

# Thoroughly Modern Emancipation

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This was a day in which Lisa was truly privileged. It wasn't often she was permitted, let alone invited, to watch television with her mistress, but on this day Madam Colette granted Lisa the privilege of kneeling in front of the screen—naked as always, except for her slave-collar, as clothes were such an unnecessary luxury—while her mistress searched for the relevant news channel. When she selected it, the current story was a report on the Party Caucuses that were a prelude to the upcoming Presidential elections. But this wasn't what Madam Colette wanted her slave to watch. What possible relevance could it have for Lisa? No society would ever enfranchise its slaves. Emancipation has to precede enfranchisement and, however much Lisa's mistress might campaign for her rights, there wasn't much likelihood of that happening any time soon.

It wasn't this news item, nor the one that followed regarding the scandalous murder of a Senator's daughter, but the next feature in which Lisa's mistress, Colette Tuchman-Lee, was once again interviewed for her views on the matter for which she'd campaigned for so many years. And this was especially pertinent to Lisa, as it related to slaves' civil rights and their owners' legal responsibilities. Lisa was fortunate indeed in being the property of a mistress who was in many ways the model slave-owner; one, moreover, renowned throughout the Union for her restless campaigning on behalf of the rights and welfare of slaves. This was bold of her as it was a matter generally regarded as the private concern of their owners. What does ownership mean if you can't do precisely what you want with what you own? Property rights surely took precedence over moral scruples. And where would the economy be if the net benefit of slave labour became the net cost of managing unemployed human

resources?

Lisa speculated that Madam Colette's concern with the complex issue of slavery and human rights might have originated from the fact that, like the original slaves shipped over from Africa, her mistress was Black. And, although the majority of slaves in America were still mostly Black, Asian or Latino, Lisa was White. She was legitimate booty from the United States' overwhelming victory in the recent war against the former British colony of Newfoundland. Lisa was sometimes tempted to agree that the briefly independent nation into which she was born was less prosperous than its aggressive neighbour simply because it still adhered to the moral scruples of the much diminished British Empire.

But for now, Lisa had to hold her breath and not fidget during the panel discussion her mistress was so intent on her seeing. And the topic of this was Colette Tuchman-Lee's current campaign to transfer the terms of slavery from life-time servitude to limited-term indenture.

"I know you mean well, Colette," said John Murray, the man chosen to represent the opposing view, as he puffed clouds of smoke from his pipe into the television studio. "Who wouldn't want to improve the lot of those few poor wretches who suffer from unwarranted maltreatment by a reprehensible minority of slave-owners? But we must consider carefully the unintended consequences of any supposed reform to a successful economic model. Recall the reforms made early last century that repealed the practise of mandating children into a state of slavery if their parents were slaves. Although this resulted in such children being freed from inheriting the servitude of their parents, as happened to your ancestors ..."

“Is this so, Colette?” interrupted the host, Emily Blackwell, whose towering bouffant hair dominated the centre of the screen.

Colette nodded. “I’m a third generation African-American citizen.”

“...But this policy,” John Murray continued, stabbing the stem of his pipe in the air. “This policy had the unintended effect of boosting the international slave trade which had become almost moribund when the Europeans and Antipodeans quit their role in the traditional triangular trade. There was now a huge demand for fresh labour from the traditional African sources and, with the European Empires so weakened after the Eurasian Wars, the United States were able to take full advantage of the bountiful supply and thereby revive the flow of human traffic. And now, of course, there are more nations in the world who practise and benefit from the commerce than ever before.”

“So, Colette,” said Emily Blackwell turning away from the puffs of pipe-smoke to her right. “How do you answer those who say that the American economy can’t hope to prosper if there’s any further liberalisation in the conditions of mandatory servitude? Can slave-owners be expected to shoulder further burdens on top of the property-owning taxes and regular slave inspections? What about those whose livelihood relies on unhindered human trade from Africa, Asia and South America?”

“I’d be the last one to deny that there’s been progress in recent years,” said the Colette on television while Lisa was aware that the Colette on the sofa behind her was watching her slave’s reaction as much as her own image on the screen. “Slaves are now permitted to have sexual relationships with one another: even same sex

relationships. The ban on casual racism against free citizens has been extended to apply to slaves, however little practical difference this has made. And it may well be that the institution of slavery will be here for many years to come...”

“And are you relaxed about that?” asked the host.

“Relaxed?” said a clearly startled Colette. “Of course not. The institution is barbaric and inhumane. It should have ended centuries ago. How can it be right for one person to be born free and the other to become another person’s property?”

“And you claim that you’re not a socialist?” John Murray interceded. “*That* is communist talk. You want to liberate the slaves and then what are they to do? Starve? You want to annul the contract between employer and employee which is different only in kind from that between a slave-owner and his property. There’d be riots in the streets of New York. Taxes would become even more excessive. The American economy would be in a tailspin.”

“I’ve said this many times before and I don’t know why I have to keep saying it,” said Colette. “I am not a socialist or a subscriber to any kind of un-American activity. But I *do* believe in a compassionate and ethical relationship with regards to slaves...”

“And this is why you’re campaigning for further legislative reforms to limit slavery to a fixed term,” said Emily Blackwell in an obvious attempt to steer the discussion away from the general towards the specific. “Do you have political support for this?”

“I have bi-partisan backing from both sides of the House for a review of the terms of indenture and Presidential Candidates from both the Democratic-Republican

and Federalist Parties have agreed to back my proposal to institute a State Pension for slaves that absolves the slave-owners' obligation of care for their property once it becomes economically unproductive..."

"...Paid no doubt by yet more and higher taxes!" interjected John Murray.

"And how do you answer criticism that your reforms only further penalise hard-working slave-owners who're already struggling to make ends meet?" asked the host with an inflexion in her voice that suggested she was about to bring the discussion to a close. "That you represent only the interests of property and not of property-holders?"

"That's ridiculous," said the Colette on television firmly while Lisa's mistress in the living room patted her slave on the head. "As a slave-owner myself, how can it be said that I don't represent the interests of both sides?"

"Indeed," said Emily Blackwell as the camera focused on her. "Well, thank you, Colette. And, of course, thank you also, John. And now we return to the fast-developing story of the hunt for John Booth, the alleged killer of the daughter of Federalist Senator Boston Corbett..."

"Well, Lisa, what do you think?" asked the Colette on the sofa as she set the television sound to mute. "You may speak frankly."

Lisa had long ago discovered that diplomacy was always required when addressing her mistress. Although she wouldn't be admonished or punished for saying something Miss Tuchman-Lee disagreed with, she was sure that the next time she incurred her mistress' displeasure and earned a beating, her apparent disloyalty would be repaid in extra welts and bruises. However enlightened Colette was with regards to

the slave-owner's responsibility of care, she also was a firm believer in the merits of discipline.

"I'm sure that limited-term indenture would be a great step forward, Madam," said Lisa, although she'd much prefer to earn her freedom a long time before the end of her term of economic utility.

"And you don't think Murray is right to accuse me of being a socialist?" Colette asked with her eyes slightly narrowed.

This could be a trap, Lisa thought. She was often sure that her mistress was being disingenuous when she claimed that the beatings she administered were solely for Lisa's own good, so she had to be sure that her answers mightn't arouse her mistress' displeasure. In any case, there was a good reason why Lisa could never be open about her views on socialism. It was as a result of America's displeasure at Newfoundland electing a Social Democratic government—Communism in America's Backyard, as it was called—that Lisa's home nation, still nominally a member of the enfeebled British Commonwealth, was invaded and she, along with everyone else who'd resisted the invasion, was pressed into slavery. And now Newfoundland—the last sliver of land north of Venezuela that had so far resisted the American juggernaut—was soon to be incorporated into the United States of America:.

"You're not a socialist, Madam," said Lisa carefully. "You're motivated by a sense of justice and fairness. And, of course, by the dictates of your faith..."

"Well, less by my faith than I should be," said Colette with an indulgent sigh. Although a Bible was prominent in her living room and a Crucifix was nailed above her bed, she very rarely attended chapel and her faith was very much subordinate to

her politics. “And, as a slave, do you think slaves as a whole will welcome my proposed reforms?”

Lisa tried not to betray her discomfort at this question. Her mistress obviously believed that Lisa could speak for all slaves, when in fact Lisa hardly knew any others at all. She was rarely permitted out of the house unattended by her mistress and she had little in common with those slaves who visited the house and who discreetly lowered their eyes when they noticed that Lisa was unclothed. Like Colette, most such slaves were Black (but rarely accorded the same honorific of African-American). And those who weren't Black were of Asian origin: reflecting the extensive range of developing nations who resourced the lucrative international slave trade.

“I'm sure they will, Madam,” said Lisa. “There can be no slave in the world who doesn't appreciate what you're trying to do for them.”

Except perhaps Lisa.

It was true that Colette treated her slave rather better than most slave-owners. Lisa was rarely left as badly scarred from a whipping as many of the slaves she'd seen, whose backs were an ugly mess of raised welts and not-yet-healed wounds. She'd never suffered the ignominy of being manacled to the public stocks and pelted with mouldy fruit and toilet waste by the children of those too poor to afford slaves of their own. But on the other hand, she didn't appreciate being the sex toy of a mistress who believed that her ownership of Lisa's services licensed her to the use of her body whenever there was nothing better available. Lisa had never been tempted to Sapphic love when a teenager in Newfoundland and after all these years she was sure that it was at best the pleasure of close physical companionship rather than sexual ecstasy



she ever felt on those occasions when Colette was disappointed by one of the men or women in her life.

Not that being second-best to any of Colette's lovers made Lisa feel better for the groping and physical invasion she had to endure on all these (lesser) occasions of physical intimacy.

"You must understand, Colette," said Tatyana, the nearest to a regular lover that Lisa's mistress had, as she lounged on the chaise longue with a cigarette screwed into the end of an ebony holder. "Although the serfs in the Russian Empire aren't free by any stretch of the imagination, they *aren't* slaves and the Duma cannot be accused of hypocrisy in siding with the European Union when it agitates for the abolition of the International Slave Trade."

Colette lay across the divan with her head on Tatyana's lap while Lisa knelt in attendance on the bare floor: nude as she always was when her mistress' Russian lover visited. Like her mistress, Tatyana Petrovna was an active campaigner for civil rights although her concern was for that 80% of the Russian Empire's population who were born unfree rather than that proportion of the whole world sold into slavery by poor nations and bought as property by the wealthy: of which the United States, from the Hudson Bay to the Panama Canal, was the most prominent. She was also in love with Colette and only Lisa's stated preference for men stood in the way of their living together as a couple.

"Serfs are slaves, Tatty," said Colette firmly. "Worse than slaves. In America, the children of slaves are born free whereas serfs inherit their status..."

"Not that many American slave-owners allow their slaves to have children,"

said Tatyana. “It was only because the institution of slavery resembled serfdom that during America’s war with Russia over the Bering Straits...”

“Which we won.”

“...which you won—over a century ago—and you still don’t know what to do with your Siberian territories... But it was only because America and its Democracy wished to appear the more enlightened empire compared to Russia’s constitutional monarchy...”

“Where most people can’t vote.”

“...where serfs can no more vote than can slaves in the United States. It was one-upmanship in the days when America was still uncertain whether it was the junior partner to Europe...”

“Which tore itself apart not once but twice...”

“...and which both Russia and America left well alone,” agreed Tatyana. “And the result of your change of policy is that countries like China and India are now just as much at war with their own people to resource fresh slaves as African nations have always been, and are just as imprisoned by a cycle of civil war and banditry.”

Nowadays, Lisa’s political and historical education mostly came from these conversations between her mistress and her lover as they became steadily drunker and less coherent before they finally went to bed together, though they didn’t always put off their lovemaking until then, much to Lisa’s undiminished embarrassment. Lisa knew that, in American terms, her mistress and her Russian lover were unusually well informed about the world and liberal in their opinions, but they were both much more conservative than was normal in what was so briefly the Social Democratic Republic

of Newfoundland, despite the cold winds of reactionary opinion drifting over the Gulf of St Lawrence from the American States of Labrador and Quebec.

Colette freely shared her property with her close friends and this generosity extended to her slave. Tonight was such an evening when Lisa was expected to provide sexual services to both women that, despite her sometimes obvious reluctance, they most often demanded. It might well have been *because* Lisa was so reluctant that Tatyana, for all her compassion for the down-trodden in her own country, took such great pleasure in licking Lisa's pale freckled skin; forced her fist up the crack between Lisa's dark red-tinged pubic hair; thrust a strapped-on dildo repeatedly into Lisa's anus while Colette nibbled on her nipples; slapped her pale buttocks until they were redder than the cheeks on her face were from embarrassment; and the two women made demands of Lisa to lick, caress and sometimes even fuck either one or both of them.

"Oh! She doesn't like it, does she?" said Tatyana with a chuckle as she tugged Lisa backwards by her hair and pushed three fingers into the slave's arse.

"I'm sure she does really," said Colette, perhaps from a sense of guilt as she let loose globules of saliva between Lisa's legs that trickled through the tangled pubic hairs to help her lover make the desired ingress.

And when Lisa groaned, more from pain than pleasure, this was taken as evidence that she *did* enjoy it and further redoubled her mistress' predations on her body.

If Lisa's mistress was the model slave-owner, wondered Lisa, what were the others like?

All she had to go on was the evidence of other slaves' beatings, but even if these weren't so visible, there was how slaves were so cowed, so beaten down: their eyes averted, the reflective wince whenever there was a sudden movement and a shuffling, undignified, unassertive manner that reinforced the impression amongst slave-owners—and those who'd dearly love to be able to afford the cost of a slave—that slaves were somehow subhuman and deserved their treatment as one step in status below household pets (but still, perhaps, above farm animals).

And what had Lisa done to deserve her enslavement?

It was because she'd been on the wrong side of the mass demonstrations that flowed into the streets of Newfoundland's towns and cities when the American troops parachuted in. What chance had Lisa against helicopter gunships, remote-controlled drones and the military prowess of the most feared and most wealthy nation in the world? At least, she'd avoided the fate of the thousands who'd been gunned down in Downtown St. John's: news of which hadn't troubled any news program she'd seen since becoming an American slave.

Lisa was eventually allowed to retire to her own bed, which was rather luxurious compared to that in her Newfoundland home. But then, in terms of slave welfare, Colette did indeed practice what she believed and which she had little difficulty in affording. Nonetheless, no feather-down duvet or memory-foam mattress could entirely compensate for the stinging pain on her buttocks and the raw ache in her violated crotch. But one advantage of a busy day spent scrubbing, vacuum cleaning, dusting, cooking, washing and ironing, let alone the other exertions she'd made for the benefit of her mistress, was that she was always tired when she went to

bed and fell asleep almost immediately.

When she arose to do her morning duties before her mistress stirred from her bed, she was startled to find Tatyana sitting on a kitchen stool wearing only her unflattering underwear and with a cigarette in her hand. Normally, her mistress was awake long before her Russian lover. At first, Lisa thought that Tatyana had got up early only to realise that, in fact, she hadn't as yet settled down to sleep. She and Colette must have had a very passionate night together and one Lisa was glad not to have accompanied to the end.

Tatyana was still tipsy and she supported a glass of red wine in her palm which she swilled around desultorily rather than sipped from. She smiled at Lisa as she walked naked and shoeless into the kitchen.

“Hello, dear,” said Tatyana with an affectionate term of endearment she'd never used before. “I hope you're well?”

Lisa nodded while wondering whether this was the Russian woman's way of apologising for her rough treatment the night before. But no. That was something neither Tatyana nor her mistress would ever apologise for.

“Colette and I were talking about you last night,” said Tatyana. “You know, about you being a slave and everything. She told me that she never lets you out of the house unaccompanied. Is that right, dear?”

Lisa nodded again. Where was this leading to?

“So, let's give you a moment of freedom, shall we, dear?” announced Tatyana. “Like a little bird. Free to flap your little wings. Take flight as you circle round the room let loose from your cage. You'd like that, wouldn't you?”

Despite her fear of the consequences of even a moment of expressing herself openly, Lisa nodded. What she wanted more than anything was Freedom and a way to escape forever and return to sanctuary in Newfoundland.

“So, let’s get you dressed and out of the house before your mistress...er, before Colette wakes up. Though that’s not likely to be for a long time, I’m sure. Do you have any clothes?”

“Not suitable ones, madam,” said Lisa. Like most slaves, the way she dressed made her subordinate role very apparent. No free woman would choose to wear the functional unbecoming outfits worn by slaves unless they’d lost their freedom by other means and were thus incarcerated for their crimes.

“I anticipated that and it’s fortunate that I always keep a change of clothes here,” said Tatyana. “You never know what might happen when I visit and, indeed, in truth you don’t...” She swirled her wine about in the glass and grimaced slightly after taking a sip which at this time in the morning no longer tasted so pleasant. “Colette proposed to me, you know. We’re going to get married. We might have to go to Russia to perform the ceremony: they’re a lot more liberal about things like that in the Empire, you know, ever since the Tsarina came out publicly.”

Tatyana pulled out a dress and shoes she’d hidden under the kitchen table. She’d been waiting for Lisa and had evidently already made arrangements. Lisa could sense a relentless flow of events that only her fear of punishment could bring to a premature end. There was no underwear, but that wasn’t what really bothered Lisa who hadn’t worn such things for a long time.

“Do you have a scarf, madam?” she asked.

“A scarf? It’s not cold outside, is it?”

“For my neck...”

“Oh, the collar. Of course. Yes,” she said as she walked into the hallway with Lisa trailing behind carrying the shoes and dress in her arms as if she was about to lay them down on a bed. “Ah, here’s a nice silk scarf. All the way from the Empire’s Polish territories. Pretty isn’t it, dear?”

Lisa nodded.

“Well, put it all on and get out the door before I change my mind, dear,” said Tatyana. “We’ll see how much your mistress really is the thoroughly modern liberal, how much she *really* believes in the emancipation of slaves, what she *really* thinks...”

And then Tatyana did a truly amazing thing. She let Lisa get dressed and then unlatched the front door and opened it wide. Outside, Lisa could see the tree-lined avenue tempting her with its suburban tranquillity. Swallows were swooping through the sky. Grey squirrels were gambolling in the trees and racing across the well-mown lawns. The early morning sun was casting long shadows in which could be seen daisies, tulips and daffodils. A small van drove past with its delivery of fresh croissants and groceries.

“Come on, then!” said Tatyana.

Fuck the consequences, thought Lisa. How many such opportunities would she ever have in a life of slavery that stretched ahead until death or, if Colette had her way, until tax-funded slave retirement when she was no longer economically viable. She strode forward, not bothering to look behind her or at Tatyana who was still holding open the door, and then she was walking beyond the door-steps, through the

metal gate between her mistress' brownstone house and the avenue beyond, and continued to stride in the direction she knew would soonest take her off Fairmount Avenue and to where she might truly escape.

She walked fast—or as fast as she could in the slightly-too-large stack-heeled shoes that Tatyana had given her—in the attempt to put as much distance as she could between her and her mistress' home. She couldn't walk as far as Newfoundland, of course. Not that she was certain that the newly rechristened Territory of Newfoundland was the right place to go, though that was where her friends and family lived; or at least those who'd not been shot or hadn't also become enslaved. Perhaps she should head south, though, of course, all of the Caribbean and most of Central America were either states incorporated into the Union, like the States of Belize and Yucatan, or were dependent territories awaiting incorporation. Perhaps given that she was still on America's East coast she should head further in that direction across the Atlantic Ocean to the European Union, the only part of the world other than the Antipodes and Japan that had entirely renounced the institutions of slavery.

As she walked along, she could see daily life in the city as the sun began its slow climb. Commuters emerged from their homes and strode purposefully towards the subway or train station to take them to the office. The less wealthy, but still free, were opening shops, driving by in delivery vans, or walking with purpose but not a lot of haste to their places of work. But those who were not free, the slaves of America, they were the ones who weren't going anywhere, or if they did, generally in the company of their masters, their mistresses or their masters' children.

The slaves didn't need collars to betray their status, although, by law, all of



them had to. Their downtrodden demeanour, their shuffling stooping locomotion, their lowered heads and turned-away faces, their ingrained habits of servitude reinforced by fear of the consequences of transgression: all these were evidence as much as any collar, chain or manacle of a state of subservience. Most were black or brown. Many were Asian, from the slave-exporting nations to the south of Russia and to the north of Australia that as Tatyana had remarked were supplementing Africa's traditional role as the main source of human traffic. And there were those, like Lisa herself, who came from the New World, so long considered the importer rather than the exporter of slaves: the result of America's aggressive prosecution of the Monroe doctrine that had made most of South America a bottomless source of war booty and had cowed the last vestiges of independence in the Northern Hemisphere.

Slaves were denied even basic dignity. How many freemen or freewomen were allowed to be naked in public gaze? Even in the public stocks which could be found in every public square or municipal park, only the slaves were denied clothes even though a free person guilty of crimes for which a slave would expect immediate death by hanging or lynching was just as likely to be punished in what was considered a cost-effective deterrent to crime. At least they no longer exhibited decapitated heads outside government buildings for the crimes of treason or un-American activities.

Lisa strode hurriedly onward as if expecting to be stopped at any moment. She hurried through the parks, keeping in the shadow of the trees that lined the paths. She strode alongside the shop-windows that exhibited riches rare in Newfoundland but were on promiscuous display for the much wealthier citizens of the United States. She walked beneath the suspension bridges that spanned the river. She followed the path

of the freeway along which trucks roared by. She walked beside the administrative offices of the Federal and State governments, whose uneasy relationship with one another caused more debate and disagreement amongst American voters than ever had the institution of slavery that a minority like Colette Tuchman-Lee campaigned against.

And eventually she paused, as she had to, right by a monument to the fallen soldiers in the Japanese War: the sole armed conflict in which America had failed to triumph and thereby still remained an affront to its national pride. Opposite her was a statue of President Joseph McCarthy, one of America's most liberal presidents, and just beside that an idealistic portrayal of Liberty with her sword unsheathed and the slogan beneath her bare sandaled feet: "Give me liberty or give me death." The monument beside and above her showed brave American soldiers, with their rifles thrust forward and bearing a look of determination, little knowing how desperately the Japanese would defend themselves. Indeed, so entrenched was American resentment of its defeat that had Japan not invented the Atom Bomb at about the same time as America and Russia, who knows how history since then might have been.

"And at last she sits down!" said a voice from another figure that towered above Lisa. "I thought she'd never stop walking."

"She's led us a real fucking merry chase, ain't she?" said a figure beside him.

Lisa looked up with fear and apprehension and she was right to do so. Just above her were two policemen both armed with gun and nightstick.

"Are you talking about me?" she asked nervously.

"Who the fuck else is there, Lisa," said the first policeman.

“Did you really think you’d get away with a collar round your neck, you little slut,” said the other. “Or don’t they have chip implants in fucking Newfoundland?”

“What’s going to happen to me?” implored Lisa.

“You should be fucking glad you’ve got that do-gooding cunt Tuchman-Lee as a mistress, bitch,” continued the second policeman. “I don’t know what the fuck you should expect...”

“Fifty lashes and a week in solitary at the very least I’d have thought.”

“Instead it’ll be nothing worse than a couple of hours in the stocks...”

“...And you, as a white bitch...”

“Like a fucking whore!”

“...can expect some leniency I guess. Nothing worse than a few rotten tomatoes and a mouthful of sewage...”

“...or horse manure.”

“You can consider yourself fucking lucky!”

“And I bet your fucking nigger dyke mistress ain’t even gonna give you the beating you deserve when you’re returned to her...”

“In fact, I bet she’ll stop at the whip...”

“Me? I’d fucking cripple a slave of mine who’d absconded like you did, Lisa.”

“So, come along now, dear, and don’t cause any trouble.”

“Because, believe me, any fucking excuse will do...”

And so Lisa’s brief moment of freedom was over all too soon. She had to face up to the fact that there was no likelihood of her ever being free for as long as she was a slave in the United States of America.

And how could it ever have been any different?