

Excerpt from:

# TAWSINGHAM AUTUMN 2017

*by Sir Guy  
Masterleigh*



ZGMO8

# TAWSINGHAM AUTUMN 2017

Imagine a world in the near future, but based on the 20th century as we may have liked it to be. With every last endearing, peculiar or downright warped feature & detail of history entwined into daily life. Where anyone can take the age, role, gender and even species they choose! A whole enclosed world, but firmly connected to a real 21st century world too. A modern-day equivalent of the Roman circuses!

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I wrote this with 'Minnie Oates' a pseudonym for a well-known lady author. She has since chosen to disassociate herself from the project as she was unhappy with some of the aspects I introduced to the story. I would like to acknowledge the debt I owe her anyway. Thank you!

This was originally written & typed onto 3 or 4 completely different and mutually incompatible sets of computer hardware, software & media, several years ago. I would like to publish the sequel, currently just a set of notes & jumble of ideas in my head, to develop the theme further.

Whether I do depends on you, the reader. Tell me you want to read it & I will write it!

*Guy*

[guy@tawse.com](mailto:guy@tawse.com)

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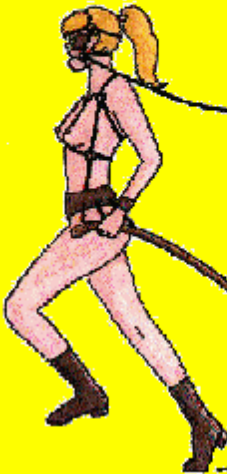
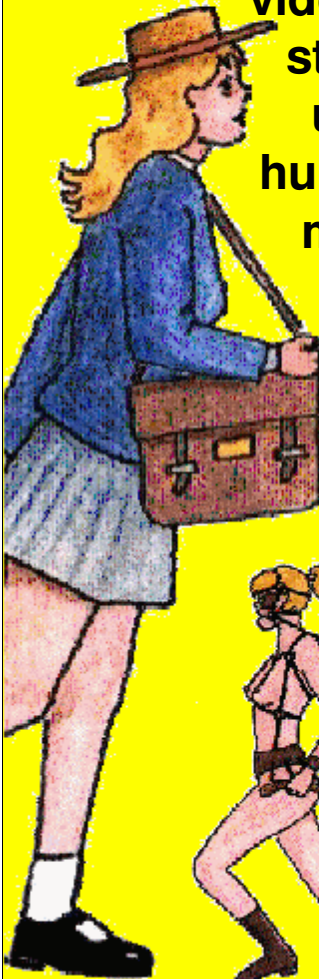
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## PROLOGUE

"Now we move on to the village green." The camera panned over a scene that stopped Minnie dead in her amble across the hotel lobby. She hated TV, avoided them like the plague, but could not totally block this broadcast out, she'd had to walk right past the wall-size screen.

The scene was indeed of a village green, just as she remembered from her youth in England. Presumably 21st century England, but the events were more like something from the 15th century. There were stocks, pillory, ducking stool, whipping post, flogging triangle, something that looked like a mock-up of a sailing ship, and other outlandish structures. That would have been extraordinary enough but they were all in use! On each there were people, mostly ladies, mostly young, but some men and some rather older, in various states of undress, with backs, bottoms and legs reddened or marked by whip or cane.

There was a milling throng, in all sorts of clothes, Minnie saw styles from 19th & 20th centuries. Some led others about, naked and harnessed, on dog leads or the traces of carts or gigs. It was wild, wonderful, a scene that fascinated Minnie and stirred in ways that hadn't been touched for decades. TV or not, she just had to watch, so she found a sofa from which she could enjoy the view and settled down spellbound.

One pretty red-headed young lady, in a simple white dress, was surrounded & followed by a large crowd. The camera panned in and Minnie could see that amidst that crowd the girl felt very much alone, shoulders braced back proudly, but eyes puffy and reddened, trickling tears.

The 'girl', though she must be in her early twenties, Minnie guessed, approached the triangle. It was 3m high, three timber baulks in a triangle on the ground, three rising from each corner to form a pyramid in the air, lashed together at every corner. A man stood at ease nearby, dressed in a vest, breeches and boots of black leather, cat o'nine tails dangling nonchantly from his right hand.

The girl went up to him deferentially, though something in the set

of her shoulders suggested duty, not respect. She sank to her knees in front of him, eyes downcast, proffering a passport sized booklet she'd been clasping in her hand. Again the camera panned in and Minnie heard the girl whisper. "Please whip me Master, 36 strokes."

"Strip" was the man said in reply. The girl rose, lifting the dress over her shoulders. Minnie saw she was now naked. Her bottom, back and front of her legs had already been soundly beaten, by their high colour. Minnie could distinguish the marks left by a cane's tip, scores of them, and the little bruises from a birch. She was barefoot.

The man took the dress laid it on a table and picked up ropes with which he proceeded to tie her hands together and to the apex of the triangle. Her ankles were fastened to opposite corners. He fastened a wide heavy leather belt around the waist of the otherwise naked girl. Minnie realised it would be to protect the kidneys.

He then whipped her slowly, across her back, 36 strokes, 18 from each side. As the camera panned into close up as each stroke landed you could see the red weals developing where previously the lashes had lined her back. Where they crossed, as many did after he moved to the other side and whipped her left-handed, a bead of blood was drawn.

Minnie heard the commentator murmur, "Of course back in olden days a whipping like this there would leave deep gouges in the flesh and scars that would last for life. But this girl will be right as rain in a week or two, with no scars at all. Doesn't hurt any less, mind." Soon each impact drew screams from the girl and murmurs from the crowd. But amidst it all Minnie could just distinguish the girl counting the strokes for the whipmaster, as she recovered after the involuntary scream. One Master," Two Master."

To her dismay the camera panned away. "We are moving to the scene outside the Green Dragon, where Sir Guy Masterleigh is to announce the results of the harness racing."

'Sir' Guy Masterleigh? Could that be the old rogue she'd written spanking stories for, and had a bit of a fling with, back in the 1990s? It was, as the camera picked him out. Splendid he looked, in full highland dress, ginger beard framing his face. Even more handsome than when she'd known him!

Masterleigh Hall  
Tawsingham, near Birchton  
Region West, England  
United Europe Federation  
E-4969  
3 July 2017

Minnie Oates  
Room 49, Ritz Hotel  
Fifth Avenue  
New York  
UE-NY-400-358-931  
United Eastern States  
North America

Dear Minnie,

Delightful to hear from you after so long, and by such a letter - I haven't had a proper letter for years, everyone else now uses email or those dreadful videofaxes.

I'm getting my secretary to do this on her infernal machine as I felt you deserved a letter back, but couldn't quite go the whole way and use a fountain pen, I don't even know if I still could! I'm sure you'd go one better and use a goose-feather quill if I did!

Yes, Tawsingham (and The Tawsingham Corporation Inc.!), has come on quite a way since we developed the initial outline and I bought that short story from you\*, when we were both struggling hard. It must be nearly thirty years ago. Delighted to hear you too are doing really well.

Yes, it would be an excellent retirement home for you, back in the England of the 20th century that you loved - or a version you'll really be delighted with had it ever really existed! (Don't tell the viewers though, most of them seem to really think spanking, caning and similar practices were really as popular as that, in

our lifetime!]

I have just the place for you. A little "period" (but with all mod cons) bungalow on the new Passingford Estate. It's a development I had built for the contemporary equivalent of 1980s "yuppies". They can enjoy the Tawsingham lifestyle, but commute back into the 21st Century to earn a living, (and therefore afford to help the rest of Tawsingham residents to continue living in just the way they want to!)

I enclose a stack of promotional bumf\*. It's a bit old, as we have found everyone just explores our virtual mall or downloads the multimedia package nowadays. So few people can actually read things longer than a page or two. Take them with a pinch of salt though, in Tawsingham almost more than anywhere else, it's who you know that counts, and we go back a long time.

Just flash me an email (yes I know you hate technology but there are plenty of bureax that will do it for you) Vidfax or letter, as far in advance as you can. I can always clear a day for you, if I know when you're coming. I'll show you round the areas which we don't yet broadcast. It will open your eyes even further! You'll absolutely love it! A whole community where spanking and domination is woven into the very fabric of everyone's life, a feature of every relationship, one way or another.

I look forward to hearing your news of America, must be so much more interesting now its no longer United, shame about the war and the mess it left behind. I guess the Americans are a tad less arrogant nowadays, though!

Look after yourself. See you soon,

Write even sooner -

*Guy*

\* [The material is reproduced at the back of this book.]

# 1 - TAWSINGHAM WITHOUT

The man, for man he indubitably was despite the pose and outfit, squatted precariously on all fours atop a truncated cone a couple of foot high and about three across, like the big cats in the circus-rings Minnie remembered from her childhood. The statuesque blonde ‘Ringmaster’ held a flaming circle, cracked her whip and the ‘lion’ jumped through the hoop and onto another similar cone four foot away, again landing four-footed.

“You mean people actually volunteer for this?” Minnie asked.

“It comes as a part of the package. They’re not all chosen to be in the circus, but it’s not up to them what they’re assigned to do. For instance I chose him because he’s got the lithe grace of a big cat somehow, so he was a natural for that role. You’d be surprised though how many of them enjoy it, and how much!” Sir Guy replied.

“Women as well as men?”

“Wait and see!”

The ‘lion-tamer’ led her charge out of the sawdust ring, leaving the cones.

Relays of waiters dressed in short-sleeved white shirts, brief waistcoats, shorts and dicky-bow ties came round, filling the glasses of everyone present, using walkways between each of the dozens of rows of seats in the vast building shaped inside like a canvas ‘big top’.

The next act came on. Two pony-girls harnessed upright side-by-side to a stripped-down racing gig raced in, driven by a tall blonde young man. The ‘ponies’ wore nothing more than harness around the waist, over the shoulders and between their legs, a brief leather contraption of leather and metal around their very ample breasts and ostrich plumes from the top-band of the bridles they wore.

Minnie guessed the contraption restrained the breasts from bouncing, but it did nothing to hide their ringed nipples, with their bouncing bells. It looked most uncomfortable. The man wore a brief pouch of black leather and an impressive tan, it covered the essentials, but left nothing to the imagination. He held the pony-girl’s reins in one

hand, running to the bits in their mouths, a carriage-whip in the other.

They did a lap around the ring, to cheers from the crowds seated on the tiers around the ring, then a second similar team entered. This time the ‘ponies’ were male, the rider a dark amazon in bright lurex and sequins. They drew level, saving themselves; then the Ring-master fired a starting pistol in the air. The pace quickened and they raced each other around the ring, in a figure eight pattern around the left-behind cones.

The whips were used to encourage the ponies, cracked above their heads initially, but on their flanks as the contest got more desperate. The amazon even caught the other rider across the back with her whip as he pulled in front. He pulled clear further and wagged his backside at her, as if taunting ‘get me if you can’.

She couldn’t catch up, however hard she whipped her steeds, but he got cocky, cut the corner too fine, the inside wheel went up the cone and tipped the outfit over, sending the pony-girls tumbling in a heap of limbs and harness as well.

“What’s the incentive to try so hard?”

“Well all the ponies get a bath and scrub down, and somewhere warm and comfy to sleep their exertions off. If they haven’t given their all in the ring it’s the rider’s fault. The losing rider is then harnessed to the rig and taken for a hard five-mile run. They don’t like that much, it’s even less fun alone and without an audience!”

“I can imagine! So they spend a couple of months as ‘beasts’, isn’t that what you call it?”

While they were talking waitresses appeared, clad in a travesty of a cocktail maid’s outfit. Oh yes that was it ‘Lyons corner-house nippies’. Minnie remembered them from the old films, black dress, starched white apron and bib. They came round and laid out a full roast beef and Yorkshire pudding meal for most of the guests, though Minnie saw some wave it away and get standard 21st century packaged pap. “They don’t know what they’re missing, she thought as she ate the ‘real food’ of her childhood. A culinary delight, on top of so much else.

“Yes, a month in basic training, as you’ve seen. Then a month training for a specialist role and another month doing it, like these performers.”

“So they’ve only had a month’s training?”

“Yes, plus three weeks practice, so they’re pretty good by now. The first week is usually quite a shambles. The trainers, though have the advantage of having already been in the ring, on the other end of the whip!

They ate as the next act came on, a ‘Tarzan’, ‘Jane’ and ‘apemen’ act, swinging high above their heads in an acrobatic trapeze routine that had everyone holding their breath.

“What if they fall?”

“You can’t see it, and neither can they, but there are safety precautions. We haven’t dropped one yet!”

Then a four footed figure sped into the ring, Minnie could see it was a woman, in a harness like the ‘lion’s’, but with a fox-fur over her back, the fox-head covering auburn curls. As she realised what it was she heard the stirring sound of a huntsman’s horn, sounding the ‘View Hello’. A pack of hounds, similarly harnessed, raced in behind. Just as the ‘vixen’ darted into the audience opposite, a group of huntsmen and women, on real horses and clad in traditional hunting pink followed the pack of hounds into the ring.

The ‘hounds’ followed their quarry into the audience, some darting up the aisle to either side of the one the vixen had taken, to try and cut her off. The audience of thousands roared its appreciation, as the milling throng surged around in their search, mostly using the walkways the servers had used, but also darting over the rows of seats.

Minnie realised that from their viewpoint it was very difficult for the hounds to catch sight of their quarry. The Master of the Foxhounds, astride his magnificent hunter, had a much better view as he cantered around the ring, following the chase. He used his horn to rally and redirect the hounds.

At last the quarry was flushed out from the audience and made a break for the exit, across the open ring. The hounds caught up and

mobbed her in a seething mass. The Hunt Master dismounted, whipped them aside, slipped a rope noose over the 'vixen's' neck and led her out of the ring, with the pack and huntsmen following.

The waiters came back and replenished their glasses, the waitresses cleared their meal and served a sherry trifle.

"How often do they do this?"

"We run three shows a day, seven days a week, with three shifts of performers, though there is some swopping between them to cope with injuries, etc. and to ensure each shift gets one rest day a week. Add that up and it's nearly two million backsides on seats every year!"

The next act was a troupe of 'dogs', again in similar harnesses, but with a costume mimicking the effect of poodles. They played a game of football with a large beach ball, then did tricks like balancing the ball on their noses, whilst half-crouching knees bent, on the balls of only their hind legs, their hands, forepaws? grabbing the air to maintain balance. The finale was to form a pyramid, four high, with the one on the apex catching a ball thrown by their trainer and balancing it on their nose.

The poodles trooped off and the servers came back to clear the meal away. Minnie, from recent habit in America, went to leave a tip. "Put that away dear, they've no use for money now, they've nothing to spend it on and they'd really be for it if they were caught with any. They're all in training for bondservice and we give them everything they need. Anyway, fancy a night-cap?"

"Very much indeed, but where?"

"Let's pop back into Tawsingham, to the Green Dragon, I like to do my drinking amongst friends, much as I welcome these tourists."

"Fine, anything you say." They walked out arm in arm into the warm August evening to Sir Guy's open-topped Bentley. Minnie realised it would have been a vintage car even when she was young. She climbed in.

They drove away from the tourist-crammed exit-roads, an eight-lane highway packed with the charmless utilitarian 'boxes on wheels' that served as almost universal transport in the 21st century. The

narrow, dark moonlit road ran through the usual boring 21st century robot-valeted prairie-type fields. In the dim light Minnie could just make out the regular augmented hedges topped with solar collectors and wind-vanes. After a few miles the landscape could be seen to end, with what looked like a high mirror-glass wall.

The Bentley headed up to a door, which purred open as they slowly approached. They stopped inside a small hall, and a uniformed man saluted them from a balcony. A door opened on the far side and the Bentley whispered out and through a narrow, winding ravine. Looking back she could dimly see what appeared to be a steep rock-face, with a low range of mountains behind.

“How’s that done? It looks so real?”

“Never mind dear, don’t even know fully myself, just told them what to do and they did it.”

Minnie knew him of old and didn’t believe it. He always had to understand everything he used and did, his early training and inclinations an engineer went right on through. Even if his materials nowadays were landscapes and people, not machines or circuits. She guessed he just meant he didn’t want to have to explain.

“Clever anyway, how far is it now?”

“Just a couple of miles.”

Minnie lay back, enjoyed the scent from the leather upholstery and even the country smells of her youth, coming from fields that were cultivated the hard way, by real people, using age-old organic, yes definitely organic by the old familiar aroma, methods.

She knew they were now back in Tawsingham proper, an enclave within the 21st century where the clock had been wound back. Time there seemed elastic somehow, it was more a pastiche, somebody’s (Sir Guy’s principally she assumed) idea of how it ought to have been, rather than a copy. From what she’d already seen parts were still back in the mid 19th century, like Sir Guy’s home, Masterleigh Hall.

Other parts were in the early 20th century, for instance most of the old village, with a melange of styles of building that wouldn’t have looked out of place in the 1950s, before the rash of ‘gentrification’ that

swept England in the '60s & '70s.

Dress amongst the inhabitants was harder to get used to, it encompassed at least the period from 1850 to 1990, all mixed up. It had been a shock too, to see in public streets so like those of her childhood what were obviously liveried servants, adults dressed in children's clothes and even more so to see people led around naked and on all-fours on dog-leashes or harnessed like horses or ponies.

They pulled up outside the Green Dragon and went inside. Minnie felt it was like coming home. The smell of beer and tobacco, it took her right back to her courting days of so long ago. She squeezed Guy's arm.

They had a drink each, but Minnie had seen so much that she remembered little of that interlude, just the warm cosy chat, that took her back decades. At last the landlord called time, another memory of days past.

They rose and Guy took her arm and led her up to her room. She was to choose her house the next day, but alone, he had to travel elsewhere on business. "Thank you for a wonderful day!" said Minnie at the door.

He kissed her hand, "My pleasure, we'll meet here again when you've settled in."

It had been good indeed, it had started that morning as she sat at the breakfast table. As she drifted off to sleep it all went through her mind.

"Minnie my dear, still as radiant as ever!" Sir Guy greeted his old flame, patting the waitress's backside as she scampered out of the way, "May I join you?"

"Of course, you old rogue, you flatter me, you're looking well too, my you wear the kilt well, I've not seen a man wearing a kilt for years, or a bow tie come to that, except in the Mills & Boone videos."

"Thank you, I do enjoy the period clothes. Just as well, have to put on a show for the paying customers anyway! Well, what's your news, how was your meal last night and indeed your night as a guest at our flagship hotel, the Tawsingham Imperial?"

"You've heard most of my news in my letters, nothing much new,

but they're doing a new series based on my new trilogy. I suggested they could film some of it on location here, they may get in touch. But you put on quite a show for the guests here don't you? I did what you said and watched for a pattern. Is it all planned, or what?"

"Sort of, the way it works is that all the waiters and waitresses are in training to join the village. Every half hour they have a lottery back in the kitchen. The one drawing the short straw has to do something to annoy a guest. As you've seen, when that happens the head waiter steps in and offers the guest the chance to discipline them then and there. So over they go, across someone's lap, or bent over a chair or the table, according to the taste of the guest concerned. Then it's out with the cane or paddle, or whatever from the trolley that's instantly provided. We have everything there, from the normal canes and tawses to a South African sjambok, even a bullwhip, though nobody uses that unless we've assured ourselves they know how to use it!"

"Clever. Do they ever upset guests by accident?"

"Yes, but if that happens they really get seen to by an expert afterwards, as well as by the guest. I set the system up that way, because I believe if they learn what they have to do to provoke someone into punishing them, they're well-equipped to avoid trouble if they want to, when they get into the village, in bondservice."

"And if they don't want to avoid trouble ..." Minnie's eyes lit up, as she saw the full implications. "Are they all going into bondservice then?"

Looking around at the staff she noticed the contrast, the waiters and waitresses seemed somehow more alive, seemed to glow and be genuinely and openly warm. They weren't all pert, young and pretty, though some were, but they all looked as if they felt that way inside and were proud of it, but without arrogance. By contrast the guest, all adults and a similarly wide span of ages, seemed somehow half-dead, surly, grey.

"No, the scheme works like this. Anyone moving into Tawsingham as a 'Free Householder', as you're planning to do, has to invest a capital sum, to buy or build their house and set up their establishment, and a part of that goes to finance the communal services, the

‘infrastructure’ to use the jargon. Of course they must also have the necessary personal qualities. No problem for you I’m sure, but some people just cannot cope with the responsibility of living life absolutely by their word, of never having much chance to hoodwink or deceive, whilst effectively being on show to the whole 21st century world 24 hrs a day. Then they have to demonstrate they are likely to be capable of earning a living, either by plying a trade or profession within Tawsingham or by investments from outside, in the 21st century. I imagine the royalties from your books, etc. would amply meet that criteria.”

“But these waitresses, surely they’re not going in as free householders?”

“Some will have the chance, my dear, though how long they last that way is up to them. Not long for some, but it’s surprising which ones do make it. Basically before signing-up they’ve each bought as many shares as they can. Ten shares would be enough to meet the capital requirement, one is the minimum, and is what most of them have bought. We then train them ‘outside’ for a year. They can leave any time, but don’t get their money back. At the end of the year there is a draw, each gets one ticket per share they’ve bought. There are a tenth as many winners in the draw as there were shares bought by that entry.”

“So one of them may become my neighbour?”

“That’s not likely, they’re coming in with minimum capital, so all they’ll get is a basic rented tumble-down cottage or council house in the old village. The Passingford estate costs a great deal more, they’re all owner-occupiers, so these trainees would have to very successful for quite a while, before they could move there.”

“How do they meet the income criteria then? If they’ve spent all their savings in shares, surely they’ll not have any interest payments from investments?”

Sir Guy pulled over a cup, Minnie found she’d filled it and added the cream without even thinking of it. Still has that knack, she thought, of getting things done for him.

“Some are canny enough to insure against that, effectively by

backing themselves to win, and if they do, it brings enough in to support themselves until they're established. Some canny ones, like Jethro Ham and his mother, who you'll maybe see later, get themselves trained in useful crafts and trades, so they can support themselves. Jethro can do all the old field crafts, hedging and ditching, bodging, dry-stone walling. His mother is the village herbalist and a wise woman, as well as being the best fruit-picker we have, she can tie the hop-bines and cut the sprouts with the best of them too. Others just take their chances."

"Wise Woman, what's that?"

"That's the respectful way of referring to what you'd know as a witch. There may be others, I've had reports of a coven meeting sky-clad in the remoter glades of Passingford woods, but she's the only one who's widely known. Mind you there's some fearsome potcheen circulating around the village, and I wouldn't put it past Jethro and his mother to start those rumours to scare people away from a pot-still he's operating out there!"

"What if they can't earn their way, if they go broke?"

"Same as every citizen of Tawsingham, there's parish relief, that'll just about support them until the twice-yearly hiring fair. If I know of someone I think deserving, but down on their luck, I may hire them for a while doing something that's maybe less than urgent, just to help them out for a while. But when and if that fails they'll have to hire themselves out, six months at a time."

"And if nobody hires them?"

"Anyone who can't meet their debts or support themselves is sold into bondservice. They can opt voluntarily to accept someone's protection, who'll take them into their household as bondservants, selling their possessions as necessary to pay as much as possible off their debts and meeting the rest themselves. Otherwise, if they can last that long, they can arrange to be sold-off at the hiring fairs - that way they get the best price. If not the beadle sells them off at the weekly market."

"Harsh, but it makes a sort of sense. Does their possessions include the bondservants? And what if nobody buys them?"

“Of course the bondservants are possessions, to be sold off. Wives too, if they married in Tawsingham, or accepted the relevant clause in the contract if they came to the village already married. There are also couples where the contract is the other way round, but only one or two. That’s why so many of the free women in Tawsingham never marry, if they can avoid it. But the debtors who don’t find a buyer are sold as beasts at the cattle market. That’s how I fill my Hunt kennels mostly, debtors who nobody wants even as beasts, for whatever reason, but who so desperately want to stay in Tawsingham they’ll even accept that.”

“Who gets the money, if there’s any left-over after paying-off debts?”

“Bondservice isn’t a life sentence. It’s usually seven years. At the end of that they get a bounty to set themselves up, to live on until they find employment or establish themselves in a trade. Any surplus on their sale is invested and they get it back then.”

“I see. Do they all have a trade?”

“You’ll see, I’m taking you right around the place and you’ll see that we do try and help equip them all to survive somehow. You have to remember, though that Tawsingham is a very feudal sort of place. Labour is cheap, because the bondservant’s services are almost free to their Masters and Mistresses. It’s a struggle to survive as a freeman, if you’re only able to offer manual skills, because the gentry can get the work done cheaper with bonded labour, of which there’s no shortage at all. That’s why I admire the Hams, they’ve worked-out the system so they can survive free on next to nothing, because they’ve the specialist knowledge and craft skills that I can’t get from the bondsmen, however hard I have them whipped. And a lot of little sidelines as well. There’s another too, Hortense, plying a very ancient profession.”

“What’s that?”

“Let’s just say that officially she’s an oriental dancer with a lot of generous men friends.”

“I see.” she certainly could, there would be a lot of scope for Hortense in a place like Tawsingham.

“Time to go.”

They walked out from the hotel. Outside there was a row of red double-decker London buses in front, trams to the left, trolley-buses to the right. They could move hundreds of people, but as yet the rush had hardly started.

Sir Guy ignored them, “They’re for the trippers.” They turned the corner and there was a couple of carriages, each with four human ponies harnessed in the traces, and a liveried coachman. As they turned the corner the coachman touched his forelock, “Morning Sir Guy, where can I take you and the young lady?”

Minnie blushed, it had been a good few years since anyone called her a young lady, and something about his tone and the situation, emerging from breakfast arm in arm with a male escort, made her feel like she used to feel half a century before when out for a weekend’s courting on the sly. She realised that she’d have to get used to him being addressed by his title too, he’d always been Guy to her. She liked the title and it suited him, but it was still a shock to hear him addressed by it.

“The initial training block, Humphries.”

They trotted off, Minnie taking in the strange sights. Hordes of trippers in ordinary 21st century clothes mingling with anachronisms like the carriage they were in, with its unusual steeds. There were signposts everywhere, all sorts of echoes of bygone times. From the buses, to the street signs, styles of building, but all somehow not quite right.

“Reminds me of an Olde English Disneyworld.”

“Yes, not surprising really, I used the Disney Corporation a lot as consultants to build this side of the scene. We call it Tawsingham Without, the way they used to call the rural parish around a town. Needed to attract millions of tourists to raise the funds to make the ‘real’ village, and that’s what I’m really interested in. This all still feels sort-of ‘fake’ to me, though I examined and modified the plans at every stage.”

They passed through a gate marked “Authorised Access only”, with

discreetly armed guards, though Minnie wasn't sure if they were there to stop the trippers coming in or the residents getting out. Both probably. They came to a low red-brick building. It reminded Minnie of an old hospital, or perhaps a school.

“Wait here please Humphries, we'll be half an hour or so.” As they went inside she saw Humphries take four bowls from the back of the carriage, put them down on the ground, fill them and the ponies bent down to drink from them.

They walked in. She was reminded of a modern technical learning centre, not quite the colleges of her youth. The ‘students’ were of all ages from 18 to 60 though most were in their 20s and 30s, about half men, half women, all dressed in 21st century clothes. Sir Guy went to a door marked “Virtual Reality Tanks” and they went in.

“I've picked out a few scenes you might enjoy. Cue Vivienne/ Bertie Childs 25th May, 2011, 11.30 pm.” A screen flickered into life and Minnie saw in ‘fast forward’ a scene where a young lady was taken to task by her father, put over his knee, soundly spanked and then thrashed with a leather belt. Minnie's pulse quickened.

“You're suggesting I might like to put myself in that poor girl's place?” She'd heard of these things, you climbed into a suit, went into a brine tank, then various sensors in the suit simulated every sensation someone had felt. You saw the world through their eyes, heard things through their ears, were forced into the position they taken, felt every touch or every blow. It excited her.

“Exactly, just put this on.”

“Well, if you say it's OK.”

“If it ever gets too much you just press your finger into your thumb, like this,” he demonstrated, “It'll then stop and you can come out.”

She climbed into the suit and clambered into the tank and was instantly Vivienne, it was so real. She heard Bertie berating her, and felt the reaction she used to have, to deny it was her fault, counter-accuse, anything to avoid admitting guilt. She heard Vivienne do just that, identifying with every word, whilst realising in that part of her brain that was mature and adult, that Bertie was making some very

good points and that in all honesty Vivienne deserved it, just as she herself had.

She felt the legs swept from under her and felt herself land on his lap. It was real, she felt each move. The first blows on the jeans-clad bottom weren't too bad, but it began to build up. Minnie felt herself moving flailing around to futilely try and avoid the blows, the warmth build up till it seemed unbearable, but she knew it was because it wasn't by any means the first time for her either. Each stinging thwack on her backside pushed her higher until she was floating in that cloud she remembered so well. Ooh it was good, nobody had done that sort of thing to her for ages and she was totally lost in it.

Then the scene faded and she could see her companion in front of her, her eyes were glowing, her breathing fast. She didn't care if he noticed.

“Care for another go?” She nodded, realising just as reality faded and the scene started that he hadn't even told her what it was going to be.

Instantly she was Mandy Masterleigh, being led to the barn by Mr. Wilton. Oh God, it was the scene she herself had written for Guy, 30 or more years ago. She knew that once inside the barn there would be Jethro Ham. With a heavy leather strap. Now she was to feel each swipe of his hard, workworn hand on her backside, feel the bite of the leather harness strap he'd used. Just as she'd written it. So Guy had actually made it happen, the cunning devil!

She wasn't wrong, she felt Mandy take a swipe at him, heard her scream defiance, just as she'd have done. Saw him head her off as she bolted for the door, felt the apprehension building up as he cornered her, then that sinking feeling as she tripped over a hay-bale. She felt him grab her wrists and yank her over his lap, ooh I'm for it now! He pinned her down and landed one swipe after another squarely on her bottom cheeks. His calm determined manner was somehow reassuring, mesmerising, and she understood exactly why it stilled Mandy's complaints.

She felt the jodhpurs hauled off by his strong hands, felt her body bent squarely over his lap and the arm pinning her down at the waist.

The spanking began in earnest, she could feel the burning fire reddening the skin. She shrieked in the suit, just as Mandy did, felt the fighting, kicking and struggling as her legs fought for purchase, her arms tried to go back around to protect herself. He calmly carried on until the fight ebbed from her.

Then, bless him, he did just what was needed. He stopped, lifted her up and lay her face down over the bale. She knew the strap was coming, hadn't she written the scene herself, and that nothing on earth could stop it, even had she wanted it to. The bite when he brought it down had her yowling anew, just as she heard Mandy's scream. 10 times it was brought down, each harder than the last and she understood completely why Mandy was sobbing, babbling promises to be good, to pay attention, to do what her father said. Minnie felt just like she had done, the first time a boy had 'mastered' her, so many years ago. She wanted him then, wanted him like she'd wanted that boy and felt as one with Mandy when she shyly asked Jethro that 'if her father asked him to beat her again, that he come, please?'

It was wonderful, like coming home after years and finding Mum still in the kitchen, as young as she was then, with all the smells of one's favourite meals promising more to come.

She emerged. "Again?" she nodded. She wanted to plunge right in.

She was the big cat in a circus ring, naked and harnessed, posed on the balls of her feet and the boots on her hands, on top of a cone. Uncomfortable, but not painful. Her eyes were glued to the whip in the Ringmaster's hand. She could feel the breeze on her naked backside, dimly see and hear the crowd beyond the lights, but the gaze was focused to detect the slightest gesture, any tiny quiver, in that whip-holding hand. A hoop came into view and set alight. The motion of the whip said "jump through it" and she did. Hard when you're twenty, very hard nearly a half century later. She pressed her thumb to her finger and came out.

"Less to your taste I see."

She clambered stiffly out of the suit. "Are these tanks expensive?"

"No, quite a few of our residents have had them installed in their homes, with the cost of consumer electronics nowadays it's no more

expensive than an extra bathroom.”

Minnie resolved she'd get one installed too, and that the subject be best changed, it would embarrass her for Guy to realise what she was dreaming of.

“Yes, I don't like that 'beast' thing you do here so much, it hurts and it frightens me.”

“I had checked your heart and system were up to it, you're really fit for your age, though when that monitor gets to work and you can fine tune your diet you'll feel even better! That time in harness is a necessary stage we think. Most don't like it any more than you did, that's why it's so useful to have as a threat to hold over the bondservants. If you can't to keep those at the bottom of the heap in line, you've always got to have something worse. The advantage for us is that, once reduced to beast status, they can't really make a nuisance of themselves. It's so easy to keep them leashed or caged and under control.”

“I can imagine! How long do they spend as 'beasts', isn't that what you call it?”

“All the trainees spend at least twelve full weeks in harness training, as we call it. The first month they spend here, in ordinary clothes, in this building and we try very comprehensively to scare them off. They are shown around, see everything they may have to do. Enter the tanks in the full virtual reality suit as you've just done and feel everything, the worst that can happen to them. We pick out some of the most painful, uncomfortable, humiliating and embarrassing scenes from the archives that have ever happened here. It's easy to pick the clips, we just monitor what the demand is and pick out the most popular amongst our regular viewers! If that doesn't put them off nothing will. About a quarter leave at the end of that week, and get most of their stake back.”

“So they know what they're letting themselves in for then?”

“Oh yes, much of the material they're exposed-to in the first month here are from the experiences of our various beasts. Actually it's not those that are the most difficult for some of them, because as a beast there's no illusion of choice. What many find more difficult is being a

bondservant, where they're not harnessed or restrained and wear relatively normal clothing, but still have to take onto themselves an obligation to accept a far greater amount of humiliation and discipline than any of them have been used-to in the 21st century."

"They actually all like it so much they're happy to go right through with the harness training?"

"Yes, let's go and see them."

They emerged into the sunlight, eyes blinking and climbed back into the carriage. Their route took them through another gate marked "Authorised Access only", but this one had to be opened for them and the guard's sidearms weren't discreet. It was also labelled "Basic Training Area". The carriage stopped at what looked like large-scale boarding kennels.

There were harnessed beasts everywhere, on treadmills or loping around in circles at the extent of a tether, urged-on with a whip. Some were going round a circuit with jumps like miniature horse-racing fences, ditches and water splashes as well. Others were going round a circuit like they use for dog-obedience training, up a seesaw, along narrow beams, all four footed. Some were fastened in pairs, like they used to do with rams, a yoke spanning their necks. Others were in the runs, just lying in the sun, running about or playing like kids, rolling around in the dirt. Supervising them were half as many leather-clad grooms, of both genders, short thick whips at their belts or in their hands, an odd-looking holster at their belt.

"So how do they get into this state?"

"After the first month, when they've confirmed they're staying the monitor is implanted and before they come around from the anaesthetic their hands are encased in a soft leather mitten. That stays on all the time and stops them using their hands. The grooms put a proper boot over that every morning, taking it off every night. They're harnessed as you've seen them, with the straps around the shoulders and chest linked by light chain to the anklets. That stops them standing upright. We put a collar on them that gives them a mild electric shock if they try and talk. We can also use a little gizmo, we call it a zapper, that gives them a shock if we point it at them and press the button, see

the grooms carrying them on their belts.”

Minnie saw one head-butting what looked like a large cat-flap and getting nowhere, whilst another loped in and straight through it.

“Why can that one get in, but the other can’t get out?”

“The collars on their necks each have a code, so that we can programme the gates to open or not for each beast. We control their food intake that way too.”

“That must feel awful, it leaves them totally helpless and dependent.”

“Yes, but they knew what was coming, and didn’t drop out, so don’t blame us. Actually many quite like it, for the first time in their lives since very early childhood they can be totally irresponsible, have nothing and nobody to care about, they just have to do what they’re forced-to, please whoever’s put in charge of them, eat, sleep and enjoy each other’s company. Freedom of a different sort.”

“You allow the sexes to mix I see.”

“Always for the first month, some for the whole period, depending on what they’re doing. We take precautions against disease and pregnancy of course. That’s seen to during the first week. If a girl comes to us as a virgin and our character reading indicates she’d best lose her virginity somewhere more romantic, then we take precautions. The monitors rapidly tell us if there’s any problems that way anyway. Too sensitive in fact, had to turn the sensitivity down when alarm bells started ringing every time one got a leathering! Mind you I use that effect to monitor what each of the hounds is getting. That way if one of them doesn’t get whipped properly in a week, then they get a good seeing-to on principle!”

“Don’t you get rapes and that sort of thing?”

“Sometimes, but it’s surprisingly difficult, without hands or weapons. The grooms can get enough of whatever they want without resorting to that and anyway they know that they’d be detected through the monitors and sacked immediately if they abused their privileges much. However each group soon sorts out a pecking order anyway, with a dominant male and his mate and so on down the scale,

they're primates don't forget, just like a troupe of baboons."

"Is it always the males who are the dominants?"

"Actually no, usually the 'pack leader' is male, but there have been exceptions, and certainly in the mid-range quite a few females buck the system and establish dominance over lower-ranking males, in their own right, not just because they're mates of dominant males."

Minnie shivered, but she wasn't sure whether it was from horror or excitement. The latter she suspected.

"So they're mixed for the first month. What do they do then?"

"It's when we get them fit and used to discipline, a bit like army boot camp. We really put them through their paces testing them out, toughening up the weaklings, thinning down the fatties. Through the monitors we know exactly what each needs to bring them up to perfect health, vitamins, minerals, hormones. We see they get it, like it or not. After that first month they're fitter than they've ever been in their lives. They get used to being naked, dependent, under control. Quite a transformation, they lose any modesty or false pride."

"Do many drop out?"

"A few, but less than you'd expect. Overall it's only 50% in that first year. The monitors pick up any just before they get really desperate and we take them out for a respite, which usually sees them through. Mind you that happens less often, now we've sorted out the wrinkles in the system of training. They feel good, strong and healthy in themselves. They did know what was coming, so they can't claim, even to themselves, that it wasn't fair"

"Then after that first month?"

"Another two months in harness, but they're trained in some specialty. They may get sent to the circus, like in that clip you experienced, or to the petting zoo we're going to now, or hauling the privileged visitors on the carriages we're using. All sorts, we try and match each to something their physique and aptitudes suit them for. We test them thoroughly so we know more about each one of them than they even knew about themselves."

"After those three months?"

“Into bondservice training, for four more months, though if they go off the rails it can be back into harness. Some actually like it so much in harness that they spend most of their training year that way. Often most of their life in Tawsingham too!”

They climbed back into the carriage, talking as they passed back through the second gate, and the first.

“What sort of training do they get?”

“Basically the women get trained in domestic skills, the men in field-work, farming and gardening and suchlike.”

“So you’re forcing them back into the old stereotypes then?”

“Yes and no. After all only one male cook even found work in Tawsingham, and that only lasted weeks, he ended up as a bondson/toyboy for his mistress. We do have a few maids who double as gardeners, and we trained them for that too. But not every trainee bondservant wearing a skirt was born female. Some of them are complete males, who want to take on a woman’s role, though they still fancy women. Others go the full way and have surgery before they come. Mind you, they mostly end up as beasts anyway, so I don’t know why they bother. We’ve even had the odd male who was born female and that seems to work far better, though it happens less often.”

“Bondson, what’s that?”

“During the first month a dossier about each trainee is passed around any of the householders looking to add a ‘child’ or ‘au-pair’ to their household. A few, usually the prettiest young ladies, are chosen and go straight into Tawsingham after only a month more training, selected by their ‘adoptive parent’.”

“So they miss out all the harness training and the other worst bits?”

“Yes, the bondservants really hate them for that! And they’re usually the ones who play the servants up worst.”

They came to the petting zoo and alighted.

“Fetch a hamper and meet us in an hour Humphries, pick us up from the other side.”

“Very good Sir.” A touch of the cap and he trotted off.

Hordes of trippers were surging around, milling around souvenir stalls and fast-food counters. Sir Guy bought a packet from the stall and led Minnie to a stile and they climbed over. He strolled into the crowd, as though looking for something. Then he took something from the packet and held it out to a 'beast' nearby.

It was female, superbly well developed, hair French plaited, naked apart from the chest harness, collar wristlets and anklets. It, she, sidled over, ready to bolt but eager for the treat. Sir Guy motioned Minnie to go around, so that as he bent down on his heels and the delicacy was taken from his fingers she could examine the 'bitch' from behind. He stroked the shoulders, reached under and cupped the breasts. He motioned for her to do the same and Minnie stroked the beast's haunches.

"Over" he said and Minnie could see the whole body exposed, legs and arms sprawled wide, knees bent, as the chains from the harness prevented them being straightened.

"Shaved clean I see." she said, fascinated. She'd never seen someone expose themselves so unselfconsciously, naked and unashamed, with people milling around in the sunshine.

"Yes mostly I, no we, have them like that. For most of them it looks and feels so much nicer."

She thought, "So you take that close an interest do you?" doing as she was bid, stroking the inner thighs and even along the sides of the mound. The lips parted, glistening. It felt good, wonderful, and she felt a wave of affection, excitement and almost envy.

"Go on, explore her, they're trained to accept your touch."

Minnie did just that, touching in the way she herself would have liked to have been petted. It was as exciting as anything she'd done for years. It was appreciated too, there were unmistakable signs that confirmed as much. She moistened her fingers with the juices, licked them and held them to the beast's lips. The fingers were licked clean greedily. Minnie kissed her, it's, forehead and stood up, a little unsteadily. Sir Guy smiled.

"Enjoy that?"

“Very much.”

“Perhaps you could have your own pet, in Tawsingham.”

“I think I’d like that very much.”

The creature kissed her feet and ambled away.

“There she’s saying that she’d like you as an owner!”

Sir Guy led Minnie to the next enclosure. These were male. He fed one of them too, and encouraged Minnie to stroke that as well. ‘It was good, but not as exciting,’ she thought. ‘I like my men as men, not pets.’

The next enclosure held a different sort of beasts. The legs were fastened together right down to the ankle by some sort of strong net enclosing the limbs completely. The feet formed the ‘bones’ of a strong single flipper. The arms were fastened to the torso the same way, either side, right down to the elbow and the forearms were the ‘bone’ in a flipper, either side. They reminded Minnie of nothing so much as seals and, looking around she saw that half the enclosure was a pool, in which some were swimming.

“I’m not keen on this.”

“We’ll pass on then. You’re not alone, most don’t, but remember what I said about the bondservants and beasts. This is what can happen to those who we can’t tame as ordinary beasts.”

“That’s cruel.”

“They knew the score. They must want to be tamed or they wouldn’t be here, so we tame them, otherwise they’d be disappointed. Anyway, they have an out if they want one.”

“What’s that?”

“Anybody with a monitor has a key formula. If they can’t cope, get a real panic attack or just plain want out, they have only to invoke that and we’ll haul them out. Of course it’s the end of their life here, but it’s a way out. Very few have used it.”

The next enclosure held beasts in an upright posture, wrists fastened together behind the waist, hand to forearm. They were trotting around.

“Ponies.” He said, and held-out a snack. One, a female, this enclosure was mixed, came and took it. This time Minnie was prepared and less thrown by the opportunities presented, of which she took full advantage. The ‘mare’ nuzzled her neck, pushed herself, itself? into her hand and wrapped their body around her. Fascinating, wonderful.

Whilst this was going on Sir Guy had drifted off and was chatting to a couple of the keepers standing by. After a while one came, leading the ‘bitch’ they’d first met on a leash. He handed it to Sir Guy. Minnie finished what she was doing, sped the ‘mare’ on her way with an affectionate slap on the bottom and came to see what was going on.

“Brought you a little something to amuse you over lunch.”

Minnie was dumbstruck, just followed as the keeper led the way, opening a little gate to let out the bitch on her leash. The carriage arrived. They climbed in, the bitch scrambling up, to lie at their feet.

“The lake Humphries, that spot I use. You’ll love it Minnie, it’s beautiful and it’s private.”

It was, a little glade, an inlet of the lake to one side, soft even grass, surrounded by trees. It couldn’t be overlooked from anywhere. Humphries unloaded the hamper and set out a magnificent picnic. Minnie’s and their ‘canine’ companion’s eyes opened wide. Salmon, exotic cheese, salads, champagne. They lay down, Minnie helped herself and fed her borrowed ‘bitch’, one treat for her, one for the pet. She poured champagne into a bowl and it was lapped up.

When the meal was over they lay and enjoyed the sun. Her pet took the buttons of her blouse in her mouth, trying to undo them, or at least suggest they be undone. Minnie obliged, heedlessly taking all her clothes off. Sir Guy followed suit. She was licked, kissed and nibbled all over by the pet. It was heaven.

Then, when she was totally relaxed the pet moved over and did the same for Sir Guy. Humphries had discreetly disappeared. Minnie crawled over and did the same. They ended up dozing in the sun, in a happy tangle of limbs.

They were awakened by a discreet cough. It was Humphries. “What

is it?" said Sir Guy.

"Begging pardon Sir, but it's four thirty already and I didn't think you'd want to be late for the performance."

"Thank you Humphries, be back here in 40 minutes."

They went for a swim, naked, splashing about at the lake's edge. They towelled each other dry, the pet showing off by shaking herself the way a dog does. Minnie and Sir Guy dressed. They sat side by side, Grace, for that was the pet's name Minnie learned, curled up at their feet, Sir Guy's arm was around Minnie's shoulders, they were enjoying each other's company without talking. Soon after Humphries returned.

The carriage took them right around the lake, with Sir Guy showing Minnie the sights they'd missed the chance to enjoy close-up, the bondservant training areas, the trainee's farm and market garden, the factory making and restoring artefacts for use within Tawsingham.

At last they came to a large building, reminiscent to Minnie of a big top. Sure enough the huge neon sign announced they'd arrived at the circus. They didn't go to the front entrance, but one to the side. Sir Guy explained that Grace had to be taken back, so he secured the leash and Minnie gave her one last stroke as they got down.

They entered just as the show began.