

# PAINTED FACE

*By Jane Barrett*



*ILLUSTRATED BY BRIAN DUKEHART*

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AN 'ADULT TV' NOVEL

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By Jane Barrett

### Chapter One.

#### **A shadow in the garden.**

Christopher Lynn never knew what made him spy on his sister. He was sixteen the first time it happened, the curtains in her room were ajar and through the gap he saw her begin to remove her sweater. Christopher knew he should have turned away but he didn't. Beth was four years older than he and was a very pretty girl.

That evening she must have been feeling particularly good, because each garment was removed as if she were performing a strip tease for a particularly randy group of men. Maybe she was. Beth had just met a new boy, David, a real hunk she called him. No doubt whatever she was performing, she was doing it for him.

Whatever was in her mind that night it had an effect on Christopher. So much so that it became a nightly ritual for the next six months. He would sneak out into the garden whenever Beth was due to undress and watch her change. He had no other objectives in mind, sexual gratification never even occurred to him. In time no doubt it would have passed away in the manner that most teenage aberrations do.

The problem came to a head six months later when his father's brother in law, Aden Martin and their cousin Laura, stayed over the weekend. Laura was as pretty as his sister and about the same age. Despite the difference in their age she seemed very fond of him. The trouble lay with his father who had an obvious dislike for both of them. Something had happened in the past between his Uncle Aden and his father and at least on his father's side it was not going to be forgotten or forgiven.

John Lynn gave the impression of being a pleasant enough man. Conservative with many old-fashioned views he was respected in the neighborhood as a good husband and family man. His friends knew he was not a supporter of women's liberation. In his view a wife's place was in the home supporting him and bringing up the children. Despite his benign appearance he was an absolute tyrant to his wife and daughter, insisting on total obedience and the absolute acceptance of his will.

With Christopher it was different. He had always been the apple of his father's eye. He'd been spoiled and encouraged to feel more important than his sister. Christopher treated Beth and his mother in the same manner as his father. He loved them, but after all they were women and their role was to make him comfortable and look after him.

He'd inherited these views, probably by osmosis, just passed on by the environment he lived in. In short he was a typical chauvinist. His attitude was probably fur-

ther accentuated in his case by his looks. If his attitudes were male, his looks were not. Christopher was cursed with appearing more feminine than his sister. With golden-blond hair, creamy skin with no facial or bodily hair, and the face of an angel.

It was possibly the need to assert his masculinity that had developed this attitude toward women which was more arrogant and aggressive than he meant it to be. He found it difficult to form any relationship with a girl. They were at first attracted by his beauty, then repelled by his arrogance. Unfortunately he never understood why, he was so wrapped up in his own world that he understood very little of other people's feelings. His cousin Laura's attitude was an eye opener for Christopher. Not only did she appear to be on equal footing with her father, but Uncle Aden appeared happy to defer to her opinion. To Christopher's amazement and consternation she not only argued with his father but openly defied him.

It was a deep seated family row. Christopher at first wasn't quite sure what it was about, but Laura and Uncle Aden were trying to persuade his father to give up the share he held in the company Laura and Uncle Aden owned.

Some years ago John Lynn had invested his savings in a half share his brother in law's lingerie manufacturing company in Portland. John Lynn the local Dentist had over the years become quite affluent. Today's visit was a further attempt, in what had become an annual event to ask him to sell. Despite the offer, John Lynn had rather bluntly said no!

Over dinner that night, the air was full of tension. With John Lynn seemingly doing his best to exacerbate the problem. The atmosphere was quite poisonous and although Beth and his mother did their best to bring peace they met with little success. Though Christopher couldn't contribute much, he did support his father and it became very evident that this was not making his cousin happy. Early in the evening both Laura and her father said they'd like to retire early, they'd a long return flight in the morning, and the unsuccessful outcome had obviously disappointed both of them.

The mood of the evening caused tension in Christopher, and without thinking of the consequences he positioned himself in the garden to watch his cousin through the window. Unfortunately for Christopher, this time his luck had run out. A neighbor noticed the extra shadow in the garden and called the police. A few minutes later Christopher was seized from behind by the local officer. The scuffle alerted Laura and he caught a glimpse of the utter contempt on her face as he was led away.

It might have rested there if the policeman had been older and more experienced, if he hadn't been new to the community and determined to make a name for himself. Or if Cousin Laura had been more forgiving and not insisted he be charged. Then he might have received a warning and been left in the care of his parents. He wouldn't have had to appear before a Juvenile Court, and the charge would not have been recorded against him.

Laura and her Father were about to leave when he returned after being bailed out by his father. Any hope for the deal they had tried to reach seemed gone. The situation was not helped by Laura's remark that Christopher was a pervert who should have been kept in jail. His father's retort, which Christopher didn't understand, was at least he didn't have a father who had to build a factory to supply his underwear.

John Lynn's voice was tinged with acid as he told his brother and Laura, that he'd retain his fifty one per cent holding and “that hell would freeze over before he'd sell it to them”. His “pervert” of a son would get control of it on his death and the will would have a codicil to ensure that it could only be sold to their competitor. Everyone knew John Lynn well enough to know that he wouldn't change his mind.

The 'Peeping Tom' charge did not seriously affect Christopher's life, although there were some changes. His father admonished him, not very seriously, partly because of Laura and partly because he hoped it was a step toward manhood. He gave a wink and a nod toward a passage of rites.

His mother seemed unperturbed by this aberrant behavior and their relationship remained much the same as ever. It was Beth who was more watchful of his moves and she always locked the bathroom door when he was around. Now whenever she went to her room, the curtains were tightly closed.

A year later another incident occurred and he was accused again of being a “Peeping Tom”. He was quite innocent on this occasion but it was a case of his having a prior charge. This time with the help of his father's lawyer the charge was kept to a minimum. Luckily he was still a juvenile, even so he was given three months of community service.

The information about his behavior was supposed to be confidential but of course it became known and was talked and gossiped about. Although the community recognized that he'd done nothing really serious, he was now treated with more suspicion. Christopher's first days after returning to college were more traumatic as he was teased and became the butt of many nasty jokes. Like most events of its type something more interesting came along and very soon his disgrace passed into the dustbin of history.

## Chapter Two

### **Death of a family**

Of course the cause of the terrible argument John Lynn had with his brother, soon became lost in the passage of time. Although there remained a distance between the two families, at least the tension eased. This didn't stop Christopher's father putting his threat into action and the will was changed to give Christopher enduring control of the company upon his death.

Sadly, four years after the incident with Laura, fate in the guise of a terrible traffic accident changed Christopher's comfortable life. Following his graduation party his parent's were taking Beth to the airport when a fuel tanker careered out of control across the road and incinerated them all. Only a smoldering metal skeleton remained, of the occupants nothing was recovered. This produced the greatest change in his life, at the age of nineteen he was entirely alone in the world. Alone, that is except for his father's brother and family in Portland.

Uncle Aden and Aunt Elizabeth arrived the next day and took over all the funeral arrangements and put into order the settling of the estate. Christopher was in a complete state of shock and not fit to look after himself. At Aunt Elizabeth's instigation he agreed that this home and town bore too much sorrow and agreed to return with them and for a time at least make his home with them.

Though he didn't know it beforehand, cousin Laura had tried to prevent his coming.

“But Papa he is an arrogant woman hating little prig and I don't want him in the house. Besides he's a pervert. I'll feel unsafe never knowing when he'll be looking up my skirt.”

“Come now Laura, that was years ago and I'm sure it was just a case of childish high spirits.”

Aden Martin tried to bring about some compromise in Laura's attitude. Although he and Elizabeth over the years before the families death had reconciled their differences, Laura had not. Since that night she'd found Christopher looking in her window her attitude had hardened, seeing him as a too privileged rich boy that each year took half of the profits from their company. Returning after their meeting to say if she ever saw that arrogant and rude boy again before she died it would be too soon.

This was not helped by an application presented just before the accident asking for Christopher to be made a member of the board at the next meeting. The tragedy had intervened before a reply was given.

“I'm sorry Laura I don't think we can stop him. Christopher wants a senior position within the company. He has some strong views and would like to put them into practice. He sees himself running Venus within a few years, as he owns 51% of the shares we can't out vote him.”

Laura felt her world coming to an end. It wasn't right, there was no justice. Never in a million years would she accept that self-centered pervert in her company. She hadn't put this much work into building an empire to have it taken away.

Laura returned from business college five years ago. Since then she had taken over more of the running of VENUS FASHIONS, turning it from a small business into a nationwide one. Her father was still the titular President, but all the responsibility and decision making was left to her. Laura had a very autocratic style and was not popular amongst the Senior Management of the fifteen hundred employees. That was not a big problem now, as most of them had been fired. The younger group were still wary of her, but they had come to respect her business acumen. During the last two years the growth of Venus Fashions under her direction had been quite dramatic.

Still, it was not enough for an ambitious twenty seven year old. In her opinion, never expressed to him, her father had never really been ambitious. Laura was determined to show them that a woman could make this one of the most successful enterprises in the nation, and no simpering cousin was going to stop her.

A direct fight against her cousin was not going to succeed. She graduated at the top of the class in Business Studies and Politics from the University of Oregon and knew that direct confrontation rarely won the battles. She remembered the thoughts of Machiavelli, "The Prince." " Know your enemy and use his weaknesses." That thought triggered another, and some part remembered remarks from long ago.

"You can control the power if you control the person." That was the key and suddenly she knew how. The time to succeed against Christopher was now, when he was at his most vulnerable. She had the inkling of a plan that could very well work. A quick search through her list of past friends and a long talk on the telephone and she knew what she must do.

"Papa we can't allow this simpering pervert to undo all we've built up. This is our organization and I know how we can keep it ours."

With that Laura outlined her plan to her mother and father. They listened in silence, at once appalled and fascinated by the audacity of what was proposed. There was no argument, both parents had learned to accept the unbridled ambition of their daughter. Some of the plans she had presented in the past had worried them immensely but all the decisions she had persuaded them to accept had proved right, and very profitable.

"I'll fly to Eugene tomorrow and make the arrangements" she said.

"Don't you think it's a little soon darling? After all poor Christopher is still very upset and grieving for his family," said her mother.

"Of course he is Mama, it's perfect. He'll be enrolled while he's at his most vulnerable. Ms. Tennyson will have mastered him before he has a chance to realize what is happening to him. I know it sounds cruel but don't forget who did all the work in establishing Venus Fashions."

### Chapter Three

#### **An Executive decision.**

Christopher arrived four days later still looking pale and drawn. Never had he felt so lonely. His next door neighbors, the Nevilles', had been very kind and helpful over the last week helping him pack and prepare for the flight. Nothing however could console him for the cruel loss he had suffered. Christopher was agreeably surprised when he arrived in Portland to find Uncle Aden, Aunt Elizabeth and Laura there to greet him

Christopher had forgotten how attractive Laura was. She was taller than he by two or three inches in her medium heels. Her figure was athletic; taut with high firm breasts, a very trim waistline and firm but small hips. The neat navy crepe pantsuit and Chanel jacket were obviously a power business ensemble. An apricot silk blouse worn beneath it feminized it, but it was obvious that she took her role of Chief Executive of Venus Fashions very seriously. Christopher was gratified, she had spared time to meet him.

Aunt Elizabeth kissed him on the cheek and pulled him tightly into her body. Again Christopher was surprised. Although she and Uncle Aden had been helpful after his parent's death, they had appeared distant and almost suspicious of him, particularly when he had been so adamant about working for Venus Fashions. The new-found warmth was quite unexpected.

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Settling into their large spacious house was very easy, though the bedroom was too feminine and frilly for his taste. It was two days later over dinner that he mentioned the role he expected to play in the company.

"I feel I must work now, that will help me forget my parent's death. I know you're doing a grand job Laura, but a man should be running the company, and I see that as my role in a few years."

Laura nodded with sympathy she did not feel, hiding the fury that was building up like a tidal wave. She managed to keep her voice calm as she said.

"I'm sure you are right Christopher, however you should have experience in design which we can put to immediate use at Venus. Or you could start at the bottom and gain experience that way."

For Christopher this was an unexpected twist. For a start he had thought there would be resistance from his cousin but now she was in agreement with him. Naturally she was correct he'd need respect. As for starting at the bottom, that was quite out of the question, he had no intention of doing any menial work. However, the thought of earning it through a design college, well that sounded like fun and would be far more pleasant

"Of course, Laura, I hadn't considered that side. Tomorrow I'll contact the college and see what is offered."



"I hope you won't be offended Christopher, but I thought this would be what you'd want. The best design courses are at the Design and Business College in Eugene. I rang them and they have a place open for you. If that is agreeable to you then you could start almost straightway."

Christopher stumbled his thanks, grateful for the help she was giving. He realized how mistaken he had been about Laura. How kind she had been to go to all this trouble. "Thank you so much Laura dear, it is so good of you to bother."

"Not at all Christopher we are all family and we must help one another. The semester starts on Monday, and if you want to begin this year it would mean leaving almost right away." She saw the startled look on his face. "Though of course I'm sure you could start next year, but then the job would have to wait."

Christopher felt he couldn't let Laura down. "No I'm fine, it will help me forget. Monday is time enough, though I'm not sure where to stay."

"Oh Christopher we were not going to just send you off without any help. The College Registrar takes in one lodger. She is very choosy and takes only up and coming executives. Her name is Ms. Tennyson, I'm sure you will like her."

Of course Christopher couldn't resist, "up and coming executive", Laura's description fit the image he had of himself exactly. On Sunday night Laura and her Mother drove Christopher to Eugene. Ms. Tennyson had been informed of his arrival and was almost waiting on the steps to greet him. In his mind's eye he had expected someone quite different, a motherly plumpish woman with graying hair. Ms. Tennyson did not fit into any of these categories.

She had a tall and taut body, long legs and stood very erect, there was as sense of authority about her. Far from being gray, her hair was a deep blonde worn in a long braid down her back. It was difficult to tell her age, the skin about her neck and face was completely unlined. He thought Ms. Tennyson couldn't have been more than thirty five.

Her eyes were deep gray and although her smile was warm there was a coldness, a touch of the predator in them. As she held his hand Christopher felt he was being undressed as she slowly examined him. Then she turned to Laura and spoke quietly, but through a trick of acoustics Christopher caught her strange remark.

"He's exactly as you described him, just perfect."

Taking his bags inside Christopher followed Ms. Tennyson up to the first floor.

"I hope you don't mind this room, it was Lesley's. I know it is a little on the frilly side for a boy, but Lesley moved here after the parents died in quite tragic circumstances. Now Lesley has moved to London and I haven't had time to redecorate it or move out the clothing. I hope you don't mind, it will be only for a few days until the other room is ready.

The room was very frilly, with white and pink furnishings and all the bric-a-brac a girl the age of his sister Beth seemed to accumulate. With his involvement in Venus Fashions Christopher was far more conversant than the average boy about women's

fashions. The cut and types of fabrics suited for underwear and designer dressing had been part of his upbringing.

A glance in the large walk-in wardrobe, showed Lesley must have been very clothes conscious. It was almost filled with blouses, dresses, skirts and slacks, all beautifully cut and seemingly new. A large number of the drawers were also filled with filmy silk and satin underwear all lavishly trimmed with lace. Despite this Christopher managed to find enough room for his rather meager wardrobe.

Sleep came easily despite the feminine surroundings. But it felt quite strange to awaken amidst lacy curtains and silk bedspreads. Over breakfast Ms. Tennyson told him she was in charge of administration at the College.

“It is going to be a madhouse this morning with all the enrollments. So I thought we could do yours now Christopher, save you having to queue up with the rest. Come on we'll fill them out together.”

It was difficult to refuse Ms. Tennyson, she had that air of command to which one automatically said yes. The College certainly wanted a lot of information thought Christopher as he worked laboriously through the form with Ms. Tennyson. He paused when it came to criminal conviction.

“Well that's something we can hurry through, a clean-living boy like you, we can put none for those?”

Christopher felt himself blush, then nodded his head. He didn't want to admit to his indiscretions, and as they'd happened so far away no one was ever likely to find out. He signed the bottom of the form, feeling slightly guilty as he read the boldly printed warning, **“That all the details are true and any attempt to mislead the College could lead to instant dismissal.”**

The next two days were spent on orientation and Christopher spent most of the time meeting his fellow students and lecturers.

The class was roughly balanced between the sexes, slightly more male than female. They appeared a friendly bunch, all of them dressed well, both sexes favored the “preppy” style. Most girls in well cut skirts with a smart blouse or sweater worn under a jacket, while others favored a cardigan slung about their shoulders.

The males were in “Bean” shirts worn beneath a light jacket or sweater, with wool or cotton slacks over loafers. They were a clean cut group very much oriented toward a business career. There were none sporting pierced noses or unusual hair styles. Christopher could sense he would fit in well with the rest of the group.

#### Chapter Four.

### **Caught red-handed.**

For the first days there were no lectures or study, just a period of getting acquainted with the College and the library. Ms. Tennyson would come home for dinner and then return to the College. The more time he spent with her the more fascinated he became. Although she was a lot older than he, never had Christopher felt so at-

tracted to anyone. She was quite beautiful, witty, and charming. Several times sitting across the dinner table looking at her he felt his emotions stir in a most disturbing way.

There appeared to a reciprocation of feeling. Ms. Tennyson would smile and laugh at his witticisms and agree with his views. For the first time he felt relaxed and easy in the company of a woman. Each night after she returned to College, Christopher would take a stroll around the streets rather than just watch television. He had been there a week, he was preparing for his evening exercise when Ms. Tennyson arrived home and asked whether he'd mind delivering a small packet to a family four blocks away.

It was easy to get lost and although he had carefully followed her directions Christopher found himself lost in a darkened back alley. A lighted window was ahead, climbing through a side gate he moved towards it to ask directions. Just as he reached it he curtains were drawn back and he found he was looking at an almost naked teenage girl. Her whole body was clearly visible to him, but he was invisible in the dark. He turned away to hurry out the gate. He'd only taken two steps when he was illuminated by a harsh bright light and a command of;

“Stop where are and raise your hands above your head.”

Christopher's heart almost stopped beating. It couldn't be happening to him again. He raised his hands facing into the glaring light which moved behind him. First one wrist was seized and he felt the harsh coldness of a pair of handcuffs encircling his wrists and the terrifying finality as they clicked shut.

“Turn around Mister Peeping Tom and let me see who you are.”

Christopher turned to find himself facing a quite attractive policewoman. He tried to explain that he had been delivering a package for Ms. Tennyson. Even in the poor light provided by the torch it was clear by the skeptical look on her face that she did not believe him. But eventually she did agree to talk to Ms. Tennyson before charging him. Back at the house, at Ms. Tennyson's insistence, Officer Diane Malloy removed the handcuffs. It was also clear that she knew Ms. Tennyson.

“There must be some mistake Diane, I did ask Christopher to drop a package around to the Neilsons. I'm sure that's what he was doing.”

“The Neilsons live on East Street, I'm afraid he was in a back alley on Westside, Ms. Tennyson. No I'm afraid this is a real one, we've had two complaints this week about someone prowling the streets. We should be doing this down at the station. Come along Mr. Lynn.”

“Wait Diane, there must be a mistake. Christopher has no previous convictions. I remember that, he entered none on his application form. Let me look after him, remember how the last one changed after I took charge.” Said Ms. Tennyson

Officer Malloy appeared to waver. “You say he has no police record. In that case I'm prepared to give him a chance. However I will need a statement from him, swearing to all this, and remember Christopher if I find that any of this is not true I'll see you spend a long time in Jail.” Officer Malloy fixed him with a stern admonishing eye.