Wolf's Lair

By harbour

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Vienna, 6th August1900

My Dearest Kathi,

Kindest thanks for your moving lines from 20th July. They were highly stimulating and have been a great comfort to me on more than one lonely night. Please forgive the lateness of my reply but it is only today that I have sufficiently recuperated from the events which I will now endeavour to put down on paper for your enjoyment.

It will scarcely come as a surprise to you to learn that I was initiated into the rather secretive double lives of a number of my fellow students last week. A private gathering was scheduled at the home of a young man, one Wolfgang F.-- a student of finance whose acquaintance I had never made but who, being on intimate terms with Christian, had apparently become aware of me and saw fit to invite me to an exclusive gathering he was holding on the last weekend of July. We who have chosen music,artot theatre as our path in life rarely mingle with our non-artistic peers, so I was left to assume that the only common link between myself and this faceless young Wolfgang must be our shared tendency to indulge in vice. That he was from a well-to-do family goes without saying, but I know you appreciate that kind of detail. In fact you may be acquainted with said family, for I have since learned that they have connections in town. If I am ever to discover his full name, you will be the first to know it.

Christian was uncharacteristically withholding about what sort of gathering it was to be, but his vague description hinted that a certain level of debauchery could be expected and I was intrigued enough to accept the invitation. When the day of the party arrived, we awoke late in the morning. Christian was even more amorous than usual and teased me so provocatively whilst I was attempting to dress that I eventually gave in to my baser urges, bent him over the bureau and gave him a quick, hard seeing to. I won’t go into detail here but it did us both good, as is always the case. Two hours later we emerged from the flat and made our way to that of young Mr. F., bathed, combed and decked out in our finery.

Wolfgang’s address was not far from ours, so we opted to walk. Once more I tried to coax some information from my friend about who would be in attendance but all I got in response was a sly grin and a wink accompanied by a few indistinct hints about old money and students from faculties which had no connection with our own. He assured me it would be fun as we approached a sizeable,

handsome grey building. The door was open and I followed him inside, where we were greeted by a middle aged servant of unapproachable character who addressed Christian in such a manner that suggested they had met before. After a brief exchange of perfunctory greetings the man took our overcoats and hats then showed us up the stairs.

The scent of tobacco and sweat filled my nostrils as I surveyed the grand room and beheld a sea of beautiful, semi-naked bodies lounging upon the sofas and sprawled upon the plush carpets and overstuffed chairs. The men must have outnumbered the women three to one and not a single girl was without her own small entourage of doting admirers. The curtains were drawn so as to keep out the sunlight. Heavy, thick crimson affairs they were, and very effective at transforming day into night. The soft glow of dozens upon dozens of candles cast a romantic and subdued light upon the depraved scene within. Upon entering the parlour we were ‘invited’ by the maid—a woman of equally inscrutable character—to disrobe at our leisure and, given the intense midsummer heat, I was not in the least hesitant to comply with her request.

Christian had already stripped down to his underwear and was greeting a dark-haired acquaintance with a kiss on the cheek. As soon as I had shed my own outer layers I made my way over to the two of them and was introduced. I forget the name of the dark-haired youth (it was a strange, foreign name as I recall) but soon found I was mistaken in thinking he was the host.

My eyes met those of a pretty young woman with fair skin and ginger hair as a servant appeared with a tablet of drinks which we gratefully accepted. I continued to observe the woman while Christian chatted to his friend. Her shoulders were bare, as were her legs and her complexion was that of purest alabaster. The men on either side of her turned to look at me and I broke eye contact with her to ask Christian whether he knew her. But I never got the question out, for I turned to find he was making his way over to one of the unoccupied corners with his friend and motioning for me to follow. As every chair and sofa was taken, we settled on one of the Oriental carpets. The brunette spread out on his back and casually rested his head in Christian’s lap. Christian gave me a warm smile as he lazily ran his fingers through the boy’s dark locks and I took a sip of my wine, feeling slightly awkward.

Soon after we had made ourselves comfortable on the floor another couple entered the parlour; a man and a woman, both in their thirties. The woman was blond and fair. Her eyes were wide with apprehension as they adjusted to the darkness of the room and there was an air of hesitation about her which could be spotted from a mile off. Her gaze met mine briefly before she looked away, colour rising to her cheeks. Her escort whispered something in her ear, his hand touching her arm in a way that made me conclude he must be her husband and that she had needed some persuading to come along to this sort of party. The three of us watched as he helped her out of her dress and led her over to where we were seated. We made a place for them, inviting them to join us and Christian cut a fantastic figure as he made polite small talk with the man, who dominated the conversation. Even the young man with the unpronounceable name chipped in now and again with an enlightened observation. The woman, however, kept silent as did I. She intrigued me and I resolved to get to know her better. Much better, if she would allow me to.

The wine flowed freely and my grasp on sobriety began to slip as more people trickled into the

parlour in twos and threes. The chink of a ringed finger tapping a glass made the room fall silent and all eyes came to rest upon a petite vision of loveliness standing on a table in the centre of the room. With a flushed face, a broad smile and many coy glances for the men around her, the tipsy young woman announced that she should very much like to make the acquaintance of any and every gentleman present, offering herself up to whomever was interested, to be sampled in whichever manner he pleased. An good-spirited cheer went up and a handful of men escorted her out of the room. Some twenty minutes later another girl followed suit with a similar speech and withdrew from the parlour with another handful of suitors in tow. Throughout the evening at irregular intervals a handful of the female guests would go on to make identical announcements and retire to one of the many bedchambers, each followed by a half dozen or so eager volunteers. Christian encouraged me to go and watch one of these spectacles, assuring me it was ‘a jolly good show, not to mention a chance to mingle’, but the sight of the exotic brunette’s tongue in my friend’s ear suggested that he may have had other things on his mind than my amusement.

I left them to it and walked down the corridor, where the sounds of merriment and voices could be heard behind every door I passed. At the end of the hallway I came upon a room with an open door and walked inside, where I was silently acknowledged by the small cluster of chatting spectators standing around a fainting couch. Their sights were fixed upon a handsome couple in the throes of coital bliss. Their bodies shimmered with the perspiration of their efforts. Neither of them made a sound or seemed to take any notice of the spectators gathered round them. I watched in utter fascination the slow, passionate and uninhibited way in which they performed their dance for us, quickly downing the contents of my glass in an awkward attempt to steady my nerves. A most primitive arousal had taken hold of my senses and for a split second I actually considered tearing that young man off of the girl and claiming her for myself, but my bashfulness soon banished the thought from my mind.

I left the room in search of another drink, but upon returning to the parlour I found that Christian and his friend had vanished, (availing themselves of one of the broom cupboards, no doubt). I smiled to myself and drank a silent toast to his success.

“What is so amusing?” a lightly accented voice asked and I turned to face the stranger who had addressed me. He had the flushed countenance of a man on the brink of inebriation, a cigar protruded from his grinning lips and his bedroom eyes seemed to peer into my very soul. He didn’t appear at all put off by my lack of response and amicably shook my hand, introducing himself as Patrice. His German was immaculate for a Frenchman and before I knew it he had pulled me into a conversation about wine, a subject in which he was well versed. It seems his family owns a quarter of the vineyards in Western Europe and he had been schooled in Paris, Geneva and Vienna. He was in the midst of studying law at the behest of his father, whose long term design it was that his son someday take the reins of ‘the family business’ as he modestly termed it. There was nothing at all boasting in his manner and the tasteful way he put questions to me about my own background made it evident that he was perfectly at ease conversing with the humbler classes.

I quickly found him to be an engaging conversationalist and managed to get some answers from him about our mysterious host (who I still had not met) and was regaled with stories of ‘Good Old Wolfi’

and his legendary sexual antics. These gatherings of his, it turns out, were generally weekend affairs held two to three times a year; long nights of debauched pleasures which the prettyyoung things of Vienna(hand-picked by Wolfi and his closest friends) indulged in, intoxicated on opium, wine and unimpeded passion, stopping only to rest before carrying on.

“The men,” Patrice explained jovially with a wave of his hand, “are left to nap as long as they please while the women, poor creatures, are scarcely granted a moment’s peace.” He spoke the truth. There were now only three girls left in the grand parlour and each one was being assaulted by three randy suitors at once. But everyone, both male and female alike, seemed to be in their element. It was a thoroughly delightful spectacle to behold.

Time flies when you’re enjoying yourself, which I was indeed with my charming new acquaintance. According to the clock we were well into the evening. The sun had set, taking the worst of the heat with it (the curtains, however, remained drawn) and any previously existing restrictions had been abandoned. All manner of combinations, positions and acts were being performed all around us but up to that point Patrice and I had been satisfied to remain observers of these depraved scenes. Apart from the reserve that came from being in a room full of strangers, Patrice was such fine company and his personality made me feel so ease that I was loath to leave his side.

A number of men had abandoned all hope of coupling with a woman that night and had taken to pursuing pleasure with each other instead. Patrice noticed me observing one such union and was clearly animated by it. He calmly put his cigar out in a nearby ashtray and retreated to an empty sofa on the far side of the room, massaging his groin as he went. Without even thinking I followed him and moments later our bodies were entwined in a passionate embrace as his tongue thrust its way down my throat. He was a shamelessly expert kisser, if a tad overzealous, and he had me desperately aroused in no time.

His erection dug into my thigh and I gasped for air when at last he pulled his mouth from mine and breathily asked me to fellate him. I grappled for a gracious way to say no but before I could speak he had taken note of my hesitation and was pulling the remainder of my clothes off. Pausing only to mutter something I didn’t understand, he dropped to his knees, wrapped his lips around my cock and began ardently sucking it. He was ever so adroit in this practice as well and I let out a quiet moan of surprise and pleasure, sinking back into the plush cloud of the sofa as his tongue and mouth performed their unspeakable magic on my engorged sex. It felt so amazing that the people around me were forgotten and I came. My cock was still jerking when he pulled his mouth off it and clambered on top of me, forcing my hand down between his legs. Without hesitation I set to work rubbing his raging staff as he passionately ground his body against mine. He resumed kissing me deeply and I could taste my essence on his tongue. We carried on this way until he groaned softly into my mouth and a hot stream of lust erupted onto my naked belly.

He stared down at me for a moment as he struggled to catch his breath, then reached over and grabbed a conveniently placed handkerchief from the little table nearby and cleaned me up. Instead of abandoning me as I half suspected he might, his demeanour grew even warmer and he had me tell him all about my studies. The questions he asked revealed a genuine interest in music and I was

delighted to discover he had an extensive knowledge of opera and enjoyed playing the piano.

When he had finally finished squeezing all the information from me that he could we drank what was left in our glasses and walked, naked, to the corridor where the air was a bit cooler. Many of the doors were either ajar or wide open now and we passed a room in which we saw a man lazily pleasuring himself with the sole of a young woman's foot—the only part of her body that wasn't being put to use— which I found highly peculiar and amusing. Patrice's hand caressed my backside and he leaned in close to ask whether I fancied retiring to one of the beds with him. My cock stirred and I was unquestionably keen on the suggestion but all the rooms were occupied so we had to make due with a brief, steamy encounter against the full length mirror in the corridor. This consisted of more heated kisses, fondling, and sucking (the only notable difference from our first encounter being that we were stood up).

After Patrice had coaxed a second orgasm from me we sought out the water closet and bid farewell to the wine we had imbibed before returning to the parlour, which seemed more crowded than ever now. Large silk pillows had been scattered on the floor and low, round tables had been set up for the dinner which was about to be served. The promise of sustenance made my stomach growl warmly and it wasn't until that moment that I realised I had not eaten all day. We joined the table of a small group consisting of four young men and the rather timid looking woman I had seen earlier in the evening. The men addressed her as Yvette and I realised from the few words she spoke that she was French as well. She was now as naked as the rest of us and seemed much more at ease than she had a few hours ago.

We were served a light soup, which was uncannily refreshing despite its making us sweat all the more. Gooseflesh spread over my arms and legs as Patrice's fingers closed around my stiffening cock. Yvette's eyes met mine as she brought a spoonful of broth to her mouth. I held her gaze for a long time before taking in the fullness of her red lips, working my way over the curve of her breast, down her tapered waist. The rest was left to my imagination, for her lower half was hidden from my view by the table. Savouring the feel of being discreetly pleasured whilst taking in the vision of the lovely Yvette, I wondered to myself how many men had fucked her that evening; wondered whether she had enjoyed it or merely gone along with it to please her husband. I vowed to myself that I would sample the pleasures her fragile body had to offer before the night was through and I'm certain she read my intentions.

Patrice's fingers calmly drew my foreskin back and forth over my engorged shaft in even, steady strokes. There was no urgency in his movements; their design was purely to please rather than to bring about climax, which would clearly have been unbecoming in the middle of dinner. If anyone else at the table noticed him touching me they did not let on, and for some reason that only added to my excitement. He stopped, however, before I reached the proverbial point of no return.

Word was beginning to circulate throughout the house that "Wolfi" had arrived, which created a buzz of energy in the group, nearly all of whom were recovering from the afternoon's exertions. A rumour was spreading that the host was in the best of spirits and had announced to one of his friends how he intended to fuck each and every guest present, to the laughter and merriment of the room. And I

joined in their laughter, for I was at just the right stage of intoxication and feeling very fine indeed. It was at that moment that our infamous host made his grand entrance. A cheer went up and someone started up the gramophone. We all sat up straight and craned our necks to catch a glimpse of him as he made his way through the room, greeting everyone individually.

A most gallant and stylish young gentleman, he was; the very picture of a libertine dandy with his immaculate hair, smart waistcoat and mischievous grin. I found myself instantly charmed by his manner and was flattered when he paused in his rounds, approached our little group and surveyed us in our exposed splendour. His emerald eyes came to rest upon Yvette and he extended a hand toward her, which she blushingly took. He brushed his lips against her knuckles before turning and holding his other hand up for silence.

“I have come,” he announced in a thunderous, affected tone, “to claim my right as your lord and host!” At this we all laughed and cheered drunkenly as he kissed Yvette on the lips.

Emboldened by our applause he unbuttoned his trousers, revealing a very impressive erection. In one graceful movement he pulled Yvette down onto the floor with him and spread her out on her back. She modestly held her legs together but he coaxed them apart and let his fingers wander over the luscious folds of her sex. It was fascinating to watch the way he touched her and the effect it had on her. The blood rushed to my cock as I stared into her face, searching for some clue of what she must be feeling at this moment. She appeared utterly mesmerised by him and I watched, along with every other person in the room, as he took her in his arms and penetrated her with one swift thrust of his hips. A few scattered gasps and whispers filled the brief silence, and then he set to work. His pelvis dipped in perfect rhythm as he pistoned in and out of her. She wrapped her legs around his body and her fingernails dug into the satin back of his waistcoat, leaving scratch marks in the fabric. Her face turned to mine but her eyes were closed in ecstasy as he nipped at the moist flesh of her neck. How I envied them both. I longed to be in his place and, simultaneously, to be in hers as well.

He climaxed and again we all applauded. Yvette was praised for her bravery, wrapped in a silk dressing gown and sent to one of the bedrooms to rest. Wolfgang stripped to his undergarments and sat himself down in an armchair opposite me. A comely young woman with long black hair had taken Yvette’s place beside me and was expertly flirting with our host as we all drank together. Several of the guests competed for his attention and I observed, transfixed, the effortless grace with which he entertained them. On one occasion his eyes wandered over to mine and I went over all warm. When the swarm had dissipated somewhat, he summoned Patrice over to him and the two conversed briefly. Their words were swallowed up by the music and chatter but the subject of their discussion was clear. Patrice’s glance flitted over to me, as did Wolfgang’s and my heart beat a little faster.

“You,” the host said in a loud but perfectly composed tone as he pointed to me. Our eyes locked as he slowly got to his feet and approached me, much to the wicked merriment of the guests standing close by. Glad of being provided with something new to watch, they pricked up their ears at once and the room fell eerily silent. Wolfgang did not say another word to me and it took my drunken brain a few moments to become conscious of the fact that I was not being spoken to so much as I was being selected. I felt a grin spread across my face, which he mirrored. “Hold him down, ladies,” he ordered

the two girls nearest to me. “He looks like a fighter.”

The girls giggled as they grabbed my wrists and it was a tad embarrassing to suddenly find myself the centre of attention, but I had no objection whatsoever to the man’s intentions for me. On the contrary, I was starting to find the exhibitionistic nature of the situation enormously exciting. More than anything, I was flattered to have been chosen out of all the others.

Sounds of approval rose from the growing crowd as our dashing host stripped off the remnants of his clothes, offering their curious eyes the firm, youthful perfection of his naked body to feast upon. I let my eyes wander over it as well and could not help but admire its beauty. His trim body was manly while still clinging to the last traces of its adolescent softness. His stiffening cock intimidated me and my pulse quickened in anticipation of the pain it could inflict on me. But one debonair smile from him and all my fears were forgotten. I threw my swimming head back and smiled, loving the feeling of all those eyes on me. A cheer went up as he crawled on top of me. He looked out into the crowd as if to check that each and every person was following the proceedings, for he was performing just for them.

With that same smile he turned back to me and plunged his tongue into my mouth, which elicited a great roar of amusement from those watching. His kiss was wild in a way that both thrilled and unsettled me. His cock settled against my thigh as he pressed his body more tightly against mine. His kiss deepened and I winced as some thoughtful soul smeared a cream of some sort on my doomed portal. An excited hush fell over the room as he pushed his way inside me. Much to my relief the discomfort was minimal. I did not fight against the hands that pinned my wrists to the couch, nor did I betray any obvious signs of pleasure. As was expected of me, I was a good sport and took it like a man. But I will not lie to you, Kathi. It was the strangest and most enthralling experience I’ve had in some time. I found being subject to the scrutiny of spectators both stimulating and inhibiting. What is more, I got off on being fucked by a perfect stranger, to put it frankly.

When it was over I was given a robe to wrap myself in and yet another glass of wine, which I could barely look at. My head was beginning to ache and all I wanted was a few hours’ sleep but every bed in the house was still full. The mysterious Yvette was nowhere to be seen and I wondered where she had ended up as I admitted defeat and trudged drowsily back to the darkened parlour, seeking out an empty spot on the floor to lie down. I curled up into a ball and closed my eyes. I’d had far too much to drink and the room was spinning. The drone of voices and music washed over me as I slipped into a state between dreaming and consciousness, where I remained for some time before falling into a heavy sleep. Despite my newly acquired celebrity status in the house I was, mercifully, left in peace long enough to rest and regain my strength.

I cannot say how long I had been out before I awoke to the feeling of a naked body cuddling up against mine. Disoriented and groggy, it took me a moment just to ascertain whether that body was male or female, friend or stranger. When the fog cleared I was surprised to see the familiar face of Florian. I forget whether I’ve mentioned him to you before or not. He is a cellist, something warmer than an acquaintance but not exactly close enough for me to call him a friend, and quite the lady killer. As far as I know his appetites are exclusively for the opposite sex (he talks of little else) and I’ve

no doubt he had just finished his rounds and shagged every girl in the house, queue or no queue.

He was obviously under the influence of something stronger than wine when he plopped himself down on the floor beside me. He smelled strongly alcohol, sweat and sex. His hair was dishevelled and he donned the satisfied grin of a fox that had just helped himself to an entire henhouse. Social chap that he normally is, he didn't seem at all disposed to chat. And thank God for that, for I doubt he could have told me his own date of birth in his condition. Instead he snuggled up close to me and nodded off. I didn't mind his presence so much as his tendency to shift positions every thirty seconds or so, rendering sleep impossible.

Just when he had finally settled in and I had relaxed enough to doze off, I was perturbed to feel an erection digging into my back. This was soon followed by a clammy hand on my shoulder, pulling me closer to him. I assumed he was merely an active dreamer and was about to shake him off when the heat of his mouth upon my throat stopped me. Evidently he was very much awake and had his heart set on a bit of frottage with the nearest available body, which just so happened to be mine. It must have been the opium, for I would never have thought him the type to dabble in that sort of thing. My cock, however, was beginning to show an undeniable interest so I closed my eyes and rubbed it. Since Florian's hand was already resting on my thigh I made the impulsive decision to put it to use. With bated breath my fingers entwined with his and I moved his hand between my legs. He did not seem to mind, so I slowly proceeded to stroke my aching sex with his palm. It wasn't long before he had taken an active interest and his hand started moving independently of mine.

The next thing I remember he was on top of me and we were kissing. The seductive notion of fucking him entered my drunken head and I kissed him with a renewed passion which he returned. I knew it was irresponsible of me to take advantage of his intoxicated state but my conscience was stifled by the much louder urges of my loins. Oblivious of my intentions, he let me roll him over and offered up little more than a sigh in response to the overt manner in which my lower body ground into his bottom. He had just enough command over his senses to pull away when I tried to introduce a finger into his hitherto unexplored anus, but I swiftly pulled him back to me and persevered in my endeavours.

Once I had embedded the length of my finger in his rectum he stopped struggling, though whether it was because he enjoyed the sensation or he'd simply run out of energy I could not say. He lay there as if paralysed as I fingered him. When I withdrew my finger and introduced the tip of my cock he began to struggle once more, but his protestations only aroused me even more and I overpowered him easily. His weakly uttered curses against me were interspersed with sighs of the most transparent pleasure as I claimed possession of his arse.

About a minute into it he had given in entirely and lay motionless beneath me. When I could no longer put off the inevitable my movements gathered speed and he moaned lightly in response to each fevered thrust. Summoning up my last reserves of strength I held back my own orgasm until the frantic spasms of his body announced the arrival of his. The sound of his sighs accompanied me as I let myself fall and deposited jet after jet of my essence in his fundament. We remained just as we were and fell into a comatose sleep immediately thereafter.

I awoke some time later to find myself on one of the sofas, though I've no recollection of how I came to be there. Apart from a few scattered sleepers, most of the guests were chatting quietly and helping themselves to the platters of fruit which had been laid out on the tables. It must be breakfast time, I thought to myself as I sat up and rubbed my eyes. My head felt a bit tender but apart from that I was grateful to have been spared the nasty hangover that ought rightly to have been mine following such a night. Scanning the dim room for a familiar face but finding no one I recognised, I wearily got to my feet and made my way toward the colourful banquet table. There I picked out a handful of grapes and an apple before leaving the parlour in search of Christian.

I ran into Florian in the corridor and he greeted me with a smile, which made me wonder exactly how much of the previous night his memory had retained. His eyes were red and his complexion sallow but he was unmistakeably sober. "Shall you be staying for the second half?" he asked jovially. I turned the question over in my mind a couple of times before I understood what he meant. It was only then that I was able to place my finger on what had felt so different about the parlour that I woke up in. The number of people in it had dramatically decreased.

"Oh," I replied, "er… yes. Yes, I think I shall. What about you?"

He nodded and scratched his stubbly chin. "Of course, of course. More coming this afternoon."

I checked my reflection in the glass and winced. "Any chance of a shave, I wonder?"

Florian shook his head, stole a grape off of me and popped it into his mouth. "Afraid not. Unless you remembered to bring along your razor, that is."

After a superficial wash I returned to the parlour, where a lively game of Blind Man's Bluff was taking place. The windows had been opened to let the cool morning air into the stuffy room and the grand curtains billowed and danced in the breeze. Every now and again a gust of wind would send one of them flying up, briefly letting in the blinding sunlight before falling back into place. Each time this happened it was a source of merriment for those of us watching the game, as it temporarily evened the odds a bit for the blindfolded gentleman stumbling about in the centre of the room. There were three young women in wispy nightdresses frolicking around him like schoolgirls as the rest of us ate our breakfast and watched. I felt like a child myself as I laughed along with them whenever the blind man caught one of the girls in his arms and kissed her.

The atmosphere was very different now. All the guests had reached varying states of sobriety and were now dressed in their underclothes. The ratio of women to men had evened out, which seemed to put the women in a less apprehensive state of mind. As we were still recovering our strength, there was less emphasis on sex and the guests were freer to mingle and flirt. The next game involved everyone in the parlour linking hands in such a way that we created a great human knot and the object of the game was to become disentangled without breaking the chain. Naturally this involved quite a bit of climbing over, crawling under and brushing against one another, which induced more laughter. It was rather silly but enormous fun.

By one o’clock our host had rejoined the party, as had the other two dozen or so guests who had spent the night in the bedchambers. This addition notwithstanding, the parlour was nowhere near as crowded as it had been the previous afternoon. Lunch was served in the form of liqueurs, absinth and wine. We were in the midst of a belated round of introductions when I felt a hand on the small of my back and turned to find Christian (rested, shaven, drink in hand) standing by my side.

“Sleep well?” he asked with the usual grin.

“Not as well as you, evidently,” I replied. “I wondered where you’d got to.”

He shrugged his shoulders. “I would have invited you along but it looked as though you were ...busy.”

I blushed in spite of myself, wondering which of the previous night’s depraved acts he might be referring to. He never did say, nor did I ask him how many boys he had brought back to the flat with him.

“You didn’t happen to bring my razor, did you?”

“Sorry,” he answered with mock sheepishness.

Our liquid lunch brought about a desirable state of tipsiness and our host proposed a new game in which the girls dress in the boys’ clothing and boys in the girls’. The gender roles were to be switched as well, with every “boy” picking his favourite “girl”. In the event of two or more boys selecting the same girl, then said girl would be obliged to satisfy the demands of each of the boys in turn.

The young women giggled and scrambled into the bedchambers to the left of the parlour, where the clothing of every male guest had been laid out for them, and the men were rounded up by the host and his servants and shown to the bedchambers on the right, where we were helped into our dresses, gloves, stockings, et cetera. In most cases the dresses were too small and had to be left open in the front or back, which only made us look more preposterous. But we all took it in our stride and had a good laugh about it.

As soon as we were kitted out in our finery, we were led back into the parlour, which had been rearranged for the game. All the furniture had been pushed to the back and silk pillows were scattered over the floor. Large glasses of wine were handed to us and the girls painted our faces with stage makeup, which actually proved an altogether pleasant affair, for it involved the twin delights of being touched, stroked and pampered by the opposite sex (who made very comely boys, I might add) while offering up a deliciously amusing chance for flirtation. The girl who had taken Christian under her wing got a bit carried away and made him up like a cat, complete with whiskers and a black nose. Mine was a charming timber heiress engaged to Ludwig, a student at the technical university who was, at that moment, being dolled up to look like a common street walker. She regaled me with a detailed account of how she had bagged her fiancé as she lovingly painted freckles on my cheeks and did my lips dark red.

After about twenty minutes at the hands of our “gentlemen” it was hard to recognise who was who. The host then ordered us girls against the wall so that the boys could get a proper look at us. It felt strange and exciting to be put on display and scrutinised like an object. I laughed at the sight of Christian being dragged off to the far side of the parlour by two girls, one of whom was wearing my waistcoat and hat. A moment later I was chosen by a dainty looking minx in trousers who laughed drunkenly as she took my hand and pulled me across the room in search of a place to lie down.

To encourage mingling amongst those of us who were strangers, the rules of the game stated thateach “boy” select a partner with whomshe had not yet been intimate. What a glorious sight it was to behold a roomful of attractive young strangers, every last one of them foregoing the social norms of courtship and moving straight into one another’s arms. My “boy” did not bother telling me her name, nor did she ask me mine. Instead we settled down on a spot in the centre of the room and she wriggled out of her trousers, which she seemed only too glad to get out of.

A loud clap of thunder split the air and roared echoingly into the distance. The menacing sound elicited a few frightened looks but most of us, myself included, were thrilled at the storm’s arrival and animated with a strange new energy and vibrancy.

(to be continued...)