

SOCIETY FOR SISSIES

By April Green



ILLUSTRATED BY BRIAN DUKEHART

A 'HER TV' NOVEL

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SOCIETY FOR SISSIES

By APRIL GREEN

Andy Clay still couldn't believe his mother was dead. Just days ago she had been there celebrating his fifteenth birthday and now he was watching the priest conclude the burial service. Tears welled up in his eyes, but he refused to let them grow any bigger. He forced them away, unwilling to let them run down his cheeks.

As the priest finished and the funeral attendants peered down the hole at Grace Clay's casket one last time, Andy could hear the comments he had heard for days, ever since it had happened.

“What a senseless waste. She was such a beautiful woman, too young for this to have happened to her!” they would say for weeks and years to come. “A car accident,” they would say, “a terrible hit and run. Isn't it awful what the roads have become? That sports car never even slowed down— as if it was out to get poor Gracie!”

He was sick of it all. The mourners all gathered around his father, who had been devastated, but he wanted none of it. He was tired of being pitied and wanted only to be left alone.

“I'm going home now, OK.?” he asked his father, who shrugged limply in response. They were to have gone over together to a neighbor's to console, but he didn't have the heart for it and his father knew it. And being new in town, he didn't feel like being consoled by a bunch of strangers anyway. As Andy slowly walked the few blocks home, he pushed all thoughts of death from his mind, concentrating on the soda can he kicked from side to side. But the loud revved kick of a sports engine behind him drew his attention immediately.

He spun around. There was a red Jaguar idly purring right behind him. That jerk might have killed me! he thought furiously. He peered into the driver's side, but it was unnecessary, because the woman in the car suddenly thrust her head out.

“Say, can you point me toward Jupiter?” she demanded assertively. Andy was still annoyed with the car's sudden halt, but he was prevented from yelling at the woman by two things. First, she was absolutely nonplused by what she had done as if she had intended to startle him. Her very disregard, her utter nonchalance impressed him into a state of sputtering shock.

And then there was her obvious beauty. She was a redhead of about thirty-five with shocking blue eyes and pale, perfect skin. Her thin lips sort of leaned into a sardonic smirk that both piqued and discouraged interest. Her only flaw, if it could be called that, was an aquiline angular nose, which while delicate was prominent enough to keep her from being a runway model. She seemed to turn up the nose and offer her

smirk so that Andy felt as if she considered even asking him directions to be a special honor. Though he could only see her head, he knew that if the rest of her was as attractive as what he could see, that she was easily one, if not the, most beautiful young woman in Jupiter at this moment.

“That way lady,” he pointed toward the main road. Cautiously he righteously added, “You ought to be more careful you know!”

He heard a nasty girlish laugh from inside the car, but he couldn't make out the source of the laugh. The older woman considered his comment, then smiled archly. “Yes, terrible what the roads are coming to, isn't it? Anything's likely to happen!” With that pronouncement made, she rolled up the window and sped into the deepening darkness of the September afternoon.

Andy was shaking as he trudged home. As he settled into his chair, flicking on the remote to MTV, he hoped the oddly beautiful woman and her passenger were just passing through Jupiter. He had no wish to cross her path again. Soon the thought of his mother, the funeral, and the woman all dissolved as the music videos grew louder and the gyrating girls pulled his mind in more predictable directions.

Andy was, if not happy, at least more accepting of what had happened to his family. The days and weeks since the funeral had brought him a little closer to his father, whom he had never felt very close to, and that was good. His father, Jess, had always been cold and uncommunicative with him and his mother had always been the bridge that linked all three of them together. Though why she bothered, Andy never knew. His father Jess had been a terrible husband to her— either screwing around on her with the bimbo's at his work or spending long hours working, or ordering his mother around like some kind of slave. It was this treatment that alienated him from his father, not that Jess cared in any case. He would be going to college soon with the trust fund his mother had started for him and he would be free from Jupiter and his father and all of it.

Now, his father seemed pretty centered on his work. As the Programming Director at Liberty Communications, the local cable access company for Jupiter, he seemed much more interested in the ratings of sitcoms and talk shows than he was in his son's life. Andy practically never saw his father some days and Andy never made too much of an attempt to connect with him. When they were together, his father asked him about girls and sports, which they'd talk about for a while, then announce that he had to go somewhere and toss him a twenty for a pickup dinner somewhere.

School didn't offer much of a diversion either. As the new kid, he didn't rate much more than curiosity at Teddy Roosevelt High. Being on the small side, he didn't have the opportunity to get involved in athletics that might have gained him more friends. And being on the bookish side, he seemed standoffish to the other kids.

About the only person who wanted to spend time with him was dopey Ann, a tall plain redhead who looked to him like Raggedy Ann. He made no secret of his lack of interest in her, and was downright rude when she came sniffing around for attention.

She obviously had a crush on him and he couldn't help but take advantage of the fact. He gloated inside when, trying to make small talk with him, gawky Ann would squeeze her upper arms together to try to make cleavage for him! It was funny because she was so flat and so desperate for a boyfriend. He would ignore her for days when she would try to track him down the hallways of the high school, then, just when she might have given up, he cruelly pretended to take notice. Andy would drop some veiled hint to see how she might react, her pale blue eyes longing to please.

“Gee, Ann, you know, you'd look great in high heels if you wore them more often,” he'd suggest and watch as the already tall girl would foolishly topple in the next day in stiletto heels. Or “Gee Ann, I don't know about other guys, but I think you'd look great in miniskirts.” Sure enough, the next day would bring in an embarrassed Ann traipsing awkwardly in a miniskirt, to the laughter of the other girls. He would compliment her, but say, no, he couldn't go to the library to study with her today— maybe a rain check. It was funny— Andy had enough rain checks with Ann to fill out the next five years! But she kept trying and he kept playing with her.

No, being a loner was all right with Andy. After all being alone gave Andy the chance to pull out the Penthouse magazines he had been collecting and enjoy himself— and that was all the company he needed.

The Human Resources director had said that Hunter Van Gilder was an exceptional find in more ways than one. She was extraordinarily talented and had numerous degrees in programming.

“Sure, but what are we talking about Gina? A secretarial position, right? How talented does she have to be? All I need is something pretty to look at during the day that will make my coffee and say 'Yes, Sir.' Got it, Gina?”

Regina Patience, Liberty's HR Director wanted to jam the words right down his throat. But she was true to her surname and held her tongue. Being a HR Director was often trying, but dealing with macho cretins was the worst part of the job. He certainly knew she hated the short version of her name. Nothing about this jerk was appealing— he was a gruff thirty-five year old martinet with an attitude. His dark good looks and athletic, if too spare frame, gave him an arrogant appeal, though his five feet five inch height created a Napoleon complex that was unbearable to normal women. But Jess Clay as programming director was not someone she wanted to antagonize.

She responded diplomatically. “Look, Mr. Clay, the position is actually 'Executive Assistant', not secretary. And there is something to be said for value added employees that bring more to the table than good looks and a tame attitude— right?”

Jess snorted contemptuously, but remained silent. Regina was uncomfortably aware that Clay was staring at her breasts. Pretending to reach for some papers on the desk, she purposely knocked over her Styrofoam coffee cup— right into Clay's lap.

He leapt up. “Jesus! It's all over my pants!” His face was beet red and Regina restrained the laughter welling up inside of her.

“Gosh, sorry about that! Here's some paper towels! How could I have done that?” she apologized profusely.

Clay shrugged it off and began wiping his lap. He looked up and leered at Regina. “Too bad you aren't interested in the job, Gina. I'd have you doing this for me right now.” His eyes returned to her breasts.

She had had enough. “Look, she here and she's also coming in later this week. You'd be advised to hire her— she's the kind of talent this place needs.” With that, she brushed out of his office.

Jess had tossed that comment aside immediately until this moment. Hunter Van Gilder sat across from his desk and she did indeed seem to be the kind of talent that the work place needed. The woman was stunning.

“So, tell me more about the programming operations around here,” she pressed.

Jess proceeded to fill her in on the various aspects of his job, his accomplishments, the coups of the past few seasons that had brought him to his position with Liberty Communications and so on.

She seemed impressed. “Yes, your idea for the televised Wet Tee Shirt Contest was written up in the trade press. It's been copied in many major markets throughout the country— though you did have some trouble with some feminist groups on that, didn't you?” She asked the question with an edge of sarcasm. That damn knowing smile of hers annoyed him.

“Yeah, the dykes at NOW got real uppity about it, but the lawyers were able to keep them quiet. When ratings are up, it's easy to maintain the status quo. Say, you're not a feminists are you? That kind of programming doesn't bother you, does it?”

Again that arrogant smile. Her white teeth flashed back at him. “Not at all— in fact I think the sexier the programming, the better. And another thing...”

“Yes, what is it?” he demanded defensively. She was awfully pushy for a secretarial candidate.

“I don't mind you noticing my breasts, but I don't want them to distract you from my credentials— all right?” She pointed to her resume, point by point. “I've got a degree in communications from Emerson, an MBA with a concentration in Entertainment Marketing Studies from the Wharton School, and an internship as a programming assistant with CBS. I later had a stint as an assistant producer with CNN.”

Jess was flustered at her assertiveness. He had been staring at her body, which was very sexy. Though she hadn't dressed provocatively, it was clear she was possessed of a shapely, trim form. The expensive blue Evan Picone suit couldn't hide that. Her chest was on the smaller side but firm, and her hips were smoothly curved to present a pert tempting backside. He liked the way she tossed her stylishly short, shocking red hair when she had detailed her impressive career. And he could not meet her bright blue eyes which seemed to unman him at every bend in the interview.

“Ah, you've done a great deal, Ms. Van Gilder. Why would you be interested in taking an executive assistant job here in Jupiter then?”

She seemed unduly amused at the question. Her blue eyes gleamed at him in quiet amusement. “Maybe I think there might be bigger opportunities here in time. Anyway, I've got a daughter who's planning on a college education. Obviously I'm more than qualified and I'm eager to get to know this place better. Shall I start tomorrow?”

He was taken aback by her complete self-confidence, so much so that he could do little else but nod dumbly. “Yes, tomorrow, why not? I'll see you at nine.”

She held out her hand and they shook in agreement. As she extended her arm, he could see the small black tattoo on the inside of her wrist.

“That's interesting. What is it, a flower?” He held her hand closer to take another look.

Van Gilder wrenched it back angrily. She was perturbed, but held her temper.

“It's a rose actually. Pretty stupid— I did it in college for a sorority.” With that simple explanation, she nodded and left. His eyes followed her taut backside as she closed the door behind her. The interview, if that's what it had been, was over. Jess shook his head as he realized she had not once called him “Mr. Clay”.

“Hunter, could you please help me with the Master Schedule for the spring season?”

Hunter's strong voice replied over the intercom. “Just hold on, Jess. I'm doing the report for the management board right now and I'm giving that presentation this afternoon. You'll have to wait until I have time, understand?” She sounded stressed and he hoped he hadn't upset her.

“Oh, no problem! Thank you, Hunter.” He clicked off the intercom. In a few short weeks, she had taken on so many of his duties that it seemed impossible that he had functioned before she had taken the job at Liberty.

It had been apparent from the first day on the job that she had ambitions beyond being an executive assistant. When he had asked her to fetch him a cup of coffee that first morning, she had laughed in his face.

“You've got to be kidding, Jess!” she had responded in sincere hilarity.

He might have fired her then, except that she had then shown him a new way to calculate the ratings in such a way that they appeared even bigger to management, then proceeded to write up the new report for him. The response to that news had been a glowing memo of commendation from the president. No, she wouldn't have to get him coffee if she didn't want to, he decided.

And instead of doing his secretarial work, she had arranged with Regina in Human Resources that that work should be split up and given to girls in the steno. That would leave her time open to “work with Jess in providing the best possible programming the station could provide.” And she had, immediately putting together the background work on at least a dozen new deals featuring hot new series. Jess took the credit, but it was clear there was an understanding between them about who was doing what for whom.

When she demanded to be given the title “Programming Associate Director” and an office of her own, he agreed. Regina gave him an ironic smile as she put through the paperwork.

“Funny, Mr. Clay— this executive assistant of yours has really got a lot more to offer than a nice smile and a tame attitude, doesn't she?”

He nodded eagerly. “Yes, she's the best, Gina. I mean, Regina— sorry about that. I know you don't like the short form. Anyway, Hunter is really on the ball.” He couldn't understand why Gina found this so hysterical as he signed off the salary authorization. Hunter had just received a fifteen thousand dollar raise.

Hunter's ability wasn't the only factor in her sudden promotion, though. Jess couldn't stop thinking about her. Even in her expensive, conservative business suits, she was drawing his attention away from anything and anyone else in the building. He thought often of those thin lips pressed against his, his hands cupping those small breasts through her wool blazer. But she was elusive when they touched on topics outside work. And it was this elusiveness that made her all the more desirable.

After a successful bidding coup in which Hunter had negotiated the rights to carry major sports coverage, he had invited her out for a celebration drink. She had declined. “Diana is expecting me home, Jess. She needs help studying for her midterms— she's an honor student at Harvard and home for a week, so I don't see her all that often....maybe another time.”

Jess knew it wasn't an excuse. She had told him about Diana when she had started. A picture of her sat on her desk.

“May I?” Jess asked.

Hunter nodded proudly and he looked at the young woman in the picture. She looked much like her mother might have some seventeen years ago. Diana had the same shocking orange-reddish hair, the same thin lips and the same overly clever smile. Her eyes were somewhat more gray than blue and she had a slight overbite which was quite attractive. Also she looked to have more of a bust than her mother, but there was a strong resemblance between parent and child. Even down to the small black tattoo on her right wrist!

“Is Diana in the sorority too? A family tradition?”

Hunter grinned and took the framed picture from him. “Like mother, like daughter!” And then quickly changing the topic, she added “Having Diana at such an early age was hard. I was only eighteen when she was born. Her father was nowhere to be found.” She bitterly spat out the last sentence. “I never saw him again and that was what taught me all I needed to know about men, Jess— how selfish they can be, how irresponsible they are. You asked about this tattoo I have? Well, I got it from a sorority that helps women. They certainly helped me out— with a full scholarship to college and living expenses for myself and Diana. She's in the same sorority as I was. And I'm very proud of that too.”

As she prepared to leave, Jess could only watch as she drew the coat over her slim body, watching the slender muscles flex as her legs bent to pick up her briefcase, her

long, delicate fingers clutching the leather handle, the brusque wave and closing door. He was absolutely mad about her.

When Hunter had suggested that she, not he, should give the monthly programming presentation for the management board, he had resisted— until he realized that without her preparatory work, the presentations wouldn't be successful anyway. And if he refused to let her give the presentation, she wouldn't do the preparatory work. He conceded and at the next meeting, he introduced her as his representative to management effective immediately.

Hunter wowed them. Her concise report on how the company might take immediate advantage of certain dormant time slots, as well as her analysis of hot new demographic groups that Sales might exploit was met with warm approval and appreciation. After the meeting, the president informed Jess what a superb team he had put together. The plan his gal had put into place, at Jess's direction he assumed, had earned Jess a promotion. From this point on, he would be the Vice President of Programming, a new position with a large raise attached to it.

Jess thanked the older man and returned to his office thrilled. He stuck his head into Hunter's office. "Can I come in?"

Hunter looked up, and waved him in. "Happy with the meeting, Jess?"

Jess nodded, entered and closed the door. As he told her the good news, she seemed less surprised than gratified.

"Well, I'm pleased for you, Jess. And you do have something to say to me, don't you? I think there are two magic words you owe me, don't you?"

He flushed. "Thank you."

She leaned back in her chair and kicked her feet up on the desk. Jess refrained from trying to look up her skirt too obviously.

"You're welcome, Jess. You're very, very welcome. Say, do you think there's some other way you might thank me?" Her leer made him uncomfortably curious.

"Well, how, Hunter? Any ideas in particular?" He wrung his hands unconsciously. What was she up to?

"Well, you know I'm a single— it's hard to get out. it's always difficult to meet the right person. You're a widower— don't you think so?"

He nodded. Running her fingers idly through her short hair, she continued.

"After all, we all have needs, don't we? For those itches We can't scratch? You're attractive— keep yourself fit, don't you Jess?"

"Y-yes. I'm in good shape."

"You can tell— you have about a thirty two waist? Not too muscular, but trim. Nice little bod on you Jess. If you let that hair grow out, you'd make a great looking chick— ever thought of it?"

He laughed first and she followed suit. "If you're paying me a compliment, I appreciate it. You're very attractive, too."

She ignored the remark. “Look Jess, why don't you really show me how appreciative you are by getting out of that ridiculous suit. Now.” She licked her lips, sending thrilling waves down his spine.

“You're very aggressive.”

“There's no point in wasting time, Jess. I usually get what I want. Come on Jess. You're wasting my time. Let's see that cute bod of yours.”

Without a second thought, he pulled off his suit. Standing in front of her, he unbuttoned his shirt, took off his shoes and socks, and finally unbuckled his pants and let them fall around his ankles. He stood before her wearing only his briefs.

She was delighted. “I love your panties, Jess! Black— very sexy! What a turn on!”

He reddened. “They're not panties— they're men's briefs!” he sputtered indignantly. He began to pull them off in embarrassment, but she forbade it.

“Call them whatever you want, babe, just keep them on! I love them on you! Now, come over here and kneel right here.” She pointed to the space under her desk as she hiked up her skirt and yanked off a pair of white cotton panties.

He smiled and obeyed.

Spreading her legs, she ran her fingers through Jess's hair. Gripping it, she pulled his face toward her lap.

“Get busy, baby. Take some dictation for Ms. Von Gilder.”

She leaned back as her boss began to service her. “Slower now. Slower. That's my pet! Good little boy, good little boy.....”

Two months later

“You're married!!?!” Andy's mouth hung open in amazement.

“That's right. You see, Hunter and I— Hunter, that's your new stepmother— were in Vegas on business and we just said, 'why not?' and did it!” Jess shook his own head at the thought of it. Hunter had been so impulsive, but then he usually did what she wanted.

A thousand questions came to mind, but Andy didn't ask any of them. He had grown used to being independent. As long as that didn't change, he didn't really care what his father did. Maybe the woman would keep him out of his hair. He was suddenly ambivalent over the whole thing.

“Great. When do I meet her?” he asked. But the question didn't need to be answered, because Hunter was already in the house. It was the same woman who had asked directions the day of the funeral!

She either didn't remember or didn't care to seem as if she did. Approaching Andy, she patted his head affectionately.

“Hi, Andy— I'll bet you know who I am already, don't you? Well, we'll have plenty of time to get acquainted. Why don't you be a good boy and fetch my bags in the car and we'll talk later.”

She didn't give him an opportunity to say no, so he began to unpack her car— the same red jaguar that had nearly run him down. It took him little time to move her things in the house. “Traveling light is my forte” she offered as way of explanation to his father, who merely sat there with a stupid grin on his face. Andy could understand why— the woman was as beautiful as he'd remembered if not more so. Over a celebration dinner at a nearby restaurant, Andy learned about Hunter's daughter Diana, who would be back from Harvard for the holidays.

“I think you'll get along quite well— Diana's really very excited about meeting you,” his new stepmother promised. He didn't respond. He was growing wary about what the new situation might mean to him.

Later that evening, Hunter made it a point to ask Jess that he leave them alone to 'have a little chat about the new arrangement.'

“Well, Andy, you must find this all a bit strange. I thought we could just talk a bit about some ground rules, OK?” She was talking to him like he was an idiot.

“First, I know you've been getting away with quite a lot, being on your own without any authority figure around. We both know you don't take your father very seriously, don't we?”

He shrugged.

Her icy eyes were intent upon his. “That's going to change now. We can't have fifteen year old boys getting into mischief, so I expect you to mind me. You will behave, Andy, or you will be punished— understand?”

He didn't look her in the eyes and didn't answer.

She coolly continued. “When I ask you a question, I expect a 'Yes, Ma'am' or a ”No, Ma'am'— or a certain bad boy will be grounded at the least.”

He glumly raised his head from his chest. “Yes, Ma'am. I understand.”

She smiled at the satisfactory answer. “Good. Now since I am your stepmother, I expect you to address me at all times in just that way. That's enough for tonight. By the way, your bedtime is now 9:30 on school nights, 10:00 on weekends, unless you are told otherwise. And it's just that time now, so go put your jammies on and get ready for bed.”

He was speechless. He couldn't believe this woman. Had she come out of the 1950s or something? Jammies? Bedtime? But it wasn't worth fighting about tonight and he was tired. He shrugged and slouched off to bed.

They kept their distance over the next few weeks. His father was never around and he wouldn't have known what to say to him about the situation anyway. Besides, Hunter, his new stepmother, seemed if less than friendly, to leave him alone most of the time. She had made him responsible for cleaning the house, which he resented but resigned himself to. The cooking instructions too were tough to accept but in exchange for mostly being left alone, he consented to cook a couple nights a week. One night

Hunter and his father had returned home to find a chicken dinner waiting for them and Hunter had been quite pleased.

As he was cleaning up in the kitchen, Hunter had come in to congratulate him. "You prepared that dish just as I told you too, Andy! Very good!" Patting him on the backside, she said something which really annoyed him. "You're a great little home-maker, Andy— you're going to make some woman a wonderful little hubby!"

He gave her a steely smile in response and she returned to her dinner. It was typical of the way she treated him— not badly, just so differently. Andy spent as much of his time away from the house as possible and he hated the prospect of the upcoming Christmas holiday. It would mean that his new stepsister Diana would be coming home and they would all be in the house together for at least three or four days. Already Hunter had informed him that he, not she, would be responsible for cooking the Christmas dinner and cleaning up.

Because he knew the house would be full, he knew he wouldn't have any chance to visit his magazine collection. Getting out of school for the holiday break, he sped home. No one was home yet and he didn't expect Hunter and his father for another three hours. He pulled out the magazines from under his mattress, smiling at the four color photos of all his lovely 'girlfriends.' As he unbuckled his pants and pulled out his member, he flipped the pages rapidly. Would he screw the blonde, the brunette? Not the redhead— any redhead reminded him of Hunter! He settled on a long haired Scandinavian platinum blond bimbo in a skimpy black satin baby doll. He was yanking her to her knees when his bedroom door flew open.

It was Diana, Hunter's daughter! She threw down her knapsack and, cupping her mouth with her hands, began laughing hysterically. Andy looked up in humiliation and covered himself with his hands. It was bad enough being caught like this, but even worse to be caught by such a great looking girl. It was in fact every teenage boy's worst nightmare. He tried to kick the numerous magazines underneath his bed, but succeeded only in spreading them all the more over the room.

Diana picked up one of the offending magazines. "Well, you must be Andrew! What a naughty boy you are to greet your older sister this way! How can you even buy these things— you're only fifteen, for God's sake!"

"I'll be sixteen in a few months!" he retorted. He felt stupid for having said it, for it only made Diana laugh all the more.

She flipped through the magazine, shaking her head. "I hate to start this way with you, but as your new older sister, I'm afraid you haven't left me with any other choice." She gathered up all the magazines. "Are these all of them?" she asked sternly.

"Y-yes, but why?"

"Never mind about that! You're to stay in your room until your stepmother gets home. She'll deal with you on this!" She slammed the door.

Andy fumed as he pulled up his pants. Who was Diana to tell him what to do? Who did she think she was? She was only three years older than he was. Now he'd have to start all over again with a new magazine collection! Stay in his room? Sure, right— like he was a little kid! He pulled on his coat and started down the stairs.

Diana caught him halfway. "What are you doing? I gave you instructions to wait in your room. Back upstairs—NOW!" she demanded.

He started to protest, but she grabbed his arm and led him back to his room. He tried to resist, but he had inherited his father's svelteness and Diana had inherited her mother's firm strength. She slammed the door angrily and he sat helplessly.

A couple hours later he heard a car engine. He looked at the window. It was Hunter's red jaguar, the one his father and she took to work. Next he could hear a discussion downstairs punctuated by female laughter.

"Andy! Down here now, boy!" It was Hunter's voice.

He shrugged. How bad could it be? His father wouldn't care. He went downstairs.

Hunter and Diana looked at him as sternly as possible, but he could tell they found the whole episode amusing. His father sat on the couch trying not to make eye contact.

"I understand you've got some interesting reading habits. Very, very naughty!" Hunter held up the magazines. "Penthouse magazine? Andy, I'm very disappointed. You were being so good. Well, I suppose there's no use putting this off. And since Diana said you disobeyed her instructions, I think she'll be the one to discipline you."

Diana grinned widely. "It'll be my pleasure, Mother." She sat down on a large chair. "Come here, Andy. Take your medicine and pull down your pants."

Andy gulped. "No way! I'm not a kid any more!" He started for the door, but Hunter's viselike grip was on him, pushing him over Diana's lap.

"Dad, don't let them do this!" Andy cried pitifully.

"Honey, don't you think that—" his father started.

Hunter wearily shook her head at her husband. "Look Jess, he really can't be doing what he's doing up there, now can he? It's just inexcusable for him to be— doing that— in front of poor Diana. Well— isn't it?"

Jess nodded slowly. "I agree, but certainly—"

Hunter cut him off again. "And hasn't he been behaving lately? Hasn't he been minding us more now that I'm here? Do you want to ruin all the progress we've made with his chores and demeanor?"

"Well, no, but darling, I just thought—" A whining note had crept into Jess's voice.

Hunter walked over to her husband and stroked his shoulder. "Honey, leave this to me, all right? When we married you promised to love and obey, right? And didn't we agree that Andy needed a strong hand— for his own good?"

Jess opened his mouth then shut it. Hunter's expression would brook no interference now.

Diana pinched Andy's cheek. "Well, if you're such a big boy, will you pull your own pants down, or will I have to?"

He fumbled with his belt and slowly pulled down his jeans, baring his white briefs.

Hunter handed Diana a rolled up copy of the unforgivable magazine. “Here— let's see if he likes this trash so much now! And make it a bare bottom spanking, Diana— I want Andy to remember this lesson.”

Diana efficiently yanked down Andy's underwear and he felt helplessly vulnerable. The rolled up Penthouse rose and fell again and again on his bare backside, quickly painting it a rosy crimson. Andy began to cry, tensing as he waited for each painful swat, then expelling a shower of tears as it made contact.

“Please stop! Pu-pu-pulease!!! I won't look at them any more! I promise!” he whined.

Diana continued the punishment. “Of course you won't! If you are EVER caught with magazines like this again, you'll get more than an old fashion spanking! And if you EVER disobey me again, you'll get more of the same— understand?”

“Yes! Yes I understand!” Andy begged.

Hunter winked at her daughter, who abruptly stopped. “All right. Go stand in the corner and think about what you've done. No, you can't pull up your jeans— just leave them off. Just stand there in your panties and behave, so that we will all be reminded of how naughty you've been.” With a final swat, she sent him to the room's far end. “Now, get!”

As he passed his father, he felt ashamed. Being spanked by an eighteen year old girl, being treated like a little kid, having his briefs called panties— he hated it. It was clear who was the real authority in this house, no matter what the reason given was. Andy glared at all of them as he passed.

Diana shook her head. “He's really a good kid, but I swear, reading that trash—”

Hunter nodded in agreement. “I know, dear. Let Jess and I talk about this whole thing alone, will you?”

The young woman stretched a bit. “Fine. I think a nap is coming on anyway.” She left the room leaving the two adults alone to talk.

Jess was upset, that much Hunter knew— which is why she had asked Diana to leave. It was still too early to openly asserted her authority over her man in front of the kids.

He had opened his mouth, but Hunter covered it with a warning finger. “Don't even start to rationalize his horrible attitude on this, dear. I won't hear it. You know he's being a brat, playing with himself up in his room with those dreadful magazines, don't you?”

She got a sullen “Yes” for her efforts and continued.

“Honey, he's an ill-behaved boy who needs a strong hand! Now I know I'm new on the scene and that he probably resents the hell out of me, but, let's face it. From what you've told me about your last marriage, things were pretty terrible, weren't they?”

The man shook his head without conviction. “Not true— it had problems, but—”

A disbelieving laugh cut him off. “Problems? Problems?!? You call what you had 'problems?' Please, spare me! You were screwing every bimbo in the office, while she was playing the martyr type in the kitchen! I'd say that's more than a problem!”

“But she was a good mother for Andy,” Jess feebly countered.

Again a laugh. “Good mother? If you call letting your kid run around like a wild animal, playing with himself all the time, collecting that trash— sure, wonderful!” She forced her derisive tone to soften. “Look, I’m not trying to beat up on the memory of Grace, honey. But was she really giving this family what it needed? Were you getting what you needed until I arrived?”

Jess considered what his wife had said. Pull the logic out of the gummy emotions and she was right. He was certainly feeling more ‘right’ about his life. Rather than try to constantly dictate and order, he was much happier to give up the facade and let Hunter run the show. It seemed better for him and it was probably better for Andy too. His son had been too wild and Grace had let him get away with too much. Still—

“Honey, I know what you’re saying, and I guess what you say is right. But is it really necessary to have Diana punish him?” Feeling more confident now, he continued. “I don’t think that was appropriate at all.” He frowned deeply to let her know he had a point.

But she wasn’t prepared in the least to give in to him. As if she had foreseen this conversation long ago, she responded with a series of precise questions.

“Do you want Andy to be happy?” she asked coolly.

“Of course!”

“Good, so do I— really I do. He has the potential to make some woman very happy someday. But he does read that trash, doesn’t he?”

“Well— yes.”

“And that trash is disrespectful of women, is it not?”

“Well— yes.”

Hunter’s argument marched on. “And these models— they are about Diana’s age, aren’t they?”

“So?”

Hunter slapped her thighs. “So, what better way to force Andy to respect women than to have one administer a well-deserved punishment, especially one that might as well be in one of those awful magazines! Don’t you think he’ll give that some thought the next time he even thinks about trying to smuggle one of those things in this house? That’s why I gave Diana permission to handle Andy when we’re out. I know I should have checked with you, but I forgot. Now that it’s happened, I hope you can see that this is all really for the best for Andy— don’t you?”

Jess could see her point. Every time he tried to argue with her, she calmly knocked down his arguments one by one. She was relying on an Ivy League education he couldn’t match.

Imperceptibly he slumped and Hunter knew she had won. She stroked his hair without saying a word. She knew then that she could have verbally whiplashed him for even questioning her judgment, but it was better this way. Better indeed to lay the

logical groundwork for her dominance that to break his will entirely. There were still things to be done.

And she appreciated his natural protectiveness for Andy. It would be important to nurture the softer feelings and emotions of both her husband and stepson. Jess was coming along nicely now. Maybe it was at last time to move into the next phase with Jess. Then perhaps she should start to handle Andy with more tender loving care.

“Jess, could you come in here, please?” The tone was strictly business and he was more alarmed than he might have been if the caller had not been Milla Tallant. The new General Manager was a no nonsense professional and she didn't demand meetings lightly. Jess gathered himself together and proceeded to her office at once.

Inside, Ms. Tallant and Hunter were chatting in a friendly way. Jess had noticed his wife's rapport with the older woman. In a way, they treated one another as sisters—Milla Tallant as the older sister who took pleasure in mentoring the somewhat younger Hunter. Not that Milla Tallant was all that older, for at forty-five she was still young for a job as big as that of General Manager.

But that's who Artemis Holdings had given the post to and that was that. Artemis had bought Liberty Communications in only the last month and had already made major changes in staffing, first getting rid of all the old management and replacing them with hand-picked Artemis personnel. At first it had been strange that all the Artemis appointees were women, but Hunter had explained that Artemis had a very aggressive affirmative action program. Jess had wondered just how aggressive that policy was, because in a month this was the first time he had been summoned to a meeting of any kind with his new boss. He was afraid he was going to find out now.

Hunter smiled at him and sat down in the only other chair in the room. Ms. Tallant surveyed him coolly through her expensive tortoise shell glasses. It was obvious she was used to running meetings on her terms and she let Jess fidget nervously as he stood before her, feeling like a schoolboy being scolded.

“Well, Jess, I guess we had better cut to the chase, should we not?” she informed him. As he fumbled for an appropriate response, she continued. “From what I've determined, it's really Ms. Van Gilder here who should be the Vice President of Programming, not you. Is that right? Let's be candid— I know that you're Hunter's husband, but I can't let that influence me when it comes to performance and Hunter and I have discussed this already. She agrees and has been forthcoming about all the successes she's had— and you've taken credit for. Would you like to fill in the details?”

Jess was horrified that his wife would do such a thing and glared at her. But the glare was returned with a fiercer glare and his eyes sunk to the floor.

“Go on, honey— tell your boss just what has been going on here,” Hunter ordered. “We both know you're not cut out for this— the job's just too big for you, isn't it?”

He started to respond, but remained silent. He couldn't win. Hunter, for whatever reason, had convinced Ms. Tallant that he was a phony in over his head. He had no idea why, but he had to agree— there was no choice. His shoulders slumped.