

# O n e

The InterDome Tram snaked from Dome 827 through an inky black corridor, its windows lighting the conduits and panels of the cavernous, colorless walls. Insectlike robots stayed obfuscated by darkness as the magnetic train slid through; the robots skittered along the walls to repair sites in the long tunnels, unnoticed. Along the upper level of the tram, passengers settled into their their cabins, preparing for the multi-day ride to Dome 101: First Dome. On the lower level, brisk business was being done in several in-car restaurants and a clothing store called InterDomeTrends – a blend of the IDT’s and DomeTrends, the mega department store which dominated the central shopping district of every Dome.

Near the front of the train on the upper level, the premier restaurant was filled with statesmen, businesspeople, and scientists milling around in indigo, blue, or green; all sought to trade their services for power, products, or prosperity. At a window-side table in the Track One Restaurant and Club Car, a provocatively-dressed platinum blonde sat staring into the darkness outside.

“Candace!”

Remy turned. “I’m sorry. What did you say?”

Her traveling companion (an older white-haired, rosy-skinned man named Carl), a waiter, and the two men in violet-blue – who had just informed Carl they would be joining their table – looked at Remy apprehensively. “Would you like a salad or soup with your lunch, Candy?”

“Salad.” Remy turned her attention back to the window and the darkness. “No dressing.”

The waiter (a Red-level citizen clad in a burgundy uniform) ducked away. The two men had introduced themselves as Senior Politician Victor and his apprentice, Junior Politician Taylor. A study in opposites, Senior Politician Victor was blond, blue-eyed, loud, and constantly had a hand somewhere on Remy. Junior Politician Taylor had a rich espresso complexion, kind dark brown eyes, a calm voice, and a reserved (though interested) demeanor.

“So, Candace, what do you do?” A hand squeezed her thigh just at the hem of her short skirt. Displeased, Remy eyed Senior Politician Victor; he smiled eagerly at her.

“DomeTrends buyer,” she lied, her attention on the void outside the window.

“Lingerie?”

Unable to dissuade Senior Politician Victor, Remy turned in her chair toward him and smiled insincerely. “Furniture. I buy for DomeTrends and supply Carl’s interior decorating business, when we’re not busy doing other things. You have no idea how intoxicating it is to lavishly furnish a Havens residence then be brought to a sublime orgasm by him under the dining table.”

Caught unawares and drinking from his water glass at the time, Carl snorted and coughed into his cloth napkin, gasping. Junior Politician Taylor’s attention bounced from Carl to Remy. Carl composed himself. “I don’t think these men want to hear—”

“But they do.” Remy took Senior Politician Victor’s hand from her thigh and brought it tantalizingly close to her cleavage. She reached across the table for Junior Politician Taylor’s hand. Pressing a politician’s hand to each of her cheeks, Remy shifted her violet-eyed gaze from Junior Politician Taylor to his mentor. “That is why they are here, Carl.”

The silence at the table was palpable. Carl stood. “Excuse me.”

“We’ll be here when you get back.” Remy smiled up at him.

“Candace, I would like you to come with me. Now.”

Remy eyed the two men with whom she held hands. “You used Indigo privilege to force Carl to let you sit with us, Senior Politician Victor, despite our need to discuss his business. We all know what you’re here for, gentlemen. So, are you going to order me to stay, or am I allowed to go with him?”

The Indigos, having been confronted with Senior Politician Victor’s abuse of his power, looked about nervously. Junior Politician Taylor took his hand back and stood; Senior Politician Victor reluctantly released Remy’s hand and rose. Remy maneuvered her way around the table to Carl; he gripped Remy’s arm and walked her toward a small alcove near the men’s and women’s restrooms. Once out of sight of the table, Carl turned Remy about. “What are you doing to me? You told me I couldn’t reject them and now you’re confronting their behavior? Why are you making this difficult

on me!”

“Difficult on you.” Remy backed Carl up against the wall, her expression distorted by agony. “On you? Carl, I have died and been brought back twice in the last several weeks. What about losing my home, my future . . . my child? What about losing the man I loved? What about the torture that box doc put me through, the nanos she inserted, and all those denizen children Enforcement murdered because your people felt my life was more important?” Remy shoved Carl, hissing, “I don’t exist any more, Carl, therefore I have nothing to live for.”

“We need you,” Carl whispered back, his hand on her shoulder. “Just, well, why did you have to embarrass them?”

Remy bowed her head, stepping back. Her voice gentle, she whispered, “Indigo privilege isn’t supposed to be used that way. Victor abused his power; had any other Senior Politician seen him doing it, he probably would have been reprimanded. I only said what Victor was thinking: he wants something sweet and doesn’t fear stealing your Candy.” Remy leaned to Carl’s ear. “A normal Yellow would have left you for a better cabin and expensive gifts. I think I’ve made it harder on him than you, Carl.”

Carl groaned then took Remy’s shoulders in his hands. “Is the whole trip going to be like this?”

“Had it been important to hide me, I should have been dressed as a Green.”

“Shh!” Carl looked nervously about the alcove, though no one was around. “We can use this to our advantage. If they won’t stop coming for you, then we’ll get what we need from them.”

“I don’t need anything from them.”

“But I do.” Carl explained a detailed plan in a soft, confidential whisper; Remy nodded, sighing impatiently; Carl smiled. “Good, thank you.” Carl took Remy’s hand, and she planted a smearsy, fuchsia kiss on his cheek as they returned to the table. The Indigo men stood as Remy approached. She sat first; the men, just after.

“I am just so charmed by you,” Remy cooed as she took a hand from each of them. She eyed Senior Politician Victor, purring softly, “And you just emanate power like a Solaray.” She sat back, glancing from Senior Politician Victor to Junior Politician Taylor. “So,” Remy said, lightly, “tell me all about you.”

Senior Politician Victor explained his work, influence, and plans for upcoming legislation. Junior Politician Taylor nodded in deferent agreement; he added details to Senior Politician Victor’s soliloquies and flattered his mentor, crediting the senior politician with his own ideas and legislative addendums, smirking at Remy as he did. Remy smiled at Junior Politician Taylor and winked at him. Junior Politician Taylor grinned at Remy’s silently acknowledgement. Carl sat quietly, glancing around the

table as he listened attentively. Senior Politician Victor rested his hand over Remy's shoulder possessively; Remy flirted wordlessly with Junior Politician Taylor as she feigned interest in Senior Politician Victor. The hours-long meal ended with small glasses of liquor and the check being picked up by Senior Politician Victor. Remy turned in her seat toward Senior Politician Victor and clasped his left hand in both of hers, stroking his fingers gently. "Senior Politician?"

He grinned. "Yes, Candace?"

"Does your wife know you seduce citizens on the side?" Remy lifted his hand to his own face with a sardonic smile. The senior politician's smile disappeared as Remy turned his white gold and diamond wedding ring around his finger.

Junior Politician Taylor stood, confident. "Candace, would you like to visit the executive club with me?"

"I suppose it couldn't hurt, Junior Politician." Remy turned her attention back to Senior Politician Victor. She stroked his cheek, looking at him as if disappointed. "An ambitious woman has to have some standards, Victor." After kissing the senior politician's cheek, Remy squeezed behind Senior Politician Victor's chair to take Junior Politician Taylor's arm. Carl and Senior Politician Victor stayed at the table as Remy walked from the dining room with Junior Politician Taylor. In silence, each man left the table for his own destination.

Fifteen years before, the world watched and marveled at child prodigy destined to become a Dome Violet – arbiter of justice and mistress of an arcology. Genetic testing while Remy was in utero had determined her fate; sociotherapists filmed her Neutral youth in Academy, assuring Remy's destiny by driving her interests in that direction.

An accident on the eve of Remy's entrance into the colored-caste system left her bereft of her memories and the ability to pass a citizenship examination. Remy spent ten years as a denizen, living at the edge of Darkside. She hoped for citizenship as she clung to her Indigo eugenicist lover, Damian.

On the verge of signing her last human right away (the ability to make decisions for herself) away for love, a chain of events sent her into the most reviled place in the Dome world: Human Sanitation Services. Hidden in the shadows of the UnderDome, Human Sanitation Services performed the unpleasant task of human corpse retrieval and disposal. Its workers carefully shrouded the dead in a covering of black resin tape then delivered the remains to a crematorium to be processed, turned to ash, and set into a canister for loved ones to pick up.

In the UnderDome, Remy discovered humanity: friendship and love, betrayal and heartbreak. What pained Remy most: She had been a Neutral citizen the whole time, trapped UnderDome by Central Computer, the self-aware metasystem which

maintained the Dome world. It had forced her to live as a denizen; it had chosen to imprison her. Her life was put in jeopardy again and again until Remy was left in an inescapable position. Remy stared down her own death at the neglectful hands of people she had once trusted; hopeless, she contacted the last person she believed could help her survive imprisonment and unfair execution. He had turned her over to the terrorist Freedomer organization.

Where her companions and friends had failed, the Freedomers had succeeded. Nanotechnology monitoring devices, implanted during an interrogation session with Enforcement Intelligence, were disabled. Unfortunately, the nanotechnology had alerted Enforcement to Remy's location, and the Freedomers fled the room just before Enforcement arrived. Carl barely got Remy to a safe hiding place. The zone was shut down, and, as she and Carl hid in a vent, dozens of denizens were poisoned then posed in a scene of Enforcement's triumph over the Freedomers. Remy wept as dozens of innocents died. When Human Sanitation Services arrived, she longed to go back with them. Carl reminded her that they had been impotent to save her; if Remy returned, she would die. Knowing Carl was right, Remy abandoned everything she knew for a future she didn't.

Just that morning, the VizNews broadcasted Remy's heroic demise at the hands of Freedomers. According to the Chief of Enforcement, Remy had VizCommed the policing entity after seeing suspicious people UnderDome; she had subsequently been mass-murdered with the group of unfortunate denizens.

Remy and Carl had boarded the IDT to First Dome just before it left the station. She felt no love, no hate, no reason to fight the next indignity heaped upon her by a world which promised her a glorious career in the Solaray-lit Havens yet delivered her an unsure future in the darkest shadows of the UnderDome. Central Computer, itself, had cast a citizen into the oubliette of the UnderDome to wait out death or madness.

Remy had survived.

She returned to the cabin she shared with Carl just before dinner to shower and change. Carl sat on the edge of the full-sized bed as Remy dictated the salient points of what she had overheard being walked around the executive club all afternoon. "Also, the University labs in Dome 827 are planning to plant poisoned fruit trees for your operatives. I found that out the day Eli and I went up . . ." Remy turned, grimacing as her heart ached. She faced away from Carl, griefstricken.

"The day the Indigo scientist murdered Alan's baby."

"Why couldn't they leave me alone?" Remy bowed her head; her shoulders shook

as she sobbed. “I had a new life; I left them alone.” She sniffled and nodded, resolute. “I’m going to make the Dome pay for what it’s done.”

Carl approached Remy from the back and squeezed her shoulders. “I would have been proud to call you my daughter-in-law, had Alan lived.”

Remy didn’t turn to look at Carl. “I am so sick of the lie that is the Dome. I am sick of agendas, and I am sick of people sweeping away my hope because it might interfere with their vision of what should be. I am sick of being left to die and living anyway.” Eyes narrowed and her jawline hard in seething hatred, Remy announced, “Well, I’m not taking it any more, Carl. I’m not going to stop until they know my pain; the only comfort I have now is that they have no clue what’s coming.” Remy lifted a dress from the closet then returned it; she opted for a less modest one. After hanging the new dress on the exterior of the cabin’s small shower door, Remy dug through her bag and collected her toiletries. Crouching on the floor, she stopped and looked up at Carl. With complete serenity, Remy said, “I’m going to destroy the Dome world.”

“Praise Him, in you the Messiah is truly returned!” Carl laughed, clapping his hands and looking up at the cabin’s ceiling. “Thank you, Almighty One, for your mercy in your people’s time of greatest need.” He closed his eyes, clasped his hands, and bowed his head. Remy watched him, dubious. Carl dropped his hands, still delighted. “Well, I will get us reservations at the Track One Restaurant for dinner, then. Shall I make sure we are seated at the same time Senior Politician Victor is?”

“No. We need to sit with Junior Politician Taylor,” Remy said. “He and I have much to discuss tonight.” When Carl had left the cabin, Remy undressed and stepped into the shower.

Carl and Remy arrived at the Track One Restaurant five minutes before their reservation. The dress Remy had chosen was made of gold-and-cream iridescent lace which flowed to her ankles; oblique shapes were placed carefully for the pretense of modesty. Remy’s open-toed gold heels were difficult for her to use, so she walked slowly, leaning on Carl to balance herself. Instead of the staggeringly vivid colors the Freedomer agents had splashed on her face that morning, Remy opted for a muted color palette, using frosted colors and bronzer to make herself appear less tired and gaunt.

People at Junior Politician Taylor’s table nudged one another and pointed at Remy and Carl surreptitiously, smiling and talking softly; Senior Politician Vincent looked up from his conversation with a young Yellow woman and startled, not recognizing Remy (as Candace) immediately. Mid-laugh Junior Politician Taylor turned to look over his shoulder. Surprised yet delighted, he stumbled over and excused himself from the table. With confident strides, Junior Politician Taylor approached Remy, a hand

out to her. "It's wonderful to see you again, Carl," he said, not looking away from Remy. "We would love it if you and Candace would join us."

"We wouldn't want to interfere," Remy said softly, smiling sweetly up at Junior Politician Taylor.

Junior Politician Taylor clasped hands with Remy. "It'll be a tight fit, but it wouldn't be any trouble at all. Please join us?" He smiled at her, hopeful. "Please."

"Carl?" Remy asked, keeping her eyes on Junior Politician Taylor.

"I wouldn't want to offend, Politician," Carl deferred.

Junior Politician Taylor chuckled. "Not quite Politician yet, sir, but I thank you for the compliment."

"I'm sure it's only a matter of time, Politician," she whispered in Junior Politician Taylor's ear. "I hope this time I won't be across the table from you." Junior Politician Taylor steered Remy to the table as Carl followed behind them, hands clasped behind his back. A chair was placed next to Junior Politician Taylor's chair and one was set across the table. Junior Politician Taylor sat Remy next to him, and Carl was placed at the other side of the table. When Carl sat, he glanced up at Junior Politician Taylor, who stared Carl down until Carl turned to speak to a Blue politician sitting next to him.

"This is Candace, everyone. She's a DomeTrends buyer and interior decorator." Junior Politician Taylor clasped Remy's hands. Dismissive, he added, "The gentleman is her employer: Carl." Remy left a lingering kiss on Junior Politician Taylor's cheek then leaned forward to listen to the other Yellow citizens in attendance talk about their careers.

Remy was not the only Yellow at the table. Several Blue and Indigo citizens had collected companions for the trip; each worked to impress by having the socially and physically superior Yellow at the table. Crosstalk consisted of the political maneuvers of the Indigo and Blue politicians and of the gifts the Yellows' benefactors had given them. The Yellow date of Senior Politician Victor thrust her arm out and shook the gold-and-diamond bracelet. The Yellows marveled at the jewelry as Senior Politician Victor smirked. Lightly, Remy asked, "Still at University?"

"On my way for my semester abroad," the girl gushed. "I'm majoring in fashion and spokesmodeling."

Remy nodded and smiled politely. "You don't say. How very Domey for you." The politicians at the table hid smirks, glancing from Senior Politician Victor to Junior Politician Taylor. Immediately, other Yellows fawned over the girl. Gushing insincere advice to the girl, the other Yellow women eyed Senior Politician Victor to see if he was interested in upgrading to one of them. Remy leaned back in her chair

and sighed, melancholy. She and Senior Politician Victor stared at one another before Remy turned her attention to Junior Politician Taylor. She cocked her head. "Are you all right, Taylor?"

"I'm sorry I didn't give you anything really nice, yet, Candace. I didn't expect to see you again, to be honest; I promise I didn't do it to embarrass you." He frowned at her, worried. "You seem disappointed. I'll buy you something first thing tomorrow morning."

"It's not that."

"Then what is it?"

"I'm just tired," Remy whispered in his ear. Glancing at Senior Politician Victor, Remy turned Junior Politician Taylor's face to hers, holding a closed-lip kiss with him for several seconds before looking up at him with a seductive smile. Both Carl and Senior Politician Victor startled. "Though I could be persuaded by the right person to stay up late."

Junior Politician Taylor grinned, lowering his eyes before confidently resting his arm over Remy's shoulder. Through the dinner, Remy discussed art, entertainment, and fashion with her color peers, occasionally nuzzling Junior Politician Taylor to elicit a shiver of delight from him. Carl eyed Remy, frowning as he tried to focus on the deals triangulating between scientists, businessmen, and politicians around the table. Her ease with Junior Politician Taylor made it appear they had been intimate with one another for months. Senior Politician Victor's displeasure at his own companion's inability to defer to and support him was clear; Remy was the superior Yellow at the table, turning political attention from the mentor to his apprentice.

Leaning forward to focus on a nearby Blue scientist's poorly-told joke, Remy and Carl caught one another's gaze. Carl's frown dissipated; Remy's eyes held seething disdain for all in attendance as she laughed merrily at the joke's punch line then leaned back into Junior Politician Taylor's arms.

Junior Politician Taylor walked Remy to her cabin after dinner. As they reached the door, he brushed her hair from her face and leaned forward to kiss her. Remy turned her face, and he stopped. "I have a very fine stateroom, Candace, and we do get along well. I understand you boarded with Carl this morning, but would you please consider staying with me tonight?"

Remy looked up at him, surprised. "I think the best part of your offer was that you didn't order me to do it, Taylor."

In the morning, Remy arrived at the cabin she shared with Carl. She inverted her clutch purse; a handful of magazine cartridges and a small tin tumbled into the bed. Carl picked up the tin and slid the top back. "None gone." Remy tugged the cabochon

poison ring from her finger and gave it to him. Carl opened the ring and nodded when he found it empty. "I'll refill it."

Remy removed her other jewelry and carefully put it all away. "At least I found something to read."

Carl rifled through the magazine cartridges. "Please don't tell me you just read magazines in his room." Dropping the pile onto the bed, Carl covered his face in frustration. "You were supposed to interrogate him, then drug him."

"He would have lied then known I was a spy. I went to the source and copied his files, instead." Remy stood over the sink and wiped her make-up off.

Carl looked from Remy to the pile of cartridges in awe. "How?"

"It's not hard. Break the encoding on the magazines, erase the contents, rip the data from the storage carts by breaking the encoding there, and copy them. It only takes a couple of minutes." Remy paused as she cleaned her face. "Your people don't do that?"

Carl stared at Remy, awestruck. "No."

Remy finished washing her face then patted it dry. "*Trends Weekly* is the timetable of shipments starting next quarter between AmeriDome MediPlaza Conglomerate and medical patch and pill supplier, Godwin Industries – courtesy of Junior Politician Taylor's efforts to bring the two together for quite a generous kickback. It had to be behind Senior Politician Victor's back because his corporate sponsor is MediDome, the current pharmaceutical supplier of the AmeriDomes." Remy shrugged. "Well, until next month, when the MediDome contract expires and the Godwin Industries contract goes into effect."

"We hit MediDome's shipments all of the time for our medical supplies," Carl said, worried. He picked up a sedative patch. "These are MediDome products."

Remy leaned against the door, nodding appreciatively. "It's very likely MediDome will try to take over shipments to the EuroDomes, AfriDomes, and AsiaDomes to compensate for the loss. Our friend, Taylor, will find himself at odds with his senior and earning his politician status at the same time." Remy frowned, remembering meeting Politician Godwin on her vacation trip to Dome 839; he was entrepreneurial, cynical, and aggressively insistent. "Godwin Industries. How big is it, really?"

"Immense." Carl's frown turned to a delighted smile. "They are very easy to strike, come to think of it. It's almost as if they expect and plan for losses more than other companies. This could be beneficial to Prime Settlement." Carl picked up each cartridge in turn, appraising them one by one. "What is on the rest?"

"*Women's Dome* has the next two years' scientific conventions – it seems Taylor had allied himself with several powerful University lobbyists as well. The locations,

dates, and keynote speakers are listed as well. The one I think would interest Prime Settlement the most? An arms and agents conference in Dome 101 this month. The most modern weaponry and the most advanced biotoxins will be ready for the taking. Imagine if the plans for every prototype and the recipes for every toxic compound were stolen. Antitoxins could be created before the toxins were put in use; weapons Enforcement would have no idea how to combat would be in the hands of each of your people.” When Carl closed his eyes and whispered his thanks, Remy continued. “*Yellow Digest* contains his contact list, from his denizen laundress to three – yes, three! – Dome Violets, including a Dome Violet Clancy located in Dome 514.” Remy paced, tapping her fingers to her lips. “Dome 514 is where the Ring is located.”

“And where Godwin Industries’s main offices are.”

Remy turned, surprised. “How is the Freedomer presence there? The Ring can’t be that hard to get onto from the denizen side.”

Carl inhaled deeply then exhaled slowly. “We have no presence there. Dome 514 is impossible to get operatives into.”

“Enforcement that pervasive?”

Carl shook his head. “No Enforcement presence at all. If you are not an employee of Godwin Industries, you aren’t allowed to live there, and anyone who works there lives there.” He rubbed the back of his head. “Our people are turned back at the IDT station; most trams pass through and don’t even stop. One operative walked in from the closer Dome and was found dead in an IDT Hotel five Domes away. Godwin Industries’ main Dome is impenetrable, yet hitting them anywhere else is effortless.”

Remy nodded, arms crossed over her chest. She pointed at Carl. “Someone needs to get in there, Carl. Politician Godwin apparently has more than prostitutes, doser dens, real meat, and a Network HumSan to hide there. We need to know what he finds so valuable in it that he would need a whole Dome to hide it and see if we can exploit it.”

Carl nodded. “I see your point.” He handed Remy the pile of cartridges. “What’s on the last cartridge, then?”

“*Dome Today* contains Taylor’s private records. It took work to hack into that cartridge, I assure you, because every last offense is worth large blocks of prison time. Junior Politician Taylor may be soft-spoken, but he is definitely a power-broker worth watching over the next decade or two – if he doesn’t end up dead. The only group he hasn’t allied with is Enforcement, and they’re the most dangerous to him at this point.” Remy stretched. “I’m going to return to Taylor’s cabin with a kiss for his cheek and a story he would blush to repeat. Then he is going to take me shopping. I will return before dinner to change.”

“We arrive in Dome 101 the day after tomorrow,” Carl said as he slid the first cartridge into a portable reader. “If you find more magazines like these, I am sure the Council and Lindy would love to have copies.”

“I will.” Remy dropped her dress to the floor and stepped into the shower. She emerged in a towel and slipped on undergarments and a pair of thigh-high cream boots. Looking around at what was available, Remy shook her head. She put on a short overcoat which barely reached the top of her boots. Fastening it closed, Remy sashayed from the cabin.

When Carl saw Remy again, she was dressed demurely for a Yellow. Wearing a knee-length straight skirt and an opaque cream halter top, Remy carried a tailored jacket draped over her free arm. She and Junior Politician Taylor walked hand-in-hand, swinging arms and smiling at one another. Carl glowered at the attention Remy gave the politician. Junior Politician Taylor glanced in Carl’s direction casually then startled. He whispered in Remy’s ear, and she looked over at Carl, confused.

Carl followed them for much of the early afternoon, pausing at a Liquid Illusions Beverage window to order a NuKaffe. Junior Politician Taylor glanced at Carl and spoke softly to Remy again. Remy nodded and strode to Carl. When she reached him, Remy had her back to Junior Politician Taylor; he tried to act nonchalant as he looked in a InterDome Trends jewelry case, glancing up at Carl nervously. “Taylor is anxious that you’re around everywhere we go.”

Carl cleared his throat. “The attention you’re showing him so soon after your Chosen’s death is disrespectful, Remy.”

Remy cocked her head and crossed her arms over her chest. “Carl, if you know of any better way to get information, I’d like to hear it. Senior Politician Victor dropped off his data carts to Junior Politician Taylor’s room this morning, probably checking to see if I stayed overnight. Right now, I’m concerned with getting my hands on Victor’s cartridges.”

Carl nodded, still grim. “What if you found a more useful politician?”

“Then I would go with him, wouldn’t I?” Remy glanced at Junior Politician Taylor then back at Carl. “At this point, I want Victor’s data – so do you. Taylor learned how to negotiate from Victor; as a seasoned politician, Victor will have data which will make Taylor’s dealings seem innocent in comparison.”

“Are you going with Victor, then?”

“Taylor has Victor’s cartridges, Carl. Tonight, I go with Taylor again.”

Carl held Remy’s arms, worried. “I don’t want you with him.”

Remy frowned. “Carl, I don’t want him to touch me as much as you don’t want him to touch me. I would kill him before I slept with him.” Staring Carl down, Remy

slid his hands from her arms. “This isn’t a game for me, Carl. I have plans for whatever time I have left in the Dome world, and men are not part of that plan. What I am able to collect this weekend on the tram is meant as a thanks to your people for rescuing me from Cain’s HumSan. Don’t assume I will trade my body for any of it.”

Carl nodded, his eyes downcast. He leaned forward to Remy’s ear. “I apologize for doubting you, Messiah. Alan’s death has been so recent, and returning to my wife, Nell, without his ashes, even . . .”

Remy bowed her head. “I’m sorry about Alan’s death,” she lied. She glanced at Junior Politician Taylor then turned back to Carl. “Get a seat at the table tonight; I’m sure Senior Politician Victor would love to goad Junior Politician Taylor with your presence after what he dealt with this morning at Taylor’s cabin door. If there is someone at the table with greater political prowess, I will leave Taylor behind after I download Politician Victor’s cartridges and spend the rest of the trip working with you to obtain that data.”

Carl nodded, smiling, then left Remy to herself; she stood, frowning, trying to find a way out from under Junior Politician Taylor’s attention. Junior Politician Taylor approached Remy and rested a hand on her shoulder. “Is everything all right?”

Remy turned. “Carl’s not happy,” she said, taking a deep breath. “I’m worried what he’ll do, Taylor. I’m really worried.”

“Don’t worry, Candace,” Junior Politician Taylor said, clasping Remy’s hand in his. His voice wavered as he said, “He can’t do anything to us.”

Remy appeared alone at the foyer to the Track One Restaurant. Carl looked over at Remy; Junior Politician Taylor had purchased her a plunge-neck satin dress in a pale cream for the night’s dinner. Carl smiled and stood, crossing the room to Remy. His voice low, he asked, “Where is Taylor?”

“He found out you were going to be at the table tonight from Senior Politician Victor. He’s taking tonight’s meal in-room because he says he has work to complete. As Remy, I know he’s avoiding the table because of you, but as Candace? I’ve been asked to send my regrets,” she murmured. Remy eyed Senior Politician Victor, whose young date was seated with him again. She smiled and waved to him as they made eye contact. Senior Politician Victor offered her a self-satisfied smile. Turning to Carl, she said, “I have a purse filled with magazine carts, and I plan to return to our cabin with Victor’s data tonight.”

Carl took Remy’s hand in his and pressed a tin into it. “Take this just in case. Slip it into your hem at first convenience.” He turned Remy around and took her arm. “I found someone you might find more interesting than Junior Politician Taylor. He was quite interested when Senior Politician Victor and I discussed you, and he asked to be

seated next to you at dinner. He's very powerful, though you wouldn't think it, initially. I realized it when other politicians turned to him to answer their questions, but it was divine providence which made it clear to me he was meant for the Almighty's plan." Carl walked Remy to an empty chair between an Indigo and a Blue. Carl grinned. "Candace, I would like you to meet Politician Mason. He is one of the authors of the Remy Bill. Everyone, this is Candace. She's my furniture buyer."

Remy's tight grip on Carl's arm and her rictus grin startled Carl. The pale, dark-haired man in rich, dark blue squinted up at Remy. "Have we met?"

"I'm sure we haven't," Remy lied. "Though we could have. I do travel an awful lot, Senior Politician Mason."

"You look very familiar to me, Candy." After a moment, Senior Politician Mason smiled. "I'll remember it eventually. Come sit. We were just discussing the Remy Bill."

Remy sat next to him, smiling tensely at the table. "Junior Politician Taylor sends his regrets. He has work to complete for his Senior Politician." Remy nodded toward Senior Politician Victor, who grinned wickedly at Remy before turning his attention to the girl. As Politicians offered noises and comments in empathy, Remy slid her napkin from the table and set it carefully on her lap as Carl sat across the table near Senior Politician Victor. He offered her a concerned look; she averted her eyes and leaned forward. "So, what is this Remy Bill?"

"Long time ago," one of the Indigos began, putting his wine glass down, "there was this girl who sociotherapists were convinced would become a Violet."

"They even brought Dean in to teach her," Senior Politician Victor said. He kissed behind his young girlfriend's ear then added, "Dean, as always, had other plans for her."

The Indigos around the table chuckled. Remy hid her embarrassment with a polite, inquisitive smile. The first Indigo took a sip of wine and continued. "Well, she had some sort of accident just before testing, and she ended up damaged."

"DamCare?"

"Worse," the Indigo replied. "Denizen."

Remy forced herself to recoil in horror, setting her hand to her chest as she wrinkled her nose in disgust. "I'd rather be dead or damaged."

Others around the table agreed with Remy. The Indigo leaned forward. "She is."

"Damaged?" Remy asked, curious.

"She was murdered by Freedomer terrorists under Level One just a few days ago, apparently calling in Enforcement just before they killed her."

Remy shook her head. "How awful."

Senior Politician Victor's date scoffed. "Dead is better than denizen, *Can-dee*. The idea of even living above them in the Havens makes my skin crawl."

Senior Politician Victor chuckled, amused. "Actually, her death was fortuitous. We had legislation we wanted to push through so Browns would have to be owned to be moved around. Attaching her name and the story of her death to it makes it compelling to those who want to protect Brown rights. Once ownership (under the guise of protection) is established, it won't be too hard to legislate ownership of any and all Browns a citizen claims. Free labor for all business owners and the government isn't required to maintain minimum standards any longer. We can destroy the Dark-side slums and turn them into something useful." Senior Politician Victor shrugged. "University laboratories, perhaps?"

One of the Indigos volunteered, "The Eugenics department at my University would love to have an opportunity at Darkside. We could turn the whole area into laboratories and laboratory housing and demolish the current facilities, turning those into classrooms and student housing."

"So this Remy person's death will eventually bring about the enslavement of the Brown population to reduce costs for the small businessperson?" Her confrontation of Senior Politician Victor left the table quiet. Remy sat back in her chair, bowing her head. "I apologize, Senior Politician Victor. That came out differently than I intended."

Senior Politician Mason's arm snaked over Remy's shoulder. "Jealousy doesn't become a woman like you, Candace."

"I'm otherwise occupied this evening, Senior Politician Mason." Remy whispered, not looking up at him.

Senior Politician Mason chuckled. "I heard you had standards," he whispered. "I'm not married, Candy."

Remy tilted her head, frowning at him. "You're not an Indigo either."

Senior Politician Mason nodded, amused, and took a drink of the wine in front of him. Over the course of the dinner, he became exponentially more affectionate toward her as he drank, until Remy was embarrassed to be at the table. Before dessert arrived, Remy stood. "If you'll excuse me? Thank you for your company, but I am expected elsewhere."

"I'll escort you." Senior Politician Mason took Remy's hand and stumbled slightly as he stood. He turned to the table. "See you at the hotel, everyone."

The table spoke up in a gaggle of goodbyes and comments about not having too late a night. "Be easy on this one, Mason," one of the Yellow women at the table joked. "She looks breakable."

Senior Politician Mason curled Remy's hand around his arm and rested her hand on his forearm. "I am only escorting her, Miriam. Where she ends up tonight is up to her." Carl and Remy shared concerned looks before she was guided from the room. Walking along the cabin hallway on the second floor of the IDT in silence, Senior Politician Mason spoke to Remy when they reached the third car. "You wouldn't mind if I stopped at my cabin on the way over to your appointment."

"Actually, I would." Senior Politician Mason stopped Remy at the next cabin door. Remy frowned. "This isn't Junior Politician Taylor's door."

"I know." The door opened to him. Remy stood at the threshold of a large, well-apportioned cabin. Instead of a small shower stall and toilet combination, it had a full-sized bathroom – the doorway of which was open. His desk's telescoping chair was out, and Remy eyed his portable. A clear cartridge case lay next to it; six cartridges filled its slots, and Remy's desire to download their contents was piqued. With an impatient huff, he shoved Remy into the room. She stumbled forward, losing her balance on her heeled shoes as she was thrown forward. Remy turned around as he commanded the room: "Lock door."

The mechanism ground and latched. Remy tried to seem confident but was shaking. "I'd like to leave, if you don't mind."

Mason removed his jacket and carefully hung it up in a wall-mounted wardrobe. "You know how I said I'd remember eventually? Dome 839: we met at that dance club – the Level Above. I was sitting with companions and my Junior, and I ended up escorting you to the table after you couldn't stop watching your friend. You had brown hair last time, and it was much longer, but I remember you, Emmy. Or is it Candace? Of course, I suspect you're someone altogether different." His careful fingers worked the buttons of his shirt's cuff then placket.

"You're not intoxicated at all."

"No, I am not." Mason removed his shirt and treated it with the same care as the jacket.

Remy considered lying then sat on Mason's bed, bringing her feet up to sit cross-legged on it. She felt along the hem of her dress for the patch-pack Carl had given her to hide on her dress. "What gave me away, Mason?"

"No denials?" Mason stopped. "You are an enigma, aren't you?"

"I don't consider myself one. Again, what gave me away?"

"The comment about the benefits to the small businessperson. However, that you knew I was a senior politician before anyone told you made the difference." Mason smoothed his hand along Remy's jaw line. "Being the only Blue senior politician in the Dome world currently, I tend to be addressed incorrectly by people who have never

met me before. You knew me and didn't wish to admit it." He stood upright and slipped his feet from his shoes, carrying them to the wardrobe before asking, "So, how is your pregnant friend, Mia?"

"Never pregnant. Being near your Indigo friend made her sick to her stomach."

Mason laughed, pulling his socks from his feet. "I'll be sure to tell Harcourt the next time I see him. Considering how forward you were with him, he was expecting to entice both of you back to his room and was assured at least you would go. He was extremely disappointed when you disappeared."

Remy stood as Mason rolled his socks carefully and placed them into one shoe. "Well, I'd love to reminisce, but I have to go. If you'd unlock the door and allow me to leave?" Mason stepped between Remy and the door.

"I think you are staying in this room tonight. If I feel generous, I might not let Enforcement take you away as soon as we get off the IDT in First Dome." Mason untucked his light blue undershirt, watching Remy's reaction. She tried to hide her fear but couldn't; he smiled and pulled his undershirt off. Remy winced as she saw the scars which mottled his skin. "So, you aren't undercover Enforcement, which was my first guess. Tell me: how does a person move through Level One first as a Green then as a Yellow?"

Remy sat on the edge of the bed again. "Citizens can be demoted. One just has to commit certain infractions against the Dome."

Mason folded his undershirt carefully. "That's quite an obscure bit of political trivia. And caterers named Emmy don't become furniture suppliers named Candy in four months." He opened a laundry bin and dropped the shirt into it. "So I have a Yellow who I first met as a Green and was educated to be a Blue or Indigo. Care to explain?"

"No, I would not care to explain."

Mason nodded slowly, carefully unbuckling his belt. "Which reassures me you are neither Candace nor Emmy. So, who would you be if I had your DNA scanned?"

Remy chuckled, shaking her head as she averted her eyes from Mason's gaze. "Oh, I guarantee you – of all people – do not want to know."

He slid his belt from his pants and hung it in the closet. "But I do."

As Mason unbuttoned his slacks, Remy laughed nervously. "So, how naked are you planning to get in front of me?"

"Completely, as are you. That is where generosity enters our negotiation. Mine is directly proportional to yours." He dropped his slacks to the floor and picked them up. "I'm ready to strike a deal," he said, hanging them carefully in the wardrobe. Clad only in a pair of electric blue underwear, Mason leered at Remy. Crossing the room,

he climbed onto the bed next to Remy and reclined against a pile of pillows, his back to the window. Remy turned and sat cross-legged, facing Mason and the window. A robot raced along the tunnel wall next to the IDT then dove down into the darkness. Mason tousled Remy's hair and stroked her cheek. "Tell me the truth: what is your given name?"

"Remy."

Mason slapped her. "I do not appreciate liars!"

Remy scrambled back, poking a hole in the skirt of her dress with her sharp heel as she tried to distance herself from Mason. "Just because my death serves you and your political cronies doesn't change that I am still alive!"

"You can't be Remy." Mason's voice was unsure.

"Look me up, if you're so drekking good at matching names to faces." Remy pulled her heel from her skirt and threw her hands up. "Fantastic." She slid her shoes from her feet and scowled as she walked into his bathroom to get a cool, wet cloth for her cheek. His hand print glowed on her skin through the make-up. In the mirror's reflection, Remy watched Mason creep from the bed to his desk. "Find an archived picture from my Academy days, Mason. Or I could start divulging facts only I would know about myself, if you'd prefer. Things the videographers didn't catch?"

Remy padded into the bedroom; Mason sat at his desk. "Come here."

Remy approached cautiously. Mason stood, grabbing Remy by the hair at the back of her head. He searched for the telltale signs of cosmetic surgery. "It's me, Mason! I'm running away to become a fun-girl in Dome 101! Do you know how horrifying Human Sanitation Services actually is? I want to live among spectrums, no matter what the price!"

Mason shoved Remy from him. "How does a denizen masquerade as a Green! Who the drek was Mia?"

Remy covered her face and forced tears. Looking up at Mason, she sobbed, "I was working for those NuAnimals UnderDome when I had an accident and my memory returned. I was me, and I had already spent my final chance at citizenship while I was incapacitated! I was going damaged in the UnderDome, Mason. Then, this Green named Emily died. She overdosed on sedatives." Remy leaned close to Mason's ear. "They lost her, Mason. She was never recorded as dead. Well, I got away and returned to her home and stole some of her clothes and took her identity and hopped an IDT anywhere else."

"You pretended to be Emily," Mason said, unconvinced.

"Yes," sobbed Remy. "I met Mia at the DomeTrends the day you and I met, and she introduced me to her friends. She runs a talent agency, and the Yellows are her

employees. Well, Mia hated your friend, so I said I'd handle it and I lied about who she was. She played shy, and I used my political science education so I could impress you." Remy sniffled. "I really did like you."

"That doesn't explain why you are Candace, now."

Remy turned her face in mock shame. "Carl is a prostitution contractor and owns my Release of Consent, Mason. He arranges my schedule and thinks I can be popular with his most discriminating clientèle because of who I once was." Remy looked up; Mason seemed amused; the story was plausible to him. "I was passing through the UnderDome while running Carl's errands when I saw something. I got out of the area and made the call to Enforcement. I have no idea why they think I'm dead, Mason." Remy bowed her head. "Carl bought me this ID in the black market and decided to test me on a nothing Junior Politician; he didn't expect Senior Politician Victor to be interested in me." Remy looked up at Mason. "I have a contractual appointment with Junior Politician Taylor, sir, one that I am missing. I have no difficulty returning to you, but if I miss this appointment, I will lose credibility."

Mason took Remy's hands and led her to the bed. He lay down and put his arms out to her. "Carl and I will strike a deal for your consent tomorrow morning, or else he won't be arriving in First Dome." Remy lay next to Mason, curling up next to him. "I am a man of unique interests and needs." Mason kissed Remy's forehead. "Fulfill them while I am here and at Conference in First Dome, and I will connect you with someone who would do anything to possess you, dead or alive."

"Thank you." Remy rolled onto him, straddling his hips as she grabbed the back of his head with one hand and pressed her mouth on his roughly. He grabbed her hand from his hair and pulled her down on top of him. Remy dislodged the tin of sedative patches from her dress's hem; the tin dropped to the bed. Mason rolled onto Remy, and she groped for the container which was partially covered by her thigh. Finally reaching it, Remy slid one patch from the tin and wrestled with its packaging behind Mason's head. He wrenched her dress's top down as she slipped the plastic wrap from the slap patch. His mouth at one of Remy's breasts, Mason pushed the skirt of Remy's dress up as he bit down hard on her nipple. Remy shrieked in pain and slapped the exposed patch down on his shoulder. She pulled Mason's face up to hers and kissed him through his bites and pinches as she unwrapped a second patch and pressed it onto his shoulder blade. Mason drowsed, and she added a third patch to his arm. He fell limp on Remy, unconscious.

Remy rolled him from her and moved the first two sedative patches to his arm. Pulling the bodice of her dress up, she shook her head in disgust and picked up the tin of sedatives. Standing, Remy eyed Mason's portable.

Dumping the magazine cartridges from her clutch purse onto his desk, she opened Mason's clear cartridge case and slid the first out. Remy snapped the first magazine cartridge into Mason's portable and stripped it. Taking the first of Mason's cartridges, she decoded its protections. Her eyes widened as she read projects Mason was involved with. Remy copied the information into the first magazine cartridge. Methodically, she carefully transferred all of Mason's data. The only sounds in the room were the taps of her thumbs on the small keyboard and Mason's loud, even breathing. Remy finished copying the last cartridge, returned the final original to Mason's clear case, and slid the pile of copies into her purse with the tin of sedative patches. Snapping her purse shut, Remy said, "Senior Politician Mason, you are a truly wicked man."

"And you, Remy, are a very, very bad woman."

Remy wheeled around, startled to see Mason standing behind her, annoyed. "You're not supposed . . ."

"I have unique interests and needs, remember?" Mason touched his shoulder where the three medicated tapes lay. "A sedative patch overdose?" Mason shook his head, disappointed. "Oh, Remy."

Remy held her purse behind her. Mason took a step forward; Remy took a step back and dropped her purse. Her voice trembling and soft, Remy whispered, "We both know what comes next, don't we?"

"The last option was Freedomer, which it looks like you are. I am so sorry I have to kill you after I'm done with you. We could have had an interesting relationship." Mason pointed to the bed; Remy approached him meekly.

"Not half as sorry as I am." Remy slapped Mason's cheek hard.

He laughed. "Was that supposed to hurt me?"

"No," replied Remy, grim. "It was supposed to kill you."

Mason pulled the neurotoxin tape from his cheek. Still laughing, he fell against the bed onto the floor, dead.

Remy collected her purse and removed the remaining sedative tapes from the tin. She carefully applied the remainder of the tin's contents onto Mason's arm. Gingerly, Remy removed the used neurotoxin patch from Mason's fingers with her fingernails and slid it back into the emptied tin. After washing her hands carefully, Remy checked her hair and make-up, frowning at the rosy hand print on her cheek. Remy cleaned the room carefully then walked toward the door. "Unlock door."

"Access denied."

"Unlock door. Authorization: Administrator Thirteen."

The mechanism ground. "Access denied."

Remy froze. She was dead to Central Computer; her administration account,

therefore, must have been closed. Remy tried opening the door using Administrator One through Administrator Twenty with no success. Panicking, Remy looked back at Mason and forward at the door. In despair, she asked, “Unlock door, Authorization: Administrator Zero?”

The door unlatched and slid open to her. Remy peeked from the room. No one was in the hallway. Her shoes in her hands, Remy ran through the upper level of the quiet tram.