

# Part One

*A Request*

*When I die  
Do not throw the meat and bones away  
But pile them up  
And let them tell  
By their smell  
What life was worth  
On this earth  
What love was worth  
In the end*

Kamela Das

*J. Conrad Guest*

*One*

I STEPPED OUT OF THE DARK, smoky habitat of Earl's Place. My need was great. I adjusted the collar of my trench coat, thumbed the drooping brim of my fedora, and drew in a lungful of the damp, cool night air that permeated Greenwich Village. I glanced at my watch.

*Good, I thought. Still time to make it to The Electric Banana and score.*

I reflected a moment on what I'd just witnessed inside of Earl's Place. That was the trouble with the twenty-first century – everything was legal. In my own time there was burlesque, but compared to this, that was Disney stuff.

I turned to look at the huge, glowing neon lights that hummed their advertisement:

EARL'S PLACE  
LIVE SEX ACTS ON STAGE  
AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION INVITED

I hadn't, that wasn't my style. But I *had* spent the better part of an hour watching in stunned silence, and with expanding arousal.

In a corner, two women writhed naked, their heads buried lustfully between the legs of the other. To my right, three men each enjoyed a different orifice of the same woman, while in front of me a woman was lost in the throes of her own solo exploits, encouraged by the voyeur who was me.

It had all been decadent to be sure, and while I'd been disgusted, I also found myself unable to look away. It would seem my descendants had digressed to their baser, viler instincts. Although repulsed, I had to admit that I enjoyed the scenes that had played out to their conclusions in

front of me. I watched, fascinated, as the three men reached their climaxes mere moments apart – a sort of dominoes effect ...

It had all been too much. I left enough money on the table to cover my bar tab and departed feeling at odds, my morality at conflict with my biological need.

Control in my own century had been easier; there was a distinct lack of availability due to legal restraints. But in *this* century any need could be satisfied anywhere, anytime ... for a price. If exhibitionism wasn't your desire, then after the show you could find a much more private encounter out on the street.

I'd learned much about twenty-first century New York City in the brief time I'd been here. Pornography and prostitution had developed into separate businesses, each enjoying a thriving growth as a result of the other's success. Their coexistence was peaceable, their respective kingpins codependent upon the financial well being of the other.

Yet it hadn't always been that way. A decade earlier there had been gang wars between the factions, similar to those in my own century's thirties. The wars had been bloody. In the end, to facilitate the survival of both, peace had been requisite. Uneasy at first, it had grown to what it was today – acceptance of the other as a necessary evil for the continued economic well being of themselves. That acceptance, at least on the surface, was acceptable to both sides.

I reached inside my jacket for my cigarettes, found them, lifted one out, lit it, and took a long drag. A moment later I exhaled and stepped off in the direction of The Electric Banana.

I always found myself at the center of conflict. It seemed, after all, the reason for my existence. Conflict always seemed to find me the way it found the protagonist of any good detective novel. Therefore it came as no great surprise when, still several blocks from The Electric Banana, with the streets dark and deserted at the late hour, I rounded a corner to behold three punks, none of whom could've been more than seventeen, assaulting what appeared to be a prostitute, what I'd learned was, in this century, a tute.

The first held the girl from behind, his right hand covering her mouth to stifle her calls for help, his left arm around her waist. The second brandished a switchblade menacingly, while the third waved a more ostentatious weapon.

## *January's Paradigm*

I've never understood the practice of paying for sex simply because it's a practice in which I never indulge. I'd never had to since I always seemed able to find someone, somewhere, who was willing to part with it for the price of a drink or dinner. Once I'd learned how to read the body language and discovered the right buttons to push, the rest was simple.

What I understood even less was the practice of forcibly taking something that could be purchased. Violent crimes of this nature were few and far between in the twenty-first century. Because it cut into profits, the syndicate bosses saw to it that the tute on the street was well taken care of. Still, in a city so large ...

I stepped out of the shadows and cleared my throat.

"Pardon my intrusion," I said. The punk with the switchblade quickly turned his attention to me.

"Hey man, we found her first," he said, and then added, his voice filled with sexual hunger, "She's ours. You wanna stick around for sloppy fourths, that's your business, otherwise you better just keep on walkin'."

The others giggled nervously.

I silently appraised the girl's want. Her pleading eyes told me all I needed to know. She might be in business to turn a profit, but the fear in her mien told me she was not into acts of violence, as some girls were. There was, after all, like anything, a market for it. While this gal might be selling sex, not violence, these three weren't bartering for what she was offering. They were drawing up their own contract, one which she would be forced to sign on the dotted line.

"Move along, man," said the scum with his exposed weapon in hand.

"Be careful with that thing." I tried to sound amiable, which for me was difficult, even under the best of circumstances.

"Huh?"

"I'd hate to see it discharge prematurely."

I didn't have the patience for this sort of thing. I never had and I never would. Slipping my fingers into the brass knuckles I kept in the pocket of my trench coat, I reacted the way I always did in situations such as this – on instinct.

I stepped forward briskly and, grabbing the first thug by his shoulders, brought my knee up hard into his exposed genitals. He sank to the pavement, his breath, I noted with satisfaction, was long and audible as it forced its way past a grimacing mouth.

Next, I caught the punk with the knife square in the jaw with the brass knuckles. I heard the breaking of bone, the blade clattering to the pavement. The kid sank to his knees, blood flowing from his mouth. A kick to his midsection followed by a right cross sent him sprawling into unconsciousness.

I turned to face the third goon only to discover he was already two blocks away, high stepping his way to safety. I grunted and turned back to the first thug, struggling to regain control of his labored breathing, and cold-cocked him.

“I thought I told you to put that away,” I muttered, matter-of-fact. The echoing footsteps of the third assailant disappeared around some distant corner.

I turned to look askance of the girl who stood trembling, no doubt unsure of the integrity of her would be benefactor. Maybe it was the unsated hunger that’d been aroused at Earl’s Place, or maybe just the surge of adrenaline in the aftermath of my rescue, but I suddenly became aware of the potency of innate sexuality emanating from this damsel who had, until moments ago, been in distress. Large breasts strained against the thin fabric that held them in check, heaving as she fought to control her labored breathing. A narrow waist with hips flaring wide, and thighs that in their lush ripeness threatened to chafe under perambulation.

Finally our eyes met. And in that moment something passed between us. Some unspoken decree seemed to assure the girl that, despite my strange attire and the odd hat sitting jauntily askew high atop my head, she was secure.

The next moment found her seeking further solace in the comfort of my embrace.

I found myself unable to placate the woman’s distress with words. A man of action, I could only return the embrace, my olfactory senses nearly overwhelmed by the too sweet essence of her too blond hair, unsure – just as I was sure of the unyielding firmness of her breasts against me – how long, given the circumstances, the encroachment should last.

Fortunately the girl took the initiative. Her composure regained, she looked up at me and whispered, “You came along just in time.”

“Yeah, well,” I said. “Trouble has a way of following me wherever I go.”

“Lucky for me,” she said in a husky voice.

## *January's Paradigm*

I was beginning to get the idea she was sizing me up as a potential customer; she seemed to sense my concern.

“Don’t worry, honey. I can tell you’re not a paying customer. A rarity, but I’ve seen one or two. My name’s Ecstasy.”

“Joe January.”

“Pleased to meet you, Joe January,” she said, playfully trying to imitate my century-old dialect. She seemed amused by the alliteration. “Walk me home?”

I quickly acquiesced, sensing there could be a reward in it for me.

“Where you from, Joe January?”

“The Bronx.”

She laughed. “You don’t sound like nobody I know from the Bronx.”

“I’ve spent some time out on the coast,” I lied.

The rest of the walk was quiet. The best way to maintain anonymity is by keeping a low profile, and the best way to do that is by speaking only when spoken to, and by keeping answers short and to the point. I found that that strategy worked well for me back in 1947, and had thus far proven effective in 2047 as well.

“YOU’RE A QUIET ONE,” Ecstasy prodded once we were inside. Her blue eyes lingered mischievously on my hat, prompting me to remove it in a rare display of discomfort.

“Just shy.”

Ecstasy took my fedora and casually flung it down the hallway, in the direction of what I guessed was the bedroom. I was right about the reward; she encircled my neck with her arms and covered my lips with her own. My desire swelled. I didn’t care that she might feel it.

“Shy?” she purred. “I don’t think so. I think you know exactly what to do with a woman.”

She was teasing me now and obviously enjoying the results.

“I also think you’ve got a lot of potential there,” she added provocatively, gently tracing the outline of rigidity that was threatening to escape the restraints rigidly imposed upon it by my pants.

Fresh from the 1940s, I wasn’t used to the liberated promiscuity of the women of the 2040s. Still, there was something wildly erotic about it.

I returned her kiss, stopping to gently nibble her full lower lip, and then proceeded to her neck and bare shoulder, allowing my hands to

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roam freely across the smooth twin globes of her buttocks, left bare by her galvanizing black panties. Ecstasy moaned her consent.

*Ab, the wonders of the twenty-first century*, I mused.

I found her ear with my tongue, and with that discovery discovered her appetite grew.

“Not so fast, lover,” she teased, pushing me away playfully before taking my hand and leading me to the bedroom.

Moments later she was fumbling with my belt and zipper while I worked at the buttons of my shirt. She giggled at the boxer shorts I wore. Not wanting to be caught in a similar embarrassing moment in the future, I decided I would refrain from wearing them at all.

Ecstasy climbed onto the bed and remained on all fours. Turning to look over her shoulder, she invited me to mount her.

I grasped her by the hips and pushed my hardness into her softness and ...