

THE ANNALS OF ANARKY SPICEROT

After C.S. Lewis

Nancy M. Cross

Chapter I

Hadesial College sat glowering in light, a dull red light reflecting off the cavern that gave neither comfort nor cheer. The heavily draped windows of Baal Hall with their pointed arches allowed only a few moving shadows to be glimpsed by an observer from beyond the gates. The strange flickering flush did not come from the windows but from the Edge of Things beyond the confines of the campus. Sitting on the brow of this precipice, the buildings in the gloom had the appearance of a cluster of fungi rising from the bole of a dead tree, the entire figure outlined against the anger of a sullen sun reluctantly set. The maroon and madder drop-off was the most evident feature of the terrain, but the inhabitants of Hadesial never looked that way, nor did they ever refer to it. The clump of structures that backed up to the pit had no windows or known doors opening toward the fearsome abyss.

Above the rooftops, high in the arch of rock under whose mushroom cap the buildings stood, a huge globe hung now dark, but which with the passing of a few more hours would light up this derivative world with a greenish neon-like light which the college personnel would call "day."

Within Baal Hall a party was just ending. The tall oak chairs lining the walls were emptying of their tired guests who had eaten and drunk to satiation; who had talked and argued their newest experiments and theories never hearing anything but the sound of their own voices; and who had danced judiciously with partners who might best further their careers, male or female - they were determinedly gender ambivalent about it. (Sexuality here needs careful explanation to any earthly reader. To quote Thumbleplut, Associate in Voluptuary Science, from his latest lecture, "there must be no implication of fruitfulness in sex, that being a gross and burdensome invention of the Enemy. No, sex in Hell is the real thing. The perversity of the Enemy-side calls it "pseudo." But here we all know it to be a pure pleasure with no strings attached, no weight to carry - a free experience. Oh, His Abysmal Majesty has been at his best with duplicating sex in Hell, all the excruciating joy of it without any of the curse of results. Fruit, what is that? Nothing but stuff that grows too sweet and spoils, and is a horrible nuisance in the meantime, a contradiction to all that is most desirable about existence in Underworld.")

This night many had left the hall, feeling quite satisfied, if fatigued, by the mental efforts exerted to use the evening to the fullest, while losing no inch of ground gained in previous such social encounters. All had come with some apprehension to meet this newest member of the faculty. Rumors had flown about her. Wasn't she especially rated for some new scholarly work of hers? How had she happened to come in under the wing of Nimblewits? It was a curious alignment because Nimblewits had been disgraced, reduced in rank after that fiasco with the African minister who had been perverted (did they call it converted?) by the Enemy.

It was horrible to think about, was never spoken, not even whispered, but everyone knew that that African who had been so safely within the ranks of His Abysmal Majesty had actually gone to his death

clinging to the Enemy. And, oh, the horror! - with the Enemy's name upon his lips! Furthermore, forgiving his attacker! It was a very great loss to HAM.

For days the whole college had been wracked by earthquake and the flashes from the pit had been very intense indeed. Most of the collegians and their professors had suffered from an instant virus, whose effects were not unlike seasickness. They had kept to their beds, miraculously feeling better once the rumblings stopped and the ancient fires dimmed again.

Nimblewits had lost his office, his name was off the door the morning after the news broke, and there was a new Dean. Just how he had been involved with the loss was safe to talk about and became the campus gossip. It was recalled that he had used his influence to place the two envoys of Hell in the African minister's government office, and these envoys had been his relatives. It was a cozy job with great benefits; many souls there were considered to be ripe for the picking, but obviously his relatives had not the wits, despite their family name, to fend off the Enemy's inroads and his final victory. They had not even been wise enough to call for reinforcements.

It was hard to believe that there hadn't been plenty of warning that things were slipping fast. The President of that African Kingdom had been the murderer, so the Nimblewitses must have thought that having the Presidency in hand there was no particular cause for alarm in the First Minister's conversion to the Enemy. Let that be a warning about complacency!

It was obvious that they had been grievously tricked by concentrating on the wrong person. It was hardly fair the way the Enemy fought. And it was a mistake they all realized anyone of them might make, a fact that made each one secretly shudder in his bed at night. Actually the two Nimblewitses had come back to the college expecting a great celebration after the now – (slurred speech meaning Christian) First Minister had been clubbed to death by the President, a properly violent happening that they, in their ignorance, had considered a victory.

"Oh, my Hatred, Oh, my Souls of the Damned, keep me from forgetting this horrible mistake," was the miserable prayer of all those who thought about the deception that had ruined these fiends. His Abysmal Majesty had been enraged. The two had been summoned down lower still in their proud flush of achievement, thinking it meant a triumphal delevation. Along with the morning announcements for four mornings the sounds of their torment had been broadcast over the college PA.; the voice of the new Dean reminded the students and teachers that stupidity would be severely punished, and that attention to their studies and execution of their learning was all that would be rewarded by His Great and Quenchless Avidity. For reasons that any astute student could learn with enough rigorous effort, one life lost to the Enemy under such circumstances of a bloody confession of love cost the Infernal Kingdom thousands of other souls.

Had not Nimblewits been true to his name in denying any familial connection to the two, and in blaming one of his assistants, who was newly appointed without his endorsement by the Under College

Association, he would no doubt have been summoned lower himself. Alas, not the sought for delevation, as everyone knew. Instead he had lost his office and his title. He was now working as a college recruiter from a tiny crowded office in the stuffy attic of Tophet Administration. So the rumor that this new electric female professor they had all just met was possibly his protégé, was surprising and had had to be checked out by one and all of the fellows and faculty.

For that reason tonight's affair had been one of the better attended parties of the last while. The serving staff had clearly not anticipated the numbers. Prime hypocrite rib had run out early and tougher cuts, washed down with a distinctly inferior Tears of Heretics, had been served up to satisfy the later diners. The bottles of Tears certainly were not aged. Of course, the modern supply was much more abundant than the older, so no doubt the college was just cutting the corners made necessary by economic realities - there was never enough in Hell.

Ah, but the new faculty member, she was a dish herself! Many the lips smacked, many the new plans for self-delevation that were formed that night midst fellows and faculty alike (there were no students at the party, except those who were working their way through Hadesial by assignment with Food Service). A slim and exceedingly energetic little devil, Ms. Spicerot was clearly a descending star. She had a frequent wriggle like the quiver of a male cat's tail that was positively enervating. She would, no doubt, end up very close to the Seat of Power. Even old Weatherall looking at her out of glugged, goatish eyes appreciated that.

W.W. had hung on through all the vicissitudes of the college, green day following green day for eons of earth time. Nothing had uprooted him from the secure spot as Head of the Voluptuary Science Department because he had been wise enough to be content, as content as an archfiend could be with his post. He had not engaged in the jostling for lower posts that preoccupied the less experienced, and had only engaged himself in fending off the attempts of the lesser demons from above who were jealous for his position. Besides, he filled it so well, so very well, that it would take a sharp prurient indeed to challenge him for it. He found Ms. Spicerot such *desideratum* that his usual consuming appetite was heightened all over with a delicious itch. The consummation would be delectable beyond words. He could feel it between his teeth, and Oh, the depths to which it might lower him if he played his game right. He had ignored lesser opportunities yet, retirement was to be thought of, and this one was really worthy of his effort. She was sharp. He could recognize that. He watched her carefully all evening as she made her way from one knot of cavilers to the next. His wariness however was only exceeded by his experience in such matters, and he did not give away his interest. Heavy, lash-less lids adequately contained his two bulging eyeballs. Many the younger fiend who, in sizing up the competition to his own plan concerning Spicerot, overlooked the aged codger who nodded over in the far corner.

Nimblewits was one who did not underestimate him, but Nimblewits was not in a position to be an adversary to anyone openly, least of all old Weatherall. He knew that many young female demons had become his meat and drink till nothing at all was left of them, and he wasn't about to let this happen to

this golden egg. He had too much of his own future tied to her. He had been percipient enough to recognize her latent abilities, clever enough to persuade her to come to Hadesial, and he would be cunning enough to outplay old Weatherall this time. Of course, he would not confront him; there would be no need for a showdown. Weatherall had never offended the Lower Depths, one had to credit him with that, and in the place of suspicion he had lately come to, Nimblewits would find no support himself from that quarter. No, he would bide his time, after all, he had Ms. Spicerot's confidence for the time being, and it would take Weatherall awhile to prepare his advances into those confidences. Besides that, he had to chuckle, look at him! What chic young demon would find him an object of desire? The veteran Head of Voluptuary Science was distended out of shape in a series of rolls girdling an unsightly paunch, his florid complexion and red eyes with their lowered lids hardly added up to a challenge for his own dashing good looks. He smoothed his sleek head with a long fingered, yellow-nailed hand. He knew he had to be particularly careful for the next while. He would do nothing to draw attention, and he'd tolerate his elevation to the attic hole without complaint; but when he came into his own once again, he would show them all. In the meantime he would make sure that delectable Ms. Spicerot did not fall prey to Weatherall. Like an ancient lizard, that old demon might seem to go on and on forever, but his time would come, too. And then a new idea leapt like a sizzling flame into his brain, so abruptly it brought on a fierce headache, but so well worth it!

'What if I, Nimblewits, could use Spicerot as bait to trip up W. Weatherall? It wouldn't be too bad to be Head of Voluptuary. It's really quite a department and has its rewards - lots of them more tangible than the Administrative Office. Instant gratification wouldn't be so bad at my age. W.W. has clearly overindulged and lost his shape and charm in the process, but I, Nimblewits, have a greater animal capacity and far more brains, I would know just the epicurean best point to remain vital and hungry while savoring and enjoying. I just might teach a few classes in that art while supervising the rest of the staff, which would leave ample time for my own pursuits. In fact," he thought with a great deal of delicious effect, "I'll inspire a human book, probably with one of those new moral theologians."

His thoughts carried on apace. He would pick him carefully so that the results would be a classic, worth a great diamond and gold brooch inscribed with H and his own name. His Voraciousness would be pleased with some new theory of Tempting with the Physical Arts that he would concoct. This ignominy he had been suffering would pass. So now he had two avenues to alleviate his pain of elevation. One would be Ms. Spicerot herself whom he was sure would succeed to the lowest levels of the Kingdom, and whom, it was certain, would be allied to him in her own demonic way; and the other would be his tricking of old Weatherall by using her blandishments, resulting in his sure descent into Weatherall's prestigious, sacchariferous seat. His very grasp of such language made him even more confident that a chair of learning, rather than administration (where mistakes could be so costly), was really more his line. Perhaps the shameful elevation could be worked to the best after all; and his spirits, which had been rather poor of late, began to return to normal. Nothing like a new scheme to restore one's ego to full power.

Chapter II

In the gloom of a rainy autumn day in a small mid-western town in the U.S., far above the machinations of Hadesial, but not out of its range of influence, a desperate young mother, fatigued beyond the ability to rest, bundled up her two children against the chill, left a note on the kitchen table, and walked against the wind to the house of an older woman whom she scarcely knew.

The wind was not alone in its resistance to her strides. Anxious voices, threatening voices, shrilled in her ears from some point that seemed to be just between the wind and her brain, "No one cares, turn back, you foolish thing! Don't bother the woman! Do you really think you're worth her time? Useless baggage! And what can you say? That you've had it? Who wants to hear that? Anyway, what help can she give you? Better that you turn right here and walk to the river - the cold waters would be the easiest way. No one would be bothered. You've thought of it before many times; time to act. Cold peace! It would all be over so quickly. If the children could understand, they'd thank you. Peace for them, too. Turn! Turn!"

A thorn laden branch caught her sleeve causing her to stop and painfully wrestle its tenacious prongs out of the fabric with her fingers. The heavy weight of her hands made this simple act such effort it brought her back to the edge she'd teetered on so many times lately. "I can't do another thing. Downhill is easier" Pieces of these thoughts floated on her blankness like flotsam on the murky river.

"Come on, Mommy. Come on!" Letty was tugging on her jacket. "Where are we going?"

Looking down into a wan little face with a runny nose, she took a tissue from her pocket, "Here, blow. We're going visiting to a nice lady's house."

"Why, Mommy, why?"

"Oh, it just seems like a good thing to do this afternoon. Tommy, don't step in that puddle."

And the threesome turned left up the hill to Homeward Street. After walking another block they stood hesitating outside of a simple house. "This is a dumb idea. What will I say? But I can't go home." And over her own thoughts, the rising whine, "The river, the river, that's the answer, the river!" She shook off the idea with a shudder and grabbing a small hand in each of hers she marched up onto the porch.

Through the kitchen window she saw a figure moving. It was a pleasant round shape that seemed welcoming in itself. She pushed the bell. In an instant the door opened, first came fragrance and warmth, and then a smiling face framed with gray curls looking at her and the children with a brief puzzlement that quickly went away.

"Why, Ellen Eagen, is it? And the children. Come in!"

She'd called her by name. Hearing it, Ellen knew that she had come to the right place. No one had spoken her name for a long time. With Mrs. Goodall's friendly inflections her name sounded good, and straightening a bit, she stepped into the room.

The children were helped out of their damp jackets and introduced to a basket of multicolored kittens in the corner of the kitchen. They were quiet children with large wondering eyes darkly circled. They just sat looking at their new surroundings. Mrs. Goodall put Ellen at the table with talk about the weather, how dark the week had been, how nice it was to have somebody stop by, all the time getting out cups and tea bags. A big dog-eared Bible on the table was pushed over like an old shoe to make room, fresh cookies were peeled from the wax paper on the counter and handed to the children who continued to sit stiffly next to the box holding the mound of sleeping kittens. They held the cookies until their mother laughing nervously, said, "Go ahead, you two, you can eat them."

Taking very small hesitant pieces they eyed their hostess. When it was clear she approved, the rest disappeared with a few eager bites. They were promptly handed another. Mrs. Goodall then settled into a chair across from Ellen and poured from the steaming teakettle she had brought over from the stove. "Now, dear, where is it you are living?"

That question opened up a halting conversation, which like the children, eventually relaxed. As they began to play with the kittens, laughing at them, hugging them, rolling their little ball and dragging the string with a cotton wad tied to the end into the next room, Ellen also began slowly to undo her heavy emotional bundle. Little by little she was able to tell Audrey Goodall the reason she had come to her door, and all the terrible things that had forced her to seek her help.

It wasn't so hard. Audrey was like mothers the way mothers used to be. Ellen could even imagine being held in those plump arms, snuggling her weary head against that ample bust, and sleeping well for the first time in years. She didn't cry. She began to think she could not cry any more. It was as though she was cried out, dried to a dusty desert inside. She numbly told Audrey what she asked, making no excuses for herself, no explanations. She had no energy to embroider the story. It was spare and bleak; dressed-up it would have looked ill anyway. It came upon Audrey's listening ears with all its disjointed angularity. She recognized at once the pain and despair behind the words. Alcoholism, neglect, desertion, loneliness, fear, poverty, it was not an uncommon story, sadly. Mrs. Goodall only asked a question at a juncture where the antecedents were unclear, otherwise she gave no words to Ellen, just her complete attention.

Outside the gloom slid without demarcation into early darkness. The rain ceased but the wind increased, howling around the corners with whistling sounds, pulling out the shutters and pushing them abruptly into the window casings. Through the kitchen window, the light glowed golden on the table which was soon set with four bowls. The two women and the children gathered close together around it holding hands with bowed heads, and the ghosts outside fled. A passer-by observing the scene would have interpreted it as a grandmother with her grandchildren and daughter enjoying close family fellowship over a simple supper. Had they watched longer they would have seen the children dressed in a couple of men's T shirts pulled from an old cedar chest, and after hugs from their mother, led away to be tucked into a double bed.

The women continued their talk at the table in the kitchen. The old Bible now was the centerpiece and Audrey the most frequent speaker. Later a weary woman in a long flannel nightgown, the same woman except for one unseeable but important difference, a tiny glow of hope planted in her breast, gently pushed the little ones to one

side of the bed and crawled in beside them. As Mrs. Goodall quietly closed the bedroom door, the last rays from the hall light reflected from the picture above the bed. The Mother of God smiled down with open hands to bless the sleepers.

Chapter III

If Weatherall had had psychic antenna he couldn't have picked up Nimblewits thoughts any clearer.

"That young fool," he gloated, "so he thinks he can unseat me. He'll learn not to tangle with his superiors. He despises my well-fed looks because his life is so lean these days. Huh, that envy, though laudable in itself, is misdirected and will do him no good. I have never been so secure. My last thesis was a stroke of genius. The lowerarchy through its avenues is even now promoting my Values Clarification Course throughout the Enemy's schools; no one will be able to challenge my place in Voluptuary. As for Ms. Spicerot over there, what makes him think it's physical attributes that will win her."

Recalling with immense satisfaction the letter he had intercepted, old Weatherall lowered his lids over all but a crack of his crimson pupils. The letter's carrier lay in his pantry foil-wrapped to protect him from drying out - poisoned by his own stinger. Weatherall looked and acted cumbersome, but he was lightning quick for the right reasons.

After a few more evaluating looks around the remaining guests, he rose slowly and heavily made his way to the door. Picking up his hat from the entry table, bowing his head, and blinking his lashless eyelids to this one and that on his laborious way, he left the hall.

Ms. Spicerot, seeing him go, thought how outdated Voluptuary was, and secretly laughed at his grotesque form as well as the ties that bound him to his archaic notions. They were doomed; they were on the verge of passing away. Ms. Spicerot knew that the world no longer was responding so well to the voluptuous or merely prurient. Actually it seemed as if humans were coming to satiety with it, and except for the proportion who were already completely sold to some devil - signed, sealed, and ready to be delivered to His Nefarious Realm - fewer and fewer were interested in saturation sex. The Enemy's control of creation had to take the blame for this - fear of those built-in miseries; herpes, AIDS, Chlamydia, alongside the old bug-a-boo of syphilis and the like, all triggered by Hell's innovative sex, were hard to overcome in reticent humans.

Her own discipline (the word has its own meaning in Hell), Eveology, was the wave of the future that would truly reach the depths of all scholastic effort and would reap the souls that HAM greedily sought. It had already shown its great potential. Earth's academic world would continue abuzz with the two volume book Spicerot had inspired (though her professor had typically taken the credit). The mistress of the French philosopher had done a wonderful work. It had been published just at the end of her second stint on earth, 1949 in earth time, 40,129 D.O.G. This was 739 Hell years after Anarky Spicerot's soul wrenching experience in the Audio Visual Lab at Nefarious U.

Hell time went much faster than earth time, thousands of years achieved limited goals. The expulsion of Lucifer from heaven, his subsequent victory with man and woman was now something over 300,000 years ago in Hell time. The current era was called D.O.G., the reference point being the Death of God - AD33 earth time.

Demons on assignment on earth would work with one prospective soul for their lifetime, putting in twenty hell years for every earth year lived by their man or woman. The effort to win one soul to hell was arduous. A no-account demon who had little or no success generally was consigned to the barbecue ovens after 1500 to 1600 hell years. More successful ones were allowed to live on indefinitely, or until their bragging and superior airs wore everyone's patience out.

Labor and design had brought forth this curriculum on woman, and it was to be only the first dividend of Spicerot's life-changing experience. She had left earth after her second mission, a 680 Hell-year stint, having prepared other women to spearhead an attack that Spicerot unflinchingly believed would be the beginning of the end of the Enemy's reestablishment of His Kingdom. Unlike the drawbacks of Voluptuary's techniques, there was no deadly disease or painful one connected with her brand of poison that would act as deterrent to her plans for human minds. Hers would be more like an odorless gas, seeping unnoticed through every crack and crevice of mankind's consciousness. Oh, the promise of it!

When she thought about how she would revolutionize the studies not only at Hadesial, but all the Under College Association schools, her centroid (she had no heart) beat with a special little flurry of beats which was accompanied by that twitchy motion. And then, well, it was only a matter of time when she would be at the right hand of old Quenchless himself. She allowed herself this impertinence in her thoughts alone, outwardly she would show the Depths every respect. And on an even deeper level, a level so dangerous that she did not allow it to come into thought at all, she knew "right hand" would not be power enough.

In thinking Eveology so vastly superior and crediting it with a coming great success, Ms. Spicerot underestimated the perennial vigor of Voluptuary Science, and especially of Professor Weatherall. He had not gotten his name for being the advocate of mere fads. The massive changes of moral thinking on earth were due in large part to his work through certain of his graduate students, and had impacted on the whole world-view of millions. Derelict personal morality had been the slippery slope that had allowed a series of rationalizations by thinkers who, to Hell's glee, had profoundly changed the outlook even of Catholic theology. Sexual perversity still had a great potential for ultimate harm. The attention and stir she was causing among the faculty of Hadesial inspired her vanity, and made Anarky's judgment less than perfect.

She knew that she was scoring importantly. She had, with her intellectual acumen, awed all who it was important to awe, and she had handled herself this evening with full effect. Besides displaying her mental superiority, she had seen to it that she looked the picture of savoriness that they all expected from the female demon. That was the hook that had always worked. Look at Nimblewits over there. He was obviously captivated by her. But for what reason? She had been around enough to know how these older archfiends used the young ones like herself as stepping stones. Stepping stones if you were lucky, sandwich fillers if you were not. So far her scholastic know-how had been so valuable to the Lower Kingdom and had held such promise that she had only been used as a step-down. She'd agreed to Nimblewit's plan, even though by attaching himself to her he had improved his position. Well, let him do it. He would have to be agile indeed to hold on to her flying coattails.

It was best, she figured, under the circumstances that he now labored, not to make much of her relationship to him, and certainly to minimize the credit he would try to take for bringing her to Hadesial. So when he came over to her, one of the last of the guests, she turned away and taking the arms of a couple of lagging fellows, she lightly swiveled to the door on stiletto, metallic heels.

Nimblewits immediately understood, and silently praised her astute sense of the proper. It underlined his belief in her that she indeed had the political know-how to make it all the way to the bottom. She had never replied directly to him about his proposition, but her application to Hadesial for a position soon after, and in the very way he had suggested it, was enough for him to believe in her acceptance of his plan despite the lack of such in writing. That, praise the infernal, meant he had found the right agent for his plan. No doubt it was her same savvy that found a written commitment dangerous.

As the last straggler left the Hall the gases in the great globe leapt into the morning phase, and a cast of green slowly overlay the persistent red glow turning all to a sullen gray. Actually Underworld was much relieved when this color change began in the early hours of the new day. The angry colors of the abyss were temporarily forgotten. That depth was in all their minds continually, but never, never, did they associate it with the Lower Realms they all coveted. The backside of Hadesial, off the escarpment, was a place of punishment, of eternal burning. There was no adequate reason for its being there, though an old myth said that the Enemy had placed it there in some ancient time. Never did any in Lower World believe that the throne room of His Great and Quenchless of the Lowest Realm would have any fire burning in it, or that he felt the torment. They believed the one abyss to be completely separate from the other they all aspired to, and HAM made sure that they continued to think so. Now the fires were all his own, and he used them for the alleviation of his own misery by sadistically enjoying the writhing and screams of the skewered whom the flames licked. There was little established by the Enemy that he had not been able to convert to his own use. He had in his own turn made the instruments of his punishment into punishment for all those demons who displeased him with poor quotas, who were too adolescent, dumb and stringy, or too old and tough to be tasty, like that ancient Weatherall. Blah, when he fell, and he would fall; only the fires for him. In the meantime he was still useful. His Infernal Lowness had real respect for that Values stuff, and as long as he came up with things like that out of his old head, well, the Infernal wouldn't fire him.

Chapter IV

For his part Weatherall had clambered back to his suite of rooms in the Circean above Liberal Social Arts on the Quad. He had occupied these same rooms for eons. They were richly appointed with furnishings that had come in all kinds of guises. Actually they might have seemed like gifts, though none had been given with affection; many had been straight bribes, others not so directly had come to curry favors of various kinds. The thick lamb's wool carpeting dyed a deep shade of wine-red had been a gift from an archdevil who served one of the old gods, Apollo, he thought it was. It had come with a specific request (or was it a demand?) concerning his niece (his "niece" - that was rich) that Weatherall keep his paws and mouth off her and see that she passed all her exams in V.S. with the best of grades. For a time, but a very short time, Weatherall had felt a small pinch of disagreeableness when he walked into his apartment on that carpet, but the warm lush comfort on his tired hooves had soon dispelled such feelings. Anyway, there were plenty of Miss Hatashes around without rich and powerful uncles. No need to fuss over the deprivation of one. Such circumstances had happened before, and, as long as such expensive gifts were attached, would no doubt happen again.

Tonight Weatherall shuffled across this purple luxury to his great mahogany desk and sat down heavily in the big revolving chair which was upholstered in blood-colored leather. From around his fat neck he extricated a gold chain, and pulling it up from beneath his rumpled shirt and the dampness of his fleshy chest, he unclasped an ornate gold key. Pulling out a drawer of the desk, he reached the key inside and opened a back panel which had a small compartment. Out of this he took a thin pile of envelopes and looking carefully at each, he selected a long slim one addressed to Nimblewits. Before going to bed he thought he would sooth his weary nervous system with the contents. It proved better than any sedative.

My dear, dear Nimblewits;

I have received your letter via your special envoy, the late Slubglum -taken care of as per your request. I thought it a wise suggestion under the circumstances.

Working at Hadesial, you must know, never has been on the agenda for delevation, not by me or any academic that I know. The faculty and curriculum are archaic and dull; no doubt coming under the increasing scrutiny of the Depths. To this point I have seen a place in your second-rate college neither for the brilliance of my work, nor an opportunity for the advancement that I am worthy of.

However, under the circumstances it seems I am compelled. Slubglum has delineated your ideas at length. I had no idea you were such a versatile devil. And, though reluctantly, I have to hand you a compliment for the extraordinary work that went into your Discovery of me as the ideal agent to help you carry out your scheme of changing things at Hadesial so that HAM would approve. Yes, you are very right. His Abysmal Majesty shall surely reward us when this whole renovation is accomplished. However, because President Catchascatchcan is known to be favored by HAM at this time, the strategy will take some fine execution. I agree with your analysis completely. It is time that Hadesial made some advances under a female demon, and you have picked the right one.

I am sending this letter with utmost precaution under the care of that especially hair-triggered Poisonpusher who is indebted to me for a favor rendered. Take care with him. So as not to breed any unnecessary suspicion about our goals,

I know that we shall not be able to discuss our mutual interests till some future time. Yet, I felt it necessary that upon my arrival there you would know that I fully acquiesced to your grand strategy. You shall have any post you shall choose when I have become the President of Hadesial.

I will send the necessary application and dossier under separate cover. With every spell for both our futures.

Anarky S. Spicerot

P.S. I am holding your letter proposing the scheme. For purposes of security also, Slubgum was added anonymously to the university larder. Be sure to destroy this communication immediately. I will not take kindly to any deviousness on your part. I have told PP to see you do it. A.S.S.

Reading it over he smiled and sighed contentedly, a sigh that turned into a horrendous yawn that showed all his corroded fangs. He locked up the letter, put the key back around his neck and stumbled wearily off to his satin-draped and mirrored bedroom. The interior was molded to him like a well-tailored suit of clothes. His endless occupation of these rooms had made it so. They contoured to his every physical and mental need like sleeves wrinkle at the bending joint of an arm. However, this fit was not of wool, however fine; on the contrary, this habiliment was all velvet, satin, and brocaded silk.

Where there was woodwork it was heavily carved with depictions of nymphs and satyrs playing their coy and overt games of sexual allurement and conquest. Around the ceiling in a plaster frieze the lower order of gods and goddesses with more deportment and less pretense did the same. Floor spaces were filled to overflowing with rich appointments: Ming Dynasty vases, costly jade and ivory bric-a-brac, shelves full of gilt-edged leather volumes, and lining the walls were provocative paintings by some of the great masters, too lust-filled for earth where they were unknown, but fittingly at home here. The day would come when all public prudishness that paraded as good taste on earth would pass (great efforts had been brilliant), and then Weatherall, through his agents, would put them on the auction block - what a largesse would be his for insurance against ever being in want again - too often, as it was now, he had to wait for opportunity, bearing the great itch the best he could. Better the tangible, real thing between his teeth than mere depictions.

He had barely pulled the silken sheets over his mound of abdomen when there was a small knock on the door. His unnaturally high voice demanded to know who was knocking and why at such an hour. Then he remembered the appointment he had made for a bit of pre-breakfast venality. He swung his heavy legs over the bed edge suddenly enlivened, and wrapping a gold lame robe around him, stopped at the mirror a second to slap on some musk of fey, and fairly skipped, elephantine-like, to the door. Shivering in the early morning draft stood two skinny underclass demons with inebriated grins. Oh, well, at this hour in the morning choosiness was out of the question. His old frame began to quiver in anticipation. With a suddenness that surprised even him he let out a howl of famishment and without even closing the door, he fell upon the two smothering them. Not stopping his groans of delight and growls of gluttony, until there was nothing left of them, he finally stood up shakily. His extended belly jerked and rolled. Belching and hiccoughing he chided himself for over-eagerness - for letting the situation get so out of hand.

He could have been more leisurely about it, even sporting, but he blamed his aggravated need on that superlative thing, Ms. Spicerot, whom for very important reasons could not be his until a whole scheme had been carefully laid and executed. When he had finally reached the lowest plane, then he would have all the self-control he had not had now. He would nibble on her forever, like a spider sipping delicious juices from a paralyzed insect just leaving enough life there to recuperate and thus continue his pleasure indefinitely. He rolled back into bed and was soon snoring. He slept far into the next day, not rousing till evening.

Chapter V.

Audrey Goodall lay awake till past two o'clock in the morning. Since Alvin's death she had become accustomed to lying awake at night. It was a fruitful time for prayer, she found, and she did not regret it. The racket with the shutters - she should have them securely fastened, but never thought of it when the wind wasn't blowing - finally diminished, but still she stared into the soft darkness. This dear young woman, and the children. . . It wasn't the first time, lately, that she had had the opportunity to talk to a bewildered and disillusioned woman. In fact, it was the third in about as many weeks.

There was that little surgical nurse at the Scripture study who stopped her after the group was over. Under a businesslike, modern-woman exterior there was pain. Her torment, it turned out, was working with a medical abortion team. She couldn't go on with it; what could she do? She couldn't quit. It was such good pay, and her family needed the money. Audrey thought her listening had done next to nothing; she had felt helpless to alleviate any of the suffering of this young woman. But she had offered to listen again, and Sylvia Brown had promised to call.

And then there was that woman on the park bench. Exercise was not Audrey's favorite thing but osteoporosis wasn't to be courted. A brisk walk helped women her age, they said, so she tried to be faithful, getting out each morning. She hated to waste time, the category where she placed exercise, so she doubled up use of the walking hour by saying a rosary. She kept one hand in the pocket of the old beige coat-sweater she wore so it wasn't obvious. About half way through the park two mornings ago, she had noticed a young woman, a little on the heavy side, on a bench alongside the path, clutching a small dog on her lap and crying into its fur. Audrey had plunked down on the far end pretending to be winded.

"Oh, I should just walk and not push it at my age!" she'd exclaimed reaching out to pet the docile poodle.

A conversation had opened up quite naturally. Toddy (a strange nickname, but meaningful to the girl evidently) had just been left by a boyfriend. They'd lived together a couple of months.

"I thought he loved me. I can't believe it," she'd sobbed.

"Come along with me for a cup of coffee, I live just a few blocks from here," Audrey had offered.

The girl hesitated, so Audrey heard her out on the park bench, but in the end Toddy, had gone home with her. Staying until after lunch, she left calling Audrey by her first name. Toddy (Theresa) Meredith had phoned nearly every day since. She needed a great deal of personal help. Why were these women, so much younger than she, coming across her path? What was she supposed to be able to do for them? She asked this question in her prayer and lay listening as a reply began to spin out in her head.

What if she were to get these three women together? She would listen and guide them very loosely - she had great confidence in the Spirit. He would work his way with them as they shared their unhappiness, their

broken dreams, but more to the point, their revived hopes. It might not work. Sylvia Brown would find it hard to recognize she had anything in common with Ellen or Toddy.

She'd write Rachel. She'd gone so much further and was closer to their ages. She'd have some good ideas, especially of how she might reach Sylvia. Well, she would put it before Him. If Sylvia called her, that might be a sign to approach her; the rest she would just leave in His hands. And with that resolved in her mind, she slipped off into dream-level love of God.

Unknown to Audrey a similar experience was happening to many women whose lives quite without their awareness displayed Christian virtues. They found themselves attracting in the most undramatic, everyday sort of way, young women questioners, women who though raised in it, had closed the book on the Church, who no longer regarded Scripture in any form as a guide to their lives, who lived unquestioned liberated lives and were reaping strange, often unwanted fruits. Beginning with a demand to be equal bread-winners, they had ended by demanding child-support from the same man from whom they had wrested self-sufficiency. Desiring freedom from menial labors, they had fallen into the most menial of labor, nine to five. Fantasizing about the "right" man, they had forfeited being the right woman, and lost the man who had the potential to be right in order to gain a string of wrong men. Wanting to be richer, they had gone out to seek their fortunes, lost their neglected husbands and had become poor - the feminine poverty.

What had a Christian woman to offer them? Only her daily bread of prayer. Only her faith. Only the rosary. For some it was too simple to hear and they turned away, but to others it was a seed of hope that almost despite themselves began to grow. Gradually nuclei of renewed women began to dot the secular countryside. Had a spiritual black light scanned from some satellite for spots of these cells, it would have revealed their mysterious proliferation as the spread of their influence melted outward into life around them, infecting, affecting individuals, families, and societies.

Chapter VI

The newest member of the Hadesial faculty went to work with great energy to revise the Advanced Human Psychology Department which she now chaired. She had six weeks of chartreuse days in which to prepare her proposals before they would be submitted to the entire faculty. Full of optimism at the reception these ideas would receive, she was certain beyond doubt that the progression of her delevation would bring her to the Presidency and ultimately far below that. When she thought of this, that deepest coveting knocked on her mental door; she still refused to open-it. It was too dangerous. Sometime later, perhaps, she could let it in. There was no end to where real success might lead. She wouldn't think about it yet, there was enough to do right here and now. And she buckled down to her outlines, preparation of her visual presentations, and the syllabus of proposed courses.

She had the quarters in the quad that she had insisted on. She had chosen them because the windows looked out on an area down the canyon where a streak of earth light falling unknown thousands of feet through who knew what spaces, actually hit the floor of Underworld for a few seconds once in twenty days or so. Into some crack in the earth's surface, illuminating deep caves and plunging through a fathomless tunnel; down the earth light fell, till it impinged on their realm; however, the green days of Underworld were not only twenty times more but they were also out of sync with the days of earth. Sometimes at night and sometimes during the day the light would splash for a few moments on that black rock that lay about half a mile beyond Hadesial's gates.

Whenever she saw that light, day or night, it would fire something deep in Anarky. She would stare with intensity. Normally her eyes were partially masked; she even had the little underlids that covered her eyes in sleep, but when she saw that earthlight upon the rocks, they changed displaying a blatant, bald eyeball that had it been observed by any other demon would have frightened all but the boldest. She then would begin a restless pacing and rubbing of her hands. Finally sending down great ejaculations of oaths to His Abysmal Majesty, she expressed a hatred that sent physical reverberations through her writhesome body. This reaction was not in any way a seizure. She could control it. Rather it was a stygian prayer which expressed her detestation of earth and its Maker and her rededication to its destruction. All hellish intelligences shared her hatred of the Enemy and His creation, but few had the ambition of Ms. Spicerot to personally ruin as much of that creation as she, by application of all her energies, could. For this reason her personal goal of someday arriving near the Seat of Power was more apt to be realized. Other demons anxious for advancement worked at intrigues to promote themselves, but disliked the nitty-gritty, roll-up-your-sleeve efforts of real soul-ruining. For that enterprise they were mostly lackeys for the Real Hatred, doing what fell to them, but allowing some lassitude about it. They tended to fake their reports a little, adding a bit of padding to their yearly accounts of earthwork.

Ms. S. on the contrary had loved every minute of her work right from the start of her tempter's initiation. She had worked like the very epitome of a demon at it. Her assignment in 39,010 D.O.G., or 1918 earth time, took her to France into the existentialist school. She was excited about all its possibilities, but when she had arrived on earth she found the demon world there badly shaken. Great advances had been made since the work of Marx and the Manifesto. The World War had been a marvelously fertile time, especially in Russia, and the

Revolution was well along in plan. However her predecessor who had done such good work at the Sorbonne, she found reduced to a blithering idiot.

During the late part of her graduation years (her education took 415 hell years - typical of the effort it was for hell to prepare its denizens for their tasks), a severe firestroke lasting for weeks completely immobilized the university. Hell counted time longer than days in firestrokes - periodic times when the perpetual glow of the abyss grew so intense even the green globe's morning lighting could not neutralize it. This was a period of two days and night in between that caused psychological havoc with some demons, and all experienced an uncommon restlessness and anxiety, finding their thoughts intruded upon by the Name by which humans continually were being saved from Hell. There were about seven firestrokes in a hell-time year. During these days some would make pilgrimages to the tormenting chambers to observe the humans eternally chained there awaiting and re-awaiting the right feast, to harass and torment them, renewing their contempt for the weakling human. Thus easing their tensions, it also effected recommitment to their demonic calling.

Gradually reports filtered back through the heavily damaged communication system that a cataclysmic, totally unexpected appearance of The Woman had overcast all the western world demonological work with a pall of fear. Recovery of the earth work momentum might take eons, but for Anarky who arrived just earth months after the happening, seeing was believing. Nihilizard was clearly out of it! She had arrived just in time or the efforts of centuries would have been lost. She packed him off home with his scarcely noticing the change in his circumstances. All the lackey types under him had lost proportionally their elasticity and acumen, morale was at a very low ebb. She got the story in bits and pieces from the few willing to talk about it.

Nihilizard and his whole crew had been ordered to leave France in the second week of October of 1917 to join with others at the Western Archdemonric in order to stave off the final appearance of The Woman in some little god-forsaken hamlet in Portugal. During the last appearance there, the Woman promised confirmation to the world of her intervention in its affairs. This had been announced by the three children involved, and was to occur on the thirteenth of that month. A special contingent of trained fiends had been working from the first shuddering news on local officials to threaten the children, and discredit the stories they told. All demons, of course, knew they were true. But things continued to unravel, the children stuck to their stories and more and more people were swept up into the belief that the Woman had come, and that the messages were from Heaven. Nothing could be done to thwart the Woman, or prevent her doing whatever it was she wanted to do, but something could be done about keeping people away from the site - from, seeing, hearing and believing. As thousands of pilgrims began their arduous journey to Fatima, all the powers of hell were unleashed upon them during the night of the twelfth. One of the humans who experienced it, Dr. William Thomas Walsh, described it in terms people at the time thought exaggerated (this is a true, non-fictional account):

It was as if the devil, somewhere in the ice and snow that could never slake the burning of his pain, had resolved to destroy with one blow all that remained of the Europe which had so long been his battleground against the Thing he hated most. Somewhere in the dark misery of Siberia, he was

permitted, heaven knows why, to disturb the equilibrium of the air, setting in motion a cold and cutting blast that shrieked across the continent to the western sea. It may have passed howling over a cabin in Finland where a little lynx-eyed man who called himself Lenin was waiting to enter St. Petersburg. . . and to begin, in a very few weeks, the transformation and destruction of all that world which owed what was best and noblest in it to the teachings of Christ. . . It scourged poor wretches of both armies into the cover of slimy dugouts all along the western front, and plastered with mud the Italian fugitives from Caporetto. It seemed to echo and enlarge the despair that was settling over the vineyards of war-wearied France, where Haig stood, as he said, with his back to the wall. Finally it dashed itself against the Pyrenees, and then, as if it had gathered up all the hatreds and discontents of disobedient men and all the rebellious powers of a corrupted nature in its mad career from the Baltic to Cape Saint Vincent, it let them all loose on the little country that has never been permanently conquered, the land where she who treads upon the serpent's head has long been honored, the *terra da Santa Maria*."

Nihilizard had led a large contingent of forces that had been sent directly to Fatima before the apparition. He had managed to turn some pilgrims back by the mudfields which were nearly impassable, and had engineered extremely "ugly moods" among the people, hoping to frighten off the children from being present.

But in the end he and all those demons with him had come close to annihilation. It was as if a great Hand of Heaven came down and crushed him and his underlings like they were matchsticks, while the other Hand caught up the sun and swirled it down through the sky. There were cries of repentance among the humans as they fell on their knees in horror of the piercing terror and glory as the sun spun on its axis. In Hell wailing and gnashing of teeth seized all, right down to the throne of HAM. Firestroke began early and with an intensity not experienced since the first year of DOG when the Enemy had poured out His Spirit at Pentecost.

Clearly Spicerot and others of her contingency, even months later, had their work cut out for them. But they were full of enthusiasm and though they lacked experience, they made up for it in youthful energies. Anarky threw her whole self into sixty hell years of hard work; casting doubt, encouraging intellectual pride, obscuring details in minds, losing reports, and distracting those who had the most influence to spread word about the affair.

By 1920 the world had gone back to business as usual, and Anarky was able to concentrate on the one woman who most interested her, Mme. DeB. A devout Catholic with a brilliant mind, Anarky was fascinated with the possibilities she presented. All underworld knew, and Anarky's education had been complete on the score, that it was that institution to which Mme deB. clung that blocked their final overthrow of the Enemy's realm on earth, in fact every hell-year the Bastion of the Church made more inroads into His Abysmal's territory, "saving" more and more humans from the banquet tables of Hell.

“Oh, damn, damn, damn . . .” was all Anarky could splutter (A good reason for humans not to use this word) when the outrageous power of that institution recalled itself to her. The other adherents to the Enemy, beyond the Church’s protection, were formidable in their way, especially those who talked to Him frequently and knew how to call upon the Name. But overall they were isolated and could be tempted occasionally by some astute deception. They simply didn’t have the protection of the Bastion, the power of that Unity and the full Spirit working through all. They were, quite simply, fool-able. In fact whole schools of Hell applied themselves totally to the tactics of the deceptions usable in fundamentalism, of sect formation, of indoctrination techniques, of the formation of new “charismatic” leaders. Such work had shown great promise since 31,000 DOG. The Break-Through made it possible to chop up the dreaded unity into manageable pieces. In some cases it was possible to lead whole groups of the professing right over into Hell without noticing a turn in the road. (Spicerot was at Hadesial when a man named Jones was used most effectively for just such a master stroke.)

Gradually she worked in closer to Mme deB. arranging her friendships and building up her intellectual pride through the successes of her exceptional ability. Humans were so susceptible to pride, it was easily the most useful of all human qualities. The young mademoiselle was thoroughly self centered in so-called “spiritual” exercises. When chastised by her spiritual director in her early teens for disobedience, she determined never to set foot in the confessional with ‘the old scarecrow again.’ By fifteen Spicerot had sold her on a life enterprise as an “irremediable solitary.” By sixteen, with Anarky’s help, she tired of “outworn morality” and prided herself in “questing for absolute sincerity,” which meant casting off “counterfeit coinage,” and was soon convinced that her embrace of the principles of amoralism were the way of reaching God. As the young woman matured, finally giving up entirely on God, Spicerot had every reason to believe that she would be an important tool in the effort for Hell in the years to come. She rejoiced when deB. wrote, “I still had absolutely no desire to know of His existence, and it even seemed to me that if I had believed in Him I should have detested Him.” But A.S.S. knew better than to believe the battle totally won, she continued carefully the nighttime monologues when her subject was asleep, and did not neglect interpretations whenever the occasion arose to make them.

When Spicerot was recalled to Hell for further work on her Master’s Degree in Human Psyc she knew the area she was most interested in, though she did not dream then of its promise. Women, articulate intelligent women, gradually stripped of the accoutrements of their sexuality, brought to considering despicable any submission, and, of course, any faith, encouraged to be proud solitaires, could be among the best tools for the advancement of HAM’s reign on earth, especially so if they continued to call themselves Catholic. The Enemy had special hopes for women, a mysterious role in his Church that Hell could only understand as “degradation”, and he must be thwarted in his designs.

Spicerot convinced deB. that it was in her best interest to rise above such a degraded role that her “Church” had in mind for her. It just happened that in doing what she had been led to believe was the best thing for her earthly life, she was also doing the best thing for Hell and of course, for A.S.S. Anarky would pray to HAM for deB. and follow her career with the greatest interest.

Chapter VII.

Back at Nefarious U. after this stint on earth, Anarky had settled into her academic work with a new appreciation. Her earth experiences had sharpened her appetites and her demonic perception. Then unexpectedly, in the course of her studies she had had a revelation. A revelation that was momentous. It had come to her through a channel open to any enterprising devil true to their natures, however, most of Satan's offspring took the easy way, believing that they understood well enough the principles of their Master without any first hand investigative work. Not Spicerot.

She had used the Audio-visual lab at the U and had gone back thousands of years to be present at that cataclysmic event earthlings call "the Fall" and Hell had named "the Rise" when it happened. She had watched the master play of His Infernal Majesty. (When this appellation was used for the Satanic Master the abbreviation could be only in lower case letters, h.i.m. or him, therefore it wasn't used often. The Enemy decreed that the masculine pronoun as a name be reserved only for Himself - HE or HIM. "I AM HE." Heaven, after all, had ultimate rule of Hell and made these decrees, something demons determinedly ignored in the wishful belief of their absolute freedom.)

Before this life changing revelation, Eveology had been a topic with but one chapter in Beginning Psych. Afterwards she understood clearly that it was the key to victories Hell had not been used to since HE had walked the earth. With the other advances of devilry that had been made over the centuries like prepared building stones, this gigantic rock of discovery would be the cornerstone of Hell's massive final edifice over which she, Spicerot, would eventually be mistress.

Fresh back from her first introduction to the world, a seasoned temptress now and wiser by far, her excruciating experience in viewing Eden brought to birth an ambitious plan for Eveology. At first these new ideas had hard going against the prejudices and inertia of the entrenched devilogues; it took great effort through years of hell time, but eventually her work won her a Masters at N.U. With her first hand appreciation of the genius of the one she called Master, and precise vision of the new tactics which would revolutionize the demonic work in Human Psyc, she was inflamed to be the most effective demon since Calumny U. Rattul who had whispered words to Judas and Pontius Pilate (the angels were instructed by Heaven, unbeknown to Hell, to allow this to happen). Actually Anarky was confident she would be more effective than C.U.R. Her vision was magnificently encompassing, so many facets of human life and experience were hinged here - it seemed so simple, why had no one else put forward that the female was the Key to the quick defeat of the Enemy?

Her enthusiasm brought a number of other demons into her Eveology group. She had a little trouble at first maintaining control of this loose organization. Others constantly tried to use the group as a platform for their own ideas. But after a period of sifting out, sometimes by rather abrupt means, Spicerot had a nucleus of ductile help. In 1932 earth time, she took them back to earth, at first to hover around the same group of French existentialists she had left about ten years earlier. Her protégés were doing beautifully.

There were a couple of scares during those years - some more of those visionaries claiming to see The Woman at Beauring and Banneaux, but this time the squelching action was more organized and, by HAM, there were few repercussions even in the Catholic world.

Together with her aids; she felt they worked out very well in the field, she felt they made excellent progress. Mme. deB. was working on a book that should speed up the process in thousands of female lives; and the talk of Europe, the impending war, would certainly give a giant boost to her designs against women. It promised to wrest them from the family, undermine their selfless maternity, get them used to monetary reward for labor, and give them a new taste for materiality. And of course, all in the best of efforts - to support their men fighting on the front.

It was a heady time, Spicerot and friends luxuriated in mayhem. With the war there was all kinds of it to watch - humans inflicting the worst of bloody murders on humans. Millions of demons were employed in the inspirations and the devastation of Hitler and his coterie alone. Millions more found their fulfillment with Stalin, while not a few gained important inroads with the "free" nations. Never had the Communist Manifesto seemed more sure to gain its goals worldwide. There was gaiety in Hell; though the pessimistic Master in his grotesque throne room reserved laughter for the most twisted of miseries - when the son of a Jewish woman, hiding his identity in the S.S. forced his own mother onto the boxcar headed for Dachau, when a child lost outside of Leningrad was stuffed into a cannon by the Germans and fired into the city, and when Catholic priests in Poland were strung up on Good Friday by camp commandants to commemorate their Master. At those times he howled his satisfaction.

For Spicerot, however, the best happening of this earth stint was the publication just before she and her team finished up, of Mme. DeB.'s two volume work. She felt it had the potential to inspire the mighty revolution she longed for. She knew that in the dull-wittedness of earthlings, and their adherence to old forms, it would take years before this book sank into feminine consciousness enough to be productive. Given enough time, and with boosts from some other younger women who were being prepared to do it, it would be an important tool. Her accomplishment secure temporarily, she saw the need to activate many more demons into her schemes, and so she took the opportunity to return to N.U. for work on her doctorate.

The next stage took one hundred and twenty hell years of effort, but with the completion and inauguration of the New Psyc Department, she claimed a doctorate - the first one given in Eveology. In 39,432 D.O.G. (1971 A.D. in earth years). Now as an up and coming provocateur she had left Nefarious University with a large number of co-workers and returned to capitalize on the progress of the women she had inspired in the 40's as a novice. Several of them had written or were working on books and the climate was right. The ideas were spreading like wild fire. Now with brilliance she inspired those who eventually formed NOW and worked herself on WOC. Nothing in all her previous education and work experience had been so pregnant with possibilities for her special talents. (She had even gone back to N.U. to encourage undergraduates to spend their internship with her there.) Since the triumvirate of Darwin, Marx and Freud, and directly because of their work, she was more and more convinced that she had hold of the greatest tool yet for the advancement of Hell.

It was true. She was, by the caprice of fate, on the threshold of something so dynamic that by the right influences at the right time and with the right intensity, great numbers of human souls with very little further expense or effort by Hell were within the grasp of HAM. She recognized here an opportunity made by converging lines. The earth milieu was at a watershed point. Her grasp of her paternity's whole grievance against the Established Order was more thorough than devils with twice her experience. HAM's single-minded ambition had fallen together in her cloned genes with special potency.

"Where," she thought, "was the one place that held steadfastly to the Enemy's notions about the value of women? Where was the sign of the sexes adhered to without deviation? Where? - just one place - there it was essential that that order be adhered to if it was to continue to bring the Enemy's saving power to people? How could that loathed institution be brought down? Why, it was obvious."

"Why? Why had it taken so long for someone in Hell's enclave to grasp it? Just turn it over! Turn the sign upside-down in that institution as it had been done in Eden by the Master, and the battle would be won at once. Undo the new Eden as HAM had undone the first. Infiltrate that institution with all the attitudes of Hell. Just place the woman at the altar. It was a simple a piece of envy as that! Four thousand years of earth time gains against Hell could be undone. Then the Enemy would be faced with either starting over," she chortled, "or abandoning the project and letting HAM have earth as totally his own bailiwick." With thoughts like these, she whetted her ambition to be the grand Mistress of Hell.

Chapter VIII

Sitting at the ebony desk which clung to the long wall of her sitting room, Anarky paused pencil in hand and gazed in front of her out of one of a pair of narrow windows which faced the earth-light rock. Ah – she waited for the day when all light on earth was snuffed out, when the sun itself and all its parasitic planets obeyed His Abysmal. She had no doubt he had the power. Didn't even the Enemy himself say in the dreaded Book that every demon was obliged to know that it would happen - all the elements dissolving in fire? And weren't the hosts of hell coming every day closer to the achievement for which every aspect of their beings had been honed? Weren't the bombs and agents ready, and the temper for it being raised day by day helped mostly by appeasers and the gullible? And her contribution would bring that culmination of victory sooner -much sooner.

Women, women! Females in the environment crusades, women waving placards at the factory gates, marches for abortion - anything but attending to their meaning, to the Enemy's hated agenda - homes, families.

She guarded herself against any savoring now of the rewards-to-be. She had noted the dull edges of hatred in those who had allowed such reveries, she intended to keep razor sharp, never to relax until she could come to the depths. . . and then. . . But for now there was only one reverie she allowed, it was like a fine grinder to her steel blade. This was to recall in its every detail the occasion of her breakthrough into understanding, the occasion of the deepening of her consciousness, the dredging of her emotional capacity of loathing for creation and Creator.

Spicerot never felt loggy or worn down, but she did suffer from agitation at times when she couldn't sit still at all. She tapped her pencil nervously for a time and gazed out of the window-slit in front of her. Suddenly her mind was made up. She jumped up from her chair and went to the bedroom. There she rummaged in the back of a closet and brought out a large satchel; the NU emblem, an exaggeration of horns she thought quite stirring, still could be seen on its well-worn surface. She put a few personal things into a compartment in one of its sides, and carrying it back to her desk began to organize papers into folders and folders into notebooks. Then carefully she arranged the notebooks in the satchel. Stacking up a pile of earth books on the corner of the desk she looked over their titles taking only two, her personally annotated copies of Margaret Meade's Male and Female, and John Stuart Mills' The Subjection of Women. She looked around the room a moment, then slid the bolt locks on the windows - they were narrow but not too narrow to block the entrance to some snooping fiend. No need to check her departure with anyone; until the faculty conference set four weeks away she answered to no one. She carefully set the locks on the doors, checked for the keys on her belt, slammed the door behind her and tested the knob. The locks had frozen in place.

Within moments she was in the transport stream headed for Nefarious. Literally in no time she was in sight of the towers and turrets of that great institution. Even in the virescent light it seemed all shadows. To her mind they called up its seriousness, its solemnity, and the great work that was going on there in the cubicles of intellect, the labs, the classrooms, the seminar cells, the lecture halls, and the research niches. Great diabolic germs of ideas were

hatching here every day, but none as virulent as hers. That belief gave her a delicious thrill and its mix with cutting impatience made the final sensation even more pleasant.

Nefarious University had been the mother of many demon minds, nurturing them in all the sciences effective for the Realm's causes. Its resources lay both in brilliant professors who passed on their respective disciplines to generations of up and coming tempters, and in the most complete and capacious facilities and technical labs in all Hell. A. Spicerot if she had any emotion close to love, doted on Nefarious U. It truly had been her mother; she had no other.

Anarky was a product of the Diablos Futurus Lab and the Early-Push Care for the Immature; it wasn't till she entered N.U. that she felt she knew what it meant for earthlings to have a home, though she didn't dwell on it. She found that all of her capacities were provided with a comparable formation grid and she strode into the possibilities with all the force of her young life. Of the resources at her talon-tips, none became more a surrogate womb than the Abbadon Library. Here she allowed herself to be formed day after glaucous day, and often far into Hells' burnt night.

The Nefarious University library overflowed with books, league after league of volumes. All of them had been written by humans. No demon had yet produced a book - short theses, brief dissertations, salient ideas jotted down, but true to their indolent nature they only planted these as potent affirmations, letting the human mind translate the defiant, angry impulses into reasoning that other humans could follow. Since HAM's brilliant success with the first humans, their descendants had had a natural receptivity to autonomy. Such inspiration was not difficult to place in their minds when sent through the right channels. Actually, sometimes humans begged the underpowers for recusant ideas they might capitalize on.

At the library in this moment in history the incoming titles were so numerous that the staff had had to be doubled, and a special squad of workers had been appointed to catalogue books by Catholic authors alone. This was such a reversal of the usual slow fortunes among those writers that HAM through his lowararchy had held a special celebration in honor of the Archdemons responsible for the breakthrough.

There had been a time within recent memory when a Catholic book appearing in Nefarious U library was a curiosity, and still had to be handled with great care for fear of deadly contamination. Now the undergrads and graduate students alike studied over these newest acquisitions gaining insights that would be plowed back into earth's academic thinking. Such inbred thought was especially popular in the social sciences. Now even the impregnable reason that had been the walls of the Old Citadel were breached, and in Underworld none believed that the great bastion of sanity in the world could pull herself together in time for a counterattack of any size to be launched. It was this weakness that Spicerot intended to use when she led the final assault.

"Now entering the Twenty-first Century all hellishness was in a good place," she thought. "There were theologians in the Bastion who even hated the idea of bastion - elitist, isolationist, defensive, they said; that too was a step forward. We have succeeded in making them think there are no spiritual forces opposed to them. We've drawn them out of the bastion. Of course, they always came out on their forays of so-called love," she spat, just

saying the word,” all that desire for unity with everyone. Hah! They no longer need that dreadful daily meal to sustain their fight against us, not the rest and refreshment the Bastion with its staunch pillars, thick walls and guarded doors gave them when they limped, world-weary, back within her gates. We have introduced them to burn-out, to no place for retreat where they can find sustenance and strength in their aged sureties. Down with the Bastion! Down with its whole hierarchical efficiency that provides all that surety, safety, rest and refreshment. Down with the Bastion!”

“It’s surprising how the slogan has caught on, but I digress, I was thinking, oh yes, how easy it has been to gain theologians to our side. Snookeribs should gain a ribbon at least for Creation Theology - not much of a book, but its influence is growing, oh, the witchery of the right woman! That Starhawk, she’s one! . . . a ribbon at least. And ho! Cunningham. He has been useful, teaching a whole class of deacons on more than one occasion that the Fall was not a Fall but a Rise. Exactly as we see it! Cunning, but gullible; ham, and there’s no refuting that! He does have both qualities that please the Master. Who likes attention and acclaim more? Who overacts, exaggerates, and overdoes better? A priest, is he? His only principle is to be avant-garde. The bigger they are in ego, the lower they plummet and not to acclaim. . . . but to the palate.” She smacked the fleshy folds around the orifice that was her mouth, making a loud slurp.

There was great enthusiasm among the intelligentsia of demons (the ones our little story will be exclusively about - this is not to mislead the reader into thinking it the only rank of fallen angels - there are as many types of demons as there are of humans, even more because deviants are so attractive for demon forms, while not attractive at all for humans, or at least not till the last half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. But as yet, the grip of these deviations has not the same hold on earth as in Hell. However, within a few more decades aberrations of the human being will be much more common in the western world, as common as cloven-footed humans are where babies have been commonly sold to Satan for “powers”). The student types in Hell were in stiff competition for the honors that would come to them upon the successful publication of literature that they could prove they inspired. Lately the field was wide open for the enterprising, and the effects were astoundingly productive - humans believed everything they read that was negative about faith and morality - especially about the Bastion; nothing was checked and lies were as good as gold. The rush was on to mine as many souls as this rich lode would spew into the caverns of the damned. Previously things had been different. It was only with great effort that a good detrimental found its way into public favor. But even then there had been a spattering of great successes.

Some old archfiends still wore their decorations, ribbons and medals of commendation on which were woven or engraved titles of works for which the inspirer received full credit. Sinkhole labored under the huge diamond studded medal that commemorated Karl Marx’s Communist Manifesto. When Infamous had received a similar one for Mein Kampf the two old cousins had retired from the field. Just wearing their pride around their necks was all the energy they could muster. The fact that the weight made them miserable never was misery enough to think of giving up the adulation of the lesser devils. All of these hoped someday to be the agent of inspiration to the human who would write something that would bring down as many souls. Comte’s Positive Philosophy, Nietzsche’s Thus Spoke Zarathustra, B.F. Skinner’s Beyond Freedom and Dignity, deBeauvoir’s The Second Sex

(though she knew she had planted the seed for this book, Spicerot as a novice never got any recognition for it, rather a older demon who had worked with Sartre took the credit and wore the medal) these, among uncounted other masterworks, had accelerated the delevation of the course of mankind, and had brought glory to the chests of many imps.

But lately the Bedecked By Bedlam Co. had been swamped with orders by the awards committee as American nuns, priests, and their cohorts fed earth's publishers with the most amusing documents. Many a novice was gaining his ribbons too early and too easily, groused the old-timers, with ideas that ware so naive that any greenhorn right out of First Demonology could have planted them. It certainly wasn't like it used to be.

The Abaddon Library was not only a complete compendium of all human literature that had furthered Hell's cause over the centuries of human history, but it had another singular department. A whole wing of the building was designated by a large brass embossed plaque which read simply Audio-Visuals (to be distinguished from Media, which had it own immensely important college department), but unlike such two dimensional (or three, counting the audio dimension) of earth facilities, it offered a five dimensional experience of entering into the victorious actions of Underworld in Earth's history. There was no catalogue of defeats, these ware wiped from all the memory tapes of Hell along with the demons responsible, nor was there any recognition that the Enemy had been able to use every defeat for His own purposes, whenever men had allowed it. Thank HAM, they didn't often allow it! With all His power of mind and spirit His Abysmal Majesty had not been able to keep this inevitable from happening now and then. There was a real war going on up there.

But these same powers did enable Nefarious to offer Audio-Visual experience to any demon whose project would benefit from the destructive pedantry of the ages. It was not a well-used facility. As we have explained, most demons in training did only the minimum requirements - the time and effort of a couple of hundred hell-years. True to their nature, they felt this was quite enough.

However, some interest lay in the first hand observation of the great Egos of the past and how they had been won to Hell; how the first implanted grains of tangential thinking had been managed, how the first decision contra-charity, pro-pride had been stimulated, usually in childish rebellion against discipline, or in bitter anger at the vicissitudes of life - those moments in the lives of Hitler, Napoleon, Stalin and Rasputin, as well as numbers of fanatically evil men and women whose names wore almost unknown on earth, but who wore models of villainy in Hell, the Susie Stops, Aaron Lechvitches, and John Snyders. These, like the grandfathers of the great Cicilian families, were all especially popular because the participants had claimed the Name... some, even the Body and Blood. Ack! Less interest was shown in the really old tyrants -Tiglath Pileser, the Ramses', or even Caligula and Nero, because in those days HAM appeared to have had the world firmly in his grasp. . . well, except for those insignificant Hebrews.

Anarky's interest in the earliest things on earth was nearly unprecedented. No imagination in Hell outside of His Abysmal himself had quite connected to understanding the real importance of the very first antecedent. Most students, and even their teachers, thought that the later blooms on the gnarled weed tree of Sin

were collectors' items, strong and virile and full of the seeds of death and misery - eagerly to be sought for their lessons, where the earlier shoots had born good stuff for Hell, but paled in comparison with the recent.

Perhaps that was so, the twentieth century had been remarkable, but Anarky somehow sensed that in observing the corruption of men of the later ages, a basic key, a principle to the final devastation of earth, was being overlooked. Somehow, the potency of the most vicious lie, the most towering vice, the most indomitable hatred, the most unquenchable bitterness, and the most overweening pride was neutralized by the simplest, most easily overlooked thing - a slave's sacrificial act, a child's outstretched arms, a yielded woman's smile, a tortured prisoner's forgiveness. Hell could not get this idea into its head, even HAM with all his intelligence could not believe his momentum stopped so radically, so easily, by such unspeakable weakness. His loathing of less than complete self-possession, of less than total self-direction, of anything other than pure autonomy blinded him. The Enemy's trust in such things was beyond madness to HAM, it was an unthinkable concept. It had no entrance into his mental processes. And it had been so long that way, that the origin of the defect was lost completely to himself. Gods are autonomous. Autonomy alone is power. He had always been autonomous, had he not? And therein, the absolute incapacity to understand the Enemy's reliance on and trust in weakness, lay Lucifer's Achilles' heel.

Anarky had the same inherent mind-set exhibiting the same truncated intelligence, and though she realized powerlessness was woman's given lot, she could understand its potential from heaven's point of view no better than her master. She simply loathed it. It infuriated her. She could not link it with the fact that the woman stamped upon all around her an indelible mode of life; if she was integral and lived by her integrity that mode was one way, if she was not, the other. Such power in a creature that appeared to be powerless, Anarky never comprehended.

She hated real women as much as she hated weakness and for the same reasons. She sensed that woman had been the key from the beginning and was even now the heart of the Enemy's reconstruction plan for earth, but she was unable to grasp that it was her submission that made it so. Of all attitudes deleterious to hell's advances, submission was the worst. Yet, demons did not know that - they only knew they hated it because it was anti-autonomous. They twisted its meaning to be sick groveling in every way they could. Hell does not promote its values hypocritically. Its citizens really believe that power, place, authority, independence and self-interest are superior qualities. Therefore, the woman! Ach! To be changed! A sure defeat to the Enemy who foolishly put his hope in her.

On a sudden impulse as an undergraduate Anarky had decided one day to use the resources of Audio-Visual to visit perfect creation before the angels with their flaming swords wore set to guard the garden - that untarnished, glowing place that God made for His Image and Likeness, Man. She would not have expressed it in this way, of course, and for a while she had only toyed with the idea. At first it seemed to her needless; her Master had been victorious over the Enemy because of his superior understanding of reality (it is possible that critics are better at understanding art than artists, and Anarky accepted that HAM had better grasped the uses of creation than its Creator). There was no need to view the occasion, it was simple and easily grasped.

After she convinced herself that there might be something gained after all, she then stumbled against a fear. Earth was difficult for the kind of senses demons have; it still had traces of deep beauty and that meant pain, not to speak of the piercing agony meted out by the angelic forces that worked there. What would it be like to see the place before Hell had tempered its fierce colors and sharp sounds, its blatant forms and nose-burning odors? Fearful! But fear was the kind of thing that could motivate Anarky, so its deterrent in the end actually worked in reverse, making her more inclined to take the risk.

Because of fierce angel guards, no one may revisit Perfection, not even in imagination. It is beyond the possibilities of those on earth or in hell. (Interesting - that humans are said to live "on" earth, mere transients, while demons, along with their human-perverts are said to be "in" hell, ingurgitated forever.) No human author can pierce the mystery of that pre-Fall Paradise because the tactics of HAM have so successfully removed earthlings from its understanding. But Anarky, after yielding to the deciding impulse, was able through the dark powers of Hell to whirl back through the channels of time and observe as through a dense, darkened lens what it was that had motivated the hatred of her Mighty Progenitor. It was an experience so excruciating that it emblazoned in her breast a smaller and weaker, but proportional hatred of the same kind and type as his - all the hatred she could hold within her smaller, weaker frame.

Chapter IX

Her first sight of Eden even through this warped lens was - earth would call it fearsome, searing beauty, but Anarky immediately loathed it with her whole being; it was . . . noxious, hideous! A panorama of absolute fittedness, of serene order, of peace that bathed the senses with an overwhelming calm, heightening them to receive ever more images of grace-filled splendor, overpowered her demonic nature. Mountains, lower hills, valleys, lakes, vegetation, all in knifing, penetrating color were framed in total completeness of shape to function.

She was thrown back physically by it, repelled into a dervish-like spin, where dizziness and violent nausea finally ended in unconsciousness. When she came to, it took all her force of will, and the remembrance of what she was called by her demon nature of HAM to do, to resolve to look into that glass again. She recalled that her Master had begun his work in this place, that he had not only looked upon it, but had entered into it, and that it was in this realm he had won his spectacular victory over the Enemy. If she were to succeed to descending to the lowest depths, to the right hand of the seat of power, she would need to understand thoroughly this victory where the fountainhead of HAM's hatred and power lay.

The vertigo threatened to undo her again if she so much as opened her eyes to the light - that fatal blue and golden brilliance, of earth, sky and sun. What could she do? She called down, crying to the strength of all the pagan gods who had walked this scene unscathed, and then remembered that their powers came only after the Heroic Extradition (HAM's expulsion from heaven), while she was attempting a look into a world that lay before time began.

But hatred can make a being as hard as steel, and she had the open channel behind her back to Hell. She would lie here until she had drawn enough of that awful strength to withstand the sights that she would see. She would see! She would watch the Masterful at his great work, and gain the key to bringing more of earth out of the dreadful golden light and into the abysmal dark that was her native realm. She would convert herself, if necessary, into some form that could tolerate the light for at least short periods of time. Even HAM had had to take a form with glaucous-like skin that could cling to shadowed rocks, follow trenches, and wind among dark foliage.

For her it must be something small, something capable of crawling under that rock and looking through the scope without the blast of intolerable light. With that, another violent whirl brought her down into the shape of a hard black beetle, the kind that curls its body into a rolling ball. That shape, now carried by the momentum of the convulsion, was propelled under the convenient stone.

With this shell acting as dark protection, a gift from the depths of underworld, Anarky S. Spicerot viewed Eden the way Creation was before the intrusion of any of the thoughts or values of her sphere. Of course, she never saw it as it was, Hell did not have the power for that in its Audio visuals; she saw it only as they could catch it with their technologies, distorted and dim. Had its reality been evident to her, she could not have borne the truth of it even in the form of a hard shelled beetle from the underside of a basalt rock.

Her insect digestive system no longer reeled, her big beetle eyes with their multi-facets brought in the scene before her as with a half sphere lens, yet compartmentalized. She hadn't realized that those eyes would see only in black and white, but that was an effective filter for the sickening sights she had first experienced. Now she could get down to business. Black and white, shades of gray in the garish light of the great globe, that was the way she was accustomed to seeing things. Color! The Enemy had gone to grotesque lengths in developing it and was obviously meaning it for those who, like him, had time for meaningless, unproductive what did they call it? Contemplation. Lamentable!

The scene before her was not static, fronds of tree branches swayed above the rolling landscape, birds - she was glad that she saw no color, she had had to survive on earth as it is after HAM's conquest, and that was quite bad enough. She was sure that before the victory of the Heroic Extradition things like birds were even more eye hurting fantastical. In the background to her left grew a meadow of grey flowers. Ahh, the congenial qualities of beetle eyes. Flowers, fecundity, frilly enticements leading not to orgy but to progeny - vile!

But what was bounding around out there? Some furry creatures were diving up and down, round and round, doing something humans call "games." Anarky hated games. Despite humans' misconceptions, there are no games in Hell, nothing but business. It was part of the Deception that made humans think Hell was fun. No demon thought so. If sounds could travel through the glass barrier, these creatures no doubt were making animal laughing noises. A dog and cat? Big and rough looking for that. A wolf? Yes a wolf, and a . . . what did they call those cat things with the great fuzzy paws that were now all four in the air as the wolf dragged this creature through the flowers by the tail ?

Unfortunately, only a part of the game. A lynx! They ended by tumbling over a shining berry bush which distracted their attention from each other. Shaking off blooms they settled down side by side munching the fruit till dark streams of juice fell off their jowls. What? Berry juice, not blood? No meat! Disgusting that two such opposite kinds of thing should be amenable to each other.

Such an insipid world the Enemy had formed! How it had needed the master touch from the first! Struggle, fight, enmity, hate, and best of all fear, had brought some interest to a world meant for placid, uneventful, pleasurable existence. Whose dander could be raised watching animals touse each other in the grass? To think! There might have been no arenas with the wonders of what tooth and claw could do to human flesh. How that caused the centroid to race, the creative energies to flow!

At this Anarky relaxed out of her tight spherical shape. Just thinking about how HAM had changed things revived her. She could tolerate watching all this mawkish unanimity, all this pointless play, realizing that His Abysmal had effectively reversed it all by bringing the spine tingling possibilities of fear into a world soft without challenge, unworried and unmotivated without death, disease, and misery. He had brought real life to the place - the daily threat of death.

"Just look what death was doing on earth now. Developments," she thought, "were all running Hell's way. There was scarcely a child, (those whose parents surrounded them with the protection of the Name were exceptions) who did not lie awake at night trying to imagine what it would be like to be shot in

a drive-by shooting, or to be assaulted by a depraved maniac. In many places children could still fear becoming flaming torches, running through the shambles of their homes, stumbling over the bodies of their parents, brothers and sisters. Uncounted numbers of these little toads could count on starving. And more and more adults, secure in their civilized, urbane refinement, did not even know the name that could save them . . . Oh, Hell, how great your works!"

Watching the big cat, now washing his wooly paws and pulling them rigorously over his face and whiskers, while its companion fell instantly asleep, spread-eagled on the grass, she swallowed all the concord by reminding herself again it did not last.

"Well, is there nothing else going on here? Just a lot of foolish tumbling, eating and sleeping animals? Soft wind, I suppose; warm sun, color, so called beauty. Nauseating, pure and simple. What good is it? What can be gained by it? A good Chamber of Commerce could soon change all this. Sell it. Inspire greed; bring in controlling forces, struggle and fight. Add some interest to the stuff of life. But by itself? Useless. Treacherous to Hell - nauseous."

She stopped and smiled a buggish smile, but of course, all the beauty should not distress her, the great mountains beyond the trees, the limpid lake reflecting them, the frothy stream jumping its way in cataracts over rocks and dimpling up in pools, only to fall away on its merry course. "I must not forget, this has all been brought to heel by HAM. All such places on earth are or soon will be completely exploited, the cause of envy and distress, thoroughly polluted. The creation begun through HIM but finished by HAM."

At that moment out of the bottom of the half bowl screen of her vision, in a dozen facets of multiple images, came two walking side by side. They were intent on conversation, not looking into each other's faces, taking in only, it seemed, the stones on the ground, the small things below their feet. They were absorbed by listening and speaking alternately. Anarky was used to not being able to hear intimate things. Earth work was hampered by the inviolability of some human thoughts. Oh, devils could program it easy enough to suit themselves, but they could not listen in, so to speak, on the thoughts of the heart when it came from the spirit, nor on anything like prayer. Those wave lengths were jammed to demons. So though it was the glass that kept her from hearing this conversation, it gave her the same impression, as with some of her earth victims, of having to guess the thoughts.

She was keen on watching expressions, on reading movements of the body, in order to assess whether the victim was moving toward her suggestions or away. What she read on the faces and in the bodies of these two amazing humans, she was not prepared for, and found so intensely disagreeable that involuntarily she found her beetle body rolled again into its tight ball. Various strong impulses seized her. Enough of this torture! Back down the tunnel and home! How good the colors of home - the greenish side of gray; how comforting the rumbling fires behind Hadesial, why had she ever thought them the least bit threatening? This effort was untoward. It could lead to nothing worthwhile for her.

But in the dark and musky odor of the curled bug shell, her head eventually cleared. "I came here with a goal. It was...It was... to . . . to . . .gain more understanding of how. . . of how the Majesty Below won earth, to gain his VIEW, TO GAIN HIS HATE! I'M ALMOST THERE. THE SECRET IS SOON TO

BE REVEALED. THESE ARE THE TWO HE CONQUERED."

At the end as she spewed out these words with increasing violence. She was forced to unroll, almost drowned by her own ooze. But it was all right. She was ready to face the scene again.

"I shall not turn back now. Yes, I've never been so miserable. When I open my eyes, I expect to see the most horrible of all sights for us who are enlightened, but I can watch, I will see; soon into this scenario My Master comes. He will save me by his might to undo all that I will now see before me. I will to be at his Right Hand and this shall be my making. (But, my HAM! no wonder this research has not been done thoroughly before!)" With these thoughts, she had opened up her compound eyes.

The two now sat close by. The woman reclined. The man sat upright where he could interpret her smooth forehead, construe her lips, translate the move of her hands and where he could look into her clear gray eyes (Anarky could not tell their color because everything was gray, but they were gray). It didn't seem there were words flowing between them much of the time, but communication was complete. For her part, the woman knew him through and through, every blink of his eye was read, every swell of his breath-filled chest, ripple of muscle, and expansion of nostril was noted on an inner scroll in an exuberant script. She found him as lucid as the waters in the nearby stream. She was not at all clear to him. It was exactly her mysteries that he watched and pondered and that enticed him. She would never be dull to him. Like the soft shades changing on a shimmering silk, her opalescent incomprehensibility intrigued him, inspired him. A part of him, he found her by far the most glorious part. A part of her, she found him by far the most understandable part. They recognized themselves as both two and one; a two never to be the same; a one never to be divided. Somewhere they had a trace of a memory that there was a time when they were undifferentiated . . . but this was better. One thing able to love itself because it was two.

And the love. Where did it come from? What was it? It flowed between them, in them, and around them. It brought them to their Friend, singly and together. There, in the Presence of the Friend, they both stood side by side. With the Friend they were always three in one. Not of their substance, nevertheless in Love He condescended to them as equal. He who was All was only Friend. They looked into His eyes, they read His thoughts with an ability to do so that He had given them. In this way they discovered His Plan. Each evening when they joined Him they anticipated reading more of that glorious Plan. The three of them together seemed to elicit it in their complete communion. The Plan was their fun. It opened up all kinds of joys to them, all kinds of adventures that ended only in original and expansive applicability of their gifts to nature and of the gifts of nature to them and to their world. It was marvelous fun! Nature yielded to them gladly because the result only enhanced her.

Then . . . HE came!

The rock slammed over and pushed Anarky's shelled body, eyes and all into the dirt, pinning her beneath its massive weight.

Side by side, and yet never more than one. With HIM they looked no more at each other. He became their Other. He was both beyond comprehension and crystal clear. They knew Him but were awed by their unknowing. They knew Him and at the same moment were thoroughly known. In eternal moments

they breathed in what He gave them which was all. And they gave back to Him themselves, together one. Such a juncture found no thing just a realm of joy, the union of two in One. And love flowed in, through, between, and all-round: a current, an eddy, a swirl, a wave of union. But more a Person. A Person of Union. Sometimes in a most human way they saw six eyes surrounding them, multitudes of wings, Fire and Cloud, and again their own eyes would reflect from the shimmering cloud, six, eight, ten eyes a spinning wheel of gleaming chrysolite and a dance of cosmic magnitude in which they were the stars. Their Friend was their Everything and He had given each to each. It was because of the Friend that they were lovers, eternal lovers in an upward spiraling earth dance that would never end, on a planet just made for them, traveling at near the speed of light, the moment eternal.

Sometimes, just sometimes, and very special times, with specially elevated sight, they were able to briefly, fleetingly "see" that the Friend was so happy and wonderful because He was complete. That is, He was not a solitary Himself. In these glistening moments, often right at dawn, they realized Him THREE. Then they knew that what they shared with Him was not there just because they were there. It was a great relief. He did not need them for completeness; He was merely sharing with them a great secret of His being, of His creativity, of His ecstasy, by being with them, two . . . or wasn't it three? It was something He owned with Himself, a One in Three, a Three in One. And they were spared all pressures to make Him happy.

It was only concern for their happiness that He proscribed for them an attitude, a direction to face towards Him. They could turn the other way, assume another attitude, of course. He was a Friend, and friendship meant freedom. "But, dear, dear hearts, I love, " they heard Him say, "let us keep reading each other's eyes, let us together unfold the Plan, let us always be happy together. Let us abide together as we do. I have made you to be like Us. We, Second and Third, read the eyes of the First. Woman, for love, for happiness, read the eyes of your first!" Man and woman, together enraptured, saw the glory of the Three and were engulfed with a beatific love. Why would freedom ever be other than the base from which they eagerly chose to be constant with such a Friend?

Wriggling to get loose absorbed Anarky's energies for how long? When finally she thrashed to the convergence of rock and air, gulped a breath, and rubbed the grime from her eyes with stubby jointed front legs, the Friend was gone and the two were walking away.

What of their relationship did Anarky realize? Nothing. Or almost nothing. She had severe difficulties keeping the present scene in focus. What she saw that most enraged her was the woman who read the eyes of the man, followed the thoughts of the man. That supple body, expressing fluid giving, bent toward him, yet spoke of complete integration self-owned. She gave. There was no compulsion. She gave. There was no need. She gave. The two, slowly ambling into the trees, through the duplication of her lenses appeared to be a multitude of men and women, and then because of some visual quirk they looked like only one. It was confusing and churned up her threatened vertigo. But always the woman, fully cognizant, bent and gave, yielded and bestowed her full self, body and soul, upon him.

"Oh, Great HAM, Intrude," screamed the convulsed Anarky.

Consciousness left her. This time, reviving, the problem was shivering. The fast time of hell was bringing the chinch under the rock quickly to the close of its life. The trembling was so aggravated that focusing the composite eyes on any one thing was impossible. She could make neither head nor tail of the impressions impinging on her insect senses. Again she fought back convulsive spasms. She began to forget what she was there for; the dizziness was doing something funny to her thoughts. Then she realized that she had exceeded the life span of the creature she had assumed. It was dying. She would have to risk it, leave the protective shell and take up a new beetle identity. Perhaps in this time-consuming experiment she'd altogether forget she was an angelic being with powers and remain a slithering bug the rest of her days. With great pain she managed a second transformation, but found even after burying her head in her turbid belly for an indefinite duration, this time the dizziness and nausea didn't diminish. Her position was getting precarious; how long would she dare to maintain this place? Just why had she come? What was the point of it? She was forgetting.

At the height of her mental and physical distress she opened the multitude of facets of her left eye. Close to her beyond the crystal barrier a thick dark line moved slowly, ominously, which caught in each lens gave her distraught mind the impression of a hundred purulent black maggots. The effect was immediate calm, even before the images melded. Maggots she understood.

Chapter X

Her Master! As it focused and was resolved into but one form, she recognized the scene of wriggling worms. It was His Abysmal Majesty transformed into an awe-inducing creature. Thick, flat head; staring, mesmeric eyes; flicking flame of tongue; fangs framing rough teeth upon a non-hinged jaw. Glorious! Adapted perfectly to counter the painful excesses of light and color in this alien realm. A ringed powerful body, all muscle toned and honed, cold, nothing of excess, meant for cruel business. Marvelous! Spicerot felt that strength flow through her despite the place she was so far removed in actual time and space. It thrilled her and chilled her fevered beetle body, bringing back its normal clammy function. All creatures above earth, on earth and below the earth, worship! Anarky worshipped her Great HAM.

His glacial, determined pace through the grasses, over the stones, clinging magnetically to the large rocks, inexorable strength exuding through the armor scales, rounding cautiously but pitilessly the trees, always in the shades and shadows, her fascinated eyes followed him on. In the distance on a grassy knoll the woman reclined beneath the spreading arms of a great tree. Its roots, like but unlike the ground-hugging dragon, encircled the woman, but protectively.

The leaves of this majestic plant, whose crown brushed the heavens, were plates of emerald green with golden edges which spun off sun-rays like shooting fire, and beneath each hung a magnificent shining fruit, original and unduplicated anywhere in the garden. The Tree of Life! To Anarky its gray form, white fire and baubles were only a distraction; she wanted to fill her honeycombed vision with nothing but the sensual power of the dark beast approaching - the Beast of Death.

Among the great, tenacious roots, the peristalsing creature kept out of the woman's sight. Nothing in her world was threatening. Fear was an emotion that had never been experienced here. Lifting himself stealthily up the giant bole, he fought gravity winding slowly round and round while below she occupied herself with turning the newly given facet of Plan round and round her faculties of intuition.

This was one of her favorite times of the day. Alone, yet aware of Presence of Friend in and beside her. Alone, but one with her beloved who was also enjoying a space and a solitude. Alone to feel all of who and what she was to the great Plan, and free to build in her imagination the working out of her contribution to it, to think of it, to move it this way, and then that, till suddenly .. coming together it flashed whole into her vision. Then she could not wait to run and find him, to share, and to watch while his practical know-how, his detailed working-out came round to endorse her vision or negate it. She didn't care which. Many times the process might be gone through, each time the best of pleasure, until at last together, they returned it polished to the Friend, a creative formulation, an invention, upon which they would all act together to build, to form, to erect, to coin, to organize, to put together, to develop, to establish, to structure, fabric, forge, carve, raise, rear, establish, compose, generate, induce, contrive or breed.

The woman meditated, twisting the long grass and flowers among which she lay into a rope which finally she put over her shoulders, crossed between her breasts and tied around her waist - a fitting adornment to her comely form. While she was absorbed in thought and hand, the heavy Liar rested, twined behind and above her in the tree.

What followed Anarky strained to watch. She could not hear the words, she could not mark the time it took. Her sense of time, she knew was far from the reality of what she observed. She understood she viewed a place where time meant nothing. The planet itself, still at the speed of light had something to do with it. It was before the planet was slowed by its Fall from the Enemy's order, before the establishment of the lumbering encumbrances of Hell.

When the woman first saw Spicerot's Master she was only curious. Friendly and curious. She stood up and went over to the blunt nose and rapacious tongue as they waggled this way and that in a flat arc before her face. She reached out her hand and stroked the metallic scales and traced their fantastic design. What did HAM say to that? Anarky's spine tingled. Laughing at this absurd kink in God's creation, the woman even clicked her nail against his fang. Anarky winced. But His Quenchless had complete control.

From then on, it must have been eons of hell time, the two of them conversed. Gradually, oh so gradually Anarky found it necessary to go through uncounted metamorphoses under her stone while she watched the poison work. And work it did! The demon beetle knew now why it had to be the woman whom her Master perverted. She alone exemplified the whole tone and tenor of this perfect, unblemished realm. Upon her acceptance, her yielding, her accommodation, her "yes," all rested, her husband and her own perfect union, the union of them as couple to the Enemy.

Union! A.S.S. despised it. No individuality in union. No independence in union. No martyred isolation in union. No pride. This woman was the plinth upon which the whole wretched column of unified creation rested. Her Yes! Her obedience to the Enemy, and then because of His miserable Plan, her obedience to that complementary other self, the man, was the essential that both began and closed the circle of the Enemy's order of created things. Within her singular form there was a soul that fit it like a hand a glove. That form spoke of yielding, of receiving, of incipient fruitfulness, nurture, life forever, and splendors of happiness. All of it contrary, clashing, repugnant to what His Quenchless Avidity had staked his life on. The woman must be taught to say, "no." The plinth must be jarred, turned up, disturbed, unset. Then the whole structure would come crashing down, down, down into the grasp of HAM.

LET THE ENEMY THROW HIM OUT OF HEAVEN! HE'D HAVE HIS REALM AND THE ENEMY'S TOO! AND HE'D HAVE IT THROUGH THE VERY ONE THE ENEMY TRUSTED MOST! hssssssstttt THE VERY ONE HE'D TAUGHT TO TRUST HIM MOST.

OH! HOW THIS WORLD WOULD BE WHEN HAM TURNED IT ROUND TO HIMSELF, TO HIS WAY OF ORDERING THINGS! FEMALE! hsssssst SHE WOULD BE HIS TO HATE, TO TORTURE AND TO DISTRACT FOREVER.

Through her continuing loss of real selfhood he would control the world. Her very intuition could be used to work against her, but first she must be wrenched from relying on man's judgment, man's governance - man who only wanted her complete happiness. Have her feel it a disgrace and injustice that the essential balance rested in the other one, in her complement. Have her believe she had it all, that her own judgment and discernment were as

strong, as well formed, and inerrant as anybody's. Plant pride in place of humility. Trusting in only the shadow she possessed of those grave qualities, and not the full reality, HAM would control her. Yes, Spicerot could see clearly, woman was the one who must be claimed for hell's point of view; then all else was written.

From beneath her shield of stone an invincible hatred of the Enemy and his maudlin realm mushroomed inside of Anarky Spicerot. And from that same dark place she coalesced an image of the despised woman, identifying as totally as her derivative self could, with the hatred of her Master for the real feminine.

Enthralled she watched him guide the woman over to a companion tree, a forbidden tree, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The woman had had no interest in it at all. She wanted only to know her lover's and their Lover's will, reading it in both their eyes, what could possibly be gained by knowing good and evil? All was good when following the Will.

Spicerot was thrilled as the Dragon, by some subtle reasoning, enticed her past her childlike innocence; she curled up with paroxysms of glee while her Master guided the fruit from the Untouchable Tree to the woman's mouth, and was buggishly ebullient at the gloomy, suspicious visage that replaced the radiance on that face. She was intoxicated with the frigid alienation that exuded from the scene as the man unblinkingly followed his wife's lead even against the sure knowledge of his tremendous loss. She drank in that alienation in great draughts. Ahhh, the sweet liqueurs of Hell! Might she always be drunk in them! Might she always be found floating on their surface like a rat drowned in a barrel of beer.

Her rapture found her quite unprepared for a sudden furious shaking of the ground, total blackness that swallowed up the screen through which she viewed Eden, and a violent cracking of the great stone which had been her protection. In a flash of perception and decision, and none too soon, she retrieved her demon form, whirled to the departure point and found herself, thoroughly weak and depleted on the projection pad in Audio Visuals.

The experience was embossed on her memory, it motivated her beyond all demons, she walked with it, ate it, and slept it. It was, she knew, her blank check to the storehouses of a Hell which would be hers! The New Eden, now they dared name it "New Jerusalem," it could be turned to Hell the same way! The very same way! Some old prophet in The Book had foretold it, "And upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate . . ." The bearer of fertility, in the wrong place, turned around, inverted, would be the bearer of desolation. The walls of the Bastion were breached, the way had been made, it only remained for her to crown it all with her surpassing achievement of setting up the "desolating sacrilege in the Holy place."

HAM had a proficient intelligence arm in his government. The same demons whose effectiveness resulted in secret police tactics on earth wherever they were found, from the SS to the NKBG, to those horrors of private armies in Central America, to the torturers in Chile and Iran, and the prison camps of Bosnia, oversaw his own agency. The reports they gave him about Anarky's activities including this hasty trip back to NU brought him great satisfaction and no particular alarm. He suspected that her vaulting ambition might go beyond most of the lowerarchy, but he had no thought that he could not control her. In fact, he looked forward to the day of the inevitable showdown with a licking of his celebrated lips. In the meantime she was as effective as any demon since the Reformation (there were, of course, great efforts made on both sides of that crucial conflict which carried the final victory) and she was coming close to grasping the Real Hatred.

Chapter XI

Ellen Eagen followed her children at a distance. Letty was holding two ends of a piece of clothesline looped around Tommy's middle, and letting the wild horse pull her laughing down the sidewalk. Her cold was better. Somehow they both looked healthier, Ellen thought. The weather was still on the blustery side. Winter was clearly around the corner, but at least the sun was shining. What a different day it was from Friday! Could so much happen in a weekend? She looked at the armful of golden chrysanthemums Audrey had just cut from her garden; their pungent, clean smell went with the day. No sweet lily valley perfume would be as right for her to be bearing along as she went back to face her life.

Things would be better, she was sure of that, but it meant hard work, clear thinking, devoted following of the transforming covenant which she now only sensed, but which brought hope. Before she had been living haphazardly. She hadn't known what her womanhood meant for her or Joe, or how aligning it with the Will of God . . . well, words made it sound very heavy, but in her heart she knew the covenant she was embracing was anything but heavy. "Take my yoke upon you," Audrey had read, "for my yoke is easy and my burden light."

Proof of that was Audrey herself a widow, alone now, but living a life that exuded fullness, in a home that radiated order and beauty in all its modesty. She had found "the covenant," as she called it, the ordering of the loving Father, all to her benefit. Both she and her Alvin had discovered the covenant, and it had brought them through years of practice into a productive and peaceful co-habitation; that is, a living together that few men and women ever experience. By it they had healed each other of the broken sexuality they'd inherited from their particular heritages.

Alvin, from a tyrannical Irish Catholicism, humorous only in turn of phrase, thought his word should be heeded as instant command. His quick and ready temper had hammered down a woman who had little self confidence to begin with. But his heart had been right with God, and over the years slowly, with difficulty, he learned that the covenant meant not power and prestige for him, but service to his Audrey and their family. Oh, yes, he ordered them, if you meant by that that he provided the necessary governance for peace and the reaching of family goals. But the covenant demanded that he leave the center of his life circle and take his place on the periphery beside his wife and children, allowing only God to take the center. He early trained his children to live on that blessed periphery with their eyes on the One in the Center who brought all the good things into their lives. As an older man he was generous beyond his means to all fellow orbiters of that Center whose needs exceeded his own, exuding a manly gratitude and strength of compassion that marked him as a humble man after God's own heart.

Audrey missed him, and missed him deeply. Still, two years after she had stood at his graveside, she thought she saw him coming from the shed, rake in hand, or bending over a seed bed looking for the first cucumber sprout, or by the woodpile chopping logs, or coming down the walk from the mailbox thumbing through the envelopes. But she also knew a great peace.

She had learned with Alvin the secret of being one with him, but also in being a person with a strong inner core who could live quite contentedly alone. Actually she had not been able to be his co-self until that inner core had become whole. It was a painful process, but she had been built up by contact with her Lord, and devotion to His

Mother, to see herself other than the weak and fearful female she had come to marriage as. Sometimes she had had to push against Alvin with all her might to keep that blossoming strength from being squashed. He hadn't understood. He thought her rebellious. But with God's help it brought him a new respect, a new thoughtfulness about women, especially this woman he loved. He saw she meant to look him square in the eye, no longer merely the fleeting glance from below, avoiding eyes, contacting only his determined chin. He hadn't thought about women just that way.

And nether had she. In her German home, women were considered useful if they were built strong, better if they were a bit weak-minded. She had been able to play both roles. But growing closer to God and with the help of an old fashioned priest-confessor who knew Mary, she learned she could not play at being. He wouldn't have it, God that is. He had something more, much more, in mind for her as one of his women. And gradually through His Word, Jesus, He taught her what that was. It transformed them both, Alvin and her. Had she played the mouse (a physically strong mouse) he would have remained the bully. There was a day when she had gained her stature and could look him in the eye, a day when he would listen. And then the temptation was to go further, to put him under her sphere of command. But the covenant forbade it. She was to enjoy the benefit of his governance and provision, for that was the kind of creature she was made to be; it was the environment that God provided for women so they could be real women. It was the essential medium necessary for femininity to flourish.

This was what had sold Ellen on the covenant. The Scriptures Audrey had shared with her were compelling, but it was the feminine, happy being of Audrey that was irresistible. She was not young, yet she was so young! She laughed so easily, she was so free. She was not lithe, rather on the heavy side, but she was so light, moved so gracefully, and was so relaxed. She was not pretty, but no face was easier to look into, more honest or more pleasant. She was not well educated, but no spoken words were wiser or flew so surely to the middle of reality. She was all feminine in its earthiness, its non-angelic sweetness. She was the model that Ellen intended to emulate. She'd told Audrey so, and Audrey had protested. "Oh, no! It's her!" And had pointed to a small crystal figure of the contemplating virgin that graced a candlestick-table through which the morning light had, at the moment, reflected.

But Ellen, because of Audrey, had seen into the future through a small crack that had opened in her blank, windowless wall of life, and she liked the Ellen she saw moving in that future space. She even had hope for the Joe she imagined in that future. It did not depend on his embracing her new covenant. Audrey had assured her that the process worked very well from just one side, especially if that one side was the woman's. She explained how reordering her life according to the covenant, putting herself in the right place, immediately repositioned her husband to God. He might not like it; it would bring a trial, but she could pass that test if she understood. Understanding the covenant, its reason and its promise, would come slowly, but blind obedience would not work. She would need to contemplate the covenant in the words of Scripture, in the lives of the women depicted there, chiefly the Blessed Virgin, and in the saintly women of the Church.

She couldn't believe herself. Ellen was actually hurrying home. What was to meet her there? Certainly nothing cheering. She braced herself to walk into that oppressive place that even smelled of poverty and despair. It had been weeks, months, since she had had the interest to clean. Oh, she had picked up the worst sometimes, but she knew things would be bad. She looked down into the bright faces of the flowers. She must not, would not, let the old

weariness and hopelessness that had enjoyed full command of those rooms overcome her. It had seemed very reasonable that Audrey had given her a vial of Holy Water. She intended to use it first thing.

It was cold, but she saw herself throwing open the doors and windows, letting the wind blow through while she threw herself into rolling up dusty rugs, pulling down the grimy plastic curtains. Wouldn't bare windows be better than that? Rolling up shades that had been pulled down, how long? Tying stacks of old magazines, stuffing bags with outworn, outgrown clothes, ditching cans and bottles. She had a desire to get rid of everything superfluous; to see the floors bare and shining, to see the old wood table top, nicks and scratches notwithstanding, polished, to see empty windows gleaming as though without glass, to have but a few necessities in the closets and drawers. Where was the energy to come from? She counted on it coming from the same source as the vision. On that mellow surfaced table, and reflecting in it would be this bouquet of gold flame flowers. Audrey said they would keep. This quickened, spicy, lovely smell was the only odor she wanted in the whole house. She would make her poorness glorious. She would embrace it cleanly and keep its pungency on her terms, never again on the miserable terms poverty handed out.

In Aunt May's trunk, her only inheritance from any family person, there was that old picture of the child Jesus with a halo around his head; she had thought it old fashioned, dull, and trite. Her taste had run more to posters; they'd seemed up-to-date. She thought their bright colors and optimistic verses would help her moods. But bare walls were better. She'd find a place for that child Jesus, a place of honor, a place where everyone coming into the house would see it. It would be the only thing on her wall. A statement. At the moment she was full of statements - better, declarations. All of them toward God and finished with exclamation marks!

Would Joe come home? What if he didn't? She wouldn't think of that. She would prepare the house and herself as though he were coming home. The bedroom. What could she do with the bedroom? It would have to speak a new language.

And then she was at the door. She took the key from her pocket, closed her eyes, looked with her imagination into the eyes of the child Jesus in her picture, turned the key in the lock, and pushed the door open. "You kids can play out for a while, but stay in the yard. Yes?" "Yes, Mamma." And she walked inside holding the bouquet out in front of her.

Chapter XII.

As the green light of the great globe blocked out the menace of red and Hell's bilious-colored day began (she adored it) Anarky spread out her work around her in the dank gloom of Abaddon and sucked in the smells like the addict of a drug. Already her head was clearer. She came to Nefarious for refreshment like the religious go to church. She began to go through all the notes she had made for Eveology that would soon dominate first Advanced Human Psychology and then all Hadesial College, and then . . . With no sleep (demons really need none, but simply sleep for the pleasure of their dreams in which they achieve the depths of torment to humans, whetting their dull ambitions and sprucing up their sluggish natures) she was energized by the excitement she felt being back on her home ground where the initial discoveries were made. Her synthesis would finally sharpen that institution to its very most effective point. She was actually hatching something of ultimate significance for the future of Hells' rule and the defeat of the Enemy. Oh, joy! She had understood the nadir of the motivation of HAM and she had grasped what his hatred of earth was really all about. Through her new position she would find the best young demons.

Now all of them had this heritage, they knew many of the words, held many of the concepts; they knew that all obedience to the Enemy must cease. Many of them spent their lives, with varying degrees of ambition, depending directly on their hunger, to tempt earthlings to disobey the commands of the Enemy, to foil his plan for Earth and to keep its inhabitants from ever returning to the order in which they had begun their existence a Paradisiacal condition and place, the thought of which made all demons involuntarily spit. All that was clear to every one of them. But there was a key to the rapid culmination of their efforts that had been consistently overlooked, at least by most underlings, simply because it was so opposite in all its thought and ways to Hell's thoughts and ways. It was almost as though it could not be seen for what it was by Hell.

Certainly HAM had not overlooked it. How could he? He understood it, and thoroughly rejected it from the first. Yet, it burned within him like a huge ulcer eating away at his bowels with such intensity that he literally bled inside. However, lesser minds were slow to comprehend, and he was in a position of such delevation that he did not have access to their small capacities with his high voltage.

Perhaps he had made an error in allowing male and female demons, this certainly worked to dull the point of his awful intent in their demon minds. When he had made this decision to have sexuality in Hell he had experienced a great conflict which he had resolved in favor of his own lasciviousness. He knew something of the immense significance of sexual union in the plan of the Enemy, he had been present when YH...(Oh,... no,... no! the terror of that name, he was twisted with pain by just the dread word in his brain)... when...the Enemy had created them in his image, male and female. BOTH had been there, rejoicing in the THIRD. Yes, that was the Enemy, not a powerful solitary, unitary like himself, but a Shared Being, a Three in One dread..., dreadful! Agggghhhh! And the ooze of internal bleeding momentarily spurting from his mouth which, with this contemplation, had opened into an agonized gape.

He swallowed down a burning coal with obvious tormenting spasms, but it was better to cauterize it thus than to weakly bleed away. Yes, cauterized, within a time he could engage in those activities he'd opened for himself by mimicking sex in Hell, and thus continue his mockery of Heaven, which was his only pleasure. Yes, after the

Fall. . all . . ach, ach . . . again, the gurgle and the blood, again the coals and fire, oh . . .and here his curses of heaven caused the abyss to rumble and the flames to mount. . After the Rise, (Oxymoxymoron, a prized brainchild of HAM, a theologian, had influenced theologians, yes, theologians, no less, to call it so remember, Cunning-ham), his first priority had been to convert sexuality to his own designs. That might have been more ably served had he not had a voracious appetite for devouring "the other" himself. In this his own spiritual nature was not denied the perverse pleasures of overpowering and absorbing; that is how he interpreted sexual experience. To deny his minions these pleasures would have denied them participation in his nature. So he aped the Creator in providing for those like-minded fallen angels female and male forms.

Because of his presence at creation, when all the sons of Y...the Enemy sang with the morning stars, he knew that masculine and feminine were at the very Heart of things. The Heroic Extrication (which was HAM's name for the war against the heavenlies), and the resultant establishment of Hell, saw His Great and Abysmal Majesty cast into its depths. A Great Achievement! From, here he could carry on his crusade untroubled. He would work pain into all his methods, he would sour this earth experiment, curdle it with pain just like sweet milk is curdled by vinegar, and force it to be drunk, mixed with blood by everyone of the aghhhh, aGHHH; a great cough blew the firepits that ringed his blackened form, causing them to lick up his charred feet and legs. Instead of retracting them, he thrust them out and howled with a laugh so charged with malice that the chained (and how they had fought to get down here) attendants, this week's contingent of lackey slaves, cringed against the cavern walls, adding a weird third dimension to the frieze decor which was representations of every manner of demeaning, demented, disgraceful activity possible to and by the most corrupted of human beings.

When the Assyrians depicted their atrocities against the peoples of earth in Sennecherib's trophy room at Nineveh, delimbing, beheading, impaling, flaying alive, they did not come near the corrupted possibilities of man's debasement of man by which HAM entertained his vision. The perversions of Hitler's camps had come closer, some of those brilliant variations and innovations had been added to the panels in recognition of that illustrious devotee of Hell.

Chapter XIII

The college day was over. All the underclassmen were at Baal waiting for Glag Cafeteria to open for the evening meal. Smells coming from the kitchen were enigmatic, some thought it was stewed Renegade Nun, and others some cheap cut of Old Blasphemer. The odor was not very enticing, but for hungry young demons gourmet stuff would have been wasted. Anyhow, the dessert was sure to please, Chef Gurgleguts had put his soul into it, so to speak. Tantilizer Torte, he called it, and refused to name its special ingredients.

Queued up tightly and pushing against the dining-hall doors, the line was anything but a comfortable place to talk, but there was the usual impatient kind of observations, aside from those about the menu. "Where was Weatherall today?" "How come the assistants in V.S. had all the classes?" "Suppose he's sick?" "Well, I had it from Searbaster that his two roommates had a date with him last night." There were smirks and knowing winks on all sides. "Well, that could explain it, couldn't it Snarktuss?" All leered at a very lean, pale student with a neck much too long. It actually looked stretched and scarred. "How about that Snarky, old kid." And the laughter caused the line to briefly expand and then contract again tighter than ever. "Heh, get off my foot." "You wanna good kick." Fangs showed, and a few claws and talons flashed. The doors opened into the hall just in time to avert a brawl, and so quickly that the mob fell over themselves into the room.

There were a few more skirmishes, jabs and punches; the fiercer personal weapons no longer evident, and then a rush to the tables where steaming pots of whatever were being borne by grubby slaves (demons who had no aptitude for the lower things) sloshing and spilling to a point of deposit at the head place. For this spot at the table there were monitors appointed. They were to dish up each plate which was passed to the end successively until all were served. The system worked because the monitors were empowered to stab without warning anyone who interfered or who passed the plate too slowly. The serving knife and fork were hefty items.

At the head table centered in the place of honor sat President Catchascatchcan, striking in a wide-lapel shiny striped suit. Out of his tallowy complexion gleamed an even line of chalk white teeth. "He's dazzling tonight, my fairy friend." A ribald round was guardedly sung at table nine furthest from the head. C.C.C. looked suspiciously in that direction, but unsure, he directed his gaze at Thumbleplut sitting beside him. "Say, T.P., I hear that Weatherall is under the *weather*, ha, ha. His flimsy joke caused his underling to force some laughter. But from then on their interest in talking about Weatherall waned. He was, after all, no one to joke about. C.C.C. needed his kind of placid demonry that didn't bother itself with striving for the superficial delegations (not so superficial when you enjoyed what you had) that the office of the Presidency gave. T.P. was an assistant prof in Voluptuary, so he was not about to enter into of any kind of remark about W.W., or he'd be next on his "fun" menu.

It was a good thing he followed that wise course, because Catchascatchcan cleared his throat as old Whet sidled up to the table. Thumping down in his accustomed place, he raised his heavy ill-shapen arm and summoned one of the slaves. "Bring me a glass of liquefied sweetmeats of goat and some dried gall," his voice was lower than usual. The slave hurried away.

Weatherall heavily eyed his colleagues. He looked over C.C.C., then scanned the rest of the table. Thumbleplut nodded in his direction with a half smile (one had to be careful, a smile just in-between, otherwise it might be misinterpreted - happy he was sick?) "Glad to see you here doctor, temporary indisposition? Good, very

good. We stumbled along today without you." (Now was the time for the smile to fade and sincere seriousness to spill across the face. He thought he affected it well). Evidently he did because Weatherall didn't give him a second glance and continued to look over the array of dons who were either overtly attacking the stuff on their plates, or indirectly with double edged words the rival on their right or left. Sometimes both at the same time.

She wasn't there. " Now, what is she up to?" he thought as he double checked the long table. Left-palpused he sat at the very end on the far right corner facing the clattering tables of students. Only Professor Slitherin of Infiltration Techniques with Terminology of the Sciences was beside him. What would he know? He would not give away his interest in Anarky. So he had to plan how he would get the information he needed. His disagreeable, but therapeutic plate and cup arrived. "Missed the announcements this morning, Slith, anything coming up I should know?" The milky liquid was already helping his voice raise to its usual distinct pitch.

"That special faculty meeting to hear whatshername's curriculum suggestion, when's that now? Did they announce it? Who? You know what's her name, ughhhh" He pretended to try to find her down the table, leaning in over his girth.

" I don't see her. That new gal that's setting up Eveology, yeh, that's right, Spicerot. Didn't announce it, huh. Don't see her tonight. Probably more of this upset going around. . . Oh, izat so?. . .To Nefarious U for a few days? Research for the new department? Should have had all of that done before now. Well, it'd better be good or we'll cut her to ribbons." He crackled the wafers of gall between his teeth.

Sitting with the others out of favor, down near the other end, Nimblewits was mentally putting the finishing touches on his plans. It would take patience but he was confident he had both C.C.C. and Weatherall in his mental sights, though from where he sat the sleek coated C.C.C. like a large bullhead in stripes, slurping up his soup midst the sycophant attention from those around, blocked the visual view to Weatherall. When he glanced down the back of the table all he could see of him were the gross overhangs of his derriere as they engulfed the chair.

Like a practical joke, he would, figuratively speaking, be the fellow who stooped down behind Catchascatchcan, the victim, while his accomplice pushed him over. Anarky would do the pushing. He'd do the betraying. That would take care of Catchy. He had the betrayal polished smooth in his mind. Nothing much offended HAM except loss of souls, especially nicely prepared ones, ones that had taken great effort and were nearly ripe, ready to fall off into his open maul. Nimblewits had had that reality rubbed into him like salt into raw wounds. Now he planned to make the same offense work for him. Catchy's work didn't involve souls directly, but he was responsible for the teaching at Hadesial that either prepared demons for effective work or it didn't, and N.Wits was gathering evidence that would thoroughly discredit his leadership. He'd had to compromise a few of Hell's principles to do it 1) Never be traitorous to those in favor with HAM, 2) Keep the most venomous efforts for the Enemy and his lackeys. But in the long run Hell would be the gainer.

He would time these disclosures just after Anarky had most impressed the faculty with the practical results of her research. It shouldn't be hard then to have some enthusiast propose her for the Presidency and sweep her into office while he helped in the background with a few well placed threats of blackmail, as well as passing around a few of Anarky's own promises of promotion. Already there were a number of faculty members who were currying her favors. They'd all want to be her best friends, her bosom buddies, even. He snorted to himself.

He was very careful these days never to appear happy, but only gloomy and depressed. An optimistic visage would have been very suspect for a fellow in his position. A plot would be sure to be suspected. Again he sneaked a look down the ill-shapen backs that were topped with craniums bending over the vittles. Bulging buttocks like pudding in sacks marked Weatherall, and he still had to come up with something that would do him under. That was going to be the hard part. Anarky surely was willing to put himself in line for Voluptuary, but he had to come up with some way of getting that tick to let go of all that he bled for his existence. Visions of the squashy consolations of the suite above Circean sprang into his head. They had to be his! It would be a fitting reward for all he had dared for HAM. There was no doubt that Anarky would bring the know-how for great success to Hadesial like no one since Slaverlands. The Grand S.G. had literally whipped into shape a faculty who trained the graduates sent out to Germany during the '20's. Wonderful the things he had done, but that was regional. Nimblewits felt Anarky's powers might just infect the whole world. He would deserve all those cushy comforts for understanding her potential and getting her the Presidency. HAM mustn't be disturbed by any problems with the takeover, because in time Nimblewits was sure he'd be more than vindicated by the Depths for this great effort.

But how to discredit Weatherall? That was still a problem. He could trust no one to help him, he was still in disgrace. Few of the other faculty even so much as nodded to him. Wait until the coup maitre. Then they'd change their tune, and just maybe he'd have a few of the old black spots to hand out himself with A.S.S.'s approval, of course. He'd never get himself in a position of being out of her favor; after all, part of the scheme was that he'd eventually be the winner in the battle for that part of her that lay quite apart from her intellectual capabilities. But moldy, old Whet - well, something would turn up.

Anyway, W.W. was more like stage two. Stage one would take all his attention for the time being. He was gathering his evidence and would be ready as soon as Anarky was. Anyway, if W.W. dropped into oblivion right that moment, it would be ill timed, he wasn't ready for Voluptuary to open now. If that happened that sniveling assistant prof sitting there next to C.C.C., Thumbleplut, might be delevated to full professor. No, it was just as well things went along normally for a while. And with that thought, he mollified himself about the fact that he had no plan to eliminate Weatherall and readjusted his depressed demeanor. Had he known that that globuliferous devil had an ace-in-the-hole against his gamble, his phony depression would have been more than real.

Weatherall more than once thought about the letter that lay in his secret compartment. It flushed through him as security. Sure, Anarky Spicerot's scheme to be President might succeed, but with that letter and some other evidence that he was sure he could accumulate, he'd be the real control of the college, but, more importantly, of that wriggly little she-devil herself. Maybe she didn't make mistakes ordinarily, but she'd made one and he'd been the beneficiary. He remembered with pride the jostle with the bearer of the letter, Poisonpusher. He was old, heavy, and clumsy looking, but he'd managed that encounter with finesse. He'd almost wished there'd been observers; he was sure these young, superior acting demons around would give him more respect if they'd seen his prowess. He'd moved like lightning, held the needle-sharp stinger with one paw firm as a clamp while he wrung the poor devil's neck with the other. There was that tingle of danger when the stinger had brushed him that only offset with high drama the gratifying finalé. He felt the warm itchy glow under the armpits at the thought of his daring skill and of how he'd prove it with that little female imp.

Chapter XIV

Sylvia Brown was having a hard time with this strange idea of covenant. She had looked up the word a couple of times in the dictionary, "a solemn contract between two parties," or "the promises of God revealed in Scripture," but somehow the definitions didn't mean a lot and, therefore, didn't stick. (She never would have believed that there were two assignees who were devilishly busy keeping it so.)

Ellen couldn't say it had been easy, but the covenant was still for her a large luminous star that had moved into her dark sky. It had lighted up the consuming night, revealing things that had long been hidden in a blackness that had been devouring her and her family. She still loved to close her eyes and relive the hours with Audrey that autumn evening when it had appeared, first a small glow on a line where the blitzed horizon of that day met the hopeless horizon of the next, then larger, until finally the sun came out. It was still illuminating the comers of her psyche, ferreting out what was left of shadows. It would take time, there were still closed closets in her mind, but she had yielded to the light and was determined never to turn away from it.

For Ellen the 119th psalm spoke to her of the one covenant that had brought her enlightenment. "Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day. . . Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

But to Sylvia a stubborn barrier was not so easily moved. Ellen felt blessed that she had had nothing to lose when Audrey had guided her to the covenant. She was poor, her husband had left her, she had no life work, other than raising her two children (Audrey assured her that this was the best work of all). The covenant had demanded nothing from her except abandonment to it. To her it was all sweetness and promise, even though only she had pledged herself to covenantal unity with God and Joe, and he was still unsigned.

Sylvia had much to lose, at least from the modern point of view. She had a good paying job, albeit it made her so miserable she couldn't sleep nights. She had a lovely home, a sleek car, and she moved with clear headed determination among people who respected her sharp mind, her self-possession, and her material well being. She dressed very well. Sylvia thought of herself as liberated and an achiever. She had been groomed by temperament, her times, and her own novelist mother (one child and divorced), to believe raising children the occupation of the "mothering" kind, you could have one or two, but you let someone else do the trivial jobs that held you down, which meant to her warm, though rather cow-like women, yoked, slow moving, bosomy, (big brown eyes, curly eyelashes?) complaisant, fecund. (A.S.S.'s efforts with deB. to B.F. were paying off handsomely these days). They had enough brains for domestic chores, enough brains to be instinctively good at mothering, but not fit for life where it was really to be lived. She had consciously and unconsciously patterned herself after the other image.

Sylvia was very much a woman of her times. It could have been she on the cover of TIME, sweat band around her forehead, lean, tough, almost breast-less, perspiring after her early morning workout. It could have been she in the soap ads, lathering a slim hairless leg in the shower, or bouncing out volumes of fresh shampooed hair. It could have been she in the evening dress, neck stretched back while a darkly dressed man, intoxicated with advertised perfume, gazed into her bony cleavage. It could have been she on the billboard, scantily clad, carried by the muscular man, light as a feather into the ocean waves (on her own terms, of course). And it really was she who depicted the total professional woman, the head nurse and administrator of surgical nursing, on the brochure for her hospital's nursing school.

The covenant demanded a very great deal from Sylvia. It totally undressed her from the apparel of all these images; it demanded, yes, demanded she seek God, with none of their trappings, bald and naked; to wait for Him, and when she had been found, to ask Him, "Who am I? Who did you create when you brought Sylvia into being?" It required a humiliation that waited to be reclothed, this time on God's terms, from the ground up.

Sylvia found it difficult, almost impossible, to believe that all the images she had strived to mirror had anything contrary to God about them. Didn't God want the best flowering of all his gifts in people? Wasn't she supposed to make the very most of herself? Her mother's books were all moral, even religious; was she not supposed to have written them? Was Audrey implying that it would have been better if her mother had served a weak man all her life, rather than pursue that wonderful talent of writing that was God-given?

"Yes, I'm in a bad place with my job; I've got to resolve it. And I suppose I'm more inclined to give it up," she told Audrey when she had called her. Audrey had invited her then to come to talk on her first day off. During that couple of hours, Audrey had listened. She found out a great deal about this bundle of energy called Sylvia.

She was a young woman with a keen, but compartmentalized, appreciation for her religion. She attended mass, she went to confession, even though she was sometimes at a loss what to confess. That was until the abortion work had eroded her self confidence. She was convinced that the Church was on the wrong side of a great number of issues. The modern world would force these entrenched holdovers from the Middle Ages to be reversed. For a while she had thought one of those was abortion. But no amount of theorizing had resolved the growing sickness she felt in her soul at the work she was doing. She'd had to reassess that, but *Humanae Vitae* was all wrong-headed, thoroughly outmoded scientifically and spiritually obtuse, they said; she closely followed its critics, though she had never read it. Joining the Scripture Study she hoped to find an insight that would relieve this mounting anxiety.

The group was studying Romans when she joined them. She had never read the Bible before and found it much more demanding than she had expected. It really didn't help her relax her inner prohibitions. Wasn't there some way of bringing these strictures in God's word, up-to-date? (On constant alert, the whisperers had all they could do these days.) Some interpretation that would make it all more . . . more liberal and inclusive? Then the group had moved on into Ephesians.

Worse and worse! What could be made of that fifth chapter? Paul was clearly a man of his times, narrow on sexual issues, subjection of women framing all his thoughts on the subject of marriage. She couldn't buy it.

But there was that Audrey. The wise things she said so simply swept away the obscure and made things plain. In her mouth the Scripture stood confirmed by her witness, eloquent witness when it came to that fifth chapter, but what was true for one wasn't necessarily true for another? Right? Sylvia did admire her. And she had reason to think Audrey returned that admiration. Though she was usually expressing doubts, or pressing for a reformed understanding of whatever it was St. Paul was expounding, still Audrey never ruffled, was interested in her psychological interpretations, and asked some good questions. But then would come those simple, direct statements that made all her erudition seem a bit ridiculous. Still, it was clearly not Audrey's intent to embarrass her; she was kind and thoughtful. Finally she had confided in Audrey her growing misery of mind and spirit. (Ahead two steps, but at this point back three! Her assignee demons were desperate.)

That had only brought her to this further pressure of the small group Audrey wanted her to join. Because of

Audrey's suggestion she was meeting with two others, Ellen Eagen and Toddy Meredith, sharing and studying what Audrey, for some reason, called this thing "the covenant." In the two weeks before, she had only gotten more and more confused. Ellen, it was true was forging a new life, so dramatically different by her own confession, that the covenant was like revelation direct from God to her. She claimed that since Joe had come home, she could see him being transformed before her eyes. And all because she was learning to serve him, to put him first, to give him the first real love the man had probably ever experienced. He had actually told Ellen that she was the first person who had ever told him that she loved him. Not even his mother? No, not his mother or anyone else. And Ellen had admitted that it was only recently that she had been able to say that. My goodness!

Toddy Meredith, too, was changing. Rather more slowly than Ellen. But Audrey was meeting with her some extra times, and had taken her to a priest. There was a whole mystery there, hidden from Sylvia's understanding. What was "special ministering?" And for heaven's sake, what was "deliverance?" (The familiar spirits shuddered that she would learn about this one.)

Audrey didn't volunteer anything about what it meant, but Sylvia imagined that it meant some kind of prayer they had together. Delivered from what? (A couple of whipped tutelaries now chained to sinks for grease trap duty in Glag's scullery could have told her.)

Toddy's situation was different, too. Her life had been very disorganized; to hear her tell it, she was undisciplined about nearly everything. She ate too much, slept too much, loved too many of the wrong kinds of men, and had no goals for herself. Anyone could see she needed some kind of shaping up before she ever got married, call it "covenant" if you like. Maybe the covenant was good for some women; she'd admit it might have a place for the . . . well, Toddy and Ellen were both a little immature about things. She'd even taken that name, she said, because she was the "hot toddy" men had at bedtime! Really disgusting.

Why wasn't it enough to give up her job, but go on with being Sylvia, otherwise? This Word of God had made her question everything that had been so securely a part of herself until lately. It was easier to dismiss it when she was vague about what the Bible really said, easier to say, "Oh, the Bible - just a collection of rather good thoughts about God by people who were sometimes mistaken." Or, "We know better than that now." However, seeing the words right on the page, then experiencing their undeniable boring power (no, certainly not that kind of boring, but like a woodpecker bores the resistant trunk of a tree) they were not easily waved off; she found them troubling.

The phrases that she disliked the most, and though she resisted memorizing them, she had found indelible in her memory kept cropping up at the most inopportune times. When she was arguing with Fred (Oh yes, she was married, but the marriage relationship occupied little of her personal world) about whose vacation, his or hers took precedence for the family (their two children had adapted well to child-care from the age of six weeks), those words would flash in neon:

"Wives be submissive to your husband as unto the Lord."

She believed, of course, that one had to be obedient to God. She thought little about it, but she did think she was doing God's will most of the time. But it was contrary to her every instinct that that had anything to do with whether she took the vacation she wanted, or he took the one he wanted. And these words were trying to block her

from the idea that she might take hers and go away by herself. Let him take his to go away by himself. Audrey's covenant? Well, all right, the covenant St. Paul claimed came from God, was fast spoiling her lovely unconscious world. She had been so free. Suddenly, she was being bound in fetters she wanted nothing to do with. Her familiars (familiar spirits are the henchmen who play with what they know about a person's weaknesses) had planted the word 'fetters'.

By the third week Sylvia had decided to quietly drop out of the Saturday mornings at Audrey Goodall's. She had plenty to do anyway. She had resigned her surgery work, was back on the rotating hours of an ordinary nurse, and was trying to get used to the uneven scheduling. A Saturday morning at home to catch up on the house was more important to her than another session over there. Really, she was fighting a feeling of resentment that Fred still blocked her from getting a cleaning woman. There were more important things than this laundry, cleaning, and cooking! She would like to get out on the golf course once in a while. Her girl friends weren't tied down with these chores. Considering it was her money, she didn't know what was keeping her from by passing Fred entirely.

He walked through the kitchen. They didn't speak. It was more and more like that lately. What ailed the man? He had never been very verbal, but he was becoming a positive clam!

The phone rang. She waited for him to turn around and answer it, but he just kept walking on. Gosh! He was infuriating. Grabbing the receiver, she fairly barked, "Hello!"

Audrey's even melodious voice said, " Sylvia?."

"Yes, yes. I'm sorry, Audrey! I was angry at this dumb drawer here, it's stuck - didn't mean to be yelling." She hated it when she lied like this. She didn't think of herself as a person who ever lied.

"I wasn't sure it was you. I just called to say we're not meeting at the house this morning; we've been invited down to the hotel to have breakfast with a dear friend of mine. She's here from California and wants to meet all of you. I'm sure you'll like her. She teaches philosophy out there and is in town to give some talks at St. Michael's. You were coming weren't you?"

"Oh, yes, yes. I was coming. What time will we meet now?"

When the arrangements were made, Sylvia hung up, disgusted with Fred, disgusted with herself, disgusted that she had to meet with those people, even disgusted with Audrey.

"This will be the last time! I'll cut the ties today! Anyway, haven't I achieved what I went to Audrey Goodall for? I've quit my job. Isn't He satisfied ever? That impossible-to-please-God is so full of rules a person can't even breathe without some judgment being made. Audrey doesn't have a corner on the truth; she's wrong, she's wrong, she's wrong, and I've let her make me miserable. What has happened to my freedom? I'll have it back! This is the last time I'll torment myself with this bunch." (The anxious tormenters took time out to wipe their brows.)

She hurried off to get out of her jeans and sweat shirt (an outfit that used to give Fred romantic ideas on Saturdays - obviously not any more) into something that reflected her cool self-possession.

Chapter XV

In Abaddon Library Ms. Spicerot's presentation took final form rapidly. Here she felt specially close to her life-changing experience, though of course, that wasn't so. But, it had been here that she had sat, head in hands, bowed with the ordeal of her adventure and the weight of implications of what she had seen, those many firestrokes ago.

It was here at Abaddon that after many days, the implications of Eden became clear to her, and here that she resolved to set out on a course that would bring her into a position of imposing this insight upon the earthly scene, winning for herself the lowest position anyone had yet achieved in HAM's ranks. There would be women priests in the Citadel! There would be! Sitting in the same spot now, she was renewed, and more determined than ever to put into place the program she felt sure would bring earth to its knees before HAM. Let the Enemy have a few leftovers, the main course and all the trimmings of humanity would come down to Hell and soon. It was the woman, the woman!

Eveology was the start, and from it would come a demonic training so simple and so effective that within fifty years it would all be over. Nineteen hundred and fifty earth years had seen piddling success with this diabolical attempt and that. No one had captured the heart of His Abysmal's vision, she thought, but herself. Now the fire would be set in the dry wood and watch it blaze! Her plans, of course, included that old tempters stand-by, sex, but no longer as merely a corrupting influence. Now it would be a means to the culminating achievement. The unfruitful woman, the breasts that wouldn't give suck, the wombs that wouldn't bear. To make human sex like Hell's sex had always been the goal -an avaricious appetite momentarily surfeited with no burdensome "relationship" or unwanted "result." Now that would be incorporated into the larger plan - the sterile woman who would knowingly and willingly sterilize herself, and with all envy take over the masculine role. Not just biologically, of course, but the total woman, sterile, no longer earthy, no longer contemplative, no longer giving, no longer a beloved; gone commitment, gone service, gone intuition, gone mothering. This woman would be like herself, Anarky, tantalizing to look at, bewitching to be near, lean, tough and boyishly sexual, sharply skeptical, a dedicated achiever. Always striving, she would scorn any response. The outright initiator in each situation; she would never yield. She would be the exact opposite of that . . . Anarky cleared her throat making a contemptible sound . . . woman that the Enemy had pinned his hopes on in the garden, the fulfillment of the rebellion HAM had in mind when he deceived her. (From the point of view of any Christian reading this, it might be the time to point out that demons could not think of the Mother of Jesus without acute mental illness so she was not a point of reference for them. Eve was *the* woman for them. Of course, Mary's Son was avoided totally in thought and word with the exception of the oblique DOG time reference and the name that intruded upon them at Firestroke).

The woman's envy of the other sex would be intensified in every particular even to musculature. Imagine, she would have women pumping iron, and wrestling. Don't laugh, you stupid demons, forty earth-years would see this. (Anarky knew that selling this idea would be hard, even the fiends would not believe it possible). Women would train their bodies till their natural monthly function would cease. It would be part of the package. Some might even die in the attempt. Early death could be victory for Hell. The woman in her envy of the man would be taught to demand egalitarianism. And the very apex of all this effort would be at the despicable altar of the

Enemy!

The effects of this demand when fulfilled would bring down the two most despised and feared of earth's institutions, the miserable home and the pitiful Church. That unthinkable awful ritual around which the Church gathered, which had fruitful union symbolized in sexual difference for its substructure would be destroyed. Brought to utter ruin and abandoned! Oh, the woman, the woman! Anarky was impatient with the process, why was it necessary to take so long to get the wheels in motion? Her burning impulse was just to fly into it herself with none of the frustrations of training others to do the work. She would be so good at it that in rash moments she felt she would need no help. She had herself set the bait in the lives of a couple of really sharp women who would write further books she inspired. The tinder was ready in thousands of lives, HAM's legions had been successful in reducing water to the roots, the old bugaboos that had hindered the work for centuries, the love of that ghastly book, those rigid ethics and that masochistic morality based on it, all these had already withered for lack of moisture. The theologians and scripture scholars, with a few frustrating exceptions, and the multitudes of liberal preachers had been wonderful drought producers! Full advantage would be taken of their seeds of doubt, as well as Panreardum's most recent work in "rights" and "justice." That had been brilliant. Imagine the American Supreme Court busy embellishing it. Then humans in their own rebellion against the Enemy had done the rest of the work, almost without help. They had helped choke off that living water with their natural espousal of the ways of hell. Hail to every man who used his prerogatives to lord it over women! Hail to every father who mercilessly beat his children and his wife with words or fists! Hail to every prelate who liked his boots licked by small priests and deacons, and every priest who loved his cushioned existence provided by anonymous-faced worker-women, and who was no more than a parasite. Hail to bosses, usually male, who wouldn't listen, who had no time for their "underlings," who got into plush cars, and polluting the earth drove off to their golf courses! How the envy had been spread, all for the good of Panreardum's eventual work. Each one of those men had done more for the work of hell than they would ever know. That is until the teeth of hungry demons and their licking tongues and sucking mandibles forcibly brought it to mind. Oh, yes, there had been mighty preparation, more or less without the brilliance of her kind of planning, but her contribution would be the coup de grace. When the match was struck, and oh, how she wanted this to be the moment! When the match was struck, the infernal would be immediate, the flames leaping up, bounding off the face of the globe like wild cats to scratch down the heavens. Eternity would be spent laughing, laughing at the Enemy, laughing, laughing, and rolling in female bodies of the deceived humans - lolling in the food of the ages. She could claim the best and the most, sitting there on . . . careful . . . careful, . . .near, next to the seat of power - only next to.

Had the library harbored other students that moment they would have witnessed an unbearably stimulating scene while Anarky went through her mental soliloquy. Her writhings and twitchings were gradually exacerbated to the orgiastic stage, not subsiding till suddenly near the end. Only after she abruptly regained her composure did Anarky chide herself for the danger she might have put herself in - allowing the consuming enthusiasm for her vision to overcome her good sense. "I must take care," she thought, "or I could be tripped up by my own intensity. I'll need it for persevering in my work, but must never give myself away."

The report from Slywarts, the librarian lackey, that came down that day to Intelligence was sent on to HAM himself. It took some time for him to receive it, but when it arrived his red-streaked eyes ran back and forth over it

concentrating on every word. A slow, wide smile twisted his blackened face by hideous degrees, finally contorting all his features and showing uneven venomous fangs. "That's my girl, Spicerot," he rasped. "Come to me you little fire ball. But do your work first." And his blood curdling laugh shook the chamber fanning up the thyrotoxic flames.

She reapplied herself to her work. The outlining became clearer and more comprehensive. Finally she felt the presentation for the Hadesial faculty was complete, but she went over it in the next few days, revising a place here and adding a point there, continually refining her ideas of how the subject matter should be presented, then deciding how many assistants degreed in psychology she would need for the multi-pronged missions, and how she would manage her class hours. Also, she would need a screening process to procure the most motivated of the demon students, those who would take an accelerated program without too many complaints, and those whose aptitudes were geared to the kind of high-powered intellectual tempting that would bring fast results. Let the Enemy have the edge on patience, Hell had no use for it. At the end, working all hours through six hell weeks, she had finished. There was also a screening program in hand that would bring only the most determinedly bitter demons to Eveology.

During the last part of that day, when the caverns began to take on their burnt rouge, she lingered in the darkening library, sitting stiffly for some time over her regimented pile of folders. Then putting them carefully into the satchel, she quickly gained the Speedway and in no time found herself back in front of her quarters on the quad of Hadesial.

It was near firestroke; like a gloomy hearth the fires in the depths sent up a wavering red glow. The fires were at their lowest. In the moving shadows Anarky stood in front of her door, and for a moment even her aweless centroid beat faster. The door stood slightly ajar. What could it mean? She knew the ways of demons. That someone would try to get in while she was away, she had been prepared for. But that anyone would be so stupid as to leave the door ajar when they left, that was what stopped her.

She stood stock still in front of the door, keys in hand, satchel at her feet, thinking what she should do. Supposing the spy was still in there. But that seemed unlikely. Anyone looking for discrediting evidence to keep her from delevation would have been around during the time close to her departure for no one knew when she planned to return. They certainly wouldn't have waited to the end of six weeks for their sleuthing. Still she didn't know a demon so lacking in ability to go away without covering his tracks. To leave the door ajar was something even an immature would never do. It could be possible that one of the Sybarites had the ruttish hunger and was waiting for her, the door ajar simply the come-hither of passion. It was near firestroke, that could account for it. Or, perhaps the college had sent around some before-semester cleaning crews. They would all have keys for their work of painting up the places, making the repairs. She had even called and complained about the lack of night shades on the windows, so important for firestroke. That was it. They'd come round and put up the black draw blinds, she could see them at the windows. How silly of her to be thrown off by that. Still she'd let them know at Grounds what a bunch of ignoramuses they were. She pushed open the door, grasped the handles of her bag and stepped into the blackness.

Chapter XVI

Sylvia (accompanied by two very nervous sprites) was a little early. She took pride in driving her Audi a shade above the speed limit. Waiting in the hotel lobby she looked over the few people there on a Saturday morning. One woman was interesting, wore her clothes well, probably a corporation executive visiting town on business. Her thick raven hair was pulled back into an expensive clasp. "Very tasteful hairdo," Sylvia thought. She too seemed to be waiting for someone.

What would Audrey do with her precious covenant with somebody like that," she mused. "Boy, when I see real women, then I know I'm on the right track. Try telling that young woman that God wills her not to be her own boss." She snickered, because she knew perfectly well what a sane woman's reaction would be that old saw. "Take it and bury it; it's outlived its usefulness. Nobody but fundamentalists believes that stuff anymore. Women have gained their own ground . . . and God approves!"

Just then Audrey appeared, Ellen and Theresa, no longer did she call herself "Toddy", a few steps behind. The black haired woman ran to her, threw her slim arms around that stout body with abandon. "Oh, my dear Audie," she cried, "Where have you been all my life?" She buried her face on her shoulder. Sylvia was shocked! "Well, it's hardly been that long," Audrey laughed. "Let me see you. Are you eating enough? Oh, you look wonderful, the same as always! Here, come over here, meet these dear friends. Theresa Meredith, Ellen Eagen." She waved Sylvia into the group. "Sylvia Brown. I wrote you about these dears."

Together the five of them walked into the large high ceiling dining room taking a round table near the big half-round front window that was typical of old -fashioned hotels. (The two demons were quaking in their claw covers because not one of these women had devilish accompaniment, but might well, beyond a demon's ability to see, be surrounded by their angelic counterparts. It was awfully electrical around, and, if so, damnably dangerous. This fear was realized when one of them received a fierce jolt. So they quickly sank into the background.) Ellen and Theresa were relaxed enough, but Sylvia was tongue-tied. It was the last that any of the three of them would have much to say. Rachel was a talker. She even joked about herself. "Have you ever met a Jewish woman with nothing to say?"

How long did they sit at that table? The damask design of the table cloth became as familiar as the back of Sylvia's hand. She doubted she would ever forget its fans of fern tucked with moss rose, a border of twisted thorny stems. Her eyes, occasionally her finger, traced the pattern, then again, over and over. For some reason, she who found it so easy to look right at people and take at least an equal share in any conversation found it almost impossible to look up. She was seated across from the big, bright window. It had to be that. The day's brilliance was hard to face.

Rachel spoke with an unmistakable New York accent. She ordered eggs Benedict. Sylvia who didn't like them found herself ordering them, too. Why was she so off her stride? She wished she could suggest they move to a table back further in the room. But no one else looked uncomfortable, and how would one break into the conversation which was now covering ground like an African gazelle?

Audrey was pushing Rachel into the limelight, which Rachel didn't resist at all. It was as if Rachel was her child, she was so proud of her.

"So she had all these degrees, so she had written all these books, and was in demand as a speaker here and there, and was working on the Bishop's committee that was writing the new Pastoral on Women, how could Audrey claim any credit for that?" Sylvia grumbled to herself. "If Audrey had had her way, she would just be a nondescript housewife rotting away in a dumpy house somewhere."

"You know, none of this would have happened to me, except for Audrey," Rachel was saying. "When I was a girl, I came to Centerville summers to visit my father's sister, Aunt Ruth. She owned the old Klinefelt Ready-To-Wear, remember it? Across the street . . . right there. My parents thought it was best if I was sent out of New York for school vacation. Audrey's children were about my age and I played with them. I even went to church with them. Now that was an experience! My folks were Jewish, of course, but only culturally; religiously, they were intellectual atheists. They didn't care that I went to Audrey's church; they thought it was broadening for me to have all kinds of experiences, and because there was no reality to it, they were sure I would have the good sense not to be influenced by a few hours in a church. And I did live the two lives quite separately. The one in the summer had its own happy, sunny flavor that I thought was simply Centerville; and the other, the rest of the year, had the sophisticated excitements of the New York I loved.

At nineteen when the two lives finally came together, I chose to become a Catholic, overspreading my whole year with the sunshine I'd come to see wasn't Centerville so much as it was Catholic faith. My parents were surprised, but not devastated. They thought this phase, a flowering of late teen-age romance induced by incense, chanting choirs, Latin and submission to authority, would surely pass. They knew that four years at Vassar would take care of it."

"But, you see, it didn't take care of it. Faith only deepened as I studied. Nothing holds a candle to Catholic reason. And then I married this wonderful fellow, not a Catholic at the time, but he too, converted. You see, I talk! A lot!! Poor man! We have this bunch of children, all grown up now, so I have time to get back on the circuit. I'd love to be home, but the Lord! Well, it's true, the Church is in turmoil."

On and on she went. The others seem to hang on her every word. They had questions. Sylvia closed her eyes. She felt Audrey's hand on her arm. "Are you all right, dear?."

"Yes, just a bit of a headache."

"Audrey tells me you're all interested in the covenant? Well, I'll tell you it doesn't work," she paused for effect, and Sylvia opened her eyes, "unless you have the right heart condition." She had a melodious laugh. "So it can't really be called a covenant, can it? I mean, a covenant is something that is applied from the outside, and this one must grow from inside out. If it is just something that you think is demanded it becomes like a room without windows and doors. I'll tell you a dream I had.

"You see, Audrey taught me the covenant. It made such good sense to me. In fact, my parents were at least partly right in believing that the submission required by the Church in those days had something to do with my joining it. I did have a psychological need, I believe, to give myself away to something. I wanted to prostrate myself before the altar, to be always at worship. I felt something so awesome in Church that it brought this out of me. But after attending mass became familiar, I temporarily lost that sense of submission to Presence. Perhaps it was just adolescence at that point, and about the same time I began to find the idea of covenant oppressive. I had to weigh

everything to see if it was according to the covenant or not. It stopped being a feeling and became burdensome law, which it is never meant to be. Besides marriage eventually reached the doldrums and being .. "helpmeet" became a real drag.

"At that point I had a dream. I was closed into a room on the second floor of a building - a room without windows or doors. I had heard there was a stairway that went from this level to another floor above an open, airy place, but I couldn't find it. There was a stairway down from this room to a lower level, but none that went on to a third floor. So finally in desperation, tired to death of the closed room, I went down to a lower floor.

"There, wah-lah! I found a second stairway that bypassed the blind room on the second floor and took me right to the third floor. This top room was sheer loveliness, full of windows and balconies that looked out to an endless horizon on all sides.

"I interpreted this to mean that legalistic following of an external covenant or contract is bondage. Rather than be in that spot it is better to throw it all out, go back to the ground floor of natural rebelliousness, independence, and self-will, but look for another stairway to a submitted life that bypasses that legalism. Actually, in life, I find it is a stairway that one can't climb by oneself. It can only be climbed by sitting on the bottom stair and crying, "Help."

"Then Someone, The One who gives all the spiritual gifts, will come down and carry you up. This level of submission is freeing, because it is really a gifted kind of love. It gives the woman who finds it a full, feminine, free life. Ellen, you're smiling. You've discovered it then?

"Now, I recognize that Audrey's covenant is about level three, it really has nothing to do with legalism. No, it is of the Spirit. But the words describing it, falling on ears accustomed only to spiritless law, sound terrible. Yet, I recognize there are no other words. Satan does have a heyday with Christian terms, doesn't he?

"The Church has the obligation to use these words to tell the Truth, even if it falls on deaf ears, even if the whole idea is determinedly misunderstood. These days, so many discard obedience, or submission, because they don't comprehend that the Holy Spirit transforms spiritless law into springs of living water flowing up out of the insides of people. In accepting the world's condemnation of the covenant, the Church seems to be in shambles. Everything, home, church, individual happiness ultimately rests on God's order, and that's the covenant. Opposition to that order is almost universal in the Church in America these days. The poor pastors stand with all God-given authority stripped away; I can understand now what Athanasius felt when he thought the whole world had accepted the heresy of Arius. We're in exactly the same spot today.

"Actually much hinges on this Pastoral we're working on, nobody would believe it. I tell you, I think the importance of it to the Roman Catholic Church in America is greater than all other work the Bishops have done to date, and eventually to be more important than any other doctrine the Church has established, except the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Trouble is the forces imposing their weight on it, it's like all hell is working there, are turning it into a club in the hands of evil. I don't know that I can hold out myself against the downright error that is being written into it. I'll tell you right now, if things go on this way, I pray, and I hope you will, that this never reaches publication. But it will take an act of God.

"The Pope could do something, but that's really unlikely the way the mill of the Church grinds. SLOWLY I Just hope somebody in Rome is aware of what can happen here with this Pastoral. It has the potential to split the

Church into two factions. The outcome of this struggle overall will finally become doctrine, you know? It may not be recognized as that right away. But eventually in a hundred years maybe, if the world lasts that long, there will be a Doctrine of Mankind and it will be the fruition of the covenant laid down by Christ through St. Paul. Have you ever noticed that the chapter in Paul," she turned to Audrey, "Is it . . . Corinthians?."

"Yes, I Corinthians 11."

". . . is most complete in formulating the nearness of the covenant to the order in the Holy Trinity. It relates the instruction about woman there as coming directly from Christ. Did you know that? The very same chapter that he gives the tradition of the Eucharist and long before the gospels were written. People want to say it is just dumb, old, misogynistic Paul whose prejudices lie behind those words about veiled women.

"I could tell you the difficulties that are being thrown up against our work on this Pastoral everyday! Talk about wars being waged. This Pastoral has so much energy swirling around it you'd think the whole future of the world hangs on what it says or doesn't say. The vehemence of those who are determined to have it express their feministic views is intense. I've never heard more bitterness than those sessions. I come away spinning like a top.

"Without daily Eucharist I simply couldn't go on with it. Remember, I'm predicting, and I'm not a prophet, that if this Pastoral goes to completion, it will split the Church in America. The Bishops are having a terrible time with it, they really wish they hadn't gotten into it at all, but there's no backing out now, and in the end they will have to be true to Doctrine and Scripture, or else turn away from both. If they adhere to their commission to preach the Truth, they'll try to say it lovingly and with understanding for the woman snared in legalism, but they'll still have to speak uncomfortable words. And the truth is that woman's role cannot include priesthood; that's been divinely revealed.

"I can see more and more women, then, who claim to feel called to priesthood, finding some Bishop somewhere who will ordain them. 'Hell bath no fury like a woman scorned.' (At this the two excluded demons quizzically glanced at each other.) And that's how these women are intent on viewing the place Christ and the Church have given them as though a result of scorn. These women have lots of male supporters, lots of priests, and it could be that the threat will be carried out, and that the American Catholic Church will come into existence severed from Rome. But the Church will not be able to accept it into full communion. Sadly, we will have another schism on our hands, and the most deplorable one of all. Formed less from positive than negative convictions, far more from bitterness than from any love, and thoroughly out of order.

"I know I'm only an adviser to the Bishops in this matter. Had Jesus not promised us that the gates of hell could not prevail, I suppose that they could come out favoring women priests, and the reversal of all the order that God established in sexually, but in that case it would seem to me that Hell would have won an astounding victory over God's church. It just can't happen! Pray, I beg you to pray! Ask the Archangels to come to our help. Michael! Gabriel! (At these names, the two dark sprites spun druggedly away).

"Anyway I'm doing all I can to be an instrument of the Truth. And the Truth lies in Audrey's covenant. It is the simplest, but most profound philosophy, basic to every Christian understanding and all wrapped up in the woman. Isn't that like God to have it so? By the way, you might all like to get a Marian newsletter I've started among women who love the covenant. We have to grasp hands or we'll all be swept away in this frightful tidal

wave of hate of what our femininity is all about.”

It was mid-afternoon before the women left their table. By this time Sylvia's headache had reached pounding proportions. (The two malignancies, with headaches of their own, shakily joined her in the Audi). She drove home much more slowly than the whirl to the hotel three hours earlier.

Chapter XVII.

After working late into the evening over a secret file he kept under a tile in his bath, Nimblewits secured it in its hiding place. Then he paraded around a while in front of his full length mirror flexing his stringy muscles and admiring his flat abdomen. Demons half his age weren't in such top-notch shape. His lascivious dreams of Spicerot kept him working religiously on his body building, and right now they led him to think of going to bed early. Dreams were nearly as good as the real thing. Besides, tomorrow night would begin Firestroke and he wouldn't be feeling so fit for a day or two - probably sitting up most of the night, or having the fidgets so bad he wouldn't be able to have good dreams. The Name would intrude to haunt him. He shuddered, but there was no reason to anticipate that by being miserable tonight.

He took another admiring look at himself in the mirror, shoved his face close up to the mirror and picked a fleck of something from his incisor, smiled at himself till the mirror seemed all teeth, then winked with his most devilish wink, and left the bathroom. Half dancing, he pirouetted across the room and slid between magenta satin sheets. He was already preparing for his new digs above Cicercean, the sheets were part of the new acquisitions. That they'd clash with the purple of the place hadn't dawned on him. (A note here that colors in hell would look like shades of gray to humans - all but the red of the pit, which was red to all eyes).

Behind his closed lids he began to encourage all kinds of images. They were just beginning to lead him by the hand into the Paphian chambers that lay behind sleep when a frantic knocking woke him. He lay for a moment thinking of the slight tantalizing form that had just beckoned from behind a drapery in those chambers, the slim bare limb that had wriggled a welcome. He impatiently hollered out, "Who's there and what by all the angels in Heaven do you want." There was no reply only a more muffled knocking like a insistent plea. Should he go and see who it was? Well, the dream was ended for now; he might as well.

Grumbling and feeling not nearly so sheik he reached the door. When he opened it the image of his dream stood there in the flesh. She was wrapped in a big concealing cloak and looked strange, but without hesitation Nimblewits grabbed her as he had intended to do in his dream and pulled her into the room. "By Ham, by Ham," he growled, "you've come. You couldn't stand it either. Oh, by Ham, you're here," and he began to pulling off her cloak as he dragged her resisting toward the bed.

Spicerot began slamming both of her hands against his oily face. "For the . . .'s sake," she almost said, the worst oath of Hell, but didn't quite make it, "for N's sake, stop it! What's the matter with you? We're already in more trouble than you can imagine!"

"Trouble? Trouble?" Nimblewits didn't let go of her, but stopped in the middle of the floor.

"Yes, you big earwig! We have to think and act fast. Have you got something to wear that will act as a disguise?" He let go. "We simply must not be seen together. When we are sure that no one is around, I'll leave and take the cliff-side home - no one goes there ever; it's the way I came, and then after half an hour you go around through the quad. Be sure that no one sees you. Thank HAM it's the day before Firestroke, darker than dark - the door will be open. She shivered. Nimblewits began to recover, his mouth worked but Anarky allowed him to say nothing.

"We have an emergency on our hands and if you don't do this right you can just go jump over the brink because it will be all over. Don't ask questions, we haven't time - just get something that will conceal you, a big coat, a hood, anything."

By now she was looking furtively out of a crack she'd opened in the door, and when she was certain no one was about, and there were no telltale shadows in the few windows facing them, she slipped out; her last words, "Remember, wait half an hour."

Then staying in the line of shrubby brush she bravely worked her way to the backs of the buildings that stood blindly along the escarpment.

After she was gone, Nimblewits' sharpness quickly returned. He scratched his chin. "A trick of some kind? Just possible." What would be her motive? He thought of the bathroom tile. But that detective work was for her as much as for himself. Certainly she hadn't arranged to drop him. He was essential to her plan. Didn't seem like it could be a trick. Besides, she wouldn't have risked a visit to his place for anything less than a real emergency. Associating with him wasn't exactly propitious for anyone on the way down, and he knew how shrewd she was. No, there was just one conclusion, something had really happened and she needed his help. The risks were grave; whatever happened on the campus that no one knew about? But going along the cliff had been an excellent device. He didn't know how he'd feel about doing that himself. She'd evidently been aware of that and decided to take that course herself. Not only bright but bold! What a demon! Half an hour. It'd take that long to find something adequate to wear in order to be sure of a good disguise. He busied himself rummaging through his closet.

Finally, draped in an oilskin and a big hat, looking ridiculous but hardly more so than the underclassmen in their peculiar getups - what did they call it? 'Spectral' He'd heard it had caught on great among youngsters on earth; they now aped the fashion of hell with fervor - he shuffled through the quad imitating a drunken student. He went well past Anarky's apartment on the far side of the quad and circled back as though coming from the opposite direction. He was absolutely certain he wasn't noticed in the shadowy maroon darkness. He eased himself through the small opening of her door without so much as the creaking of a hinge. The apartment was dark, even to his excellent night vision it took a few seconds to adjust. The windows let in not a crack of outer glimmer and the room was black as pitch.

"Don't come forward," it was Anarky's voice. Then a little flame sputtered up and there she was crouched, candle in hand, beside a vast misshapen body. Weatherall lay humped on the floor like a beached whale, his face had melted into fat puddles that randomly, by gravity, sagged this way and that leaving his eyeballs stranded like two beachballs. He was obviously quite dead.

"My gods, Anarky, how'd it happen? Why'd you do it?" Nimblewits was shaken.

"By Scylla and Charybdis, you don't think I did it! I came home tonight from Nefarious and stumbled on him right there. Hasn't anybody missed him? How long do you think he's been here?"

"Bu..bu..but what happened to him then?" Nimblewits was beginning to feel a lightness in his head that trickled down into his chest and made him want to snicker. Ah, the Fates. Here was the problem, his big problem, delivered to him on a silver platter like The Baptist's head, solved in a stroke like the sword had solved Herod's. Yet, he knew there was some treacherous ground to be crossed balancing that platter before victory was secure. It would

take some fancy footwork, the time table would have to be pushed up, and until he studied it he didn't know just how.

"Look here," Spicerot was saying, " Do you see this funny purple mark on the back of his right arm? It's kind of swollen around it, and then this line runs towards his armpit - ugh, what fat!

"Well, so what - one of his delightful morsels stuck him with a claw."

"I don't think so. This has a peculiar look about it. I've seen it once before when a friend of mine in doing me a favor had to eliminate an obstacle. His name is Poisonpusher. Well, you know him - I haven't heard from him since I sent you that letter under his protection."

Nimblewits thought a moment and his eyes narrowed. "Letter? The only letter I ever got from you was an envelope of credentials and your application. "

"Well, that's it then. I wrote you a letter agreeing to your plan and sent it with this very special envoy. Poisonpusher must have been somehow waylaid by Weatherall, how he ever overcame him I can't understand, but before he was incapacitated PP stung him. He didn't know it, and because it was a slight sting the poison has taken weeks to deliver him. He must have come here in the past few days to see what other blackmail he could pick up for his case against us, and suddenly fell down paralyzed. He's not dead, of course, just frozen like this forever. But what are we going to do with him?"

"The timing isn't right. Now if he'd just held out for a couple more days, a week even, it would have been ideal. But somehow we're going to have to get some help and get him back to his place. Maybe we could put him in bed and get someone to nurse him, saying he's sick. Then, after your election which will have to be stepped up, get rid of him."

"But who? I don't know anybody here and everybody either wants to own me or see that the college disowns me. There is nobody outside of yourself that I have enough on to trust. And you certainly have nobody who will even pretend to be your associate. It's maddening, just when I wanted full concentration on starting the department. I'm for just dragging him back to the abyss and tossing him over."

Nimblewits could suddenly see Thumbleplut as in a vision. He was standing next to Weatherall's chiffonier unfolding his own rose colored silk sheets. In the next second he would walk over and spread them the great puff of mattress of Weatherall's bed. "It can't happen," he cried out.

"Why not? We'll still go ahead and see that C.C.C. is sacked, I'll get the Presidency and gear the whole school toward the Great Woman Project, and I'll see that you get your delevation just as I promised. Actually it's an unexpected charm that's happened to have the old succubus out of the way.

"No, no! He'll be missed, when they find out he's gone, we'll be suspected. Leave it to me. You just go on and try to get some sleep now. I'll take care of the whole thing so that no one will ever know that he's been here. It will just appear that he's overdone it again and is having some recuperation in his own bed. Go along now, and forget this ever happened."

Anarky was beginning to feel the effects of Firestroke as morning came closer. Ham! it would be a tough weekend. She eyed Nimblewits through semi-closed cat slits. All right. Just be sure to find the letter Weatherall has

of mine somewhere; he's got a key hanging there around his neck. And remember, if it doesn't go right, I have the letter you sent me and I won't hesitate a minute to put you on the frying pan. So make it work!

With that she turned on her heel and minced into the bedroom. By the time the door closed, Nimblewits had devised his plan. He took extreme care, but the night was now past its midpoint, sliding toward Firestroke, and no one was around. In the almost complete darkness, he dragged the heavy body out onto a path that led to Circean. It was a good thing he'd been in physical training; it was all he could do to get it more than seven satyr strides away from the apartment where he hid it under the scrubby growth along the way. Then he went directly to the rooms of Thumbleplut that luckily were on the ground floor of Epicurean Hall. He had to tap on the bedroom window quite a while, he dared not pound on the door. But finally T.P. roused and came to the window.

"I say, what's going on there? That you, Nimblewits? My dear deceit, what do you want? Yes, come to the door." After a whispered consultation on the stoop, Thumbleplut disappeared into his rooms and soon reemerged darkly dressed. The two then went off in the direction of the moribund body of Weatherall.

By the next morning, among the very few up for breakfast, the word was passed from table to table over an insipid gruel-of-dissenters that Whet Weatherall had had some kind of stroke, that he had been found in the quad and was being cared for by a special team of fiends under the direction of the Assistant Professor of Voluptuary. It was impossible to tell yet how much recovery there would be, but T.P. assured everyone that things were in good hands, and smilingly assumed the headship of the department, at least temporarily. He was especially ingratiating to C.C.C. just as Nimblewits had figured he would be, sidling up to him at every opportunity, no doubt offering him some of the loot from the laden rooms of Weatherall in return for a future permanent appointment and placement there. "Get as chummy with him as you please, you dupe," thought N.W. through his firestroke headache, "The two of you will get yours together."

Chapter XVIII

With Weatherall safely somnolent in his great bed, Nimblewits got some needed elbow room. Through the next days a succession of smallish devils, foreign looking, were seen in his company. C.C.C. had the details of this on his desk. He had looked the report over and dismissed it. Nothing to worry about. Just part of Nimblewits' recruiting efforts. A good thing too! They needed to reach out and find new sources for enrollment. The world demand for educated fiends was greater than ever; they could make important advances for the name of Hadesial if they just had the personnel. Catchy had just the slightest worry, too. More activity by Hadesial's graduates might cover up a few small botches that some of the alumnae had been involved in. That Africa affair! Of course, it wasn't his fault. Education at the college was as good as ever; it was just that the student stuff they sent over wasn't as sharp as it used to be.

C.C.C. had hoped that by this point in his career he could claim some achievement quite as impressive as Slaverlands had put together. It wasn't working out that way. The President of the Soviet Socialist Republic whom his elite alumnae had been preparing for years, first through the NKGB, finally through acceding to the height of power in the land, had died before a really magnificent plan had matured. The first step of that plan, the killing of the Pope, had failed. What was the matter with that contingent? His school and his name wouldn't be perpetuated down that avenue. It was bitterly disappointing; hundreds of years of hell-effort had gone into it. And, now, horrors, if it should happen, that same pope might have success in folding up the whole communist effort!

Was it true, as the intelligence reports evaluated it, that the Woman . . . painful thought . . . had interfered again? Something had to be done about . . . her! Let Nimblewits find the devils they needed for the job. It didn't matter to him where they came from, the weirder the better.

Then the day came when the faculty gathered in mid-afternoon to evaluate the new curriculum proposed by that precocious Professor Anarky S. Spicerot. The conference room overflowed with the portly, pretentious presences of every pedagogue from every level of the educational side of college employment - monitor to full professors. The meanness over chairs and places made the scene one incessant argument and scuffle, until the din drowned out the convener's foghorn voice and his threats completely. Everyone ignored him; he had no power here. Even C.C.C.'s belated arrival went unnoticed in the hassle which threatened to turn into out and out fighting at any moment. Then Anarky herself walked through the door followed by two female lackeys bearing a briefcase apiece. Taking in the imminent mayhem she put two fingers to her mouth and shrieked a whistle that brought the contenders sharply around on their heels, facing her, slack-jawed. It was hardly the way a new department head should behave. For a moment the silence was distinctly hostile.

But Anarky's enthralling feline voice was purring, "Come now, my dear friends. I've found a much better place for us. The large lecture hall on the lower floor is available. You'll all have the full view of the platform and the lectern that you each deserve; you will be able to see the overhead, and some undergraduates are there now to save you doctors the front seats." She bowed to the old Professors near

her. Was she mocking them? Who ever bowed these days? Doubling that bow to Catchascatchcan and Thumbleplut, who had become his ever-present shadow - a new Assistant-to-the-Pres post had been established for him, she grimaced seductively, "You both have a place on the platform, and Dean Snitcher, too."

They all followed her meekly, the slaves at her heels, mesmerized by her inimitable hip motion as she led the crowd like so many puppy dogs, down the stairway, through the hall, and into Lecture Arena Number One.

Four hours went unnoticed. Even the old dotards used to sleeping through faculty meetings kept alert. Spicerot simply engulfed them with her wit, her wisdom, the magnitude of her vision, her enthusiasm and the grasp she had of her subject. If she had had none of those things, she had that bewitching figure, that provocative wriggle, that dramatic flair, that simply had the power to glue eyes to her. C.C.C. sitting on the platform near her prancing, gesticulating form was flushed from collar to hairline, his pointed ears were scarlet. Thumbleplut's knuckles above the claws were white as he stabbed into the arms of his chair. Noticing them (he was very conscious of his body language), he'd tried consciously to relax only to find himself digging into those inanimate limbs again as though his life depended on it.

The overhead projected her outlines of courses, flashed diagrams of her goals, and showed the inter-relatedness of her curriculum to the other college departments. In this regard she was the epitome of diplomacy. Giving copious credit to the heads of each discipline, she threaded her Eveology into each existing department as though it had always been there, apparent and indispensable. Anyone would be a fool to dispute it. Hadn't the old doctors been teaching these things for eons? It was both the most central feature of all their work and the unifying concept behind all the efforts of education.

It was unheard of that one professor should praise another. Spicerot was breaking all the rules, and they suspected it was just deceptive flattery for the other fellow, but gobbled up her acclamations for themselves. They each had strong reasons to believe that Anarky was secretly in love with them. They were all geniuses, brilliant forerunners of the most avant garde of all concepts, and she, Spicerot, simply offered her services of how to bring them into the places of recognition they had earned. She alluded heavily to the Depths and their endorsement of her work. The old duffers with hoarse, "yeas" and grunts of approbation were soon clambering over each other to get on the band wagon of Eveology - the wave of the future. Then she bragged about the advances she had made on the earth scene where ultimately all their work as educators in the institutions of higher learning really met the test.

At this point did she allude to recent setbacks of Hadesial 's best efforts? It was during this part of the presentation that C.C.C., flowing along, infatuated with her every move, had the first warning light blink on the worry panel of his brain. But passion overrode it. She went on telling about the successes of Nefarious U's teams of demons in establishing "women-doing-theology," of the inroads of WOC on the American scene, the worship of Wicca right inside the Citadel, of Catholics for Choice, of Bishops and priests applauding the values her associates had planted, and even promoting them.

Then suddenly Catchascatchcan awoke to hear her say, "And what has the administration of this college to boast of since their tenure? This chart shows the latest statistics from Educational Oversight. Note this drop off of souls consigned to Hell by Hadesial graduates, the worst record of alumnae from all undergraduate education. Either we wake up and bring this institution into the mainstream of HAM's efforts or we'll all be suspect, not just these," she pointed to the three on the platform, "our ineffectual, bungling leaders, who have, I'm sorry to say, this very day been proven negligent to the trust of HAM and have been thoroughly discredited.

"The envoys of Level Two Bureau, Educational Oversight, are at the door. They will read the allegations against these who are accused of gross ineptitude, and quasi-dedication which has allowed a revival of religion in strategic areas in the world, a turn to the right in numbers of governments, and worst of all a string of perversions to the Enemy that have set back HAM's cause by decades - all directly attributable to this lazy, complaisant leadership. If you doubt, you will soon be convinced by the affidavits which will now be read. No! Don't move! Armed agents have you surrounded."

C.C.C. who had been ready to pounce on her, slumped against the back of his chair, blanched grey. Thumbleplut's elongated chin rested on his vest, his slit eyes glazed over, and Snitcher was waving his hooves over his head in apparent mental disarray.

Professor Spicerot, still the center of every pair of eyes like a watch in the hands of a hypnotist, was completely in control. She called in Nimblewits, who acted appropriately humble while she praised his handling of the investigation which had uncovered the dishabille that had become Hadesial. She credited him with saving the entire college from the wrath of HAM. She called on the whole assembly to publicly reestablish him in good graces.

He came to the podium escorted by four formidable demon types who were rarely seen around college campuses. Two of them guarded the three, the other two stood at the two corners of the platform and faced the stunned audience. Then Nimblewits proceeded to read the affidavits condemning the administration of Hadesial, count after count of failures of alumnae were read, some of them working on postgraduate degrees from universities but found to be unqualified, some of them, totally inept in the field, had let really big fish get away, a few had botched plans as big as the assassination of the pope, and then there was this fading of communism. It was shocking!

The actual teachers of these demons sighed with relief that their names were not mentioned, and joined heartily in the condemnation of their leaders. The top layer was rotten! Hadn't they said so on more than one occasion? Hadn't they been giving warnings right along that Hadesial was on a downhill slide? But who had listened? Nobody, nobody! Such a relief to finally have these nincompoops get their come-upance. They had almost dragged the whole school into the most awful disrepute. "Away with them! Away!" The assembly croaked, squawked, squeaked, squealed and howled its malevolence. No need for a vote. It was unanimous.

Thank HAM for this Spicerot! What an A-1 devil! Nimblewits deserves credit too."

After shouting denunciations against the administration and praise for the whistleblowers, the planted instigators hardly needed to raise the cheer once. It just burst out spontaneously, "Spicerot for President! Hurrah for Anarky! Spicerot for President!" While the assembly broke into spontaneous applause and chanting, the strong-armed gargoyles hauled off their prisoners, now considered duly tried and convicted by Hells' law - there was no more need for them; they were dragged immediately to the precipice and thrown over.

The splendid inaugural for President Spicerot took place that evening in Baal Hall. Nobody questioned that the banquet with its fabulous entrees was catered at the drop of a hat or a fantastical decor accomplished in a matter of three hours. Where had all the drinks been procured? How had the Rhadamanthus Band been got on such short notice? Nobody asked these questions. Every hellish denizen of Hadesial flung himself into the celebration because he figured himself soon to be the cohort of the President - so successfully had Anarky S. Spicerot insinuated herself. The revelries went on until the great globe blearily brought in morning. By then stacks of students lay disheveled in the corners of the hall, under the front windows among the shrubs, and beneath the staircases, some of them tangled with their schoolmasters.

President Spicerot and Dean Nimblewits left the party before dawn. They had arranged to exit separately, Spicerot with two female attendants who were now her entourage, meeting at Weatherall's apartment. That old succubus remained unfinished business. How would they take care of him? Nimblewits thought of having the body bronzed and hung like a cocoon from a yardarm in the quad in memoriam of his long headship of Voluptuary Science. No one need know that he had been plunged into the bronzing fluids alive, merely paralyzed.

Spicerot, on the other hand, was figuring that Nimblewits would have to wait for his coveted apartment. Weatherall had been a formidable demon with ties to nearly every important personage in Hell. He had never been out of favor with HAM and it would be extremely tricky to dispose of him without inciting trouble from that quarter. She would give orders to have him kept in perpetuity in his own bed with the best possible care. It would prove with Level Two the evenness of her administration, her sensitivity to HAM's modus operandi. Dean Nimblewits would just have to cool off.

Speaking of cooling off - she was aware of his lascivious designs on her; she had been since her first sight of him so many firestrokes ago. She would go nowhere without her two cabalistic sisters.

Arriving at the suite in the Circean first, Nimblewits had to wait on the bench in the hall; he had no key. He fidgeted. It would be the only time! Glorifying in the events of the day, he engaged in a few exquisite fantasies of how he and Spicerot would top off the celebration in Weatherall's mirrored boudoir. For the time being they would just have to drag the behemoth into the utility hall. He was prepared to move in that very night, the valise with the satin sheets was at his feet, and his other personal items were packed ready to be hauled over in the morning. What a victory! What a superb outcome of all his plans! He was as satisfied as His Abysmal Majesty himself.

When the President arrived with her foxy looking twosome, Nimblewits was put off, even disappointed, but the momentum of his triumphant success refused to be suspended; he simply modified his plans to include three females - after all, his taking over Voluptuary demanded it. Once inside the apartment, he was enraptured with his surroundings. It was now all his. He didn't hide his appetite. Spicerot kicked off the shoes from her tired feet and dug her claws into the plush pile of the carpet. How would she tell that maniac that the place wouldn't be his for a very long time? It was going to be tricky. Her eyes narrowed in thought.

Seeing him so intense, she realized it hadn't been her plan that had succeeded so much as his. Hmmm. She growled softly low in her throat. It wouldn't do to cross him. He had shown amazing resiliency. Yesterday he'd been a lonely recruiter among the outcasts of the college, and today he had everything he'd planned to have, including the new President of Hadesial indebted to him. She could find a way out of that, but well, it wasn't going to be as easy to turn him away from his pig-headed idea.

"Let's go in and see what he looks like," Nimblewits moved toward the bedroom door. "I haven't seen him since the night Thumbleplut and I got him here. Was that an effort! They wouldn't let me back in here after that. Thumbleplut took full charge." Nimblewits laughed jubilantly. "Wasn't that just the best joke! T.P. walked into it with his eyes wide open."

He turned the elaborate knob of the door and disappeared into the dark bedroom which he had imagined over past months to have the appearance of a mortuary with a permanent corpse laid out in opulence. Anarky lounged in her place, devising her strategy. "No need to do anything about it tonight. By morning my mind will be clearer."

The bray coming from the room beyond made her start. "Hheeeehaaaa. Hheeeehaaa. My Hello .. gab...alus. and all the ancient votaries! Hheeeehaaaa! He's gone!"

He came out of the room prancing like a horse. "Anarky, I mean Ms. President, he's gone!"

President Spicerot was able to fully stabilize her new administration on the fact that the deposed President and cohorts had done away with that poor defenseless, long-time pillar of Hadesial, Professor Whet Weatherall. Such was an act of treachery against HAM himself! The quarters in Circean were full of T.P.'s personal things, and Weatherall's expensive antiques and artworks were found dressing up the domicile of Catchascatchcan. Anarky was truly riding on the crest of a wave blown along by Lady Luck. Nimblewits was happy, well almost - he had his department and the luxuries to go with it, even though her practiced bodyguards had had to teach him a thing or two. No nasty problem had risen there; he'd given up that part of his plan! All was solved. She allowed herself a great laugh, just one, quite a roar; but . . . he who laughs last . . .

Intelligence, bringing reports of the whole affair down to the lowest, gradually filtered back the news that His Avidity of the Depths sent congratulations to the new President of Hadesial and expected the college would soon fall to distinction in truly great work. The formal recognition of Spicerot as President came later signed with HAM's own hand, and a greeting scrawled above it - May We Meet When You are at your Best. Anarky had it framed and put in place of C.C.C.'s portrait in her office.

Ruthlessly she now set all the gears of the college to turning out phalanxes of Eveology trained devils in record times. Some of the older professors resented inroads on their academic freedom, but no one dared to make so much as squeak about it. The inexorable onslaught against women everywhere was bringing such results that Second Level report found Hadesial coming from last to first in every category of soul ruining among men, women, and (ough!) children as never before - oppression, depression, suppression and possession, after just the first two years of A.S.S.'s administration.

Other institutions began sending groups of teachers to be indoctrinated in the new curriculum and techniques for teaching it. A whole new institute was set up at Hadesial for them. Anarky S. Spicerot became the name on every educator's lips after the Education Association granted her an unprecedented series of articles in their prestigious journal. There she had brilliantly set forth the principles of Eveology in the context of the recent triumph over the Roman Catholic Church in Canada.

She explained in detail the education of the team of demons who had been assigned to the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Ottawa, of the special work done with M.M. the theologian who infiltrated poison into the benign minds of the bishops themselves, and the work of one crack group who specialized in fear - yes, *fear of women*. The bishops nearly were on the run to be the first to promote Eveology in their parishes through propagation of the scientific kit which one contingent had planted. So marvelously had the whole plan worked that Catholicism in Canada looked like a veteran being dragged from the battlefield sans legs. It might continue to call itself Catholic, not much they could do about that, but it would be confined to a wheelchair, never walk again, and have only the sympathy, if not the respect, of a few folks who would remember when. That is, until it finally expired.

Spicerot considered this just her first showcase for Eveology. Her plans were much bigger than Canada. It was still a few years off, because of the time it took to train these devils, but her sights were on the heart of the whole Catholic enterprise itself. She would bring down the New Jerusalem, even as her father, His Quenchless, had brought down Eden. As far as the U.S. was concerned, the Pastoral on Women would do for the American church what they had done in Canada, but it would go deeper. This time they would have an official document, the real thing, they wouldn't have to use subterfuge and say it was official, when it could be proven, if anyone were so brave as to try, that it really wasn't. That bishops could be manipulated into destroying the home and Church had been proved in Canada, now they would consolidate what they had learned and apply it on a world scale.

Agents were working hard; many woman theologians had been prepared. They had been given a fierce spirit and fierce face - a formidable bunch, and when the fear shock troops had done with the Bishops, it was certain that the new theology would be transplanted as easily as a gardener could tear out delphiniums and plant pigweed, should the spirit move him.

Chapter XIX

It began inauspiciously, the way the Enemy always begins things. What attracted Him to such non-descript places; stables - stables! hillsides, execution yards, second floor dining rooms, prisons, and tombs? Why never where it mattered, great palaces and seats of power? But the Marion Age began despite the Great Woman Project (GWP), perhaps because of it. A prophet of the 1700's had predicted it. The Woman herself had said the time would come. Some small indications here and there might have warned the exultant demon world riding the crest of their Eveology that all was not going their way.

If Spicerot had been in the field instead of behind a desk at Hadesial she might have caught on. She was sensitized because of early experiences with The Woman. But her underlings weren't. A few common women praying the rosary had turned the Russians away from Austria in the 40's. That was long forgotten. In the 60's the same kind of thing had happened in Brazil, and in the 70's it was in Chile that women praying the rosary had turned the evil tide away. Unbeknownst to Hell the iron curtain, iron, I tell you, was about to crumble like rotten plaster before the astounded world's eyes. And this because of a Pope who had entrusted his pontificate to the Woman. Now there were those little groups of quite ordinary women taking up the rosary again in America. Yes, the warning signs were there. Many children were being snatched from suicide, drug addiction, and spirits of lust by these humble efforts; families were being healed, men were being reformed to God. The little group around Ellen Goodall came together each week, prayed and went away to spread faith in famished places where it really mattered.

But overall, hell's victories among prominent, newsworthy women, and the flashy, sexy ones were so heady that the GWP (pronounced gwimp) teams refused to believe there was much of a problem. Concentrating on the big fish - Scripture scholars, and theologians, and the bishops enthralled by them, they rushed toward the ultimate defeat of what was left of the Citadel in the way they had been so progressively trained by Eveology. Let these bead-counting frumps, lacking all initiative, get a few scraps, in a few more years it wouldn't matter; they were like model T's left behind sputtering in the dust by powerful, sleek, racy Thunderbirds. Besides, the powers-to-be weren't listening to these throwbacks to age-old piety. Marian woman! Huh! Well, they were told to keep quiet, to be more accepting of change, to stop their judgmental prattling, and this by their own bishops! They should pay more attention to the really important arenas like the Women's Conference in Beijing. GWP had worked like hell on it. Even the U.S. President's wife was there promoting the cause! That was what counted!

So what was the worry? That Rachel Truer! So she had shaken off the agent assigned to her and was continuing to be trouble on the Pastoral; so she was sending out her pathetic little letter to a handful of women who were psychologically dependent and chained to the past. What mischief against Hell could that work? Though. . . it was a little worrisome . . . that someone on the commission really prayed the rosary everyday and didn't just give lip-service to it. The spirit drones assigned to the committee members soon learned by painful jolts from the electric voltage around her to keep far away.

Several more recent graduates had been sent to trouble Rachel and others like her wherever they could find an opening. Possibly all this work these women was doing for the Enemy could be used as a wedge between the women and their husbands, or perhaps their health could be affected. It was unfortunate that even after great exertion put in on this, the men were as solidly set as ever - protectors, providers, and friends, the proverbial rocks.

The mystery of why never dawned below; a balanced life with special attention to their husband's needs and (yes) desires, daily dependence on the dreaded food, and practiced spirituality - all this precluded marital alienation, or even sickness. These lovers of the Enemy continued their schedules, robust, and readily protected by angelic forces. But what was their strength against so many in important places already thoroughly convinced by hellish reasoning?

From her headquarters, President Spicerot wielded more and more power over the GWP effort, which was now a joint enterprise of many institutions of lower learning. From her office everyday, the elite envoys of Hell came and went dead set on business. Efficiency, one of Anarky's great strengths, had sharpened the resources of Hell to a fine point. Though much of the pressure of that point was being applied to the work of the committee on the Pastoral for Women in the U.S. and on various agencies in Rome, the efforts were widespread. The university and college contingents of GWP had done such great work, (the intellectuals were almost won to a man/woman), that these demons were being pulled off to let the humans carry the ball. Their writing and speaking was much more effective than anything the evil sprites could do with their indirect tempting and deceiving. These human expositors gathered believers like a magnet pulled through siderite.

Now the full drive was directed to the successful dissemination of feminist propaganda throughout the Bishops' staffs besot with their political ideas of justice and with not enough Christian understanding to grasp why the dark realm might be involved. It was as important as HAM's own overturning the Enemy's perfection in Eden, Anarky knew. As M.M. had admitted to a reporter after the achievement in Canada, "It was clear to me that most of the bishops did not understand the issues and that many of them are of enormous good will toward women. They now have the experience of working with women in the Church; they recognize the giftedness of women that they work with in their various dioceses, but their affirmation for women doesn't as yet really include a critique of the structure as it is, and they don't see the issues in the radical way that feminists see them, because in order to include women in the church, we need a new ecclesiology, a new Christology, a whole new theology of ordination and ministry. And so the radical nature of what is happening is not perceived by them on the theological level, but it is perceived by them on the emotional level."

As the work on the Pastoral ground on, the demons assigned proved too successful. These chief tempters had stimulated their clients to unrelenting anger. When the report of its collapse came to Spicerot, she was taken aback for the first time since her devil-adolescence. Envyfatta and Toothsome had so embittered their charges to every church-thing, other than woman's ultimate and complete control over it, that they now demanded an end to the whole effort. No group of raw men, especially wearing little purple skullcaps, spit, spit, would ever be able to tell women what they were all about! Nor would the defiant woman ever accept any pastoral that was hung-up by timidity over the omnipotent power of Rome and that doddering old white-robed Patriarch! The whole attempt was larded with patriarchy and authoritarianism. So the very women that hell had counted on, took up their briefcases and marched, refusing any further hypocritical collaboration with the enemy which was the Church.

By HAM! Spicerot had thought this would be the perfect wedge splitting off an American Catholic church easy to control. She fell limp into her big leather swivel and closed her eyes. Then slowly her inner vision began to clear, and from deep in her throat came a growly chuckle. At first her office lackeys feared it was an attack of some

kind; they all coughed in unison to help clear her throat, but when she burst out with chortles and guffaws, they belatedly chimed in. If this momentarily had seemed a set-back, she was suddenly sure it was not.

“Great Avidity! It’s a victory!” she hollered. “Those bishops overseeing the process have great influence with their fellows and they’ll kow-tow now - fear all over the place! They’ve looked into the mouth of the tigress in those superb viragos - those teeth, those snarls, those fiery eyes - what feline ferocity. What courage! What resolve! What furious, feline ferocity!”

Her first impulse had been to thrash Envy and Tooth; but she’d reward them at once. After all, it was not a pastoral that really mattered; it was persuasion of those who elected the Big Guy, and bishops were a leap in the right direction - let the anxiety and appeasement roll - tidal waves through all their colleagues. This was better than any document, this had unleashed true fear and readiness to capitulate. Take it right to the top!

Spicerot gave orders, pulled the best of her troops from other assignments and sent them without rest to diocesan headquarters all over the world. New words soon entered inter-Church communications, ideas with a twist into diocesan programs; hesitation, fears, and dismay were related from one bishop to another over the woman problem. The conferences where demons had historically had a hard time became a hunting ground for those men who deeply feared women anyway, and for those whose childhood experience had formed them by constant anxiety for their overburdened, unappreciated, and sometimes abused mothers. Fear had emotionally hampered any understanding that would make them hold out for tradition. Even those whose loyalty to Rome was secure didn’t know what to do about these militant women who suddenly seemed like the majority. They would dither while Anarky’s agenda gained ground. Women’s rights echoed deeply in such men to whom it sounded like fairness; and those who harbored a deep dislike and distrust of authority themselves, well they were already in the right camp. Australia, New Zealand, and Canada could be safely counted on; and America after a few more meetings of the NCCB would be like a good swiss cheese, the alpine kind. Austria, Belgium - other Europeans, yes, Europe was even holeyer.

However, the work was not promising in Rome at the moment. Communique’s sent in by Tarslugger who was assigned to the Vatican carried the fearful news that the Pope was close to obeying some command of . . . pain!. . . the Woman. An obscure consecration, whatever that meant, of, possibly, Russia. But Spicerot quizzed her big-brain-analyzers and they questioned what possible good that would do him. She thought she knew that even Fatima, after all, had been effectively squelched by HAM. She didn’t receive reports that many world bishops were paying any attention to this consecration. That was a relief. (Remember how impossible it was for any demon to comprehend, much less to honor, what they considered weak. This fit that category because the world’s press gave this consecration not one headline. But Ellen Goodman and her three, yes Sylvia was there, had gathered a group of men and women in their little church by the river, and prayed with their elderly priest who was a LaSalette - this order had special devotion to the Woman - on the Saturday of the consecration.)

Anarky’s high hopes that the Pastoral would split America from Rome were now redirected, and her hordes of troops, so well-trained and experienced, turned their sights on that richer field - the red-hats who’d elect the next pope. The bishops so stunned by the turn of events with their pastoral efforts, were ready to placate women even if they had embraced witchcraft -which Anarky noted was happening even in women’s religious orders. The counter-

sign would stand in the Holy place! When the image of priest-garbed women loomed in her mind's eye, she was filled with unholy glee. Already it was commonly seen in the less potent churches. That did nothing for her. It must be THE Church, HIS Church. And the leap forward since the demise of the pastoral was stunning. Had that silly document been promulgated, the bishops would have been off the hook, their work done they would have washed their hands of any further efforts; even the folks in the pew would have thought all was settled. Efforts everywhere would have met with malaise. She saw now that gathering a commission of activist women had been like letting turbulent water flow into a reservoir behind a dam, or collecting poison until the bottle was full, letting the waters gather force, and the poison deepen and intensify; then breaking the dam - the wild water up-turning every peaceful place; smashing the bottle so that its powerful, spasm-inducing fumes flowed everywhere. Had the waters or the poison been safely contained no effect like this could have been gained.

Powerful American religionists, devoid by now of obedience, would override the cautions and despicable adherence to the Enemy's plan. Working like a backed up sewer their rebellion would inundate that sanctimonious papal house. It didn't look as though this Pope was touchable except through besmirching him with the odium of being anti-woman, just an Old World man bogged down in his cultural biases. New-world, thoroughly Eveologized people would successfully tar him with being quaintly over his depth, and antiquated. They would no more think of him as their spiritual head than they would think of HAM having that precedence over them. Yet HAM would have it, whether they thought it or not!

Now with this pope's immediate predecessor, naive lover of the Church that he was, with his all embracing smile, Slyneedle had almost pierced the Enemy's defenses on the matter. This innocent man had spoken a few words about Mother-God that could have been well used by GWP, effectively muddling the reality behind gender. What good he could have been put to; but he died! Too soon. (What Spicerot and her kin could not know was that the Almighty forbade that primary office of His to be ultimately tampered with. He had called this one He loved, now in danger, right home.)

One late night, sleepless because of Firestroke, when A.S.S. was pacing up and down her presidential suite, she found her thoughts turning to that strange man who had gained the papal seat so briefly. He had obviously carried his confused, from Their point of view, theology right with him into the top office. If that could happen once, why couldn't it happen again only with someone who was healthier, who perhaps had a quarter of a century to effectively dismantle the hated Citadel. Now the old pope was certainly failing; she guessed within a year he'd go to his reward . . . REWARD - that thought coming unbidden sent her into a fit which she struggled to control. It took some time because the Firestroke symptoms aggravated this overlay of tremors. But . . .but . . . she spluttered, where. . .was she. . .Oh! that!

And the excitement of the idea brought it all clear again. If a man could be elected to the top spot, she mulled, somebody who held, even unknown and hidden to himself, her woman-larceny deep within himself, then her descendancy to the lowest honors of HAM was clinched. At that she had to loosen her claws from her own flesh, the thought had been so powerful. As these ruminations continued, her thoughts spread out over the upper world. She could be sure of intelligence reports, in them she had memorized Eveology's progress chancery after chancery, the hours ticking by. With her remarkable memory for the red-hats, she went over what she knew of their loyalties -

they could be confused all right, but disloyal? No, she would have to find one who, despite that confounded loyalty, was more than a little thin in comprehension, and assign one of the best fiends; this man would be somebody nearly all his cohorts thought innocuous, and well, nice. Nice, YUK! As soon as this blasted Firestroke was over, she knew exactly the course she'd take. She'd find him, but get him elected? That would take real intrigue. Firestroke by damned; it was hard to think.

As soon as normal activity resumed at Hadesial, the President called in her sharpest lieutenants from all over the upper world. She had right at hand the exact sequence of the election of that other pope who died, and knew that he had been a compromise between the cardinals who held the fort, so to speak, and the ones eager to let down the drawbridge - no, not let it down - get rid of it. His sweet smile and affability had made him the logical compromise. Her best intelligence officers had it laid out before them while her long red-nailed claw vehemently underlined salient points by slashing through the paper. What had happened then could be programmed to happen again. The cardinal scene she laid out as only she knew it; it looked very possible that that consistory where the usable fellow had been elected could be restaged; but some hard devious work remained. The assignments were made with dire threats about the crapulous end if success wasn't forthcoming, and the pack went out snarling to recruit their teams.

Having a Council of Bishops in the various countries was in itself propitious; it had the effect of forcing bland, uninsightful, general ideas only vaguely related to the piercing, paradoxical realities of the Enemy upon the whole college of bishops - the lowest common denominator effect. It also placed individual bishops in a place of lessened responsibility, for which many of them were thankful. Especially when it came to women. It toned down the teaching office to something much more manageable. People no longer were looking to their teacher - the stand-in for The Teacher, as direct guidance for their souls, because the big amalgamated mass of purple zucchettoed men first had to mollify each other, so their instructions to the faithful came out blunted, not pointed for a particular parish or the individual soul. As Anarky read over her communiqués, she thought this was certainly in her favor. On things that demanded pointed answers, they could always say "read this or that document of the conference." Thus staying far away from unpopular positions. This made dilution a common phenomenon and one that would aid the underworld's big plan. They were certainly already treading on egg shells when it came to the "woman question," fading away quickly when confronted with those angry females. The sacred texts were even revised with acquiescence to women's sensibilities - changes in language were one of the most successful efforts. The commission on the liturgy was full of active sympathizers who exercised immense power over translations and even supplied their own texts.

Ways were being found to get ahead of Rome's questions and objections. For these reasons Spicerot became certain of the outcome of this tremendous all-encompassing war. All her intelligence reports told her GWP had inroads in every diocesan office and most bishops had quietly surrendered. Well organized teams of demons were assigned to gain immediate access to any holdouts, putting pressure on any reluctant Bishops through virulent troops of females, demolishing theologians who dissented from the dissenters by innuendo and character assassination, controlling the religious press to make the victory seem unanimous, issuing kits for consciousness raising that would make the Canadian kits look like baby toys, further demoralizing priests by placing watchdog

women in every parish, making sure that end-runs were made by staff members around any obstinate bishops, thus empowering women for their undercutting task, that was until priestesses took over. Yes, by the end of the year - the old one was weakening and would soon be gone - women would be ordained priests in the Citadel. Eve's envy again ascendant; then it remained to merely watch while that two thousand year old institution, both the new American part and the old Rome part, sank slowly into the dust. The new millennium would soon be free of it! HAM would rule! (And Spicerot with HAM)

Messages from many bishop's conferences that could have been a warning (things were not so advanced after all) had been put into the round file of the Supernatural Urgent Information Central (SUIC) in fact, the wastebaskets were overflowing. Anarky relied on this office for intelligence gathering, especially about any new appearances of The Woman. Such occurrences, depending on their sources, could be the one deterrent to her success, and she anxiously scanned the reports every day. The Woman's power was unaccountable. She wanted no such disruptions. But SUIC (pronounced "sick") was quiet except for the code that meant "all was well" which kept flicking up on the screen; otherwise, not an upsetting word had come through from that department in weeks. She could trust her group there. They were the tops in discerning any supernatural intrusions from the Enemy side. How could she know that there had been such a flurry of Appearances, so overwhelming in number, that the team, analyzing them, dissecting them, worriedly working them over, had determined that they were all hoaxes? After all, how could The Woman appear in such widely separated places at nearly the same time?

They had word that she'd appeared in Brazil, Japan, Africa, several places in the U.S, to say nothing of that strangest of all, Medjugorje, where she was supposed to speak everyday. They'd kept their eyes on that for years, fearing that those kids might really be seeing her. But the dreaded Sign had not been given, and even a devil with HAM's powers could not appear in all those places simultaneously. They had even sent an agent to Minnesota, wherever that was, and checked out an Appearance that was supposed to take place on Easter Sunday, but nothing happened there except snow. The Catholic world, near its end, obviously was hatching hysterical women, and not a few men, all over the place. The strange spell always indicative at the turning years of the millennium was already sending the tipsy over the edge. The team was relieved when this explanation was delivered by Psychobabble, one of their experts in human psychology; so relieved that they all went out, found a cache of Tears and got roaring drunk.

They had put the machine on automatic, so that the message of "all's well from SUIC" in code kept up its staccato assurances, and all six had missed a few days of work. Therefore, Tarslugger could not reach them. T.S. had one of the most dangerous jobs in Intelligence gathering. He'd been placed within the Vatican itself where he daily had to dodge and hide from innumerable angels as they rushed in and out bearing messages. He had just overheard from a roost on a window ledge, where he looked like part of the masonry, that the Pope was confined to his bed in his final illness. T.S. in his anxious memo advised Anarky to begin the final push for the Consistory, calling into Rome immediately all who were to work around the edges there. Reinforcements should be on their way! And further - What was headquarters going to do about all the Woman's appearances which certainly boded no good when this fated election would come now so quickly? Any other plans hinging on the election of a new pope would have to be put on the fast track.

When the hangover had eased and the six in SIUC realized just how far things had slipped, and after they finally decoded Tarslugger's cautionary report, now a couple of days late, they first passed the laudanum, waited for its effect, and then the wolfsbane. Snap, crackle, pop - pop, crackle, snap. Like black soap bubbles they flew up and burst, just a filthy residue sifted down, coating decoding machines, stacks of communiqués, phones, and computers. They believed it was to oblivion; alas, such spirits would painfully learn they had but one end, the Second Lake of Fire.

Chapter XX

A fatal gap had opened, but communications seemed alive and in order from President Spicerot's end. Every hour was the same; "all's well in SIUC" came in the code; and then . . .O, HAM!! the late arrival of Tarslugger's communiqué. Now her advance team would be late; and it was too late to worry about any Appearances. What she never guessed, besides all the trouble, another of her dependable intelligence gatherers, actually a key to every thing she knew, was betraying her - just what had Nimblewits been up to?

Her high-powered stratagems were drawing nearly all of Hell's resources; Anarky was putting all her eggs in one basket - a new, ha, ha, puppet for pope. She savored the sound of it, "Puppet for Pope!" The little fellow had been claw-picked by this very talon, and his malleability had been punched and prodded into exactly the right compromise-candidate shape. The college of cardinals, by the count right on her desk, would be divided; those opposed to Spicey's program had hardened and were holding the line, those totally committed to her agenda, though aging, were going tough, led by those shell-shocked ones, so nicely traumatized by the flash of the tiger's teeth. To her crack mind she had found the one door to the inner sanctum; she and her hordes would rush in and with ferocity never seen before, turn it into a ruin, upon which would rise an eternal monument to HAM who had once more defeated his Immortal Foe, and in the very same way. She went over and over the statistics coming from Intelligence and it all pointed to no other result but the election of Puppet for Pope in the impasse that would certainly develop. More often now, A.S.S. was allowing herself the luxury of savoring sweet victory. HAM's indebtedness to her would be fathomless. She even had had vague thoughts, yet unjelled, of carrying the rebellion to its obvious conclusion, that she, a she-demon, should descend below HAM. Taking rebellion far beyond the limits of HAM, the title of that position came easily enough, Her Exquisite Poweress. HEP, she would hepitize, that is, glut the world with anarchistic, thoroughly hellish, female power for as long as there was one. All earthlings who lusted after advanced tastes and attitudes more than anything would worship HEP.

After the death of the much-revered and loved Pope - there was immediate talk of sainthood - the President of Hadesial, off stride by the treacherous delay, rushed into preparations. Caught by the lapse, tense and angry, she was ruthless. Every possibility for the Consistory was covered, but without the cool deliberation and detailing necessary. Demons assigned to the right ears of the participants, who would take great risks in accompanying them to Rome, had been pulled away from their previous task without rest, and were not well briefed. Then compelled to keep at their posts till each of those men entered the forbidden building itself, they were confounded by a kind of force field that kept shocking them like hornets. The last thing a red-hat was to think about before his participation with the other cardinals - which was not to be left to chance, was therefore, a series of squeals and squeaks, instead of the thoroughly planned last-minute Eveology banner-words of potent propaganda. Not a few of the demons, debilitated from these last frantic, painful efforts, which were added to the work of the last months (hell years), stumbled back from the doors and were unable to muster the strength to regain the stream for underworld. Like those of S.I.U.C. they chose wolfbane rather than languish in this torturous seat of Christianity. Tarslugger flew about counting carcasses, shaking his head that the poor devils had been sent out so hurriedly that they hadn't been issued survival suits.

While the cardinals deliberated in Rome, speculation went wild in the press around the world. Even office

gossip gathered by Intelligence confirmed that Hell had won. Everyone from the top bureaucrat's secretary to typists in the NCCB offices thought priesthood for women the natural outcome once the powerful American hierarchy put their backs into this change of direction for the Church.

The human outcry for change was made to seem enormous; certain publications with back-breaking effort on the part of thousands of Spicerot's core illuminati had riled a vociferous part of the Catholic populace, made to appear a majority. One paper that had not been breached did scream out in black print, "Have Catholics Lost Their Senses?" A woman reporter pondered why the bishops were so willing to beat themselves with the great stick the feminists had insolently provided. But overall there was little protest from those called "faithful". Through these days, whenever the bishops appeared - some on Larry King etc., these female dreadnoughts were there haranguing and exhibiting fierce scorn, a true exaltation of anger; and every newspaper spun it to mean that the greater part of Catholic Christendom was in revolt. The lie of it didn't matter, not as long as enough gullible folks accepted the engineered statistics - and the compromised candidate won.

With the extreme efficiency that the whole GWP strategy had been laid, every possible breakdown in communications provided with a backup, and every contingency secured with an alternative, how Anarky and her top aides could be so out of the loop was unexplainable except for that sleek master of deception who had made plans of his own ever since ASS had turned her wriggly backside on him.

Oh yes, he had heard that one gut wrenching guffaw. He had seen the sneer in his direction.

It still echoed in his brain, galvanizing Nimblewits' steely resolve of revenge with a coating of apparent enthusiasm for GWP that couldn't have been greater. The number of hours he worked as just one of the assistants, even after his full teaching schedule in Voluptuary didn't seem to count with him; he sweated over the map layouts with their increasing red-colored tacks, he revised the graphs of human resources now attuned to Eveology, and kept the demon contingent schedules. His greasy brow dripping, he sent off groups to their assignments, and gave pep talks to the returning exhausted demons who were being sent on immediately to another theater. At Circean an enticing little dish was sharing his apartment just to lead Anarky to a false assurance that her rebuff meant nothing to him. Lately Anarky's trusted female imp, Ms. Vagary, who oversaw all incoming communiqués had disappeared. (It happened after a party for the office group that Nimblewits gave in the Circean lounge; Ms. Vagary had been seen chaperoning her apprentice secretaries and technicians, watching their Tears input though not a drinker herself.) But after she left the party, not entirely willingly perhaps, in the company of a ravishing stranger, she was never seen again. The mystery that remained unsolved, but Nimblewits was the logical one to replace her. So now, turning over more of the teaching to his assistants, he himself received, decoded, organized according to importance, and handed out to the typing pool the daily reports that came from the ferocious work going on above. That he changed a word or two, adding a "not," or taking one out, could make all the difference. The effect of the botched work going on above and his slight additions and subtractions put Anarky at a risk she wouldn't have believed. Her comprehension of months (hell years) of effort, and now the workings of the election of a new pope, depended upon on an intelligence that was deeply flawed.

Every now and then Anarky would sit down with a list of all her closest associates and studiously rethink their loyalties, if you could call it that, never did she hesitate to wipe out anyone not totally in her debt. It wasn't

loyalty, it was blackmail that kept them fearfully responsive to her. Nimblewits was number one on that check list. She had only to recall his indebtedness to her for his new high ranking position on the faculty and for WW's digs, as well as all she had on him in the big coup, not even to add her cozy approval by HAM (the citation was framed in gold), to skip over his name without a qualm. Besides, she had sequestered a couple of those queer types he'd used in the revolt (similar to Ms. Vagary's unknown companion); kept on ice, they would back up her charges if he so much as turned a whisker and he knew it.

From all her calculations the actual election of her picked man could be but three short days away - those S.U.I.C. oafs, torch them, had put all the complex and necessary preparations under the gun. And this gravely deficient time meant greasing and speeding up the great gears for the celebration at Hadesial. It was to be more elaborate than any affair, even the grand one that had seen Slaverlands receive his magnificent payoff from HAM. It demanded the wheels to spin even if the expendable slaves fell into heaps. The Master had not come to that gala himself, of course, (what would demons think to see him so scorched and blistered?) but several of the greatest of the lowerdowns, Archdemons and such, had come to laud SG's achievements in His Abysmal Majesty's name. The ground crews were set out on the run to groom the campus down to the last spiky thorn bush and remnant lava flow. Beginning with Anarky's quarters, continuing to the dormitories, the library, the administration buildings, and the classrooms all were covered with gangs like ants, hastily slapping up great metallic plumes of fire springing around golden symbols, muscular raised arms bearing crowns, scepters, and maces interspersed with an emblem - the woman sign, a circle with a cross (necessarily changed to an x). Artistic, flattering renditions, if imaginary, of HAM's face soon hung from every balcony, some of them askew because worker-imps had hurriedly planted them with big swatches of duct tape. At night the red glow of the pit would give them the appearance of baked ham and the light of day would overcast them with gangrenous color.

Into Baal Hall kitchen flowed a torrent of vittles of such abundance that the storerooms and pantries were soon inundated with bags, boxes, cans, jars, bottles, and barrels of provender. All variations of prepared human souls, dried (consciousness intact), in sauces, mixed with liqueur, pickled, spiced, candied, or fresh awaited the cooks' own recipes, who under the pressure of time ignored them and began to fling this and that together. The store caves were raided with such helter-skelter they were left a jumble, in all bringing the inventory to a dangerous low. The fiend who prided himself on being in charge was infuriated at this uncontrolled attack on his bailiwick and sent off an immediate protest below to his boss, Archdemon Stankerstunk; but Anarky only rushed off more emergency requisitions for huge amounts from every warehouse department. She was certain that Hell would have an overflowing sufficiency in the very near future. No unearthly devil succotash would be served to adulterate the fare for this party. The variety was fit to thrill every jaw, mandible, chop and masticating mouth of the denizens of the depths. If only it could be gathered in time; no ifs - her determination would carry the day, and more blows descended on the driven lackeys.

These profuse provisions were only exceeded by the potions brought in to quench the thirst that gluttony would bring on the feasters. The wine cellars had been restocked slowly since the beginning of the Anarky administration, now the tempo of deliveries was frantic; a steady stream of conveyances of every kind bringing the cream of the crop of spirits distilled from the tears of regret of damned humans, their broken promises, deceived

loves, betrayed confidences, deliberate falsehoods, open-minded ignorances, self-serving blindnesses, too late to be repented of. Tears had become their meat by day and by night, and the intoxicating drink of their tormenters. The strength of the intoxicant depended upon how many souls had looked to the damned one for guidance to knowledge and Truth (according to the Enemy's definition). But tears of regret weren't the best. The choicest libations, ruthlessly collected from their dens that lined the river of fire, were those of false prophets, deceiving religionists, and apostate or heretical Bishops and priests, especially those who had indulged the excesses of Voluptuary. The lovely intensity of this brew fomented because of the hatred that spawned the tears. In two's, those who were the antithesis of the other's favorite theory or philosophy were chained together. The most liberal theologian to the most radically conservative. Unitarian bound to Jehovah's Witness eternally. They had not been condemned here by the Enemy, but rather had worked their way here by refusing, quite deliberately, door after door to the other realm - all of them opportunities to heaven, labeling them, too closed-minded, too fundamentalistic, too narrow, too lenient, too papist, too unscriptural, too bound in tradition, too man-determined, when the Enemy had pointed it out to each one as the right door all the same. So they grated, grinding their teeth through the interminable green days, until only tears relieved their existence. These were tears of frustration. Rarely did the religionists cry tears of repentance. If they came, too late for any salvation, such tears were considered even choicer by the collecting demons.

Spicerot rushed out signed orders for complete renovation of the great reception room in Baal Hall where she had first been entertained at Hadesial. The renovator-demons were threatened with tail-wringing tortures if they didn't finish in time. Furiously, fabric wall hangings, marbled in deep shades of grey, were stitched up and hung; the old oak chairs, tossed out in a heap, were replaced with chairs, wide, deep and comfortable, stolen from a faculty lounge at Nefarious and brought by a Saurian team at night. Deeply etched glass panels of the jinn, the nix, the ancient pidwidgeon, and other oddities of dark sprites were slapped over the old arched windows (she had had these made at the scorching glass-blowing forges where damned humans labored), and though unfinished and without their hangers, they were stuck-in with Crazy Glue.) Down came the heavy drapes releasing clouds of choking dust, and up went new fabric artistry woven with spells, incantations, and curses, ripped off the looms before the last knots were tied. Somber wood framed, black velvet paintings of nymphs and satyrs (from whose well-furnished apartment?) added elegance. The workers were dropping with fatigue, but still the whips cracked. Great chandeliers were grunted into place. Barely arriving in time for That Day, they shed an emerald light so counter colored that even when dimmed no telltale red from the pit found even a ledge to rest upon without being made innocuous. Limping, falling, kicked back onto their hooves, the demon crews were driven on. The final touch to the decor were the huge bouquets of hemlock, nightshade, belladonna, and banewort gathered by barely crawling imps; stuck every-which-way in vases and fairly chucked onto the serving tables, and lastly, the laborious strain of stationing of two immense Upas trees in huge pots at both sides of the newly installed stage. From this ornate, magnificently draped platform, Anarky carefully planned three ceremonials; first, her acceptance speech to The Grand Summons to Come Lower, to be followed by a stirring ritual immolation of the latest great female soul lately to descend to HAM's realm. . . oh let it be R.R.R. she fervently prayed, or deB, someone truly worthy of the honor. Lastly, from this stage her final departure would take place as Consort, and (at least temporarily) Equal, to His Abysmal Majesty. Each of the three ceremonies was thoroughly rehearsed with

musicians (music in Hell was atonal - melody strictly verboten), honor guards, attendants, and minor dignitaries who arrived panting, some dabbing angrily at fresh wounds. These latter had been arriving with some pomp at Hadesial since the last Firestroke, as convinced as Anarky that, like a conqueror of old, she was about to lead Hell's armies to their greatest victory since Eden. They would be in her vanguard. They were more than a little put out by the rough hustle that insulted their high stations.

Besides the demon-worker toll which was considerable, the physical face-lift put the college deeply in debt. Spicerot had, without their knowledge, signed over all her staff as collateral for the foodstuffs, and the college buildings themselves for the redecorating. No one need ever know about this except the lower accounting office, and they were all on her side. The one sure thing about this business was that it would bring a prosperity to Hell unprecedented in all its 300,000 years, and especially to Hadesial. Her investment would look like a trifle when the profits began to flow in; and any board of equals would agree that the loss of a few dozen lackeys was more than worth it. Those S.U.I.C. fiends had been the cause of many of her problems; she simply hadn't the time to cover her tracks and make things look legit.

She had not been to earth for many hell years. In her dedicated years at Hadesial, she'd lost track of just how many. But Anarky S. Spicerot in full force of hatred, would have nothing less than that she be present when her Puppet Pope was presented to the world. Then she would return in Hell's acclaim to the greatest revelry ever. She was more than a little put off that this meant simply arriving with her retinue at St. Peter's Square to be lost among thousands of those horrid Christians - there was an odor about them that stifled, and those Guardian angels were murder. It seemed to her that her part in this event should be recognized with a flourish of trumpets inside St. Peter's itself with cardinals, archbishops, bishops - the whole miserable tribe in attendance, and herself prominently elevated to their awed view. (From this very place, eventually, the flames would shoot up that would burn all that remained of the Bastion, scorching the very heavens themselves). She should not be just one among thousands in some outdoor square.

Momentarily she thought the Church should recognize this day in some way more special than for any other papal election - if they could only see and envy her bedecked environs below - enough to make the Versailles of Louis XVI pale in comparison. After all didn't they know that this election would . . . Ahh, no, of course, they didn't know. And Anarky smirked . . .O.K. . .it would have to be a pavement crowded with despicable pilgrims. She still would see him, herself! And then, and then, return in triumph to the consummate celebration of the absolute victory and reign of Eveology and the ignominious end of the hated Church.

Though it was an utmost difficulty, President Spicerot insisted that egress to the surface this time be through the earth crack whose sunlight leak had so fired her malice ever since coming to Hadesial. It was significant that she take advantage of every piece of symbolism. So the lifting stream at great expense, and the exhausted demise of hundreds of slaves was engineered to be redirected for this one time.

Nimblewits planned his escape from Hadesial carefully. Thank Belial! She was engrossed in her bundobust! He would attend the embarkation with feigned exultation; but when all eyes were on the Descendant Star he would slip away through the crowds and be on the Stream to Nefarious U where an old colleague awaited; he had all the papers necessary for condemnation of Anarky S. Spicerot, many written in her own hand, if that proved

necessary, but he thought the communications he'd been sending further down would have long since taken care of any questions about his loyalty.

That Day dawned the usual green. Though it was not Firestroke the morning began with more than usual growlings from the Depths. It made a few wonder, but Spicerot assured it was a fine omen. She dressed early in a ravishing concoction of stalactite silver satin that shimmered from head to toe with each of her seething shivers. That day, taking care of final details through her secretaries and functionaries, emotionally at fever pitch, these attacks were frequent. Those demons attending her were affected like coals constantly blown upon. The whole retinue as they left the President's apartments and formally processed to the embarkation point seemed to steam and bubble like a gaseous pot boiling. When the ground trembled beneath their feet, it went unnoticed, or was accepted as a fitting tribute to the maddening excitation of the participants and their observers. Then little bright bubbles of fire popped up out of the cracks of the ground to roll along like marbles before being snuffed, making the whole party bound along delightedly. What a celebration! Those not actually designated to be part of the party lined the route greeting the parade with animation and passionate cries which reverberated along it accompanied by the ascending rumbles from the Lower Down. It was triumphal! It was Descendency! "But just the prelude," though Spicerot, twitching with each stagey step, "Just the prelude!"

As they ascended to the propulsion point, which rested upon the rock upon which the earth light struck, a tremendous tremor went through the cavern causing the earthbound party and those crowds of observers to raise even a louder din of the triumphant. Surely HAM was rejoicing in the Lowest, sending them off with his unction. Spicerot had no sooner put her feet upon the pad itself and raised her arms in the salute of power than an ear splitting volley of cannon cracks opened the rock beneath her feet and a torrent of flaming lava belched up. It all happened in an instant. As quick as the flick of a snake's tongue the blistering fury coiled around her followers. The two female bodyguards and then Nimblewits, first in line to the pad after Spicerot, went down as if pulled by suction. He'd had no warning. The last to be seen of him was his slicked hair burning like a grease fire on a stove. The next three splatted out upon the violent wave with belly flops, floated for a moment kicking convulsively, burst into flame, and were sucked under. Other demons nearby stunned into immobility, blazed up in a group like birthday candles tottering on uncooked batter. Then one by one the mucilage swallowed them up. Those further afield turned and began to flee.

No one witnessed the great black rock split further and Spicerot, frantically dancing to maintain her footing, slip like a shivering silverfish into the maw of a huge toad. A long lusting tongue of fire lapped up the edges of the rock before its jaws snapped together with a grinding crunch.

Those dashing back toward the college were met by a gigantic leap of flame which jumped from the abyss like an untied monster. A ravenous animal it headed towards them roaring with the voice of a thousand thunders. Blasting through Baal Hall like a blowtorch through a matchbox, with licks of crimson it gobbled up the screaming, panic ridden crowds of demons that surged leaderless upon the quad. Buildings exploded on all sides throwing up their occupants dismembered, charred and indistinguishable. The Circean was the last to shudder, collapse, and submit into red rage. The giant globe maintained its ghastly luminosity of the scene, unperturbed, till the ascending flame with fearsome heat and acrid gas shattered it as hammer pulverizes a watch crystal .

It did not take long. Its mission for His Abysmal Majesty accomplished, slowly the red tide seeped back and fell into the lake of molten brimstone in the depths below the precipice. The embers, all that were left of Hadesial, did not die for hell weeks. Finally the last blackened coal cooled, and the only light over the scene was the flickering from the fire that is never quenched below the escarpment. It was a site to which no devil ever came. The place, the time, the events obliterated from the memory of Hell.

THE END