

T W O

When Remy reached the cabin she shared with Carl, the door opened to her.

Carl was sitting on the edge of the bed, his head in his hands. Remy tossed the used tin of sedatives onto the desk then washed her hands again. “It’s got a used neuro tape in it, Carl. Mason was a doser. Right now he’s covered in sedative patches. I had to use the neuro on him, Carl. He knew me from Dome 839.”

Carl stood and paced. “Did you get his data?”

Remy nodded, dumping the contents of her clutch purse onto the desk. “It’s in the magazines. Carl, he was into deals Taylor could never even dream of. Mason took me back to his room; I hit him with three sedative patches, and I thought he fell asleep.” Remy shuddered. “He caught me copying his files, Carl. He was going to use me, kill me, then come for you.” Remy began to weep inconsolably. “Enforcement is going to execute me, Carl. I murdered a politico. They’re going to find me guilty of murdering a Blue!”

“Not if an Indigo says you weren’t there, Remy.”

“Junior Politician Taylor?”

Carl bowed his head. “I didn’t have faith, Messiah, and sent you to a servant of the Evil One. Go to Taylor now. Stay with him until the announcement comes. Do whatever you have to so he will protect your life.”

“But—”

“I should have removed you from the table the moment I saw you feared Politician Mason. It is my fault, not yours. Alan would have understood what you have to do, Remy. Go now, before it’s too late.”

Gathering her purse, Remy strode to Junior Politician Taylor’s suite. He opened the door to Remy, stunned to see her in her disheveled state. He gave Remy a drink as she sat at the edge of his bed and wept, telling Junior Politician Taylor that Mason had promised to escort her to Taylor. Mason had dragged her to his own room, shoved her in, and wanted her to take sedatives with him. She had refused and slapped him; Mason had slapped her in return and assumed she was initiating a night of deviant sex. She temporarily talked Mason out of it, promising to return. “I don’t know how I got out,” lied Remy, shaking in real fear. “I ran and ran and then ended up here.”

Taylor sat next to Remy and held her to him, rocking her gently and kissing her forehead. Teary, Remy tilted her face up to his. Taylor bowed his head to kiss her as

Remy slid her hand behind his neck gently, pulling him down onto the bed with her.

Remy lay awake in the darkness, Taylor's nude body pressed against hers under the blankets as he slept soundly. His arms wrapped protectively around her (even in his sleep, Taylor held Remy to him), she tried to find comfort in his presence. Instead, Remy felt loneliness.

From youth, Remy attempted to find solace in the men of her life. Her father, David, praised and petted Remy while the cameras were on them; when the cameras were off, he retreated to sullen solitude.

David initially shared his art and poetry with Remy, but when sociotherapists turned Remy hard toward politics, David found himself on the edge of Remy's life. Her mother, Maria, loathed David. Maria only offered him affection when she felt he was encouraging Remy, but when he tried to have a life outside of Remy, Maria turned hostile and bitter toward her husband, cursing at him in gibberish.

The career David had hoped to create through Remy's celebrity never manifested, and he punished Remy with his absence – unless he felt so alone he needed her. Remy traded his affection for promises that when she was a Violet, she would only put his art in her house and would force all other artists move from her Dome. His depression never subsided; Remy couldn't comfort him, and, just after Remy turned ten years old, she abandoned him to his misery.

Damian entered her life at that time. A studious and soft-spoken boy from the AsiaDomes, he was transferred to Dome 827. Damian's dark, soulful eyes and his quick mind entranced Remy; she envied his coarse, glossy black hair and found any reason to touch it, usually ruffling it when they joked around. Remy and Damian became the best of friends, though her private pain about her father's depression was hers, alone.

When Patrissa arrived, Remy's life changed. Patrissa's father, Indigo Politician Dean, had bartered his daughter's future for the chance to influence the world-renown little girl Remy had become. Patrissa grew up disdainful of Remy's special treatment, especially the attention Remy commanded from her father, Indigo Politician Dean.

Dean's charisma, presence, and VizStar looks made him a strong politician to ally with Remy. Remy sought a father-replacement; Dean took on the role effortlessly. Dean approached Maria to have an affair with him; she refused. Fearful that Dean would abandon her as her father had done, Remy turned toward her peers. Instead of finding solace, she realized Patrissa had taken Damian because Remy had stolen Dean from her.

Remy turned suicidal as her life curled in on itself. The sociotherapists threatened, begged, and panicked as Remy's future dove. At the last moment, Indigo Politician

Dean maneuvered himself deep into Remy's life – a calculated political move. In front of the camera, Dean and Remy were tutor and phenomenon; behind the camera, he stepped in as a strong male role model. Remy's admiration turned into affection as Dean convinced her to abandon the future others had sought for her to become an Indigo politician. His inculcation of the Indigo mindset succeeded all too well; instead of maintaining her awestruck affection of Dean, Remy manipulated the world around her to create a future where she needed no one.

Remy's crush turned into a power grab, and at fifteen, she approached Dean as a potential lover. With that first kiss, Dean decided to take control of Remy's potential, offering her a coveted Junior Politician apprenticeship with him. Once Remy reached the age of majority, Dean planned to ally with Remy politically and intimately. He was driven from the Dome by Maria's correct suspicion that Dean's relationship with Remy had changed.

Remy maneuvered herself into a situation where she and Dean could be alone. Dean went with the intention only to tutor Remy, and ended up in Remy's bed as her first lover. With assurances they would resume the affair once Remy was attending University, both mentor and student were satisfied with the weekend's outcome.

Her future secured, Remy's mind bent toward punishing Damian for his betrayal. They built a love affair on lies for the camera. Post-accident, Remy was convinced the pre-accident girl had loved Damian, so the adult Remy fell in love with him.

Ten years passed, and her hope of being more than a denizen mistress to an Indigo citizen faded, despite her affection for him. As Damian's influence waned, Remy found two men who took on opposing mentorship positions. One man, Tem, communicated with her through Central Computer; Tem taught her to manipulate computerized systems. The other man, Iram, showed her that the Dome was not all there was, and that Central Computer was less benevolent than people assumed.

When Remy's memory returned, so did the complete truth of her relationship with Damian and her affair with Dean. The Dome world didn't love Violet Candidate Remy – it wanted to own her or destroy her. Ready for Iram's tutelage, Remy listened to his most amazing secret: he had lived outside the walls of a Dome in youth. Then the sinister side of Central Computer was revealed to her: Remy was being edged out of the history Central Computer wished to write for the Dome world.

When Remy was cast down into Human Sanitation Services, she found herself looking for computer administrators with neural wiring for Tem. She met three: Jack B. Nimble, Jack Flash, and Jack Frost. Golden-haired Jack B. Nimble was dangerous, flirtatious, and sensual; Remy and Jack B. started a romance neither was prepared for. Remy walked away from him, unable to take the overemotional veering transport

ride that was Jack B.'s life. Miserable without him, Remy and he reconciled with the promise of a lifetime together in the Human Sanitation Services department of Dome 514 – Godwin Industries' central Dome and the location of the Ring. Within hours, Jack B. ran away from her.

Remy juggled friendships, attractions, and dramatic interludes after Jack B. left. Her Human Sanitation Services supervisor, Cain, only wished to be friendly, but how he approached Remy made people (including Remy) think he was ready to replace his lover, Assistant Supervisor Ami. Cain's friend of twenty years – the passionate chef, Jean – claimed Remy's attention as well. Jean and Cain fought over her, both men believing the other intended to create a sexual relationship with Remy. The destructive argument which brought Dome 827's Human Sanitation Services department into a war between support staff and Transport Services also brought out a truth Remy was devastated to discover: Jean was her biological father, not David.

She turned to friends and abandoned the hope of love after several rough and lonely starts. Remy hid an attraction to her friend, Jack Flash, who did the same until the day he left to establish computer connections between Dome 827's Human Sanitation Services and other UnderDome Human Sanitation Services departments. Despite her desire to create a future with her best friend UnderDome, Remy held her attraction from Jack Flash. Cain's Network was more important, and Remy feared for Jack Flash's safety if he stayed for love.

As Jack Flash roamed the Dome world establishing Tech Wings, Remy was given the chance to be trained by Cain to become a Network Supervisor – the person in control of a Human Sanitation Services department. She took the opportunity for independence and thrived.

Jack Flash and Remy met again in Dome 839 on a vacation weekend Remy was taking with several women from Dome 827's Human Sanitation Services. They found their comfortable familiarity immediately. Emboldened by his year of experiences, Jack Flash kissed Remy just after midnight on her thirtieth birthday. She offered him the choice to leave, stay friends, or become lovers: they spent the weekend as lovers. Last minute, Remy chose a future with Jack Flash over a future as a Human Sanitation Services supervisor. Their happiness was short-lived; Assistant Supervisor Eli found out about the relationship and Jack Flash's plans that evening. Eli pulled Jack Flash aside and revealed Cain's plans to him. Jack Flash left Remy without explanation.

Three months later, Damian re-entered Remy's life with unbelievable news: Remy was a Neutral citizen. Damian promised could get Remy's citizenship if she signed her Release of Consent to him. Remy doubted Damian until he spoke against the Dome: an offense so heinous, even a Violet could be executed for it. Before Remy could agree,

Damian was convinced by the woman sent to negotiate for Remy's freedom that Remy wanted to remain a denizen. He poisoned her. Remy had to be resuscitated; she lost the baby Jack Flash and she had created on their weekend together.

Jack Flash and Remy promised to stay together, a plan torn asunder by the angry and punitive Assistant Supervisor Ami (the one-time Messiah of the Freedomers). Angry at the upheaval Remy had brought into her home, Ami sent Remy to an assured death at a hostage crisis site. Remy survived, having to be resuscitated again when the chemicals an Enforcement Intelligence doctor had used to extract answers reacted poorly with the cocktail of chemicals the UnderDome's MediWing had put into Remy to make her strong enough to go to the DomeTrends and negotiate for the release of the hostages in exchange for her own life.

The men who meant to protect Remy were maneuvered away from her. In the end, Remy was left to fight for her own life and her freedom, seeking a friend she had never met in person to help her. He had turned her over to the Freedomers, leaving her again trapped by circumstance and betrayed by a man she had hoped to trust.

Taylor shifted in his sleep. Remy reassured herself she was not a denizen fun-girl – she had been a citizen before being declared dead by Central Computer. Remy turned in Taylor's arms and reached behind his head, trailing her fingers around the short, wiry hair at the nape of his neck. But for fortune guiding his life, Taylor could have been one of her Human Sanitation Services co-workers, possibly even a Jack. Taylor opened his eyes and stretched, satisfied. "Coming with me when we arrive?"

"No."

Taylor slipped his fingers over Remy's cheeks, painting her tears down her face instead of across. "I thought not." Rolling onto his back, Taylor sighed, disappointed. "I'm not a major mover in Dome society yet. You're an Indigo wife if I've ever seen one, Candy. Drop Carl off on Level One and reach for the Solarays."

Remy rested her head on Taylor's chest; in the dim light, her ivory hand smoothed over his ebony chest. "I had my chance at happiness, Taylor. I lost my family; I lost my home; I lost my best friend and lover; I lost my child. I almost lost my own life. If I hadn't lost them all at the same time," Remy whispered, her body tensing as she fought the grief consuming her. "All I can do now is survive. That's what Carl was helping me do."

He stroked her hair. "Just believe you can have it all again, and you will."

Remy turned her back to him and curled into a tight ball, sobbing. "How did I end up here? I am so lost right now."

Taylor crossed his arms over Remy, pressing his warm body to hers. She felt his own tears of despair on her cheek. "Candace," he whispered, "I found you and I know

where I am, so you can't be lost, right?" He kissed her cheek. "Please stay with me the rest of the trip; I'll have the porters move your things here after breakfast. When we get to First Dome, you can decide if you want to do." He paused then added, "Maybe even stay with me at Conference?"

"I don't think I could stay with you at Conference after what happened tonight. Everything has gone so wrong, Taylor." Remy turned toward him. Taylor and she kissed slowly, sliding their hands over one another's bodies. They clasped hands tightly and looked into each other's eyes, both concerned. "I don't know how I got away from Politician Mason," she whispered, "and I'm so afraid he'll come for me." She sniffled. "Thank you for letting me stay. I feel safe when I'm with you, Taylor."

"Senior Politician Mason is overconfident for a Blue," he said derisively. "Some day he will cross the wrong man."

"Oh, no! I don't wish him ill," Remy lied. "I just want him to leave me alone."

"And me?"

"I want you to touch me," she whispered. "I've wanted you to touch me from the moment I first saw you." Taylor turned on his side and kissed Remy. Remy closed her eyes and thought of Jack Flash as she brought Taylor into her. They made love until Solaray dawn and fell asleep together, exhausted.

When Junior Politician Taylor's portable trilled less than an hour later with the request for an impromptu breakfast with Indigo Politician Thomas, Taylor left the bed, disappointed. Remy followed Taylor into the bathroom. They entered the shower together and began to kiss as the warm water poured over them; Taylor lifted Remy against the stall; she moaned and clung to him as his body joined hers. When Taylor left the shower, he ran to the room's VizComm and contacted Politician Thomas. Remy smiled from the doorway as Taylor glanced at her. "I am so sorry," Junior Politician Taylor said, failing to hide his guilty grin. "My shower took longer than expected."

From an angle, Remy saw the VizScreen image of the older blond politician arch an eyebrow. "I assume, then, you have a guest."

"Yes, sir," Junior Politician Taylor said, sheepish. "I'll be there in fifteen minutes."

Politician Thomas chuckled. "I won't keep you long, then."

Junior Politician Taylor glanced at Remy, worried, then looked up at Politician Thomas's image. "Is Politician Godwin on the tram?"

"He's not coming to this Conference, Taylor. He's on his way out of First Dome with his wife's canister, not on his way into it for Conference."

Junior Politician Taylor nodded. "I will make sure to send my condolences to his offices, sir. Politician Godwin's wife, Kayleigh, was a remarkable woman."

"We'll discuss this more when you arrive. End Transmission."

Junior Politician Taylor dressed quickly and left the cabin. Not long after he left, Remy contacted Carl, who brought her magazine cartridges. “I’m moving into Taylor’s cabin, so expect porters to pick up my belongings soon,” Remy told Carl as she took the cartridges from her. “And Junior Politician Taylor is the man to use to get into Godwin Industries’ Dome.”

Carl nodded. “I am very sorry it came to this.”

Remy bowed her head. “So am I.” She touched his shoulder. “When we get home, we’ll mourn together.”

“When we get home.” Carl smiled at Remy and left the doorway; he descended the first set of stairs down to the lower deck of the IDT. Remy stepped backward into the cabin, picking up Junior Politician Taylor’s portable and slotting *Dome Man* into the reader to rip its contents.

A digital collage of Politician Godwin facing off with Politician Dean was the magazine’s cover screen. Remy read the article about the two politicians’ decades-long battle for dominance. While Dean swayed the hearts and minds of the citizenry and most politicians, Godwin’s vast empire and wealth drew people to him. The article cited an anonymous source for a quote which disturbed Remy: “Politician Godwin, like his father Politician Maurice, understands people. Unlike his deceased father, Godwin is a man of few words and relies on others to move people and politicians toward his causes. His wife acts as his liaison in most situations. If something ever happened to her, Politician Godwin would crumble on the political stage and fade like a StarLite at Solaray dawn.”

Remy deleted the magazine’s contents, frowning. The Dome which had created the important politician had snatched his wife from him. Feeling guilty, Remy decided to leave Godwin to his solitude. Her misery was nothing compared to his. Remy’s Dome life was over; Godwin was expected to maintain his political block without the resources he needed. She had met both Politician Thomas and Politician Godwin at the Grand Dome Hotel in Dome 839 and cringed. When Politician Godwin said he was happily married (and had no untoward intentions toward Remy), Politician Thomas had added that Godwin and his wife were expecting a baby.

Kayleigh had been pregnant when she was murdered. Remy rested her hand on her own abdomen, thinking of the baby she had lost. Angrily remembering denizen children falling one-by-one in the ocher gas UnderDome, Remy tore through Senior Politician Victor’s passcode protections, uploading his cartridge to the portable’s buffer so it could be downloaded onto the *Dome Man* cartridge. “Never again,” Remy said to herself. “Never drekking again.”

When Taylor returned to the room, Remy met him wearing a towel. She set her

hands on either side of Taylor's head and pulled him to her for an open-mouthed kiss. He dropped what he was carrying to the floor and partially undressed from his suit with Remy's help. Taylor was pulled down to the floor as Remy, desperate to feel alive, clung to him. Taylor on his back as Remy straddled him, she looked down into his dark eyes. He reached up and stroked her cheek. "How could someone so wonderful have been made to suffer so much?"

Remy startled. "I'm not wonderful, Taylor."

"You are to me." He pulled her face to his and resumed their intense kisses. Rolling Remy onto her back, Taylor maintained eye contact with her as their bodies moved together. As Remy climaxed, Taylor held her to him. Left shaking, Remy wept uncontrollably. Taylor slid from her body and circled his arms around Remy, letting her sorrow flow out. When Remy was emotionally numb again, Taylor asked, "What are you planning to do?"

"I'll just have to find a place to belong."

"I wish we'd known one another for a long time already. Then I could just ask you to marry me." Taylor kissed Remy's forehead. "You're like no Yellow I've ever met. All they care is what they can get out of a politician or businessperson. I have to fight you to buy nice things for you."

"I'm an artist, not a prostitute." Remy covered her eyes with the palms of her hands. "Yellows are the fun-girls and fun-boys of the citizenry."

"I, uh, I," Taylor stammered. He cringed. "I guess it's not just Indigos who believe that, then." Lifting Remy's hand to his mouth, Taylor kissed her fingers in turn. "I'm sorry I thought you were like that when we first met."

"Don't worry about me returning over paternity, either," Remy said, averting her eyes. "I'm on-chem."

He sighed, relieved. "I didn't want to ask; it's rude. It wouldn't matter anyway. I am, too. Just because you're ethical doesn't mean other women are."

"You have your career to preserve."

Taylor sat up on the floor, sliding his clothing off the rest of the way. Nude, he stood and reached a hand down to Remy. She pulled herself up with Taylor's help and they sat on the edge of the bed. "Probably for not much longer. Politician Thomas just informed me this morning that I signed my life over to Godwin Industries, Candace. I now belong to the most loathed political block in the Dome world, and they're outing me on the first day of Conference." He exhaled. "You and I both have something to fear from Mason once he realizes what I've done."

"Then let's forget about him," Remy said, pulling Taylor down onto the bed next to her. "We can pretend we were friends who have just met again after being apart

for a very long time. Maybe we just realized we loved each other the whole time. Just don't let the Dome come between us until we've been happy, Taylor."

Taylor smiled at Remy, his fingers knit with hers. "Marry me, Candace."

"Yes," Remy replied, smiling at him as he moved over her. She gasped when their bodies joined and smiled peacefully, content to be alive in Taylor's arms.

Just before Solaray dawn on the final day of the trip, Mason's body was discovered. Early in the morning, Taylor's cabin entry bell chimed. After startling awake, Remy pretended to be asleep. Taylor finally woke when the insistent rapping at the door turned to pounding and shouts for him to open the door. Exhausted and irritable, Taylor took the blanket from the bed and wrapped it around his waist, leaving the top sheet for Remy. Remy followed Taylor, sliding the satiny sheet from the bed and slinging it around her body loosely. Just in case it was about Mason, Remy needed a witness to see her in a compromised situation.

The door slid open to reveal the Orange conductor Remy had fallen onto when the IDT had left Dome 827's tram station. Remy stood just behind Taylor, one hand on his shoulder and one hand holding up the bedsheet. She and the IDT employee locked gazes. Taylor glared at the unwelcome visitor, bleary-eyed. "Are we at First Dome early?"

The conductor stammered through his speech about the death of a Blue citizen on the tram as he stared at Remy. "The, the IDT, uh, authorities are looking for, well, a, uh, a Yellow woman of average height, very slim build, and, um, white, um, white-blonde hair who disappeared that, um, evening."

Seeing Remy's concerned face, Taylor pulled her under his arm protectively. His eyes narrowed as he spoke to the conductor. "Why?"

"She, um, was last seen. With the deceased," the Orange conductor eyed Remy nervously. "Before he was, um, deceased. That is."

Taylor stared at the man, unamused. "You moved her things here, yesterday, yet you have gone through the drekking IDT waking superior citizens looking for her?"

"I didn't realize, I mean, I didn't move her belongings personally, no, sir, so I can see where some confusion —"

Taylor frowned. "Candace was being escorted to my room by Senior Politician Mason two nights ago. He wanted her to use illegal intoxicants and struck her when she chose to follow Dome law. She escaped him and came to me directly from his cabin, where she left him very much alive. She has been with me in my stateroom since then, fearing for her safety from a damaged superior citizen. I will tell Enforcement when they arrive. Now she and I wish to be left undisturbed until Enforcement boards this drekking tram. Leave. Now."

The conductor left, embarrassed. Taylor led Remy to his bed and covered them both with the blanket. "I can't believe it," Remy whispered.

Taylor turned on his side. "Did you kill him?"

Remy feigned shock and horror. "No!"

Taylor lay on his back on the mattress. "I wish you had; at least I would have had the satisfaction of knowing someone did it to him instead of him doing it to himself." He stretched his arm out to Remy and she turned on her side toward Taylor. He chuckled. "Maybe things won't be so bad. Now that worst of Politician Dean's lackeys is gone, there might be a chance Politician Thomas can turn things around."

"I thought Politician Godwin controlled the block."

Taylor squeezed Remy to him. "His wife was everything to him, Candace. He can't function in the political arena without her."

"He can get a new wife," Remy said, yawning. "I'd bet there are already a million Yellows lining up on an IDT to wherever he lives to offer private condolences."

Taylor was quiet then asked, "Are you going to join them?"

Remy turned to Taylor. "I have what I need right here in this room. From what I've heard, he's a bitterly unpleasant man, anyway. I'll leave him to his grief and let the rest of the Dome world fight over what he can buy them. Drek, maybe he can change legislation and marry a woman for each day of the week, so neither he nor they will have to suffer one another's presence longer than twenty-four hours at a time."

Taylor laughed quietly. "He's not that bad once you get to know him."

"Then you marry him." Remy yawned again. "Go to sleep, Taylor. Tomorrow, you're a Politician."

Taylor nuzzled Remy's neck. "Suddenly, I feel like celebrating."

Remy giggled. "You're going to be useless at Conference, you realize."

"Then I'll be like every other politician there," Taylor replied, nuzzling Remy, "though I'll be the only one unable to stop smiling."

At the announcement that they were arriving at First Dome in the hour, Remy and Taylor left the bed reluctantly. They showered together in silence and dressed. Their breakfast was delivered to the cabin, but neither ate. When the IDT stopped, Enforcement and Human Sanitation Services boarded. No one was allowed to leave or board the tram. Senior Politician Victor arrived at Junior Politician Taylor's cabin at the same time Politician Thomas did, and both men stood as Taylor explained what had happened to Remy. "Senior Politician Mason contacted me late that evening," Taylor lied. "He demanded to know where Candace was, and I told him I didn't know." He stood behind Remy, his hands on her shoulders. "She was hiding here at the time."

Politician Thomas eyed Senior Politician Victor. "I have witnesses who could

attest that Politician Mason was a doser. I consider this to have been an extremely unfortunate accident.”

Senior Politician Victor glared at Politician Thomas. “It seems Senior Politician Mason’s addiction finally caught up with him.” He scowled at the Enforcement officer. “Despite my previous misgivings, I see his death was accidental, after all.”

“Domey day, Politicians,” the officer said, nodding to the three men in Indigo.

The Enforcement officer left and Senior Politician Victor turned to Politician Thomas. “It appears we are even, now.”

Politician Thomas glowered at Senior Politician Victor. “There was never any question of imbalance, Victor; I expect to mourn your friend’s passing as you would mourn mine.”

Senior Politician Victor nodded toward Junior Politician Taylor. “I will meet you at the Grand Dome Hotel, Taylor.”

“Yes, Senior Politician,” Taylor replied, standing attentively. The senior politician left the room and Taylor bowed his head. “He knows.”

Politician Thomas patted Taylor’s shoulder. “Then you need to be announced this morning. I’ll meet you in the hotel lobby entrance, and we’ll get you out from under him if you don’t mind moving from your Dome of residence.”

“Not at all,” Taylor said, relieved. “I don’t think I would be particularly appreciated in my Dome any more.”

“I look forward to several fruitful decades working with you, Politician.” Politician Thomas shook Taylor’s hand.

“Thank you, Politician.”

“It was a pleasure to finally meet you,” Politician Thomas said, smiling at Remy and offering a hand.

“Candace.”

Politician Thomas frowned. “You look extremely familiar, Candace.”

Remy smiled, nodding slowly. “I get that all the time, Politician.”

Politician Thomas shrugged. “Well, I’ve got people to organize. I’ll see you in a half-hour, Taylor?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Tom,” the older blonde man said, pointing at Taylor. “I’m your political equal as of this moment.”

“Yes, Tom.” Taylor grinned. The door closed behind them and Taylor lifted Remy from her feet, kissing her. He threw his head back and laughed in delight with Remy, then rested his hands at her shoulders. “I know this is crazy, but marry me.”

Remy’s smile melted. “I can’t. I’m associated with the death of a politician—”

“Which was resolved,” Taylor said, still beaming.

“Only to Enforcement,” Remy replied, worried. “You’re just starting your career, Taylor.” She left a soft kiss on his lips. “And that’s only the beginning of the reasons I can’t marry you.” Remy faced the window as Senior Politician Mason’s black-wrapped body was rolled from the IDT a few cars down. Taylor stepped behind Remy and draped his arms about her. “But if I could marry you, Taylor? I would.”

Taylor kissed Remy’s cheek, melancholy. “Don’t stop at the Havens, Candace.”

“I have big plans, Taylor,” Remy said sadly. “Plans that will eventually change the Dome world.”

“That’s the attitude, Candace.” He hugged her tightly. “I love you.”

Remy turned in Taylor’s arms and gripped his wrists. “Don’t.”

Chortling nervously, Taylor asked, “Why?”

Leaving his side, Remy strode to his cabin’s door. She grabbed for her luggage, snapping the handle of her gray rolling case out as she walked; Remy stopped as the door opened. “Because I’m a walking dead woman, Taylor.” She exited his room and ran out onto the IDT station platform. Carl stood at a newsstand nearby then started walking toward Remy, turning away. Remy turned around to see Taylor behind her. “Taylor,” she whispered.

“Stay with me at Conference,” he begged.

“Is that an order?” Remy frowned up at him.

“No,” whispered Taylor. “I just hoped . . .”

“Politician Thomas is waiting for you.”

“Will I see you there?”

Remy glanced toward the bench Carl was seated at and Taylor looked over. Taylor bowed his head, shaking it in disbelief. “I didn’t want to end it like this, but I guess I have to. I have a prior commitment, Taylor: I made a promise to Carl that I have to keep.” She hugged him, then took a deep breath. “He understands what happened between you and me. He still wants me, and I’m going to live with him.”

Taylor nodded then kissed Remy on the cheek. “I could have made you happy.”

Remy rested a lingering, close-lipped kiss on Taylor’s mouth. Smiling up at him, she whispered, “You kept me alive when I was ready to give up completely.”

Taylor grimaced in anguish, took two steps backward, and walked toward the exit, unwilling to look at Remy. When Taylor disappeared, Remy ambled to the bench and sat hard, leaning forward. Carl patted his knees. “Ready to go home?”

“Yes,” Remy said, nodding. “But where you’re taking me will have to suffice.” Carl stood first and strode to a hallway. When he turned the corner, Remy followed. Remy reached the first turn and saw Carl at the end of that hallway. He opened a locker and

closed the door most of the way; he walked from it and opened another ten lockers away. Carl placed his bag into the locker he had just opened and closed it, then strode down a hallway. Remy set her bag into the locker Carl had left ajar and closed the locker's door firmly. As it closed, the locker registered as broken.

Remy turned the hallway again and saw Carl stand in front of the departures and arrivals screen. Remy reached him and looked up at the screen as he spoke quietly to her. "Go to the women's restroom adjacent to to the men's room I enter. When it's empty, close it for cleaning; the switch is on the wall just to the left of the door. Change into the clothing hidden behind the fifth mirror and put what you're wearing in it. Open the restroom, finish cleaning it, and come out once citizens enter and leave it. I will find you and take you UnderDome." Carl left Remy's side. She glanced at Carl as he entered a bathroom across the station from her. Remy waited a minute then walked toward the women's bathroom. The last woman left just after Remy entered, and Remy shut the bathroom down for cleaning.

She counted the mirrors right to left first and tugged on the fifth mirror. It didn't move. Remy began to tremble, worried. Stepping back, she looked at the series of sinks and slapped her forehead. The fifth mirror left-to-right gave easily, and Remy found a gray duffel containing a coverall and janitorial cap. Washing her face roughly with soap and water, Remy removed her make-up. Her skin was left ruddy and splotched. The bruise Mason had left on the citizen, Candace, had offended Taylor mightily; on a denizen, the mark would amuse most citizens. Remy stripped to her underwear and slid the coverall on, zipping the coverall up and setting the cap on her head. She eyed the blue colored contact lenses warily then struggled them in. Tossing the contact lens container into the gray duffel, she tucked the long ends of her fashionable bob under the cap. Remy looked at the woman reflected in the mirror.

Before her was a non-descript, blonde and blue-eyed denizen with a dark green-gray bruise on her left cheek. Remy stuffed the satchel into the small alcove behind the fifth mirror and replaced it. Opening the cleaning chemicals closet, Remy wiped down all of the mirrors and unlocked the door. She checked the stalls and bowed her head as a large group of Orange and Red women entered the bathroom chatting and laughing. Remy scuttled from the bathroom after replacing the cleaning fluids into the closing cabinet. She looked up to see Carl cleaning the sign outside the men's restroom. Carl and Remy walked together, heads bowed, to the closest escalator down into the shadows UnderDome.

Startled at the volume below Dome 101, Remy covered her ears when they reached the area reserved for denizen movement throughout First Dome. The screeches and grinds of the machinery were unshielded, so the noise was near-deafening in many

places. No fans moved air in the UnderDome of First Dome; certain zones were frigidly cold while others were oven-like as Carl led Remy through the short, narrow tunnels, pulling her onto slow, shuddering people-movers which made the trip along the hallways only a little faster than walking.

In Dome 827, the people-movers were in great arched hallways; the temperature might have been warmer or cooler than the perfectly maintained Dome above, but it was evenly distributed. The orange glow Remy had been used to from her time at Dome 827 was gone; long strips of dim, bluish-white light were tucked along the top corners of every hallway. Carl walked her to an Intra-Dome Tram platform, and they rode to the Dome's central district. Remy looked up at the metal ceiling a meter above her head, thinking of the pictures she had seen of First Dome's plaza. Asking Carl to visit the plaza was not an option; Remy would have to visit it on her own, if the Freedomers allowed. She followed him down a long corridor and stopped as Carl pointed out a sign with "Human Sanitation Services" etched on a tiny plaque on a plain metal door. Opposite the door were a pair of elevator doors. "I told you Dome 827's HumSan entrance was impressive," Carl commented. "Until the 800-Series, they all looked like this one. There is no sense of gravity to a door that looks like any other access door. I will miss that entry."

Remy slowed her pace as she neared the unimpressive door. Maria would collect a canister of ashes which had been identified as Remy within the next day or so – if she hadn't already – from Dome 827's Human Sanitation Services department. She stopped, thinking of her mother's one-time friend, Kayleigh: Had her mother, Maria, spoken to Kayleigh before Kayleigh had died? Had Maria come to First Dome or had she met Politician Godwin at his home? Would Maria and Jean stay with their friend and abandon the Network? How long would the Network and Politician Godwin maintain parallel interests with Kayleigh gone?

Remy thought of the white-haired, green-eyed, cocky politician she had met only once; he had walked from the same Human Sanitation Services department door she was passing. In his hands, he had carried his wife's and his child's ashes; distraught beyond words, he was disallowed to show the world his grief. Remy bowed her head. Kayleigh had been the denizen's primary advocate, and she was dead. Godwin had gone from married man to eligible bachelor – one of the women would find her way into his life, perhaps on a lie. Once the woman was entrenched in Politician Godwin's life, denizens would find themselves in worse danger than before.

Denizens were animals, monsters, automatons – anything but living, breathing, feeling humans. Kayleigh knew the truth; she fought to educate the Dome's citizens. For her efforts, Kayleigh had been executed and her work would be forgotten and

abandoned completely by even the sympathetic citizens within Remy's lifetime. No one could protect Remy's friends and family from the coming political onslaught; no one could defend denizen children of the Child Care Centers from the prostitution contractors; no one could keep unnamed infants from the torture which awaited them in the sadistic laboratories of the Dome's Universities. Carl whistled and Remy ran to catch up with him into a dark corridor.

They reached a pile of debris at the mouth of a wide, unlit hallway. Carl led Remy through a maze of rusted sheet metal and discarded broken electronics until they reached a set of decrepit, dent-pocked, grease-and-rust-stained doors which were barely discernible from the wall. A defunct card reader hung from a single, thick cable. The ends of the cable's other wires had disconnected from the reader; they splayed tangentially. Carl slid a card through the reader twice; a metal hum and grind from below vibrated the floor. The doors hissed open, and a dim five-meter-by-five-meter room lay before them. Carl took Remy's arm and pulled her in. As the doors closed, they were in complete darkness.

"Lights on." The lights flickered on. They stood in a small storage closet filled with shelves of old janitorial supplies. Carl grinned as he slid his card in the reader on the interior wall. The room lurched, then began a slow descent. Carl leaned against one of the black-painted walls with the content serenity of a man who just arrived home. The elevator stopped, yet the door didn't open immediately. "Don't worry. They're checking to make sure it's just us."

"And if we weren't supposed to be here?"

"We'd be dead now." The doors opened onto a dark-gray polished hallway with wall-to-ceiling picture windows across from Carl and Remy; the top of each window canted toward the view below. Remy timidly approached the window directly ahead of her. She stopped in front of it and looked down across the deep cube-shaped chasm lit from above by a handful of Solarays.

Far below, a verdant plaza lay, makeshift tents were scattered around paths which wound through rolling grass-covered knolls; people milled, played, and shopped in the open garden and park. Trees and lawns, fountains and gardens, and a long, raised processional with a centered square dais were the immobile features of the large shared Domescape. Hundreds of Freedomers flowed through the many tiny black cutouts along the base as they entered and exited the communal area.

Carl stepped forward. Resting his hand on Remy's shoulder, he announced: "Welcome to Prime Settlement."