

The Emancipation of Agnes

Part 1



Dulci Daily

An "Adult TV" Novel

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Part One

**by Dulci Daily
RP Classic Edition**

Chapter 1

“My dear Lady Blowboys!” exclaimed my guardian, Lady Julia Troveroy, in her most nearly cordial tone of voice. “How glad I am to see you back from town! Pray do come in and commiserate with me upon the evil state into which England is daily descending. I can hardly even bear to read the news of late. I am everlastingly grateful to dear Mr. Mortison for my daily doses of laudanum, which alone enable my poor nerves to face the future with relative equanimity.”

“There is no need of laudanum for me,” said Lady Augusta Blowboys, one of the leading ladies of the county and as close to a dear friend as Lady Julia could boast, “but there is great need of commiseration, indeed—and, I dare say, of outrage as well!” Lady Augusta’s stout, stern face brushed past me without a glance. In all my fifteen years at Troveroy Park—ever since I had been brought here at the age of three, in the fateful year of our Lord 1815, to be given the Troveroy name and brought up by Sir Arthur and Lady Julia—I had seen Lady Augusta many times, but I had never seen her smile.

We seated ourselves in the sitting-room. “Katharine, bring some tea and cakes,” Lady Julia directed our housemaid, the only servant we could any longer afford—and almost my only dear friend in all the world.

“Yes, Your Ladyship,” said Katharine, in her usual excellent imitation of the King’s English, without a hint of the lovely smile she could show to me alone. Lady Julia had given strict orders: there must be no suggestion that she had been forced to hire an Irish servant, who would have been called Kathleen in her native land, for want of a proper English girl willing to meet Lady Julia’s standards of high performance and low pay. In England, at least in our house, I alone called her Kathleen, and only when Lady Julia could not hear.

“We shall not, I think, speak today of matters of little consequence,” Lady Julia declared, “when so much of great consequence is utterly dreadful, as I expect that you have now observed.”

“I have seen the abomination with my own eyes!” Lady Augusta affirmed. “Would God I had been taken from this world before my time, rather than

lived to see a man so foolish, incompetent, and wrong-headed as the Duke of Clarence ascend to the throne! Lord Blowboys refuses to go up to town until he must, at the opening of Parliament, for he cannot forget that the Duke of Clarence opposed his positions in the House of Lords at every turn, and on the flimsiest grounds. I, however, felt that I must see for myself whether the barely believable reports of our new King's vulgar speech and conduct were true. They are."

"I am utterly shocked to hear it—though not surprised," said Lady Julia.

"You know how I detested George IV, both as Prince Regent and as King," Lady Augusta went on, "but he had at least some royal dignity on certain occasions. His brother William has none—as anyone could easily have predicted from his career as Duke of Clarence, before his revolting metamorphosis into His Majesty King William IV. The man goes about making the most astounding and ridiculous speeches at any length he pleases, to anyone who will listen, always praising his appallingly plain, strait-laced, ill-dressed wife to the skies on every occasion—and the unwashed masses go utterly wild in applauding him!"

"I had never thought," said Lady Julia, "that I should have preferred to be the wife of a simple country knight, rather than a great lady such as yourself, but now I see that I have one advantage at least. I shall not, I believe, have the honour of attending the coronation." Lady Julia, to be sure, did not *spit* when speaking—but she seemed to be coming as close to it as she dared.

Lady Augusta was not to be outdone in venom. "You will have quite as much the *honour* of it as Lord

Blowboys and I, who will attend,” she said, “and you will have considerably *more* the *pleasure!* I predict that King William will treat the coronation, as he treats much else, entirely as a cheap joke—which is only to be expected, from an old Navy man whose character is not superior to that of any other loathsome tar!”

Lady Julia lowered her voice to her customary scandal-mongering tone. “I have read in the news,” she said, “though I can scarcely credit it—even of *him*—that our new King, shortly after his accession, was actually seen permitting certain ladies of the night to kiss him in public view.”

“My dear Lady Troveroy, let us not indulge in euphemisms!” Lady Augusta cried. “Street-walkers! Strumpets! Harlots of the lowest sort! And what would you expect of a man who flaunted his evil life, with a woman not his wife and his ten bastard children, for twenty years?”

“Nothing more than that,” said Lady Julia. “But perhaps, as a simple country knight’s wife, I may be permitted to turn my mind away from great affairs of state—such as they are—and toward a matter of more local importance. I have set the date of Agnes’s coming out.”

Lady Augusta looked at me and raised her eyebrows. “Indeed, so soon!” she said with a critical stare. “She was rather a late bloomer, was she not? She has only lately attained a suitable height for a full-grown woman—and her figure, I think, has still rather little consequence!”

I blushed and cast my eyes down. Even with some gentle puffery beneath the aging, out-of-style, high-waisted muslin gown I was wearing, my bos-

oms appeared quite small for those of a full-grown woman. They were even smaller than they seemed, but Lady Augusta would never know how small they really were. Much less would she ever know why they were so small; she would never know my secret.

“It has indeed,” Lady Julia admitted, “but some men of quality, I believe, rather favour a young lady with a certain petiteness and delicacy of figure. And her face and hair are remarkably pretty. Do not you think so?”

Lady Augusta scrutinized my plump, ruddy face and my curly blond hair. “Quite tolerably pretty, indeed,” she admitted. “The eyes are the colour of a fair blue sky; the nose a bit snub, but not too much so; the lips a bit too full, but still quite lovely in form and colour; the face overall, plump, but no more so than is pleasing. With the halo of golden hair, her face looks quite innocent and angelic. There are men, I dare say, who would set sail to make that face their own.”

“My dear Lady Augusta,” Lady Julia said, “I know what a critic you are of beauty, and this is rare praise! Agnes, surely you are most grateful to Lady Augusta for the high honour she has shown you!”

I knew I must seem sincerely grateful, and I did my best. “I am indeed, Your Ladyship,” I said, with as sweet a smile as I could muster. “This is—er—high praise indeed. I can only hope and dream that—ah, a *suitable gentleman* might see even half as much beauty in me as you have done.”

“Well said, Agnes!” Lady Julia commended me. “I am fully confident that, after you have come out, a highly suitable gentleman will see quite as much

beauty in you as Lady Augusta has done, and even more!”

I could not be so confident of that as Lady Julia. I could be fully confident only that my beauty was already of great interest to a highly *unsuitable* nobleman: Lady Augusta’s husband, the infamous rake Rodney Rogerson, whom George IV had elevated to the peerage as Lord Blowboys.

I had often blushed, and seen Lord Blowboys smile lewdly at my blush, when I saw him staring at my little bosoms and gazing upon my loveliness. I knew, of course, that his name did not mean what it might seem to mean: it had nothing to do with *boys*, much less with *blowing*. Rather, it came from the old French “Bleau Bois,” a name that had been in England (though not borne by Lord Blowboys’ ancestors) since the time of William the Conqueror. Still, I had excellent reason to fear that Lord Blowboys’ lascivious interest in me would not disappear even if he knew my secret: that I had been born, not as a girl, but as a boy.

Lady Augusta soon departed, and the rest of the day passed in sad, uneventful silence until after supper. I played on the instrument for a little while; I looked through the almost endless store of historical and literary works in Sir Arthur’s library; I ate supper in near silence with Lady Julia. Then I caught a few pleasant moments of friendly chatter with Kathleen in the kitchen—and gloom gave way to gladness.

“I dare say your coming-out gown is as lovely as any you could find in London or Paris, Miss Agnes,” Kathleen told me with an admiring smile. “I’ve been

working on it in every spare moment, and now it's ready for you to try on. There, I've finished the dishes; is now the time?"

"Oh, yes! I'd love to try it on!" Kathleen was an expert seamstress; I was sure her high opinion of the gown would be matched by my own.

"The gentlemen will surely be saying that *you're* as lovely as any *lady* in London or Paris, too," Kathleen added. She surely thought so herself, to judge from her devoted gaze upon my face.

"That will be very pleasant, no doubt," I responded, "so long as they do *not* wish me to imitate the *vices* that may be found among the lovely ladies of London—and I do not wish to speak of the lovely ladies of *Paris!*"

Kathleen laughed. "No one, I'm sure, will expect you to imitate *them*," she assured me, "and least of all will I."

I looked at her laughing blue eyes, her plain but not unpleasing freckled face, her golden-brown hair, her tall thin form; I took comfort from the sight, and loved her dearly, as I had done ever since I was a child of eight and she was a new housemaid of fourteen. It was highly improper, I knew, to feel such ardent affection for a mere servant as I had long felt for Kathleen, my dearest friend by far—but I feared my heart would burst if I did not speak of it at last.

"Dear Kathleen," I ventured to say, though awkwardly, "I am most grateful for your confidence—and I have as much confidence in *you* as you in me. I dare say I might search through all the gentlemen in England, to say nothing of France, and

hardly find one as worthy of my love and admiration as *you*.”

Kathleen gazed at me in astonished silence. I saw a tear forming in her eye, and then another. “Well, then,” she slowly said at last, “if that be so—and if ever you do find a gentleman so worthy as you think me, God knows why—then you must marry him, and *only* him. Will you promise me that, Miss Agnes?”

“Oh, yes!” I assured her.

“May God bless you more abundantly than you can dream!” said Kathleen, with several streams of tears now running down her face. “And please promise me one thing more, Miss Agnes. Whomever you marry, wherever you go, even to the ends of the earth—will you take me with you as your servant?”

“Oh, Kathleen!” I knew I would weep as she was weeping, and be glad of every tear. “Not only as my servant, but as my dearest friend!”

Quickly I glanced about to ensure that Lady Julia would not see what I would do now. I embraced Kathleen closely, and I felt her strong arms embracing me tightly in return.

“It’s the loveliest gown I’ve ever seen—or at least the loveliest in the latest style,” I told Kathleen honestly. Gazing upon myself in the looking-glass within my bedchamber, I could hardly have taken my eyes off my gown if I had wished, and I did *not* wish.

The gown was pure white, with twin pink roses not far above my bosoms. The cleft between my bosoms, enhanced by puffery and made more prominent by my short but rather strict corset, shyly

peeked out above the bottom of the low, shallow V-line that bared almost all above my bosoms up to my neck. The sleeves were large, though not so gigantic as some I had recently seen on ladies of fashion. The waist was low, in the modern style, but the skirt was as long as skirts had been in Regency times, and rather fuller. My secret was safe beneath it.

“It needs no alteration, then, do you think?” Kathleen asked with a critical eye.

“Oh, no! It’s perfect! Thank you for all your work on it!” Lady Julia had informed me long ago that it was most improper to thank servants for doing their duty, but now I did not care.

“I thought it was the least I could do,” Kathleen said. She was blushing—but not, I thought, at the impropriety. “I’m sure the gentlemen will be dismayed at how few are the opportunities to dance with you, and how quickly the evening goes by, on the night of the ball.”

“I only wish it would be proper to dance with *you* at the ball,” I told her truthfully. “Shall we practice the waltz again?”

“Oh, certainly, if you wish.” I could see her blushing harder at the thought, and at my eagerness to dance with her.

We danced, though the only music came from Kathleen’s sweet, high voice. She played the part of the man, of course—quite fittingly, for she was several inches taller than I—and I followed her lead as best I could. I could see why the waltz was still thought scandalous by some, for my heart and my fancies were strongly affected when Kathleen clasped me close to her. I almost began to wish that

Kathleen were really a man, and a gentleman, not a mere servant girl—so that I could marry her, and live with her, and love her forever as I loved her now.

Too soon Kathleen had vanished, and I was alone. Away from her arms, I submitted again to reason and propriety, as I had so long done before. I must prepare myself for life with a respectable gentleman, not a servant girl. I had even dared to select the gentleman, and to cherish good hope that he would select me too.

All alone, in the dim light of my bedchamber, I let my hair down and began to undress for bed. Ever since I had been old enough to dress myself, I had always dressed and undressed alone—and Lady Julia alone had always dressed and undressed me before then. She had insisted on it—for she knew of my secret, which I was now to reveal to myself alone as I did each night.

Gentle reader, I beg of you, do not think ill of me if I here reveal too much to you. I have no wish to imitate the racy, revolting qualities of ill-bred French authors and their degraded English ilk. If I speak more frankly than perhaps I ought, it is only in hope that somehow, somewhere, my words might touch—and even help to heal—a kindred heart unknown.

I removed my resplendent ball-gown, and then my low-necked, pure white petticoat. My corset followed as soon as possible; I detested corsets, the more since fashion nowadays seemed to decree that they must become tighter every year.