

**Note:** This is a draft of my new chapter in the ongoing story, The City. I'd really like to get your feedback on it, as well as on the previous chapters, as I continue to write.

Also, this story is inappropriate for young readers. If you're a young reader then you likely won't heed this warning, but at least do me a favor and feel bad about reading past this point. (Quite plausibly it isn't appropriate for any readers and you should all feel bad. But, hey, what did you expect given where you found it?)

## Chapter 5: Reactions

It had only taken Julia two cycles to change her mind. Blushing sheepishly she'd returned to Jacky and asked her to talk to one of the people she knew. The thought of physical intimacy with another woman still repelled her, but the constant sexual tension was becoming maddening. It was a persistent distraction at night, vexing her with sexual thoughts. But what had really prompted her to reconsider was the way it was altering the character of her daily servitude. Each pair of hands that touched her now gave her a shameful little thrill and she could feel herself becoming aroused even at some of the rougher fondling. This betrayal from within added insult to injury, and she didn't feel she could bear it much longer.

Jacky had patted her shoulder reassuringly. "It's alright. I'll talk to Marian tonight. She's sweet, you don't have anything to worry about." Julia tried to convince herself of that throughout the next day as she psyched herself up for the rendezvous.

But it was not to be, at least not that night. When Julia arrived back in her pod it was in uproar. Instead of the normal activity of women showering and eating she found the assembly room filled with tenders. The showers and dining room were empty. Immediately upon being escorted in a group of tenders took her and asked her escort who she was.

"Julia Simmons," one replied.

Held fast in place as she looked around in panic, she was scanned with one of the hand devices the tenders used. It made its usual beep. "It's her," said one of the men holding her to another holding a pad. A third man holding what seemed to be a larger version of the scanner swept it over her abdomen a couple of times without saying anything. Then, turning to Julia he demanded, "Do you have any plans to escape or otherwise violate the terms of your contract?"

"N...no." Julia squeaked uncertainly.

"Were you aware that a group of women housed here intended to assault guards and attempt to avoid their duties?"

"No," she shook her head vigorously.

The man gave a long hard stare to the wide eyed woman, then gestured over his shoulder with his thumb. Julia was dragged into the bunk room and tossed onto a bunk. "Stay in your bunk until told otherwise," she was ordered. She saw that there were tenders on the periphery of the bunk room too, and that many bunks already contained women.

Eventually the last dejected woman returning from her assignment was roughly deposited on a bunk. They weren't permitted to speak to each other so Julia and the others simply watched from their respective perches. After what seemed a long while an officer entered the bunk room. He stood in the middle of the doorway and addressed the room in a commanding tone.

"Ladies, as many of you already know, some of the women who share your housing accommodations have attempted to make an escape. It was foolish and pointless. We have all of them

in custody. Some will be rejoining you shortly. You can decide for yourselves whether going back on your word is a good idea.”

There was a pause to let this sink in. “Goodnight ladies,” he added. Within minutes every woman was unconscious.



...or so it seemed. Once the insensibility field had reduced the many female forms to inanimate lumps the tenders began to withdraw from the bunk room. But a pair of them detoured to haul a still sentient figure from a bunk near the door. She glared at them blearily as they dragged her out of the room. “Take her to the showers,” the officer instructed. His men complied.

On the tile floor of the shower a small stand was quickly erected, like a tall stool except that instead of a padded surface on which to sit it had a curved horizontal bar. The woman was made to straddle this uncomfortable saddle. Since her feet could not touch the floor they instead gripped awkwardly at the vertical support in an attempt to stay balanced and lessen the weight on her lap.

A moment later the officer, a lieutenant, walked in and fixed the struggling woman with his gaze. “Why didn’t you inform us there would be an escape attempt?” he demanded after a moment.

“I didn’t know!” Jacky protested.

“I find that hard to believe. This place,” he gestured around the shower symbolically, “isn’t large. And you’ve been in it a long time. You know a lot of people.”

“I don’t talk to everyone, and I can’t read minds.” Jacky objected with apparent conviction.

“But this many people? You really expect me to believe you had no hint?”

“If I’d of known anything I’d have told you. Why wouldn’t I? I don’t want things to be hard.”

The officer glowered at her again and said nothing.

“Why do you care so much anyway? You said you caught all the idiots that ran—and you always do. You guys have total control over this place! Why does me spying for you even matter? It’s trivial to you.” Seeming to catch herself her questions trailed off.

“You agreed to do a job for us. Are you saying that you can’t, or won’t, do it?”

“No,” Jacky shook her head vehemently. “I’m not. I’ve been giving you the information you ask for, I want to. I just don’t get it.” She added quietly.

“Hmm,” the officer grunted, “that’s good. Because you’re not going anywhere, and your stay will be more pleasant if you do what we agreed without imagining that you need to understand it.” He patted her head condescendingly then turned to depart. Over his shoulder he added, “Turn on the cold water for a while before you put her back. She could stand to be more alert.”



In all nineteen women had tried to escape from pod 72. That the blonde and her friend were among them was no surprise. But, to Jacky’s dismay, also among those who did not turn up in the assembly room the next morning were Angelique and Torch. Torch should have known better, as Jacky lamented more than once. But apparently 231 orgasms in three cycles had been her limit and she’d accepted even faint hope of escape over a return to another day of Rough Riding. It was a testament to her grit that after all that she could clear the fog from her head and make a break for it under her own power. Angelique’s departure was, in a way, more puzzling as she’d not complained of her role in the

city nearly as much as many. But she was quiet, and whatever she'd thought on the matter she had apparently not shared.

The plan had been simple: rush the guards as women were being returned at the end of the cycle. Long observation had revealed a pattern to who was brought back when, the product of an underlying schedule. At a certain point the left-most door would be open and two guards would be walking out. Usually nobody else came in that door for almost a minute, and nobody was near the middle door. As a group they would knock the two men over in the doorway (under the assumption that a door would not close on a tender) and then run out into the passage beyond. Their rout from there was uncomfortably conjectural, but they hoped to lose pursuit in sparsely used tunnels before calling for their mysterious benefactor's aid.

In execution things immediately got more complicated. For one thing, the pair of tenders turned out to be impressively strong. They did eventually fall, but each grappled an assailant who was then stuck in the doorway with the downed guards. The rest had to hurriedly squeeze passed these screaming, thrashing unfortunates as they abandoned them. One of the fallen men had then tossed a countermeasure of some sort, a whining orb that landed amongst the back ranks of the fleeing women. All those nearby staggered or fell as their ability to balance disappeared. Several women turned back to help their staggered compatriots but only ended up joining them as they blundered into the field of effect.

The remaining ten women fled only to run headlong into another tender responding to the commotion, countermeasures already out. The party scattered. Only five managed to stay together and get into an empty stretch of hallway. There they frantically followed the instructions that had been delivered to them. They went as far as they dared before stopping to send a signal, opening a small access panel and pushing a sequence of the glowing buttons within. The wraiths had descended on them soon after. Every one of the intended escapees was bound for transport within fourteen minutes subjective.

Of course, the women back in the pod weren't aware of most of this. They'd only seen the two women caught before other nearby tenders rushed in and the women withdrew to a deferential distance. Within minutes the tenders were locking down the room and beginning the process accounting for all its occupants.

Jacky seemed genuinely downcast about the breakout, especially over her two friends' involvement. She alternated between abusing the intelligence of the participants and saying again and again that she should have stopped them, stopped the whole thing. Julia wasn't sure Jacky could have done much, but didn't stop her from venting her frustration.

"When will they be back?" she'd asked at length.

"They mostly won't." Jacky explained to Julia. "They'll be scattered to other pods. Only a few will be brought back, and they'll make sure we remember them. Poor bitches. They'll be back here tonight."

"What if some of them actually made it?" Julia pressed, trying to cheer her companion.

"Made it where? They all made it to the only place they were ever going to go, which is back to processing." She scowled. "I've seen this all before. The only way out of here is being let out."

A few moments later Julia was called to another cycle of milking.



Jigglibits gingerly shifted her body, searching for ease. Leaning forwards forced the tender flesh of her chest between cold bars, while leaning backwards was rendered all but impossible by her body's

ballooning proportions below the waist. She would have sat with relief, but the cage was too narrow to allow it. At least she'd be removed shortly, but only to be dragged on stage to daunt yet another room full of captured women. She couldn't see their faces, and perhaps that was a mercy, but she could hear the murmurs and gasps that the sight of her produced. Sometimes, absorbed in her own degradation, she had pondered how the sight of her over-sexed body might be met on Portland's main drag even if it were clothed, imagined the grimaces and the leers she's surely be met with, the mothers covering children's eyes, the cat-calling teenagers pointing in glee.

Given his rank Dirn surely could have delegated delivering orientations. But he seemed to enjoy the task, and thus Jiggli had featured in almost every orientation for a long while. Her ubiquity in this role had made her something of a fixture, known to the ranks of the tenders in a way no other personally kept woman in the City was. Dirn deliberately cultivated this making his ample toy into a kind of mascot. Low ranking men were urged to goose his pet for luck, and the tenders greeted her obscenely wherever she went. Likely this was the reason she was transported by cage rather than some more standard method. (Obviously it was impractical to make her walk long distances if time was a consideration.)

Today she had other things on her mind though, things gripping enough to wrest her thoughts away from her perpetual humiliation. She'd thrilled at what she'd overheard in Dirn's meeting with the wraiths four cycles prior. And more even than the content she'd thrilled at the tone: Dirn was deeply frustrated. In a way, being his slave she'd come to know this formidable man rather well, and for the first time in her experience she could tell the tender captain had met an obstacle he didn't know how to remove. But it was a vague glow of excitement at a person who might flout her master and his minions. It had been fanned into sudden flame the night before. She, the captain, and two other women were in the midst of what Dirn called "play time" in his private dwelling when there was an interruption. An officer had arrived with urgent business for the commander. Grumbling, Dirn covered himself with a robe and withdrew to the next room to dispatch the interruption.

Jiggli was left lashed across a short frame her still heaving chest pressed into the thick carpet and her face close to the floor. At first she could make out little of what was said. But presently her master's voice rose in a clearly audible exclamation, "What do you mean we don't have all of them?" He continued, nearly bellowing, "When I was briefed on the incident I was told that every infractor was captured and held for punitive reassignment. How can we not have all of them?"

To his credit, the man sounded as if he kept his composure. "Your briefing was accurate, sir. But something happened on the way to processing. We're still trying to figure out exactly what—a fight of some kind."

"A fight? Explain!"

"The infractors were trussed and on carts being taken back to processing. On the way there something happened we're having trouble reconstructing. The women were being transported up the passage, and apparently a large group of our people was coming down it. When the two groups passed each other it seems a fight broke out between them. The men I've talked to say they weren't even talking until they were suddenly in a brawl. But the stories don't all agree. Things got chaotic, weapons may have been used, and when it was over one of the carts was gone."

"Just one? How many guests were on it? And do we have a list of the men involved in the fight?" Dirn's tone had quieted, but his intensity had only grown.

"Yes, just one cart containing three guests. And no, we have all the men assigned to transport the carts, all nine, but we don't have a single name after that. The other group, at least twelve, seems to have run and nobody reports recognizing any of them."

For several long, tense moment Dirn was silent. Jiggli's breath had calmed, and she now held it to better hear what was said next. When he at last stirred it was to initiate an unbroken torrent of action that would not be stinted for hours. "Convene my entire staff immediately. Have the men we do have systematically questioned. Also, I want every one of the remaining infractors individually escorted through processing by no fewer than four men. I trust you have already initiated a search for the missing cart?"

The officer apparently nodded the affirmative.

"Broaden it. Make a concentric sweep and expand it as rapidly as possible. I authorize you to reallocate any inessential forces to it. Continue until you find something or receive further orders." Jiggli could hear the sound of the man departing, and of Dirn summoning his personal assistant. "Set up an immediate meeting with Archons Ra, Tyr, and Lleu, tell them it's very pressing. And make sure that a wraith is there."

Had her mouth not been gagged Jiggli felt she might have laughed into her cleavage.



The missing faces in the pod were not the only disruption to the ordinary pattern of Julia's day. When her escort reached familiar corridor behind the wall of *The Generous Cow* Quinton, the dreadful little man in the apron, was waiting for her. Julia had only ever seen him within the pub itself.

"There has been a slight change of schedule," he said to the two men in his supercilious tone, "this little hand warmer is going in room 23 today." The tenders simply nodded and lead Julia down a nearby passage to an unfamiliar wooden door. Inside she found a dim space much as she was used to, and was quickly installed in a frame and hoisted as usual. A moment later her head poked out into the room beyond. She was clearly still in the pub, but in an entirely different corner which she hadn't seen before. It appeared, in fact, that she was in a sort of booth, somewhat removed from the main room. Instead of an open view of the trophy wall of women there was a mirrored barrier perhaps six feet in front of her. There were mirrors to the sides also, though she hadn't noticed this yet. And this was Julia's introduction to the infamous "mirrored box."

You might be puzzled as to the ominous tone in which the box has been mentioned. After all, a woman mounted there was in the very same position and subject to the very same treatment as one mounted anywhere else in the establishment. But your reaction is that of one looking on from the outside: you've been envisioning Julia's front half protruding from the wall, her ample breasts hanging beneath her, her light brown hair framing her attractive face. This image hasn't changed.

Julia, however, looked out from within that face, and being directly confronted by what you already saw changed her perspective a great deal. Julia's vision was now filled with several angles on the lewd spectacle she provided. Though it had slowed after the first injection, each day of milking had seen her already enormous bosoms swell slightly larger. There they now sat, their girth pressing them together even as they hung free, presenting over a foot of cleavage. Knowing that something is the case and seeing it are two very different things. Everywhere she looked there she was, her faced perched atop those outsize mounds of bare flesh.

When business began the spectacle became downright pornographic. For one thing, she discovered that the booth also brought sound back to her rather than losing it in the general din of an open room. Imagine something awkward that happened to you in the bedroom. Now imagine being forced to watch it on a loop with the audio turned on. That gives you some idea of what Julia went through, though her film involved a succession of men milking her x-rated tits like a cow's. Every quiver,

blink, murmur, and change of hue was reflected back to her, every jiggle, spurt, and soft moan. It was too much, and for long periods she'd screw her eyes tightly shut and endure her groping in total blackness. But eventually her lids would flutter open again, and she'd briefly make eye contact with the milk-spewing, rosy faced floozy in the mirror.

Her one consolation was that, as the day drew on, the man in the vest had still not sought her out. "He must not know where I am," she told herself hopefully as his accustomed visit was longer and longer delayed. In fact, Julia was allowed a relatively slow day tucked away as she was in a corner of the establishment. Some of her other regulars did find her in her new corner, but she received less attention than normal in the mirrored booth—not that she registered the fact.

As her ignominious day was finally drawing to its close a voice spoke softly in her ear, "Did you miss me?" There stood the auburn-haired man. Julia started: it was the first time he'd actually addressed her. "I had other business to attend to, but I hated to think you'd be lonely." He clasped her breasts warmly as if greeting a friend. "I asked," he added conspiratorially, "that you be placed in here too keep things more interesting in my absence."

Perhaps disoriented by the direct address, perhaps spurred by the day of humiliation, Julia whispered, "Why can't you just leave me alone?"

"Hmmm," he dropped his voice to match hers, "do you suppose I should ask the host how he feels about cows asking patrons to leave? But, since we both know you didn't mean it, let's not dwell on it." He began his usual routine with energy.

Julia said no more, only whimpered under his ministrations as yet again her arousal began to build. But this was different: as her face flushed and her breath began to come in gasps every agonizing detail of her fervid writhing was displayed to her. The intense pangs of shame this engendered became, somehow, all mixed up with her arousal, till humiliation, stimulation, and libido were a single hot, sticky mass sloshing around her insides.

Once again the man brought her to the very edge of release, her self-control obliterated, her mewling need filling her mind as her hips thrust against nothing. She seemed to be a single caress away from a cataclysmic orgasm. And once again he stopped. A long, plaintive whine escaped her.

In another unprecedented act, the man turned back to her, and asked in a low, earnest tone, "Do you want me to bring you to climax?"

Julia's lips quivered. No audible sound emerged.

"Do you want me to explore every intimate crease of your body until I push you into a steaming, screaming orgasm?"

Hating herself even as she did it, Julia nodded, whimpering.

"I know," he said. And his suddenly grinning face was gone.



Jacky's prognostications were largely correct: the women who had tried to escape, the sixteen that could still be located anyway, were going to be reassigned and redistributed. Two were pulled to fill gaps in the Academy's test subject pool, they would wake to a short explanation before being stuck in storage. The rest would come to in new bunk rooms, their bodies drastically altered and their new duties a mystery.

The City's operation presumed a steady stream of punitive reassignments. The enormous need for guest labor was broken up into a hierarchy of postings. Only the top quadrant of this hierarchy usually saw women who'd come straight from recruiting. Women found themselves in lower slots only

after violating their contracts, and in the lowest only after repeated or major violations. Thus the principle of culpability was woven into the system. Yet all assignments were consistently filled. Women could be counted on to be uncooperative in certain proportions, from raining abuse on visitors and flailing about until somebody's nose was struck to deliberately undermining their instructions or aiming kicks at tender areas. This was, though it was not broadcast, just an expected part of business as usual.

Escape and assaulting a tender were also in the standard statistical distribution, but were classed as fairly major violations. Not that such behavior was, under normal circumstances, regarded as posing any real threat to the operation of the City. But it could be a genuine nuisance. Those in charge didn't want resistance to their operations to become too organized. They also wanted to make sure that at the end of the day tenders could smile at anything that they'd undergone. The tenders were subject to quite a strict body of regulations covering their actions toward "guests", even unruly ones. And their efficient aloofness might be imperiled by what felt to them like unsettled scores.

Of course, escape attempts could have been made utterly impossible. For instance, communal pods could have been eliminated in favor of an individual storage system like the Academy's. But just because they had these drastic options, "held all the cards" as Jacky had put it, did not mean they wanted to employ them—especially not on the captive population indiscriminately. Perhaps, by now, it should go without saying, but the city's authorities did not aim to inflict as much discomfort as possible.

There were awarding reassignments as well, though they were used in much smaller numbers. Women who showed themselves apt or enthusiastic in some aspect of their assignment might be moved to a venue where they could shine. Those who served well might find themselves in positions of more importance or flexibility, even occasionally moved into roles with some authority, the female quasi-ambassadors being the most prominent example. But the stick inevitably loomed larger than the carrot.

Of these sixteen, five were going to the aggression games in sector Tau; one was going to the "blubber bucket" (*Mounds* outside of tender slang); two were being remodeled as a princess; one was even going into the new "Rent-a-Bitch" vending machines, and so on. One unlucky girl was consigned to the domination shows, and she was being specially prepped for a headline performance opposite a seasoned dominatrix. Many of the guards involved in the incident planned to attend this cathartic spectacle.

Of course special thought was given to who would be dramatically returned to pod 72. The chosen example stumbled in at the end of the cycle along with the last of the returning women. At first glance she looked, and reported feeling, surprisingly normal—a college-age woman with a slim build and sandy hair, one could have found several equivalent girls in most any sorority house. Curious women quickly began to cluster around the disoriented girl and it did not take long to locate an oddity: dangling from a cord connected to the back of her neck hung a device the girl herself had not yet noticed. It looked like a mattress controller: simple up and down buttons and a small numerical display. The thing was not affixed in any visible way and would not come off—it seemed to be wired right into the girl, though it caused no discomfort!

That was odd, but hardly the sort of distressing spectacle they'd expected. They quickly began an examination of the controller. The display read "00" and a cautious press of the down arrow, with the girl's permission, seemed to have no effect. When the up arrow was pressed the display incremented upwards "01" and there was a brief hum that seemed to come from within the bemused girl's sternum. But aside from that nothing seemed to transpire. Cautiously the button was pushed several more times, "02", "03", "04." Again there was the brief hum, and the girl did report a slight sensation but had trouble putting words to it. It was minor whatever it was.

Then some indelicate hand made the mistake of pushing the up button twice in immediate succession. Instantly the display flashed “99” before returning to “04” and there was a loud beep. The buzzing hum started up and did not abate as the numbers on the screen steadily incremented upwards. Within a few seconds both victim and onlookers could detect a change. “It’s so tight,” the woman gasped, her hands pressed to her abdomen. Even as she said it, the onlookers could see the woman’s breast line swell subtly but perceptibly.

The visibly swelling girl grasped now her chest, now her hips. “Turn it off!” They tried to comply, but it seemed the damage was done; the numbers on the little controller kept ticking upwards. At 15 swelling was visible all over the girl: her ass, thighs, breasts, and lips all were noticeably increased, such that her white underthings were beginning to look snug. At 25, her bra looked sizes too small to contain the ballooning orbs within. Now aware of both the changes and the sensation of inner pressure the girl squealed, “Oh gawd, it feels like I’m being inflated! Turn it the fuck off!”

At 38 her bra flew off her with an audible “pop” as her almost perfectly spherical boobs became too much for its clasp to handle. The girl reached up towards her chest and had difficulty touching it with limbs which seemed to have become stiff. She groaned continuously and pleaded with the women standing by to turn her off, though by 50 her pleas were becoming garbled by the size of her puffed out lips. Her panty looked like it was biting into her ever expanding contours, and some of the onlookers had to rip it off.

At 67 her arms had become so stiff at the elbow and shoulder that she could no longer reach her own body, and she simply stood arms wide blubbering alarmed pleas. “Pweaf ake if fpop! Imph fo tigh! Pweaf!” Her legs followed soon after. The crowd caught her as she fell and laid her on her back. By the early 80s most onlookers had already surmised the outcome.

There the girl lay, still making incoherent noises through the forced pucker of her monstrously swollen lips. Her arms and legs were spread wide and almost entirely immovable, she could certainly neither raise herself nor stand. Her breasts quivered above her like a pair of bowling balls, and her hips and thighs had doubled in width. Her pubis too was bizarrely swollen: her bare mound bulged obscenely and her pussy had adopted a ring-like shape. Everywhere her skin seemed to have been pulled taught and smooth as if barely containing the flesh within.

The shocked bystanders began slowly deflating the poor girl again. As so often happens somebody felt compelled to verbalize what everybody had already realized: “She’s a blow-up doll” came a loud whisper. The girl twitched, eyes pleading. She wouldn’t be able to communicate it for some minutes, but the process also seemed to have brought her taut skin to a tingling sensitivity. She was unnervingly aware of little air movements in the room drifting across her chest.



Julia crept away from the throng pressed about the unfortunate non-escapee and softly made her way into the bunk room. It was that point in the cycle when most everyone was eating or showering, save those now clustered in the assembly room, and though the bunk room was not off limits she felt as if she was intruding in the dim space. Most who withdrew here did so for some modicum of seclusion, something that life in the pod allowed little of.

Here and there a bed was occupied by a solitary figure. A few others housed couples. Julia tried not to gaze at the entangled forms as she passed. Nearby a pair of shapely women were scissoring energetically, their breathy moans audible for some distance despite their muted tones. Julia had been



dimly aware that some women in the pod were in couples of a sort, but hadn't paid it too much heed.<sup>1</sup> Being in this quiet place amongst such open displays of intimacy made her feel even more ill-at-ease than she'd already been. (There was little choice but be open: the cots had no blankets.)

She made her way to a cot in a far rear corner where she sat down. She fidgeted and stared at the repetitive patterns in the grain of the floor as she nervously waited.

After a period that seemed longer than it was another female voice spoke softly beside her. "Are you Julia?"

Julia's insides fluttered wildly and she looked up and nodded timidly. Before her stood...not at all what she had expected. The woman next to her looked in her mid-thirties, her dark hair was pulled up into a neat bun atop her head, and her eyes looked out through a pair of cateye glasses. Her figure was quite feminine, though nowhere near the levels of exaggeration of, say, Julia herself.

"Hi." the woman greeted Julia with a soft smile, "I'm Marian the Lesbrarian."

Julia was startled, and her face must have shown it.

"Did Jacquelyn not mention? I mean, in real life I was a bi nanny from Toronto. French Canadian on my mother's side, carrying a few extra pounds because I like chocolate cake too much. Pretty normal. But here, now, I'm Marian the Lesbrarian who'll flip through your pages. You know how it is." She waved a hand at Julia's figure.

Julia nodded in response without quite making eye contact. Her heart was in her throat.

The woman sat down next to her. "Jacquelyn told me you needed...a human touch. But you seem pretty tense. Maybe we should start slow." She slipped her arm around Julia's waist. "What turns you on, Julia?"

Julia was not expecting the question, and the first thing to spring into her head was a pair of masculine hands on her enormous rack. She violently pushed the image from her mind. "Um...I...I like to be kissed."

"Yeah?" Marian slipped behind Julia, sliding her arm all the way around her as she did. Tenderly she planted her warm lips on the small of Julia's neck. Julia wondered if a carmine red imprint of lips would be left there.<sup>2</sup> Marian gently planted another just under Julia's right ear, and then a third between her shoulder blades as she pulled their bodies snugly together. "You smell nice, Julia," she breathed into the flushing girl's ear.

Awkwardly, Julia accepted these advances. This was entirely new territory for her, and whatever breaking down of barriers many hours of public fondling by men had achieved, they did not carry over to this quiet, tender interaction with another woman. Despite the stereotype about college girls and experimentation, the furthest she'd ever gone with someone of her own gender was a bit of innocent flirting in high school. And Marian was also older than anyone she'd ever dated. That said, the sensation was very pleasant, and she was relieved that the women holding her presented as neither a stereotypical bull-dyke nor one of the more freakishly modified women she shared the pod with. A pretty woman was attentively trying to arouse her, and it soon began to have an effect.

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<sup>1</sup> Of course many women engaged in a variety of activities to make their time in the pod more enjoyable. Aside from sensual pastimes there were discussions, games, even tiny religious observances. People continue to be people even in very odd conditions.

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that this is not as absurd as it sounds. Yes, that Marian's lips were carmine red was a matter of permanent alteration. But this alteration wasn't quite like getting cosmetic tattoos in the waking world. Many women in the City had lips which had been rendered such that they behaved like they'd been recently smeared with makeup, leaving bright red imprints on most anything they touched. In some guest quarters there was even slang for this: "rubber stamp lips."

Marian paused, removing her own bra. "What else do you like, Julia?"

She didn't know what to say. It was not a kind of thing she'd been asked by strangers—in fact nobody had ever put the question to her so directly. Julia faltered. After a moment's silence Marian slipped back in front and gently pushed Julia's shoulders backward onto the cot. Leaning in she ardently locked lips with Julia. Julia responded out of habit, but also shut her eyes to escape intense discomfort.

Marian continued to caress and peck at Julia's cheeks and neck, her tongue stimulating the tender skin. "Do you want me to play with your beautiful breasts?" She flicked her tongue at the base of one playfully.

"No. Please don't." Julia was emphatic.

Gamely, Marian moved to Julia's belly and hips, running her hands tenderly along her inner thighs. Julia's tormented body responded gratefully to the attention, but her mind still balked. She simply lay there and let it happen. Soon her panty had slid off and Marian delicately explored her most private tract. Julia shivered deliciously and, as Marian's breath reached the outer folds of her torrid slit, did her best to focus on the sensation and forget where it came from. Very softly a gasp escaped her.

Soon this first gasp had swelled into sequential cries of pleasure as her hungry nether regions responded gratefully. Yet as her physical arousal mounted and her body began to tremble Julia tried ever harder to think of something other than its source. One image and then another flitted through her head, bits of movies, old dates, images from posters. As her arousal deepened the image of her daily tormentor popped into her mind unbidden. The man's winking face and clutching hands filling her swirling mind as she writhed. She had the strong urge, as she never had before during sex, to reach out and fondle her own breasts.

A moment later she realized what was going on in her head with revulsion. Even here in her own mind he'd followed her! With something between a cry and a grunt her eyes snapped open. There was Marian's tight bun bobbing before her, the woman's face nestled in her tawny carpet, her own bare body spread out in the open air of the bunk room. Julia felt herself suddenly cooled. The spell, such as it was, was broken. In its place her discomfort was tripled. She grimaced and, unsure what else to do, raised her body and inched backwards on the cot away from Marian's energetic tongue.

Marian stopped and looked up at her. "Is everything all right?" came her gentle inquiry.

"No I...I don't..." she faltered, her face reddening even further, "I want to stop."

"Is it something I did?"

Julia shook her head wretchedly. The thought of Marian renewing her activity repelled her. She didn't know what to do or say. Drowning in mortification she just sat.

"Well," said Marian softly, rising, "you're a lovely girl, Julia. Find me if you decide you want me to finish reading your book."

Julia nodded without eye contact. As Marian stooped to retrieve her bra Julia realized for the first time that at no point had the woman taken off her glasses. And then she was gone. Julia was left alone ashamed and naked. Her vexing need, more acute than ever, chiding her.



The tightening of protocols made everything take longer. It didn't create a lot of new work in any one place, it just added small delays and hindrances in a lot of places. This was an irritation, but it bothered Kel a good deal less than the difficulty he now had accessing his suite and other facilities after hours. His tuning and honing was severely impeded, and he'd had to redirect his obsessive efforts into more analysis and planning.

Archon Ra had briefed the entire Ambassadorial staff some days prior to explain the new policies, but the reason for the tightening was not forthcoming. The archons had conferred and decided that the Antechambers needed to be made more secure. Specifically, every point of egress was to be tightly controlled—no mean feat given the complexity of the system. This would involve both the stationing of new guards and the modification of internal controls on the gates and portals themselves. Everybody should be alert for any operational abnormalities and attentive to details.

Many found these changes immediately irksome. The ambassadors were used to doing their work with a fair degree of autonomy, and they bridled at needing somebody else to open doors for them. Speculation about the cause of the changes naturally began at once. Few facts were clear, though a number of rumors were on offer. It was clear enough that there was concern about somebody making their way into the Antechambers who shouldn't. But who and why this worry now?

What Kel and the others saw was intentionally only a small part of what was going on. Alarmed by their ongoing failure to locate the missing cart and its contents, the First Circle of the city had gone into emergency session. Scenarios that had previously seemed unthinkable now loomed ominously. Fraught discussions of what to do next were ongoing. At least, it was decided, the malefactors were almost certainly still in the City, and it was important that this remain the case. The archive where contracts were stored, already a vault, was locked down. The archons responsible for such esoteric matters also assured the others that steps were underway to shore up the invisible bindings keeping guests in place. And of course every place where the City was continuous with spaces outside of itself was watched. The preponderance of these were Ra's responsibility though even the high archons' own gateways onto the void were for the moment deactivated.

This was largely damage control, though. Even more pressing, it seemed, was locating the source of the disruption. That here was a traitorous conspiracy involving multiple individuals, at least one of them of rank, now seemed all but certain. This was without known precedent in the City's annals, and the members of the First Circle were anxious that it not become common knowledge as they tried to suss out their traitors. The wraiths were mobilized to scrutinize the City's own citizens as never before. And much more radical schemes for pinpointing the treachery were being daily entertained by the archons.

Unsurprisingly, suspicion fell first on the handful of women working among the Ambassadors. They had some understanding of how the City worked, and the highest rank, even if only simulated, of any woman in the City. But they were already closely watched—they always had been. And the impressive recruitment numbers each posted didn't easily square with great solidarity for the guest population.

Beyond them, the problem was that no citizen seemed much more likely to be traitorous than any other. All had been screened. Many had been in their posts for years. Looking for traitors seemed to be a process of guessing in the dark. Officials with a hand in operations and officers among the Tenders were being observed. But the project seemed apt to devolve into straining the entire citizen population, a task for which they were not prepared.



When her eyes were finally uncovered Torch had no idea where she was. She had remained conscious during all the long hours since she'd been bound and slid onto the cart for transport. First she'd moved at a steady pace, then she'd been jostled wildly for a while, and after that rushed along with bumps and sharp turns. Finally she'd been unloaded from the cart and set on a hard surface for

what felt an eternity. She was aware of something prodding at her, but little more than that as her ears and eyes were both thoroughly stopped.

Indeed, it was the excellence of her bonds that had kept her and her companions constrained for so long. This was not the showy gear used in an open sector bondage show but rather the restraints used by the tenders. And the bindings were resisting attempts to remove them. Each woman had been gagged, masked, and hogtied, her arms bound together, her legs bent sharply at the knee. A pole with rings running the length of her back was incorporated into the black harnesses allowing her to be slid on and off the racks of the cart like drawers. All of this harness was connected with flat, round clasps that could not, apparently, be manipulated by hand. There must have been some tool used by the tenders for this purpose but, lacking it, it took a frustratingly long time to undo even one latch holding Torch and the others in their stifling confinement.

At last able to see Torch found that she was lying chest down on pale flagstones. Several female figures peered down at her while the kneeling woman who had removed the blindfold was now fiddling with the strap of the ball gag. To her surprise Torch realized that the women were dressed. Of course, women wore things in the City, one saw elaborate lingerie, yoga pants, French maid outfits, amazon breastplates. What one did not see was a group of women standing around in comfortable jeans and t-shirts as these women were.

Apparently despairing of loosening the strap, the woman beside torch yanked it roughly up and over the back of Torch's buzzed head jamming the already snug ball even deeper into her mouth in the process. Finally the whole thing came free and Torch spluttered and gasped.

"Hello, Kayla," one of the standing women greeted Torch. "I'm sorry we're having such a hard time getting you out of there, but we'll have it figured out shortly. We're Lilith's Sisters. Welcome to the resistance."

**Hello reader. If you're enjoying my story thus far please let me know. I find I'm losing a bit of steam, and I'd appreciate feedback and encouragement so I know somebody other than me is reading what I write.**

**At any rate, stay tuned for Chapter 6: Who, Wom which is already taking shape.**