

St. Modestine's School for Girls



Susan Hulbert

An "Adult TV" Novel



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Saint Modestine's School for Girls

By Susan Hulbert

“It’s good of you to agree to this meeting, Commissioner.” The Bishop was dressed like a hiker, with a backpack and sturdy boots.

“I confess to being intrigued, My Lord Bishop. It’s not every day that I’m asked to meet someone like you.” Commissioner “Brad ” Bradley was dressed similarly at the Bishop’s insistence.

“I’m sorry. I had to insist on casual dress and somewhere neutral where neither of us would be likely to be recognised. And you should call me Bishop. We don’t need formality here.”

“I guess this is a confidential matter.”

“It is. Since we’re here beside this lovely river, I suggest we walk along the first trail.” The Bishop looked over his shoulder. “No one must know anything about this meeting.”

“Are you afraid of something?” Brad asked as the Bishop scanned their surroundings once again.

“I really am paranoid, aren’t I, but one reads so much about long range microphones and cameras with long lenses.”

“There are only our cars on the parking lot and we’re going into rather dense woodland, so long lenses wouldn’t be of much use.” Brad waited as the Bishop looked round again.

“Long range microphones wouldn’t be too much good with the noise of the water rushing beside us either.”

They walked in silence for a minute or two.

“Why don’t you tell me about whatever’s troubling you?” Brad asked, then laughed. “I get the feeling that you should be saying that to me?”

The Bishop looked at him, then, realising that it was a joke, smiled in agreement.

“I’ve got a real problem and I wanted to ask if you could help,” the Bishop said in a soft voice, as if still afraid of eavesdroppers. “You know that my church has had some unfortunate scandals recently.”

“I do and I congratulate you on the way you’ve acted,” Brad replied. “It can’t have been easy to provide evidence and see the reputation of the church being shredded in public.”

“It wasn’t, that’s why I’m talking to you today.” The Bishop’s voice dropped even lower. “I think that there’s another area of sin which I need to root out, once and for all.”

“I’ll certainly help all I can but you’re going to have to explain.”

“No one must know,” the Bishop said. “It must never become public knowledge, not after all we’ve been through.”

“I can’t promise that we can ignore serious criminal behaviour.”

“I know and that may be my problem later on but I have to do something.”

“Do you want to tell me now, or shall we meet again?” Brad asked. “If we seem to be regular friends, say hiking companions, like today, we could keep in touch more easily.”

“I think that’s a great idea,” the Bishop said thoughtfully. “I could telephone your office and ask if you’re free for a walk at irregular intervals and you could do the same.”

“Let’s choose somewhere like this where we’re relatively concealed from prying eyes and there’s a lot of background noise. That should help you to talk more freely.”

Next week, they met again.

“I’m so glad we’ve had this meeting,” the Bishop said. “I’ve been wrestling with my conscience for weeks wondering how to approach you and now you’ve made it easy.”

They walked companionably for another half hour, climbing steadily as the path rose from the river and followed a tributary into the hills. Trees turned to scrubland and then there was only grass and wildflowers as they approached a cairn at the summit.

They sat on the grass and each took a flask and a sandwich from their backpacks.

“I think someone at Saint Modestine’s School for Girls is not as holy as he should be,” the Bishop said suddenly, as if something had told him to reveal his purpose. “It started with a whisper and then a rumour. It was as if someone wanted me to know.”

“Being not as holy as he should be isn’t a criminal offence.” Brad poured from his flask.

“It’s more than that,” the Bishop sighed. “I think he’s been putting some of the girls from the school into the hands of some nasty men. They’ve been cajoled and maybe even bribed.”

“Foolish virgins?” Brad asked. “Are they under age?”

“I get the biblical allusion,” the Bishop smiled grimly. “I’m not sure that they are. I don’t think so, although it’s possible. It’s more than that. This could seriously damage people’s faith in my church.”

“Can’t you simply get rid of all the people you suspect?”

“Not easily, unless I have some proof of serious wrongdoing,” the Bishop replied. “My investigations haven’t found anything, but the rumours persist. Maybe I haven’t got access to subtle investigators like a Police Commissioner?”

“And that’s where I come in?” Brad asked. “I’m not sure what you want me to do and how you want me to do it. A full investigation would hit the press as soon as it starts.”

“I really was hoping for something more subtle.” The Bishop’s eyes almost pleaded for an answer.

“Leave it with me; I’ll try to come up with a strategy,” Brad said. “We’ll go hiking again soon. I’d like a few more details from you though, if you can get something without alerting your staff.”

Brad had been thinking about the Bishop’s dilemma for a few days, when he spoke to him again. This time they hiked on the other side of the river and parked in different car parks.

“I’m going to have to get someone else to deal with things,” he told the Bishop. “If I do it personally, questions are going to be asked and we don’t want that.”

“I understand,” the Bishop replied. “Please do your best to shield my church.”

“I’ll do my best.” Brad gasped a little as they climbed up the scree towards the head of a waterfall.

“I’ve decided that I need someone to take matters forward; may I ask then to contact you personally?”

“You may give them my private number.” The Bishop paused to think about it. “We could meet privately, like this.”

“I have in mind a woman investigator.”

“That will be fine as long as I don’t get in trouble for violating my vows of celibacy.”

“I think that when you meet her, you’ll be reassured on that one,” Brad laughed. “She’s reliable and discreet. I’ll make sure she has the funding to take matters through.”

“In that case, I look forward to meeting her.”

“Can you get Inspector Joy Barton for me?” Brad called to his personal assistant as soon as he got back to his office. “Tell her to get here as soon as she can.”

“The Commissioner was very vague about your problems.” Joy met the Bishop at the same riverwalk a few days later. She was large and lumpy in her hiking gear, florid faced, with tufty hair sticking untidily around her knitted hat.

“I have a real problem,” he said, feeling he could open up to her. “I need help to get real evidence on abuse at St Modestine.”

“That’s a pretty exclusive school for girls, isn’t it?”

“You know it?”

“I know of it,” Joy said. “I went there some years ago when some silver went missing but I can’t pretend I know much more.”

“I suspect that two or more of my staff have been involved in matters which could cause serious embarrassment.”

“You’ll have to tell me what you know.”

“I understand but it’s so painful.”

The Bishop led her to sit on a rock and took out his flask. He poured two cups and handed her one. He looked round as if checking that there were no eavesdroppers again.

“I think they’re encouraging some of the older girls to attend parties, where men, old enough to know better, pay them for services.”

“Don’t the girls complain?”

“Oh no; sadly they seem to be chosen for their appetite for money,” he continued. “When I have thought that there may be evidence forthcoming, I have been disappointed and word of my enquiry has been relayed to those whom I suspect.”

“But I’m guessing that they didn’t resign.”

“No, they’re still very much there.” He paused again. “I did speak to the mother of one girl who wanted to complain. It was some months after her daughter had left the school and was waiting to go to university.”

“Would she give evidence?”

“Not at all.” The Bishop turned as if to admire the view. “She told me that if she complained, her daughter would be singled out and she didn’t want that.”

“Understandable I suppose, but you said she’s left the school.”

“They promised her daughter would receive an excellent reference if she kept quiet and the opposite if she didn’t. Her child would be labelled an immature troublemaker and liar. You can guess which path she chose.”

“But she told you.”

“In confidence, and I fear I may be breaking her confidence by telling you this.”

“You haven’t,” Joy replied. “You’ve not told me who she is and I’m not going to involve her anyway.”

“Of course you’re right, and I know that I may have to be more explicit as your investigation makes progress.”

“I’ll try not to be intrusive,” Joy paused. “Are there no boys at the school?”

“Of course, we have adopted modern standards but the boys are day pupils and rarely have social contact with the girls outside tuition hours. We only have girls as boarders.”

“That’s a pity.,’ Joy said. “I was thinking that someone inside the place would be good.”

“That’s an excellent idea.” The Bishop thought. “But the women we employ aren’t there full-time. Their work hours rotate and many are part-time workers.”

“There’s something I do not understand.” Joy looked at the Bishop, waiting for him to explain more.

“I think some of the staff members are facilitators, rather than active participants. They manage the girls and they are all girls who are involved, no boys. The girls are allowed off campus and take advantage of that permission but we don’t know much more than that.”

“Difficult,” Joy muttered.

“Surely you have women investigators.”

“We do but this is going to require a long term placement. I can’t think of anyone skilled enough or one who’d be willing or able to be away from their own life for what may be a few months.”

“I can understand that,” the Bishop replied. “They may have families or elderly parents to look after.”

“And there’s a problem of appearance,” Joy thought out loud. “Ideally we need a spy in that group of girls and I can’t think that any of our female investigators would pass as a teenage girl.”

"I think we should hike back now." The Bishop stood. "There must be some way of getting an observer in there."

"I agree that's the best way," Joy said. "It's the who and how that we need to get right."

"We're safe to talk in my office." Brad indicated to Joy which seat she should take. "I had it swept for all kinds of bugs and listening devices yesterday."

"I'm not sure about my status in this investigation," Joy said. "Forgive me, sir, but my superiors are starting to ask questions."

"I'll have you drafted to my personal staff," Brad said. "I want you to give full-time attention to the Bishop's matter."

"I think the way forward is to find some way of getting inside the school without arousing suspicion."

"I know that's the best way but there's a problem when the group we have to investigate are teenage girls. Perhaps it would be easier to infiltrate the Mafia?"

"I agree but there may be a way," Joy said. "It will need you to give me authority to work entirely independently. If anyone connected to the school gets a hint of what I'm about to suggest, it could close the whole project."

"I can give that authority but I need some details."

"I don't have a female member of staff who could do it," Joy said, watching the disappointment on Brad's face. "The Bishop has a place in the college to give at his discretion. He suggests that as a way in. But I told the Bishop there's no one who could be away from home and family for an extended period, even if they could look the part."

"From the bits I know, the Bishop said the target group was late teenage girls," Brad replied.

“I may have a plan but it’s going to need you to authorise it.” Joy opened her document case and pulled out a folder. “It’s not going to be cheap.”

“Assume that I’ll approve the budget and tell me about it.”

“Look at this guy.” Joy slid a photo across the desk.

“Okay, it’s a recruit. That much I can tell. He looks too young to join the force and if we still had any physical standards, he’d never have gotten in.”

“I agree; in an earlier age, he would have been far too small,” Joy said. “He’s only five foot four inches tall and the slimmest recruit that our uniform people have ever had to fit.”

“And you know this how?” Brad’s face showed some doubt.

“I had a drink with an old friend who’s an instructor. “This guy came up in a general conversation. I didn’t say a word out of place.”

“I don’t get it.”

“There’s a lot to work out but he’s a black belt in one of the martial arts and has a good, if not spectacular, education.”

“But boys are excluded from this scandal as far as we know.”

“Exactly, and that’s where this needs secrecy and money...” Joy hesitated.

“Come on, tell me. I don’t care how sketchy the plan is.”

“I think that with a bit of investment and a lot of training, he could become my daughter and a seventeen-year-old student in Saint Modestine’s School for Girls; a girl student.”

“That’s a lot to take in.” Brad rubbed his brow. “Could it work?”

“I think it’s the best shot we have. His instructors have reported that he’s keen and adaptable. We can only put it to him.”

“Okay.” Brad thought and wrote something on a piece of notepaper. “Here’s my personal authority to do whatever you think fit.”

“The first thing I need to do is to disappear and re-invent myself,” Joy said.

“But you’re going to run this.”

“I know but I need a home for my new daughter and it’s really important that no one could trace it back to this office,” Joy said.

“Good thinking,” Brad agreed. “You report only to me and if it all goes wrong, it’s not traceable back to this office.”

“I was thinking more about protecting us from leaks rather than you from blame,” Joy said. “But I guess it’s the same thing.”

“I’ll arrange an apartment,” Brad said. “And a pool car.”

“That’s no good, it could be traced back and they all look the same anyway. Send me the money and I’ll arrange an apartment and lease a car.” Joy replied, “I’ll need money to live like I’m a wealthy single parent of a teenager in an independent school.”

“Anything else?” Brad smiled at her thoroughness.

“My daughter will be expensive. She’ll need clothes, of course, and all the accoutrements that go with her being a normal and over-acquisitive teenage girl.”

“So if I have him posted to my office from training, he could report to you.”

“Yes but we can’t order him into this job.”

“Of course and it must never ever leak out.”

“Unless it’s a successful operation.” Joy smiled at Brad.

“How long before you could get started?”

“I could start tomorrow if you have the funding,” Joy said. But I think we should wait until he’s trained and posted to your office before we do anything more. He needs to be given a choice.”

“If he agrees?”

“We should aim for the beginning of the next school year. There’s a lot of training between the police college and girls school and that may not be quick or easy.”

“And the costs?” Brad said. “I think I’ll have to speak to the Bishop to ask if he’s got any funding available.”

“For goodness sake, don’t tell him why,” Joy said. “You can ask him to reserve the place but say it’s for an old friend’s daughter. I don’t want to risk any association with you or the Bishop outside these four walls.”

“This is looking to be expensive.”

“If you want it done properly, I can’t think of another way forward.”

“Sadly I can’t either,” Brad sighed. “I don’t think we can limit the costs without failing to do the thing properly.”

“The training costs won’t be small, depending upon how far he’s willing to go with his impersonation.”

“How far?”

“How much of a girl he’s willing to be.”

“You want me to do what?” Carson West wondered why he was being posted to the Commissioner’s office as a new recruit. He’d reported, then been whisked off in a private car to an anonymous apartment in a block outside town.

If that wasn't enough, changing out of his neatly pressed uniform into oversized sports clothes in the back of the car made it all seem weird. The car dropped him off at the entrance where he was instructed not to speak to anyone but to go at once to meet his new boss.

"Come in, Carson." Joy opened the door almost the second he knocked. "I don't know how to explain this gently but you've been selected to be an undercover officer."

"Is that because I'm small and expendable?"

"It's certainly because of your size," Joy explained. "But there's no one else on the force that has any chance of completing this mission."

"Do I get to lock up the bad guys?"

"Maybe, but not for some time." Joy's smile was infectious. "The way you've been recruited is a little unusual but there's a serious purpose. If you accept the mission, your life may change in ways we can't predict."

"Mystery upon mystery." Carson didn't know what to say.

"You'll be undercover, living completely in the role created for you. You'll be on your own and report only to me."

"No contact with my old friends and family?"

"None whatever," Joy replied. "I saw your file though; it doesn't list any family or next of kin."

"I don't really have any."

"No girlfriends or boyfriends?"

"Neither to speak of," Carson replied. "I've dated several girls but I guess that they don't like that they're usually a head taller than me."

"I guess they don't know what they're missing." Joy smiled at him. It wasn't reassuring.

“I’m going to give you some details of what’s required of you and in doing that, I have to swear you to complete secrecy.”

“I’ll swear to that,” Carson replied.

“The Commissioner told me to tell you that if a whisper of this ever gets out, your future career will be as the officer in charge of washing traffic cones, in the Department of Washing Traffic Cones and the staff will be one person.”

“I didn’t know we had anyone to wash traffic cones,” Carson said.

“We don’t unless this gets blown.”

“I think you’d better accept that I’m sworn to secrecy,” Carson replied. “I’m prepared for undercover work and I’m sure I can survive under cover for a substantial period.”

“I accept that.” Joy took a folder from her document case. “Working under cover is hard work. Any slip and you could be in trouble and the whole project can be wasted.”

“I think I’m prepared.”

“Okay, here’s the deal.” Joy opened her folder. “You’ve heard of Saint Modestine’s School for Girls; they take a few boys as day pupils but it’s mainly for girls from wealthy families and they’re all boarders.”

“I know where it is,” Carson replied. “You can’t miss the girls. They wear that old fashioned girls’ school uniform.”

“Did you ever have any contact with the school; any old girlfriends, or perhaps you knew one of the boys?”

“No; it’s a place for rich kids, not people like me.”

“The Bishop in charge of the school has approached the Commissioner for help,” Joy continued. “He’s afraid that some of his trusted staff are abusing their position.”

“So he could just sack them, he doesn’t need much evidence to stop that.”

“It’s a bit more sensitive. He wants to clean up the school and doesn’t want any scandal.”

“So why does he need to involve us?”

“If you’ll let me finish, I’ll explain. It’s all to be kept as quiet as we can.”

Carson blushed at the rebuke. “I should have guessed.”

“He fears that some of the older girls are being... used, for want of a better word. They’re being paid to attend parties for older men; men old enough to be their fathers or grandfathers.”

“Like high-class call girls?”

“The Bishop thinks that there’s some sexual activity involved, but doesn’t know if it’s full sex. Whatever it is, it appears to be arranged by some of the school staff and they are paid for their services, with more money being distributed amongst the girls involved.”

“Have none of the girls complained?” Carson asked. “What about their parents?”

“The Bishop has rumours of complaints but none have been pursued. He thinks the parents are being offered the option of seeing their daughters get glowing academic references from Saint Modestine’s or having the reputation of one who was expelled for lewd behaviour. That’s a euphemism, by the way.”

“So they shut up.” Carson saw the point. “Not much of a case unless there was force involved and you don’t seem to be saying that there was any coercion.”

“The girls were simply led on. It could be their own inclination or simply to get more money than their allowance,” Joy said. “Remember that Saint Modestine’s is quite strict. The girls have quite an early curfew and are checked in and out of the place unless some members of the staff are with them.”

“So how are they getting out to these parties?”

“The Bishop thinks that they’re taken out in the school’s bus, as if it was an ordinary organised trip. Only certain members of staff are involved and such enquiries as the Bishop has been able to make have been negative.”

“Hasn’t that made them give up?”

“Maybe for a while but they’ve got their confidence back,” Joy said. “The Commissioner has agreed to help.”

“So where do I come in?”

“We want you to go undercover as a pupil in the school,” Joy said. “I’ll be your mother and your contact. We’ll have an apparently good lifestyle and a background that should withstand any checks.”

“But the boys are only day pupils.”

“I know; that’s why we want you to go as a girl pupil, specifically a seventeen-year-old girl pupil.” Joy paused to watch as her words sunk in.

“Do I look like a seventeen-year-old girl?” Carson couldn’t think what to say.

“Probably not but with some contacts that the Commissioner has, you could be made to look like one,” Joy replied.

“But I don’t know how to behave like one.”

“I’m sure that’s only a matter of study and application,” Joy said, wondering herself if that could be true.

“When do I have to decide?” Carson shook his head as if in disbelief.

“Right now, I’m afraid,” Joy said. “You’ll need some time to get prepared and into character. We’ve provi-

sionally registered you as a pupil from the start of next term.”

Carson took a deep breath and looked skywards. “Okay, I’ll do it,” he said. “One condition, if I’m allowed to ask for conditions.”

“What would that be?” Joy asked.

“If I’m to do this and be successful, you’ve got to allow me some discretion in all things.”

“What things?”

“I don’t know but there’ll be times when I’ll know that I have to do something or ask for something that you haven’t thought of.”

“I think I understand.” Joy nodded. “That’s entirely reasonable. Come to me with anything you want to ask.”

“When do you start being my mother?” Carson grinned, and then they both laughed.

“Right now,” Joy said. “I’ll take you to your new home.”

“I’ve brought nothing with me.” Carson looked round the huge family room of their temporary home.

“You weren’t meant to bring anything,” Joy said. “In fact, I want everything you’re wearing and everything you’re carrying in this bag. It’s going to be destroyed so that there’s nothing lying around to connect you with your real identity.”

Carson looked at her and then understood. “I guess that makes sense.”

“Your bedroom is the first door through there. You’ll find clothes in the dressing room.” Joy pointed where he should go. “Everything should fit. It’s going to feel strange, but don’t worry, there’s only you and I here.”

Ten minutes later, Carson re-appeared. He was dressed in skinny jeans and a tight top which skimmed his waist. He had white canvas slip on shoes.

“Here’s everything I had.” He handed the bag to Joy. “I’ve only kept the cash from my wallet. Do you want my mobile phone as well?”

“Everything,” Joy said. “Cash is okay, but nothing else.”

Carson blushed and looked away as he dropped his phone into the bag. “I guess its goodbye to all my old girlfriends.”

“Were there a lot?”

“Not this last six months while I’ve been in training,” he replied. “And before you ask, no boyfriends either.”

“I’ve arranged for us to go to a private clinic as soon as we can,” Joy announced. “The Bishop has given me the contact, so we must assume it’s safe.”

“What do we need a clinic for?”

“They’re going to help us get you to pass as a seventeen-year-old girl,” Joy said. “Don’t ask me the details, but they deal with gender issues all the time.”

“Can I keep my name?” he asked.

“You can be Carson; it’s an unusual name but I’ve heard it for both boys and girls,” Joy said. “From now on I’m Mom or Mummy. I’m listed as Mrs White on everything and I’ll get your identity documents made out as Carson White.”

“What about Mr White?”

“He died in Iraq,” Joy said. “There’s a paper trail if anyone ever wants to check.”

“Is that for real?”

“It was an old boyfriend,” Joy said, “But we weren’t together for a long time before he was killed. I’ve a few

calls to make so why don't you settle into your room and I'll call you when dinner's ready."

"Okay Mom," Carson said with a huge grin on his face.

"I thought I'd dress for dinner." Carson re-appeared when Joy called.

"That's amazing." Joy looked him up and down. "If I didn't know better, I'd say you've been a girl before."

"I haven't," he replied. "I did do some dancing when I was younger; modern and tap with a little ballet but I was always too short for most of the parts. It did teach me a bit about stage makeup though."

"That's not stage makeup." Joy looked at him.

"It's from a YouTube video," Carson said. "I know the basics and there's a laptop in there, so I used it. I thought you'd want me to get into character as soon as possible."

"Well, I certainly approve."

"It's a strange sensation, wearing a dress." Carson said. "I love feel of it, the tight bodice and the short sleeves; the way the skirt flares when I move."

"It really looks good."

"I used the full range of lingerie too."

"How did you know about that?"

"Come on," Carson laughed. "The porn industry is all around the training school. You should take a walk round the students' bedrooms. The posters in some would make your eyes water."

"But it's all in the best possible taste," Joy asked.

"There's nothing that the commandant there could censor, if that's what you mean. They're scantily clad



is what you'd say. Nothing obscene at all but lingerie was on display for all to see."

"So that was your guide?"

"I got a little help from the internet as well." Carson twirled round, making his skirt flare out."

"Stockings and a garter belt." Joy noticed. "Most girls would choose tights."

"Maybe I'm not like most girls," Carson laughed. "It's not an unpleasant sensation, although I'm not sure about higher heels."

"Those look to be about two inches," Joy said. "I don't want you to risk spraining your ankle or worse. We do have a tight schedule to keep."

"I'm not sure about these breast pads though. I fastened the bra really tightly but they do feel insecure."

"That could be a problem in a girls' school." Joy's face looked seriously at him.

"It could be a bigger problem if I'm going to be in an all-girl environment," Carson replied. "I used to stay with my aunt and uncle. My girl cousins and their friends were always comparing their boobs."

"I guess they were at that age."

"Yes, the age I'm supposed to be, seventeen."

"I don't think we've thought that one through properly," Joy said. "I'll have to think seriously about it."

"Is the makeup okay?" Carson said.

"I think it's a good attempt," Joy said. "I don't really know what's fashion for a girl of your age but dark eyes and pale lips are a pretty safe option."

"You should see some of the frights on the videos," Carson laughed. "But there are lots of really pretty ones. I guess I'll have to practise."