

Bare Behind

PENNY BIRCH

Nexus

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BARE BEHIND

Penny Birch

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In real life, make sure you practice safe sex.

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**Dedicated to Paul,
for thoughts of Madman Kline**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Cover Page](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Epigraphs](#)

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[Chapter Six](#)

[Chapter Seven](#)

[Chapter Eight](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Other eBook Titles from *RoverBooks*](#)

One

Spank a girl and she stays spanked. For me, anyway, a relationship can never be fully equal if the other person has held me squalling and kicking across their lap, bum bare to the world and tears streaming down my face. Certainly it's not easy to feel relaxed in that person's company.

I don't mean play spankings. That's the opposite. With Amber I always feel fully equal and fully at ease, however often she takes me across her knee or makes me bend for the application of some more severe implement of correction to my bottom. In fact I only ever feel truly comfortable in the company of people who are used to smacking my bottom for me, or at least seeing it done. I mean real spankings, punishment spankings.

That was what my Aunt Elaine gave me. I'd been sixteen, a bridesmaid at my cousin Kate's wedding, pretty in pink, right down to my panties. What I'd done was fairly unspeakable, even though it hadn't really been my fault, and I'd deserved retribution. She put me across her knee, lifted up my fancy pink dress and pulled down the ridiculous frilly panties I'd been made to wear. I was spanked, hard. I cried — in fact I really blubbered — but it wasn't the pain of the experience so much as the humiliation.

So that was what I was thinking of as my train moved from station to station along the Thames Valley. Not the appointment to a senior lectureship at my old university, about which I had every right to feel good, but what my

aunt had done to me so many years before. Naturally I had to call in, as I was now living so close, but it was not a prospect I relished. It had seemed a good idea in the morning, in my cosy new flat. There had been a slight sense of unease at the unfamiliar surroundings, but nothing I couldn't cope with.

It was at the station that nostalgia started to get a grip on me. I'd stood on that same platform so many times before, as a little girl, as a student. After that every sight, every smell had made it worse: the woods at Mapledurham, with the leaves beginning to turn; the mud and petrol of the Thames itself. The last straw was going past my old school. I thought of Kate, Aunt Elaine's daughter; how I'd looked up to her, how I'd envied her, her wedding, my spanking.

I couldn't stop thinking about it, most of all the agonising shame of having my panties pulled down so that I could be spanked properly. That's what had really got to me; it's what always really gets to me. It's worse than the pain, worse than the awful helplessness of being under someone else's control: having my bottom bared as if it's unimportant, as if it just doesn't matter that my pussy and bumhole are showing.

That's what Aunt Elaine had done, and I was going to visit her, in the same big, rambling house in which it had happened. I felt as if I was sixteen again and telling myself to stop being silly made no difference.

I got out at Pangbourne and decided to walk up the hill, hoping to get my head together and work up an appetite for lunch. It was a mistake. For one thing my feelings of nostalgia and insecurity grew steadily worse as I walked along the same lanes where Kate and I had played as children. For another I'd barely got halfway when it began to rain, so when I finally arrived I was soaked to the skin and looked like a drowned rat.

Aunt Elaine was as ever; brisk, rather stern, talking to me as if it was my fault that I'd got wet. I was sent upstairs

to strip and shower in the very same bathroom in which it had happened. She'd redecorated but the mirror was the same, the mirror in which I watched myself prepared for a spanking, in which I'd seen my panties pulled down against my will. By the time I'd dried myself and put on her bathrobe I was trembling.

I went downstairs only to be told to go back up and put some clothes on — her clothes. Born in 1943 Elaine had been a teenager in the sixties, as had my mother. Unfortunately, if my family had done any swinging it had been on a golf course. Both Elaine and my mother had brought being proper to the state of a fine art, and it was reflected in my aunt's taste in clothes. She's also bigger than me. Her skirts simply were not going to fit me without the aid of safety pins, so I ended up braless in just a baggy silk blouse, with a pair of huge, frilly panties that came up to my waist but felt dangerously loose. I was hardly indecent, with the blouse covering my bum.

I still got a disapproving tut when I went downstairs, but Aunt Elaine was too busy cooking to remonstrate. The house was already full of the smells of roast beef and apple pudding, familiar scents that added to my nostalgia. Deciding that if I couldn't shake it off I might as well wallow in it, I poured myself a large glass of sherry and sat down to go through some of her old photo albums.

Inevitably I chose the one of Kate's wedding. There I was, slightly sulky in my fancy dress and looking about twelve, despite actually being a month older than her. In fact it was hard to tell that I was older than her little sister, Susan, who'd been eleven at the time and already taller than me. She'd been the other bridesmaid and, if I looked sulky in most of the photos, then her expressions varied from a rebellious scowl to pure mischief. I'd been spanked towards the end of the reception, and there weren't any photos taken after that, which was probably just as well.

I picked up the next album, thinking it would be one with pictures of Kate and me when we'd been at school together. It was actually a much later album of some do involving Kate and her second husband, Jeremy. I went through it anyway, idly picking out the faces of old friends from among the crowd, only to stop as I realised that one of them was seriously out of place.

He was a big ginger-haired man with a bristly moustache. I knew him, but not from my childhood, nor from anything to do with my family. It had been at a party, a very rude party. I was sure of it, and if I couldn't remember his name, or which party it had been at, then that didn't matter. What did matter was that my aunt knew a man who was into the same sort of rude fantasy play I am, and that was not good.

I've always tried very hard to keep my family and professional lives separate from my private life. I haven't been entirely successful, but I have managed to prevent my dirty behaviour from becoming common knowledge. Above all I didn't want my mother to know, and anything that reached Elaine was likely to get there in double quick time. My mother and Elaine knew — or at least suspected — that Kate and I had had sex together, and that was bad enough. To think of my mother discovering about the spanking, the pony-play, the panty-wetting, would be unbearable.

On the other hand, the photos had been taken four years previously and nothing had been said. Possibly it was just coincidence. That seemed the sensible conclusion. After all, just because she knew him didn't mean they shared such intimate information. Either that or Elaine knew but had chosen not to tell my mother. Then again, however well he knew my aunt it seemed likely that he'd want to keep his sexual peccadilloes secret, just as I did. Or they might be lovers and have a fine time swapping stories of my degradation; unlikely, but not impossible.

I always do that, analyse every alternative in a given situation. It's a useful trait for a scientist, but it was now driving me into a fine state as I mulled over the various possibilities. I also tried to remember more about the ginger-haired man, but failed. I couldn't even remember if he'd spanked me. That makes me sound a complete slut, which I am, but that's not the point. What I could be sure of was that if he had been to my aunt's house he'd have every chance of recognising me. I was in plenty of photographs.

Despite trying to tell myself that I was being ridiculous and that it was just coincidence, my worry wouldn't go away. I had to know who he was and how he related to my aunt. Not that I could ask straight out, but when Aunt Elaine finally came in from the kitchen to ask me to set the table, I adopted what I hoped was an air of casual interest and showed her the picture.

'Who's this?' I asked. 'I'm sure I know him, but I just can't place him. He's not local, is he?'

'No, no,' she answered, taking the album. 'I don't know him at all. A friend of Jeremy's father, perhaps? Now, if you could be sure to lay out the silver napkin rings. I know it's only the two of us, but one does like to do things properly.'

I breathed a sigh of relief, chiding myself for getting in such a state over nothing. It all came down to my feelings of insecurity, and I knew it, rationally anyway. Determined to drive my bad feelings away, I helped myself to a second sherry, sipping it as I set the table and dealt with the wine.

Lunch was as good as it ever had been; roast sirloin of beef with all the trimmings, apple sponge pudding and cream, washed down with a claret my uncle had laid down and a Vouvray *moelleux*. By the end I was feeling distinctly mellow myself and not a little drunk, while my tummy was a hard ball beneath the waistband of the ridiculously large panties.

Our conversation had become increasingly relaxed as the meal had gone on, from polite enquiries after health and

family gossip, to more nostalgic topics inspired by the albums I'd left out on the sofa. Elaine had picked up one of the oldest of them and was scanning the pages with a bittersweet smile, stopping at a large print of Kate and me in school uniform.

'My, you were such a handful,' she sighed, shaking her head.

'A handful? I wasn't, I was as good as gold!'

'Oh, my dear,' she laughed. 'How we do deceive ourselves. You were terrible, always in the right, and always knew best, and as for school!'

'School? I was a model pupil. I was never in trouble!'

'Precisely, my dear. And your marks; Little Miss Smarty Pants, the teachers used to call you, although not to Geraldine's face.'

'Well, that was hardly my fault!'

'Perhaps not. Still, they used to find you absolutely exasperating, I know I did. You simply would not be told. Geraldine was entirely graceless about it. All those 'A' grade certificates, framed in the hall if you please, and poor Kate.'

'Kate? Auntie Elaine, I was desperately jealous of Kate at school.'

'Oh, what nonsense! No, my dear, you were quite dreadful, believe me. I doubt there can ever have been quite such a smug child. I used to itch to smack your bare behind for you.'

'You did,' I reminded her, the words tumbling out before I could stop myself.

I stopped dead, the blood rushing to my face. Aunt Elaine chuckled.

'So I did,' she said happily. 'My, what a fuss you made!'

She took a sip of her wine, smiling as she put the glass down, all too obviously thinking of what she had done to me. I was blushing furiously, the awful insecurity and humiliation that had been building up in me all day rushing to the surface.

‘Such a fuss!’ she said, happily.

‘I was sixteen!’ I answered her in protest. ‘You took down my panties!’

‘Well you deserved it,’ she went on calmly, ‘every bit of it. What I should have done was to take a good hold of your ear and marched you out to the garden, to make you tell Geraldine what you’d been doing. I would have done, I think, had you not made quite such a silly fuss over it all. I was desperately cross. Do you know, I think they heard it out in the garden? What must they have thought?’

‘They did hear us in the garden,’ I answered bitterly. ‘Susan told me.’

‘How very funny!’ she responded.

She laughed. I couldn’t answer. I was too horrified. She had recounted that awful punishment as if it was just another happy memory, something amusing, something to be joked about. Not to me it wasn’t. It was my first panties-down spanking, an event of enormous importance. I realised that I’d been wrong all the time. She hadn’t done it out of anger and righteous indignation or, at least, not entirely. It had excited her. She’d as good as admitted it when she’d said she used to itch to smack my bottom. It was typical of her, keeping it secret, hidden behind the façade of ‘necessary discipline’.

‘I still say it should have been done sooner,’ she went on. ‘Still, better late than never.’

She chuckled, and with that I was sure. It could only mean one thing. I’d shown her the photograph, and she’d got on to the subject of spanking me in under an hour. It could not be coincidence. She knew I liked it. She wouldn’t say it, any more than she’d expect me to admit to enjoying it, but she knew. He’d have been the same, when he told her. I could just picture it: him laughing, maybe tugging at his horrible bristly moustache as he joked that he’d ‘had to spank me once’ and I’d taken it rather well, or that I’d ‘needed correction and been properly contrite afterwards’.

He might have told her in the hope of getting Elaine across his own knee, or simply into bed. She was still appealing at fifty-eight, and I could well imagine a dirty old man like him taking his chances with an attractive widow. He'd have played a game, the way older people do, testing the water to see if sex is an acceptable proposition and hiding the kinky bits behind careful phrases and guilty silence.

Now she was playing the same game. She'd find an excuse, I knew it; some reason my panties had to come down, some reason I had to have my bottom smacked. She was playing the game but I wasn't sixteen any more. I was a grown woman and she had no authority over me at all. It didn't matter. She knew.

'Geraldine was always too lenient with you,' she went on, as if musing. 'She always used to say that she would spank you when you needed it. I'd have done it just to wipe that smug little expression you always wore off your face.'

'I'm sure you would,' I answered, catching the sulky tone in my own voice.

'Too late now,' she sighed.

It was my cue. It was as good as an order, as good as getting in a couple of strapping men to hold me down. I couldn't stop myself. Maybe if I'd been sober, maybe if I'd been feeling not quite so emotional. As it was I stood up, slowly, with part of my mind screaming at me to sit down but unable to obey. Four paces took me to her end of the table, and I stopped beside her chair, sideways on.

She didn't say a word, nor did I. We both knew what was going to happen. I took hold of the blouse, lifting it to my waist to lay bare the big white panties and effectively offering myself for punishment. I couldn't bear to look and closed my eyes, already fighting back the tears. For a long moment nothing happened, and then I felt her hands in the waistband of the panties. She tugged them down, ever so matter of fact, just far enough to reveal my bottom.

That was too much. I began to cry; big oily tears squeezing out of my eyes as the unbearable humiliation of standing there with my bottom and pussy naked grew stronger. Again she left me, just to really let it sink in, before the spanking began. When it did, it was gentle, just pats really, delivered to the undersides of my bum cheeks, one after the other. It wasn't hard, it didn't have to be. She could have put me across her knee, or made me bend for the cane, anything really. What mattered was that I was being admonished and accepting it by allowing my bare bottom to be smacked.

Soon the tears were streaming down my cheeks, and I was sobbing, really brokenly, pouring out all that emotion as my bottom quivered and jumped to the little smacks. I was bare bottomed, bare behind, as she'd said, the way a punished girl ought to be, holding my blouse up to show myself off, in mute submission, in snivelling acceptance that she was right, that I ought to be spanked, and often.

I took it until she'd finished, then ran up the stairs with my pink cheeks wobbling behind me, the oversized panties still around my thighs. I went straight to her room, slamming the door behind me, and threw myself down on the bed. I'm not sure why, but it seemed the right place to be. She'd spanked me and now I was going to snivel it out of my system on her bed, and masturbate.

I had to. She knew that, and I knew that. I also knew that she'd leave me alone until I was done, treating it as an embarrassing necessity for a girl with a smacked bottom. I don't think a spanking has ever put me quite so firmly in my place, maybe not even that original one. I felt incredibly small and utterly grateful to her for doing it to me. I went straight onto my knees across the bed, bum up so my smacked bum showed in the bedside mirror. My cheeks showed only a flush of pink, but my face was a mess, tear stained and miserable.

My finger went into my mouth and straight up my bumhole. I love something up my bum after a spanking, but normally I spend a little time teasing myself by tickling my ring or deliberately taking my time to choose what to put up. This time I was too urgent. It had to be my finger, and fast, so fast that it hurt a little as it went in. That didn't stop me. I pushed it right up, as deep as it would go, until I could feel the wet, mushy flesh of my rectum. My other hand went to my pussy and I began to masturbate, making little circular motions on my clitty as I fingered my bumhole.

It felt so rude, with that finger deep up my dirty smacked bottom and my clitty burning under my hands, frigging off because I didn't have the will power to stop myself. Drunk, tired and spanked, my inhibitions had gone completely, leaving me to enjoy thoroughly the urgent needs of my body. After a while my finger went into my mouth, then back up my bum as I let my fantasy run wild.

I thought of what Elaine had said, about dragging me outside by the ear and making me tell my mother what I'd done. In front of Kate, too. The humiliation would have been appalling, admitting to them that I'd let Kate's brand new husband spunk up in my face. In fact my face had still had sperm on it when Elaine had spanked me, so if she'd dragged me outside, everybody would have seen. He'd pushed my head down the lavatory too, so my hair had been dripping wet.

It had been worse. He'd meant to fuck me, to take my precious virginity across that toilet bowl, puncturing my hymen at the same instance he flushed my head down the lavatory. If Elaine had been a few minutes later, if they'd forgotten to lock the door, I'd have been caught like that...

Just the memory of what had really happened was so humiliating it was hard to get my head around it. The options were far worse. The thought of having to explain myself to my mother while Elaine held me by the ear, with a curtain of sperm hanging from my chin and my wet hair

plastered around my face. It would have been in front of all the guests as well, and I could even have been punished like that, held kicking and thrashing between my mother and aunt, my bottom exposed, and spanked, spanked in public...

Or if Toby had fucked me and I'd been hauled across Elaine's knee, maybe my mother's too, struggling in desperation as my dress and petticoats were hauled up, screaming with embarrassment as my panties were jerked down. Spanked, all dignity gone, legs wide, hairy pussy and dirty brown bumhole on show to hundreds upon hundreds of leering, delighted men and women, with my virgin blood smeared around my pussy hole, in full view of every single one...

I came, biting hard on the coverlet to stop myself screaming as the most delicious orgasm hit me, carrying me on wave after wave of pleasure as I rubbed at myself and jabbed my finger frantically in and out of my pulsing anus. It lasted so long, as long as any I've ever had, and left me weak and shivering, splay legged on the bed, with my finger still stuck deep up my now slimy bottom hole. It took a long time to die away completely and I was still slowly fingering my bum long after my anus had stopped contracting. My fingers were sodden with pussy juice, and in the end it was fear of leaving a wet patch on the coverlet that made me get up.

In the bathroom I thought of what I'd done just in my aunt's house, and the strange way it had come about. Left to my own devices, I'd have handled it differently. Like Elaine, I'd have made sure there was plenty to drink and also tested the water a little. The difference was that she'd only succeeded because I'd been in such an emotional state, whereas I'd have asked a straight question as soon as I was reasonably sure of getting what I wanted, or even just put my victim across my knee to see what happened.

Her technique was strange — at least to me — but really fairly typical of her generation, and I've been spanked

by enough dirty old men to understand. Modern teenagers and twenty-somethings are often quite cool about it, recognising playful spanking as a legitimate, slightly cheeky, form of sex play. But those who were brought up repressed or under eighties' concepts of political correctness tend to feel guilty yet do it anyway. That covers most of those in their thirties, forties and fifties. Older than that and attitudes tend to be more ambivalent and hypocritical, with the pretence of discipline used to conceal sexual pleasure and not a great deal of consideration for consent. So first you have the young ones, 'do it and laugh about it'; second the older, 'do it and agonise over it'; third the oldest, 'do it and don't mention it' and fourth; those few truly debauched individuals who just wallow in it, free of all self-judgement.

Fifty-eight or not, Elaine definitely belonged to the third group but, then, that's my family all over. She obviously felt no guilt whatsoever about spanking me, or Kate and Susan, so long as it could be presented as discipline. To her it was clearly a mildly amusing and very necessary action, almost a chore, had it not been for her own unmentionable reaction. So it was fine, really, for all that we couldn't discuss it. We'd both done what we needed to do.

For all my efforts at rationalisation, I was very shame-faced indeed when I came back downstairs. Elaine was drinking coffee in the drawing-room and had already poured my cup.

'Are you better now?' she asked.

'Yes, thank you,' I answered.

That was it. True, I was thanking her for the spanking as much as the for the courtesy of asking how I felt but, again, it didn't need to be said. Our conversation drifted onto more ordinary topics and nothing more was mentioned. I stayed for tea, by which time my clothes were dry, and I left soon after. Perhaps there was a shade more warmth in her goodbye kiss than I'd expected, but I couldn't be sure.

Walking back through the lanes was a strange experience, stranger even than on my way. I'd told her I was better, but I'd lied. I felt deeply ashamed of myself and horribly insecure. That sort of feeling has always led to arousal for me. I just can't help it, and if the psychologists want to paint it as a defence against my lack of confidence as a teenager, then fair enough.

I felt like I had as a teenager: vulnerable and uncertain, a bad, spanked girl with a wet pussy and not understanding why. My need for humiliation was raging. I wanted to pee in my panties, to have it soak through the seat of my jeans and around my pussy, so that people would see and snigger at me, and exchange looks of disgust or amusement. I wanted to strip nude and offer myself to the first man I met, to be tied over a farm gate and fucked from the rear, preferably up my bottom. Most of all, I wanted to be spanked, bare bottom, hard and in public.

I didn't do anything, although it was a close thing (at least the panty wetting bit). As it was I managed to restrain myself, waiting until I could use the loo at the station. Even then I would have masturbated if there had been a functional lock on the door. If I was trying to hold back from disgracing myself, then fate was not with me. As I came out of the Ladies the train was pulling in and I jumped onto the nearest carriage, the last. It was empty, and with the high-backed seats hiding my lower body, the temptation to touch myself very quickly became overwhelming.

I told myself I'd just do it through my jeans and began to stroke the soft bulge of my pussy lips as the train set off. It wasn't enough and, before I really knew what I was doing, my zip was down and my hand was burrowing into the front of my panties. I kept my eyes open, nervously watching the door at the far end of the carriage, and let my mind run on my family spanking fantasy. It was going to be easy, and I could already feeling the little jumps and twinges around my clitty as I focused on how it had felt to have my aunt take

down my panties. I shut my eyes, reasoning that I'd hear the door in the unlikely event of anyone coming back down the train.

It was so good, so shameful, thinking over and over of how it had felt to have my panties taken smartly down off my bum, to leave me bare and ready, available for the smacking Elaine had decided I deserved. There was a click and a jolt. I realised that it was only the train going over some points, but my eyes had come open. I found myself looking out across the edge of Reading, with my old school playing fields just coming into view and the low hill that hid my mother's house beyond.

Once more I closed my eyes, trying to bring back the fantasy. It wouldn't work, the damage was done. It wasn't my aunt I was standing in front of any more, but my mother. I tried to push the image out of my mind, but I couldn't. I just gave in, rubbing at my pussy in urgent need as the first fresh tears squeezed from my eyes.

I was imagining myself in her study, with my father's photograph on the desk, and her looking at me in shame. I was being lectured, told off for all my sexual excesses, every dirty little thing I'd ever done. I was being told I was a disgrace, a slut, that I ought to grow up. She was saying that I'd been naughty, that I needed spanking, that she was going to do it. She was telling me to pull down my pants. I was protesting, shouting at her, that it was ridiculous to expect me, a grown woman, to accept a bare-bottom spanking. She just looked stern, and the I was doing it, my thumbs going into the waistband of my panties, pulling them wide, pushing to lower them, with the tears streaming down my face as I exposed my poor little bottom...

I came, my teeth clamped hard against my lower lip to stop myself screaming, in blinding, terrible ecstasy at that awful image, with my shame a great bubble of pain in my head and the tears spraying from my eyes as I shook my head in a futile effort to control my own thoughts.

Two

The one sensible thing I had managed to do was pinch one of my aunt's photographs with the ginger-haired man in it. I was determined to find out who he was, both from simple curiosity and because it was making me feel insecure that a link existed between my private life and the older generation of my family. If I could find him, I could at least try to control that link. Otherwise anything might happen.

The spanking evidently fitted in with what Aunt Elaine considered acceptable, so I could be confident she wouldn't pass it on to my mother. On the other hand, she might not be so understanding of some of the other things I like: being a pony-girl, wetting my panties, anal play, and more. I ruminated on the problem all the way home. There were two sides to come at it from: how I knew him, and how my aunt knew him.

He'd been at a party, I was sure of that. I was fairly certain that it had been one of Morris Rathwell's, because only Rathwell has the huge free-for-alls where a girl can get spanked by someone she doesn't know. Being obligated to Morris Rathwell tends to be a fairly painful and extremely humiliating process, often more than I can really take, so I preferred to delay that line of enquiry.

On the other side, I was confident that Aunt Elaine was lying when she said she didn't know him. There he was at a family gathering, but not admitting to it fitted perfectly with

her 'do it but don't mention it' attitude. It was pointless to try to push her for more information.

The photo showed Kate's youngest, Jemima, proudly holding out a teddy-bear to him. At six years old I wouldn't have gone near a man who looked like that, so I decided he wasn't just a caterer. It also meant that Kate and Jeremy were likely to know him, but as they were in Antigua that line of research would have to wait. Susan was easier, working in London as a writer on some pop magazine.

I called Susan, who was keen to meet up but had endless social and work dates. We agreed to meet for lunch on the Saturday coming. Even then she spent the entire phone call threatening to drag me along to some concert in the evening. She was full of enthusiasm, and teased me about my submissive sexuality, but I still didn't tell her what her mother had done.

* * *

My week was spent setting up the lab and generally getting used to the routine of the university, little of which had changed since I'd last been there six years before. It kept me busy, at least during the day, and so I managed not to dwell too much on Aunt Elaine and the ginger-haired man. The evenings were filled with all the little social events that mark the beginning of a university year, so I'd generally be tired by the time I got back. That didn't stop me masturbating every night over the variations on that same agonising fantasy, of being spanked in front of my entire family and a hundred or more others.

I also saw my mother, but she treated me with the same mixture of pride and exasperation she has always shown. She made no reference whatever to spanking, let alone suggesting I needed one. I had to conclude that if Elaine had told her anything, then she was being remarkably discreet about it. It was much more likely that

she hadn't, for which I was grateful, although it didn't stop me worrying.

* * *

Certain that any afternoon spent with Susan was sure to involve a fair bit of alcohol, I took the train into Paddington on the Saturday. Her offices were just off the Marylebone Road and filled with vivacious twenty-some-things, nearly all of whom were female and blonde, or at least dyed blonde. Susan fitted right in. Some of them were even slightly in awe of her, addressing her as Suzie J, which was the name she wrote under, and treating her as an oracle on anything to do with pop scandal. It was a world entirely alien to me and left me feeling bemused, although merely being Susan's cousin apparently gained me immediate acceptance.

I knew it was inevitable that I'd end up explaining what had happened with her mother, and that she'd think it was hilarious. So rather than bringing out the photo at her office, I waited until we were at lunch, which for her meant black coffee and a very small, very sticky cake. I chose a goat's cheese salad and sat picking at it, trying to pluck up the courage to make my admission, while Susan chattered happily away.

It was only after about ten minutes that I managed to get a grip on myself. Ever since the spanking from Elaine I'd been feeling meek and shy, which was ridiculous in front of Susan. After all, I'd told her about the first time, including what had happened with Kate and Toby. Her response had been to flush me again, but after she'd peed in the bowl first. I took out the photo, interrupting her assassination of the latest Boy Band's credibility.

'Who's the guy with Jemima?' I asked.

Susan took the photo, pursing her lips as she studied it.

'I remember him, I'm sure,' she said. 'Yeah, he's an old friend of Jeremy's dad.'

'Does he know your mum well?'

'I don't know, maybe. Why?'

'It's long story. Basically he was at a party, a spanking party. He may even have spanked me, I can't remember...'

'Slut.'

'Look who's talking. Anyway, I'm worried that he might have told your mum about me and that it'll get back to mine, and...Well, you know what they're like.'

'Sure, but I don't see the problem. Even if he does know you're mum's niece, he's hardly going to tell her that he's smacked your bum, is he?'

'No, that's what I thought, only...Only, when I went to visit your mum after moving down, she...she talked me into taking a spanking.'

'You are joking!'

'I'm not. As soon as we'd drunk a bit she started going on about that time at Kate's first wedding. I'd already showed her the ginger guy's photo. She said he was a friend of Jeremy's dad, too, so that's probably how they met. He must have said something, because she was obviously angling to do it again...'

'So you let her!? Jesus, Penny!'

I threw my hands up, close to tears and with a lump in my chest so big I couldn't speak. For a moment Susan looked completely horrified, then burst into a fit of giggles. After a while I managed a grin, trying to see the funny side of it. She shook her head, still smiling as she refilled our glasses.

'So you want to talk to the ginger guy?' she asked.

'Yes. I mean, you know your mum, she's not going to admit anything. So I want to find out who he is and what he's told her. Look, I hardly know Jeremy's dad, so could you find out the guy's name? Discreetly?'

'Sure, shouldn't be hard.'

'Thanks, Susan, you're an angel.'

'No problem. Maybe next week sometime, yeah?'

‘As soon as you can.’

‘So tell me about it.’

‘Not here!’

I glanced round to where more than one of the groups at neighbouring tables had started to take an interest in our conversation. Susan just laughed, taking another bite of her cake before speaking again.

‘You’re coming to see Madman Kline, aren’t you?’

‘I don’t know. Who is he?’

‘Not he, Penny, them. They’re second generation, goth-punk, with serious attitude. They’re trying to shock their way into a recording contract, the way the Sex Pistols did in the seventies. There’s got to be some good stuff for me, and we go back stage and everything.’

‘It’s not really my thing, Susan.’

‘Come on, Penny, don’t be boring. Bed afterwards? I promise.’

* * *

I was not going to turn down a chance of a night in bed with Susan. So I went to the concert. If anything, it was worse than I’d expected. The venue was a huge, smoke-filled room tacked onto a pub somewhere in Park Royal, with a couple of hundred affected teenagers dancing to a hideous atonal racket. The singer’s voice was a strange androgynous whine. I could make out the lyrics, although I understood from Susan that they were mainly about social depravation and the betrayal of the working class by the government. It all seemed pretty hypocritical considering all the band members were the children of seventies stars and had never done a day’s work in their lives.

There was nothing to do but put up with it, so I stayed close to Susan and drank beer out of the bottle to try and look inconspicuous. She was having a great time, and a lot of people recognised her, which she wallowed in.

When the final mind-numbing encore had been played, we made our way to the back-stage area, a sort of breeze-block shed with portable cabins as dressing rooms. The band knew exactly who Susan was and were determined to both impress and shock her; me too, by association. There were four of them. The most striking was Haze, the singer and the only female; a tall, skinny girl with brilliant scarlet hair in a triple Mohican. She was certainly powerful and I'd have fancied her if she hadn't had such a monumental chip on her shoulder about class. The other noticeable one was called Damage, a great shambling youth with greasy black hair and a long face. He was the lead guitarist and also the song writer, with a morose temperament to match his looks. The bass player and drummer, Freebase and Small Joe, were relatively normal muscular lads with tats and piercings; one with a fuzz of short hair dyed white, the other with his head shaved and a V-sign tattooed on his scalp.

They were high on drink, adrenaline and probably a lot more, and out for trouble. Susan was flirting evenly with Freebase and Small Joe, and making it pretty clear that she was up for sex with either one or both of them. I couldn't really protest that I wanted to sleep with her, but considering the state they were in I was pretty hopeful that before long Susan and I would be the only ones capable.

So I tagged along back to the hotel the band were staying in, by which time I had no idea where I was, except that it had to be somewhere in west London. The hotel was pretty dingy, but they had a suite of sorts, with a small sitting-room, a couple of bedrooms and a tiny bathroom. They'd barely had time to raid the fridge for drinks before Susan was stripped and taken into a bedroom.

That got to me, watching Joe hold her while Freebase pulled off first her top, then her jeans. There was no question that she was willing, as she was giggling and helping them with the difficult bits, but I don't think they'd have cared. By the time she got to the bedroom her bra was