

THE INDECENCIES OF ISABELLE

PENNY BIRCH WRITING AS CRUELLA

nexus



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The Indecencies of Isabelle

***Penny Birch
writing as Cruella***

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Dedicated to all Isabelle fans
and especially BE

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One

‘Five little bad girls, Lined up by the door, One got caned,
And then there were four.’

I laughed, almost spilling my tea, at the sudden reaction of the five girls standing against the wall. They’d been expecting something mild for the first go. Every single one looked around. Jasmine was pouting. Portia wore an angry scowl. Caroline’s hands had gone to her meaty bottom cheeks. Katie looked as if she was about to cry. Only Pippa reacted with any bravery, tight-lipped as she gave a tiny nod.

‘Fetch the cane,’ Laura ordered.

Pippa broke line. With her neatly done brown hair, her soft, shy face, her long dress of printed blue-and-white cotton, she looked as if she might have been attending tea at the vicar’s house. Not that there was much difference, as Sarah’s sunlit Oxford flat was as respectable as any country vicarage. Except that in addition to tea and cake, Sarah, Laura and I intended to amuse ourselves by making each of the five girls choose a painful or humiliating punishment as part of a little game.

The rules were simple. We three dominant women would take turns to make up a little verse, counting down from five to zero, and each time offering a punishment. One of the girls had to accept and could then join us at tea instead of standing with her nose pressed to the wall in the corner of

the room. The punishments might be hard or soft, more or less undignified, but whoever tried to avoid the early ones might find herself in serious trouble.

I sat back to watch, sipping my tea. Pippa knew what to do, well trained by Laura, skipping quickly into the bedroom and returning with Sarah's thin black malacca cane. Falling to her knees, she offered it to Laura, who took it and made a casual gesture to the vacant armchair. Pippa immediately scrambled into it, kneeling, with her back pulled in, to leave her bottom a round tempting ball beneath her dress.

'More tea, Isabelle?' Sarah asked as Laura stood up.

'Yes, thank you.'

I put my cup and saucer down on the table, watching as Sarah prepared tea and Laura prepared her victim's bottom. Sarah's living room looked west, bathing us in warm autumn sunlight that gave a golden tinge to the backs of Pippa's thighs as her dress was lifted. Beneath, she had on big silk camiknickers, pulled taut across her bulging bottom with a puff of lace around her sex and where her cheeks spilled out beneath the hems.

'Sugar?' Sarah asked, as Laura's fingers pinched the catch at Pippa's crotch.

'Just one lump, please,' I answered.

The fastenings came loose and Pippa's soft furry pussy was put on show. She gave a little sob as she was exposed and hung her head in embarrassment. Laura took no notice, but turned up the tail of the camiknickers, baring the full cheeky globe beneath. Everything showed – Pippa's firm, slightly fleshy cheeks wide enough apart to reveal her

tightly dimpled anus as well as each tiny fold and wrinkle of her sex.

I picked up my cup as Laura tapped the thin black cane to the crest of Pippa's cheeks. Pippa stiffened, a fresh sob escaped her lips and then a sharp cry of pain as the cane bit into her flesh. Sipping my tea, I watched as six firm, even strokes were laid across the quivering globe of girl flesh, to leave Pippa sobbing and gasping in the chair. She was quite brave and didn't cry or make a big fuss, which was a pity, but the expression of mingled resentment and ecstasy on her face as she got up was a delight. Briefly she kissed Laura's shoes, before taking the cup of tea Sarah had poured for her and sitting rather gingerly in the chair across which she'd just been beaten.

'Your turn, Isabelle dear,' Sarah stated.

'Let me see,' I replied, although I already had my verse worked out. 'I know...Four little bad girls, Dying for a pee, One wet her panties, And then there were three.'

'Isabelle!' Sarah chided. 'Not on my carpet, girls, or there really will be trouble.'

All four girls were looking around again. Katie was the most embarrassed, but I knew she was far too shy to do it. Portia looked more resentful than ever, but didn't speak. Jasmine and Caroline shared a glance, no doubt weighing the indignity of having to pee in their knickers against the pain of the beatings they would certainly get otherwise. Jasmine spoke first.

'OK, I will.'

'In the kitchen doorway,' Sarah instructed, 'and you're to mop up if you make a mess.'

Jasmine responded with a single miserable nod and broke line. I tried to catch Sarah's eye, but she was deliberately looking the other way. Knowing exactly what would be going through her head, I hid a smile behind my teacup. For all her assertive, dominant poise, she'd be thinking back to her own time as Dr Eliza Abbot's plaything and being trained to wet herself on command.

That knowledge made it even more delicious as Jasmine came to stand in the open doorway to the kitchen, her feet braced a little way apart on the tiles. She was in hipsters, tight around her neat apple-shaped bottom, with the waistband of her bright-red thong just showing. As her hands went to the button of her jeans I gave a low cough. She stopped, turning, her elfin face half-hidden behind a curtain of ash-blond hair, her face set in uncertainty.

'Mistress?'

'Leave them up,' I instructed.

'But, Mistress...'

'Leave them up, I said.'

'But...but how am I supposed to get home?'

'You should have thought of that before putting on that silly thong. Now do as you're told.'

'I'll lend you a skirt,' Sarah offered, with real sympathy.

'There we are,' I assured Jasmine. 'Sarah will lend you a skirt. Now come along, we're waiting.'

She swallowed and turned away, her head hung down. Her cheeks tightened in her jeans, she gave a tiny, broken

sob and she was doing it – a dark stain growing slowly on the back of her jeans, trickling down her legs and spreading gradually across her bottom. She was shaking as she did it, full of shame and remorse, and I was no longer bothering to hide my smile.

By the time she'd finished the wet patch covered most of her bottom and the pee had begun to soak into her socks and fill her shoes. She looked a fine sight and she knew it, her emotions strong on her face as she carefully peeled her jeans and knickers off her little wet bottom and hobbled across to Sarah's washing machine. I couldn't help chuckling as she performed a clumsy strip, taking off everything below her waist and stuffing jeans, panties and socks into the machine before scampering off to the bathroom.

'You can stay like that until we leave,' I called out to her, ignoring the fact that she was supposed to be allowed her dignity back after taking her punishment.

Nobody contradicted me and when Jasmine came back she was still naked below the waist, her neatly turned bottom bare at front and back, with the little puff of pale down that hid her sex and the little tattoo that marked her as mine on show. Rather than take her own chair, she curled herself up on the carpet beside mine, her head pressed to my leg. I could think of a rhyme that would have had all three of the remaining girls begging to be let off, but it was Sarah's turn.

She didn't speak, sipping tea and admiring them: Caroline, cheeky by nature and by physique, with her voluptuous bottom packed into tight black jeans and her breasts straining the fabric of her top; Portia, immaculate in white slacks and a silk blouse, her dark curls in artless disarray, looking as if butter wouldn't melt in her mouth;

Katie, small and soft and pretty, with her blonde bobbed hair and freckles adding to her shyness. At last Sarah put her teacup down and nodded.

‘Let’s see then...Three little bad girls, Feeling rather blue,
One went naked, And then there were two.’

Katie went bright pink. Portia and Caroline spoke almost at the same instant.

‘Me!’

‘I will!’

‘Caroline,’ Sarah decided. ‘And when you’re in the nude you can take over serving tea.’

Caroline broke line with her face wreathed in smiles. Going nude in front of other women was nothing to her and she began to strip with enthusiasm, peeling it all off and kicking each garment aside until she was stark naked. If I had her figure – a tiny waist dividing big heavy breasts and a, frankly, fat bottom – I’d have been embarrassed. Not Caroline, who happily took over serving, with her big boobs lolling forwards and her bottom almost in my face as she bent to pick up a plate of biscuits. I smacked her, making her cheeks wobble and drawing out a sound halfway between a squeak and a giggle.

‘You’re a slut, Caroline,’ I told her. ‘What are you?’

‘A slut, Mistress Isabelle,’ she answered happily.

I drew a sigh, wishing I’d had a chance to spank her big bottom and wondering if I should do it anyway. She’d have howled, because it would have been unfair, and because

she always does, but Laura had put her teacup down and I held back.

‘I think you got off very lightly, Caroline,’ she remarked, ‘but I suppose that’s the nature of the game. So let me see, yes...Two little bad girls, Standing in the sun, One got slipped, And then there was one.’

Katie winced, looking seriously unhappy. Portia opened her mouth to speak, but hesitated. Both knew that whoever was left would have to take whatever I decreed. Both also knew that Sarah’s slippers had thick rubber soles that stung like anything. Portia glanced at me, perhaps trying to negotiate, but I ignored her. Katie was biting her lip and didn’t seem able to speak at all. Finally Portia spoke, deeply sulky.

‘OK, you can slipper me, but not too hard.’

‘That,’ Sarah answered her, ‘is for me to decide. Fetch a slipper.’

Portia made for the bedroom, genuinely reluctant for she knew full well what the punishment would do to her. Sarah moved to middle of the sofa, her face set in a faint smile and, as Portia came back, she patted her lap. Portia made a face, but obeyed, draping herself across Sarah’s knees with as much elegance as she could muster.

It was always a joy to see Portia punished, partly because she was so resentful about it, and partly because there was something in her confident, almost arrogant, upper-class English manner that just cried out for her to be put across another woman’s knee and absolutely walloped. Now she was going to get it, and she was pouting furiously as Sarah picked up the slipper.

‘I think we’d better have these down,’ Sarah stated, patting the taut white seat of Portia’s trousers. ‘Lift your hips.’

Portia’s expression grew sulkier than ever as she raised herself, making her bottom rounder and more tempting still. Sarah burrowed a hand under her girlfriend’s tummy to snip open the button and peel down the zip, allowing Portia’s bottom to swell out a little from the tight confines of her trousers.

‘Down they come,’ Sarah said happily, and began to tug on Portia’s trousers.

It took four firm heaves to strip Portia’s bottom, her tight white trousers peeled down to the top of her thighs to leave her full-cut, blue polka-dot panties far enough down to show the top of her deep bottom cleft. Not that she was allowed even that much dignity for long, Sarah’s fingers going straight to them.

‘I think we’d better pop these down too,’ Sarah announced.

Portia’s beautiful rounded peach of a bottom was duly unveiled. Her face was a picture as they were taken down and the full, pale mounds of her bottom cheeks were quivering slightly in her agitation as she braced herself for punishment. Sarah had kept hold of the slipper throughout Portia’s stripping, and now tapped it to the meaty crests of the bare bottom she was about to spank.

I settled back, sipping my tea in comfort as Sarah began to spank, applying the slipper with hard swats. Portia’s expression of miserable self-pity vanished the instant the slipper made contact with her bottom, breaking to shock

and pain, then round-mouthed consternation as Sarah took a firm hold and laid in.

Portia went wild, and I couldn't help but laugh – at the faces she was making, at the way her bottom wobbled, at the way her thighs pumped. When she started to make desperate little scissor motions with her legs it was so funny I had to put my teacup down or risk spilling it, and it was made all the better because she could see me laughing and was getting even more furious. Like her Mistress, she thought I should be among those getting it, and she resented being watched by me almost as much as she did by men.

By the time she was done, her bottom was rich pink all over and she was shaking in reaction. Her face was full of shame, but no longer for her bare rosy bottom, but for her own reaction to the spanking, and she made no effort to get up. I knew just what she wanted and was hoping Sarah would provide. Sure enough.

‘Like that is it?’ Sarah remarked. ‘OK. Open your thighs, I’m going to masturbate you.’

Portia’s shocked expression grew abruptly stronger, but it was fake. She didn’t protest, but spread her thighs as she’d been ordered, to allow Sarah to slip a hand between. It took just moments, the skilled application of Sarah’s fingers to Portia’s pussy producing a gasping, shivering climax as full of shame as ecstasy. As soon as it was done Sarah popped her fingers into Portia’s mouth to have them sucked clean, before wiping them on the polka-dot panties.

As Sarah sent Portia into the bathroom with a final smack to her reddened bottom I was feeling deeply aroused. Sarah followed Portia, and we waited, now with a good deal of

tension, as I tried to find a rhyme that would allow me to indulge my needs with Katie. She was always shy, always quiet, always the one who found it most difficult to accept her sexual needs, yet the flush of her cheeks and her eyes as she looked back over her shoulder betrayed her true emotions.

I knew what she wanted – more or less what Portia had just been given – although she'd bawl her eyes out as she was punished. Unfortunately, I needed something different, for the sake of the game, and to outdo Sarah. I could hear Portia giggling in the bathroom, probably as her bottom was creamed, which gave me an idea. By the time Sarah and Portia came back I was ready, but I made Katie wait a couple of minutes while I sipped my tea before addressing her. She was still looking back over her shoulder.

'Put your nose against the wall, Katie,' I ordered. 'You know how you're supposed to stand.'

'Sorry,' she answered, and promptly obeyed, pressing her little snub nose to Sarah's leaf-patterned wallpaper.

'That's better. Was it really wise to go last?'

She shook her head, rubbing her nose on the wall.

'Just think, you could be sitting down like Pippa or Portia, a little warm behind, but quite decent, and knowing it was over and done with.'

She nodded her head, making the tip of her nose turn up against the wallpaper, so that she looked more like a cartoon pig than ever. Her face was flushed pink, which added to the effect, and I took another sip of tea to let her dwell on her fate a bit longer before speaking again.

‘But you’re not. Instead, you have to accept whatever I suggest.’

‘So long as your poem has correct rhyme and meter,’ she said stubbornly.

‘Of course...One little bad girl, Aching to be done, Up went her panties, And then there were none.’

She looked around, puzzled.

‘But I haven’t had to take my panties down yet.’

‘That’s not what I meant. Sarah, would you be kind and run to fetch whatever cream you were applying to Portia’s cheeks just now?’

Sarah hesitated, no doubt thinking of rebuking me for speaking to her the way I had, before deciding not to make an issue of it. Katie’s expression was working between puzzlement and concern as she turned from the wall and came to stand by my chair. I patted my lap.

‘Over you go. Bottom well up, please.’

‘Am...am I to be spanked? With my knickers pulled up tight or something?’

‘Something,’ I replied. ‘Now get over my knee.’

She obeyed, pink faced as she laid herself across the arms of my chair, her bottom lifted beneath her plain black skirt, round and inviting. I took hold of the hem, lifting it up gently to show first her pale shapely thighs and then her panties. They were white and full cut, with a pattern of cherries across the bulging seat, in pairs, but each like a

little chubby bottom. Even with so little showing she had begun to sob, her emotions as strong as ever.

I left Katie showing her knickers as Sarah returned from the bathroom with a tube of plain skin cream, ideal for what I had in mind. Thanking Sarah, I took hold of Katie's cherry-patterned panties and pulled them down quickly, making her gasp in shock as her bottom came on show. She had a truly beautiful behind, chubby and firm and smooth, exquisitely feminine. With her panties at half-mast I took a moment to stroke her cheeks, out of sheer admiration, before pulling the little garment off her legs to leave her completely bare behind.

'Pull your cheeks apart,' I ordered.

Her bottom cheeks were quivering, and she was snivelling quite badly, but she did as she was told, reaching back to spread the plump little globe of her bottom and show off the details between, her sweetly turned pussy lips pouting from between her thighs, the tight pink bud of her anus twitching slightly.

Everybody was watching, and Katie knew it, her snivels turning to full-blown tears as she held her bottom open for inspection. I took the tube of cream, placing the nozzle just an inch above the splayed star of her anus and squeezing, to extrude a thick white worm of cream into the little dimple at the very centre. She gasped as she felt it, and her ring tightened, squeezing out a little cream. Her words came broken and urgent as she spoke.

'What...what are you going to do with me? I thought you were going to spank me.'

'Sh, just keep your cheeks well apart.'

As I spoke I'd pushed my middle finger into the soft thick cotton of her cherry-patterned panties. She went silent, her cheeks still held wide, her bumhole opening and closing to make the creamy centre pout and suck in her apprehension as I applied a second worm of cream to the taut white cotton over my finger.

'And up go your panties,' I announced as I pressed my finger to the slippery ring held so invitingly open between her cheeks.

'No, Isabelle,' she whined as she finally realised what I was going to do.

It was too late. I had already pushed the full length of my finger in up her bottom, taking a good-sized pinch of panty material with it, certainly enough to hold them in place in her hole. As she expelled her breath in a long gasp of shock and outrage I extracted my finger, leaving her panties wedged well in up her bottom.

Portia was giggling and Sarah and Laura were smiling in amusement. Pippa started to clap.

'There we are,' I stated. 'You can let go of your cheeks now, and I think you'd better go back to college like that. After all, it's not far, and nothing will show unless you bend right over.'

'I'm on my bike!'

'That's OK then. Just be careful how you ride.'

'You know what they say about knickerless girls,' Portia said laughing. 'Make her keep her skirt tucked up, Isabelle, I want to see.'

‘I’d intended to,’ I replied, suiting action to words by tucking Katie’s skirt into her waistband. ‘Now, do you want to get up, or would you like your botty smacked?’

Her answer was a broken sob, but her bottom came up, pushed high to show off the fleshy tuck of her cheeks where she liked to be smacked, with the cherry-patterned panties hanging down from her bumhole to cover her pussy. I began to smack, firmly, right over the pouted lips of her sex. She’d stopped crying, briefly, but began again as her bottom started to pink up, gulping and snivelling in between little cries of pain. My smacks got harder, slowly, making her panties jump and tug in her bumhole, and harder still as she gave in completely and her thighs came slowly apart.

The odd little gulping noise she always made when she was in tears changed to gasps, her breathing grew deep and heavy, her thighs began to tighten and I spanked harder still. Suddenly she was there, panting and mewling in ecstasy as I brought her to climax, my hand now smacking on the rear of her sex through her dangling panties. She cried out, like Portia, so much shame blended with her ecstasy, a reaction that left me weak with need even as I finished her off with a few deft touches to her soaking pussy. I had to have her, then and there, however undignified Sarah and Laura might think me.

‘On your knees!’ I snapped as Katie rolled off my lap.

She didn’t need telling twice, and was burrowing her face between my legs as I tugged up my skirt. I pulled my French knickers aside to let her in and she was licking, her face buried in my sex, her bare red bottom stuck out with her panties hanging from her bumhole for all to see. Jasmine began to stroke my breasts through my blouse, Caroline

came to kiss me, full on my mouth, and I closed my eyes in bliss.

As Katie's tongue worked busily on my sex I was thinking of the sheer joy of having three beautiful girls at my beck and call. All of them were bare, at least from the waist down, made to parade their bottoms and pussies for me, and for my friends. All of them wanted me, needed me, to keep their bottoms warm, to put them on their knees, where they needed to be, as my beautiful Katie was, licking my pussy with her well-spanked bottom thrust out to the room and her panties hanging limp from her penetrated bottom hole.

Caroline had moved to nibbling a nipple through my blouse, and I bit my lip as I came, determined not to scream and risk giving away what we were doing to Sarah's neighbours. My thighs tightened around Katie's head, and I held her in place until I was finished, only then letting my body go limp. She was smiling as she rocked back on her heels, and came up to kiss me, her mouth rich with the taste of my sex.

I couldn't stop grinning as I adjusted myself and went to wash my hands, thoroughly happy with the way our little game had turned out. Not only had it been great fun, and ended in ecstasy, but there was something wonderfully British about it, just the sort of thing an intimate group of Oxford ladies should do over Sunday afternoon tea. Portia had suggested it, and it was typical of her - naughty, elaborate, and designed to ensure that she got what she so badly needed.

After the long summer break I'd been a little worried that we might not be able to pick up where we'd left off. My birthday party had been wonderful, ending with Portia and I

tied head to tail while two men did rude things to us, but it had done very little for the dominant image I wanted to cultivate. I'd also had to concentrate on Collections or risk being sent down, making it impossible to reassert myself properly before going back to Scotland.

Fortunately I had passed Collections, while the others had been every bit as keen as I was to bring together a private and highly erotic ladies' society. Now, in noughth week, we'd agreed to meet at Sarah's flat and decide what to do. Having all arrived, there had been a few rather awkward minutes before Portia had suggested the game, which had well and truly broken the ice.

Only the very basics had been agreed, and I was going over what to say in my head as I sat down again, now decent, unlike the three girls clustered around my chair. Sarah had provided brown bread and butter, biscuits and a delicious lemon cake, from which I cut myself a slice before speaking.

'We'd better decide what to do this term then. As I remember it, we'd all agreed that we're called the Rattanners and that we meet once a month and for special occasions, but there are still a couple of points we need to resolve. First, I propose that we accept only female members, and men are invited only by unanimous agreement.'

'Absolutely,' Sarah agreed.

Jasmine made as if to speak and then thought better of it.

'We must be absolutely certain those men we do invite are discreet,' Laura put in, 'so I suggest we give them associate membership. That way they know they have a lot to lose if they step out of line.'

‘Who then?’ Katie asked. ‘The three who came to Isabelle’s birthday? I like Dr Appledore.’

‘Duncan is an obvious choice,’ I agreed. ‘Mike and Dave I’m not so sure about. They were great at my party, yes, but I can’t really believe they haven’t been boasting about what happened, probably all summer.’

‘They have,’ Caroline replied. ‘Half the men up at the Red Ox know, even about you and Portia with the cake.’

Portia was blushing pink as she spoke. ‘Then they’re out. I hate men who can’t keep their mouths shut.’

‘We should vote on it,’ I pointed out. ‘Who is against inviting Mike and Big Dave again?’

Laura, Sarah and Portia agreed immediately, the others following after a moment of hesitation, except Caroline.

‘We do need some men,’ she pointed out. ‘Duncan’s nice, but –’

‘Not particularly virile,’ I finished for her. ‘But you agree that the men from the Red Ox are likely to be more trouble than they’re worth?’

‘I suppose so,’ she answered.

‘Good,’ I went on. ‘How about Walter Jessop?’

‘He’s a useful man to know,’ Jasmine replied, but not with any great certainty.

‘I don’t think I could be comfortable in front of him,’ Portia put in.

‘Who’s Walter Jessop?’ Katie asked.

‘Just some dirty old man,’ Sarah replied. ‘He runs an antique shop in Whytleigh. He’s quite inappropriate.’

‘He’s OK,’ Caroline defended him, ‘and he has some great stuff in his shop sometimes, corsets, Victorian drawers...’

‘We can buy things from him without having to invite him to Rattaners’ events,’ Sarah pointed out.

‘That’s true,’ Caroline admitted.

‘Not Walter then?’ I queried.

Nobody objected and I went on.

‘If anyone asks, we just say nothing’s happening. The official excuse can be...can be that we couldn’t agree on playing with each other’s girlfriends.’

‘They will probably believe that,’ Sarah agreed.

‘They’ll have to,’ Portia put in.

‘That deals with the men then,’ I concluded. ‘What else do we need to consider?’

‘I have a proposal,’ Sarah answered. ‘We should have a set of rules, with punishments for anybody who breaks them.’

Portia and Caroline both giggled, and I was smiling as I answered. ‘Good idea. I’ll draw them up.’

‘We should all be able to make suggestions,’ Sarah responded, with Laura immediately nodding agreement.

‘OK,’ I agreed. ‘Let’s set that aside for our first proper meeting. Next, how about premises? Laura’s is the obvious choice, but it is rather far away, so –’

‘An excellent reason for using it,’ Sarah broke in. ‘I certainly couldn’t risk a full-blown party here. One or two of my neighbours are already being pointed about my relationship with Portia, Mrs Cook downstairs particularly.’

‘Interfering old bat,’ Portia put in.

‘I get the same problem,’ Jasmine added, ‘not from neighbours so much, but straight friends, and if we’re not going to invite the Red Ox mob...’

‘I agree,’ I said. ‘College rooms are out, of course. I’m in Cut Mill this year, but with twelve other students.’

‘I’d be delighted to host everything,’ Laura offered.

‘Thank you,’ I said.

‘How about organisation?’ Sarah asked. ‘Somebody needs to take charge. I suggest Laura, as we’ll be using her premises.’

It took me an instant to realise what she was saying, and I opened my mouth to reply, only to close it again. The Rattaners was my society. I had done all the hard work, over the whole of my first year, carefully seeking out women who shared my tastes for giving or receiving erotic punishment. Unfortunately there was nothing I could say that wouldn’t make me look like the presumptuous little brat Sarah thought I was. From her viewpoint, younger girls took it and older ones dished it out, and she’d never really come to terms with the idea of me as a dominant but also the

youngest member of the society. Fortunately Katie came to my aid.

‘Shouldn’t Isabelle organise events? she asked. ‘After all, if it wasn’t for Isabelle there would not be any events to go to.’

‘I’m sure we all appreciate Isabelle’s efforts in bringing us together,’ Sarah replied patiently, ‘but it makes sense to have our hostess organising events. In any case, I propose Laura as society president, or whatever title we choose. Laura?’

‘A military title would be more to my taste,’ Laura joked, ‘but, seriously, it would seem sensible if I choose dates, and there’s no harm in a little formality.’

‘Far from it,’ Sarah agreed.

‘We do need somebody to be in charge,’ Jasmine said, ‘but I propose Isabelle.’

‘Then we had better put it to the vote,’ Sarah responded. ‘Who is in favour of Laura Soames as president of the Rattanners Society?’

She raised her hand as she spoke. So did Portia, then Laura herself and Pippa immediately afterwards. Sarah gave Katie a stern glance, but her arm remained firmly down.

‘In favour of Isabelle Colraine?’ Jasmine asked.

I raised my hand, as did she, Caroline and Katie.

‘It seems we have a dead heat,’ Sarah said, ‘so I suggest we vote again at our next meeting. When would be convenient for a party, Laura?’

‘The weekend after next?’ Laura suggested.

As I nodded my agreement I felt every bit as rueful as if I’d been one of those who’d had my bottom smacked, and yet I knew it was silly. They were talking perfect sense, except that Katie was right. The Rattanners was my society.

Two

As I cycled back through the parks towards St George's College I asked myself if my reaction was reasonable, or if I was just being a brat. Sarah clearly thought of me as a brat, and it was hard to see how I could go against her without proving her right.

Perhaps she was right? After all, my instinctive reaction to the idea of somebody other than me organising the Rattanners had been one of frankly childish pique, and I still felt the same. It wasn't fair, however pathetic that might sound, not after I'd gone to so much effort and sacrificed so much to bring the society into existence.

By the time I'd got to the gate into the Fellows' Gardens I decided that I had to make sure it was me who took charge, regardless of whether that made me a brat or not. The question was: how?

We would vote again in two weeks, and it was sure to be a stalemate. Jasmine, Caroline and Katie were first and foremost my friends and would always support me. Among the others, Sarah was evidently determined to put me in what she saw as my place, preferably across her knees. Portia was worse. Not only was she certain to go along with Sarah, but she had always taken a positively wicked delight in my discomfort. Laura was more reasonable, her decision to stand against me based on simple common sense, which was if anything more annoying than Sarah's attitude. Pippa was less predictable. She liked to be given orders and harsh,

unexpected punishments, but she was married and very much her own woman, her relationship with Laura more one of convenience than devotion.

I could work on Pippa in the hope of breaking the stalemate. As only Laura knew how to get in touch with her it wouldn't be easy, while at best it would only provide a stay of execution. The real problem was Sarah, and her attitude. Unlike the majority of sadomasochistic women I'd met, she didn't see dominance as innate, but as something to be developed with time. As she'd explained when we first met, it was appropriate for younger women to be disciplined by their seniors.

The fact that Pippa was her own age and more deeply submissive than any of us except possibly Katie didn't seem to bother her. She had been trained to think that way, by Dr Eliza Abbott, and wasn't going to change. I knew the story from a couple of unguarded conversations with Portia, who loved to gossip. Sarah had first come to Oxford to work as a kitchen girl at Erasmus Darwin, and had met Dr Abbott through the original university lesbian society.

Dr Abbott had been the harshest of Mistresses, giving enemas with soapy water before spankings, and, worse, training the young Sarah to wet herself on command. The training had stuck and, although Sarah had in turn used the same technique to give Portia a powerful reflex to pull her knickers down, she had never managed to overcome her own conditioning. It was something she was very sensitive about, a real weak spot, hence her reaction when I'd had Jasmine wet herself in front of us.

Two possibilities for exploiting the situation had occurred to me before I reached Cut Mill. First, I could win Sarah's sympathy by helping her overcome her conditioning.

Second, I could find out where Dr Eliza Abbot had gone after leaving Oxford and bring her into the Rattanners. Both schemes had advantages, and both had drawbacks.

I'd been immensely lucky to get a room in the Mill, as just about every single second year student had put their name on the list. It was a genuine converted mill, straddling a leat that led down through the meadows past St Catharine's College, with the high Cotswold stone wall of the deer park on one side and the river on the other. Tall limes and beeches shaded it, creating a tiny rural idyll at the heart of Oxford.

Knowing that I was to live there for a year was so delightful I paused as I reached the little bridge over the leat, just to admire the view. My room was on the first floor, directly above the mill race, which was now a still green pool with the rotting iron carcass of the wheel rusted into place. I could not have asked for more and, after going up, spent a moment gazing out of the window in sheer rapture and thinking how lucky I was.

I'd made a coffee and sat down in my armchair before my mind turned back to Sarah. The first option, helping her overcome her conditioning, would certainly win her gratitude, although she was quite bloody minded enough to still support Laura. Also, Dr Abbott was a zoologist, and a senior one. I was a history student and knew next to nothing about zoology, let alone ethology or psychology. It was still worth exploring, perhaps by asking a few carefully judged questions to some suitable don.

The second option, bringing Dr Abbott into the Rattanners, was far more appealing. Sarah would be horrified, but quite unable to resist. More likely than not, and by her own philosophy, she'd end up back at Dr Abbott's feet, or worse.