to himself. He didn't understand why these girls needed special training. All the women he ever came across seemed to know just how to get just what they wanted. Madame Chao stepped back from the line, standing with her back to Bernard. He sneaked a look at the four newcomers.

They were all young — eighteen, twenty, twenty-two-years-old, Bernard guessed — but with no real similarities apart from that and the fact that they all wore the same short, white silk, high-necked, side-slit dresses and white high-heeled shoes. The one that Madame Chao had greeted as Collette

was a little fatter than the others and her qipao fitted tightly across her belly. Anna was taller with long fair hair hanging loosely so that it framed her face. Fara, the most slightly built of the four, wore her brown hair similarly. Daphne had a round, pale face and short red hair, with toned arms and leg muscles; she looked as though she was fond of sport. All four were watching Madame Chao attentively.

"Kòngzhì Rén is the art of dominance. It was developed by the ladies of the Chinese Court to establish control over the vast civil service that the Emperor set up in the Forbidden City. Most famous in the time of Empress Wu Zetian more than thirteen hundred years ago. You will learn techniques for control. All are simple but effective. There are four paths you will follow. They are the Path of the Hand, the Path of the Cane, the Path of the Rope, and the Path of the Look. You will learn the four pressure points of Pain, Pleasure, Humiliation and Fear. All are important. With study, you will find you can manage any man."

As Madam Chao was speaking, the door to the room opened. Mary Tang, immaculately dressed in her black qipao, stepped silently through the door. Over one shoulder hung a Givenchy bag. In her other hand, she held a long thin cane and the end of a leash that ran to the neck collar of a hooded and gagged, leather-clad slave following attentively on hands and knees. Mary said nothing. Bernard thought she looked impossibly glamorous. He looked across at the four new girls. It was clear that they were all impressed by the new arrival as well. Their expressions ranged from Fara's clear look of approval to Collette's puppy-like infatuated gawp.

At the the same moment, all four girls noticed the effect that Mary's arrival had on the males that were waiting on their knees. The men weren't quite gazing with their tongues hanging out, but it was clear that Mary had stunned them into both silence and immobility.

"We are lucky to have Mary Tang to advise us," Madame Chao went on. "She is foremost practitioner of Kòngzhì Rén. She wears black qipao. This tells us she has studied all four Paths and achieved excellence. You girls wear white qipao. This for beginners. Then yellow, green, blue, red, brown, and finally black. You study well, you get to wear black qipao like Mary."

Mary's expressionless face turned towards the girls. The man at her heels barely moved but, from something in his stillness, Bernard sensed a quiet pride that he was the slave of this exemplar of the craft of dominance. Mary, seemingly oblivious of her audience and Madame Chao's slaves, reached into her handbag and took out a cigarette. She lit it with a flick of a gun metal grey Zippo® that she stared at momentarily, appreciating its simple lines and efficient function. She inhaled deeply.

Bernard saw the twitch of her finger as she gave an almost imperceptible signal to her crouching slave. He immediately knelt up and put his head back. Mary slid back the zip in his hood that closed his mouth. The slave opened his mouth wide. Mary leant across and tapped her cigarette. A clump of white ash fell down into the slave's mouth.

Bernard coughed involuntarily, earning a scowl of disapproval from Mary. To Bernard, it was almost a badge of honour to be even noticed by this goddess. He could only dream of being allowed to be in such a woman's presence, only fantasise about having a leather suit like that of her slave instead of the simple neck collar that was all that he was allowed.

Fara looked at Mary. The way that Mary Tang's qipao clung to her body made it move sensuously whenever Mary moved. The sheen of the silk reflected highlights from Mary's small breasts and her shoulders. Somehow, the discreet elegance of the qipao cast a sense of calm all around her; each move that Mary made seemed to be in slow motion.

Madame Chao noticed Fara's attentive gaze. "You are right, Miss Fara, to study Miss Tang's appearance. Kòngzhì Rén depends on formality, a considered and careful look. This is not a set of rules. Not a checklist like you find in books. Kòngzhì Rén is in the mind, a state of being. It is like eastern arts of origami, sushi, geisha, tea ceremony, dance, or music. You learn its shape and feel. Then you will understand power of Kòngzhì Rén."

Fara watched as Mary's slave buckled in response to a simple glance from his mistress. A moment later his face was pressed to the floor, his tongue on her foot, while Mary stood, staring impassively through the window of the room while she coolly smoked her cigarette, occasionally letting ash fall on the bowed head at her feet. Fara could think of nowhere that she would rather be than in Mary's shoes.

Bernard was wishing that he was beneath them.

Madam Chao went on, addressing the four girls. "Tsai Linn and Liu Wei will see to your classes. These," she gestured to Bernard and the other three, "will be used for practice. Mary Tang will be conducting examinations. Now we will leave you to your work. Miss Tang, if you can come with me, please."

With that Madam Chao turned on her heel and, accompanied by the tap of stilettos on wooden floor boards, strode from the room. Mary Tang took the cigarette from her mouth and stubbed it out on a small metal plate attached to her slave's hood in the middle of his forehead. Without the need for a command, her slave opened his mouth once again, allowing her to dispose of the spent dog-end before closing the zip across his mouth once more.

She tapped her heel with the tip of her long cane, indicating wordlessly to the slave that he should follow closely, and then set off to follow Madame Chao, her slave scuttling behind her quickly so as to avoid being jerked forward by his leash.

Fara and the others were left wondering how they would ever learn to emulate Mary Tang.

## 12 Jim's Call

While Fara was working hard, starting to learn the elements of Kòngzhì Rén, her mother was enjoying an unexpected spell of summer sunshine after the earlier rain.

"Excuse me, Ms Dangerfield," Jim Wheeland called over the garden hedge to where Phyllis was lying stretched out on a sun lounger. "I wondered if there was any news from Fara."

Phyllis sat up and pulled a towel around herself, covering up the bikini she had on. She understood enough about 18-year-old boys to not encourage this one.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to disturb you."

"That's all right, Jim. It's no problem." Phyllis could tell it was no problem for Jim either. The way that his cock was stiffening in his shorts was somewhat gratifying, Phyllis thought. She wondered if she made it on to his list of "MILS." She was perfectly aware that every teenaged boy had a mental list of "Moms I'd Like To Serve," although she also knew that the more coarse version of the acronym substituted the word "Suck."

"It's just I hadn't heard anything since she went off to London. And, well, college has been suggesting I should start looking at sponsorships and I'd hoped that...."

It was a problem every male faced on leaving college. He had to find someone that would accept him as their responsibility in law. With males having so little freedom in society it was almost impossible for them to function without someone to hold a bank account for them, be responsible for their whereabouts and behaviour. Either that meant continuing to be the responsibility of their parents (something few parents were willing to do), finding a place with an commercial or private employer who would take this on under a contract of service like the short-term agreement Phyllis had for Harry (a sponsorship as they were known,) or - and this was extremely rare - to get taken as a life partner by a woman so love struck as to want to tie herself down as Marianne Higgs had done. Life without a sponsor or a life partner was precarious and often put those without a sponsorship on the wrong side of the law.

*Oh, heavens,* thought Phyllis. *He thinks that Fara might have been planning to take him on as her partner. How could he be so naive?* Phyllis understood enough about her daughter to know that she wasn't planning to tie herself down yet, if ever. She reached over to pull her blouse from a bag beside the sun bed. As she pulled it on, dropping the towel, she could sense Jim's conflicted response.

"Ms Dangerfield,..."

"Yes, Jim." Phyllis was sitting on the sunbed. Her white blouse contrasted with her suntanned skin and the jet-black bikini. Jim's gaze flicked from her bare legs to an envelope he was carrying.

"Well, I wondered. Could you get this to her? Please." He offered her the envelope.

"Yes, of course." Phyllis was anxious to let the boy's hopes down gently. She was pretty sure that Fara would have forgotten all about him, given the demands of the course and the distractions of London. "You know you shouldn't be thinking about settling down with one girl yet at your age, though. Have

you thought about trying to find a sponsorship placement yet? You must be coming up to the end of college soon. If you find the right one, well, that can lead on to relationships, can't it?"

"I guess so. And, yes, I'd thought about sponsorships. I was going to ask, well, I wondered if you might have a place here?"

*This is too complicated*, thought Phyllis. On one hand, the idea of having a fit-looking eighteen-year-old around the place was distinctly appealing and she was starting to get bored with Harry. There was a part of her that would have quite happily grabbed Jim by the wrist and dragged him to her bedroom. On the other hand, though, did she really want to take a complete beginner in hand, and one that thought he was romantically involved with her daughter? Sense prevailed over lust.

"I don't think so, Jim," she said. Jim's crestfallen expression told Phyllis she wasn't going to be successful in her aim to avoid disappointing him. "You're a nice boy, and I've been very happy that you and Fara are friends. But there's a long way from that to a sponsorship place and I'm not in a position to take on more than the one I have now, I'm afraid."

"But I'm sure I could do a better job than Harry. I mean, Fara..."

"Jim, I do not want to know what you and Fara may or may not have got up to. I'm flattered that you like my daughter well enough to want to come into sponsorship here, but it just wouldn't work."

"Well, perhaps I could show you. Wouldn't you like a foot massage after that sun bathing, or perhaps I could fetch you a drink, or maybe something more."

Phyllis found herself admiring Jim's persistence. The fact that his gaze had hardly left her legs throughout their entire conversation was both endearing and rather pleasing. Even so, she knew that it would be very unwise to take things any further. "No, Jim, I mean it. I'll pass on your envelope, but I really think you should go now."

Jim's expression changed to one of resignation. "All right, Ms Dangerfield, of course. But if you change your mind, you will get in touch, won't you? I mean, no matter what Fara says."

Phyllis nodded and watched him leave. It was only after he had gone that she started to realise that maybe Jim's visit had little to do with her daughter, after all. Maybe he was just hitting on Phyllis, and Fara's trip to London just meant he didn't have an excuse to come around any more. That would explain why he'd had to ask her about sponsorship.

Still, at least she could send on his letter, she thought, although she was pretty sure she knew that Fara wouldn't want to be thinking about a life partner of any kind or thinking about being a sponsor herself.

.....

Fara's reaction to Jim's envelope was even more dismissive than Phyllis had predicted. Collette, Daphne, Fara and Anna had been together when the letter from Fara's mother with Jim's envelope arrived. They had been discussing the day's lessons, all agreeing that Mary Tang was possibly the most glamorous woman that they had ever encountered.

"What's that?" Collette asked.

"Letter from my mother. She's sent me a note from a boy I was seeing at home."



“Important?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t opened it. The last thing I need is an ex-boyfriend complicating my life,” Fara said. “I’ve got enough to think about with the Path of the Hand, the Path of the Cane, the Path of the Rope, and the Path of the Look. I’m not going to worry about the Path of the Sad Boy Back Home.”

She tossed Jim’s envelope into the waste bin unopened.

## 13 Starting to Learn

Collette, Fara, Daphne, and Anna had spent a restful night in the dormitory that had been set up for them on the top floor of the Sunrise Tea Parlour. "Not very comfortable," Tsai Linn had said as she had shown them the small room, with its four simple beds ranged along one wall, "but you will be too busy to worry."

Certainly, the accommodation was simple but the beds were comfortable enough and, given how hard they were working, the girls found it easy to get a good night's sleep. Next day, they were up early and ready to start.

Tsai Linn and Liu Wei joined the group of four trainees. The girls had been chatting together, wondering what the morning class would bring, but were now waiting attentively.

Four male slaves, naked and collared, had been brought up from their cages in the basement and were now kneeling in the middle of the room.

"Tell me. Here are four males. How can we stop runaways?" Tsai Linn smiled at her class.

The trainees were standing in a room, with a bare wooden floor. The room, over the Tea Parlour, had been used as a store room for some of the Sunrise imports. A pile of boxes with the company's logo stood in one corner. Now though, with most of its floor cleared, it was where Fara and her friends were to start the JUMIST Junior Mistress Training Programme, beginning to follow the discipline of Kòngzhì Rén. Liu Wei sat on the pile of boxes watching. She didn't look happy at having to sit by while Tsai Linn did the talking.

On the end wall, framed in a glass case, hung a beautiful, black silk qipao — the symbol of the girls' goal. An elaborate dragon embroidered in red silk stretched from the shoulder to the hem. Its silent presence was as much a warning to the men as it was an encouragement to the girls.

The four girls looked at one another. They were all uncertain and none of them was anxious to take the initiative. Standing there in their plain, white silk qipaos, they looked like a row of medical students listening to the words of some distinguished consultant and reluctant to take the risk of saying something foolish. Tsai Linn, in her yellow and blue Sun Rise uniform, paused for a few moments to see if any of them would come forward with an idea.

"Please imagine — this man is yours." Tsai Linn clipped a leash to Bernard's collar and pulled him forward. Caught off balance, Bernard almost fell as he shuffled forward on his knees. The first girl, Collette, pulled a face as much as to say "No thanks!" and Tsai Linn responded, "Yes, not pleasant idea but please pretend." The other girls giggled. "He is bigger than me. Maybe he wants to abscond. He is stronger than me. How can I stop him? Remember the four paths and the four pressure points." She looked down at Bernard who at least had the sense to keep his head bowed, not daring to be caught staring either at Tsai Linn or her pupils.

The students stood in silence while thinking how to couch their answers in terms of the Path of the Hand, the Path of the Rope, the Path of the Cane, and the Path of the Look and the four pressure points of Pain, Pleasure, Humiliation and Fear.

“The Path of the Rope — Tie him up?” Collette volunteered.

“Good,” Tsai Linn welcomed her input. “How about more ideas?”

“Ankle chains,” one of the other girls said.

“Chain his collar to the wall. Or put him in a cage or a cellar or something.”

Liu Wei yawned and looked bored. She got up from her seat and walked around the room, fiddling with some of the instruments of restraint and punishment that hung on the walls. Tsai Linn gave her a mildly irritated look but carried on with her class.

“All good ideas,” Tsai Linn encouraged. “How about making slave keep himself in place?”

One of the girls laughed. “You can’t do that! They’d just walk off.”

“What might stop that?” The girls looked puzzled for a while. Tsai Linn dropped Bernard's leash. The four girls saw him shoot a worried glance at her as she walked away from him, obviously concerned about what was to happen next. Tsai Linn walked back towards Bernard. As she drew level with him, without thinking he dropped his head to the floor.

“See. This is instinct for him. He knows this is what he does. No command needed. No whip. No cane. He is own slave keeper.” Tsai Linn reached forward and gripped Bernard’s hair at the back of his head. She pulled his head up until he was looking up at her, his face only inches from hers. “You want to leave, round eye? You want to go no-sponsor?”

The girls could see that the look on Bernard’s face was one of pure terror. He shook his head vigorously. Just the thought of trying to make his way on the edge of the law was enough to make him feel panic.

“See. If male know he better off with you, he stay. If male know he worse off without you, he stay. If male afraid of what you might do when he go, he stay. If male uncertain, he stay. This is Pressure of Fear.”

“So our best bet is to make them understand that staying is their best option, either because they are afraid of going or because ....”

“Because they like being treated as they are...” the girl on her right, Fara, interrupted, “Pressure of Pleasure!”

“Exactly,” Tsai Linn replied with a smile. “Keeping males is like walking tight-rope – we must be circus performers. Sometimes cruel, sometimes kind, but always in charge. So sometimes we use chains or ropes or cages, but this just to show he depend on us. Come here.” She waved to Fara, the girl who had just spoken, to join her. “See what you can make of this one.”

The girl looked a bit shy for a moment but straightened her back and stepped forward. She didn’t bother to take the cane that Tsai Linn offered but just stepped up to where Bernard's head was pressed close to the floor. Fara wasn't certain what to do but then, she told herself, keeping this slave in order couldn't be any harder than bullying her boyfriend. Jim. She thought back to a time when she'd been teasing him, pretending to be a New Order agent that had arrested him.

“You,” she barked. “Look at me!”

Bernard slowly turned his eyes upwards to see the girl seeming to tower above him. She stood with her hands on her hips, square on to him. The white silk of her dress clung tightly to her figure. A breath of air in the room disturbed the way that her qipao hung, giving Bernard a brief glimpse of her thigh. She grinned widely as she noticed the flicker of lust in his eyes.

"You just love this, don't you?" she sneered.

Bernard would have loved to be able to say no, but he couldn't. The look in his eye, his whole demeanour, the stiffness of his cock, all gave him away.

"Go on, kiss my shoe." She pushed one foot towards him and he lunged towards it eagerly. "You'll do anything to know you can get some more of this, won't you?" she laughed, peering down her nose, with a mocking expression on her face.

Bernard, unable to deny it, could only set his lips to the toe of her shoe. The rest of the girls joined in with clapping and laughter until Tsai Linn brought things to a halt.

"There! See, males are own worst enemy. All we need to do is give them chance to obey. Too few brains, too much dick. Miss Fara, very good – excellent demonstration of the Path of the Look and the Pressure of Pleasure."

Fara smiled smugly and then bestowed a contemptuous look at the other males as they knelt patiently as she walked back to join the other girls. The men all looked helplessly down at their stiffening pricks as the four girls came forward in their tight white qipaos so that each of them could clip a leash to the collar of one of the men for a practice session.

It was only then that Fara noticed Mary Tang, who had slid silently into the room and was standing at the back watching all that was going on. With her black qipao and her equally black hair, she blended into the shadows at the back of the room. She stood with her left hand on her hip. Her right arm, pale as porcelain, hung by her side. A curl of smoke drifted up from the cigarette she held. She brought it to her lips, took a slow deep draw and then exhaled. A moment later she was gone; the cloud of cigarette smoke, still hanging in the air, was the only sign that she had been present.

Liu Wei passed along the line giving each of the girls a long-handled cane.

None of the girls was completely new to the challenge of dominating males. Either, like Fara, they had bullied boyfriends in adolescence or they had watched as their mothers dealt with the males in their homes. Even so, it was a new experience for all of them to be confronted with naked adult males waiting on their every command.

"Do we have to put up with THAT?" Collette pointed with her cane at the engorged cock of the slave whose leash she was holding.

"Just the problem of having to deal with men," Liu Wei replied, unhelpfully.

"Hmm," Tsai Linn responded with a scowl at her colleague. "This is a difficult conundrum. Some males enjoy punishment, some do not enjoy punishment but are still aroused by it. When you use cane or belt or strap or any punishment tool you have a difficult path to tread and must be clear to yourself what you are trying to do. In my experience, the more you beat them the more aroused they

become. Best to ignore it. Let him ache — it will sap his will and force him to think of other things. Later we will see ways to solve this — keeping cocks caged and balls empty."

Collette and the other girls nodded.

"Now, we use Path of the Cane to get men to stand and kneel as we want. See poster." Tsai Linn pointed to a chart on the wall. "Each has one-word command — stand, kneel, bow, so on. Use the tip of the cane to let the slave know how he should place himself. Use the shaft of the cane if he is not paying sufficient attention to your instructions. Try each position in turn."

The girls started the exercise, some with more success than others. Liu Wei intervened a few times to help Daphne as she found it difficult to guide the long cane. "Hold with a loose wrist to guide with the tip, use the cane as an extension of your arm to strike with the shaft," she advised.

Daphne tried again with a little more success, but it was clear that her man was confused about what she wanted him to do. Fara and Anna seemed to cope, but Collette was the star of the class— soon getting her man standing, kneeling, lying face down, or crouching —with just the touch of the tip of her cane.

After an hour's work, Tsai Linn clapped her hands. "Enough for now," she said. "Good work, ladies. Go have break for tea."

After the girls had left the room, Tsai Linn rounded on Liu Wei. "What is your problem? These girls are trying hard. You're no help at all."

A sulky Liu Wei responded. "Stupid games! Western girls have no idea. Playing at domination. Cha!"

"No. That's why Madam Chao want us to do this. Sure, they not Empress Wu, but they are trying. That Fara, she has some skill, some instinct for it."

"She think she can get black qipao, she crazy. She not last a minute in Shanghai correction house."

"No, and she not have to. English males much less difficult to dominate. Give the girls a chance!"

Liu Wei shook her head and turned to piles of equipment that had been used in the lesson. "You," she snapped at Bernard, who with the others was still kneeling at one end of the room, "put these away then all you get back to cages."

The four men looked happy to be excused from further efforts but being sent back to the cramped conditions of the cages was hardly much of a respite.

## 14 A Question of Trade

In the House of Commons Terrace Bar, Jackie Maygood and Florence Daniels were talking over a glass of wine after a long day's work in Committee. "What do you know about what's been going on with Sunrise and my team, Jackie?" Florence Daniels was keen to make sure Home Affairs and Inwards Investment were singing off the same hymn sheet.

Jackie Maygood shook her head. "Not a lot. Just what you read in the press. They haven't really been on the radar for any special attention from Inward Investment once it was agreed they'd set up manufacturing here."

"No, I suppose not. How's it going for you with Inward Investment?"

"I'm enjoying it. It's my first ministerial position – I've been glad of the opportunity and I think we've been able to deliver some positives. You know the New Order political stance didn't make it easy for us to make friends abroad for a while, but money follows opportunity. Being able to deliver a large low-wage labour force has certainly helped us to attract plenty of employment."

"In Cabinet yesterday, Claire said she thought you'd done a good job."

Jackie smiled. It was Claire that had got her in to her current post and it was good that she had noticed her efforts. "Well, thanks."

"Anyway, I wanted to update you on a new programme we're putting in through New Opportunity. You've seen how we've had some problems with the younger generation getting on board with the New Order program. It's not that there's any groundswell against it. It's more that they don't see things the way we did before we got into Government. Sunrise have some new approaches to youth education that we're going to be putting in place."

"Isn't that an Edu & Skills thing?"

"They'll be involved in implementation, but I'm more interested in outcomes. You know how concerned I am about reducing things like male curfew violations, for example, and domestic dissidents. This programme should help with that. Anyway, I wanted to make sure you knew what I was up to. I didn't want to spring anything on you that might affect the relationship Inward Investment has with Sunrise."

"I haven't had too much to do with them since the decision to set up the factory in Holmsward. I thought it was going to face a lot of local objection, but it's turned out to be a real plus for the town. The security worries have been unfounded. To be honest, I think some of my constituents have been glad to have a local sponsor they can pass their males on to."

"It's often the way," Florence advised. "People start off thinking something is going to be appalling and then they discover it's a real benefit."

"It doesn't make it any easier to get new ideas introduced, though."

"Absolutely. The Junior Mistress training programme is in the same class, I think. Sunrise say they are making progress with the first batch and I'm hoping we can make an announcement on it shortly."

Would it be a good idea to for your department and mine to co-host it? Johannsen's always happy to see Departments showing that they're talking to one another."

"I'd have thought so. We can pick up on the fact that Sunrise are bringing in skills and investment and you'll be keen to stress the benefits of the programme on social cohesion and order. How is the push against domestic dissidents going, anyway?"

"It could be better. Male Control Force does what it can and the intelligence services do a good job, but it will be an uphill battle until the sort of skills Sunrise are teaching are commonplace. The Dissident Analysis Briefing yesterday recommended lowering the concern level by one point, so that's in the right direction, at least. The only trouble is, I'm sure they aren't infiltrating the real hotspots. We're putting some more resources in though, more CCTV, a bigger budget for cultivating informants. It would help if the Courts gave us more support with longer sentences but that's something we can work on. Chief Justice Stearns made some good points recently on the need for keeping recently discharged offenders under review, I think if we support that we might expect support from her on sentencing issues."

"Interesting. That all makes the problems at Inward Investment sound like small beer."

"Don't sell what you're doing there short. If your team hadn't set up the Sunrise relationship, we couldn't be doing what we are."

"How did you get involved with them anyway, can I ask?"

"Do you know Corey Preston?"

"I've heard the name but beyond that, no."

"She could be worth having a chat with. She's a lobbyist. Normally they are a pain, but she does have some good ideas. Your department have almost certainly been keeping her out of your way, if they are half as good as mine are at avoiding anything that might involve them doing a bit of creative thinking."

"Tell me about it. What is it they say about the Civil Service? They are rarely civil and never provide a service? It's better now that more party members are working in the departments, but the old guard try so hard to be bloody 'above politics' as they call it."

"Well here's a thought. I've got a policy that I hope to be introducing that will address Stearns' worries. It could benefit from Sunrise's manufacturing capacity. If you could suggest, through Preston, that support of the policy might well result in an opportunity for Sunrise, then Inward Investment gets a new feather in its cap; I can show that the policy has industrial support; Corey gets to show what a good job she's doing for Sunrise; everybody's happy."

"Well, I'll see what I can do. Have you got anything I can tease Preston with?"

"Let's just say it involves lockable devices, GPS location services, and a way of improving conformance with Male Control Orders. I'll get you a paper on the things we're prepared to discuss with them if they sign off that they won't make them public."

## 15 The Path of the Hand

"Hand plays many parts in control of the male," Tsai Linn announced to Fara and the other girls who were standing in the training room.

Three of the men had been taken upstairs to help with the next stage of the girls' training while one had been taken off to help in the unloading bay of the Sunrise Tea Parlour. Bernard was stood against a wall on one side of the room, his arms raised up above his head, his wrists chained to a bar. The other two were kneeling, looking at the assembled trainees with expressions of trepidation.

Each male had a collar locked around his neck. Dangling from the collar of each, a tag carried a single Chinese character.

"For this lesson, we give slaves a name," Liu Wei announced, looking no more pleased to be involved in this class than the last. "Usually, 'you' is enough, but today we have 'worm,' 'slug,' and," she pointed at Bernard's tag, "'cockroach.' All spineless animals, just like their namesake. Only thing stiff about them ever is their cocks!"

The girls giggled in response.

"Miss Anna, show how Path of Hand may be used. Use this one." Tsai Linn gestured towards the man nearest to her.

Anna strode across to where the man was kneeling and stood square in front of him. "Look up, worm," she snapped. As the man did so she drew back her hand and brought it across his face, palm first. "Pressure of Pain," she said, looking smug as the man fell back with the force of the blow.

Collette followed suit, showing how she could apply Pressure of Pain with apparently no effort by twisting at slug's nipples.

When it came to Fara's turn, she picked up a pair of gloves lying on the table next to where Bernard was chained. "Look up at the ceiling, cockroach," she ordered as she pulled the gloves on slowly. Reaching towards his balls, she cupped them in one hand while stroking his chest with the other. "You see," she said, "good behaviour can be rewarded as well as poor behaviour punished. If you take the trouble to please us, perhaps there will be some pleasure for you."

Bernard's cock was soon stiff in response to Fara's seductive caresses and voice. Pre-cum was soon dripping from his glans. Looking down at her hand, Fara shook her head and tutted. "Now, that will not do. You really must try to control yourself."

"Ahh!" Bernard responded as Fara tweaked gently at a nipple. She shook her head again and peeled off her cum-sticky glove, pushing it into Bernard's mouth.

"There, cockroach, keep that for a while to remember how you must keep control."

"Bravo!" Mary Tang's voice rang out across the room. She was standing in the doorway, clapping her hands, with her leather-clad slave kneeling at her side. "Well done. A most excellent illustration of Pressure of Pleasure and Pressure of Humiliation. Very good. Miss Fara, you soon be ready for yellow qipao test, I think." Fara felt proud to be singled out and walked back to her place in the line of girls



as though on heels a good two inches higher than the ones she had on. Liu Wei raised one eyebrow, clearly disapproving of Mary Tang's praise and sceptical as to whether Fara was ever likely to be ready for advancement.

To Liu Wei and Tsai Linn, Mary Tang said, "Madam Chao wishes to see you. I will look after the class."

"Excellent, some time off," Liu Wei responded with a smirk.

Mary Tang said nothing as the other two left but then eased herself down onto a comfortable armchair. She gestured with a flick of her fingers to her slave who was still beside the door. He turned to face the wall and lowered his face to the floor. The girls watched, impressed by Mary's wordless control of her slave. Mary crossed her legs, leaving a stretch of thigh visible through the slashed skirt of her short black qipao. "Bring your cockroach over here, Fara," she instructed.

Fara let down the bar that Bernard's wrists had been chained to and released it from the wall. Grabbing the bar by the middle, she steered Bernard across the room until he was in front of Mary.

"Are his hands clean?"

Fara looked and nodded.

"Very well. Unchain his wrists. He can give me foot massage."

Bernard gulped at the thought of crouching before this goddess and caressing her feet. His dick stiffened at the prospect. Even the idea of approaching her was daunting, and the sight of her legs set off by the black silk of the slit-skirted qipao served only to make his erection worse. Fara giggled. "You're going to be busy," she laughed, pulling her glove from his mouth.

The four girls watched closely as Mary took control, anxious to gain hints as to how they could improve their own skills.

"No, not with mouth, With hands. See. All you girls learn from this. End of long day standing in heels telling men what to do, then you sit down — have them pamper you." She turned to Bernard. "Cockroach, you take off my shoes and massage feet. You know how to do that?" Bernard nodded. At least this was something he could do. His supervisor at the Station had insisted on it sometimes. Repellent though she had been with her thick ankles and bunioned feet, he had still found that he had something of a talent for helping her relax. It had made his life easier than it otherwise might have been. "You take care or you find more Path of Cane. Understand?"

Carefully, he slid Mary's shoes from each of her feet in turn. The beautifully sculpted heels of the shoes and their finely polished and stitched leather drew his attention as he placed them on the floor nearby.

"Do not get too enthused by shoes, cockroach," Mary admonished. "Please attend to feet."

Bernard, kneeling beside Mary, leant forward, his head inches from the hem of her skirt. As he did so, he caught a hint of scent of lotus flower — applied, he was sure, behind her knee. His fingers sought out her ankles, felt the tension in her muscles, and pressed and moved her foot to ease and relax her. While Bernard went to work, Mary embarked on a talk on the importance of giving slaves menial personal tasks to do as a way of emphasising their inferior status.

"This is perhaps a little more personal than you might permit a male to be normally," she began. "His flesh against yours."

Collette, as ever the most squeamish, gave a shudder.

"But if he understands that even when he is this close to you he is still under your thrall, he will be even more your slave. Other foot, cockroach. And of course, Path of the Look can be Path of Not Looking At All. All males are aroused by disdain and by being ignored. They crave attention. Giving them lowly tasks makes them more aware of how much they have to achieve to even be noticed. Toes now, cockroach."

Bernard, obedient as ever, was trying as hard as he could to keep his attention focused on his task. Mary Tang's delicate feet had perfectly formed toes. The nails were painted jet black, shining like some lacquer-work box with the Chinese character for "kiss" — 吻 — picked out in gold on the nail of the big toe on each foot.

Although Bernard was working assiduously on his task, he could not help but be aroused by the feel of Mary's feet, the smell of the lotus oil perfume, the swish of the silk of her qipao as she moved in her seat, and the sense of devotion that her studied contempt encouraged.

"So, let them clean floors, wash clothes, make beds, keep house — they are good for such simple tasks."

Bernard was still stroking carefully. Using his fingers to stroke each toe in turn. Suddenly, he became aware that, while his conscious mind was completely focused on the careful manipulation of Mary's feet, his unconscious mind and his cock were pursuing their own agenda. His climax came before he realised that his throbbing erection was beyond his control.

"Oh, Mary, Miss Tang," Daphne called, pointing to where Bernard had placed Mary's shoes. A thin stream of Bernard's jism lay across the finely polished leather. It was hard to tell who had the greatest look of horror on their faces, the girls at the thought of Mary's beautiful shoes despoiled by the cockroach's cum or Bernard choking back the relief of his orgasm with the fear for Mary's reaction.

When her response came, it was calmer than he could have hoped for. "Poor males. Slave of their desires. So little control over their bodies. So easy for them to betray themselves with lust. I should be angry but you have provided excellent demonstration. You can lick it clean, though. Quickly, cockroach. I don't believe man cum is good for shoes unless it is quickly followed by man tongue."

Bernard leant forward intending to pick up the soiled shoe.

"No, hands behind back. Just use tongue. I think there has been enough trouble from you using your fingers today."

Bernard didn't care, he simply did as he was told, accepting the salty taste of his own cum as he polished the toe of the shoe clean while the girls and his fellow male slaves looked on in disgust at the extent to which he was prepared to debase himself.

Mary Tang peered down at the shoe which Bernard had cleaned so thoroughly. "Put it on me, cockroach," she said. While he did so, she turned to the girls. "That is enough for this afternoon."

Tsai Linn and Liu Wei returned to the room. "We have just finished," Mary Tang announced. "What do you want done with these?" She gestured at the males waiting beside her.

Liu Wei shook her head. "Nothing now." She thought for a moment and then added, "Please, Fara, take the men back to their cages and lock them in; we not need them until later this evening."

"Always good to keep slaves caged when they are not working," Mary added with a laugh. "We don't want them wandering around spraying their jism wherever they happen to get excited. All of you: think of ways we might control this sort of behaviour. Tsai Linn will ask you about it tomorrow."

Fara, proud to be asked to take on such a responsible job, took great care in fastening a leash to each man's collar before she led them out of the training room and off to the slaves' accommodation.

## 16 Back Street Love

Soho was once London's centre of vice and was still an area where the underbelly of the city could be sensed. The pornographic book stores and girly clubs, not to mention the upstairs rooms rentable by the hour, had long gone, mostly replaced by down market shops, a couple of cheap hotels, overpriced wine bars, and a single fetish shop specialising in, as it said over the door, "Rubberwear for the Now Generation." Even so, it was possible to imagine activities that might not meet the approval of polite society going on behind the curtains at the grimy windows.

As he walked up Wardour Street, Stephen Higgs was worried. Even though he was sticking to "men-allowed" routes (mainly the back streets, certainly away from shopping areas), he was out of his designated area. He had a plausible excuse for being in town, but he wasn't convinced he'd be able to sustain it if he was stopped. It was difficult trying to keep an eye out for police patrols while still walking along as though you had a perfect right to be there. He stepped off the pavement to allow a woman coming towards him to pass. She took no notice of him as she swept by.

There was a hostel at the end of Dean Street. Un-sponsored men working in the restaurants and bars of Soho and the West End used it. Nobody took much notice of who came and went. Stephen stepped inside. The man behind the desk recognised him and nodded. Nobody asked for names here, that was understood.

The lobby was dark. On one wall, a notice board carried a myriad of notices, directives, and posters with various logos of various Government departments. Mostly it was stuff from the Department of Home Affairs with updates of the regulations. One carried a rather stern-looking photograph of Florence Daniels, the Minister for the Department. Someone had drawn a moustache on it. Stephen wasn't sure what surprised him more: that someone had dared to do that or that it hadn't been taken down.

He headed on through the building, along corridors lit by only bare light bulbs. Peeling paper and dingy paint told of years of neglect. He turned a corner and followed a narrow staircase down.

Opening the old dark brown door at the bottom, he went in.

"Hi! Great!" A shout of welcome greeted him from one of the group of twenty or so men inside the room. He knew quite a few of them by sight but none by name. In one corner, a half-dozen men were sitting huddled closely together, talking intently. The youngest in the group was sitting wide-eyed, obviously fascinated by what was being said. Stephen thought he recognised him. It took him awhile to work out who it was. Jim — what was his name? Oh yes, Wheeland. He'd been one of the lads hanging around with Fara Dangerfield. He was pretty sure neither Phyllis or the lad's parents would be happy he was here. Not that it had anything to do with Stephen, of course.

The rest of the group were all sitting down, in a semi-circle, facing towards a television set in the corner of the room. This was a rarity, a TV set not controlled by an Ident Card. It had a DVD player connected to it.

One of the men got to his feet. Stephen knew him as one of the founders of the group; he'd been at all of their earlier meetings. "Hullo, everyone," he said. "Good so many of you could make it. I'll get on with the showing."

Without further announcement, he slid a disk into the television's DVD player and pressed "Play". A flickering black and white image filled the screen — a poor, pirated print, Stephen guessed. Titles announced '*William Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew.*' There was a sharp intake of breath audible around the room.

A young man in front of him asked his companion in a whispered voice, "Is this Shakespeare? We didn't do this one at school."

"Shhh," his companion responded. "You'll find out why."

The audience got progressively more raucous as the film progressed. It was hard to tell which got the greater cheers: Petruchio's speech, "I will be master of what is mine own: She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house, My household stuff, my field, my barn, My horse, my ox, my ass, my any thing," or when Katharine spoke out against her sisters with "Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, thy head, thy sovereign; Such duty as the subject owes the prince Even such a woman oweth to her husband;"

The applause at the end drew a "Hey, keep it down in there," from someone at the door to the room.

Stephen waited for most of the others to go. It had been good to see something like that, he thought, a piece of normality in a crazy world. He wondered how long the group would be able to go on meeting. There was a lot of suspicion of male gatherings from the authorities and the combination of anti-dissident rhetoric in the media and the actual interventions of the Male Control Force meant being caught at something like this could be a real source of trouble. He wondered if it was worth it.

Stephen headed for the exit. The group that Jim was sitting with was still sitting and talking. Jim was nodding enthusiastically. Stephen felt uneasy. He wondered what the young man was agreeing with.

Stephen was not the only one engaged in illicit activities in that part of London.

Less than a quarter of a mile away, in the back of the Sunrise offices in Gerard Street, the four males being used in the JUMIST programme were sleeping in their cages. The room was dark, shutters at the windows saw to that, and there was no need to provide light while the men were in their cages. It was only five o'clock in the afternoon but, even so, they slept heavily, grateful for a respite from the day's exertions and knowing that later one or more of them would have to help out in the kitchens of the Tea Parlour or spend the evening clearing up the training room and readying it for the next day's activities.

Bernard tossed a turned, awake and asleep in his uncomfortable cage. In his dream a woman's legs passing by beside his cage, high-heeled shoes, tight skirts, dark hose. He rolled over banging against the bars of the cage's door. He had been, he thought, fast asleep, resting as best he could in the cramped conditions of the cage but now, suddenly, he was awake. To his astonishment, one of his companions was pushing open the door of the cage above him and climbing out. "What the fuck are you doing?" Bernard yelped quietly.

"Shhh. The cage wasn't locked properly. Look. I just noticed when I rolled over." He showed Bernard the padlock that had held the door shut. Its hasp hadn't been pushed home. "I'm making a run for it. I've had enough of Hong Kong Phooey and her friends. That chubby bitch in the white qipao tweaking my tits was the last straw. Just go back to sleep. I won't be missed until they come to sort out the evening shift and if you're asleep then you needn't get into trouble. I'd let you out, too, but I don't know where the keys are."

Bernard was partly relieved. The idea of escaping sounded attractive but the penalties for being caught certainly weren't. Maybe the whole thing was a set up anyway; an excuse to punish them more - if that was possible. On the other hand maybe that girl, Fara, had made a mistake when she'd locked him in.

"That's OK — you've got to take your chance," Bernard said, watching the man grope in the darkness for the cupboard at the end of the room where he thought he might find some clothes. How far will you get, Bernard wondered, remembering what was in the cupboard, in tea-stained overalls and bare feet?

## 17 A Question of Restraint

It was six o'clock when the disappearance of one of the slaves was noticed. Tsai Linn had been sent to collect two slaves for kitchen work and realised that one of the cages was empty. The unfastened padlock lay on the floor beneath the open cage door.

Whack! Bernard was startled awake by a cane slamming against the door of his cage. "Where is your friend, stupid round eye? You think we can't count up to four?"

"I - I - I don't know," stammered Bernard with some degree of truth.

"Cha!" Tsai Linn exclaimed. She checked the padlocks on the other cages and then stormed out of the room, only to return a few minutes later with Madame Chao, Liu Wei and Mary Tang.

Madame Chao looked at the open door and shook her head. "Stupid boy. No sponsor. Fugitive. How did this happen? Who locked them up?"

"I got one of the trainees to do it," Liu Wei volunteered. "The thin girl, Fara. She must have not fastened the padlock properly. Look, it is here..."

"You," Madam Chao snapped at Bernard through the bars. "Did Mistress Fara lock you in here earlier?" Bernard nodded. Madame Chao rattled the lock on his cage. "Well, this one secure. Pity this one not go walkabout — maybe get a better replacement. Liu Wei, call police, tell them there is runaway. Which one was this? Ha! Anyway, file on my desk. Tsai Linn, you need to talk to Miss Dangerfield. This is most unfortunate incident; she must learn from her mistake. I shall call Ms Daniels. She must be told and we will need new training boy. Mary, please see what could be done to stop this happening again."

"I could have a talk with the others," Mary said, giving the three remaining occupants of the locked cages an appraising look. "I am sure," she paused to flex her riding crop threateningly between her hands, "they will be happy to provide every assistance in discovering the whereabouts of our missing friend."

Bernard gulped. Mary Tang's enigmatic expression hid, he was sure, a determination to discover what had happened. He was certain that the fact that he had no idea of where the fugitive was wouldn't prevent a distressing interrogation. The idea of a talk with Mary Tang and her riding crop did not appeal.

Madame Chao shook her head. "Do not trouble. Police either catch him or not. Not our problem. We need to get on with training programme." Bernard was relieved.

A few minutes later, Tsai Linn confronted Fara. She was distraught at the thought that her carelessness might be the cause of the escape. "I can't have left the lock open. I am sure I checked. He was the first one I put into a cage. One other slave was already in a cage and then I went back and checked all the locks."

"I think, Miss Fara, you didn't push the hasp home quite tight. Then the slave could have opened the lock."

Fara looked devastated. "I'm so sorry. I can't think how it could have happened."

"We all make mistakes. Trick is only make them once. We will have to postpone yellow qipao test, though. You are not ready yet, I think."

Fara looked tearful. She had been anxious to progress as quickly as possible but she could see that this stupid mistake was going to set things back quite a bit. "Of course," she said, biting her lip. "I understand."

"No worry, you soon bounce back. Slave probably bounce back, too, once he find out how tough it is outside no-sponsor."

Fara smiled, but she didn't feel any happier.

The next morning, Liu Wei and the four trainees were sitting in the small lounge at one end of the training room discussing the planned morning's class. The four girls were enjoying cups of coffee. Liu Wei looked disapprovingly at the cups as she sipped her own delicately-scented jasmine tea. "I don't know how you stand the smell of that in the mornings," she said shaking her head. "Still, no matter. Today we try ways to keep slaves restrained. Why we do that?"

Liu Wei's question was met with blank looks. "Isn't it obvious?" one of the girls asked.

"Maybe, after last night," Liu Wei responded with a sneer directed towards Fara. "If so – quick lesson; we all go shopping in Oxford Street! I think it's more difficult than that. Remember: thought makes good deeds."

All the girls except Fara laughed. "All right, how about to keep them in one place?" one of the girls volunteered. "I mean, if you wanted to make sure they stay somewhere, then you could use something to do that. I mean that's the obvious one; what else is there?"

Liu Wei nodded in encouragement.

One of the other girls leant forward. "Well, I saw your demonstration at the station where you were using those wooden things, what were they called?"

"Cangues?" a third answered.

"Yes, those. Well, they made the men look pretty silly. So perhaps that's another use, humiliation."

"Very good. See, when thought is given, new ideas appear." Liu Wei clapped her hands together encouragingly.

"Oh, I know," the girl who had suggested "cangues" leapt in again. "You could use it as a punishment – making them unable to move or tying them in an uncomfortable position because they've done something they shouldn't."

Liu Wei nodded. "Any other ideas?"

"Oh yes – so you can make use of them. I mean, like if you wanted a seat or a table or something like that. You'd have to keep them in the right shape or it wouldn't work."

"Excellent! All good ideas. But be careful. No matter how clever the idea, you have to make sure the knot is tied or the lock is shut."



Fara blushed at Liu Wei's reference to her own stupidity.

Liu Wei went on with the lesson, taking the girls through into the classroom and encouraging the girls to try various methods of restraining the males. Collette proved herself capable with ropes, demonstrating her skills with a cruel hog tie. Daphne experimented with cuffs and chains, securing her male in a way that meant he could move about, but only in a crouched position. Anna concentrated on lacing her man into a long leather body suit, carefully tightening the ties and straps until he was completely unable to move, blindfolded, deafened, and silenced by the leather enclosing him.

Fara tried to help Collette, but seemed to be having difficulty with each task she attempted. Finally, she broke a finger nail attempting to knot ropes around the chest of the man. "I can't do this!" she sobbed, throwing down the rope and running from the room.

As Fara burst from the training room, she almost collided with Mary Tang. Although Mary's face remained as expressionless as ever, she sounded concerned. "Miss Fara, you seem upset."

For all Mary Tang's cool exterior, Fara found her a sympathetic figure. It was easy to talk to her. She sank down in a chair and looked up at Mary disconsolately. Mary Tang took out a cigarette and lit it, letting Fara answer in her own time. "Yes, the runaway. How could I have done that? I cannot concentrate on anything after that stupid mistake."

Mary placed a compassionate hand on Fara's shoulder. "Let me tell you a story. It is about a young girl in China. She was very poor, from a simple farming family. She went to work in house of pleasure in Shanghai. She try to learn Kòngzhì Rén. Start off white qipao, just like you. Many girls in her house much better than she. They have many customers, she has to take what she can. But she study hard. Soon she earn yellow qipao and then green. But she make many mistakes. One time she forget man locked in box for three days. He not happy. He say he submissive, but turn out not to be so! Girl was very upset but she learned to keep her feelings hidden. In time, she know how she feels matters only to her. Mistakes are to help you learn. Outside, she learn to show no emotion. Turns out this is great asset for student of Kòngzhì Rén. – many men like that, others just get confused and so easier to train. Example of Path of the Look, I think?"

Fara smiled at Mary's encouraging words. "So, in spite of that, she went on to win her black qipao?"

"What you think?" Mary responded, taking a final drag on her cigarette.

"I think I might try again," Fara said as she headed back to the classroom.

The man that she and Collette had been binding looked up as she entered. Ignoring Liu Wei and the other trainees, she snapped at him, "Don't gawp!" She looked down at him for a moment and took a short length of rope. Making a noose, she slipped it over his head and positioned it across his mouth as a bit gag. Tying the free end back to the rope linking his elbows behind him, she pulled on it to force him to arch his head back. "There," she said, "I think that improves it, don't you?"

The man gave a groan of discomfort. Collette clapped her hands in approval. "That's really the cherry on the top!" she exclaimed.

Even Liu Wei had to admit that Fara's addition turned a competent tie into an exquisite punishment for the poor captive.

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Bernard and the two other men being used for the training course were spending the evening working. After the class had finished with them, the men were required to help out with the chores around the Tea Parlour. They'd been assigned to laundry, one of Bernard's least favourite tasks. Dealing with the Sunrise girls' uniforms meant ironing an endless series of yellow shirts and blue skirts. The tedium was only relieved by the need to deal with the trainees' qipaos, with their fine silk and carefully stitching. With these, though, the slightest mark or crease from incompetent use of the iron showed and earned a crack of the cane and order to "Do it again, round-eye!" from their supervisor.

While the men kept working, the supervisor slipped out for a cigarette. "Keep working, I soon see if you been lazy when I come back!" she had warned.

For the men it meant a few moments escape from the relentless oversight of one or another of the Sunrise girls.

"Have you heard anything about Ned?" the man carefully putting the girl's uniform skirts on hangers asked Bernard.

Bernard was puzzled. "Ned who?"

"Ned who did a runner."

Bernard hadn't known his name. He had been just the man in the cage above him. He shook his head.

The third man chipped in. "I reckon he'll have got help from one of those Male Rights groups. They can fix you up with an Ident Card that makes it look like you're sponsored. He must be doing all right otherwise he'd have been back here by now. I can't see Madam Chao and the rest of these yellow shirts being pleased at him legging it."

Bernard wasn't so sure about Ned's likely success. He didn't have a chance to reply though. They heard their supervisor returning. All three got back to their tasks to look busy when she came back in. She looked at them all with suspicion. "More work, you three," she chided. "You no finish laundry, you no get supper."

## 18 Police Activity

Phyllis Dangerfield had spent a quiet afternoon reading. Harry had gone into town on a shopping errand. She had no doubt that he'd be using the opportunity to meet up with a few of his friends, but she didn't mind as long as he was back before curfew. At least, Harry hadn't caused any of the problems that her last houseboy had, Phyllis thought. That had been an unfortunate few months with police on the doorstep every other week. He'd been good in bed but, in the end, he just hadn't been worth the trouble.

The doorbell rang. When Phyllis opened the front door, Jim Wheeland was standing outside with a rucksack slung over his shoulder.

"I really need to talk to you," he said. "Please."

Phyllis hesitated. She wasn't sure if it was wise to ask Jim in while she was there in the house alone but, on the other hand, he had never been any trouble. "Come in," she said. "Go on through to the living room."

"Thanks, Ms Dangerfield," he said, following her waved direction.

He sat down on the couch, dropping his rucksack on the floor beside him. Phyllis followed him in and stood just inside the door. Jim looked to be as much in conflict as he had been at their last meeting. He was sitting with his hands clasped around his knees, looking up at her. She was left wondering if the rather severe black dress she was wearing was serving to intimidate or to arouse him. His gaze seemed to be fixed on the strands of pearls that stretched around her throat.

"I've not heard anything from Fara, I'm afraid," Phyllis said.

"No, no, I'm not surprised," Jim said. His voice seemed calmer, almost as though he was relieved by what Phyllis had said. "It will have been a shock to her."

"A shock?" Phyllis was puzzled.

"To learn about us."

"Us? There isn't any 'us,' Jim. I thought I made it clear I can't sponsor you."

"Oh yes, quite clear but..."

The doorbell rang again. Jim looked startled and grabbed his rucksack close to him.

"It's all right, Jim. It's probably just the post." Phyllis, puzzled by her caller's startled reaction, turned to the door. As she unlatched it, the door burst open and two police officers pushed by her. A moment later, one of them had Jim face down on the floor with his arms pinioned behind his back.

"Are you all right, Ms Dangerfield?" the other police officer asked.

"Yes, of course. What on earth is this? This boy hasn't done anything. At least not here."

"I'm sorry, Ma'am, we're with the Dissident Suppression Group. We've been watching Wheeland for a while." She crouched down beside Jim and cuffed his wrists behind his back. Jim looked sullenly at the two officers as he was dragged to his feet.

"He's my daughter's boyfriend. She's away on a New Opportunity programme. I think he's feeling a bit left out, that's all."

"I don't think so, Mrs Dangerfield." The officer tipped up Jim's rucksack. The contents spilled out onto the floor.

Phyllis looked down in horror. There on the floor lay a long and vicious-looking knife and with it a roll of duct tape and cable ties.

"We were going to be together," Jim started.

"Shut up," barked the officer holding him. "You're being arrested, don't make me have to go through all that 'anything you may say' crap."

Phyllis looked again at the rucksack's contents. Besides the other things, there was a packet of condoms. She hadn't seen such things in years. Prick sex wasn't the sort of thing that went on in her circles. As she realised what Jim had been planning, she suddenly felt faint. "Oh my," she said, sinking slowly on to the couch. "He was going to..."

"It's all right, Mrs Dangerfield. You weren't in any real danger. Like I said, we've been watching him. There's a group of dissidents who have been only too keen to encourage him. This gives us the evidence we need to pick them all up." She looked at Phyllis who was obviously badly shaken. "Is there someone who can come and keep you company? We need to take this one in."

"Err, yes, my neighbour, Marianne. She should be around. I'll call her."

Jim struggled as he was hustled out to the patrol car but the arresting officer was more than a match for his efforts. "Tell them I belong here," he called back over his shoulder to Phyllis.

Marianne Higgs, Phyllis's neighbour, came over as quickly as she could in response to her friend's call. She was horrified when she turned up and heard what had happened. Phyllis was pleased for her support. Marianne was sympathetic. Even so, her views on male-female relationships, made her wonder if this sort of thing was more likely if you treated men the way New Order did. It was intolerable, of course, but perhaps it was a consequence of tampering with what she saw as the proper order of things.

"He just must have developed this fixation on me. I really didn't encourage him. I don't think I ever saw him when Fara wasn't around until he came round to send her a letter."

The two carried on talking as Harry came in carrying a pile of shopping. Marianne called to him. "Harry, can you make some tea, please. Mrs Dangerfield has had a bit of a shock."

Harry looked concerned as he got the tea things together and brought them in. Unsure of whether or not to speak, he blurted out, "I saw the Police car. It's nothing to do with Miss Fara, is it?"

"No, Harry, but it's nice that you're concerned. Everything is all right, really. You needn't worry."

"Just make sure the doors are kept locked at night," Marianne added.

Harry looked startled.

"Don't worry. Ms Dangerfield has had a shock. She'll want to carry on as before. There really isn't anything to worry about. It was just one of Fara's friends. It looks like he got involved with some unpleasant people."

Harry wondered what it was all about. He knew there were groups opposed to the New Order Regime. He'd seen some anti-New Order graffiti last time he'd been in town. You didn't expect to find trouble out here in the suburbs, though. He had been asked if he wanted to go to some sort of "male support group" meeting by Stephen Higgs, but he'd turned that down. He didn't feel the need for "support" and besides, the whole thing had sounded a bit suspicious. He certainly didn't want to do anything that might put his sponsorship at risk.

Later on, after he had cleared the tea things away and Marianne had left, Phyllis called him back into the lounge. "I really need to relax," she said. "It's been a very trying day. I think you might give me a massage."

"Of course, Mrs Dangerfield."

"But I'll have a bath first. Go and run one, will you?"

"Certainly." Harry could tell from her tone that she was going to expect an evening of attentive service. He didn't mind; it had been distressing to see her so upset,

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In West End Central Police Station, Detective Sergeant Valerie Haste was reviewing the file on the Sunrise absconder. From her perspective, it was a routine case. Although sponsors were obliged to report such incidents, it wasn't actually a crime to abscond from a sponsorship position, just a very stupid move. The real problems came with things like curfew-breaking, leaving your control zone, and the sort of illegal activities that people without a stable environment got sucked into. He'd left his Ident Card behind, for example. That would mean he'd be trying to get a fake one or a stolen one, and that would lead him to some of the more criminal elements. That was really the only reason Valerie had for trying to find him.

She didn't have the time or resources for her efforts to go much beyond flagging it up for the patrols and checking the obvious sources. "Can you get me a CCTV scan for an absconder?" she called across to Gary Sumpter, the junior clerk that had been allocated to her office.

"Yes, ma'am," the junior responded willingly. He had been pleased to get a sponsorship — even if he was deliberately vague to his friends about just where his sponsorship was — and he wasn't going to let any lack of enthusiasm lead to him losing it.

"Gerard Street, vicinity of the Sunrise place. Late Wednesday afternoon, say, between five and six pm. Solitary male, mid-twenties, about 5 feet 10, 150 - 160 pounds. Wearing overalls. Bare feet."

"Bare feet?"

"Don't ask. Just see if he turns up on any of the cameras."

"Yes ma'am." It was dull job scanning CCTV footage, he thought, but at least, if he found something, Valerie would put in a good word when it came to his Performance Review.

Valerie looked across at Sumpter sceptically. It was the first time that they'd had a cross-dresser in the office — least ways, one that was doing it without being told to. "A TV watching CCTV can't be right," one of her colleagues had remarked spitefully. It wasn't that she minded that Gary chose to dress as a woman, except of course, it wasn't the way any woman dressed for work these days. And he was careful not to let anyone think he was a woman: he didn't wear a wig or make up and he had a moustache, for heaven's sake. He just liked to wear skirts and tops or dresses.

Actually, Valerie thought, she couldn't remember when any of her team had appeared in the office in anything but trousers. She'd tried asking him about why he did it, but that had just triggered a "Why, is there a problem?" and Valerie couldn't think what that might be, apart from a mild suspicion that he might be taking the piss.

Gary smiled at Valerie as he smoothed his skirt down across his lap and turned back to the monitor. It was good to be working for an open-minded boss, he thought. Women ought to be pleased that he wanted to look like them. Women were so innately superior; how could he not want to emulate them?

## 19 Mah Jong Night

The four girls were all together in their dormitory after a day's efforts in the classroom. Collette and Daphne were quizzing each other on the day's topics. Fara was lounging on her bed, scruffy in jeans and a tee shirt, reading a magazine and still feeling embarrassed about her mistake. Anna had been showering and now stood, wrapped in a towel, trying to dry her long hair in front of a mirror.

Liu Wei disturbed the group. "Madame Chao says we have special party tonight," she announced. "Celebrate your first month here." She didn't look like she was looking forward to it.

Collette, Daphne and Anna were all enthused by the prospect. Even Fara thought it might take her mind off her stupid error.

"Yes. Madame Chao arrange good meal, then all go play Mah Jong."

Although the meal sounded fine, neither Fara nor any of the others thought the game sounded like much fun. Fara, still upset by the slave escape and not wanting yet another reason to look stupid, tried to excuse herself saying she had no idea of how to play the game. Liu Wei brushed her protests aside and insisted that they should all put on their white qipaos and follow her. "Even you, Miss Careless," Liu Wei added, looking at Fara

They left the Sunrise Tea Parlour. Although it was warm, Fara felt a little embarrassed to be wearing the thin silk dress out in the street. The short walk to the restaurant was all it took, though, to give her the very agreeable sensation of drawing the envious attention of other women and the cowed, covert glances of the few men that they passed.

The street was like many in London, segregated so that women would not have to share the same pavement with unaccompanied men. On Oxford Street or Regent Street, a woman could walk freely, knowing that the only men she would encounter would be under some woman's control. Here, though, in Gerard Street, as so many in the capital, one side of the road was given over so that unaccompanied males could still move around. As she stepped confidently along the road, she suddenly understood some of what had been said about the Path of the Look. She caught sight of one man bowing his head as she swept past him, the slit silk of her dress swinging to expose her thighs and the tightly fitting fabric stretching across her belly and breasts. She smiled.

Tsai Linn saw her as she walked up to join the group. "See, Miss Fara, you have the power to control them without a word. Most impressive!" It made Fara feel a little better, even if she was still fretting over how she could have failed to fasten the padlock.

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Dinner had been organised at Lee Ho Fook's restaurant. One table had been set for the group: Liu Wei, Tsai Linn and Madame Chao sitting on a long couch and the four girls, next to one another, on chairs opposite. With all her guests seated, Madam Chao clapped her hands to get things under way and four uniformed waiters scuttled in obediently carrying dishes of food, bottles of rice wine and TsingTao beer.

The girls all enjoyed Chinese food and the sit-down restaurant meal was a pleasant contrast to the snatched lunches of sandwiches between training sessions that they had been used to since their training started. Tsai Linn explained some of the less familiar dishes and there was plenty for

everyone to enjoy. Liu Wei, piling food on her plate enthusiastically, showed just how she had achieved her more than ample figure.

Liu Wei reached forward greedily for the bowl of pork balls. As she did so, she knocked her handbag from the couch, sending its contents spilling across the floor. Collette went to help. "Don't worry!" Liu Wei lunged towards the small pile of things.

"No trouble," said Collette as she retrieved a lipstick and powder compact that had fallen out. But then there was something else. "Hang on," she said. "What's this?"

She held up a small brass key with its orange plastic fob. On it was written "Cage #3".

"Wasn't this the cage that was found open? The one Fara is supposed to have left unlocked? What's it doing here?"

"How would I know? Maybe she put in my bag to make it look as though I let slave out. Here, give it to me."

Madam Chao sat quietly through the exchange and then spoke. "I don't think so. The girls don't have access to the keys. They are returned to the key cupboard when the males are let out in the morning. All Fara needed to do was fasten the padlock shut. Nobody has suggested she needed a key. I wonder why the key would be in your bag, Liu Wei, unless you had used it to open a cage."

"One of the males, then. They are devious. Stole key, used it to escape, and then placed in bag to make me look foolish."

"You would be foolish indeed to believe that. Slave escapes, then comes back to plant key? Not likely! Other slave steals key but only one slave escapes? Not likely. No. Please leave us. You and I will talk again in the morning but I do not wish to share my dinner with a foolish person." Madame Chao folded her arms and looked directly at Liu Wei.

Liu Wei scowled at the others around the table and grabbed her bag. Without saying anything, she turned on her heel and headed for the door.

"Well," Madam Chao said, watching her go, "we can continue with our meal. So, Miss Fara, how are you looking forward to your test for Yellow Qipao?"

"But I thought..." Fara looked at Tsai Linn who had told her that it would have to be postponed.

"I think it can go ahead now," she said. "I will speak to Mary Tang and see when it can be."

"Oh, wonderful," Fara responded while her three companions all applauded, happy that one of their group was ready to take the first step up.

A short time later, the party moved on to an upstairs room where the girls were to be introduced to the delights of Mah Jong.

The room was smoky. There were six circular tables. Five were occupied with four women sitting around them, intent on their games. "Sit, ladies," Madam Chao commanded, gesturing to the one empty table in the room.

As the girls took their places, Madam Chao called for jasmine tea. In the centre of the table, a box covered and lined with red velvet held the bamboo and ivory tiles used to play the game. With over a hundred tiles bearing a strange array of unfamiliar symbols, the girls felt more than a little intimidated by the prospect of learning the game.



"Mah Jong is an interesting game," Madam Chao announced. Anna and Daphne looked sceptical. "It is a game of skill and strategy, a game where you must calculate the possibilities and must sometimes pretend things are not as they are. But it is also a game of chance. Good hand or bad hand, you can play them well or poorly. This is like life and is like males, too. Poor male can be well-trained. Good male can be spoiled."

The ring of a bell at an adjacent table brought a waiter scuttling out to serve Mijiu. The women at the table each took a glass, downed it, and then returned to their game, the tiles clacking noisily on the table.

"Also, maybe playing Mah Jong give you insight into Chinese culture. Sometimes it is right to wait for the best move. Sometimes it is wiser to stop your opponent from making the move they want rather than to make the move you want."

Fara picked up one of the tiles from the box. It felt warm in her hand, its edges soft from its use in thousands of games.

"Plus, another benefit comes from proficiency."

"What's that, Madam Chao?" Collette asked.

"You can make a great deal of money! It is a very competitive game."

As if to underline her remarks, there was a cry of "Majong!" followed by a disgruntled "Ha!" from one of the other tables. As a portly Chinese matron, got to her feet in evident annoyance at having lost. She reached forward to the table and picked up a small handbell. Two short rings brought a man carrying what was evidently the woman's handbag out of the back room. She took out a purse and unfolded a wad of notes. She passed across what must have been over £100, Fara thought, to the woman opposite her at the table before stalking off, with the man trailing along behind her.

Madam Chao spent a while explaining the rules and taking the girls through a simple game. They found it unexpectedly engaging. Daphne, competitive as in everything, was an aggressive player. Anna was more cautious, taking longer to pick up the essential points. Fara and Collette had both played cards at home, were familiar with rummy, and found it easy to understand the essentials.

The games went on for over an hour. Then, Fara looked up to see a face she recognised. Corey Preston, a friend of her mother, was standing in the doorway. Fara wondered for a moment if she was there with news from home — she realised that she hadn't spoken to her mother since she'd got to Gerard Street — but soon realised that Corey's arrival had just been so she could catch a few words with Madam Chao.

Taking a moment out from the game, Madam Chao went to greet her. Fara did overhear a few words from Madam Chao. "She is all right, you say? Then, we shouldn't let that interfere. Distraction at this time would be unhelpful." They didn't seem to be significant. She soon forgot about them and returned to her game.

It was midnight before Madam Chao and the girls headed back to the Tea Parlour.

Contrary to expectations the girls had all enjoyed themselves.

## 20 A Demonstration of Competence

"As you would expect, Miss Fara, those that wish to progress in the art of Kòngzhì Rén have to demonstrate their understanding of the principles of the art and their ability to put it into practice." Mary Tang was explaining to Fara and the others how the process of examinations would work. "It is sufficient, at this stage, only that you prove to me you can put into practice the four Paths: the Hand, the Cane, the Rope, and the Look. You must also show an understanding of the four pressure points of Pain, Pleasure, Humiliation and Fear. Please remember: at this stage, we do not expect you to exhibit great prowess in any particular field. It is more important that you can show a range of skills."

Fara nodded, biting on her lower lip. She felt confident about her understanding but she knew that putting it all into practice was a different matter. The other three listened with a mixture of jealousy that Fara was having the first attempt at the exam and relief that it wasn't them.

"Good. In that case, you need to know that the test will start this evening at seven o'clock. You will take one slave from the cages. Here is a key — cockroach, I think it is. You have worked with him before. I will observe. You may do whatever is needed to demonstrate your understanding of Kòngzhì Rén. When you believe you have finished, return the slave to his cage. I will observe, but I will not comment nor answer any questions during the trial."

"And how will I know if I have passed?"

"Do not worry; you will know for yourself, I believe. But afterwards, I will deliberate. Such an award is not made lightly. This may only be the first step, but it must be taken properly."

At seven o'clock exactly, dressed in white qipao, white stilettos and white, wrist-length gloves, Fara presented herself to Mary in the training room. Mary was waiting, standing impassively at one end of the room. She was wearing a long black qipao in black silk brocade. Bright red piping edged the collar, shoulder fastening, and the slit in the side of the skirt. Beside her, held in a crouched position by hobbling straps and fastenings on his leather suit, was a slave; the same one, Fara assumed, that had accompanied her on her first appearance at Gerard Street.

Fara was impressed by the stillness that Mary seemed to project around her. Even her slave, hobbled as he was, seemed to be surrounded by an aura of calm. The poor man was obviously uncomfortable. The leather suit alone, stiff and heavy, would mean he was hot and would find moving difficult. The hobbling that fastened his ankles close to one another and his thighs to his ankles would make every step in Mary's wake a considerable effort. His leather hood had only tiny eyelets allowing him sight. Across his mouth a thick round bar, held in place by a strap around his head, acted as a bit gag. It pulled uncomfortably at the corners of his mouth. In the middle of the bar a hook was fitted. This served to hold the strap of Mary Tang's handbag, allowing it to hang conveniently accessible for her. She unfastened the bag and drew out a scent atomiser, using it to blow a cloud of scent into her hair. The slave held his head back, making sure the bag hung clear of his body. Tossing the atomiser back into the bag, she then found her cigarettes and lighter. She took one from the case and lit it. As she returned the cigarette case and lighter to her bag, her slave had to suffer a stream of exhaled smoke in his face. "There," she said, turning back to Fara, "the scent of Lotus flowers and tobacco is a soothing one, I feel."

Fara smiled. She wasn't sure that Mary's slave, struggling to stay still while the handbag dangled from his gag, felt particularly soothed.

"Now," proposed Mary, "are you ready to begin?"

Fara took a deep breath. "Yes," she said, sounding more confident than she felt.

She started with a polite bow to Mary before walking slowly from the room. Mary followed her. At first, her slave made a move to hobble after her, but a simple shake of Mary's head told him he should remain. Fara walked down to the room where the slave cages were, trying to concentrate on the routine she had planned.

Bernard was crouched in his cage. Fara unfastened the padlock and opened the door. An admonishing finger told Bernard to remain in place. She stepped back from the cages and took a leash from the hooks on the wall. She clicked her fingers and beckoned to Bernard, who emerged on all fours. As he started to stand, she shook her head. He remained on his hands and knees and crawled towards her. Another finger gesture pointed him to her foot. Bernard complied eagerly, as Fara had known he would, pressing his face to the floor beside her shoe and then, as she moved it towards him, bringing his lips to the toe to kiss it.

As he did so, Fara reached down and fastened the leash to Bernard's collar. She jerked on the leash, pulling him up. His head was now close to her hip, his face barely an inch away from where the slit of Fara's qipao closed at the top of her thigh.

Fara could tell that Bernard was slipping into a submissive reverie. While she knew this would help him be more obedient, she needed him to pay attention to what she wanted from him. She reached down and twisted one of his nipples, bringing forth a whimper. "Come," she said, pulling him to his feet and leading him back to the training room.

Once there, Fara tied his wrists with a simple but efficient use of rope and then chose a cane from the rack.

With the long cane as a guide, she went through a repeat of the exercise where they had steered a slave through various positions. In that first exercise, Bernard's attention, had needed to be improved by several face slaps and hard cuts from the cane across his buttocks. This time, he followed her directions almost without fault.

Mary stood quietly at the end of the room watching without a word. Her hobbled slave crouched beside her. The only movement from her came as she took the occasional draw on a cigarette, sending a curl of smoke drifting lazily into the air above her. Her long, black qipao made her look like a black marble pillar beside the door.

Fara was unable to read Mary's reactions to the work she was doing but, still feeling confident, she tapped Bernard on his back, his thigh, and then on the back of his neck, indicating that he should kneel and drop his face to the floor. She stepped towards him. He, anticipating that she was asking him once again to lick her shoe, lifted his head slightly. Fara brought her foot up and pushed down on the side of his head trapping it beneath her shoe with the spike of her heel inches from his eye. Bernard's panicked squeal told Fara that he was terrified of what might happen next but, confounding his fears, she lifted her foot and crouched down beside him.

"Did that frighten you, cockroach?" she whispered in his ear.

Bernard, still shaking with the thought of what Fara might have done with the heel of her shoe, nodded.

"And yet, that sad little prick of yours is as stiff as anything. Why would that be, cockroach? You can tell me, can't you?" Fara reached down and drew a finger nail across his belly just above where his cock was springing upwards.

Bernard whimpered as his cock twitched in response to the pleasurable sensation, at the same time shamed by the way that his body betrayed his addiction to submission.

"Yes, Mistress," he gasped, "please, will you let me cum?"

Fara laughed. "Don't be silly! What an idea. No, you can go back in your cage and you'll keep your hands tied out of the way, too. I think you've had quite enough amusement for one day. Go on. Go downstairs. Put yourself in your cage and I'll come down to shut you in shortly."

He looked up at her for a moment and then bowed his head. He got to his feet, bowed again, and then left. Fara waited for several minutes before following him.

In the room downstairs, Bernard was back in his cage. His cock throbbing and his hands still bound behind him, he could only watch dolefully as Fara shut the door firmly and clipped the padlock in place with a satisfied smile as the hasp clicked home. Fara felt confident that she had shown all she needed. She hoped that she had done enough but she wasn't certain it was enough to impress Mary Tang. She looked across at her. "That is it," Fara said. "I have finished."

Mary Tang nodded. She reached down into the handbag that still hung, open, from her slave's gag. She took out a powder compact, flipped it open and stared at the mirror in the lid for a moment before snapping it shut once again and returning it to her bag

"Thank you," Mary replied with no trace of either approval or dissatisfaction on her face. "I shall consider your performance." She snapped her bag shut, turned on her heels, and with a click of the fingers to indicate that her slave should follow, left the room with Fara wondering whether or not she had passed the test.

At the end, Fara felt completely exhausted. The others gathered around her in the dormitory.

"How did it go?" Collette asked.

"I don't know."

"You'll have done fine," Daphne chipped in.

"Maybe. It did seem to go all right and I had the one we called 'cockroach' to boss around; he's the easiest of them, isn't he?"

"Lucky cow! I bet I get stuck with 'slug.' He doesn't seem to know his right from his left half of the time."

"Well, I feel like I've run a marathon. It's so hard having to pay so much attention all the way through so that every move is done correctly. There were some bits that I'm sure I messed up. I'll have to wait and see what the inscrutable Mary says, I suppose."

"No clues?"

"Nothing. Still, she didn't say I'd failed."

## 21 Filling Gaps

Detective Sergeant Valerie Haste of the Male Control Force was sitting in Madame Chao's office at the rear of the Sunrise Tea Parlour. "I'm afraid I don't have much to report on the absconder," she said. "He has not appeared on any of our surveillance operations. There was a shot of a man answering his description on closed circuit TV crossing Shaftesbury Avenue near Dean Street but after that nothing. Some of the cameras around there have been vandalised. We think we know where he was headed but nothing yet. He's probably still in the area but apart from that I'm afraid we haven't succeeded in finding him."

Madam Chao thought for a moment. "Please, it is of no concern," she responded. "I do not think he was any great risk to anyone except his own stupid self. Although, of course, Ms Daniels will be concerned if the project is delayed at all as a result."

The mention of the Minister for Home Affairs caused a visible stiffening in Valerie Haste's manner. "Yes, well understandably. I understand that she is anxious for the programme here to succeed and something like this must be disruptive."

"We are managing but it is, of course, an embarrassment for us."

"Do you know how he came to abscond?"

"Yes, I believe so. Those issues will be remedied but I wondered, could you help ensure disruption is minimised? We do not need anything special. Perhaps you know of a way we could replace the absconder without bothering Ms Daniels further. After all it is embarrassing for us that he has gone and for you that you have not found him. Best if we solve the problem before Daniels has to worry."

Valerie Haste was happy to help if it kept the politicians out of things; the last thing she needed was that level of complication in handling dissident affairs. "I am sure we can do something," she said, as she got up to leave. "Let me see when I get back to West End Central."

A short time later Madam Chao called Liu Wei in to see her. "Do you wish to explain? I assume you do not wish to dispute the fact you were responsible for slave absconding?"

Liu Wei looked sulky and shook her head. "These girls have no right learning Kòngzhì Rén. It's a waste of time."

"Oh. Of course. I was forgetting your long Chinese heritage. Where was it you were born? Guangzhou? Beijing? Ah, no, Shoreditch! Cha, you need different views, I think. We find somewhere else for you to work. Go supervise production line in factory. There you can bully to your heart's content. If your Kòngzhì Rén skills so good maybe you can get production rates back on target."

Liu Wei looked unhappy at the prospect. The Sunrise factories weren't much more pleasant places for the supervisors than for the workers.

"Otherwise there is steamer Mighty Lotus leaving for Tianjin tonight. I could arrange for you to be on board. No place here for people in Sunrise that do not see things the right way. Back in head office maybe you learn to think better."

When Madam Chao said "on board", Liu Wei wasn't sure if she meant as a passenger or cargo. Either way, she had no wish to disappear off to China.

"So I tell from your sour face that this is not a good idea. I will call factory and tell them you start there tomorrow. Please do not visit JUMIST girls. I do not wish the programme to be disrupted more than it has been already."

Liu Wei was not the only one experiencing a change of direction. Gary, Valerie Haste's junior clerk was sitting in his boss's office with a concerned look on his face. "But I'm quite happy here, Ms Haste."

"I'm sure. Sadly we can't all be happy all the time. And since you haven't succeeded in tracking down Madame Chao's runaway you're going to fill in until we find him."

"But I don't know anything about what Sunrise are doing down in Gerard Street."

"Fine. You'll have no preconceptions then. Listen, they are training some girls in the art of bossing men about. They just need some men to practice on. You should be used to being bossed around by now, given you've been in this department a month. You'll find it easy."

Gary wasn't sure. A girl he knew had used some Sunrise products on him once, "Just to try them out," she'd said. The heavy wooden cangue had been a humiliation and the thick plug gag painful after only a short time. He didn't think he was in any position to argue with Valerie, though.

Gary turned up at the Sunrise Tea Parlour asking for Madam Chao. In retrospect, Valerie told herself, it would have been a good idea to warn Madam Chao about Gary's dress preferences and to suggest to Gary that turning up to his new placement in drag might not be the way to get things off to the best start.

With Madam Chao busy elsewhere, Tsai Lin had the task of greeting the new arrival. She seemed not to be fazed by the arrival of a moustachioed man in pencil thin knee length skirt, 3 inch heels, black hose and a white high necked blouse that fastened at the back.

"Detective Sergeant Haste said I was to report here to help out with the JUMIST programme. My name's .... "

"Good, follow me," Tsai Lin said crisply, cutting him off without even seeming to notice his appearance. She led the way inside and downstairs to the room where the males were kept between training sessions. "Undress. In there please," she said pointing at the open door to cage number three.

"Are you sure this is right? I mean... DS Haste didn't say I'd have to..."

"Of course. But do not think we are not sensitive to different lifestyles. You have stockings and garter belt under that skirt?" Gary nodded. "OK. You keep them on. Everything else off."

Gary, pleased with the concession, did as Tsai Lin ordered. She was happy to have a fourth slave for the practice sessions and in any case, she thought, he'll wreck those stockings on the wire floor of that cage before too long, and Madam Chao could decide what to do about all this when she got back.

Returning to the training room, Tsai Lin found Madam Chao talking to the class and introducing another of the Sunrise girls to Fara and her friends.

"This is Wan Yu," Madam Chao announced pointing to a slim, pale-skinned girl in the Sunrise uniform of yellow blouse and blue skirt, "Her name means 'Gentle Jade' but not so gentle with men as you will find. She will replace Liu Wei who has new career directions. Any questions? No. Good. Now, I have one very pleasant duty to conduct." She clapped her hands.

For a side door Bernard emerged. He had been clad in a leather suit and hood for the occasion. His arms were strapped to his sides and his ankles hobbled so that he could only shuffle forward slowly. In his mouth, a solid rubber ball prevented any coherent speech. The ball had a hook in its centre. From the hook hung a coat hanger and on the coat hanger was a qipao of the most vibrant buttercup yellow silk.

"The first of our trainees have achieved their first step towards black qipao in Kòngzhì Rén. Miss Fara, your examination was excellent, I am told by Mary Tang. So we are happy to make this award. You are now yellow qipao. All others will follow you soon, I am sure."

Madam Chao took the hanger from Bernard's hook and waved for Fara to come forward. As she passed the dress to Fara, the others broke out in generous applause. Fara looked up to see Mary Tang at the back of the room. In an uncharacteristic display, she was applauding as well.

Fara took her new dress back to her place. The others gathered around her admiring it.

Mary Tang joined the group. "A very good performance, Miss Fara," she said. "I was very happy that you met this first standard. I am sure you others will do the same very soon. Miss Fara, I enjoyed the way in which you started with your slave. The wordless confrontation, the use of gesture, the pose and simplicity of movement were all excellent demonstrations of the Path of the Look. When you pulled his head close to your hip, it was clear from the look on his face that he was completely under your command. Cockroach is an easy subject but, nevertheless your performance was compelling. Of course, the qipao you were given is an aid to your Look. You wear it well but for progress to the higher levels you will need to make your own choices. Your use of fear, pain and humiliation were simple but enough at this level to convince me that you see their value and can apply them. These need more work for the next level, though. I did like the way you sent him down to the cage on his own at the end of the session; a very good example of the pressure of humiliation, I thought."

Fara was happy to bask in the approval of her friends but she had been bitten by the bug. Her only thought was how she could move on to win her green qipao and then, maybe one day, the black. She took the opportunity to talk to Mary. "I did enjoy doing the exam," she said.

"And I enjoyed watching you."

"Is it very difficult to win the black qipao?"

"Not difficult but it needs practice and application. And time."

"How long did you study for?"

"I study still. Never stop. I may have black qipao but only two dragon. There is always more to learn."

"Yes but how long did you take to become black qipao? Months? Years?"

Mary nodded. "Five years. I had some advantages. House of Pleasure is good place to learn. many different men, soon find out many different weaknesses, many different ways to make them submit. But I was a slow learner. I did not always listen. Sometimes I thought I knew best myself. I failed Yellow Qipao test twice before I passed. You may learn quicker than me."

Fara nodded, grateful for the guidance and proud to have passed on her first attempt something her idol had needed to try three times. Even so, five years sounded like a long time!



## 22 A New Week

Valerie Haste was standing in the small back room behind the hostel in Dean Street. The Dangerfield boy hadn't proved to be very resistant when it came to interrogation. For all his juvenile bravado, Valerie was convinced that he'd been encouraged to plot Phyllis's kidnap and rape. It hadn't been long before he'd told his interrogators about this place but Valerie didn't think it was likely to be much help.

The people at the hostel claimed they didn't know anything about the people that came and went to this small room. Well, they would say that, wouldn't they? Now she was inside it there wasn't much to see. A few chairs, a table near the barred window, the television, of course, with no ident card reader and a DVD player. It was pretty obvious what sort of things would have been played on that but there wasn't any trace of any of it.

In the corner of the room was a rubbish bin. Valerie tipped out the contents. A bundle of brown tea-stained cloth turned out to be a set of overalls. Valerie guessed this would have been worn by the absconder from the Sunrise Tea Parlour. She bagged it up for identification, assuming that anyone from Sunrise took the slightest notice of what their slaves were wearing.

There was depressingly little else; there were no printed papers in the bin. Valerie had hoped to find a discarded flyer for a meeting or some other piece of group propaganda but whatever had gone on here, it looked like people had got together by word of mouth. All she found were a few cigarette packets and some sweet wrappers - all, very depressingly, not illegal.

Back in the Police Station, Valerie was keen to get Jim to identify others in the group - whatever it was. "You know they won't be in the least worried that you've been arrested?"

Jim was sitting with his wrists cuffed behind him, a precaution that had been taken because of the times he'd suddenly erupted into violence during questioning. "Who would that be?"

"Your friends in Dean Street. Well, I say friends. I mean not really friends to set you up like this, eh? What did they do? Tell you you had a right to express your feelings for Ms Dangerfield? Say she shouldn't be allowed to deny you?" Valerie had a good idea of the sort of arguments these male groups used. "Did they get you the knife? Did they get you the condoms?"

Jim looked sulky and said nothing.

"We know there was at least one sponsorship absconder using that place. That will mean there will have been all sorts of illegal activities going on from there. Did they tell you they'd get you a new ident card? Or maybe they were going to get you a room where you could take Ms Dangerfield? How was that going to work anyway?"

"It wasn't like that. We were going to be together. Those things - in the rucksack - they were only to show her I was serious. She would have seen things my way. We'd have been happy there. Her daughter's left home now. She needs someone more than that houseboy."

"What makes you think that? Did she tell you that? Or did they tell you that, your friends in the back room?"

"No. I could tell. I mean she has friends who live like that. We could have been like Mrs Higgs and her husband."

"Husband?"

"Yes. Sure. I told you. There are people that live like that. We could have lived like that."

Valerie was feeling sorry for Jim Wheeland. He was obviously deluded. Whoever he had been talking to in the Dean Street room must have encouraged him but maybe he really didn't know who they were. She didn't feel she was getting very far. Unless there was something to the Higgs thing. Husbands were pretty unusual these days and at least it was something for her to have a go at.

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In her office in Gerard Street, Madame Chao looked at the bundle of clothing that Valerie Haste was showing her. "Yes, could be runaway's," she said. "When they work with tea it makes overalls that colour. You think you find him?"

Valerie shook her head. "No, not really. But it helps build up a picture of what's going on with the underground groups and you never know."

"I like how you work Detective Sergeant. Thorough. Realistic. Methodical."

"Like your Kòngzhì Rén?"

"Ha! You are well briefed. Yes, I think your methods must be much like ours. A systematic way of doing things. A thoughtful approach to each problem. Which reminds me, thank you for filling the gap left by runaway. I shall tell Ms Daniels that you have helped a lot."

"I should have told you about his - well - dress sense."

"Cha! Makes no difference here." Madam Chao laughed. "He dress as we like but interesting to have girls get a different challenge in their domination. Not sure they will have encountered anything like young Sumpter before."

There was a knock on the office door.

"Come!" Madam Chao announced.

A dark haired girl in Sunrise uniform opened the door. "Oh. I'm sorry Madam Chao but you were going to talk to the JUMIST trainees."

"That's all right Wan Yu. I think the Detective Sergeant and I have finished. Do we need to do any more now?"

"No, that's fine, Madam Chao," Valerie responded. "I'll get back to you if we have any more news but in the meantime, good luck with Sumpter."

Wan Yu giggled at the mention of Gary's name. "He's a confused boy. Likes to wear women's clothes but not so keen on being told which women's clothes to wear. Thinks trousers not for him! Even with zip at side."

Valerie smiled. "Like I said, good luck," she said as she left.

Wan Yu and Madam Chao made their way to the training room. Fara in her yellow cheongsam and Collette, Anna and Daphne in their white ones were waiting together with Tsai Lin.

"Good morning ladies," Madam Chao announced. "More work today, I am afraid, but still much to learn."

The girls smiled, their enthusiasm for learning the arts of Kòngzhì Rén was undiminished.

"Miss Fara, you will start more work on Pressure of Pain for Green Qipao level. Miss Collette and Miss Daphne, Tsai Lin tells me you should be ready for Yellow Qipao test this week. Miss Anna still work to do on Path of the Cane, I believe, but will soon catch up others."

Anna nodded, looking a little glum. That had been the hardest thing on the course so far for her and she still didn't have the hang of directing the cane and varying its direction and force according to the message she intended it to send.

"No worry, Miss Anna," Wan Yu interrupted. "I give you special coaching. I was not quick to learn but now can write my name on man's buttock with few quick strokes."

"I'll be happy if I can just manage an 'A', I think," said Anna with a smile. "Thank you."

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Later that evening, Fara's mother and Valerie Haste sat down in the Sunshine Tea Parlour with Phyllis' daughter.

"Fara, this is Detective Sergeant Haste," Phyllis began. "We need to tell you about Jim,"

"Oh, what's he been up to?" Fara looked across at the sergeant. "I mean; I'm assuming that you're not here about that bottle of vodka."

"No, miss, it's more serious than that," Valerie cut in "Did you have a letter from Jim Dangerfield? Can I ask what was in it?"

Fara looked at her mother and then back at Valerie. "There's not much to tell. I had a letter from him but I didn't even open it. I guess it was some sort of infatuated love letter. I didn't have the time to think about it then. We were just getting into the start of the course."

"So, you don't know if it was anything like this?" Valerie handed over a sheet of paper in a plastic sleeve. It looked like it had been crumpled up and then smoothed out again. "We found this in his room."

'Fara,' the note read, in between a number of crossings out and corrections. 'I know we have been spending a lot of time together but I need to let you know that I have realised that Phyllis that needs

me and wants to have me around. That houseboy of hers isn't any answer to the things she really needs. She deserves someone to worship her in a way that only I can. I can't imagine anything better than being with her and I know that she wants to be with me. I will do anything to make that happen. I'm sorry. This must disappoint you but it has to be this way. James.'

"Phew," said Fara, "heavy stuff. I mean he was always pretty intense but this sounds as though he'd really gone over the top." She looked across at Phyllis, "No offence, Mum. I guess you think this is nonsense too."

"Of course. But it's what he was planning after sending you this."

"There are a series of charges he's facing," Valerie explained. "Conspiracy to kidnap, attempted rape, carrying an offensive weapon with intent to wound."

Fara sat white faced. "But he's not like that. I mean a bit crazy, maybe but ...."

"We think he might have been got at by some radical masculinists. We're following up several leads. Now, though, we just need you to confirm that is Jim's writing."

Fara nodded.

"Thank you, miss. That's all I need," said Valerie as she took the paper back.

"What will happen to him?"

"There will be a trial of course. It's hard to see there will be any verdict but guilty given the evidence. Sentence could be up to ten years for something like this. He could make that less if he was more cooperative about who put him up to this but so far he hasn't wanted to help."

Fara thought for a moment. "Would it help if I talked to him?"

"I'm not sure, Miss."

"He's always had a stubborn streak but, well, I've had plenty of practice in getting around that. I might be able to get him to see that he could make life easier for himself. And if it helps stop something like that happening in the future, that's got to be worth trying."

"Well, it's good of you to offer. Let me think about it. I'll get back to you."

Fara and Phyllis watched as Valerie left them. "So are you all right?" Fara asked her mother.

"Yes. I was shocked at first but the police have been wonderful. I'm sure there's no real danger now. Corey was going to get Madam Chao to let you know what had happened but they were worried it would interfere with a test you were doing or something. Let's forget about it. How is your training course going? I haven't heard anything from you since you got here."

"I'm sorry Mum, I should have written or called or something. I saw Corey. I wondered why she was here. We've been so busy though, it's been really absorbing. I guess I've lost track of the outside world a bit. I haven't listened to my music player for three weeks."

"That's astonishing! You must have been busy!" Phyllis knew Fara was never separated from her music player. It had been a joke between them. "And you're finding it helpful?"

"Absolutely. It's so much better than that wishy-washy stuff they pumped out at New Opportunity. This is all really practical stuff and we get our own males to work on and there's this really cool girl, Mary, who tests us so we know if we're learning things. That was an important test - I just passed my first exam and...."

"Goodness, Fara, it really does sound like something special. I'm glad you're finding it helpful."

"I thought I'd be spending the evenings out around here but there hasn't been time, what with the studying and feeling worn out after a day's training. I'm so glad I decided to come, though. Thanks for finding it for me. When I get back I'll help you with Harry. I'll need someone to practice on"

Phyllis was delighted with Fara's idea. It wasn't often her daughter offered to help around the house. "How much longer has the course still to run, anyway? I thought you'd be back soon."

"It's supposed to run for two months. I mean obviously we won't stay here until we get to Black Qipao - that took Mary Tang five years! There's just over a month left. "

## 23 Path of the Look

Bernard had been left in his cage for some time. The others had been taken out, no doubt for work in the loading bay or elsewhere, but he was still locked behind the bars that held him captive. At first he had thought that this was an improvement over his usual lot but he soon began to feel uncomfortable at his confinement, hungry and thirsty and desperate to use the toilet.

Voices from the corridor told him that he was about to be disturbed and moments later Wan Yu and the four western girls came into the room.

They all lined up beside Bernard's cage, taking no particular notice of the fact that he was there.

"Today we talk about Path of the Look, OK?" Wan Yu announced.

Her four students nodded.

"For Kòngzhì Rén how you look; how slave sees you is important. See, look at these." Wan Yu passed around a number of magazines for the girls to look at.

The four looked at the magazines with distaste. "Isn't this the sort of disgusting thing that New Order banned when they first came into power?" Collette asked holding out a double page spread of pictures of a corset clad dominatrix, wielding a whip over helplessly cowering slaves.

"Yes," Fara laughed. "Men don't need this sort of fantasy now. They can have the real thing..."

Wan Yu went on. "Let us consider the question of look. We must think of two things. How slave see you and how you look at him. I do not talk only of clothes; they are tools of trade. Like whip or rope. We use them as we wish. I do not say you must look this way to train man, only think. How will way I look affect him. For example – this..." Wan Yu pointed to Collette's picture of a corseted dominatrix. "Is she indulging his fetishistic urges or using them to enslave him?"

"I don't know," Collette responded uncertainly. "I guess it could be either. Or even both..."

"Good! Correct answer!" Wan Yu applauded Collette's words. "We cannot know. Only she knows why she is doing it. So first thing with the Path of the Look is intent. Never let your look be an accident. Always consider its effect. You may choose to ignore that, dress as you please because it pleases you, but be aware even that has an effect. How much humiliation will a slave feel if his Mistress wear old jeans and sweater – not even bothered to intimidate him with heels and leather? Hmm?"

"A shame," Fara chipped in, "I was quite looking forward to putting on something like that."

"That can be too, Miss Fara. I am not saying you should not choose such clothing, only you should choose it wisely. Consider the pressure of Fear. How might your look contribute to that? If you consider using items of clothing that will also provide Pressure of Pleasure to the slave?"

Fara thought for a moment. "Well, high heeled shoes, I suppose they will intimidate – the slave would be afraid of being trodden on or the heel being scraped across his flesh. Oh, and masks, they will add to a slave's fear if he cannot see his mistress's expression or judge her mood."

"Is there another point there," Anna asked. "If the slave cannot tell our thoughts from our expression, then he will also be more uncertain, more likely to be obedient..."

"Very good. This is one point where Chinese girls have advantage, I think. All round-eyes think our Eastern faces blank and without feeling. They cannot read us. Sometimes even not sure which one of us is which. Eh, round-eye?" Wan Yu slapped her riding crop on the side of Bernard's cage.

"Yes, Miss – No, Miss," Bernard responded uncertainly from behind his bars. Fara and the others laughed.

"But you can make use of this. Masks, make up, even maintaining a dispassionate or disdainful expression. All these are good ideas." Wan Yu sat down on Bernard's cage, the backs of her legs filling his view, the heels of her shoes barely inches from his face. "So, let us return to question of porno pictures. Problem is not how woman looks in these pictures. Problem is where the decision lies. With pictures, too often man is deciding what to look at and when. This is not acceptable for male slaves. Decisions are a bad idea for slaves. Too often they make wrong choices and waste time thinking about such things. Of course men are driven by their pornography-devouring psyches but that is for us to use and decide what they will see and when. Give me examples of how this might be put into practice? Anna you have been quiet. Perhaps you have an idea."

Anna thought for a moment. She much preferred to stand at the back of the class, avoiding being noticed, but even so she could see the sense in Wan Yu's remarks. "You could put up a big picture of yourself in his room or in his cage, so he always has to see it. Something looking threatening, something intimidating. So he is always aware of the presence of his owner. Or, for a task, you could make him write down an exact description of how you look. Punishing him for mistakes, of course."

"Good ideas, Miss Anna. So it seems you were listening. This appeals to pressure of fear – fear of punishment, fear of his Mistress's displeasure. Now, how about pressure of pain? Can look achieve that?"

"I don't really see how." Daphne answered. "I mean not the look alone. I've yet to see a man double up in pain at a disapproving glance."

"That is true but do not forget that you may use aspects of your look as instruments to apply the pressure of pain. A slap with a long leather glove for example; a blow with a belt; a kick from a platform soled shoe. All these are pain applied through the look. Try these please." Wan Yu held out a pair of stiletto heeled shoes in crimson patent leather. "Put them on."

Daphne took the shoes willingly, kicking off her own white court shoes. The heels on the red shoes were a good two inches higher, five inches in all. Around the edge of each shoe was a row of heavy brass spiked studs. There were still longer spikes on the ankle straps that stopped the wearer from being tipped forward out of them.

Enjoying the feeling of the high heels on her feet, she walked up and down the cage room. "These look fabulous," she said.

"He thinks so too," Collette pointed with a laugh at Bernard's cage. "He was watching you like a puppy dog. Looks like we know how to get *his* attention!"

Wan Yu smiled. "Exactly. Now can anyone think of an additional aspect of the Path of the Look?" she asked.

The four girls, all feeling that they had explored the subject thoroughly shook their heads.

"A clue. Not YOUR look...."

"Ah!" Daphne interrupted. "I know not our look but the look of the slave. Things that can be done to their appearance to enforce our dominance."

"Very good Miss Daphne. Exactly right. You can think about that tonight and tomorrow we will discuss your thoughts. Maybe a practical exercise too."

As the training session proceeded Madame Chao appeared accompanied by Mary Tang. Two of the men were taken out of their cages and encouraged to demonstrate obedience to the girl's commands by crouching before them and putting their heads to the floor. Daphne enjoyed the response she got from strutting in front of them in the red spiked shoes.

Madam Chao spoke quietly to Mary as the two watched Wan Yu and the girls. "The girls seem to be picking up the elements of Kòngzhì Rén quickly."

Mary nodded attentively. "Yes, all good pupils."

"What do you think of English males?"

"Ha! Docile. Easy to keep in order now. Fourteen years of New Order has done much. They know now, no way back. Girls like these make sure of that." She nodded towards Fara and the others.



## 24 Police Procedural

"A husband?" Constable Margery Dennis, Valerie Haste's live-in lover, was sprawled on the bed they shared.

"Yes, a husband." Valerie had just got back from work. She'd been planning a quiet evening but from the way Margery was staring at her coyly, bed sheets wrapped around her obviously naked body, her partner had more energetic plans.

"What you mean like he used to be?" Margery nodded towards where Valerie's ex-husband Barry was sitting on the floor.

"Oi!" Valerie snapped. "Stop lounging about, haven't you got work to do?"

Barry looked up sullenly. "Yes, but she, " he nodded towards Margery, "said I should be here to help when you got in. She thought you might need warming up." His tone was closer to insolence than Valerie would have liked but she let it go.

"How thoughtful, Marge! You are such a slut. I don't think I need him for that tonight though. All right then, Barry, help me undress then you can get me a drink. I need a scotch after today."

"Bad one?"

"Oh, not so terrible," Valerie stood while Barry unfastened her skirt. She stepped out of it. He turned to hang it in the wardrobe and then came back to begin unfastening the buttons on her blouse. "It's good to have you do this Barry. No, not so terrible Marge, it's just I'm not getting anywhere much with the Wheeland boy." She turned to Barry. "No, don't hang that up it needs laundering. Do it tonight. I'll want it again tomorrow."

He shuffled off with the shirt. Valerie wondered why she hung on to him. Since the divorce he'd been just like any other sponsored male. She could end that anytime she liked. Maybe she was a bit sentimental. Hardly what you'd expect from a Detective Sergeant in the Male Control Force, though.

"Well do we?" Valerie, now stripped to her underwear climbed into bed alongside her lover. "Do we know anyone with a husband, I mean a current husband?"

"No. I'm pretty sure we don't. Still don't talk work. I want to play." Margery nuzzled up to Valerie's neck, her hands exploring the other woman's breasts.

Valerie, enjoying Margery's attentions was giggling happily when Barry returned with her drink.

"You're impossible," Valerie said as Margery tried nibbling on her ear lobes while she attempted to take a sip of her drink. "Still I've decided on two things. I'm going to talk to this husband and I'm going to get the daughter to talk to her boyfriend. Now, if you want to nibble something try further down." She pushed Margery's head down towards her lap. "That will be much more amusing."

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In Gerard Street, Wan Yu called her class to order. "Ladies, ideas on Path of Look for your slaves? Miss Daphne I think you should start, you were most vocal when this topic was raised."

Daphne had found it hard to adapt to some parts of the training. She wasn't always comfortable with the abstract ideas behind Kòngzhì Rén but she had found that her intuition about what worked was

sound. "Well, I was thinking about the first day we saw Mary Tang. I know the way that SHE looked impressed us all but I was thinking about her slave. He was in that one-piece leather suit; completely enclosed, strapped and padlocked in, silenced, featureless to anyone seeing him. It was obvious to us that his Mistress had taken great care to have him like that. Mary must have thought as carefully about how he would look as about how he was to be restrained. She might have him dress that way because she likes how it looks or because she likes what it says about her and about him."

"Very good. And what do you think his perspective would be?"

"He looked uncomfortable. The suit must be hot and make it hard to breathe easily and the straps restrict his movement. he'll be stiff after a while. So, Pressure of Pain, I think."

"Pressure of Humiliation too," Collette chimed in. "He must know how ridiculous it makes him look."

"Anything else?"

"There could be Pressure of Fear," Anna added, "if he is afraid of being restrained like that, maybe if he was claustrophobic. Or maybe fear of being seen like that. Although he should be pleased at how good a job Mary did on him."

"So maybe even Pressure of Pleasure. If a slave feels his Mistress pays special attention to his appearance maybe that makes him a little proud and that makes him a better slave? He won't want to offend his Mistress if he thinks she will not make him look so good," Wan Yu suggested.

Fara wasn't so convinced by Wan Yu's last point but didn't have a chance to debate the issue as Wan Yu announced, "Now we have a practical exercise. Let's look at these two."

As she spoke, Tsai Linn came in leading two shackled and gagged slaves. Both had been forced into maid outfits.

Bernard was wearing a black satin maid's dress with a lace trimmed apron and a short skirt that barely reached the tops of the stockings he had been forced to wear. The skirt was puffed out by petticoats beneath and the short sleeves of the dress left his arms bare. His face was masked by a black stocking that had been pulled over his head and, from the way that his cheeks were puffed out, the girls guessed that he had been gagged with an inflatable ball behind the leather strap that covered his mouth. On his head he wore a stiffly-lacquered, shoulder-length black wig with flick ups. On his head a maid's cap had long, lace, tails hanging down behind his back. In as much as the girls could judge his expression behind the stocking mask he looked completely humiliated .

Alongside Bernard, Gary Sumpter was feeling equally put upon. Where Bernard was the image of the fetish sissy maid, Gary looked positively frumpy.

The stockings and garter belt Gary had been left with on his arrival hadn't survived long with the sharp corners and cramped access of his cage. In fact they had only lasted long enough for the Sunrise girls to label him as an uppity sub trying to get around them and for the men to think he was some sort of sex traitor.

Now he had been put into an outfit that Wan Yu said was, "Proper maid uniform for hard-working maid." The dress was plain, black and with white collar and cuffs to the short sleeves. The skirt was straight and knee-length. he'd been given a pair of thick stockings and some plain, black, low-heeled shoes. Where Bernard's apron and cap were elaborate his were about as simple and untrimmed as could be imagined. The only thing the two men shared was that their waists were corseted, their

chest augmented with padding, their faces masked with stockings and their mouths stuffed and strapped.

"So," said Wan Yu, "which is better costume for slave? Cockroach or new boy?"

Collette put her hand up and Wan Yu invited her to answer. "The obvious answer is cockroach, I guess," she said, "but I'm not so sure."

"How so?"

"Well, cockroach probably hates his costume but I think that one," she pointed to Gary, "hates his more. He likes to wear women's clothes but he is being made to wear the clothes of the most menial woman - a household servant, like all women used to have to be. I saw him when he arrived, he likes to look more flamboyant than this. Worst thing for him is to look nondescript. Cockroach though likes not to be noticed. He thinks if he is not noticed he does not have to work so hard. This costume for him is a disaster. It says 'look at me!' I think that is worse than being made to look foolish."

Tsai Linn looked delighted. "A very good answer Miss Collette. I can see you have spent a lot of time thinking about this Path. Well done!" She looked at the two hapless men. "Well, we will now put you to work. Cockroach, you go fetch tea for us all. And you, scullery maid, you go sweep out kitchens."

The two cross-dressed slaves nodded obediently and went to leave.

"Wait," said Collette, calling after them. The two men stopped. "Shouldn't a good maid curtsy before, leaving?" The others giggled.

"Oong mmumphs," the gagged Bernard responded bobbing obediently, almost falling over in his high heels as he crossed one leg behind the other and bent his knee while holding the hem of his abbreviated skirt.

"So-og-gy" Gary was slower to grunt his apology, clearly unhappy at the humiliation of trying to talk while his mouth was stuffed, as he gave his curtsy and left the group.

Tsai Lin watched him go, thinking that he needed a little more encouragement to join in properly.

Moments later, Wan Yu appeared. "Miss Fara, I have a message for you from the police," she said. "They say that they can let you see Jim tomorrow. If you can help by getting him to cooperate they will be very happy."

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That evening, Fara and the others were lounging in the dormitory. The place was quiet. Madam Chao, Tsai Lin and Wan Yu had decided to go to friends nearby for a game of Mah-jong

Anna was sat at the dressing table, experimenting with various ways of putting up her long fair hair and trying out a series of neck scarves that she had acquired on a recent shopping trip.

On the floor in the middle of the room Daphne was stretching and doing exercises. She, more than any of them, had found it difficult being cooped up in the Sunrise Tea Parlour. Normally she was out playing sport and running but here she hadn't had the chance. While the girls were free to come and

go as they pleased, there really wasn't the time to get far and the Tea Parlour was a good mile from the nearest park.

Collette was reading, taking time out from study to enjoy some trashy fiction. It was, as Anna said, a traditional story, "Girl Meets Boy, Girl Enslaves Boy, Girl Lives Happily Ever After".

Fara, wearing only a tee shirt and pants, was lazing and listening to her music player.

"I tell you something I'm missing," Daphne said, sitting up. "Sex."

The others looked up startled. It wasn't a subject most girls talked much about between themselves normally.

"We've had four men locked up here with us for the last month and my fanny thinks I've entered a nunnery. The most physical contact I've had is one of them dribbling over my feet and, frankly, its not enough."

Collette was shocked. Her entire sex life had been lived out between the covers of novels. Anna said nothing. Fara, on the other hand, had come across plenty of sexual boasting at her school. "As opposed to your normal life of debauchery, is that?"

"Well, no. I mean, I've had a few tumbles with Mum's houseboy when she's not been around. It's so funny, he's terrified that I'll tell her. And there was the man that looks after the changing rooms at the running track and, well a couple of boys in my class. It's just sometimes, I really feel I need something."

"What, a prick?" Collette looked scandalised.

"No! Nothing like that!" Prick-sex was universally disapproved of in polite society. New Order maintained that it was impossible for a woman to indulge in sex with a man's prick without it seeming that the male was in a position of power. All the girls had had, "The Talk" at a New Opportunity meeting warning them of the danger to their health, mental stability and social position of indulging in anything like it. It had a mythical status, though. Prick-sex parties - not illegal but certainly illicit - were reported in the tabloid media. Women thought to favour it were felt to be either dangerous radicals not happy with social norms or equally dangerous conservatives, hoping to turn the clock back to a time when men were men and women were grateful or some such nonsense.

"I know what you mean." Anna spoke up, seeming relieved that she had the chance to express herself. "I had a bit of a thing with the boy who does the work on my mum's car. A bit greasy around the fingers - I had real trouble stopping my mum noticing the marks on my skirt - but his tongue was all right."

Daphne almost moaned. "Mmmm. That's what I need. A good long tonguing."

"Then that's what you shall have," Fara declared, getting to her feet. "Who's going to help me bring one of the men up here?"

Collette was startled. "Should we do that? What if there's some trouble?"

"It'll be fine. We're supposed to be learning how to dominate aren't we? This can be a free-lance project."

"I'll help," Anna volunteered.

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By the time the girls got to the cage room, they had borrowed two Chinese opera masks that had been hanging on the wall of the staircase and had retrieved a leash, a set of wrist cuffs and a pair of canes from the training room. The men, who had been enjoying a relatively relaxing time cooped up in their cages but otherwise untroubled, found themselves confronted by the disturbing spectacle of two masked girls.

"You will come with us," Fara announced to Bernard as she found the key to his cage in the small cabinet on the wall opposite.

Anna opened the door to the cage and Fara ordered Bernard out. Bernard looked bewildered. Normally it was one of the Sunrise girls that brought them out of their cages and they weren't usually needed at this time of day. Anna cuffed Bernard's wrists behind him without him resisting. Fara clipped the leash to his collar and the two girls led him out of the cage room with his companions watching, relieved that they had been left behind.

Pulled along by the leash, Bernard followed the girls upstairs towards the dormitory. He had been there before, on cleaning duties, but this was the first time that he had been there while the girls were there. Outside the door, Fara and Anna stopped. Anna took the scarf from around her neck.

"I'm not sure that a slave should be allowed to see inside a lady's bedroom," she said, knotting the scarf across his eyes as a blindfold. "Now you can come inside."

He felt himself pulled forward through the door.

"Ah, you brought the cockroach!" he heard someone say.

"He's the easiest to manage. We thought he'd do," one of the masked girls said.

"As long as he's got a tongue," the first voice said.

A tap from a cane on the back of his legs was accompanied by the order "Down!" and Bernard was forced to shuffle forward on his knees.

Although he couldn't see it, Daphne was sat on the edge of one of the beds, legs spread wide and without the shorts she had been wearing before. Anna passed Bernard's leash to Daphne and she pulled him closer to her crotch.

"Get your tongue busy on my quim, cockroach," she told the helpless man kneeling between her legs. "And if I don't get to cum, you're going to get such a thrashing."

Bernard recognised Daphne's voice as she grabbed a handful of his hair and pulled his face into her crotch, his nose colliding with the thin vee of silk that covered her cunt. Her also knew what he was being expected to do. He'd been put in this position often enough by his supervisor at the railway station.

With his head trapped between Daphne's thighs and her hand clamping his head tight against her crotch he didn't have much room to manoeuvre but he managed to push his tongue along the edge of her panties, feeling the stiff curls of her pubic hairs with its tip.

"How's he doing?" It was Fara's voice from behind him.

"Better than I expect -- oooh, that's nice, good boy! - much better! Keep at it."

Bernard felt her push her hips forward .

"Now work your tongue in."

It wasn't easy. Bernard tried to get his tongue around the elasticated edge of her panties but without success.

"Useless!" Daphne exclaimed, pushing him back, pulling her panties off and pulling him back in again. "Now try!"

Bernard did what he could, finding it difficult to keep in place with his hands bound behind him as Daphne bucked in response to his more successful tongue thrusts. With her crotch pushing against his face and his tongue now buried deep between her dripping lips, Bernard's nose was filled with the scent of her sex. Each lapping motion served to drive Daphne towards her orgasm.

"Ohhh, that's so close. Keep him at it girls, I'm nearly there."

Bernard felt Daphne let go of his head as she stretched back, raising her hips, close to cumming.

"Try harder, Cockroach," Fara's voice snapped. The snick of a cane across his buttocks pushed him on.

"Yes, stick that tongue out." Anna encouraged.

"Go on! You can do the rest of us after!" Collette chimed in, drawing startled looks from Anna and Fara who were surprised that the normally straight-laced Collette would be so enthusiastic.

Bernard whimpered from his position trapped between Daphne's thighs. His expression of distress was the thing that pushed her over the edge , unleashing weeks of pent up frustration in an orgasm that drove her hips forward with the strength of muscles honed in cross country runs and bouts of tennis. Bernard felt like she would break his neck.

It was a good hour before the rest of the girls had finished with him and returned him to his cage.

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Tsai Lin opened the door to the cage room. After one absconder she wanted to make sure that the men were securely bedded down before she went off to bed herself. Although all seemed normal and all four men were safely locked in their cages something didn't seem quite right. There had been something about the startled way in which all four men had reacted when she opened the door to the cage room and turned on the light.

As she went upstairs she noticed the gap on the wall where the masks had been hanging. Something, she decided had been going on.

She quietly opened the door to the girls' dormitory. All four seemed to be sleeping, Daphne was even snoring softly. The room seemed stuffy. A musky smell that Tsai Lin recognised made her think that the girls had been engaged in something other than the careful study of their notes. The presence of one of the training canes made her more suspicious.

Leaving the girls to sleep, she went off in search of Madam Chao. "Girls have had one of the males in their room, I am sure," she told Madam Chao.

"Are males safe in their cages?"

"Yes, Madam Chao. I checked all the padlocks. Everything is secure. The girls have put things back properly. Just two opera masks missing from staircase."

Madam Chao chuckled. "Ha! Girls have been practising Path of the Look, I think. Poor males must have been frightened to see them! No harm done, we must expect them to take advantage of their new skills sometimes."

Tsai Lin suspected that the girls had been involved in more than some sort of Kòngzhì Rén practice session but, since Madam Chao seemed happy to let the matter drop, she didn't pursue it.

## 25 Dumb As Soup

Fara had arrived at the Detention Centre, just south of the Thames at the old Oval Cricket Ground, for her interview with Jim. She had found the prospect daunting at first but she had agreed because she felt responsible to some extent for having encouraged Jim. At the same time, she knew that she had not controlled him as well as she now knew she might have done.

"It's just through here, Miss Dangerfield," a uniformed officer of the Detention and Rehabilitation Service shepherded Fara along a corridor between heavily locked cell doors. "He's in the interview room at the end here. Anything that's said is recorded, so if you can get him to say anything we'll have it on tape. I can come in with you if you want. Otherwise, I can wait outside in the corridor. "

Fara was feeling determined. The amusements with Bernard the night before had left her feeling that she could succeed with anything she put her mind to.

"I think that will be best." Fara stopped outside the door to the interview room. She had thought a lot about this moment and the impact it needed to have, if she was to get Jim to start being co-operative. She lowered the big round sunglasses from her forehead over her eyes. It wasn't that it was bright in the cell block, quite the reverse, it was more about the look she wanted to achieve.

She was wearing a round-necked black dress with short sleeves and a knee-length pencil skirt. A string of pearls around her neck and a pair of pearl earrings were the only items of jewellery. Black sheer hose, low-heeled black shoes and a pair of wrist length black gloves completed her outfit.. "I look," Fara had thought with satisfaction when she had looked at herself in the mirror after dressing, "a bit like a bitchier version of Audrey Hepburn." Her mother would have said that Fara looked like a younger version of herself, which was just what Fara intended.

She nodded to the guard to open the door. As she stood in the doorway, Jim looked up, "Phyllis, I...." he began.

"No it's not Phyllis you half-wit, it's me." Fara pulled off her dark glasses.

"Fara. Oh!" Jim looked confused as recognition dawned. "It's all a big mess. I just wanted to be with you. No I mean, Phyllis. I wrote to you. She told me..."

"She didn't tell you anything Jim. Anything you think she said, you've made up."

"But the way she looked...."

"What? Didn't they teach you any history in 10th grade? Men stopped thinking that fifteen years ago. You don't get the right to decide anything like that. What does it matter how she looked? She wasn't looking that way for you. If you had any more brains you'd be as dumb as soup. Now, you owe me an apology." She put the dark glasses back on and adopted a haughty pose, determined to intimidate Jim as far as she could..

"I'm sorry Fara." Jim's response was automatic.

"Not like that. Like you mean it. Like you maybe understand just a tiny bit how wrong you've been. Like how you apologised after I caught you with that vodka. Only nicer, 'cos this time you've been even more stupid." Fara was confident about confronting Jim in this way. When she had pantie-gagged him and hung the vodka bottle dangling from his cock, she had known that he was as much



affected by his own response to her actions as by anything that she had said. Now, with the benefit of her Kòngzhì Rén training, she knew that Pressure of Humiliation would be an effective tool where Jim was concerned.

"Please, Fara." Jim looked towards the guard the other side of the open door.

"Do you think she's going to take your side? Or are you worried what she thinks? If you are you'd better get used to it because from what I hear they're talking about twenty years and the detention centre guards aren't as liberal minded about rapists as this lady probably is."

Jim looked scared as the guard tucked her thumbs into her belt and gave a smile that suggested that any liberal tendencies she had were being sorely tried.

"Now apologise nicely." Fara put her left leg forward. "Kneel down, face to the floor, tell me how sorry you are and then kiss my foot."

"Fara, I.."

"Jim, I'm not having a discussion about this." Fara put her hands on her hips.

Surprised by her determined firmness, intimidated by her manner and embarrassed by the mistake he had made greeting her as her mother, Jim got to his knees. The floor was cold through his thin prison fatigues. "I'm sorry Fara, I really am," he said with his face to the floor. "I didn't want to frighten Phyllis, I wouldn't have hurt her. I couldn't hurt her. They just said I shouldn't let her ignore me, shouldn't let her laugh at me."

Fara was happy to let him talk.

"But Phyllis isn't like that is she? She wouldn't laugh at me? Can I?" He looked up and then glanced back at her foot.

"Yes," Fara said simply. She stared at Jim. It was obvious that he still hadn't grasped the position he was in.

Jim pressed his lips to the toe of her shoe. "I'm so sorry."

"So you say. But, well, whoever gave you those ideas are the ones laughing at you. They think they've masterminded a dissident plot and got away with it while you take the blame. Maybe Phyllis is a bit sorry for you, but mainly she'll be angry at you letting them get away with encouraging rape and kidnap."

"They shouldn't laugh at me. I mean that's not right."

"No."

"I mean I sat there in that club in Dean Street and Geoff and Kev and Stevie said they'd help and they got me the bag and the knife and the rubbers and it was going to be easy."

Fara sat down on the table in the middle of the room and crossed her legs. Jim scurried across on his knees to where he could press his lips to her foot again. "And now they're sitting in Dean Street laughing," she said. She shook her head. "Dumb as soup!"

"No, not in Dean Street. They've got a room back of the Helen Mirren Theatre. That's..."

"That's where you were going to take Phyllis?"

"Yes, I..."

Fara looked up at the guard. She nodded. "That's all right, Jim. You know if you tell them this it will make it easier."

Jim looked up at Fara. "Oh, no, I couldn't. I mean ... But between us."

"Jim, I can't help you if you won't talk to them." Fara shook her head, knowing that everything Jim had said was on tape.. "Dumb as soup," she said and then called for the guard.

## 26 Coffee Stop

While Fara was talking to Jim, Collette took advantage of a short break in training sessions.

The classes from Wan Yu and Tsai Linn were fascinating but intensive. With Fara out of the class that morning helping the police, the rest of the girls had had to work harder than ever. She was feeling energised, though. The previous evening's sexual amusements had first made her feel embarrassed but they had also left her feeling more alive and somehow more aware of the world around her.

It was raining. She wrapped herself up in a trench coat and ventured out for a walk. Sometimes she felt she needed just to spend a little time by herself, thinking about what she had learned but today she felt independent, and just wanted to do what she wanted to do.

She made her way to Cambridge Circus. It was only five minutes walk from the Tea Parlour but it was, at least, a change of scene. It was pedestrianised now and used as a venue for New Order rallies. The intelligence services were rumoured to have their offices almost opposite. Just around the corner, in Old Compton Street, she found a coffee bar and sat herself down at a table by the window. Outside rain ran down the windows.

She took out her notebook and a pair of reading glasses from her handbag. Page after page of notes contained ideas on how the Path of the Look and the Path of the Cane could be applied. There were notes about New Order sponsored research into the effectiveness of humiliation in the management of males, lists of restraints that might be used in pursuit of the Path of the Rope. There were times when she wondered if she would ever grasp it all, if she would ever move beyond the yellow qipao that she had so far managed to acquire.

There were a couple of other women in the cafe; professional types between meetings, Collette imagined. Behind the bar a woman, the owner Collette assumed, stood supervising two male baristas, while a third waited at tables. He came across to take Collette's order. Collette, struggling with her decision to avoid pastries with her coffee as a way of making sure her qipao got no tighter, finally asked for a black Americano.

As the waiter went back to the counter, Collette felt she knew him from somewhere. She peered at him over her glasses and suddenly realised that it was the male that had absconded from the Tea Parlour.

Afterwards, she thought about what she did next and how reckless it was.

She thought about leaving to call the police but maybe he had recognised her already. Talking to the bar owner might be an option but if she knew he was an absconder then she might try to stop Collette. No, the more she thought about it, the more certain she was. The only way to deal with the situation was to confront the runaway.

She waited until he was behind the bar, got up from the table and took her cup to the counter. She was standing between her quarry and the door.

"Sorry, Ma'am, was there a problem with your coffee," he asked. The owner looked up with the air of someone waiting to see how a member of staff was about to handle a customer complaint.

"Not really," Collette responded, confident now that the man hadn't actually recognised her. She took off her glasses. "Only that it was served by a runaway who is obviously working here with a false Ident Card."

The man glanced towards the door but could see he would have to push past Collette to reach it.

The cafe owner pulled out a small wooden club she obviously kept beneath the counter for dealing with trouble and moved to the door as well. Collette could tell by her reaction that she was not going to let anyone think she knew that she was harbouring an absconder. The two other women got to their feet. Neither of them looked like they were about to let a sponsorship absconder get past them to go on the run again. The other two baristas, Collette noticed, seemed to have made themselves scarce in the cafe's back room.

"You," Collette said, confronting him with her hands on her hips, "absconded from your sponsor a week ago. You're coming back with me."

"You stupid shit, Ned" the bar owner chimed in. "I don't need this sort of trouble." She saw a passing policeman and called him in. "This dick is a runaway," she said. "This young lady spotted him. I've got his Ident Card here," she said, flourishing it, "I guess it must be forged. It fooled me though."

The policeman spoke to Collette and each of the other women in the cafe while Ned sat looking around uncertainly.

"We can't arrest him for absconding Miss, but, if you're right, the Ident Card must have been forged. We can take him in on suspicion of being in possession of falsified identity documents or take him back to where he belongs, if you like, as long as you think he won't run off again. I think once this card has been looked at, the Station will want to know where he got it."

Ned looked sulkily at the police officer. He wasn't looking forward to that conversation.

"I think we should take him back," said Collette firmly. "I'm sure Madam Chao will want to talk to you, won't she?" she went on, looking at Ned.

Ned didn't look like he was looking forward to that conversation, either.

Fifteen minutes later a police car drew up outside the Sunrise Tea Parlour. Madam Chao emerged with Fara, Daphne and Anna behind her.

Collette climbed out of the car with a triumphant grin on her face. "I have found something that belongs here," she announced as the police officer pulled Ned from the car.

"Cha! Runaway returned! Good news. Bad pennies always come back!" exclaimed Madam Chao. "Fara, Daphne, please put this back in cage."

The two girls leapt forward happily pulling Ned inside with the police officer following ready to remove Ned's cuffs once he was securely housed.

Her colleague explained to Madam Chao the circumstances of the runaway's return. "This young lady was very brave in confronting him," she said. "She faced down any threat of violence. We'll be checking his Ident Card and we'll let you know when we want to talk to him again. I'm guessing you've done something about security since he ran off."

"Oh, yes, officer," Madam Chao answered. "Cause of his escape has been removed."

## 27. Back of the Theatre

The small room at the back of the Dame Helen Mirren Theatre was providing Valerie Haste with much more useful evidence than she had found at the Dean Street hostel. There was a pair of handcuffs, one end locked to a heating pipe and obviously waiting for the guest who was going to be brought here. Valerie peered at the cuffs, there was a possibility of fingerprints on the shiny metal. It was next to a soiled mattress with a single coarse blanket folded up on it. There were bottles of water and packets of energy bars. It looked like they'd planned to keep Mrs Dangerfield here for a while. A bag contained rolls of duct tape and cable ties that looked like they had come from the same source as the ones found in Jim's rucksack. Valerie couldn't believe that they'd been so careless as to leave them there but perhaps they'd panicked when Jim was picked up and they' felt they couldn't risk coming back. She would have some plain clothes officers watch the place for a while but didn't really expect anyone to try to recover the stuff. Maybe they'd just set Jim up and running like a clockwork mouse, and had left him to get on with it. That would match the way some of the other male dissident groups worked; they get the benefit of some gullible kid's protest and they can move on to the next one. There was another bag. Valerie peered inside. There were two packets of condoms - again a match for the one's that Jim had - plus, treasure of treasures, a receipt.

Great, thought Valerie, at least the girls from forensics have got something to work on.

And, until she had some answers back from them she had one other lead to follow up. The fact that one of the men mentioned by Jim had been called Stevie.

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"Ms Higgs?" The caller at Marianne's house smiled as she opened the door

"It's Mrs Higgs, actually." Marianne could sometimes be a little bit pompous. She didn't like having, as she saw it, to deny her married status, especially to strangers.

"Well, yes. It was that I wanted to talk to you about. I'm Valerie Haste," she showed Marianne her warrant card, "I'm with the MCF." Valerie wasn't hopeful about the likely results of the meeting. Higgs had only been mentioned in passing. It was more the oddness of the relationship that made her think it was worth following up. Husbands were pretty uncommon these days, after all.

"Oh, is this about poor Phyllis's experience? That was awful. Are you any nearer finding the people responsible?"

"Possibly. Could I come in? I wanted to ask a few questions."

"Of course. I'm not sure I can help though. I didn't really know .... Wheeland was it? ... He was there a few times when I was visiting Phyllis but I don't think I ever spoke to him." Marianne showed the way into her lounge. The two of them sat down.

"No, I'm sure. No it was more Stephen Higgs I wanted to talk to you about."

"My husband?"

Valerie was taken aback by the use of the word. It was so rarely heard these days. While she hadn't expected Marianne to be secretive about the fact that she was married to a man, she hadn't expected her to be quite so outspoken. "Err, yes."

"Well? What's the problem? And why aren't you talking to him rather than me?"

"We will be Mrs Higgs." Valerie was confused. It sounded like Marianne didn't understand her legal responsibility for the man. After all, it was something that had been put in place in the early days of New Order when sponsors and spouses were put on the same legal footing. "But you do realise that in law, you have to answer for his conduct?"

"Well, I suppose so, formally."

"Formally and actually, I'm afraid."

"Well, I'm sure there's no problem. Let me put your mind at rest."

"Would you be surprised to learn that Stephen," Valerie couldn't bring herself to talk about him as 'Mister' Higgs, "has been attending proscribed venues associated with male dissident groups."

"Yes I would. I would think it quite ridiculous. In fact, I wouldn't believe it."

"I'm afraid it's the case. We have CCTV evidence of him visiting a club in Soho where we know that unregulated videos were being shown. We also have a suggestion that he is linked to the group behind the incitement to kidnap Mrs Dangerfield."

"I'm sorry. It's quite ridiculous. You people may be used to dealing with all sorts of undesirables but we are not like that. My husband..."

"I'm sorry to interrupt Mrs Higgs. Do I take from this that you have what would have been called a 'traditional' marriage?"

"Most certainly. That is exactly what we do have!"

Valerie was getting more and more concerned. "And that would include Stephen having a degree of freedom?" Marianne nodded. "And the opportunity to conceal things from you if he wanted?"

"But why would he?..."

"Dissidents and criminals often wish to conceal things, Mrs Higgs. And I'm sure you'll remember that married men used to be guilty of keeping plenty of secrets once upon a time. The only trouble is that back then you weren't expected to know what he was up to and now, I'm afraid, you are. I will need whatever details you have of his whereabouts over the last six months. Where can I find him now?"

.....

Stephen Higgs was standing in the check-out queue at the local store where he regularly shopped. He'd promised his wife that he'd pick up some food for that evening's meal and he was unloading the contents of his trolley onto the checkout conveyor. The man at the till, one of twenty or so sponsored

males that did almost all the work in the store apart from the managerial tasks, looked bored but greeted him, "Hullo Steve".

Outside, Stephen saw two police cars, blue lights flashing, slam to a halt. Officers leapt out. He wondered who they were after.

A shout through a loud hailer told him. "Stephen Higgs! This is the police! Come out with your hands raised."

Confused and not knowing why he was suddenly the target of police attention Stephen looked around. The man at the check-out suddenly found a reason to leave his till, pushing it shut and running round behind Stephen back into the shop.

Stephen reached the door of the store. "What is this?" he called to the officers.

"Just turn around and face the wall. Put your hands on the wall."

Still wondering what was going on, Stephen did as he was told and found himself handcuffed and bundled into the back of one of the patrol cars. With his relatively protected home life, Stephen hadn't ever been exposed to the sort of rough treatment routinely handed out to un-sponsored males. He had seen articles in the paper about how the "diligent officers from the Male Control Force" had dealt with this or that dissident inspired act, of course. Some felt that the MCF was bit over enthusiastic sometimes but generally the media supported their efforts. Stephen had never imagined that he'd be taken into custody by them. Why would he? After all he hadn't done anything wrong, had he?

This question didn't carry any weight with the officers in the patrol car. "Why the fuck would we care? We're just asked to bring you in?"

"But what for?"

"How would we know? We're just asked to pick you up. Maybe someone wants a chat? Maybe someone wanted to save you walking home but decided you could go via the station?"

"These handcuffs are painful."

"Oh, sorry, Sir," The police officers tone was sarcastic. "We forgot the ones with the soft lining today, didn't we?"

Stephen sat back, realising that there wasn't going to be anything gained by antagonising the policewomen further.

.....

In the interview room at the police station, Stephen Higgs sat on a hard wooden chair beside a desk. A stony-faced uniformed officer watched from beside the door. Stephen looked up as Valerie Haste came in to the room. She didn't say anything but flopped a thick file of papers down on the desk and sat down opposite Stephen staring at him.

Stephen spoke first, "Why am I here?"



"That's a difficult question. I flunked philosophy at Police College." She pulled two photographs from the folder. "Do you know who these people are?"

Stephen reached for the pictures. "Yes, of course. That's Phyllis Dangerfield, she's a friend of my wife. And, that's, err, Jim Wheeland. I saw him with Fara Dangerfield a few times."

"When did you last see him?"

"I'm not sure. Maybe three weeks ago. Look what is it you want?"

"Just for you to answer my questions."

"Was that in Dean Street?"

"Dean Street?"

Valerie got to her feet and slapped Stephen's head with the file. The officer at the door looked at the ceiling. "Asking a question is not fucking answering!" Stephen was startled by her sudden aggression.

"Maybe."

"Did you see him in Dean Street?" Valerie hefted the file in her hands.

"Yes. Once." Stephen admitted. Valerie sat down.

"What did you talk about?"

"Nothing. He was on the far side of the room. I don't even know if he saw me."

"Who are Geoff and Kev?"

"I don't know."

Stephen's face showed not a glimmer of recognition. Valerie was disappointed. She was beginning to wonder if there was any connection between him and the Wheeland case after all. At least she had him for being at the meetings in Dean Street. The trouble was there could be another man called Stephen involved with the Dean Street group, she supposed, although that would be a coincidence.

Stephen was wondering how on earth the Police knew about his visits to Dean Street.

"Well, then about Geoff and Kev."

"I don't know any Geoff or Kev."

"They seem to know you. And Wheeland knows you too. Geoff, Kev and Stevie set him up, he says."

"They can't know me. And I've never been called Stevie."

"We'll see when Wheeland picks you out in a line up."

"Fine by me. I've been at Dean Street, sure but I don't know these other people. Jim Wheeland will tell you I'm not this 'Stevie' he's talking about."

Bollocks, Valerie said to herself. Stephen Higgs was either a brilliant liar or he was that most unlikely of things, an innocent man. She didn't think she was going to get any further. "All right, Higgs," she said. "You're being arrested on suspicion of participating in an illegal assembly contrary to the Male Control Orders 2024. You do not have to say anything, but it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence." She turned to the officer by the door. "Put him somewhere quiet. It'd be a shame if it got out that he might be involved in that conspiracy to kidnap and rape."

Stephen looked petrified as the officer grabbed him roughly and led him away.

.....

Harry, Phyllis Dangerfield's houseboy, had finished his chores. Phyllis was taking a bath. She seemed to do that a lot these days, Harry thought. The phone rang. Normally, Phyllis liked to answer herself but there had been calls from the press following the business with Jim and now she had asked Harry to pick up any messages even when she was in.

"Phyllis Dangerfield's phone. Can I help?"

"Who's that?"

"Her houseboy. Can I give Ms Dangerfield a message?"

"Yes, thank you. If you could tell her that James Wheeland has been charged with offences relating to his arrest last week and that the Prosecution Service will be in touch once we have a trial date. Obviously we'd like to keep any distress to a minimum but it may be necessary for Ms Dangerfield to give evidence."

"Yes, I'll do that. Thank you." Harry responded. He put the phone down.

Phyllis emerged at the top of the stairs, wrapped in a towel and with another turban style around her head. "Who was that?"

"The Police, I suppose." He passed on the rest of the message. Phyllis looked as though the fact that Jim had been charged gave her a measure of relief. "That's good news, isn't it?"

"Yes. Very much so. I suddenly feel a lot more relaxed. Why don't you get a bottle of wine from the fridge and bring it upstairs to me in the bed room. And bring a glass for yourself. I feel like sharing my celebration."

Harry nodded, expecting that he would be sharing more than a glass or two of wine. "Of course, Ms Dangerfield. I'll be right up," he said.

.....

"You're back!" Margery Dennis greeted Valerie as she came back to their flat. Barry had taken Valerie's coat and was hanging it in the closet. Margery was standing in the middle of their living room wearing only her uniform blouse and stockings, and holding aloft a bottle of wine and two glasses.

"Have we got something to celebrate?"

"Yes," laughed Margery., ignoring Val's gloomy response "It's Tuesday, I got through my shift without anyone bitching at me and I thought we should have some fun."

In all honesty, Valerie didn't feel much like having fun. The Wheeland thing was going nowhere and with Sumpter away at the Tea Parlour there was too much admin to be done in the office.

Barry put his head around the door. "Do you need anything, only I thought I'd..."

"That's all right, darling," Margery smiled, "We'll have some dinner later but I've got other things planned for now. I'm sure you've got lots to be getting on with. Off you fuck."

Valerie smiled. "And what are these 'other things' you've got planned?"

"Come and have some wine. And if that doesn't take your mind off your shitty day I'll be forced to expose you to the wiles of an oversexed police constable on the couch right there."

Relaxing a little in the face of Margery's enthusiasm, Valerie took a glass. "Marge, you're impossible. Not everything can be solved by sex."

Margery poured them each a glass of wine. She curled up on the couch, tucking her stocking legs up behind her, smiling up at Valerie like a contented cat. "Nonsense. It's a common enough motive for crime so why can't it be a solution to the ills of the world?"

Valerie thought for a moment about what Margery had said. Maybe Higgs hadn't got involved in the Wheeland thing because of politics, maybe it was to do with sex. It was worth thinking about. Assuming she survived the evening. She smiled.

"That's better," said Margery reaching for the buttons on Valerie's shirt. "I told you sex can solve anything."

.....

Next morning, back in South London, Valerie carried a coffee into the interrogation room. Stephen Higgs was waiting for her.

"You're looking in a bad way, Higgs." Valerie was shocked by the man's black eye, bruised face and cut lip but not entirely surprised. It could be rough in detention for some. "What happened?"

Stephen shot a look over Valerie's shoulder towards the guard at the door.

"Walked into a door, did you? Nasty!"

"Yeash," Stephen responded, thickly, "Nashty."

"I wondered if you had the chance to think again about Geoff and Kev."

"Not really, I've had a bit of a headache."

"Don't get smart with me."

Stephen scowled back.

"Let's talk about sex."

"I told you, I've got a headache."

Valerie ignored the jibe. "This 'marriage' thing. How long has that been going on?"

"Me and Marianne? Sixteen years."

"So before New Order came in?"

"Yes. A couple of years."

"And you and your 'wife' .. you still have sex?"

"This questioning is very intrusive, Sergeant."

"Not half as intrusive as some of my lot would like to get. Do you still have sex?"

"Yes."

"Would that be with you on top?"

"Oh come on! Sometimes. Yes."

"Prick sex?"

"Yes. Marianne's quite traditional. She likes it like that. I know it's not 'politically correct' but it's not illegal either."

"No, you're right. That's not illegal. What's illegal is encouraging forced sexual acts on a woman."

"I told you that's nothing to do with me."

Valerie changed tack. "What sort of movies did you watch at Dean Street?"

"I don't know. Nothing pornographic. Classic films, I guess. Nothing you wouldn't have seen in cinemas once upon a time."

"Proscribed material?"

"If you mean, 'Did they feature women in subordinate roles?' then yes. Show me a film from back then that didn't."

"I'm thinking you've got used to prick sex, liked watching films that showed women being kept in their place and were happy to encourage Wheeland to fulfil his fantasies."

"It's an interesting theory, Sergeant, and I like a good yarn as well as the next man but I'm not sure I see your evidence."

Valerie folded her hands across the case folder on the desk. The problem was she didn't see any evidence yet, either. On the strength of the interview she had enough to charge him with taking part

in an illegal assembly. At least that would keep him in custody for a while. Maybe something would turn up on the forensics report to help.

.....

When Valerie got back to the office, she found Gary Sumpter busy with filing. "They finished with you at the Tea Parlour, then?" she asked.

"Yes, Ma'am, with the return of the absconder they said I should come back here."

The experience at Madam Chao's had obviously had an impact on Gary, Valerie noted. The slide slit in his pencil skirt and the blouse with its mandarin collar and cap sleeves all had echoes of the girls' qipaos. He still hadn't got rid of the moustache though.

"The forensic reports that you wanted came back," Gary added. "Oh, and the fingerprint on the handcuffs - there's a positive match. Someone called Stephen Davies. He's on the Political & Anti-Social Subversion Watch List. Someone in CI7 wants to talk to you about him."

"Fuck."

Gary didn't understand why Valerie was so annoyed. He had thought she'd be pleased.

## 28. Progress Review

“Minister,” Madame Chao welcomed her guests with a warm smile.

Florence Daniels and three of her departmental team had arrived at Madame Chao's for a review of progress on the JUMIST project.

Madam Chao for her part had assembled the students, her tutors, Mary Tang and the four 'practice' males, including Ned, in the training room. Madam Chao had not yet returned Gary and he had been put back in to the hated simple maid's uniform to allow him to waitress the event. Corey Preston was there as well, anxious to make sure that the JUMIST pilot didn't, as so many Government schemes, peter out in a flurry of "what shall we do?" - "what do you want to do?" discussions.

From where Bernard knelt, he could see that Madam Chao was making a special effort to impress, presumably in the hope of further contracts. Bernard himself had contributed by shining Madam Chao's shoes, a job that had been minutely inspected and sent back to him several times by Wan Yu (with an accompanying thrashing) when he had thought that he was finished. If the care she had taken with her appearance spoke of an eagerness to influence Florence Daniels and her ministerial team, her impassive expression gave nothing away.

“I think you will find outcomes as predicted, Minister,” she started. “We have been running JUMIST programme for almost two months now. The four young ladies you asked us to work with learned many things. You see now.” She clapped her hands and the four women that had spent so much time tormenting Bernard and his colleagues over the last few weeks stepped forward. Where a few weeks before there were four rather bashful youngsters there were now four young women exuding confidence.

Madam Chao had them demonstrate their skills, directing the men in a series of prearranged manoeuvres deigned to show how with the use of the cane and the hand the men could be made to adopt certain positions. The display was competent but at the end of it, Florence wasn't sure that she seen much more than a circus act.

“Your pupils are obviously very competent. That was done very...” She paused, groping for the right word, "neatly."

Corey felt uncomfortable. It was hardly a ringing endorsement of the girl's work.

"What is the significance of the different coloured outfits?" Florence Daniels asked.

“The qipao is traditional Chinese dress, as you will know. We use different colours to signify different levels of skill. The girls reach different grades as they progress through their training. First white, then yellow, green, blue, red, brown and finally black. Once they are black qipao, they can progress further. One – two – three dragons. The most revered Mistress in our province in China is five dragons. Very rare.”

“But one of your girls is already blue qipao, I see.”

Fara had managed to pass each of her first three appraisals on her first attempts. Now she stood feeling slightly embarrassed at having been noticed for progressing further than the others. Collette and Daphne were close behind her in green. Anna had achieved her yellow qipao and was waiting to take her green test the following day.

Madam Chao explained how Mary Tang had conducted the examinations.

Although all the girls studied hard, they all found that the way that Mary stood there silently as they went through their paces in the tests was disconcerting. They had managed to show their skills in the way of the hand, the way of the rope, the way of the cane and the way of the look. At the end of each successful test when she had nodded her approval they had all been overcome with excitement. Their squeals of delight were hardly the mark of the implacable dominatrices they aspired to become, but Mary had overlooked that. She had been happy that their performance in their displays so far had been well up to the standard expected and that they were taking so much delight in learning the art that she herself had studied for so long. The men that had been used for these trials had collapsed to the floor at the finish, their backs and arses striped from demonstration beatings, wrists and ankles scored from the girls' presentation of their bondage skills. At the end of each test, when Mary Tang had taken the student on one side to discuss areas for improvement, Bernard and the others had breathed quiet sighs of relief.

Florence seemed more impressed as Madam Chao spoke, warming to the details and extent of the programme.

Madam Chao folded her arms and gave a satisfied smile. "Miss Fara makes extraordinary progress in only one month but all are skilled and capable. I am proud to train all of them. We must ask question though, what next?"

Florence Daniels replied, cagily, "I hope we can move things forward. The PM is still keen based on the feedback I've given her. But," Corey's ears pricked up at this, there was always a 'but', "I need to be sure that the program is really achieving results before we can progress things further. These four girls seem to have done well but there is a great difference between success in the training room and beneficial results in the real world as you will know, Madam Chao."

"La! Completely correct Minister. But I can tell you something that may convince you that the outcomes of training are truly beneficial. I have two examples. Miss Fara, Miss Collette, please step forward." The two girls took a step forwards and stood, slightly embarrassed at being the centre of attention for the Minister's party. Corey bit her lip. She and Madam Chao had rehearsed this part of things several times. Daniels needed to be convinced by the two stories she was about to hear if they were to have a chance of getting the contracts extended.

"Let me tell you first about Miss Fara," Madam Chao began. "She had been instrumental in helping police disrupt a male dissident cell. She confronted a man who had intended to commit rape and kidnap. She used many skills of Kòngzhì Rén. Persuaded him to pass on evidence of others involved in plot. Male Control Force are very pleased with her contribution, I believe."

"A very good example," Florence responded. "That's exactly the sort of thing the programme needs to achieve if we are going to drive down male offending rates. It's hard to imagine most girls of her age having the confidence to do something like that."

"Confidence and self-assurance is an important benefit for students of Kòngzhì Rén. Also example of Miss Collette here. The Minister will know the problems there are with men absconding from sponsorship. Male Control Force do not have time to track them down unless they do something illegal but often they end up in bad company, as you know. We were unlucky and lost one of our practice males. Miss Collette identified him, discovered he was working with forged Ident Card and had him arrested."

"Remarkable! Just the sort of resourcefulness we want to encourage. Well done both of you! Madam Chao, I do think this is convincing evidence for the success of the programme. Especially in such a short time."

Corey felt relieved. It seemed as though they had managed to present enough evidence, after all.

"Main point though, Minister – being Mistress is skill, skill needs learning, skill needs practice. All need to understand and seek to progress. With care, from one rice plant entire family can feed."

"That is very much the concern," Florence started. "How can this be made broader? Mary Tang - able though she is - cannot train all our aspiring young mistresses."

"This is true. My thought is that we need to build culture of enthusiasm for the art of Kòngzhì Rén. Maybe get BBC to produce documentary on its history, produce guides that introduce principles in newspapers and magazines. And - for reaching young women - suggest we ask these very expert ambassadors to help us. " She gestured at the four girls. "There are many text books too but they will need translating. Much could be done with a small group of sponsored men taught basics of Mandarin Chinese. They could do the bulk of the work with some from Sunrise checking and correcting. My staff are very good at correcting."

"That, I am certain of, Madam Chao. I can see that you have a clear view of what is needed to take advantage of this pilot scheme. I am pleased that Sunrise is being such a constructive partner in this. I will ask my team to document where we have got to so far. I don't anticipate any problems in arranging for the current contract to be extended to take account of the work needed to get the broader programme under way."



## 29. Good-bye to All That

Claire Dobell-Bull was sitting behind her desk, resting her chin on a hand as she listened. A pall of blue cigar smoke hung over her head. She looked, Florence Daniels thought, as inscrutable as one of the Buddha statues that Madam Chao had in her office.

"So, if I have this straight, you have set things up with Edu & Skills so that the costs of the JUMIST programme are on their budget but it remains a Home Affairs responsibility because of the expected positive impact on offending rates?"

"That's right," Florence Daniels responded confidently.

Florence's opposite number from Edu & Skills nodded. The last thing she wanted was any show of inter-departmental rivalry in front of Dobell-Bull.

Claire turned towards Jackie Maygood. "I imagine you and Takely are happy too?" Jackie nodded. "Though I must admit my idea of inward investment is that overseas companies spend money here, not that we spend money with them."

"There is an overall net positive impact, I can show you the numbers ..."

"Yes, I'm sure you can. Never mind. Johannsen's given me the nod on this. It'll go through cabinet all right. Once we get the formalities dealt with you'd better get on with it." She wasn't usually happy with this sort of inter-departmental deal. There were too many opportunities to fudge responsibilities, she thought. Still, on this occasion, it looked like Daniels had got things set up sensibly.

"Thank you," Florence said and got up to leave, tapping Jackie Maygood on the shoulder as she did so. If she had learned one thing in Government, it was that it was a good idea to stop selling once you'd got the order.

.....  
In a private dining room at Lee Ho Fook's, as the main course of food was being cleared away, Madam Chao got to her feet. "This is sad day and happy day," she started. "Sad day because we finish this stage of the JUMIST programme and say goodbyes. Happy day because the work of you all has been so successful."

Around the table Fara, Daphne, Collette and Anna sat listening with mixed emotions, pleased that they would soon be returning home but sad that their time together was ending. They were each in the qipao they had won as a result of their studies; Fara in blue, Collette, Daphne and Anna all in green.

Tsai Linn, and Wan Yu were there as well as Corey Preston. Mary Tang sat at the end of the table with her usual impassive expression. Her leather clad slave was kneeling beside her. his leash hooked to the back of Mary's chair.

Even the men had been brought to share in the event, although their participation was limited to waiting at table for the meal and dealing with the plates once they had been cleared away. This had been a treat as far as Bernard was concerned. He had managed to steal a left-over pancake roll while returning some plates to the kitchen and a fork full of noodles and prawns as a half-filled plate was scraped into the waste before washing up. They didn't really get a chance to listen to Madam Chao's warm words though; they were working too hard.

"I am pleased that you have progressed so far. At the start of this course I had a bet with Mary Tang. We had different views of how many of you would progress beyond white qipao in these two months. I am happy to say, I lost. Though I don't think Mary made it easy for you to help her win."

Fara looked down the table at Mary and thought she detected a hint of a smile in response. Certainly Mary had shown no signs of taking it easy at any of the tests as far as she could tell.

"Government tells us that this programme will continue. We start on new phase tomorrow. We hope you continue your studies but now you must do this on your own. We also hope that you will help us with future courses - maybe come and talk to students, now you are skilled in Kòngzhì Rén?"

The girls smiled at each other, pleased to be thought skilled, even if they all knew they still had much to learn.

Madam Chao sat down and looked around the table. It was true they had a lot to learn but it was also true that they had come a long way. She watched as Collette scolded one of the men for serving from the wrong side and smiled as Anna beckoned a waiter to clear a dish with an imperious finger that was as fine a demonstration of the Path of the Look as could be imagined. Daphne had appropriated one of the men to kneel at her side holding a tray with her glass of wine. Madam Chao smiled, there was plenty of room on the table for the glass but Daphne had chosen this small act as a demonstration of her superiority to the unfortunate servant. Fara sat almost as calmly and impassively as her hero and mentor Mary Tang, waiting for a moment as Bernard stood offering a choice from a plate before waving him away. Madam Chao clapped her hands. "Ha! Very splendid! Ladies, you all have learned well, I can see. Now deserts please!"

As the deserts were served, Madam Chao clapped her hands to summon one of the men. Bernard, the nearest, went across to her. "More tea, round eye!"

Bernard nodded. He knew no answer was needed to a simple command like that. He soon returned with a fresh pot of tea and refilled Madam Chao's tea bowl.

"Kneel there." Madam Chao gestured with her chopsticks to a spot beside her. Bernard did as she said. "You are boy from railway station, yes?"

Bernard was surprised, worried and slightly pleased that she remembered him. He nodded again.

"When were you last beaten?"

To Bernard this did not sound like a conversation that was going anywhere happy. "Just before the Minister's meeting Ma'am. I had the honour to clean your shoes. I needed some correction before they were as you would wish."

"Ha! Sunrise girls make sure you do your work well. Hope you are grateful." Madam Chao didn't wait for a response. "And girls, our trainees, have they beaten you?"

"Yes, Ma'am. I had to give them cane practice because..."

"Not interested in why. Which do you think most proficient?"

Surprised to be asked for an opinion, Bernard thought for a moment.

"So difficult?"

"No, Ma'am but I want to give the best answer. Miss Daphne has the most strength I would say. Her blows land hard. Miss Anna is most accurate. Five strokes felt as though each landed exactly on top of the one before."

"Thank you, round eye. A treat for you." With her chopsticks, Madam Chao picked up a lychee from the dish of fruit in front of her and offered it to Bernard. He opened his mouth and took it, not used to such considerate treatment. "Good. Enough for now. I think you quite like feet, round eye. Since you think it an honour to clean my shoes how much more of an honour to kiss them. Do that then go."

Willingly, Bernard crouched down. He pushed under the edge of the table cloth, ignoring the odd scraps of food that had fallen on the floor during the course of the meal. He was close to her feet. She was wearing fully fashioned black stockings, the seams on the back of her legs acted as a pointer, showing him where he should press his mouth. He knew it was shaming to be here. He knew she would only feel contempt for the ease with which she had gained his obedience but in the end he was happy to be able to do as she asked. The black shoes had white edging around the heel. He pressed his lips to the toe of Madam Chao's left shoe, taking in the smell of the leather as it mixed with the aromas of the restaurant.

"Enough!" came Madam Chao's voice from above. "Do not get too excited. I think we all know what happens then. Go now. I have finished with you. Clear dinner things and help restaurant staff wash up. You go back to railway station tomorrow."

Bernard was shocked. He hadn't expected his re-assignment to come to an end so suddenly but, of course, with the training over, there was no use for him here. He hoped that his supervisor had moved on but he had a horrible suspicion that she might still be there.

After the meal, Madam Chao took Corey Preston to one side. "Your help is greatly welcomed," she said. "I know how difficult this would have been without access to Daniels and Maygood."

"Well, it's what I am paid for."

"Of course. But we do not always get what we pay for. Please, have this." Madam Chao passed a small box to Corey.

"Thank you but..."

"No protests, please."

Corey opened the box inside a was a porcelain sculpture about ten inches high. "It's beautiful," Corey said. "But what is it? It looks a little like a penis."

"Ha! You are right. I had not noticed! It is a model of the memorial to Wu Zetian, Empress who devised Kòngzhì Rén. The memorial is in Shaanxi in China. It has no inscription on it. The Empress said. "'My achievements and errors can only be evaluated by later generations. So, there is no need to carve any single word on my stele.' I think that is a good motto for us all."

"I agree. It is a good motto and a beautiful gift. Thank you."

As the last of the food was cleared away the girls said their goodbyes to one another, each saying they would be sure to stay in touch. As Collette, Anna, and Daphne left, Fara noticed that Mary Tang was standing examining a painting of the Great Wall of China that hung on the dining room wall.

She was motionless. She seemed to take in every detail of the painting just by standing in front of it. She had chosen, unsurprisingly, to wear a black qipao to the event. Unlike others that the girls had seen her in this was floor length, the side slit cut dramatically high on her hip. A single golden dragon was embroidered across the top of the dress.

Standing with her hands clasped in front of her, in heels higher than she normally wore Mary seemed like part of the architecture, an oriental caryatid, rather than just one of those attending. Her slave was every bit as still, black leather covering every inch of his body, straps securing his arms, zips closing the openings for his mouth, eyes and crotch.

Fara knew by now not to be daunted by the way that Mary looked. Fara approached her. "I never said, 'thank you' for what you did," Fara said apologetically.

"I did the same for you all," Mary replied.

"No," Fara answered. "When I thought that I had let one of the men escape. You told me about the young girl in China. The one who left a man locked in a box for three days. It was a great help."

Mary Tang nodded, accepting Fara's thanks gladly. "Good. This is not an easy path and we all must cross fences. Sometimes there needs to be a stile."

Fara smiled. "When I have studied more, will you examine me for red qipao?"

"Of course. This can be arranged. But when you reach black qipao we must find another. I cannot do that. Need to find someone black qipao two dragons or more. I hope to reach two dragons one day but for now you need someone more skilled than me."

"You said 'when' not 'if'. Thank you. And, it is hard to imagine someone more skilled."

"No need for thanks. This is a matter of fact, Or flattery, though that is appreciated. You can certainly gain black qipao if you wish. And if you work. It gets much harder after red qipao."

Fara nodded. She knew that it would but, equally, she knew she was going to try.

### 30. Retrospective

Five years later, Fara Dangerfield found herself standing in the wings of a television studio at BBC Broadcasting House.

"Good evening and welcome to 'Retrospective', a chance to look back at defining moments in recent history with me, Victoria Fleming." The presenter, reading from her autocue, smiled into the unblinking eye of the television camera. "Tonight we will be talking with Fara Dangerfield, one of the trainees in the very first JUMIST sessions, about how that event laid the foundations for so much development of women's man-management skills in the last five years. Ladies, Ms Fara Dangerfield."

The studio audience applauded as Fara walked confidently onto the studio set and sat down beside Victoria. Resplendent in a long black silk qipao with red piping on the hems and the fastenings, she was completely relaxed as she greeted her interviewer.

"Fara, for those that don't know - and I'm sure there can't be many - tell about the start of the JUMIST programme and Kòngzhì Rén."

"Well, Victoria, I'm not sure about the political background and the whys and wherefores but for me it was a chance to fill in a gap in my understanding of how to live in the society we are building. It turned out that this method, this art, devised thirteen hundred years ago, has real application in the modern world."

"I believe you taught yourself Mandarin in order to study it?"

"Well, yes, but don't let that put viewers off! Since I first started, most of the key works have been translated into English. When I signed up for the course, though, I knew nothing of the language, Kòngzhì Rén, or Chinese culture apart from what I picked up at my local take-away."

Victoria smiled. "But now you've reached the highest level possible. Your black qipao signifies that I believe? And you were the first western woman to gain that distinction?"

"Well, it's true that I have managed to win the black qipao but that's not the highest possible level. There are grades above this; five dragon grades. I don't think you can ever stop learning and that's something you can't get men to do for you, no matter how hard you try! Kòngzhì Rén teaches you always to be looking to increase your skills. That's why it has been such a powerful force for developing young women in this country. That first course set me well on the way. It was so hard at first. I never thought I would get to grips with it. I'd managed to pass the first three grades during the initial training but after then I had to build my own skills. Luckily the Government funded access to an expert mentor to help me learn and to arrange for examinations at the various levels. It's all part of the JUMIST plan now."

"Were you surprised how quickly it caught on?"

"No, not really. I'd felt there was a need for something like this and it seems that lots of other people agree. It's very practical and easy to apply but it makes you think about how you do things too. With diligence and practice and good tuition your skill builds until it becomes easy, almost second nature. You apply the methods instinctively but behind that you are always thinking, always learning. I think the thing that has really encouraged me has been how quickly the network of clubs and study groups

grew up once New Opportunity really got behind it and of course, the way in which Sunrise has contributed their expertise too."

Victoria bristled at the mention of a commercial concern, sensitive as ever about advertising on the BBC but she knew she had to give Fara the opportunity for her own plug. "You've written about your experience, I believe."

"Well, yes. I don't have anything like the understanding of Kòngzhì Rén that my mentor, Mary Tang or the wonderful exponents of the art in China have but I thought it would be useful to have a work for the general reader. Something that might inspire other girls to get involved in the programme in the same way that I did and my other colleagues did too. It's called 'Four Paths, Four Pressures, One Goal' - I've tried to make it a bit of an introduction to the method as well as talking about my own experiences."

At home, Fara's mother watched approvingly as the interview continued. She felt Fara deserved the attention for all the hard work she had put in. It hadn't been easy writing the book while holding down her full time job at the Ministry for Inward Investment. "Miss Fara's made a big success of this Kòngzhì Rén thing, hasn't she?" her houseboy asked as he brought Phyllis the coffee she had asked for.

"Yes, ... " Phyllis started, and then stopped, looking at her houseboy, the latest in a series. She couldn't for the life of her remember the name of this one. He was young, on his first sponsored placement. He couldn't be much older than Jim Wheeland had been though he was much better behaved. And *much* less strange. Phyllis wondered a bit about Jim. In the end she hadn't had to give evidence in court. The Prosecution Service has decided he wasn't fit to plead. Phyllis guessed that he was still in the secure hospital. At least, she hoped he was.

Florence Daniels watched with satisfaction too. The success of the Kòngzhì Rén programme had made it easier for her to hang on to her job through what must have been seven rounds of ministerial reshuffles. It had certainly kept Edu & Skills on the back foot too. The figures for male anti-social behaviour were down again this month. She was pretty sure the Kòngzhì Rén programme had something to do with that.

Marianne Higgs turned the television off. She couldn't watch. The programme brought back memories of an unhappy time. She and Stephen had never got over it really. He'd been changed by the three months he'd spent in detention. She'd been changed by the thought of his keeping secrets, by the betrayal of trust. She'd thought of divorce but in the end had decided to stick with it. After all, that was what being married meant, wasn't it?

Madam Chao was far too busy to worry about television programs. They had invited her to take part but pressures of business had taken her up north to the Sunrise factory for a production review with Assistant Production Manager Liu Wei. Madam Chao had been surprised by how she had worked her way back into favour, but the girl had put her cruel streak to good use in the factory. While she still complained about her own working conditions, she nevertheless had managed to make them better than those of her unfortunate staff. Corey Preston missed the broadcast too. She was flying, high over the Middle-East, returning after a briefing session on Sunrise's latest technologies. The company had been very grateful for her work promoting their involvement with the JUMIST scheme and she'd picked up other international clients on the back of it. That kept her busy, as did the continuing revolving door of Government staff that meant there was always someone new to try to get to.

Back in the studio, Victoria Fleming swivelled her chair away from Fara to face a different camera. "And.... we're very pleased that we can reunite the rest of Fara's class here today, so let's now bring on, the journalist Collette Donaldson, pentathlete Daphne Steel and fashion blogger Anna Carson. We are also lucky enough to have two of the original tutors, now working in the UK wide UMIST programme; Tsai Lin and Wan Yu."

Bernard sat glumly watching the screen in his room over Euston Station. This was the sort of thing you had to put up with on TV's when you plugged in a male Ident Card; endless propaganda for Government programmes, endless guff designed to keep you in your place. He recognised the four young women from the days he had spent at the Sunrise Tea Parlour, Collette and Fara both in black qipao, Daphne in brown and Anna - showing Bernard thought a fashion choice rather than her prowess in Kòngzhì Rén, purple. They all looked sleekly groomed and successful. He listened to the programme. Throughout the entire hour they didn't mention Bernard or his colleagues once. In the end he turned the television off and headed off to try to get some sleep. His new supervisor was due to start in the morning. She'd just come from one of these JUMIST training programmes; no doubt she'd be looking to practice her paths and her pressures. Bernard wasn't looking forward to it.

**THE END**

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