

T h r e e

“It’s called Freedom Square. You should see the Night Market; there is nothing anywhere up there like it.” Carl dropped his arm from Remy’s shoulder and admired Freedom Square for a moment with her. He turned and shook her hand. “My work with you is complete.”

Carl walked down the empty hallway and disappeared around the corner. Remy turned around and faced the elevator’s doors: it required a key card from the Prime Settlement side, as well. To her left and to her right stretched a long, broad, and tall rectangular hallway. The dark floor was polished to a high shine; the matte gray walls and ceiling made it appear more like an air conduit than a hallway. Remy listened intently: the only sound was air being pushed into the area through regular vents along the top of the wall. The lights along the hallways weren’t illuminated – the glow of the Solarays over Freedom Square filled the hallways with bright daylight. Remy paced as she waited; still, no one came.

Returning to the window, Remy shoved the plexiresin a few times and inspected the heavy frame. She rested on her stomach and slid upward, lying face-down on the clear window and watch the square below, unnoticed from her vantage. With a finger, Remy traced from the centered dais along the walkway to a set of tall doors inset into the wall across from her. No one crossed over the platform; squinting, Remy realized the platform was at least three meters from the ground; people traveled beneath it through underpasses. Around the walls of the giant room at different elevations, dark, thin strips of window reflected Solaray light. The Solarays cast a warm tone on the brushed silver-tone walls, giving the walls a faint golden glow. Cupping her hands about her eyes, Remy lay peacefully separate from the drama far beneath her. Children ran, people met, and life proceeded without Remy having to be a part of it.

“It is spectacular, isn’t it.”

Remy turned, lost her balance, and slid down the thick window onto the glossy charcoal-gray floor. She tried to say something clever but had nothing.

Before Remy stood a slender and fit woman in her late forties or early fifties with a long, aristocratic nose, full lips, and a strong, angular jaw. The woman’s pale blond hair was clipped short in a style Remy considered more a man’s hairstyle than a woman’s: looping curls on the top of her head were blended into the short-trimmed sides and back. She wore a tungsten gray tailored tunic top in a mottled weave; her wide-legged

pants were the same shade of gray material and flowed to the top of her dark gray slipper shoes. The dark gray material made the woman's silvery irises appear brighter in contrast. "I admit I haven't ever tried laying on the window, itself. I fear falling, though they tell me the windows are quite stable." The woman in gray reached a hand down to Remy. "Would you like to come with me? The Council is waiting."

"I have a feeling I couldn't say no, could I?" Remy took the woman in gray's hand and pulled herself up.

The woman in gray led Remy in the direction Carl had gone; a few quick steps and Remy was in stride next to her. "You have options, Remy. You could return to the Human Sanitation Services department Carl rescued you from."

Remy stayed silent.

The woman in gray nodded. "Well then. You could return to Level One."

"Enforcement would find me, and when they realized I was not dead, they would make sure I was."

"I suppose that's not an option for you, either." The woman in gray nodded sagely. "Is it possible perhaps it's time to try this life? A woman willing to trust a piece of plexiresin to hold her from plummeting two hundred meters to her death certainly could be capable of speaking to a few people for the opportunity of a lifetime." The woman in gray stopped Remy before a set of double doors at the end of the hallway; the doors slid apart. "Ah. Here we are."

Remy entered a waiting room. On one wall were floor-to-ceiling windows. On the opposite wall, freestanding panels shielded an entry into another room. Before Remy were wide, thick-cushioned chairs and couches. Remy blinked in disbelief as she inspected them. Instead of the gray-on-gray decor Remy had come to expect from the waiting rooms and residences of the UnderDome, Level One, and the Havens, the chairs were upholstered with a kaleidoscopic tapestry of flowers and leaves. "I have never seen anything like this." Remy turned to her blonde escort. "The fabric colors are all . . . mixed."

"You will get used to it, Remy. We have no caste system here, therefore all color belong to all people." Remy touched the cloth of one of the loveseats gingerly with her hand; the weave was soft. Relaxing onto an over-sized chair, Remy brought her legs up and tailor-sat on its wide cushion. The woman in gray walked around the panel; a pair of doors slid apart. A man, mid-soliloquy, stopped speaking as the doors opened. The doors shut, and Remy was left alone in the silent room. She slid her legs around and curled up in the chair, closing her eyes to rest after her exhausting trip on the IDT.

Remy woke, startled by the woman in gray's fingertips on her shoulder. "The

Council is ready for you, now.”

Following the woman, Remy stepped behind the waiting room’s screens. A pair of doors slid apart. Another grouping of panels hid the bulk of the Council’s room; Carl came around the room’s freestanding screens, ready to leave. He grinned when he saw Remy. “I was unsure I would meet you here, but here you are. They retired me from the field, as I had prayed. When you are able, come meet Nell; she would love to hear about your friendship with Alan.”

The woman in gray spoke for Remy, resting a hand on Remy’s forearm. “She must face the Council now, Carl. Praise Him.”

“Praise Him.” Carl nodded somberly then exited the room; as soon as the doors closed, it fell dim in the Council chambers. The woman in gray led Remy around the panels and into the main room.

The edges of the room were hidden in its inky shadows. A skinny spotlight lit the middle of the room. An unoccupied chair, set at a semicircular table’s straight edge, was the focus of the bright lamp. Facing the table, the chair’s back was to Remy and the woman in gray. Obfuscated people sat along the table’s curved edge. Their faces were so dimly lit that Remy could not discern features, only motion.

Remy approached the chair, reaching to pull it out for herself. A deep, masculine voice commanded, “Halt!”

Remy stopped. She turned to look over her shoulder at the woman in gray, who stepped back into the shadows and disappeared. Remy turned back toward the table and squinted to into the darkness. Another voice, a woman’s voice, demanded, “Why are you here?”

Flummoxed, Remy asked, “Excuse me?”

“What is your purpose beneath the UnderDome, in Prime Settlement?”

“My purpose.” Remy trembled, adrenaline coursing through her, driving Remy to run away or to stand and fight. Anger took hold of her, and she pointed at them. “You have hunted me for over a drekking year, and you want me to state why I’m here? I’m here because you drekking forced me down here!”

After a long silence, a woman spoke from the shadowed table. “Obviously, we have the wrong person, therefore you must be terminated. Goodbye.”

Remy paced in a circle in despair, then set her hands at her hips, angry. “Fine. I want to live so that every infant who was taken from its denizen mother’s arms by a eugenicist, every innocent slaughtered by Enforcement, every denizen kept from his or her right to citizenship receives a drekking blood payment. I want every person who imprisoned me in the blackness of the UnderDome to suffer as I have and will tear apart the UnderDome to get to the person who left me there to die. I want each

death committed in my name balanced by my own drekking hand.” Remy walked forward and rested her hands on the table, leaning into the darkness. “My purpose is vengeance, and I will have it, with or without you.”

A nervous man’s voice cut the darkness. “Perhaps in the next world. Goodbye.”

From the darkness, two burly figures entered the light. Remy backed up to them slowly. “I’ve survived this far,” she growled as she reached the two men. With her left hand, Remy slipped the sidearm from the hulking red-haired guard’s holster, switched it to her right hand and stepped into the light, moving the weapon in a slow arc around the table. “All right! I have a few shots in here. Why don’t we see how many of you people come with me to your ‘next world’, shall we? I’m sure I can take at least two of you with me before the redhead’s partner shoots me.”

“Remy, put the pistol down.” The woman in gray stepped into the light, and Remy turned, pointing the weapon at her heart. The woman in gray smiled, unfazed, and opened her arms benevolently. “You are she.” Remy lowered the pistol, confused; the woman in gray reached her hands for Remy’s. Her right-hand fingers slid between the free fingers of Remy’s left hand; with her left hand, she took the pistol from Remy, holding it out behind her. The red-headed guard swept by the woman in gray’s and took his sidearm from her. The woman in gray clasped Remy’s other hand. “Welcome, Messiah.”

The lights in the room went up, and Remy looked around at the men and women assembled around the table. Several men had beards, and many of the women’s hair were bound back in braids and buns or tied back under kerchiefs. All were dressed simply; jubilant, the group walked in a disorganized group around the table to Remy, laughing and talking. They reached Remy; she was overcome with hands touching her back and shoulders, kisses on her cheeks and hands, and words of gratitude and relief that Remy had arrived in Prime Settlement at its time of greatest need. Still gripping the hands of the woman in gray, Remy asked, “What just happened here?”

“This is the Council, Messiah. They were chosen to test your heart and assure that you have come to renew the Almighty’s power in this world. We seek liberty for the oppressed of the caste system above us and judgment for those who oppose His glory. Those who stand in our way oppose the Almighty’s greatest truth: we are all equal under the Almighty One’s loving sight.”

“All mighty one? Prescient guidance?” Remy’s eyes widened. “You’re Lindy.”

“I am His servant called Lindy, yes. Now, come with me, Messiah. We have much work to do to purge the filth of the Dome from you.”

Lindy led Remy down the hallway to a nearby elevator; her two brawny guards followed. When the four entered the elevator, Remy eyed the ashamed red-haired

young man whose weapon she had taken. Neither he nor his brown-haired partner were older than eighteen. He glanced aside at Remy then stared forward, his hand resting over his sidearm. As the elevator descended, Remy turned back to Lindy. "So, you're not angry that I was about to shoot your Council."

Amused, Lindy said, "We would have appointed a new one. Their terms are nearly done anyway. They will be quite happy to get back to their regular work and leave the headaches of managing Prime Settlement to the next Council."

"People don't wish to serve? In the Dome, people scabble for power!"

"Prime Settlement is a community whose purpose is to serve the people within it. Public service is part of every Freedomer's duty. Why, even these two boys are getting ready to go out into the field when their service to the Freedomer Guard has ended."

"Yes, Lindy." The brown-haired guard smiled to Lindy; she patted his shoulder.

"Yes, ma'am." The red-haired guard maintained his somber expression.

Lindy sighed patiently. "Daniel, you are to call me Lindy." Lindy glanced at the hand which covered his holster. "Does this have to do with losing your sidearm?"

"Yes, ma'am." The elevator doors opened onto a windowless hallway. Near the end of the long, windowless hallway, was an inset door. Walking between the two guards, Lindy and Remy strode down the wide, quiet hallway, the sound of the guards' shoes sending tapping echoes along the hallway. Lindy stopped Remy at the entry and turned her toward the doorway.

The entry door was wide and ornately decorated. Etched at the center of the door, a large winged skeleton wielding a staff terrorized a cityscape beneath its feet. On the skeleton's brow was a crown of woven leaves and thorns. The three crossbars near the head of the staff gave the tip a triangular shape. Arcing electricity emanated from the crossbar, striking the Domescape below. Lines radiating from the skeleton represented an aura of power as it destroyed without mercy or discrimination. Around the edges of the door, living, curling vines and flowers encroached on the image of death and destruction. Hidden within flowers and leaves, joyful children played among the vines and celebrated the nightmare monster's destruction below. Remy reached to the door and touched the leafy crown on the skeleton's head, stroking the cold metal door as her finger trailed from leaf to delicate leaf. Lindy rested her hand on Remy's shoulder as Remy dropped her arm slowly, awestruck by the image before her. "It is ready for you, Messiah. Open it and enter thy inner sanctum."

"Open door." The door slid aside; Remy gasped. The lights flicked on slowly, cold from disuse, illuminating the vast apartment. Fans began to hum as comfort sensors signaled the chilly apartment to warm to twenty-three degrees Celsius.

The apartment's ceiling stretched up five meters with a dropped ceiling in the

kitchen. The right wall was a short-wall-to-cathedral-ceiling widow with solid, wide ledges. Hand-loomed, multi-hued heavy tapestry curtains hanging on hand-beaten curtain rings were pulled back the reveal the view below. Remy entered the salon and stepped down into the conversation pit set before the impressive widow. Hand-quilted cushions, pads, and pillows were scattered around the bench seating of the deep conversation pit; all were covered in brightly colored tapestry scenes. She picked a pillow up from a bench and rested her cheek against it; the pillow was lightly perfumed. Remy walked from the conversation pit, still holding the pillow. She stopped at the center of the narrow strip of floor between the conversation area and the window. The apartment was approximately a hundred meters lower on the wall than the hallway where she first entered Prime Settlement. Looking up across Freedom Square, Remy saw the window she had leaned on; it appeared a thin rectangular prism attached to the wall. The window reflected the golden glow of a gigantic Solaray lamp which Remy could see from her new vantage. Four Solaray lamps were installed over Freedom Square; only one was illuminated. Looking down, Remy saw her residence was set directly over the tall doors which led onto the processional bridge to the raised dais. Startled, Remy stepped back. Clusters of people stopped all around Prime Settlement; all faced the apartment's window. "Can they see me?"

"If you're at the window? Perhaps. For now, they see a light; that is enough."

Remy jumped down into the conversation pit, tossed the pillow onto one of the padded benches, and investigated her new home. Lindy crossed the room to Remy, and the two young men stood near the door. The room was a combination of a Grand Dome Hotel suite and a Dome Violet's Haven's apartment in luxury; its use of color everywhere made it unrivaled above or below-Dome. On the wall, tapestries hung with themes of both life and death, creation and destruction. A full-color tapestry of the etching on the entry door covered what looked like a hallway. Remy crossed to it and moved the tapestry aside. Three doors, two simple and one ornate, lay on the short hallway. Remy slid the curtain back into place and turned left, striding along the wall and into the kitchen.

The main suite's open kitchen looked over the shared dining and entertaining area, a large tile-covered island with a sink divided the kitchen from the dining area. Remy checked the appliances; they were modern and electric. Past the kitchen were several inset doors. Remy checked them; one was a guest bathroom, and the other was storage. Remy turned around. "Can you get syntho-propane?"

Lindy looked up, surprised. "For?"

"I wish to replace the cook surfaces and ovens with syntho-propane replacements and the tanks to supply them."

Lindy entered data into her portable. "It may take several days' time, but if it exists below or above, I shall get it for you."

Remy stopped at the artisan-made resin-and-metal dining room table. She squatted by it, smoothing her hand over the sculpted legs before tracing a finger along one dining chair then another. She set her hand on the floor and stroked the hand-loomed rug. Everything in the room had been scavenged, repaired, or recycled and remade. Kicking her shoes from her feet, Remy crossed the room to the conversation pit again and walked on the hook-loomed pile carpet. She laughed then began to weep. Lindy entered the conversation pit and put her arms around Remy. "I can't believe this," she whispered to Lindy.

"Is it not to your liking?"

Remy looked up at Lindy. "This is the most beautiful place I have ever been. All the color."

"As I have said, we have no color restriction. Use whatever colors you wish."

"I could even wear violet?"

Lindy laughed. "As much purple as you could care to wear, but why limit yourself to one of their arbitrary restrictions?" Lindy stepped back and held Remy's hands in hers. "They rejected you, praise Him. You were brought out of the realm of the Evil One because of the strength of your soul. When the Almighty One named you his Messiah, we were fearful. A Messiah from the Dome world was most unexpected. The Almighty One graced me with His vision, and I saw the journey you experienced to find us; so chastised and humble I was before Him! The Almighty One chose you because you can reach into that world and bring it under His Almighty guidance or cause it to suffer His wrath. Now that you are here, Prime Settlement shall celebrate with such ecstasy that those who flaunt immorality will know judgment is at hand."

"Praise Him," the brown-haired guard announced merrily. "Praise His wisdom!"

"Praise Him," added Daniel, quietly.

Lindy turned. "Why are you not pleased, Daniel? Our savior has come. You have seen her. Your children will know you have served her. Is this not enough for you?"

"It is glorious, ma'am. I am displeased that I disappointed you and the Almighty One."

Lindy bowed her head, sighing impatiently. "Daniel, do you wish a sanction now, from your Messiah?"

Suddenly energized, Daniel knelt, his head bowed. "I do, Lindy."

Lindy licked her lips then offered Remy a frustrated smile. "Messiah, Daniel comes to you, penitent at his inability to complete his service as requested of him. He has lost his weapon which could have been used to murder the servants of the

Almighty One. What say you as his judgment?"

Remy glanced at him then winced at Lindy. Lindy closed her eyes and breathed slowly, trying to calm herself. "Have you done something like this before, Daniel?"

Not looking up, Daniel replied, "No, Messiah."

Lindy added, "Like his father and his brothers before him, Daniel has served the Almighty One's people faithfully. This is the first time he has lost control of anything he has been given charge of."

"Perhaps he was overwhelmed?" suggested Remy. Daniel looked up at Remy, gape-mouthed and awestruck.

"Of course," Lindy murmured, nodding slowly as she smiled. "Daniel's pure heart recognized his Messiah when Johann's did not, and he was stricken. What say you, then, Messiah?"

Remy squeezed Lindy's hand and left the conversation pit. "Let's just have the Almighty One speak through you this time, Lindy." Remy slid the curtain to the short hallway open then closed it behind her. The doors on the left and on the end of the hallway were small bedrooms. She eyed the third door (decorated with the winged skeleton) and decided not to enter quite yet, despite her exhaustion and desire to sleep. Remy slid the curtain open, forcing a smile. Lindy smirked; Johann frowned; Daniel was dazed. "Is it decided?"

"Daniel is to guard your life with his own. Johann, stop pouting." Lindy patted the brown-haired man's face. The entry sounded and a cadre of eager young women in white peeked in at Lindy and Remy. "Messiah, I shall leave you in the capable hands of these maidens to cleanse you of the filth of the Dome." Lindy turned to leave. The girls flowed into the apartment and through the curtained area into the first door to the right, the one with the skeletal messenger.

"Lindy, wait," Remy said. Lindy stopped, looking over her shoulder at Remy. Remy reached a hand to Lindy, offering her a gentle smile. "Please stay with me." Lindy's expression turned from surprise to extreme pleasure as she eyed Remy's outstretched hand. "If only until you must leave?"

Lindy waved dismissively toward the guards as she maintained eye contact with Remy. "Johann, go down to the military ward and inform the generals the Messiah has arrived in her apartments; Daniel, stand outside the Messiah's entry and let no one in." As the men left, Lindy knit her fingers between Remy's. "As my Messiah wishes."

Hand in hand, Lindy led Remy into the master suite. The door opened to Remy and Lindy; from a doorway, the hush and splash of water flowed from a tap into a tub as girls discussed the supplies they had brought so they could care for Remy. The low ledge from the living room extended into this room; a wide bed was level to the

window ledge and butted up to it. A dark blue quilt with tiny, colorful embroidered flowers covered the bed. Lindy pulled Remy into the middle of the carpeted room and turned her around.

The closet doors had NuWood panels inserted into the frames. Along the edge were the delicate flowers and vines, but no children were among the leaves, only birds. Peaceful NuAnimals stood in a garden park scene where a fountain sprayed from a lake. NuTrees filled the background behind the lake; carved NuBirds and NuAnimals nested among the trees. Remy leaned forward to look at the detail of the NuLake and smiled. NuGeese, NuSwans, and NuDucks paddled the lake. Where the entry door showed death framed by life, these doors celebrated life. Remy inspected the carving for people and found none. Stepping back, she spotted a NuDuck at the top edge of the pastoral scene. Its wings were spread wide as if it were ready to fly through the bedroom and coast to a water landing on the lake. Remy set a hand to her stomach, remembering her childhood dream to be a NuDuck. Remy's heart twisted; yearning for answers, she had none. Remy approached the door and stroked the feather-carved head of the NuDuck. Up close, it looked more like an observer than participant of the scene. Looking over her shoulder at Lindy, Remy smiled. "It's as if it's looking over them all," she said to Lindy, "as though it's ready to protect everyone there from the Dome."

"It is," Lindy whispered in Remy's ear. "Just like you."

Remy didn't turn as she reached back for Lindy's hand. Lindy took Remy's hand and squeezed it. Remy bowed her head, hiding her smirk. Remy would replace Ami in Lindy's heart, taking Ami's family as Ami had taken Remy's. Remy to Lindy and hugged her. "Thank you," Remy whispered, resting her head on Lindy's shoulder. "Thank you for everything."

Lindy held Remy to her then stepped back, holding Remy's hand gently. "Come, beloved of the Almighty One." She led Remy to a large oval tub and stood back as Remy was stripped and helped into the bath. Lindy leaned against the wall and watched Remy with extreme gratification. The girls sang in harmony, thanking their deity for wisdom, pure hearts, and true faith as they performed His will. The contact lenses were removed and soothing drops were put onto Remy's eyes. Her hair and eyebrows were restored to their dark, rich brown; the haircut that was flirty while she was a platinum blond was dramatic with her dark hair and pale skin. She was helped to standing and her body was scoured; Remy flinched as a stinging astringent was poured over her skin from a hand-beaten silver fiasco. After Remy was bathed, she was led to her bed, where several layers of white cloth was lain between her bedspread and her body. Strong hands massaged a warm, spicy-scented cream all over her body while the

women sang softly. Remy fell asleep on the wide bed under the capable hands of her masseuses.

She woke to Lindy's hand smoothing over her back; Remy propped herself up on her elbows and looked over her shoulder. Everyone else was gone. "I have never felt so peaceful in my life. Ever."

"Then the evil has been cleansed." After rubbing Remy's bare back a little longer, Lindy sighed then clapped her hands loudly, twice. The bedroom door opened and a middle-aged woman entered Remy's room. She carried a black sleeveless unitard in her hands. "Do you wish the tailor come and fit the Messiah for her uniform, now?"

"Uniform?" Remy turned on her side, frowning at Lindy. "I thought you said I could wear anything."

"You are not just a Freedomer." Lindy helped Remy to standing so the woman could dress her, "You are the commanding general of the Almighty's army. Like your predecessor before you, you must be clad in pure darkness: that which takes all colors and renders them the same. They will know you for it, and they will fear you for it. When you are brought before our people, the Almighty One wishes they see you first as The Destroyer. After that, you may show them the aspect of The Lifebringer."

"And in this life-bringer aspect, I get to wear any color I want?" Remy adjusted the sleeveless unitard.

"The Messiah shall be ready for her tailors in an hour." Lindy waved the woman out of the room and reclined on Remy's bed. Remy lay on the bed on her back next to Lindy and stared up at the ceiling. Lindy stroked Remy's hair. "When you don the Lifebringer aspect, my dearest Remy, you will be clad in light and life. Allow me to help you on your way, allow me to serve you, and you shall become the greatest human ever born of woman. You will live forever."

"Forever," Remy murmured, smiling.

When her tailors arrived at the apartment's entry, Remy was barefoot and sitting cross-legged on the main salon's window ledge, facing out over Freedom Square. Her chin was propped by her thumbs and her index fingers were extended and covering her lips as she watched the people below, lost in her thoughts. Lindy reclined on pillows in the conversation pit quietly planning the initial presentation of Remy to the people. Remy's tailors entered; Daniel followed them in carrying a large wardrobe trunk. He frowned. "Where is the Messiah, Lindy?"

Remy twisted around and Lindy looked up from her portable. Daniel took a step back, surprised to see the drastic change in Remy's appearance. She stood and padded along the edge of the conversation pit. Reaching the foyer, Remy greeted each of the tailors in turn then faced Daniel; she looked up into his wide, pale blue eyes. "I left

the Dome behind, Daniel,” she said, serene as she addressed the hulking young man. “This is who I am.”

“Not all Messiahs are meant to be golden and light,” Lindy added, standing. Remy closed her eyes, annoyed, until Lindy said, “Messiah Remy will burn her image into their hearts and minds, and they will know His swift judgment comes now. She is His darkness, Daniel, and the Almighty’s light shall shine brighter in her presence.”

Daniel bowed respectfully and backed from the room. Remy stretched her arms out as the tailors measured her. “Am I really darkness, Lindy?”

Lindy stood. “Did they appreciate you in the light above, beloved Messiah? Did they raise you to the greatness you were born to, as we have done here?”

“No.” Remy bowed her head, ashamed. “They didn’t.”

“Then inspiring them with love failed, didn’t it?” Lindy crossed to Remy and touched her cheek. “Now it’s time to inspire them with fear.”

Remy spent the next two days listening to Lindy’s praise, the women’s singing, and the priests’ teaching. Draped in loose black kimono tops and black drawstring pants, Remy sat cross-legged in the conversation pit nodding sagaciously at men Lindy called priests. They were the arbiters of law in Prime Settlement. When Remy tried to liken them to politicians, Lindy corrected her. “The Book and the Law come from the Almighty One. The priests are only teachers, appointed by His will to illuminate the path of righteousness.”

“Path of righteousness,” Remy repeated, skeptical as she glanced from a nervous priest to Lindy. “Where are the women priests?”

Lindy smiled. “Every mother is a priest in her own home, Remy. Where these men sit in the Temple and teach the Law to all, each home’s matriarch passes the ritual and the Law down to her children to sustain His glory from the cradle to the grave.”

“It doesn’t seem fair to me.”

Lindy sat next to Remy and asked quietly, “Does it seem fair that only women have succeeded where men have failed?” Lindy lifted Remy’s hand and kissed it gently. “He has spoken to me the truth: no man shall ever stand as His Messiah. You are His and His alone. You are the matriarch for Prime Settlement.” Lindy glanced up at the priest, then whispered in Remy’s ear, “You are the highest priest of His Temple, Remy. Speak and grown men shall cower before you like children.”

Remy turned her head, frowning. “Leave us!” Remy commanded. The priests scattered from the room, leaving their texts behind. “Lindy,” Remy said, her voice soft, “I don’t believe a drekking thing they’re telling me.”

“You will.” Lindy kissed Remy’s forehead, her lips soft on Remy’s skin. Lindy sat back and smiled benevolently. “You have brought hope even to me, Remy.”

The down-turned corners of Remy's mouth curled up. She touched Lindy's cheek gently. "Then I am happy, finally."

Lindy bit her lip, then chuckled softly. "I shall return. I shall definitely return."

"You are my family now, Lindy. You are all I have, and you are all I need." Gaze turned upward as Lindy trembled holding Remy's hand. "I will bring you what you want most." Remy smiled up at her. "I love you, Lindy," Remy lied.

Lindy closed her eyes, shivering in delight. "I . . . I must go; I see I have much work ahead of me. Be patient. I ask only that you are patient."

Remy stood, wrapping her arms around Lindy. "I can be patient; the people wouldn't understand my place in your life yet."

Lindy hid a giggle. "Oh, I don't think the people would ever understand, Remy."

Remy bowed her head; despite her betrayal of her people, Ami was still part of the cultural consciousness. Remy's fight to overcome the iconic first Messiah was her first battle; winning Lindy's heart was the key. "I will not leave you, Lindy." She looked up at Lindy, hopeful. "All I ask is that you love me. Love me, and I will do for you what no one ever has."

Lindy stared, awestruck. Remy frowned; Lindy had never been overwhelmed before. Remy kissed Lindy's cheek and smiled. Lindy took a deep breath. "I have to go," Lindy said, her eyes darting nervously. "I shall return on the day of your presentation. I . . . can't before then, or it might prove dangerous for us both." Lindy backed to the door; it opened and Daniel turned. Lindy glanced at him then bowed to Remy. "Sleep well, Messiah."

"Thank you, Lindy," Remy said as she walked slowly from the conversation pit. "Your presence is, as ever, a comfort to me."

Lindy backed from the apartment and turned from the doorway. Remy crossed to the doorway and stood next to Daniel, watching Lindy leave. Lindy turned as she reached the elevator. Remy set her hands behind her back; Daniel did the same; both stood attentively as Lindy left through the elevator. "Messiah," Daniel said, nodding respectfully at Remy.

"You serve Prime Settlement well, Daniel," said Remy, slapping his shoulder and offering him an insincere, smile. She entered the apartment and stood at the window with her arms behind her back, observing the landscape below. Tents and lights were being set up; in the darkness, they could see her silhouette. Remy sat cross-legged at the window and rested her chin on her clasped hands.

Throughout the night and into the next day, Remy sat at the window, turning food away when it was offered. Midday, by Lindy's order, Remy was given hot broths and teas to drink as she looked over the Freedom Square. Taking the proffered beverages

from people, she held the warm cup in her hands but drank nothing.

People passed through the apartment, preparing the home for Remy's permanent occupancy. Remy stared out over Prime Settlement remembering her life before Prime Settlement. Again and again, Remy agonized over the weekend with Jack Flash; her heart longed for him, and she remembered his words to Geanna – that the love he and Remy shared was for life. As the lights were shut down over Freedom Square for the night, Remy sat in solitude at the window, trying to find a way to bring Jack Flash below to her so they could start a family together in the refuge of Prime Settlement.

When the Solaray lamp illuminated over Freedom Square, Remy chose to turn from her previous life completely. Jack Flash was safe above as long as Remy was dead; she couldn't bring him below and risk his life for her selfish happiness. Her heart wrenched in sadness, mourning the loss of the baby and of Jack Flash. Feeling barren and alone, Remy sobbed bitter tears. A gentle, though large, hand rested on Remy's shoulder. "Messiah?"

Remy wiped her eyes roughly, forced a smile, and twisted around to look up into concerned blue eyes. "Yes, Daniel."

"Messiah, why are you weeping?"

Remy turned back to look over Prime Settlement, opting to tell Daniel a half-truth. "I weep for the people I could not save; I weep at losing my baby's father; I weep for my own child."

"Chosen Alan and your child honored his family." Daniel squatted behind Remy. "We all go willingly and fight for the freedom of all people who believe no man is greater than any other. All are equal under His eyes."

"Then why am I up here, Daniel? Why am I kept separate?"

"Because you are His; he sent you to us so you could replace Messiah Ami, who was led astray by the Betrayer."

Remy turned, frowning. "Betrayer?"

Daniel sighed and climbed onto the ledge, sitting next to her. Bringing his knees up, he wrapped his arms around them. "When I was a small boy, the Betrayer met the Destroyer in the UnderDome above. The Destroyer is not a being of men, Messiah; he or she is for the Almighty One alone. The Destroyer is the Messiah cloaked in the Almighty One's righteousness, the weapon which brings swift judgment in this world. In darkness, the Destroyer reaps the souls of the wicked and raises the souls of the righteous who have fallen in battle directly to Him."

"The winged skeleton on the door."

Daniel nodded. "That is the Destroyer, yes. The Betrayer (servant of the Evil One), brought chaos into the Almighty One's ordered world by whispering into the

Messiah's ear, enticing her to meet with him in secret. The Betrayer convinced our Messiah Ami to don the mantle of the Lifebringer when we needed her to be our Destroyer. The Messiah fled Prime Settlement in secret with the Betrayer; Lindy was inconsolable and sent His servants to retrieve the Messiah." Daniel bowed his head. "They did not return. The Almighty One was angered by our pride and lack of protection of his most beloved servant. The Almighty One turned from us, Messiah. The Evil One gave Lindy false visions again and again. His grace held was from us as the filth of the Dome contaminated Messiah Ami's soul. We prayed so humbly for His forgiveness, yet He stayed from us, not feeling the truth of our penitence.

"Again and again, Lindy predicted a son of Prime Settlement would step forward as Messiah of His people. Time and time again, each false Messiah failed. Then, the Almighty One felt our anguish and gave us a true and real victory. My father and two older brothers died in the only successful strike in years – an explosion which destroyed a Dome conveyance crushed them and the false Messiah. Though none of that strike team survived, our success was meritorious – the Betrayer knew and felt fear at the Almighty One's hand, and we knew the Almighty One's benevolence again. Despite the victory, we again had no Messiah to lead us.

"We prayed and swore to protect Messiah Ami if the Almighty One returned her to us. Not long after, the Almighty One gave Lindy true sight again: she held the visions back, afraid it was the Evil One tainting her vision. Word was sent from the Almighty's faithful servants in the Betrayer's lair of you. Initially meant for the Evil One's wicked purpose, your soul was claimed by the Almighty and His seed of grace was planted in it. The Evil One cast you down and punished your righteousness, throwing you into his foul servant's realm.

"What joyful news we heard over those years! As we lay ourselves prostrate before Him, the grip the Betrayer held on his minions loosened, and you created insurrection among his very servants! Lindy revealed her vision to us; you were being called below to the Almighty's realm upon this world, and the Evil One was desperate to stop you. A son of Prime Settlement, Chosen Alan, recognized His grace in you. He lost faith, however, as the temptation of the Betrayer's realm reached for your pure heart. The Evil One planted suspicion in Alan's heart, and he fled to Prime Settlement, believing you were sullied by a servant of the Betrayer. Lindy was angry, so very angry! Alan was to be publicly scourged then executed for his lack of faith in the Almighty One when news reached us from his faithful servant, Carl. You sought Alan as your Chosen and were ready to come to us.

"Alan's life was spared, and he was anointed as your beloved husband. He went to you and was thwarted by the Betrayer's minions. Not long after, we learned you and

Chosen Alan had created life, only to have it poisoned from you by the Evil One. We have only just stopped mourning the Holy Child. Filled with righteous rage against those who took hope from his people, Alan was sent a final time to retrieve you. The Evil One's presence in the Dome world is too strong; the Almighty One's faithful servants died, including you.

"You were resurrected by and into His grace and glory – praise Him! The Betrayer knew you as His true Messiah and fled his own realm. You were imprisoned by the Betrayer's servants and left to die in the Betrayer's realm; the Evil One believed he had conquered, but it did not know that darkness is where the Destroyer is born, Messiah.

"The Almighty One led His faithful to you and you were set free; the mechanical pestilence was sent from your body; the Almighty One made a miracle and you were lost to the Evil One, cloaked in the darkness of the Destroyer as you crossed through the Evil One's realm. We have heard news that you reaped a bitterly evil soul, and the realm of the Evil One knows the Destroyer comes, for the wicked soul has told the Evil One of your victory." Daniel smiled, nodding. "We come to great and glorious times, Messiah; the history is being written already. That I disappointed you . . . I have been rewarded with an honor I am unworthy of."

Remy shook her head in amused disbelief. "That is quite a story, Daniel. I'm just a woman."

"Messiah, you—"

"Please call me Remy."

"But Messiah—"

Remy leaned forward to Daniel. "Remy. Not Messiah. *Reb-mee*."

Daniel scrambled from the ledge and tumbled into the conversation pit, landing gracelessly on his back. He rolled to his knees and gathered the cushions and pillows, placing them onto the bench as they rolled onto the floor despite his efforts. Unable to stop the pillows from dropping, Daniel stood stiffly. "I am not at my post, Messiah. I beg forgiveness for entering without asking. I heard you weeping and believed some evil had attacked you."

"Daniel, you would serve me better on this side of the door than the outside."

"Yes, Messiah." Daniel stood unmoving, his face stern and his gaze forward. Remy stretched her legs then stood stiffly. She slid into the conversation pit and picked up the pillows at Daniel's feet, setting them onto the bench.

Remy walked stiffly from the conversation pit, not looking at Daniel. "When you are comfortable enough to call me Remy, will you, Daniel?"

"Yes, Messiah."

"Thank you. Please don't leave the inside of this apartment; tell me when Lindy

and my dressers arrive. I am going to meditate in my room.” Remy slid the tapestry aside then closed it behind her. She entered the master suite and padded toward the bathroom, drawing herself a hot bath to soothe her tired body. Once she was clean, Remy dressed and lay on her bed. She closed her eyes and slept until a rap at the door awakened her. “Open door!”

Daniel entered. “Lindy and your dressers are here. Do you wish them enter?”

“Lindy only. I need to speak with her.”

“Yes, Messiah.”

Lindy entered, formally dressed. Though her shirt and slacks were the dark gray Remy had come to expect from Lindy’s wardrobe, the calf-length jacket Lindy wore matched her cool, gray eyes. Its hem flared as Lindy swept across the room. Lindy sat at the side of the bed and clasped Remy’s hand. Lindy glanced over her shoulder at the group of women who waited at the door, anxious. “There is little time, Messiah.”

“Close door.” The door separated them from the dressers. Remy lolled her head and looked up at Lindy. “I wanted to believe in your Almighty One, but after hearing Daniel’s version of what happened to me?” Remy closed her eyes. “I can’t do it.”

“You can do it.” Lindy took Remy’s hands. “You are their only hope, Remy. What else is there for them? Central Computer certainly doesn’t care about them. Why should the Dome be allowed a god and Prime Settlement not be?”

Remy pulled her hands from Lindy’s. “Who is the ‘Almighty One’? What is ‘god’? What is ‘to pray’? What is ‘blessed’? I understand my father’s NuParisian rants better than your people’s day-to-day conversations, and you are all speaking what I believe is Dome standard!” Remy rolled from the bed and stood. “I don’t belong here, Lindy. Send me home.”

Lindy stood and circled her arms around Remy. “Oh, sweet Remy, beloved of the Almighty One.” Lindy kissed Remy’s forehead. “Explain to me, then, how you died and returned when you were poisoned, how you survived an assault which slaughtered all there but you and the undeserving soul you saved, how you were poisoned and died yet again but were resurrected? How did you survive imprisonment, Enforcement’s poison, the nanotechnology, and the trip to Prime Settlement once that man learned you were a Freedomer? Explain to me how you survived all of those things.”

Remy rested her head on Lindy’s chest. “I don’t know.” She took a deep breath, “I have a feeling, but it’s irrational.”

“That you were kept alive for a higher purpose?” Lindy stepped back, holding Remy’s hands in hers. “That is the Almighty One, our god. When you begged for something or someone to guide you through the darkness and save you? That is to pray. You survived because you were meant for the Almighty One’s purpose. That is

blessed. His purpose for you is to lead his people. That is Messiah.”

“Lead a people.” Remy’s head lolled forward. “I couldn’t stand up to Ami. How am I supposed to lead your people? She’s a Freedomer and I’m not.”

Lindy lifted Remy’s chin. “I will teach you, and all things shall be provided to you. Our people – and they are yours, too – understand your origin. They know you were born of the Dome yet were drawn to us. They know you are new to our teachings, but they believe you are blessed with His grace.” Lindy took a lock of Remy’s hair in her hand and gently slid her fingers through it. “Oh, Remy, you have the qualities of a savior. Believe, and the people will be your shield when your enemies strike at you and your sword when you strike at your enemies. They have true faith, Remy. True faith can drive a person to greatness before he or she dies. True faith makes the idea of death tolerable. True faith gives those who suffer the knowledge that there is a reward at the end of it.” Lindy leaned her forehead against Remy’s. “If we do not have true faith, we stand on the precipice at the end of the world. We stand in infinite darkness without the Almighty One.”

Remy stepped away from Lindy and turned, bowing her head. “Do you really believe there can be a god, like you say?”

“Do you really believe a computer can think like a man?”

Remy faced Lindy. “Of course. Central Computer does.”

“Have you ever seen Central Computer?”

“Yes. The Dome world runs because of it.”

“Not the effects of Central Computer’s influence. The actual machine.”

“No. No one alive has.”

Lindy shrugged, nonchalant. “Then how do you know it exists?”

“It just does.”

“So does the Almighty One. Central Computer is of this world; the Almighty One is of the one beyond. The Almighty One is everything, is the beginning and is the end. The Almighty One made humanity. Humanity made Central Computer. Which, then, is the greater miracle?”

Remy bowed her head. “Daniel said history is being written.” She looked up. “Will that include, well, you know?”

“Your companion on the trip.” Lindy nodded. “Carl’s report to the Council left out those things he felt were unflattering to the Messiah’s image. To Carl, you were still struggling under the Dome’s influence. He came to me and spoke the complete truth. Carl is privately doing penance in the Temple for his lack of judgment when you needed his wisdom.” Lindy kissed Remy’s cheek where it was still discolored from Mason’s hand. “You released a monstrous and wicked soul to the Evil One, where it

shall suffer for eternity, having been reaped by the Almighty One's own right hand."

Remy met Lindy's gaze. "When he died, I felt vindicated. I wanted Mason to die; I felt pleasure watching him laugh, knowing he didn't realize he was already dead. Is this what your Almighty One is putting into my heart?"

"The Almighty One is a god of justice. What you felt was righteousness, for you know in your heart that man was tainted. The Almighty One's will was performed through your hand. That man who died was judged by the Almighty One and was found evil enough to be reaped by your hand. Already the man suffers for his sins."

"This is very hard to believe, you understand."

Lindy clasped Remy's hands and kissed one then the other. "Do not worry so much whether you believe in the Almighty One, Remy; the Almighty One believes in you." Lindy took a deep breath. "Oh, I wish we had more time," Lindy lamented with a pitiable smile. Lindy led Remy to the center of the room. "Bid them enter, and you will see His will."

Lindy reclined on the bed as Remy's dressers stripped Remy quickly and dressed her in a sleeveless black unitard. A woman brushed out Remy's hair and trimmed it as another applied foundation to cover her bruises. Remy's eyes were lined with kohl and red lipstick was applied then blotted from her mouth. "Make up?"

"You need to look like death, Messiah, not dead." Lindy clasped her hands in front of herself, pleased. "Dress her in the basic uniform, without the weapons belt or plating," Lindy said, her eyes wide with fervor. "Show me His Destroyer."

Once Remy was dressed, Lindy commanded Remy's dressers leave. "Come with me and see the Messiah His people will see. You are not Remy any longer; you are my Destroyer."

Lindy led Remy to the full-length mirror on her bathroom's paneled sliding door. Standing next to Lindy was a woman whose doll-like features had been hardened by her recent experiences. Her heart-shaped face had become angular. Her kohl-rimmed eyes were filled with unfathomable, grim sorrow. The hair that framed her pale face were jagged and darkest mahogany brown. The obsidian jacket's collar was tall, hiding most of her throat and neck; within the lining were narrow pieces of bulletproof armor. Inside Remy's jacket, strips of the same armor twisted and flexed when she moved. Flat jet buttons, each carved with a tiny winged skeleton, fastened the jacket across her chest and at an angle across her left breast, ending at the left side of the jacket's collar. The straight arms of Remy's jacket were tailored down to her wrist; its cuffs had been buttoned closed. The fitted jacket was snug at her waist and flared slightly to follow the curve of her hips. The black-matte tassets and greaves, rerebraces, and breastplate were strewn on the bed with a pair of black non-skid boots and an armored black belt

carrying her clips and holster – all for use when she was in the field. Her pants were trimmed in black down the outside of each leg with religious symbols embroidered in black thread; the trim hid the zips beneath; long flexible strips of armor stretched from Remy’s knee to Remy’s waist. Heavy black boots with short polished black heels rose above her calves to just under her knees; these were meant for ceremony rather than combat. She stared at herself, mouth agape. The reflection in black mouthed Remy’s spoken words: “This isn’t me.”

“This is the Messiah.” Lindy said, turning Remy toward her. “Believe.”

Ten minutes later, Lindy exited the bedroom. Daniel bowed respectfully toward Lindy; she grinned at him. Remy emerged from her bedroom, resolute. Daniel fell onto one knee and bowed his head when he saw Remy. Others glanced at Daniel and followed his lead. Lindy knelt slowly, smirking. “Rise,” commanded Remy.

The people before her stood; Daniel kept his eyes lowered. “The Freedomer Guard is ready for you in the Processional Room, Messiah.”

Remy crossed to Daniel and pulled his face up, roughly cupping his chin between her thumb and curved index finger. “Daniel, do not avert your eyes from me like that, ever. If you turn from me, Daniel, you turn from Him. Do you understand me?”

The room was silent as all looked at Daniel. Lindy arched an eyebrow as Daniel raised his gaze to Remy’s; he was childlike in his awe. “Yes, Messiah.”

“Good.” Remy put her hand out to Daniel. “Take my hand, Daniel. I’ll have enough people protecting my life this evening. The first of Prime Settlement other than Lindy to know me as your Messiah, I wish to recognize your true faith.”

Daniel stared at Remy’s hand. Lindy’s voice cracked like a whip. “Daniel!”

“I am honored, Messiah.” He covered Remy’s hand with his larger one, and she squeezed Daniel’s hand.

Descending in the elevator in silence, Remy glanced at Lindy. They shared a quick knowing smile before turning to face forward, both wearing serious expressions. The elevator door opened, and the entourage entered the tall room, where guards, generals, Council members, and clergymen waited. Remy stepped forward, her hand gripping Daniel’s; the Council dropped to its knees before her. All others in the room did the same, even Daniel as he held her hand. “Rise.”

The tall doors groaned, pitched, and shuddered as they opened. Thousands of excited voices on the other side of the door hushed to whispers. Remy’s confidence evaporated, and, as Daniel started forward to join the waiting Freedomer Guard, he was yanked back gracelessly by Remy’s grip. Daniel glanced at Lindy, uncomfortable. “M-Messiah?”

Lindy’s body warmed Remy’s back as she stepped behind Remy. Her voice was

soft in Remy's ear. "Release him to the Freedomer Guard, Remy. I will make sure he is at the front for you. His work is not yet finished."

Remy nodded as she leaned back into Lindy. "I wish it made so."

Lindy removed Daniel's hand from Remy's. "Tell the Master of the Guard that the Messiah commands you shall stand at her right hand on the causeway."

Daniel bowed reverently to Lindy then jogged to the Master of the Freedomer Guard. Daniel was placed in the position of honor and, trying to hide his smile, he stood proudly at the head of a line of young men and women. Lindy kissed Remy's cheek, squeezed Remy's hand. Striding to the opening door, Lindy joined the Council as they winced and covered their ears at the deafening pops and scrapes of the disused doors. The stripe of Solaray light widened, and Remy crossed it into the darkness where the Freedomer Guard waited.

Remy approached the group, frowning, hands clasped behind her back. She stopped in front of the Master of the Freedomer Guard and arched an eyebrow. Lindy covered her mouth lightly to hide her amused smile, took a deep breath, and shook her arms out as she exhaled. As the doors squealed and ceased their rumbling, the Master of the Freedomer Guard said, "The Freedomer Guard is ready to proceed at the Messiah's command."

Remy walked slowly along the first line of guardspeople; she picked lint from one young woman's shoulder and straightened the holster of one of the young men. Inspecting Daniel's line, Remy tsked at the dirty fingernails of one of the young men and set a stray hair back into a young female soldier's tight bun. Remy stepped up to Daniel, checked his hands, his hair, and his uniform. "Perfect, Daniel." Remy walked backwards down the line to the shadows as the other young guardspeople glanced up at Daniel. "Proceed!"

With the snap of hard-soled heels on the polished floor, the Freedomer Guard exited onto the causeway, leaving a pair of guards along the causeway in equidistant increments. The Council stepped onto the raised walkway, and the people applauded and cheered as they walked to the central platform. Just behind them, the generals and religious leaders followed, serene and serious; they received applause and shouts of praise. Lindy turned around. "For you, beloved Messiah," she shouted to Remy before turning and striding down the causeway to the cheers of the people.

In the darkness, Remy waited. The staccato tap of Remy's bootheels striking the floor echoed as she walked in a thoughtful circle; she tapped her thumbs on her lower lip as she thought. Taking a deep breath, Remy exhaled and walked to the back of the processional room, where the strip of Solaray light began. Remy stepped into the light and walked forward slowly to the doors. A hush fell over the people as Remy reached

the doorway; the closest to the doors saw Remy and were struck silent.

Remy strode forward with purpose, barking, "Follow me forward," to the first set of guards along the causeway. They fell behind her without question. Remy repeated the command to the next set of guards, and they fell behind the first two. The Master of the Freedomer Guard leaned to Lindy, whispering angrily. Lindy rested a gentle hand on his shoulder. Lindy and Remy locked gazes as Remy brought the Freedomer Guard forward. She stopped between Daniel and the other guard, putting her arms out to them. Each took a hand, and Remy pulled them down to kneeling before Lindy and the Council then dropped their hands forcefully. As the Freedomer Guard knelt before the group on the dais, Remy looked up into Lindy's face and announced loudly, "The true Messiah of the Almighty One comes to serve Prime Settlement and shall lay First Dome at her feet as tribute!"

Lindy startled and smiled, mouthing, "First Dome?" Remy nodded up at Lindy before bowing her head again. The jubilant cheering thundered as it echoed around Freedom Square. Lindy took Remy's hands and helped Remy to her feet. The guards stayed kneeling before her, glancing at Daniel for guidance; his eyes were closed and his mouth was moving in quiet prayer. Lindy leaned forward and whispered in Remy's ear, "You have done in a moment what none in ten years has been able to accomplish. You truly are Ami's equal."

Remy kept her head bowed as if reverential, though her tone was cold. "I am the true Messiah; Ami was not."

Lindy raised an eyebrow, displeased. "Ami was the Almighty's Messiah before you were born."

"Which of us is here prepared to conquer a Dome for you, and which of us is in the UnderDome planning your overthrow with Cain and his Network?"

Lindy gripped Remy's chin, pulling Remy's face up. Though she smiled, her tone was icy. "Do not speak his true name here again, Messiah. Ever." Lindy slid a white gold signet ring (the ring's face decorated with a raised three-barred, tree-shaped cross) onto Remy's right middle finger. Lindy raised Remy's hand in the air. "We shall have victory over First Dome in the name of the Almighty One! Praise Him and praise His Destroyer!"

Remy turned her head left and right; from the walls to the causeway. All around her was a sea of tens of thousands; with one voice, the people chanted, "Praise Him!" Trembling, Remy looked down at Daniel and the other Freedomer Guards kneeling at her feet. They looked up at Remy as Daniel did, chanting with devout adoration. Remy stretched her free left hand to Daniel, the only person she could trust in the cacophonous mob. Daniel stood and took her hand, smiling down at Remy. He

crossed to her left side and faced out with Remy and Lindy, shouting, "Praise Him!" in his booming baritone. As Remy relaxed next to her, Lindy turned her head slightly in sidelong observation. Lindy raised her voice with Daniel's; Remy stayed close-mouthed as she stared forward down the Solaray-lit causeway to the dark room she longed to return.

In the UnderDome above, denizens stopped – unable to identify the organic rhythmic thrum below their feet. En masse, denizens panicked and flowed from the UnderDome up to Level One, away from the tunnels. First Dome's denizens cowered at work, hid in their tiny Darkside apartments, and huddled together in groups near the Dome wall on Darkside boulevards as far from the unnatural noise as they could get. Day turned to night, and the denizens stayed from the UnderDome, skirting the Dome's walls to get to Level One workplaces instead of using the Intra-Dome Tram and tunnels.

The denizens' fear spread to the citizenry in the night-darkened First Dome as the familiar background noises of human life in the UnderDome and in Darkside were rendered silent by inexplicable terror. Citizens retreated to the safety of their hotel rooms and residences for the night; many others took the InterDome Tram anywhere else but there. Businesses closed early because workers claimed to be unwell simply to avoid leaving their homes. The final evening of Conference was disrupted; a memorial dinner for Senior Politician Mason was canceled – the caterer's suppliers and servers were left short-staffed because of a rash of sudden illness. Even the normally packed Sun Aura Della Kupla was nearly empty, and the Synapse Room was closed for the night because no one of renown or celebrity was there to use it. For the first time since the club opened, the Sun Aura Della Kupla closed before midnight.

The Dome world felt Remy's arrival into Prime Settlement.