

Giulia Napoli

Destiny Taken

Book 1 of the Destiny Lost Series



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Giulia Napoli

Book One of the *Destiny Lost Series*

Destiny Taken - Inside Flap Summary

This is an erotic, sexy, fetish and BDSM novel of personal triumph and tragedy, that is at once surprising, hard-hitting, seductive and finely crafted. This is the sexy, passionate story of Destiny Michelle Hutton, a pleasant, reasonably intelligent, attractive young lady, and how she loses control of her own destiny.

Tragedy strikes early for Destiny, who tries to move forward in spite of personal anguish and love lost. She becomes an educated professional and explores her deep, inherent sexuality in unusual and unexpected situations. When she thinks she's rediscovered her way, her life is again uprooted, and she finds herself imprisoned and subjected to a fetish environment so different and challenging that she could never have dreamt of it.

Destiny's story is one of her personal development, along with the blossoming of her sexuality. Woven into this first novel of her story are the range of sexual, fetish and BDSM scenes readers have come to expect from Giulia Napoli. Destiny's sexuality and submissive nature are tested, manipulated, and evolved by both her love interests and those who would dominate and control her. Her time in the Control Institution for Delinquent Women will surprise you, horrify you, make you yearn and cry, and trigger most of your erotic inclinations.

This is the first book in the *Destiny Lost Series*.

Destiny Taken - Publisher's Summary

This is a solid, adult contemporary fantasy novel of over 105,000 words. It contains fetish erotica and BDSM scenes. It includes extensive body modification; self-image alteration; smoking; hair changes, removal, and shaving; weight gain; compulsions and addiction; bondage; discipline; short and long-term physical and mind control and submission; riveting heterosexuality and tasteful bisexuality.

It goes without saying that *Destiny Taken* is serious adult drama containing open discussions and scenes of intense sexuality, erotica and fetish erotica, BDSM and sexual relations. Parts of *Destiny Taken* may be too intense for some readers.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, businesses, organizations or persons living or dead is entirely coincidental.

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Other books and stories by Giulia Napoli

About Lena

Ashley's Wedding

Oh Claire! (To Be Perfectly Claire Series, #1)

Eighteen Months

*Destiny Bound (The Destiny Lost Series, #2) coming Fall,
2016*

Dedication

To all the struggling fetishers out there

Acknowledgements

My Global Jele editors get my thanks for reviewing *Destiny Taken*. I appreciate your openness to my nutty ideas, your interest and help in making this tale as good as it could be, and the high quality of your text editing.

I want to especially thank my talented friend and Screening Editor, Tanager Leigh, who not only put the book on track and found countless ways to improve individual scenes, but also invented Tia.

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Thanks to a lost friend for a kick-start and bouncing ideas around. You know who you are.

Finally, I want to thank my beautiful, talented, long-time friend, and Final Editor, J. Ellyne for her quality editing, suggestions, encouragement, and honesty in reviewing *Destiny Taken*, both early on and at the very end of the process.

I'm so fortunate that all of you have my back.

Giulia Napoli

USA

July, 2016

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About the Author

Destiny Lost

Giulia Napoli

Prologue - Fireflies

Our sexual attraction was still new (at that stage of development where it's both a novelty and a compulsion). It continued to build up, better and better each time. We'd been best friends for a couple years, but the heat and passion were mere days old. Perhaps we needed those years of friendship to finally evolve to this, or to allow enough unexpected things to happen to give our friendship a chance to veer off in that direction. It didn't feel like the evolution of our relationship, though. It was like throwing a switch a few days after we both turned eighteen, and suddenly the passion was there. We were both astounded at what had occurred between us – almost every day for the past couple of weeks.

It was the first experience with another girl for both of us, though neither of us was a virgin. I'd had several sexual relationships with guys, and I know Tia had at least two that she'd mentioned to me.

I'd call my sexual experiences up to that point interesting and warm, but uninspiring. Guys my age just didn't get it yet at eighteen or nineteen. Girls at least knew what turned girls on. At least twenty-first century girls that I was acquainted with did. Looking back from about twenty years later, I realize how much we didn't know, even about our own bodies. We knew enough, though, to find satisfaction in the arms of another girl our age, if we were so inclined. I didn't think I was, but finding out started me on the path to understanding the person I truly am. At least until I became unrecognizable to myself, physically, sexually, mentally, and spiritually. That came about not because of what I did, but because of what others did to me over the intervening years.

You're thinking I consider myself a victim. You probably expect to find that I did it to myself. People who grow up comfortable, in good homes, with a loving family in a free country don't become victims unless they, themselves make poor, easy choices. Read on and then decide.

We were hanging out at Tia's house on a lovely Sunday in early spring. Her mom and dad were conveniently gone for the day, which was how they spent many evenings and weekend days. They liked to get out and take advantage of everything the metroplex had to offer.

We ate our sushi lunch with chopsticks in the breakfast room. The room's bay window looked out on the backyard, across a short lawn to a stand of sparse trees that marched down a ravine to the lovely river that ran along our exurban town of River's Edge.

A clump of dogwood trees, in full flower with pink and peach-colored blossoms, stood at the edge of the yard to the far left. A privacy fence to the far right enclosed the pool area so well that nothing could be seen within it unless you were upstairs. No neighboring houses were visible from where we sat, or from the enclosed pool. The trees and grass were lush with the lighter green of springtime. The day was sunny, bright and pleasantly warm, which perfectly reflected my mood.

We cleared the few dishes to the dishwasher and walked outside, through the privacy fence gate, into the pool area. No one could see us there so we immediately stripped off our bikinis, laid a thick mat between the pool and the hot tub, put another mat on top of it, and hopped in the not-very-hot tub, hand-in-hand. Tia slid to the middle of the round, bubbling basin, squatting and submerging her shapely body past her shoulders. Then she ducked her head and moved underwater, toward my spread legs and newly lasered pussy.

I felt her playfully blow bubbles against my vulva; her tongue snaked along my inners slightly opening me. Below her tongue a finger probed within my lower slit, then her thumb slipped within me and her finger moved down to push under me and find my rosebud. Her tongue flicked under my hood, prying it up slightly, and I felt her gently blow a stream of tiny bubbles against my clit. Mmm ...

She must have stayed under for a minute and a half, continuing her water-play. Finally, she raised her head above

the water, right in front of me. Her thumb was still in my vagina and a finger was now within my rosebud.

Her heavy, rich-chestnut bangs were neatly plastered across her whole forehead, ending just below her brows when wet. She looked up at me, her face dripping, only her eyes cleared by her thick lashes diverting the droplets that trickled down her tan, creamy skin. Her full, soft lips parted and she flashed me an adoring smile, showing her perfect white teeth. I hoped my return smile was just as dazzling to her.

Down she went again and the bubbling massage of my clit continued. I felt a finger of her other hand reach into me and push against the spongy, sensitive flesh of my G-spot, pushing my clit up from its base from the inside, to extend slightly above its hood. Now I could feel the bubbles all around it. I was climbing the arousal ladder quickly.

Two fingers now opened my rosebud and entered me, while she continued to minister to my G-spot and clitoris with fingers, mouth and tongue.

When she next surfaced, I was already at the edge. "I'm going to cum in a moment, if you keep that up!" I shouted, laughing and shuddering with joy.

"Then cum. Let see if we can set a record. We have all afternoon and most of the evening too."

"Sounds like a worthy goal to me!" I leaned farther back, pushing my butt to the very edge of the ledge on which I sat, offering myself to her for anything she chose to do.

Her attentions were totally directed to my nether regions. We hadn't kissed; she hadn't fondled my boobs nor sucked my nipples. But oh was she rockin' my sexual center! I started to quiver uncontrollably as I tried to hold back on my climax, while she played and tuned me to keep me oscillating at the edge, not quite crossing over the event horizon to the pinnacle.

Three more of her dives later, I was still edging but I was sure I couldn't hold out for another minute or more, before she surfaced again. I felt a hard stream of bubbles machine-gun against my clit and then her tongue pushed flat against it and I

shot over the top, crashing directly into an orgasm that rose up to consume me!

I was screaming and didn't realized it. My hands were gripping Tia's hair with almost enough force to pull it out. It must have been painful for her, but she didn't stop. Waves and water waves of ecstasy swept over me, concentrated with great force up and down my slit, where my legs joined and behind that. She must have surfaced at least once while I was still cumming, because it went on for so long that holding her breath that long would have been impossible.

"How did you learn to do that?" I asked as we lay in the sun, atop the thick, wet mats.

"Learn? I just made it up as I was going along. I tried to picture what I'd want and did it to you. Guess it worked."

"I'd say. You should patent that."

"It's probably already in the Kama Sutra somewhere," she laughed.

"I never read it in there."

"They probably added it to the Kindle edition ..."

I interrupted her with a kiss, which I held while I rolled on top of her. Our warm, wet bodies slid along each other, our breasts smashed tight against each other. My long, highlighted blonde hair had fallen forward and surrounded both our faces. I slid down her body until my mouth covered her also hairless pussy. Then I began to give as good as I'd gotten.

It was the greatest afternoon of sex I could have imagined at that point in my life. The fact that it was girl-on-girl was barely incidental. It was two young women who loved each other with a purity and a clarity that is too rare, though I still believe, at least a little, that it doesn't need to be.

We would be intimate again in a few days, but it wouldn't rise to the level of passion of that Sunday afternoon. Then everything would change.

Chapter 1 – Yesterday

Because I want it to, this story begins nineteen years ago when I was fifteen, at the beginning of my sophomore year in high school. If my partially scrambled, undependable memory serves me at all, and sometimes it doesn't, I believe my name at that time was Destiny Michelle Hutton. Sometimes I forget I was Destiny, and think she was only someone I knew. Most of the time I remember, and if I forget, Tia reminds me.

This story is about what happened to me. Whoever I was and whoever I am. For the moment, assume I'm telling you the truth as it actually happened, and that I'm Destiny. Or used to be.

I'm an Air Force military brat and that was the single largest influence on how and where I grew up, the only child of two loving parents. I spent time all over the US, from east to west, and almost a third of my pre-college life in England, Germany and Belgium in Europe. Having no choice, I learned to make friends wherever I was; I probably wasn't the most outgoing person you ever met, but I did alright. Overall, I think the experience made me a little more conservative in a few areas, and more daring than normal in others. One thing's for sure, I've always been a somewhat out-of-step with my peers who were one hundred percent raised in America.

I managed to develop a good number of friends within a month or two of moving someplace new, though I had never had what I would consider a very close or best friend. That was the status quo until I finally moved back to the US, ending up in the quirky, planned community of River's Edge, at the beginning of my sophomore year in high school. We landed there because my dad was stationed at a huge Airforce base about 35 miles away. River's Edge was a compromise location: my mother wanted the city, my dad liked the country. As it was, we were in a lovely, ex-urban area, more-or-less in the middle of a large metropolplex.

A week after arriving in River's Edge, we were settled in, just in time for me to start school at the beginning of the school year. It was within the first minutes at my new high school that I met Tia.

Her name was Tia Malinda Morales and she was a force of nature. She was the prettiest, the smartest, the most athletic, outgoing and friendly and, as I was to discover, the kindest girl in the tenth grade.

On that first day of school, I arrived about half an hour before the start of homeroom. I walked into the common area, just outside the cafeteria. This part of the main school building was an enclosed atrium that everyone called *the lobby*. The first person I saw, the first *thing* I saw was Tia, holding court with a couple dozen admirers, equally split between girls and boys. She was standing, and gesturing animatedly, while most everyone around her was sitting in concentric circles of chairs. The image was *quite extraordin'ry*, as my Brit friends would say.

The lobby was completely full with smaller groups of students – ranging from freshman to seniors. The group around Tia was far and away the biggest single gathering in the lobby that morning.

At that point I didn't even know Tia was a sophomore like I was. It looked like an exclusive club, so I sort of skirted the group and was trying to decide whether to move away or sit down when I heard her call out, "Hey, cute girl! Are you a sophomore?"

"Me?" I answered, looking around for someone else she might be addressing.

"You're the only cute girl I see standing there! Sophomore?"

"Ye ... yes," I said, probably somewhat tentatively. I wasn't shy – except maybe in the evident presence of royalty.

"Are you sure?" She asked, grinning. Everyone was looking at me, and I hated it.

“I ... I’m a new sophomore. My family moved here a week ago.”

“That’s great!” She said.

I smiled. I felt like I was a rather ordinary bug under a microscope. I wished I hadn’t come down here. That feeling was unusual for me, since I could usually give it out, as easily as I could take it. But she was so pretty! So lovely and poised! So ... hot!

Tia spoke again. “If I remember the list, you must be Cary, Jacob, Donatello, Jorge, Sid, Lemongelo, Steve, Julio, Hillary, Maria, Angelique, Lydia, Tiffany, Olivia, Ashley, Rhadika or Destiny. My money’s on Destiny.”

What the hell? I thought. Could she have memorized – and remembered - the whole list of new sophomores? Who was this person?

I tried to smile like the friendly and confident girl I wasn’t at that moment. I probably looked like a grinning fool. “I’m Destiny,” I said, wanting to crawl under the nearest rock – or table.

“Then come here, Destiny, and meet everyone!”

I felt frozen in place. I eventually stumbled forward, through the crowd that parted for me like the Red Sea parting for Moses. I realized I was finally standing in front of Tia and staring right into her intelligent, shiny brown eyes with my deep blue ones. Dark, heavy bangs and a thick, straight, shoulder-length bob framed her face. She was exactly the same height as I.

I can’t remember a single thing she said to or about me. I remember answering questions somewhat robotically, and I remember that she introduced me to all of the other students gathered around her. I was overcome with the strength of her presence and the charisma that was flowing off of her and splashing wonderfully onto everyone around. Who was this girl?

She was, of course, the most popular person in the sophomore class, and perhaps in the entire school. For some

unfathomable reason, she took an immediate liking to me, tucked me securely under her wing, and made my acclimation to tenth grade and a new school effortless.

Tia was dominant by her very nature, by her reputation, and by the strength of her broad accomplishments. I would have thought that might have caused a conflict between us, since I'd always considered myself to be a dominant personality. It came as a surprise to me that we never conflicted, and I never felt that I was hidden in her shadow. That might have been partially me, but it was, probably, largely Tia. It would never have occurred to her to promote herself, at the expense of anyone else.

Tia was truly one of those "let's raise everybody up" people, versus those who get ahead at others' expense. I probably assumed a subordinate role with her naturally, but I never felt submissive. Perhaps I was, maybe not. What I did know was that Tia was impossible not to like. For myself, I found her impossible not to love as the best friend I'd ever had.

We hung out together, studied together, went out together, double dated, and did everything else best friends do. Somehow, Tia managed to spend all that time with me, get all her other things done, and never alienated a single one of her other friends or admirers.

Sophomore year led to junior year, driving and partying and studying even harder. Tia and I shared almost every class and we were friendly rivals for the top spot. Someone else might be tops say three times out of ten, Tia five and me two. I think if it weren't for Tia, I probably would have been strong, but never at the top. She lifted me up with her.

We were both interested in archeology and, to a lesser extent, anthropology, as potential careers. As senior year dawned, we started thinking about college and whether or not we should try to go to the same school and share a room or apartment.

I had hopes, but I couldn't see how that was going to work. Tia was good enough to probably land a full ride at a

major archeology school like Yale, Stanford, or Penn. I was very good, not great, and my parents couldn't afford those places on their own. Sometimes I felt like Salieri to Tia's Mozart; I was good enough to appreciate how great she was.

I was looking to stay close to home for college – the big university Uptown, in the city that anchored the southern part of the metroplex, or perhaps, a very good private university in the north metroplex. I didn't think it was fair to Tia to hold her back in our state, which has fine schools, but not programs as impressive as she could land elsewhere.

The year progressed with the usual senior activities. Tia and I remained as close as two pieces of tape stuck together. After the holidays, we both decided to get an early start on our science fair projects, which were a major part of our grade in the Earth & Space Sciences class. We were both doing archeology-oriented projects, but each of us had a very different focus.

We helped each other through the projects, setting aside every Monday and Thursday evening to work on them. I recall that Tia and I had turned eighteen the previous week, Tia on April 4 and me on April 6. It was on the following Thursday, right before the fair, that something happened.

I was at Tia's house that night. Her parents had theater tickets and had gone Downtown for dinner and a play. We were down in their rec room, doing online research, and working on the presentation displays of the few but exciting findings from a Native American site dig we'd attempted in a gully near the densely tree-lined, scenic river that River's Edge sits on the edge of. We'd been fortunate to have a couple early, warm weeks in late February when we could get out to do the field work.

Tia's project was oriented toward the anthropology aspects of the findings, while mine was more of an archeological analysis of the dig. Both projects were based on what we each thought were pretty good hypotheses. I thought

we'd claim an A+ for each of us, and I thought we both had a good shot at winning locally, and making it to the district fair.

We were working away on our separate displays. I was trying to get a video to play from my iPhone to a small screen I'd put in one of my project posters, when Tia asked for my help with holding something she was trying to affix to hers.

I set my little screen down and moved over to hold the stuff for her. She was struggling with tightening a fixture into place and we were both in each other's face, gathered around her display. Suddenly something snapped and whatever she was doing fell apart. She yelled a stream of curses unlike any I'd heard from her before.

I was standing there, right in front of her, and I could feel the spittle generated by her string of colorful epithets. I suspect that my mouth was hanging open in surprise. She glanced up at me, red-faced and angry, her long brunette hair still in her face from bending over.

She looked at me, fire in her eyes, but just stood there for the longest time. Then, simultaneously, we both burst out laughing, tears running down our faces from the hilarity of the moment. I put my hand on her shoulder to try to steady myself and regain some control. We finally managed to slow, then stop our giggling. At this point, we each had a hand on the other's shoulder. I lifted my hand first, intending to bend down to start gathering the pieces of her project from the floor.

Before I could move my hand back, Tia's had left my shoulder, gone around my neck, and pulled me towards her. She tilted her head and our lips met in a spontaneous kiss that was equally surprising to both of us.

My first thought as we pressed our bodies together, one of her arms around my neck, the other around my waist, was how full, moist and warm her lips were. Both of my arms were around her neck as we kissed over and over, sometimes in short, sweet pecks, sometimes deliciously long. My little tongue slipped into her mouth and hers and mine circled about each other.

Without me noticing it, we had moved over near a sofa, still standing, each enfolded in the other's arms. "Take off your clothes, Destiny, I want to feel your warmth against me," Tia whispered and she bent down to unfasten her own shorts.

My best friend was taking our affection for each other to some other level. I had never been with a female before for anything seriously sexual. I felt as though I'd stepped onto a commuter train that was already in motion. I supposed there was a way off of it, but did I want to take it?

Of course not. I wanted to charge ahead with Tia. I looked into her eyes and I told her with my own, in no uncertain terms, that I wanted her. I wanted everything with her. I was destined for her. I could see in her expression that she heard and understood me as well as she would have if I shouted it out loud. My light touch of affirmation on her arm was like an electric shock to both of us. I was somewhat surprised to realize that I was exactly where I wanted to be right then. I didn't feel any angst about the sudden turn our relationship had taken.

I sensed her warmth, her proximity, her musky, heady aroma. I was captured and I wanted to be. I knew I was ready. This was the time for us. There was nothing better for me right then than what Tia was proposing. The moment was ripe and I couldn't let the fruit of our passion wither on the vine. My desire for Tia right then was a consuming passion, not to be denied.

In moments, we were facing each other naked for the first time.

Tia was as beautiful without clothes as she had been while casually dressed. Her breasts were larger than mine but equally firm. Her shoulders were broad, her stomach flat, her hips shapely but not large; inviting I would say. Like me at that time she had no pubic hair, having had it lasered off earlier in our senior year; she'd come along with me when mine was done. I could feel that she was silky-smooth as my hand moved down to cup her pussy. I could only barely feel her inner labia protruding from her outers, definitely less than my own.

With one hand holding mine, she used the other to take the back pillow cushions from the sofa and tossed them aside, giving more room to lie down. She laid me on the sofa and straddled me. As her head bent to my breast her hair enveloped my upper chest. Her lips were on my nipple which, though already erect, began to harden like a small pebble. She worked both breasts, sucking and biting me.

Tia surprised me by saying, “I haven’t done this before. I’m only playing with your breasts this way because it’s something I like. If you want something different, please tell me.”

“I want you to continue what you’re doing, exactly like you’re doing it,” I replied.

My hands were cupping her pussy again, which had gotten very wet. Two of my fingers easily parted her lips and slid along between her small inners, down to her opening and up to her clit, which I circled with my fingertip, trying to avoid scratching at the little nub with my medium-length nails. Her pelvis began a slow rotation on my hand. She laid on top of me and I moved my hand around to her pert, muscular bottom. She pressed against me, her hips still rotating, her lips now on mine once more.

Tia held each of my breasts in a hand, while her body pressed down against me. She squeezed and massaged my areolas and nipples. I slipped a finger within her, trying to divide my attention between her lips and tongue enmeshed with mine, and administering to her pussy with my right hand.

Tia slid off me and moved me partially to my side and down, my lower legs up on the padded arm of the sofa. She lay next to me in 69. Our mouths touched each other’s sexual center and out tongues probed beneath our hoods and around our clits.

I had never felt a woman’s pudenda other than my own, and never had thought of doing it with my mouth. Tia tasted nice – slightly musky and a little salty, with a faint fragrance of body lotion. The pheromones she was releasing were

sparkling fireworks in my mind. I wanted her then like I'd never wanted anyone before.

I sensed her responding best with a firm pressure and slow movement of my tongue around her clitoris, while I sucked on her upper vulva, my lips evenly surrounding her pleasure center. For me, her lighter touch was the key. I felt us both begin to move up toward climax at about the same rate.

The feeling of intimacy with Tia was thrilling, increasingly consuming. I felt myself slip away into her and we merged as much as two women could. It was sweet and loving and impossibly arousing at the same time.

One of Tia's arms had reached around me and her hand was squeezing my small butt cheek. Her pelvis moved toward me and back in a slow rhythm, which increased in tempo as she neared the top. I felt her release my butt cheek and barely tap my bottom. I instinctively slowed my ministrations, to stretch the buildup - an inexperienced teen's attempt to make this better for her. It seemed to work.

I was actually quivering with arousal. My own build-up was both awesomely pleasurable and intensely exciting. It was much more exciting than any of the episodes I'd had with boys to that time. Every movement with Tia was tender, loving, unhurried.

I thought I must be on some other plane of existence. My attention was so focused on me and Tia together that the world receded into the distant background.

She was getting very juicy and I realized I was also. My tongue easily slid around her clit and along her slit, licking the insides of her inners and sucking them into my mouth too. She did the same with me, and that was the first time I ever realized how pleurably sensitive my inners were.

I flicked the tip of her bud with my wet tongue in between drawing circles around it. We were both getting very close. Suddenly, I realized I was about to crash into climax and I knew I couldn't stop it. I felt the orgasmic wonder tingling from my back and shoulders to my thighs as I tried as hard as possible to hold back. I lay my tongue flat against Tia's clit

and pressed as she began to shake in an attempt to slow her own arousal. Then she gripped my bottom and came, blasting my face with a squirt of juice from her pussy. That was enough and I went over the top into a blistering climax that was the best ever at that point in my life.

Waves of overwhelmingly gratifying pleasure-pain washed over me, along with an undertone of even sweeter pleasure that seemed to entwine around the deliciousness of the mainline of orgasm. I realized we were both shaking violently, using our only remaining presence of mind to continue to attend to each other's sex. I have no idea how long we lingered in the amazing bliss of togetherness and release. Time had stopped for us.

Afterward, we partially sat up, weak from what we'd done, and simply looked at each other. Tia's mouth was hanging open. I don't know what I must have looked like, but my long, blonde hair seemed to be everywhere – in my face, down my back, wrapped around my neck, in my mouth.

Finally Tia, looking as surprised as I'd ever seen her, mumbled, "That was something else ...". Then she slumped over against my naked shoulder as she fainted.

The weekend that followed was great in several ways. On Saturday, we both scored Excellent on our projects, and we each received an A+ from our Earth & Space Science teacher. Even better, I won with the most points in our category! I beat Tia, who came in a few points behind me. That meant I'd get to go on to the district science fair in the state capital, about 65 miles northeast, in three weeks.

Tia was a gracious loser, as she was gracious with everything. We celebrated by finding alone time and continuing the physical intimacy we'd discovered on Thursday. Though I'd known her as my closest friend, I was only now discovering my sexual attraction to Tia. She was obviously feeling the same way about me. This was weird because we'd been best friends for two and a half years, and nothing like this had ever happened. I'll add to that by saying

that we were both totally into boys too, and neither of us was a virgin on that count. In fact, we both had boy dates for the senior, all-night party after graduation in six weeks, though we *were* double dating.

A couple weeks passed and we were having a lot of girl-on-girl sex. I think some of our classmates were beginning to suspect that the two of us had become more than best friends, and I didn't want it to get out. At lunch that Monday, I mentioned my concerns to Tia, who blew them off by saying she didn't care if they knew everything. She said she was hot for me and that we could post it on the event sign in front of the school for all she cared.

I said I was equally into her, but I didn't want our relationship to become a public spectacle. I don't know why; I just didn't want it out there. I think I hurt her feelings, though I'm sure I didn't mean to. Anyway, one thing led to another, and we had our first big fight ever.

Somewhere, in the midst of the argument, she said something to the effect that because I'd won the science fair, I'd become an uppity bore. I'm sure she didn't mean that either – because she said it *in the heat of battle* – but it was out there anyway. That really hurt, so I told her I would drop out and, since she was in second place, she would go instead of me.

I stormed off and went to see our Earth & Space Science teacher. I told him something had come up, and I couldn't make the district fair this coming weekend, and that he could send Tia as my alternate. At the end of the day, I heard her called to his office so he could tell her the news.

She caught me after school and immediately started to apologize for what she'd said while angry. She wanted us to go see our teacher so I'd once again be the school representative to go to district.

I accepted her apology, but told her to stick the science fair where the sun didn't shine. To her credit, she didn't get angry, only sad. We sat outside of school and talked for a long time, but I wouldn't give on that, and I couldn't find a way to

explain why I was interested in keeping our sexual relationship secret. That was probably because I didn't fully understand why I felt that way.

We parted and both went home unhappy. Tia called me that night. I didn't feel like talking, but agreed to come over to her house the next day, after school. That next night her parents were out with friends so we grilled a little salmon and had a salad with the salmon on top for dinner. We talked, but neither of us would give an inch. We actually tried to make love, and did, but we were both sad and our hearts weren't in it. We were both still hurt that neither of us agreed with nor understood the feelings of the other.

After we had our paltry sex, we sat quietly for a while, then I made some stupid, hurtful quip that I can't even remember. I saw tears form in Tia's eyes as I got up to leave. "Good luck at the science fair," I said in a sarcastic tone of voice, and I left. I could be a bitch like that sometimes.

As I reflect on my actions that evening with Tia, my only excuse is that I was a young, still immature, eighteen-year-old. What was about to happen would make me look back on those last moments with my friend over and over as the years went by.

I avoided Tia over the next few days. I received several texts from her asking me to meet her, and urging me to do the science fair, but I sent back only a single word, "no."

On the weekend, I had made plans to go out with a guy in my class and two other couples for Saturday night. I wanted to get my mind off Tia. She'd headed up to the state capital for the fair anyway.

My mother called me down for lunch about one o'clock. As I walked through the family room, I saw a news bulletin on the flatscreen about a shooting. I stopped to stare at the newscast and realized that the shooting had occurred at the high school in the state capital, where the district science fair was being held.

I shouted out, "OH NO!" and collapsed onto the couch. Tia was there! Was she alright? What was happening?

I checked my phone. There was a text from Tia, but no content. A message at the end of the text said the contents were lost because they were sent when the “signal strength was low.”

I grabbed my mobile and sent a panicked text to her immediately.

She never responded. Tia was already gone.

!

Chapter 2 – Life Goes On

Domestic terrorism is what they called it. In actuality, it was an unstable kid pissed off at his girlfriend. He'd gone into the school – trench coat and all to cover the firearms. He'd found his girlfriend at her poster, pulled out a pistol, and shot at her three times. The first bullet hit her square in the chest. Before she could crumple, he aimed at her head and fired. He missed her as she started to collapse. Right then, Tia had reached the end of the aisle behind her. The bullet hit Tia in the left temple, killing her instantly.

The shooter emptied the pistol into other students, then pulled out a semiautomatic rifle and began shooting indiscriminately. Eventually, a couple guys got him from behind and wrestled him to the floor, beating him senseless in the process.

It was over. Nine wounded, four seriously, and eleven dead, including my Tia.

I should have been there. I probably wouldn't even have been walking in that aisle at that point in time. Tia's project was actually far from where she was shot.

A girl called me several days later. She'd been at the science fair, her project placed next to Tia's. She'd been talking to Tia, who was upset because she'd been trying to send me a text, and couldn't get a mobile signal in the auditorium. She said Tia had just been judged and had headed outside to text me, since she was finished, and wanted to try to get hold of me, her "best friend and lover," according to what she'd told the girl next to her – the girl who called me.

Tia only made it to the end of the aisle leading outside.

My spoiled, self-centered, unthinking, cruel, selfish actions killed the best friend I'd ever had. The most wonderful, promising person I knew growing up. That should have been me with a bullet in my brain, not my sweet Tia. There was nothing I could do, no great feat I could accomplish

in all my life – for the next 80 years – that would be worth a month of Tia’s time on earth.

I was inconsolable. I spent the summer in and out of mental facilities. By mid-August, I had become conscious again, thanks to my parents, my other friends, *Xanax* and a new drug, *Perspektiv*. The big school in Uptown was starting classes in late September. I started on time, weened myself off the drugs, and tried to throw myself into the college experience.

Life goes on; time passes; we have little control of life, and no control of time. Most every day, I took Metrorail to college in Uptown, along with more than 45,000 other students, about half of whom commuted like I did. I majored in anthropology and archeology as planned. I kept some old friends, some of whom had stayed in town for college like I did, and made new ones. What I didn’t have was a best friend.

No, that’s not exactly true. Mimi Eversole, from Coeur d’Alene, Idaho of all places, was a very good friend – probably a best friend. The problem was, she wasn’t Tia. But we hung out and double dated and commiserated about college life and growing up and all that non-academic stuff that seems so important when you’re late-teens/early-twenties and trying to find yourself, trying to find your way.

I lived at home so I had to work at it to personalize as much of the college experience as the kids on campus. That even extended to very late nights in someone’s dorm room or apartment, having those long talks, or studying, or just acting our age. Once in a while, I’d spend the night on someone’s floor or couch – if they had one. I would conscientiously text my mom, telling her I wouldn’t be home, so she wouldn’t worry. I was neither loose nor irresponsible.

I was with Mimi and a handful of other girls on one night in November. It was six months to the day that Tia had been shot. They all knew the story, of course, and most knew the date. I would have been crying in my beer, if I’d had a beer, which I didn’t. I was making the whole evening a downer and

the other girls didn't know what to do about it. One of them, a pretty, Native American girl from Arizona named Waki, went back to her place and returned with a small glass of orange juice.

"Drink this, Destiny, it'll help relax you, make you happy, and maybe a little high."

"What's in it?" I asked. It was obviously not just orange juice.

"Shrooms," Waki told me.

"Oh! You're reinforcing a really undesirable stereotype," Mimi said. Everyone, including Waki, laughed. I even chuckled a little.

"Hey, this stuff works," Waki replied, faking defensiveness.

"Yeah, and it'll make me see blue dinosaurs and flying toilet bowls with wings," I noted.

"Probably not, because there's only about half a gram in there. It usually takes two to tango."

"Two what?" Someone asked, confused.

"Two grams. This should only relax her a little."

"Oh ... that's real encouraging," I told her.

"Suit yourself." She picked up the glass and was getting ready to drink it.

I was down enough to realize that I didn't care what the stuff did to me. At that moment, I was fully aware of what I'd done to Tia, the love of my life. If it weren't for me, she would be here, or safely off at another school somewhere else. I took back the glass and downed it.

I expected to be flying the next minute but it didn't happen. Ten, then fifteen minutes passed. Finally, after about twenty minutes, I did think my spirits were a little better. I wasn't communing with talking bowling balls or clocks eating pasta either.

The conversation among us girls went on for another hour or so and then began to wind down. I left to head home before the last Metrorail train, feeling a lot better than I had earlier. Three cheers for the shrooms.

I still felt relaxed as I turned off the light and slid under the sheets in my own bed. I think I was in that state between awake and asleep when I heard someone call my name in a small voice from another room. I thought it sounded like a younger version of my mother. I sat up in bed, facing the window on the far wall. I was going to go to my parents' room to see what was wrong when someone stepped in front of the window, near the foot of my bed.

The moon illuminated her in silhouette, but my nightlight allowed me to see enough of her from the front.

It was Tia.

“What the hell?” I said quietly, to myself.

“Must be pretty good shrooms,” Tia said. “Blue meanies, I’d guess.”

That was just plain weird - especially because I had no idea what a *blue meanie* was, since I’d never heard the term before that moment. This had to stop. I reached out and turned on the light.

The light was on. Tia stood there. I gasped, then I started to cry. My Tia was there! Standing right in front of me, there in my room!

That was impossible, of course.

I didn’t care at that moment that it was impossible. I just needed to talk to Tia, tell her how sorry I was, beg her forgiveness, find out where she was, ask her what I should do, offer her my life in exchange ...

I said all those things. She looked at me impassively, save for a faint, melancholy smile that seemed to materialize only on her lips. Her eyes appeared to be looking at something far away.

“I’m lost without you, you know,” I said, trying to get a response.

“I hope that’s not true. I don’t believe that it has to be true. I wanted to help you achieve your potential, your future, not be the reason for how it turns out.”

“I’m no one without you. You defined me, Tia.”

“You’re mistaken.”

“I was always Tia’s friend. Now I’m nothing.”

“If what you say is true, Destiny, then who was I? I was, of course, Destiny’s lover.”

“No.”

“No? Then who was I? What was I?”

“You were only Tia. You needed no further definition. We all orbited about you, Tia. Me, closest of all, most tightly bound, most in your aura. I was the moon to your earth. Beside you, I was pale, colorless.”

“I’m no longer here, my Darling, my Friend, my Love. You’ll have to seek, find and fulfill your destiny without me, beyond me, Destiny.”

“But I told you, I’m lost. I’m nearly without motivation or hope. Had you been here, I would have had a focus, a *raison d’être*.”

“Oh, Destiny ...” Tia, or her image, wavered, darkened, then steadied but remained darker.

“Help me Tia!” I called out.

“Oh, Love, I can’t do anything now. I’m not of this plane any longer ...”

She began to darken further. I thought she was becoming somewhat transparent.

“Tia ...” I wasn’t sure what she was telling me. A moment later. I sensed a huge, circular room with dozens of doors leading from it all around. I knew they represented the many options emanating from what appeared to be my present

position in life. Some were ornate and beautiful; some were plain; some were tattered with chipped wood or peeling paint; some were dark and foreboding. They were all equidistant from me. I was positioned in the center of the room, giving me no way to choose one of them, though I was sure only one could be selected. Once I passed through the chosen door, I could never return to this point and select another.

I had this creeping apprehension that the obvious choices, what seemed to be the beautiful, tempting doors, might not be the right ones. My confidence had been shattered with Tia's death. With Tia gone, I felt that all of the desirable lines of my future life were entwined with things that would probably go wrong. My future was hopelessly convoluted, because the vector of my reality had been warped, my choices interlaced with discord.

I could simply give it up. What was the point without Tia? How could my life ever atone for the selfishness and self-serving obstinacy that had caused her to be lost?

At that point, I should have taken a step back and formulated a new future. Too much of what I saw ahead was tied up with Tia, who was no longer here. I had interests in so many other things: history, travel, cultures, the emergence of civilization, teaching, sexuality in contemporary societies, documentaries, writing ...

It would have been easy to walk a sufficiently different path. But I couldn't get myself to change direction. That would mean a move away from my Tia, and I couldn't do that. I feared losing her forever if I did, not being able to grasp at that time that she was already lost. More than that, I feared forgetting her, and I was culpable, if not actually guilty, in her death. My life should always remember and honor her because of that, right?

"Tia!" I shouted, "How important are my choices? Can I sit back and let the future happen? Do I have any control? Can I find you? Can I join you? Can we be happy together again?"

"Is my destiny already written?"

Though I could still make her out faintly, I heard her voice from far away whisper, “Your destiny may no longer be in your hands, Destiny.” As she said that, one-by-one, the doors began to vanish. In a few moments, only a handful remained. It seemed like a preponderance of the remaining doors were dark, foreboding.

“What do you mean, Love?” I begged her to tell me.

“As I look ahead, I see your destiny being seized from you, almost surreptitiously, such that you don’t know it’s happened until it’s a *fait accompli*. Without knowing it, your success will place you in grave danger. It’s a danger you won’t ever recognize until it’s much, much too late.

“Perhaps I could have done something, Destiny, but I’m no longer able. Chose as best you can. If you fail to do that, a truly disquieting destiny will find you, and own you. Your only escape is to turn completely around, and make something of your future that would, I’ll admit, appear mostly alien to you.”

“I can’t do that!” I shouted. “I can’t stray from the Destiny you knew! I can’t abandon your memory!”

“That is lovely, and yet so lamentable at the same time,” she said in a muted voice which I barely heard. Her diaphanous image smiled sadly and faded away.

I felt lost. Maybe everyone comes to think that some decision they made turned their life in a direction that wasn’t where they wished they’d gone. They should have known it and avoided that decision. Unfortunately, they probably didn’t realize it until years later. I knew it at that moment, and I was incapable of finding a way to prevent it.

I had the strong, insistent feeling that any choice I made as the years moved forward would result in a life less than I would have enjoyed with Tia here.

But I’d lost Tia. I could no longer lay claim to any future that included her.

I had a disturbing, haunting feeling that chilled me from head to toe, that my future was already being written, and it

would lead to the loss of everything I'd known.

What made me feel cheated, thinking back on that moment many years later, was that I was just a naïve, inexperienced eighteen-year-old. The fates were terribly unfair in expecting me to know what to do. Yet my future was being written, or at least projected firmly, and I would pay a price for not interceding right then in my own destiny – I'd pay a terrible, lasting price.

I honestly didn't know what to do with Tia's thoughts or her advice. I didn't know where I was going, except to classes, on a dig from time to time, out with the boy du jour, to my job at Macy's or hanging with friends. I'd decided, by ignorance or neglect, to go where my experiences took me. Whatever happened, I deserved it. I had lost my Tia. I was following a path that wandered through the woods in which she'd perished; I wasn't blazing any new trail of my own design. I would pay the toll the fates charged me.

Not all my memories of Tia weighed heavily on me. There's no doubt that those three, high-school years of Tia's influence had gotten me into clothes and makeup and exercise and looking my best, whether dressed up for proms or down for cleaning out the garage. That uniquely feminine world view was tempered by my streak of fashion recklessness that used to crack Tia up.

Even when I was with Tia, I fulfilled a need to demonstrate my individuality. From time to time I liked to be a little unconventional or bold in my appearance – in the clothes I wore and how I looked overall. I'm sure Tia's glamor and evident sexiness had the larger influence on me, but my rebellious tendency went all the way back to when I was very young. When I was five, I decided that I needed to wear all my clothes inside-out, and my pull-over shirts inside-out and backwards, sometimes with both my head and one arm through the neck opening. That went on for months. It's hard to believe that my parents were that understanding for that long.

Being a child who would often march to the beat of a different drummer, I wasn't satisfied with wearing my clothes backwards only at home, but I had to wear them like that to school also. I absolutely knew my clothes needed to be worn that way, in order for me to feel *fashionable*. I wanted people to notice me. When I was older I enjoyed dressing sexy and capturing the eye of those around me, but I did try to draw the line at *slutty*. At least, I think I did. I now know that slutty is only in the eye of the beholder.

When I was older, what I did seemed innocent enough. I would leave a button or two undone on my blouse or wear a mini-skirt with spiked heels that looked nice. I wouldn't wear patterned black nylons that would make me look like a hooker, though sometimes I would wear pretty heavy makeup that sort of gave me that more in-your-face-sexy look. My ears were only pierced once - I didn't have holes in any other part of me. I didn't have tattoos. I mostly tried to be edgy, without looking tarty – maybe save for the heavier makeup. That was my opinion, anyway.

I'll admit that I liked to dance commando in a mid-thigh, sweet little evening dress, but that's a long story in itself, and I have a better one to relate now – to give you an idea of how my personality developed after I was left without Tia, post high school.

Of course, that assumes I can still accurately remember the story. My thoughts get muddled sometimes. The only stories that are totally clear to me involve Tia.

I get confused all the time, truth be told. I'm pretty sure that's not my fault. What's happened to me has done that to me, as far as I can tell.

If everything I've experienced happened to you, you'd be at least as befuddled as I am; I'd bet on it. Especially if you're a *matiahng*, a submissive. I never thought that I was, but I am now. They messed with my mind, you see.

I've come to the conclusion, having lived among these weird, misguided, tribal people for years, that it's not important that I tell you the truth, only that I give you an

explanation. Or several explanations. They can even be mutually exclusive. The more ways something could have happened, the truer it is, right? That's called mythopoetic thought. The ancient Hebrews related their experiences that way, because that's how they viewed reality. Don't believe that makes sense, that it actually happened? Check out the book of Genesis: two conflicting accounts of creation. Mythopoetic thought in action. Hooray Yahweh. Mythopoetic's sister process, mythopoeic thought, adds to this concept. That's when every [significant] event is believed to originate from the will of a superior being.

No. That doesn't mean my Master.

Here's what I'm trying to tell you, bottom line: there are a large group of societies on Earth that don't think about anything, including life and reality, like you do. By and large, they wouldn't even bother to read this tale. But you are. You expect cause and effect. You expect "I think this is right, because of ..."

Sorry ... not gonna happen here. I, Destiny, fell under the control, and therefore the destiny, of people who viewed the world differently than I did. Differently than you do. Everything that follows is based on that premise: what they did to me was totally justified in their world view. And that understanding of reality wasn't what you would believe, nor what you would accept for yourself, or your loved ones.

But it was the reality that defined my future. You may feel that I was treated unjustly and, by your standards and what mine used to be, I was. But that carried no weight. You'll see, when you get a glimpse of my future. At that point, we were not in Kansas anymore.

Where was I? Oh ... yeah ... I was about to tell you something of my last teenage year, so you'd understand the earliest experiences that related to how I got to whom I became.

I was still trying to find myself in Tia's absence. I wasn't plotting a course as much as I was giving in to the opportunity of the moment. I thought I'd essentially recovered from Tia's

death a year earlier but I'd come to the conclusion that it was always going to be with me. It had left me drifting and thoughts of her were never farther than the edge of my consciousness. I hadn't *seen* her again since my shrooms' experience in the fall.

Back to me in the vignette I was trying to relate to you. My college friend, Mimi, used to dare me to do things. It was a rare occasion when I was able to resist her dares. Freshman year, during spring break, Mimi stayed with me in River's Edge instead of returning to Coeur d'Alene. Neither of us had the money for a spring break on either coast, or in Mexico. She and I went to the River's Edge Galleria to hang-out, rather than actually shop. I worked at the Macy's at a different mall, and didn't want to go there on a day off.

It was in late March. We felt quite grown-up by then having almost finished a year of college, and we were completely full of ourselves because we felt so much more confident than we had when the school year began. We were now past that exciting but scary transition period. I was both reckless and rash.

Knowing we were heading for the Galleria, I wore a tight pair of jeans with spike heels and a white linen blouse with puffy sleeves (I called it a peasant's blouse, before I knew what genuine peasants actually wore, which is usually nothing above the waist). Over that I wore a fitted leather vest that laced up the front. I liked to leave the top part untied or at least loose so I wouldn't feel all confined. Since the linen blouse had a low neckline, I thought I looked pretty hot. Mimi did my makeup and I did hers. Each of us painted the other with more eyeliner, false eyelashes, eyebrow pencil, lip gloss and so on than we normally wore – just for the fun of being different that day. Leaving home, I'll admit that I looked mature, primed, and ready for any kind of sexual encounter.

I had ten days without classes; I felt better than I had since Tia's death. I was in my last teen year, and I was horny.

We were walking around the mall, taking our sweet time to look at everything, and we stopped in the pet store. I'm not a fan of those places because I don't like the idea of selling

animals like you'd sell video games or shoes or anything else in the mall. That said, we had time to kill and they had the cutest little ragdoll kittens in the window. We stopped in and the sales clerk - knowing how to work us - got one out and let us play with her in their enclosed play area. She was the cutest little ball of fur and was friendly like a puppy, which is typical of the ragdoll breed. I couldn't help but crack up at her antics, her tail was wagging like a dog so hard she would fall over from time to time. I just adored her but when I picked her up and was nuzzling her nose-to-nose, she picked that time to pee. Of course the stream of pee hit me, but at least it was only down my sleeve and not in my face. Nevertheless, it *really* smelled of cat pee. I had instantly become a litter box, and I had the aroma to go with it.

It was still early and we weren't ready to leave the mall yet so I thought about buying a new shirt or blouse or something to wear (I'd use any excuse to buy more clothes) but Mimi told me I should just go in the bathroom and take off the blouse and only wear the leather vest. I was reluctant because that would leave me in tight jeans, heals and a sleeveless leather vest, which only covered my front and back but not the sides because of the way it was laced. I wouldn't be able to wear my bra because it would look terrible with the open sides of the vest. I could feel my bravado, the cocky confidence I'd felt earlier, slipping away. A brief thought crossed my mind like a scrolling sign I could almost see: yeah, Tia could have pulled that off, but not I.

So I declined - until Mimi dared me. I was a sucker for a dare. At that point, I thought I would at least see what I looked like in the bathroom mirror. I could always change my mind and put my kitten-piss-stinky blouse on again if I needed to.

I went into the women's *lounge*, the mall's term, I called it the "john" like everyone else. Who was "John," anyway? Oh yeah, some godson of Elizabeth I. There are a lot of simple or important things I can't remember, but somehow, I remember that. Probably because no one messing with my mind thought to wipe it out. Don't believe me about "John?" His name was something like "John Hamilton," and he invented the flushing toilet. Like over 400 years ago.

I didn't even know they had toilets then, flushing or otherwise. They had trees and leaves, right? Maybe holes in a wood plank?

I was in the john, at the mirror, and thankfully, I was alone. I took off my pissy shirt, washed off my arm, slipped back into my vest, and examined myself as I fastened it up.

Whoa! That was way too much skin, in newly-uncovered places! It looked like I needed to put the pissy shirt back on. I started to take the vest off, hoping no one would enter the john right then, when the mirror shimmied and I saw someone off to the left side, behind me.

It was Tia. She scared the shit out of me.

“HUH?” I gasped in surprise. I hadn't been anywhere near shrooms in six months! Only that one time in Mimi's dorm.

Tia's lips were moving and I strained to listen. She paused, and I got the impression that she had started over. I hoped so, because I'd completely missed what she'd said before.

“Destiny, you have to be yourself. Decide who that is, and be that person.”

Yeah, good advice, Obi-Wan. But I had no idea who I was. You're supposed to figure that out over four years of college, right?

Tia was obviously expecting more from me than I was ready for as a not-quite college sophomore.

“I can't, Tia. I need you to shore me up.” I said that being surprised, confused, and probably wanting more help than I even needed.

“That's not an option – for either of us,” she told me. “Dearest Destiny, it will get harder ...”

And she flickered and was gone. I'm sure she'd never really been there.

I decided that it must have been the lighting. Tia is gone; Tia is gone.

Shaking, I stood there with my eyes closed for a long time, seeking some composure. Finally, I forced myself back to my image and tried to judge if I were tarty, slutty, sultry, acceptable but risqué, desirable, pretty, ugly, or plain gross. With my eyes open, I stared for many more minutes. I could feel Tia still nearby and I had a strong sense that she appreciated and approved of how I looked.

Actually, I looked REALLY HOT! I've always liked my broad, gymnastics-enhanced shoulders. Wearing a sleeveless leather vest left them mostly naked and was just plain sexy. It was even sexier since everyone could see the sides of my chest all the way up and down to my waist, except for two narrow leather strips that connected the front and back. Without a bra, if I moved just right, it was possible to catch a titillating side glimpse of my cute, modest-sized breast. Usually. The bottom of the vest didn't quite go down to the top of my low-cut jeans so I showed some skin there too, above my trim waist. I suppose I looked a little like a biker chick. I felt so sexy that it's hard to even articulate it. It gets me horny just writing about it years later.

Of course, almost everything gets me horny now. I wish I could do something about it ... yeah, really. You'll see eventually, if you stick with my story. But I am digressing.

Mimi and I wandered the mall after I decided to leave the lady's lounge in just my vest and jeans - and I loved it. I felt so free and, surprisingly, not embarrassed or timid or ... anything. Most people wouldn't see much unless they were close to me, but I did get a few looks. Or maybe it was my long, highlighted blonde hair.

As we walked by Spencer's, Mimi pulled me in, telling me I needed a couple tattoos to complete the look. I knew immediately that resistance was futile. We bought a few, went back to the lounge, and she put a very real-looking, two-inch rose on my upper right breast, so that it was easily seen from the plunging lines of the vest. She also put a barbed-wire tat around my upper left arm. That took a while to get right. Both fake tats were very real looking, and they made me feel even sexier. They both lasted about two weeks, as I recall.

Of course now, the tattoos I have will last forever. And I never picked out a single one of them.

After we ate Japanese stir-fry at the food court, Mimi decided to take it a step further and dare me once again. She wanted me to loosen the leather laces up the front and take them out of the top section of the vest. I worked on slowly unlacing them while we sat there in the food court. She kept urging me to display more and more. I ended up taking out the lacing completely, which meant nothing was holding my vest together above the top of my boobs. I also loosened the section just below that. Now anyone could see lots of cleavage - such as I had back then - which wasn't that much, but it was firm and sexy. If I looked down I could actually see my belly button beyond where my small boobs parted. Still, as long as I didn't twist my torso, the vest stayed together pretty well. It wasn't like you could see my nipples or anything.

We wandered around the mall some more and by this time my exhibitionism was in control of how I felt and I was hot to trot. We had quite a few double-takes from people and even attracted four, early-twenty-something guys who tried to pretend they weren't following us. I remember distracting one older guy who was with his wife. He stumbled over her trying to see me. I suppose I got stares from just about everyone. The only people who didn't stare at me were two gorgeous, young, black women, who were in line next to us at Aunt Annie's. I thought at first that they might be twins. They were laughing and talking, clearly having a good time, and ignoring me completely. One had an eye slightly turned in so it was difficult to tell where she was looking. The other was looking right at me, and my promiscuous display didn't get so much as a slightly raised eyebrow.

I was a little put-out, because they were so pretty, and I thought I also was. My sense of propriety demanded that they should acknowledge another beauty like themselves. After staring at them and trying to draw their attention, I decided they were neither black nor twins, they just had the same short, dark, kinky-curly hair. I was actually about to say something to get their undivided attention when I noticed the canes they

were each holding in the hand away from me. They were blind!

River's Edge was a haven for handicapped people – almost half of the population – so it wasn't unusual to encounter disabled people there all the time. Since the cute blind girls couldn't see me, I immediately felt better, though now I was even more anxious to show off.

Don't think me completely wanton at that time; I would never have been that exhibitionist in most other places, like a park or on the street. I knew nobody would make an unwelcomed move on Mimi or me with the stores and mall cops around.

It was getting later so we made one final stop. I had noticed a cute guy in a computer accessories store earlier so we went back and we pretended to shop for small speakers. He was nice to look at but a little bit the geeky nerd type. He came across as a bit nervous and uncertain. He probably didn't have much experience talking with an overtly sexy girl in his store - or anywhere else, I suppose. I did ask him to show me a few speakers and I let him ogle me to his heart's content.

There was nobody else in the store so we took our time. Feeling brash and totally into teasing the guy, I did the ol' leaning forward routine a few times. He soon overcame his nervousness and sort of played the game along with me. For example, he dropped a patch cord at his feet and I bent down and picked it up for him, standing back up a little slower than necessary, to afford him a good view down the almost open front of my vest.

For a little while I let Mimi have at him while I browsed in another part of the store. Her clothes were certainly sexy, though not as conspicuously flirtatious as mine. Over in one corner, I took out the last set of laces from the vest so all I had to hold it in place were the position of my boobies in the fitted front, and its natural tendency to try to close. At this point, the vest wasn't laced anywhere in the front; the two halves gapped a couple inches apart. A sneeze from across the room would have opened it up, revealing my little knockers in all their 19-year-old glory.

It was beyond suggestive. When I walked back over to the cute clerk and Mimi, I thought both his and her eyes were going to pop out. At one point, unable to resist it, I turned sideways quickly and the vest came open. There was no way he didn't see my entire titty, nipple and all.

After a few more minutes we left. I did feel a little guilty that we didn't buy anything from him, but it was okay in the end. A couple weeks later we had the first of several dates and we remained good friends until ... until I was gone.

He totally forgave me for playing with him like that, but he always liked to see my tits. I wonder how he is now. He'd never recognize me in a hundred years. He wouldn't recognize my tits either.

From the computer store we walked back towards the exits. An older, mall cop with a bright shock of gray hair decided it was a good time to make his presence known. He was very nice but he made it clear that the Galleria would be closing shortly. He asked if we needed an escort to our vehicle so we would be safe. It was sweet because he pretended to ignore my state of *undress*, and mentioned it was a service they offered to all women at closing time. I didn't believe his story but we let him walk us to my car. To this day I'm not certain if he were escorting us for safety reasons, for ogling reasons, or if he had been told we weren't welcome anymore and he needed to kick us out of the mall.

Though I didn't often realize it, I was socially adrift without Tia, searching for whom and what I was. Tia was nothing if not a classy, classic beauty, with a grace and elegance that was far beyond her age. I learned so much from her, and I became a far better person for it. After she was gone, I felt inadequate, lost and somewhat undone. Though I don't understand how, those feelings aroused a deep-seated vein of exhibitionism that grew while I was in college. Eventually, my unconscious flirting was going to get me into a lot of trouble. More than once. And the trouble seemed to get worse each time it happened.

I remember sometimes, but I'm not much for flirting anymore. There's no reward during or afterward for me.

There's only punishment.

Flirting became pointless after I had been here for a while. In the Sudan. Before I came to the Sudan, it had grown to a way of life, an occupation. I was a professional coquette, among other things.

Now I can't go home. Home to River's Edge or America that is. This is my home now. This dirty, dusty, stinking village. I'm lost somewhere in the Sudan.

Chapter 3 - Landslide

I went on my first dig when I was a junior in college. While I was an archeology major with a minor in anthropology, my geek side was firing on all cylinders. I managed to get into an excavation program sponsored by several universities. Most of the digs were a week or two at a time, at various places in the Americas. Those experiences served me well when it came time to apply for grad school, and I had several attractive opportunities. I decided to stay relatively close to home, and chose another huge state university in the state capital – the city where my Tia was killed - about 65 miles from River's Edge.

I could have gone away and gained experiences on one of the coasts or elsewhere, but I had a serious boyfriend at the time. At least, I thought our relationship was serious. I hadn't decided how that was going to play-out over the long term, especially if I made a career out of my favorite activity, scrounging in the dirt and sand and rock for glimpses of ancient civilizations, the people who lived in them, and probing into how they viewed the world and what they did both day-to-day and on special occasions.

I hadn't "seen" Tia since her appearance in the mall mirror, though I'd dreamt of her many times. The dreams were all those stupid, frustrating dreams where you're supposed to be at home, but it doesn't look like home, and you're with friends who don't look like they normally do. All except for Tia, that is. In my fuzzy, poorly formed subconscious yearnings, Tia always looked like Tia, smelled like Tia, and acted like Tia. Unfortunately, she never appeared to notice me until right at the end of the dream. She would glance at me, her face inscrutable – and then I'd wake up. Every time.

That pattern continued until one night when I was in the throes of deciding about grad school and my boyfriend, with whom I was living. In that dream, Tia looked at me and, instead of waking up, I heard her say, "Decide for you, Destiny, before someone else does."

“What about my guy?” I asked her.

“A ship passing in the night,” she said. “The fates are closing about you. Your chance of fulfilling your own destiny is poised on the edge and could fall either way.”

And then I woke up, no wiser for having listened to Tia’s riddles. In my heart of hearts, I thought they were my own riddles, projected on a friend and lover who only (imperfectly) existed in my memory.

By the time I was finishing my Master’s degree, with a decent thesis, the boyfriend was history and I was free to go where I wanted. I was trying to decide between entering a PhD program - where I was or elsewhere - and trying to get hired-on at an interesting dig in some exotic location.

In the end, I couldn’t decide. I lacked the grounding my relationship with Tia had given me. I suffered for lack of ideas from my trusted, valued, much-respected friend and lover, even six years after she was gone. I chose to apply to multiple places for different opportunities. Unable to completely seize Destiny’s destiny, I’d let their acceptance and/or individual offers decide for me. Years ago, when I was with Tia, I always thought maybe we’d decide to launch our careers together, maybe after finishing complimentary PhDs at one university, or two close by each other. Now, I’d completely ignored Tia’s advice to decide for myself, commit to a future, and grab onto what I wanted, challenging the world to deter me from my chosen goals, my destiny. At the time, I didn’t realize what I’d done, what I’d committed myself to.

I would let fate decide my destiny. I’d go where the most attractive offer was: to school to finish my PhD, to work somewhere, or off to an interesting dig.

During my Master’s studies, I’d spent my research time at a major dig in Central America, and at another in the Middle East, with a young, female visiting professor, Dyana Berkley, who would become the second reader of my Master’s thesis. She became something of a mentor and confidant to me, which

I suppose was predictable, given the dearth of citable women in contemporary archeology.

I was completing said dissertation and applying to PhD programs when I got a call from Dr. Berkley. She'd been funded to open a new site in the Middle East, this time off the coast of El-Agamy, Egypt in southern Mediterranean waters near Alexandria, but away from the more explored areas. The project would include lots of underwater work, which really excited me. That included diving, along with manned and robotic submarine work, with the real possibility of utilizing domed habitats, and establishing a permanent domed habitat should the early excavations look promising enough to warrant it.

I'd also get living expenses and a small stipend.

The opportunity was everything that excited me, and my research there would count toward my PhD at the University of Florida, where Dr. Berkley was based. I was over-the-moon with the thrill of this opportunity. Ignoring all the other offers I had, I accepted immediately.

Tia was there, at the foot of my bed, when I awakened in the middle of that night. Her face was faintly illuminated, but there was no obvious light source. She looked at me with a knowing smile, a smile that said she was happy for me. Her eyes, though, said something else. They appeared to be looking off into the distance again, a distance of place or time – I couldn't tell which. It was the same gaze I'd seen the first time she'd appeared. Once again, her eyes seemed to reflect a knowing sadness. I sat up, intending to ask her what she saw, but she was gone.

Was she telling me I was on the right path, or the wrong one? Her lips enjoined one thing, her eyes another.

In some way, she seemed to be saying that I'd made the right decision, but that it would lead me somewhere I didn't want to go. Somewhere that would make both me and Tia unhappy. I struggled to understand. Would it truly make me unhappy? If I didn't like it, I could always resign and return to River's Edge, right?

Certainly, it was at least worth a chance. As for Tia – she couldn't really be there in my bedroom, I knew. Her image was simply a manifestation of my own mind trying to make sense of my own future, and trying to evaluate the decisions I'd already made. I thought my future held challenges, but that they were understood, and that I could work through them. I'd do an interesting dig, get some PhD credit, decide whether or not to write it up (or get forced to do a paper by Dr. Berkley), and then decide what to do next.

I'd committed to the future I'd chosen. The wheels were in motion. I faced the rest of my studies with confidence.

The final weeks of my Master's program passed, and then I was done.

Thus it was that when I finished school in June, two months after I'd turned 25 years old and with my newly-minted Master's degree in hand, I bade my parents farewell for what I expected would be the better part of a year. I flew from the metroplex to Rome. Relations between the US and the current Egyptian government were strained over religious issues of course, so direct flights from any US city, even from New York to Cairo, had been suspended.

The Italians apparently didn't care about such things to the same extent. I landed at Leonardo da Vinci – Fiumicino Airport, changed terminals, and boarded my Alitalia flight to Cairo. Dr. Berkley herself met me there as I emerged from customs into the crowded, bustling Cairo International Airport, by far the busiest in Egypt.

I'd been to Egypt some years before and I'd loved it. After losing Tia, that had been the trip I wanted for high school graduation. Most of my time on that trip was spent in and around small villages along the banks of the Nile River. I really enjoyed that area because the people seemed so very happy, despite extreme poverty. To me, it was something of a celebration of the basic goodness of the human spirit. Yeah ... that was back when I believed there was a basic goodness.

I'd tightly packed my things into two modest bags and a carry-on. Dyana, as she told me to call her, had hired a driver whom she called on her mobile. He met us just outside the arrivals area, popped my things into the trunk, and we headed out of the airport and onto the Ring Road around Cairo, to avoid the packed, intensely crowded city as best we could. Eventually we left the Ring Road and proceeded northwest towards Alexandria.

The temperature was a warm 80 degrees F or so and the driver left the windows down. That would have been comfortable except for the dust that seemed to be everywhere. The dust didn't let up at all until we were almost at the sea near Alexandria. The gritty air gave way to a pleasant salty breeze off the Mediterranean, though by then, I felt like every exposed inch of my face, arms and legs was covered with a fine, orange-brown powder.

The base for our archeology operation was a former Turkish frigate, the *Barbaros Hayreddin Pasa*, which Dyana had acquired with her very impressive grant money. The ship was moored offshore near the small peninsula, Jazirat al Marabit, between Alexandria and El-Agamy. We took a small launch out to it. Dyana showed me to my tiny cabin, and helped me figure out where to stow the few belongings I'd brought.

The *Barbaros* stayed anchored at that spot while we had a surprisingly good, Mediterranean-cuisine meal on board later that evening. I met everyone in the crew and all but one of the archeologists and students connected to the dig. For the first time, I was an archeologist, not a student. My firm little 34 B cups were bursting with pride.

We spent the next several days at anchor in the same spot while we opened dozens of boxes of new or newly-arrived equipment, set it up, and familiarized ourselves with the operation of much of it. Dyana and I did a few test scuba dives, including one using Sea-Doo Seascooters which I hadn't tried before. It was fun being pulled along without having to work at swimming. The Seascooters would allow us

to do efficient, close-up surveys of the sea bottom and mark spots for more detailed investigation.

On the second day Dyana and I were doing a lot of work on deck – just the two of us. The day was very warm, but there was a constant breeze, usually from the northwest. My straight, lower-back-length hair was tied in a ponytail, but the wind still managed to whip it all over. I finally paused long enough to plait it, in the hope that it would just dangle out of the way, down my back. The problem was that I spent so much time crawling around boxes on the deck that the braid kept getting caught on everything as I'd bend over. I tried arranging the braid like a headband around my head and shoving it under my baseball cap, but the cap was too tight to be comfortable. When I loosened it, the braid fell out, right onto the hot, oil-covered shaft that had been lying on the sun-drenched deck, which I was gingerly (it was really hot) installing into the propulsion sleeve of a robot submersible.

I swear that I heard my hair sizzle – though it was probably my imagination. It did appear that I'd gotten an instant, hot-oil treatment on the tips of my hair! At least my split ends would be happy.

Dyana was watching me and my hair shenanigans, a faint, knowing smile on her face. She didn't say anything, though. The short bangs of her modified Louise Brooks, less-than-chin-length, stylish bob were cut all the way across her forehead, to where her hairline began at each side. That was enough that even with the wind behind her, she didn't have hair in her eyes, and usually the wind was blowing her hair back from her face.

I noticed, out of the corner of my eye, that she continued to watch me struggle with the submersible assembly for over an hour and finally said, "Let's take a break."

One of the great things about most digs is that there's always beer to be had. Maybe that's because archeologists have uncovered so many remains of ancient breweries, that they figure the modern age should maintain the tradition. The *Barbaros's* stock of beer was plentiful and we took two out of

a cooler on the deck and kicked back for a break with a couple cold ones.

We both looked over the work we'd completed, and what we had yet to do. The rest of the team was in various places below deck, preparing for the survey work ahead. At the moment, we were still the only team members on deck.

"It's never going to work, you know," Dyana said.

"It better work. We need both submersibles!" I responded.

"I don't mean the robot subs," she replied. "They'll work; they're brand new, high-end, after all."

"I don't understand," I said. I didn't get it.

"It's your hair, dear. It's way, way, way too long. It's a serious inconvenience while you're working on the deck, and it will be an outright hazard under water."

"Wha ... what?" But I knew what.

"Gotta cut your hair. The shorter the better. Today. You have two choices: I cut it now and it's done, or we make a big *coming of age celebration* about it, and we call everyone together to do it, and let them cheer you on."

From Tia's influence years ago, I'd come to like being the center of attention more than most, but I didn't want an audience for this! In fact, I REALLY, REALLY didn't want my hair cut! It's been long since ... It's ALWAYS been long!

"You wanna cut my hair? Cut all of it? SHORT?" I swear my voice rose an octave with each sentence.

"Not only do I want to; I insist on it."

"My long hair? You want me to cut it?"

"No, not really."

I was both confused and relieved at that point. "Then I don't understand ..."

"I don't want *you* to cut it, *I* want to cut it *myself*. In fact, I am stipulating that it must be cut, if you're planning to stay

on this dig.”

“Really? But ... but ... but ...”

“Do I cut it now, or gather everyone together to watch? If you don’t decide, I’m just going to cut it now.”

“With what?”

“An acetylene torch ...”

“WHAT?”

“Oh for heaven’s sake. I was just joking. I’ll go to my cabin, grab the implements I need and be back here in less than a minute.”

“Dyana, I don’t want this. I love my hair.”

“Look, you’re an archeologist. You work in windy, dusty, dry, wet, hot, terrible climates, about 90 percent of the time. You’re in one now. That school-girl hair isn’t compatible with your chosen profession.”

Those words got to me. I HAD chosen my profession. I’ve never wanted to be anything else. That was more important than ever – I was doing it for me, and for Tia, whose similar, compatible dreams would never be realized. But I didn’t want to give up my hair!

“Dyana, I want to keep my hair. It will take me five years or more to grow it back this long.”

“No it won’t.”

“Of course it will. It’s almost 30 inches long! That’s more like six years!”

“It won’t take that long, because you’re never gonna grow it back like this. You don’t need it! You’re not in junior high anymore. It’s time to be all grown up.”

In that, she was surprisingly right.

“NO!” I shouted. “I don’t wanna have it cut!”

“Listen to yourself. For a professional, you sound surprisingly like an eleven-year-old. It’s time to cut it, and I’m going to save you lots of trouble. Wait here.”

“Dyana!” I called after her, but she disappeared through a hatch under a bulkhead.

I chugged the rest of my beer, then claimed another one. What was I gonna do? I couldn't let her cut my hair off, could I? She seemed determined, and she was the boss. I didn't want to get on her bad side, but I wanted my beautiful, long hair! Why you ask? Because I loved it! And besides, it had always been long.

She returned in less than five minutes with a folding chair and a small travel bag. “Sit here,” she insisted.

I didn't move. I didn't want to move. Even if I'd been willing, my own fear was keeping me rooted to the spot where I was sitting, my back against a porthole, protecting my braid.

She patted the seat of the folding chair, a confident smile on her face. She was scaring me right then. I looked into her eyes. They were actually quite lovely eyes, a deep brown that complimented her short, dark, luxuriously brown hair. Hair that was the length she wanted mine to be, I was sure.

I tried a compromise. Maybe just a trim would satisfy her. “Just a couple inches, that's all,” I told her.

“Okay, three inches,” she said, “no more.”

“Two inches,” I tried.

“Alright, two inches,” she patted the seat. I got up, walked over, and sat down. I didn't see how a two-inch trim was going to hurt anything, though I couldn't understand why she thought that was going to help any.

She pulled a surprisingly large scissors out of the bag and walked behind me. “No more than two inches,” I said.

“Agreed,” she said.

A moment later there was this awful scrunch above my braid, and it separated completely from my head!

I shot up out of the seat. “WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO?” I shouted, surely loud enough to be heard on shore, miles away. As my hair fell forward into my face, I reached around the back and felt that my braid was gone! I felt her

hand on my shoulder, pushing me back down as she placed the severed braid in my lap.

“AH ... AH ... AH ...!” I was so shocked I couldn’t even speak. I heard the snip of a smaller scissors toward the top back of my head.

“DYANA! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU’RE DOING?”

“Cutting your hair to no more than two inches,” she said, innocently.

I heard another snip. She was still cutting in the back! I heard another snip and started to get up. Dyana pushed me back down with a warning that, “If you don’t sit still, you’ll end up with your hair all hacked up.” There was another snip!

“Stop it!” I yelled. She could not have misunderstood me in the first place. I told her so.

“You said no more than two inches, so I’m making it no more than two inches,” she said, trying to sound innocent. Snip!

“I meant not to cut more than two inches and you know it!” I yelled at her, starting to get up again.

“It’s too late now, anyway. You’re about to join the short-hair sisterhood which, as an archeologist, you should be a member of already. You’ll like it, if you sit still so that I can do a good job.” She was combing my hair out and snipping the whole time she was talking.

At this point, it was too late and I knew it. I was really pissed off, and I don’t get that angry very easily. I’m one of the most even-tempered people you’ll ever meet. At that moment, though, I was ready to throw Dyana overboard with a chunk of metal fastened to her neck! The tears started to come and my shoulders were shaking as I tried, now angry with myself, to stem the tide.

She stopped for a moment and stepped around in front of me. She was breathing heavily and I could actually see her very erect nipples pressing tightly against her T-shirt. Before I could do or say anything else, she looked into my tear-filled

eyes, bent down, and kissed me passionately on the lips, her tongue probing and her hand clenching my hair behind my head, forcing my lips tightly against her own.

Everything seemed to change in half a heartbeat. I was both shocked and almost instantly aroused. This beautiful, successful woman was kissing me! I put my hands on either side of her face and held her there. We attacked each other with our mouths and tongues. We were both breathing in gasps. One of my hands reached down to her breast and felt the rigid nipple through her shirt. There was no bra in the way. I began to rub it between finger and thumb, easily at first, then more vigorously. The moment of passion extended to several minutes. Then Dyana pulled back a few inches and just looked at me with this incredible expression of passion and need.

“What the hell happened?” I asked breathless.

“I’ve wanted to cut your hair from the day I first saw you on that original dig we shared,” she said. “As I was doing it, I became overwhelmed with the need to kiss you, to possess your hair and your mouth.”

“Cutting my hair did that ...?”

“Yes,” she interrupted, not letting me finish. “And don’t expect me to apologize. I love that I did it, and I’m going to love it even more when I finish.”

“But ... but ... I didn’t want my hair cut!”

“I’ll make it up to you.”

“How? It’ll take years to grow it back!”

“Like I said, you will never grow it back. Now that you’re a woman, you can put aside the things of a child. I’ll make you the woman you’re destined to be.” There was no mistaking her words or her tone. Unbelievably, this stunning, successful woman wanted me!

In a way, it was as though Tia had returned to me, all grown up, but still in charge.

I was speechless. I knew I should be even angrier, but I was too consumed by those few minutes of spontaneous

passion. How did she even know I was bi? As I recall, I was screwing a male grad student when we were on that dig. Either she didn't know that, saw through it, or had some bidar that I'd never heard of.

Though I continue to be attracted to men, you know I swing both ways given the right partner on the right occasion. Most of my sexual experiences to that point in time had been with men, but my first kiss was with a girl, a friend at an international school in Brussels which I attended in the eighth grade. Of course, we both claimed that we did it so we could practice for when a boy kissed us. I liked it, though, and I like looking at beautiful people, women included, and perhaps Dyana especially. At that moment, I was at least a little sexually conflicted and still shocked by the cutting of my hair, and even more, I'll admit, by Dyana's moves on me.

Despite my distraction, I knew I was still angry - very angry - about losing my hair. I reached up to my crown, grabbed a handful of the now far-shorter hair and yelled at Dyana again, "How are you gonna make up for this? Tell me that!"

"Sit still, let me finish, and I'll show you."

"You think fucking me will make up for butchering my hair?"

She stepped back, still standing in front of me, looked directly at me with that same, passionate expression, tilted her head slightly to her right, and simply said, "Yes."

I couldn't believe it! Any of it! I still couldn't imagine that she'd cut my hair, not even with the braid laying in my lap. I couldn't believe she'd come on to me or kissed me. And I really couldn't believe she'd want to have sex with me. She was gorgeous, for God's sake! And an established, respected archeologist! Yet she wanted me!

Did I want her? I hadn't thought about it before; it had never, ever occurred to me. The answer was an unequivocal yes, of course. I was attracted to her - yeah, in that way. I suppose I'd always been, somewhere below the surface of my thoughts. If someone had asked me about it, I would have said

that she was as out-of-reach as my favorite movie stars, Leonardo DiCaprio and Charlize Theron.

If I'd been given a choice, would I have traded my hair to be with her?

I didn't know. What difference did that make, anyway? My beautiful, long, shiny, straight, blonde and highlighted hair was history!

"How are you cutting my hair?" I asked her, no friendliness apparent in my voice.

"However I want. Short. I want you and I want you with short hair."

"Why, Dyana? Why do you want me, but with short hair? I never thought you paid any more attention to me than was necessary for our work to get done."

"I guess you're not as perceptive as you think you are. Cutting your hair is an awesome high for me. Why do I care about how you look? Because you turn me on and I'm an admitted, short-hair lover, when it comes to women. In addition, mostly, I prefer women. That's why."

"What about how I feel?"

"I guarantee that I'll make you feel terrific. As far as your hair goes – and it's pretty much gone - you'll end up loving it. Give it a couple weeks. Trust me."

"TRUST YOU? After what you did without my permission?"

"Yes. Though one could argue that you told me to cut it to less than two inches long."

"I TOLD YOU NO MORE THAN TWO INCHES!"

"Exactly my point. See ..."

She was trying to keep from laughing and I was somewhere between joining her and punching her out. She was only about an inch taller than I am. I could take her. Of course, she was holding a scissors, but now it was a small one.

Instead of swinging at her, I said, “You’re too smart to misinterpret what I said about cutting my hair and you know it.”

“Okay, I’ll concede that. But you’ve got to admit there’s room for argument.” Now she was laughing outright. I was struggling to stay angry. I reached up for my hair again; I knew that feeling it would refuel my anger. She gently moved my hand down to my lap.

“Now sit still while I concentrate on this cut. I want it to look great. I know it will, if you’ll stop wiggling around. Did you know I used to cut hair when I was in college and grad school?”

“No,” I said, my arms now folded across my chest. My body language was pretty clear: I wasn’t interested in what she had to say. At this point, I was resigned to my fate, but pouting. I think the only reason I hadn’t gone ballistic was that I had too much respect for Dyana as a professional. That and those kisses ...

“Cutting hair was a great way to earn money. Besides, I charged those poor – literally poor – students below market rates for a great haircut. It was all under the table too, so I didn’t pay taxes on it. I had plenty of regular customers, and made a decent amount of money doing something I liked.”

“What, ruining the hair of every woman you screwed?”

“Everyone looked better when I finished with them, regardless of whether they left right after the cut or sometime later. Honestly though, there weren’t many that I asked to stay. I’m very, very particular when it comes to lovers.”

“Is that supposed to make me feel special?”

“I don’t know, but I hope it does. Frankly, I haven’t been with anyone since before we met on our earlier dig. After I saw you, and got to know you, I wasn’t interested in anyone else. I redoubled my efforts to secure this grant. A major motivator for me was the possibility of persuading you to join me. Once you were here, I was planning to be a bit more patient, but when opportunity knocks ...”

“Cutting off two feet of my hair isn’t much of an icebreaker!”

“Really? I’d say let’s wait and see.”

She’d been snipping in the back this whole time. Now she combed a bunch of my hair forward and my eyes and face were covered. I instinctively tried to blow it away from my eyes.

“Hold still, don’t blow. I want your bangs to be perfect.”

“I DON’T WANT BANGS!”

I felt the scissors against my left temple and then another snip sound as she cut bangs, well above my eyebrows. I was petrified, and afraid to move, afraid to even move my mouth.

“They’re too short!” I mumbled through clenched teeth.

“Hush. They’ll be perfect.” Then she snipped bangs high above my nose. At that moment, I finally realized it was hopeless. She was going to have her way with me. All I could do was resolve to storm back to my cabin, alone, when it was finally over. I thought maybe I’d just leave, and fly back to the States.

But I suspected I wouldn’t. Was this beautiful, talented professional actually interested in me?

Wait. I was a professional – and I’d earned it. She’d be the one who would be fortunate to have MY attention.

Sort of. That said, we did share the same goals and dreams. Wasn’t that what I was looking for in a partner? In a love interest? Wasn’t that a small part of what I’d shared with Tia?

Did I care Dyana was a woman and not a man?

No, actually, and I was sure of it. In fact, had a man I knew only as well as Dyana cut my hair this way, I would have called the police and accused him of assault!

Snip! Now there wasn’t any hair in front of my right eye. Snip, snip, and I had bangs – for the first time in ... for the first time! I’d NEVER had bangs before!

At this point I was either completely resigned to my fate, or enthralled by Dyana; I couldn't tell you which. The snipping kept happening, and a little or a lot of hair would fall with each snap of the scissors.

I finally had the presence of mind to ask, "What are you doing to me?"

"What I want," Dyana said.

"How are you cutting my hair," I asked numbly.

"Into a short pixie, I think you'd call it," she told me. "I'm guessing, in the future, it'll become your signature style."

In that, though, she was wrong.

I felt the scissors snip up and over my left ear. Her fingers were pressed tight against the side of my head as she continued to cut. Little pieces of hair fell into my lap, or blew away because of the breeze on deck.

On and on it continued. I was pretty sure I would have no hair left and I'd hate how I looked.

Someone looking at this scene might have said she was claiming me. There would have been much truth to that.

Did I belong to Dyana now? That was an odd thought. I hadn't been even a little submissive to anyone since Tia, and I'd certainly never been this submissive to anyone. At least, not to anyone I'd known before. But Dyana was like a grown-up Tia - special, sophisticated, beautifully young, and yet mature at the same time. Could I be hers? Would that mean how I was going to look after this haircut would be okay, since she'd chosen it?

As I said, you could argue she'd laid claim to me by forcing her will on me. Surprisingly, I didn't react negatively to that idea. Was this her way of affirming ownership of me? Did I want to be *owned*? I would always have said, "Of course not," but to be claimed by someone so ... so ... profound, so desirable ...

She kept cutting, now on the right side. Then she started shaping my new bangs into an irregular fringe. I could feel the

wind blowing over my ears. That was a feeling that I only associated with a ponytail. I didn't have a ponytail now, however. If I let my hair grow out from when Dyana was done cutting it, I couldn't have a ponytail for more than eighteen months!

That was a very long time. I'd read a book called *Eighteen Months* once. The heroine lived what would be, for most people, an entire lifetime of experiences in that eighteen months.

Admittedly, it was a very erotic lifetime.

Truly, I was beginning to realize I might never have a ponytail again.

Come on, it's just hair, I told myself. As a hairstyle, ponytails are pretty awful – at best, they're vanilla. Why are you letting this get to you, Destiny? You're stronger than that. Besides, you have an opportunity to screw your boss! I chuckled out loud at that thought.

Now it was Dyana's turn to ask, "What?"

"Nothing." I said.

"Almost done," she acknowledged, but the cutting continued, unabated. I was pretty sure I'd already lost 95 percent of my hair. That's astronomical to a young woman like me. I reached up to touch what was left of my lovely hair. Dyana gently slapped my hand away.

"Be patient," she said. "You don't want to touch it; you want to see it. We have to go to my quarters so I can finish this properly with the electric trimmer I have there."

"Absolutely not!" I shouted.

"You don't want to go to my quarters?" She said, innocently.

"I don't want you anywhere near me with electric trimmers."

"Give it a rest. You don't have any hair left to speak of anyway. Your hair's a lot shorter than mine is."

“Then I’ll use the trimmers on you!”

“Maybe ... we’ll see what happens.”

She kept trimming, cutting over one ear then the other, going up the back and the sides with comb and scissors. She was moving rapidly. I was getting scared again.

“Okay,” she said finally, “let’s go to my place. Don’t touch your hair yet!” She threw her tools in the bag, pulled me up by my wrist, and pushed me ahead of her, her hand flat on my butt. I reached up to feel my hair again and she yelled, “Not yet! Leave it alone.”

My head already felt MUCH lighter and I could feel wind in places it had never touched before. There was nothing hanging down onto my back anymore, nothing even close to my shoulders. In fact, I was sure no hair was *hanging down* anywhere.

We arrived at her quarters in less than a minute, and went inside as she closed and locked the door.

Chapter 4 – This Girl Is a Woman

Now

“Take off all your clothes, so I can finish you and brush you off. Then you can see how great you look.” Dyana started to strip without a moment’s hesitation.

Her cabin was pretty roomy, and even had a double bed along the wall of the starboard side of the ship. I removed my clothes as requested. They were, after all, peppered with long, medium, and short pieces of hair. I realized I was still holding my braid, and set it down on her desk. There was no mirror evident so I couldn’t yet see myself. I was standing there in my panties – I hadn’t worn a bra – and Dyana said, “Panties too. I want to see all of you.”

In a moment, we faced each other, both of us naked. Dyana and I were equally hairless below the neck, meaning that she had no hair on her body at all, just like me. I’d been lasered, lasered again, and finally lasered as a high-school graduation present from my parents, who’d agreed to my request with raised eyebrows and only after an admonishment from me to “realize this is the twenty-first century; I am not a cavewoman.”

Dyana’s hand pressed against my hairless pussy and she whispered, “This is exactly how I imagined you’d feel.”

Instinctively, I reached up to touch my now vanished long hair again, and she said, “Don’t. Wait. Sit here,” and she pulled out a desk chair and motioned for me to sit on it.

Thirty minutes ago, I would have had to flip my hair out, over the back of the chair, to avoid pulling on it when I sat forward. Not now, though I did start to flip it instinctively. Given her admonishment to keep my hands away from my hair, I sat down on my hands. In spite of my continued angst, I said nothing. She took a small, cordless electric trimmer out of her bag and approached me from behind. She pushed my head forward and told me to sit still.

There was nothing else to do. I did as requested. I heard a snap, then a buzz as she turned the clippers on and approached me from behind.

I felt the totally new experience of cold blades on my neck and then she swept them up into my hairline. “I want to taper this at your hairline, so it looks smooth, not cut straight across. I prefer that look for you.” She kept sweeping the clippers from below my hairline up into my hair to taper it from however long it was in the back, to essentially nothing at my hairline. Then she ran it up the back sides a little to taper it there, and over my ears to get any strays. Finally, she tapered what must have now become my *sideburns*.

“I want you to have a precise, tapered look - not anything wispy,” she said. “Wispy is for sissies.”

“You’re making me butch,” I accused her.

“Not even a little. You’re too sweet to actually be butch.”

She finally stopped. “Wash off in my shower stall and then I’ll check your cut and finish styling it – not that that will take much doing. You’re gonna love how you look and how easy this is.”

“There is no chance that I’m gonna like how I look.”

“Keep an open mind, Destiny. Now go shower.”

I turned on the meager water from the showerhead – this was a frigate after all, not a luxury liner – and stepped in. I put my head under the spray, reached up to rub the water through it to get it wet, and almost fainted on the spot. MY HAIR WAS GONE! ALMOST ALL OF MY HAIR WAS GONE! I couldn’t believe how my head felt – tiny and ... and ... and ... almost naked!

“You bastard!” I yelled at Dyana. “You bastard! You took all my hair!”

”You have plenty left. Hurry up and I’ll show you. You’ll love it!”

“I AM GOING TO KILL YOU WHEN I GET OUT OF HERE!”

“If you don’t cool down, I’ll turn off your hot water,” she called out, humor in her voice. I found nothing funny in what she’d done to me.

I squirted shampoo in my hand, smeared it on my newly-shorn head, and realized I had about five times too much for my hair length and ended up with foam and suds all over the place. I was standing in a pile of bubbly foam. There were too many suds to go down the drain. I managed to rinse my hair and wash my body quickly and got out of the tight confines of the shower stall, leaving bubbles a foot deep in it.

Dyana was standing there holding a towel for me. “I wanted you to shower, not take a bubble bath,” she laughed.

“I don’t have enough hair for the shampoo I used! And it’s your damn fault!”

“Sit down and stop complaining.”

I sat; she combed through my hair. She clipped it in a few spots and then put some gel or something in her hands, rubbed them together, and worked it through the little that was left of my hair. She roughly combed it over from left to right with her fingers, including my bangs, though she then flipped a few wisps of them onto my forehead. Then she pronounced me done, opened a small closet door, and stood me in front of the mirror on the inside of it.

I gasped and started to cry. I didn’t look bad – not at all – in fact, it was really cute and I looked pretty. But it wasn’t me! My hair, my beautiful, long, long hair was now just a little pixie cut with rather severe sides and back! I’d completely lost that young, innocent, makes-your-heart-jump-with-yearning-to-look-at-me appearance. I was pretty, not beautiful anymore.

“You look fantastic!” Dyana said. “I knew you would!”

“THIS ISN’T ME! I don’t look like me at all!”

“It’s you now and you’re gonna love it! Really, you are!” She gently took my shoulders and turned me away from the mirror and towards her. Then she gave me one of the most passionate kisses I’d ever received from anyone - woman or man. No. The. Most. Passionate. Kiss. EVER!

I kissed her back, tears still coming from my eyes and running down my cheeks. At least my body kissed her back. The me inside was in a panic about how I looked; I was being sexually stimulated by a master and my mind didn't know where to focus. I opened my moist eyes to look into Dyana's already opened ones. She had short hair, I thought – though nowhere near as short as mine – and I considered her drop-dead beautiful.

No. It wasn't having short hair that was the problem, I realized. It wasn't even that a woman infatuated with me had cut it without my permission. It was losing long hair to get to where I was now that was the problem. My thoughts kept bouncing between wanting to kiss Dyana and focus on her body against mine, and dwelling on what she'd just done to me.

In the end, my physical attraction to Dyana, and hers to me, won out. In a few minutes we were rolling on the bed, still in each other's arms. Somewhere deep in my mind, I realized that this friendly, sexy wrestling would have been impossible with my long hair wrapping around us and getting caught under us. The thought lasted a fleeting fraction of a second at most, then my long hair was forgotten in the passion that continued to build around us.

I'd accepted that I was bi-sexual over the space of only a couple weeks with Tia. Dyana absolutely cemented that realization in my mind. I was the "B" in LGBT. I was gladly that person.

Dyana ended up on top of me with her left hand behind my head, pressing my head up and our lips against each other. Her right hand was under me at the small of my back, pushing our pussies together. Our tongues flickered frantically within each other's mouths. Finally, she paused for a moment and pulled back to look at me.

We stared into each other's eyes. "I should be on top," I said, panting. The inside of my mouth and my lips were still tingling from her exquisite kisses.

"Why?" She asked.

“Because you made me more butch than you are.”

“You have such a sweet, pretty face that you couldn’t be butch if you had a penis,” she countered, whispering. “You’re confusing butch with sleek, fashionable and sexy.”

“Your opinion.”

“It’s the only one that counts, lover. Besides, your boobs are bigger than mine. That makes you more of a woman, doesn’t it?”

My breasts were bigger than hers – by less than a half cup size, but that was all. She was thin and firm and so was I. Did she just call me “lover?”

“I’m not your lover ... not yet at least.”

“Give me a few minutes.” Her fingers went to my left nipple and her mouth to my right. She rested her face against my pert boobie as she suckled at it. Her other hand went down to my pussy. I could feel her fingers carefully parting my folds and sliding up my slit. Yes, I was already juicy.

Her midnight-blue nails were short and her hands were softer than I had expected. I remember being surprised that a very professional archeologist would wear nail polish at all. Her long, supple fingers probed me so carefully that I was sure she was mapping my pussy in her mind. She rolled her fingers back and forth along my fairly large inner lips, first on one side of my slit, then along the other. The rubbing and rolling of my flesh there felt fantastic.

I had known how sensitive my inners were from my own playing with them. I’ve almost cum a few times just manipulating them – almost, but not quite. Compared to me as an amateur, Dyana was a master at giving me pleasure through my inners. The sensation was in that delicious space between pleasure and climax. It was a building, but slower building, arousal. I thought that, given enough attention, she might make me cum just by manipulating my inner labia.

At the same time, her tongue was slowly, carefully circling my nipple, while her free hand was rolling my other nipple between finger and thumb. I couldn’t figure out how

her one mind could be doing all these different manipulations of me at the same time. I didn't feel a stirring in my groin or my nipples, I felt a stirring everywhere, which rapidly rose toward ever greater pleasure.

Her mouth and hand left my nipple. Her tongue slid down my belly to my navel, then continued to the hood that partially cloaked my clitoris. At the same time, a hand reached lower on me, and I could feel her slender thumb within my pussy, while a finger probed the rosebud behind it. Her other hand pushed upward on my butt cheek, forcing my sex tightly against her mouth.

I was having great difficulty thinking clearly. Dyana was in charge, and I simply wanted to go along for the ride.

I never considered myself to be a sub naturally; I always thought I was more the dom. But with Dyana, I was comfortably bottom. Maybe I looked butch, maybe I didn't, but I was totally given over to her use of me, and didn't consider how I might top her.

There were little bolts of electricity flowing up and down my outer labia, as Dyana continued to play with my nether region. Every touch, every glide of her fingers or tongue between my outer and inner labia was electrifying. I felt myself shudder with need all along my torso, from my groin to my upper chest. At this point, Dyana had control of me.

Two of her fingers were within my anus, and her thumb was stroking my inner lips. It felt WONDERFUL! Her slender thumb moved up and began to easily, slowly circle my clitoris. I could feel the ecstatic, orgasm-edge tension rapidly build. I existed in some Neverland between wanting the arousal to continue to build while more and more was done to me, and impatiently awaiting the climax. I was almost vibrating with anticipation and need. I wanted Dyana to direct her fingers to my clit itself. I wanted the focus of her attention where I needed it most!

Her fingers and thumb left my labia and the soft folds around my clit, and all of them concentrated on my little rosebud, the entrance to my farthest, nether region.

Now the area was free for her tongue to continue its journey, ever onward towards the center of me. I felt it slide around my outer labia, up and past the top of my vulva and along one side, landing again on the hood protecting my love bud.

Her tongue probed my hood and under it, as though she had achieved a complete understanding, a mental picture of the geometry of my pussy. Perhaps by then she had. I felt her talented, nimble tongue slide once again between my hood and clit, and then, ever so carefully, caress my clitoris itself, almost encircling it as she curled her tongue around it.

Dyana's tongue slid along one side of my clit, around the bottom of it, and up the other side, ending underneath my hood. I quivered in an uncontrollable response to her mastery of me. I once again became aware of a hand that still played with, and ministered to one of my nipples.

My arms and hands had been thrust above me, and I hadn't even noticed it. I reached down to press her head tighter against my pussy with my left hand, and play with my right nipple with the fingers of my other hand. All the while, Dyana kept control of my pussy with her tongue.

Moments later, in a rush that came upon me suddenly, I came with her tongue still lightly kneading my clitoris. It arrived so quickly, so unexpectedly fast, that my body seized in shock. I shook violently, biting my lip until I was sure it bled, and I realized that I had squirted like I'd never done before.

Within my anus, her fingers pushed up against the wall separating that part of me from my vagina, at the same time her other hand slipped into my wet, wet snatch. I felt – I think – a finger press against the front wall, at my G-spot, while she pressed upward from within my ass; I had never felt the likes of that before. The pressure in both places served to prolong the orgasm beyond anything I thought possible.

I gasped in loud, high-pitched, desperate breaths.

Her tongue attacked my uber-sensitive clit, and I began to rise to climax again.

By that time in our sexual encounter, Dyana must have been fisting my vagina, and almost fisting my asshole, because I could feel all of this pressure within me. But within and from every place where it was evident, the feelings of arousal and the need to cum built again and again to the point where I think I screamed louder than any time in my life before. I realized that the orgasm that totally consumed me would be disabling in its monumental power.

“No, no, no, no, no!” I shouted. “I can’t ... I can’t ... I can’t take ... any ... more!”

She lifted her mouth from my pussy long enough to say, “Hush, I am making you mine.”

And then it all happened again! I thrashed around beneath her, out of my mind with the intensity of the pleasure her expertise was giving to ... no ... forcing upon me. I needed ... I needed ... it had to stop! Yet I came again. Then again!

I had been blessed with wonderful sex with Tia, but this was mature sex on a completely different level. This was the consuming, disabling copulation of two women in the throes of passion – one fully experienced at lovemaking and one who had been physically claimed, and who was at least partially experienced.

Dyana was sucking and biting on my clitoris. It was so tender! The pain was acute, the sensitivity unbearable, the pleasure beyond anything I’d ever thought possible! I wanted her to continue forever, at the same time I thought I’d surely expire from the throbbing tenderness and agony in my sensitive clit!

“Stop! Stop!” I yelled. But she didn’t stop. Her tongue moved to my rosebud and circled it as her hands moved back up for her fingers to minister to my nipples.

My butt hole was resonating with the pleasure that I thought my clit was now too sensitive to handle. Then she licked upward toward my clit again, around but not on it, and I came again, then again, a gripping, tightening of a kernel of pleasure deep within my sexual center, followed by a tsunami of climax radiating outward from my clit and my nipples at the

same time. Then I lost all conscious thought. I had no idea what happened next. I had become absorbed by sexual pleasure.

A while later, I lay in bed with my head on Dyana's arm. I could feel the novelty of the short, tiny, sensitive bristles of hair on my lower neck, as they pressed against her. My little bit of hair was otherwise almost unnoticeable to me. That, in itself, was so different than before. As I thought about it, I realized that I had always been *aware* of my hair. It was always there, flowing down my back, caressing my neck, blowing in the wind, hugging my face, tickling me somewhere. All I needed to do was pay attention, and I could know it was there. Now, that feeling was gone. The short hairs that were left provided me with no feeling at all unless touched. At least, none that I could detect at that moment.

"Except for the bristles on my neck, I can't feel my hair at all," I said, with a neutral tone.

"Is that a problem?" Dyana asked.

"I don't know. I don't know anything at the moment. You overwhelmed me."

"I intended to."

"I think you got the short end of the stick."

"Why would you say that?"

"I didn't even make you cum."

"I did cum, you know."

"No, I didn't know. How?"

"I thought of what I'd done to you, and what my hands and mouth were doing, and I couldn't help but cum."

"Without anything touching your pussy?"

"I was rubbing against your left leg; because you were consumed in the throes of passion, you never noticed."

"I don't understand how you could cum from what you did to me."

“Thinking about it, are you turned on by my dominance of you, by my changing you to suit me?”

I admitted that I was, though I couldn't fathom why.

“I cut all your long, long hair off of you, and you love it because it was I who did it, don't you?”

In that instant I understood. Without hesitating, I told her, “Yes. You can make me anything you want.”

“I already have,” she said, “and as the days go on, I will continue even more. That's what makes me cum.”

“Do I get a chance to help out with your arousal?” I asked.

“Of course. We have a world of sexual encounters to try. You're mine now, you know.”

“You're proposing that you changed me to suit you.”

“Of course. And I'm not 'proposing.' I did change you – to suit me, yes.”

“Are you going to change me further?” I was mildly curious, but I found I really didn't care. I just wanted the intimacy and the sex to continue!

“You're very close to my ideal; time will tell.”

I didn't realize it then, but my haircut was a harbinger of what was to come for me. Change. My life was soon to become an almost unending procession of change, which would take me so far away from what I'd been, that no one would ever be able to recognize me again.

Change was to come for Dyana too, but neither of us had any conceivable idea of what form it was going to take. We could never have guessed. Nothing about the historical mission we were on, nor its location, made us recognize any clues.

The changes coming to Dyana would be a harbinger for me, though it would be many years coming.

In this blissful moment, I was oblivious to any revelations, intimations or omens. In bed with Dyana, I had no

cares in the world at all.

At the end of the third full day, the final team member, Dyana's Egyptian, project co-leader, Dr. Sagi Hawass, arrived by launch. The thirty-something archeologist was a distant relative of the former Egyptian Minister of Antiquities, Dr. Zahi Hawass. Dr. Zahi had fallen into disrepute when the Muslim Brotherhood had seized control of the Egyptian government in the late twenty-teens. He then rose to prominence again, and was now once again pushed aside by the current, conservative and fundamentalist, ISIS-leaning if not directly aligned, Egyptian government.

The Egyptians insisted the expedition be at least jointly lead by an Egyptian scientist, and not solely by an infidel – their words to the foundation funding the expedition. In fact, the Islamic rulers couldn't bear even partial credit being awarded to an infidel, in the event something truly revolutionary was uncovered. So Dyana, the grant awardee, and all the rest of us, had to accept a co-project leader of unknown ability. In the end, I suppose we got lucky. But I always had my unproven suspicions of Sagi.

Based on my first impression, Sagi seemed aloof and a little into himself, if you get my meaning. I suspected from the beginning that he had an Arabic attitude toward women, but I resolved to get along with him. I saw from their very first moments together that Dyana and he didn't seem particularly compatible. They didn't "click." I assumed time would tell.

Along with Dyana and Sagi, the lead team consisted of an American postdoc, Gilbert (Tex) Duffy, an Australian professional diver, Robbie Simpson, and myself, the most junior lead team member.

A couple days later, the ship moved out a few kilometers farther into the Mediterranean and we began work in earnest. As the youngest of the five senior members of the expedition, I was responsible for managing the exploration team of myself, two grad students, and a handful of over-eager undergrads, each one of which looked like she or he belonged

in kindergarten – grade school at the most. At 25, I was getting too old, too fast.

My first task was to set up a survey grid, and assign survey responsibilities to each of the eight of us comprising the exploration team.

That meant I was going to be spending a lot of time being pulled in scuba gear behind a Seascooter. I suspected that it would barely ruffle my now dramatically short hair.

I still did a double-take every time I saw my reflection. I felt so unlike myself that I began to wonder who I was anymore. That feeling was probably intensified by my blossoming affair with Dyana. I'd been sleeping in her quarters, and everyone knew it. Like my previous affair with my lost Tia, the public exposure of that relationship bothered me some, but Dyana blew it off as our business, and she didn't care how anyone else felt – especially any Egyptians with an outdated, provincial attitude about person-to-person relationships.

Sagi made no secret of the fact that he thought our behavior was too progressive for his world-view. I think he was personally insulted by the fact that Dyana and I were far more interested in each other, than either of us was interested in him.

None of the other team members, or the crew for that matter, seemed to care at all. Tex thought that our relationship was totally fascinating. The guy didn't have a prejudicial bone in his body, even though I don't think he'd ever met one woman – let alone two – who were interested in other women.

On the day we moved the ship out farther, Tex asked me if I wore my hair short because I liked girls. I almost sprayed my coffee on him, and it did go up my nose. There was absolutely no malice in his question and my first reaction was that it was terribly funny. After I calmed down, I said no, I wore it short because Dyana had cut my long braid off before I realized what she was doing.

“So y'all wear it short for Dyana. That's what Ah said,” he replied innocently.

I hemmed and hawed and realized, from his view and probably from the view of others, I was wearing it short because of a woman. But I wasn't doing it because I liked women, though I did. I realized I was unexpectedly conflicted.

This had surreptitiously arisen and – in truth - had snuck up on me. I'd been in love with a woman before, with Tia, my flawless, champion high school sweetheart. This particular woman, Dyana, who liked my hair short, who had cut it that way to lay claim to me so-to-speak, had solidified my feelings of attraction to women, and my deep-seated desire to submit to a woman, because it turned me on like that, truth be told.

Gosh, I thought. Was he right? His innocent question didn't have a simple answer at all.

This would require honest introspection, which I was in no way prepared to do.

In that moment of denial, I decided he wasn't right, because I'd have my hair long if I had a choice. I determined to let it grow, just to prove my point. Having short hair, though, didn't make me a butch lesbian, a term I never really believed in anyway.

I didn't share that thought with him but I did tell him I liked guys too. I admitted most guys liked long hair, but I knew there was a sizable minority who liked short hair.

“Do you think my hair looks like a guy's hair?” I asked, afraid of the answer.

“Not at all,” he drawled. “It's short, sure, but it's very purdy. Ah don't think you could look lahk a guy under any circumstances. Y'all have one of the nahcest girl's faces Ah've ever seen. Your body's hot too. I mean girl-hot. Wanna go out sometime?”

I had to laugh. “I'd love to, Tex, but I am in a relationship right now. It's with a woman, but that doesn't make it any less deserving of fidelity. I don't need both a male and female lover at the same time to be fulfilled. As far as you and I going out, we'll see what happens over time.”

“Ah'll be rahght here.”

The underwater survey and the excavation were absolutely incredible! They lasted for the first month, on-site. I not only learned a lot, but I got to use all kinds of great equipment. My team easily, rapidly formed a strong bond, and I was very gratified by our ever-growing sense of comradery and by what we were able to quickly accomplish. I did have one special undergrad whom I thought highly of. She was a smart, talented though naïve, pretty, slightly plump upcoming senior from Yale, Toni Pintaudi.

Toni worked 24/7. I never did find out if she ever slept. Her problem was that she was so uptight – all the time – about her work (which was always excellent), about interpersonal relationships, and about anything else she could think of. She had no self-confidence. She was a compulsive worrier.

Given an opportunity, I decided I would attempt to *cure* her. I thought she needed a good hard slap, and a refocus of priorities to get her to lighten up, and appreciate her own talents. She needed to worry about, or focus on something other than work. When time permitted, I intended to find that distraction for her.

Toni aside, our survey continued. Within that first month, we identified five sites for further probing. They were part of an Egyptian settlement that appeared to predate Thonis-Heracleion, which is directly off the Alexandria coast, by as much as 500 years. That meant that the site was 2800 to 3000 years old! In addition, we discovered three outstanding artifacts: Toni found a pharaoh's head and upper chest that had been ninety-percent buried in the sandy, muddy bottom, with only the right side of the mid-chest visible; Tex uncovered a collapsed column that was barely exposed to the water; and I discovered the most surprising artifact of all, a two-sided statue that looked, as best we could tell, like a woman's full pudenda on one side, and the same pudenda without inner lips, hood, or clitoris on the other. If it turned out to be what it appeared, that would mean that female circumcision had been practiced in Egypt for perhaps 3000 years!

We talked about the pudenda statue at dinner that evening. Four of the five team leaders: Dyana, Sagi, Tex and I were there. Robbie wasn't with us then.

I'd asked Tex if he'd seen the video we'd obtained of the two-sided statue.

"Ah did. It's the biggest damn pussy Ah've ever seen." We all laughed at what he said and how he'd said it with his Texas drawl. "Ah'll bet the little lady who owned that empty slit wasn't near as happy though."

"That's surely true, I said, "though if she were cut young, she wouldn't know what she was missing."

"If they initiated the tradition Egypt follows today, she would most likely have been doctored before puberty," Sagi noted. "Though once in a while, but not very often, an Egyptian woman isn't cut until adulthood, or until marriage."

Dyana looked directly at me. I thought I saw a hint of lust in her eye. "I haven't studied your video in detail or slo-mo yet, Destiny. What's the chance that the cut side is simply damaged or eroded from centuries in the water?"

"It's remotely possible, but having looked closely at the spot where the clit would be, there is no evidence of breakage, though there is a smooth indentation," I answered. "If it were polished by water erosion, I wouldn't expect the indentation to be only there – it would have spread above and within the slit. As far as the labia breaking off, the slit is totally smooth with an even surface within. You can just put your fingers inside. There would have been no room for the petals of an inner labia.

"The best argument for no erosion damage, though, is that the circumcised side of the statue was the most deeply buried."

That seemed to convince everyone that we'd found what we thought we had.

"Ultimately, it might strongly suggest, or definitively indicate, that Nefertiti and Cleopatra, and all the other Egyptian princesses – along with the common women in

ancient Egyptian society – had been circumcised. If so, they would have been incapable of an orgasm, as we understand that capability in the twenty-first century,” Dyana offered.

“The custom of almost universal circumcision does, of course, persist to the present day in Egypt,” Sagi noted. Even though I’d known that, I couldn’t suppress a cringe. Tex’s mouth dropped open. “In Egypt, it’s not only widespread, but by far the norm. Among married women, 97% of Egyptians have been circumcised, either by removal of the clitoris or excision of the clitoris, hood and inner labia. Under the current, fundamentalist-leaning government, the practice of partial infibulation: excision plus surgical reduction and permanent closing of the outer labia by stitching them together from the top of the vulva to the vaginal opening, is becoming common too.

“The misguided, ISIS-leaning politicians falsely believe that female circumcision is an Islamic tradition. This find could prove that it predated Islam by at least 1500 years.”

“That certainly might help separate it from Islam and convince the government to stop promoting it,” I suggested.

“Yeah, if those fanatics even believed our findings. What they believe has nothing to do with real, scientific evidence,” Dyana quipped.

Sagi replied, “I fear you might have hit on the problem, Dyana. Female circumcision, at its various levels of invasiveness, had been outlawed in Egypt during the reign of Hosni Mubarak. That barely slowed down the practice at all. It was deeply ingrained in the culture. When he was deposed in 2011, the practice continued under the Muslim Brotherhood-influenced government. With the current, even more religiously fundamental government, it has become standard practice for Egyptian girls, openly legal, and essentially expected of all women in Egypt under the current, ISIS-influenced government. The only improvement, if you can call it that, is that now it’s usually done in a medical facility of some kind, instead of on the dirt floor of a grass hut.”

Personally, as you might expect, I considered the practice to be horrifying. In that regard, my view was the same as that of virtually every Western woman. Dyana did, however, have a slightly more tolerant viewpoint.

“I certainly agree that the practice is barbaric, but if you look past it into the society in which it’s practiced it falls within the boundaries of tribal tradition. In other words, it’s a ritual of belonging. I try to look at female circumcision anthropologically – as a rite of passage into the accepted, Egyptian, womanly ideal.”

I had to offer my opinion. “I always thought that the goal and intention of female circumcision was to curtail a woman’s independence, her inclination to infidelity, and make lesbianism an essentially meaningless endeavor, at least from the standpoint of sexual arousal. I thought that’s why they did it. I thought it was sponsored by and supported by the men in the community.”

“Not at all, Destiny,” Sagi said. “Most men are completely ambivalent when it comes to the practice. They leave it to the women to decide. It’s been perpetuated by the women themselves.”

“That’s true,” Dyana agreed. “If a culture embraces the goals of tribal membership and the supporting rituals, along with any real or imagined benefits of the outcome of the ritual itself and the behavior that supports it, then the members of that society would pursue the tradition simply to fit in. After all, we follow norms of our own civilization. We embrace women’s legal equality, leadership, and standards of dress and behavior. We embrace or at least tolerate personal choices like body modifications: piercings, tattoos, breast augmentation, rhinoplasty, labiaplasty, other kinds of plastic surgery, and so on. The difference is that in our culture, those choices are what an individual wants to do with her or his own body. That said, most infant boys are circumcised and mothers often get their infant daughter’s ears pierced. Both things happen long before a child had the maturity to decide.

“I’m not saying I’m a die-hard advocate for multiculturalism, because I’m not. But I’ll admit that it’s very

difficult to find absolute principles for human behavior within any society, let alone across all of them. We can all agree about prohibiting murder, but we do it in wars all the time, so even that isn't absolute. It gets much more difficult to define an absolute morality when you talk about cultural traditions.

“In my opinion, female circumcision in Egypt merely reflects the mores the society values. As a Western woman, you might hate it, but you couldn't argue against it from some, arbitrary, Western sense of morality.”

I could see Tex struggling with both the topic of the discussion and where it had landed. I got the impression he not only had nothing to say, but he really wanted this conversation to end. I had to suppress a smile at the discomfort of our big, gentle post-doc.

Sagi spoke again. “Based on the monument you've uncovered, the tradition of female circumcision is likely to be a foundational custom, deeply ingrained in Egyptian culture from long ago – at least twice as ancient as the country's currently-dominant, Muslim faith. If that proves to be true, it would undeniably show that female circumcision is an Egyptian tradition, which has nothing to do with Islam, as many have contended for years. If so, female circumcision as practiced in Egypt would be one of the most persistent, ancient female rituals known.

“Under the current, ISIS-influenced Egyptian administration, female circumcision has once again, become compulsory and, for all intents and purposes, so firmly entrenched that it would take a true female rebel, locally at least, to avoid the practice and continue to exist outside the prison system.”

I had to add my two-cents worth. “Since circumcision is usually done before early teens, there are few or no ‘rebels.’ Most any potential Egyptian rebel has already been circumcised as a child, and has little or no idea of what she's lost.”

“That is, in fact, true,” Sagi agreed.

As I thought about the statue still lying on the Mediterranean Sea bed, I had an evolving, somewhat different view of the practice. It now was obviously a social norm that had persisted for about 3000 years! Barbaric, for sure, but with enormous, traditional, ethnic inertia.

I'd always known, intellectually, about societies where male dominance was the norm. Even my beloved America, in which I'd grown up, hadn't considered women equal citizens until about a hundred years ago. Now, however, it was right there, staring me in the face, unavoidable in its social, societal, and personal impact. And it was an ancient tradition. Incredibly ancient.

Chapter 5 – Real Love

Dyana turned 32 at the end of my third week with the team. She and I celebrated privately during the day, and the rest of the crew and archeologists threw a big party for her that started even before dinner. I'm not a big drinker, but I managed to really put it away that night. Whatever happened afterwards is barely a blur in my mind. I might have had sex with one of the crew, following a couple hours of flirting. I'm not sure anymore. If I did, Dyana apparently didn't care, but I expected that she knew.

As I expected to, I crashed in her cabin that night, dead to the world in mere minutes.

Some indeterminate time later, I felt Dyana running her fingers through my short, short hair. I purred with the pleasure of her fingertips on my scalp. This was one of the best things about short hair. If you had a talented lover, as I did, she could make your entire head an erotic zone. I felt the stirring from my scalp all the way down to my pussy.

After several minutes of this, I opened my eyes to look on my lover, and to initiate my own response to her erotic stroking of the short hair she'd imposed on me.

There was a faint light from somewhere, perhaps moonlight through the starboard window. It was difficult to tell what the source of the faint illumination was. What was clear was that Dyana was asleep and facing away from me. My face was buried in her short bob. I was cupping her from behind.

Once again, I felt fingers run through my hair from front to back, back to front, and then combing my hair in its natural, new shape, from left to right.

I looked up from the bed without moving. Tia was there, the image of her torso suspended above me. Her hands reached down and stroked my hair. Her eyes had a look I didn't recognize at first. Then I realized that there was lust, contentment, and appreciation on her face. She was reacting to my short hair.

I didn't say anything, fearing I'd alert Dyana to Tia's presence. Her fingers in my hair felt wonderful, comforting, sexy and arousing. I found her face and saw the pleasure in it.

With the faintest whisper, I heard her say, "Ooo ... yes! Destiny, this is you. I wish I'd thought of this ... so, so sexy. So, so desirable. I so want to ..."

And she was gone. I think she liked my pixie haircut! If she were real. If I hadn't dreamt the whole thing. If there was some connection between our world and the next ...

The first month of work passed in a haze of hours a day in the water, half-a-dozen dives in one of the two mini submarines, and seemingly endless seafloor mapping. Finally, as the second summer month began, we had investigated a large enough area in detail that we were able to focus on five sites for detailed exploration, all within a square that was two kilometers on a side, and all about ten clicks, or six miles offshore.

We would spend a couple days assembling the new site-covering domes, which would let us work comfortably on the bottom, 10 to 15 meters down. As soon as they were ready, two teams would anchor them to the sandy-muddy seafloor.

I'd done a dive in the morning of our 30th day out, to set exact location stakes for our first dome. Dyana asked me to join her for lunch in her cabin, where I spent a good portion of my off-hours time.

We finished a mixed salad with sea polyps, along with a couple glasses of a very nice Chardonnay from the Burgundy region of France. Did you know that in some years, that region produces more Chardonnay than its famous Burgundy red, the Pinot Noir? It's true. I really got into wines during my Master's degree work and though I didn't yet have enough money to spend on wines to become a connoisseur, I had lots of knowledge and reasonable experience picking decent bargain bottles.

I'm something of a heretic in that I like my Chardonnays almost ice cold – I know you're supposed to serve the oaky ones at about 54° F and the non-oaky ones at 48° F, but I like white wine cold. That's just me. Dyana indulged me on that one. Anyway, the wine went great with the salad, and mellowed us both out. Fortunately, we had the afternoon off that day.

I wanted to take advantage of the mood and got up from our little table (I was starting to think of Dyana's cabin as *ours*) and reached for Dyana's hand, intending to lead her to the bed. "In a few moments, dear," she said.

She stood and reached her hand behind my head, her fingers in my hair as usual, and pulled me to her for one of our spectacular kisses. We're both talented kissers, and took fair advantage of that fact. We both have soft, full-but-not-thick lips. They fit together wonderfully. We maintain that yielding softness when we kiss.

About four times out of five, I broke out in goosebumps when Dyana kissed me. It never seemed to get old. This kiss was one of those. I felt it everywhere.

She pulled back a little and said, "Sit back down for a few minutes. It's been a month and your hair is getting a little shaggy. I want to trim it up so it's nice and neat like it was."

I didn't plan to have her do that. In fact, as I've mentioned, I was going to let it grow as long as I could. I told her that.

She looked at me sweetly and said, "That's fine, but this is beyond 'as long as you can.' Now it's time to trim it."

"Uh ... uh ... that's not what I meant. I'm going to ... umm ..."

She interrupted me. "No, I'm sorry – well, not very – but you aren't going to have long hair again. You're a short-hair girl now and that's how you'll stay." She started taking her haircutting things out of her little bag.

"I know you like my hair short," I admitted to her, "and I'll probably keep it shorter than it was – it would take me

years to grow it back anyway. But I want it a little longer than it is.”

“Why in the world would you want that?” She asked.

“Just ‘cause I like it longer?” I answered her with a question because I didn’t actually have a reason. It was more like a want, and I wasn’t sure why I wanted long hair. I suspected, again, that it was only because it had always been long.

“It looks great every moment of every day – including in bed, under water, and blowing in the wind. It’s easy, sexy, very pretty on you, and everyone is used to this being how you look.”

“Except me.”

“You’re more used to it. And after a few months keeping it this way, you’ll be completely at home and happy with it.”

“That’s what I’m afraid of.”

“Why on Earth would you be afraid of that?”

“I don’t want to become a committed, short-hair woman. It isn’t me.”

“It is now, and your lover is crazy about it.”

And so we went back and forth, but the end result was inevitable. I sat down, she put a towel around me, and started trimming about half an inch off the top, back and sides. It all went much faster this time and, before I knew it, the clippers were buzzing up the back at my hairline, along the sides over my ear, and making my sideburns - which had become a little wispy - short, tight and neat.

I was back to where I had been when it was first cut. It was obvious to me that I’d wear my hair like Dyana wanted, as long as I was here. As long as I was in the same reality as she was. When I thought about it, it actually did make total sense to me. For whom did I want to look good more than for my lover? The answer was obvious: for no one, including myself. After all, I didn’t look at me very often, but Dyana did. Why wouldn’t I want to look good for her?

There was no driving reason to not be what she wanted, of course. So I was going to remain a short-hair girl.

Did Dyana make it up to me in bed? Did she show her appreciation? Was it worth losing my long, flowing hair – essentially forever?

Oh God yes!

That afternoon after I was rendered neat and tidy again, we made our way onto the bed, but not under the covers. Unlike most times, we started our intimacy in half-69, our mouths on each other's nipples. I was on top. "I'm butch again – or still – and I'm on top this time," I told her. She didn't argue at all.

Her breasts are barely smaller than mine, but she has surprisingly big nipples. I could suck them into my mouth nicely. Dyana liked me to be rough with them. I'd come to know just how to suck them in and then nibble on them to really get her going. Then I'd bite down at the base, and slowly increase the force of the bite until she said, "Aaahhh!" Then I held it for a while, then let up, sucked it back in, and did it again.

That's different than what I like. My nipples are hypersensitive – at least, that's how they seem to me. Any stimulation – fingers, lips, tongue, palm-of-the-hand, even just looking at a hot guy or girl will make them hard, aroused, and standing at attention. Dyana was gently swirling her tongue around one of my nipples, while her hand reached up (her "up"), to rest on my inner thigh and draw circles on it with her fingertips. It was driving me insane with sensation!

My nipple was in her mouth and it was totally obvious to me that the togetherness that implied was exactly what I wanted in a lover. Dyana could have been female, male, or neuter and it would have made no difference to me. I simply needed Dyana. The warmth and pressure of my torso against her was everything I needed to become a woman who was, at that moment, sex-crazed.

I forced myself to pull away, and move downward to her pussy. My tongue slid over her bellybutton and down along the

center of her lower abdomen, to the thick hood over her clit, as I positioned us in true 69. I played around her prominent love button but avoided touching it directly. I circled it with my tongue and sucked on the whole area for a while, then played my tongue lightly over her clit as I concentrated my suction on it, drawing it out from its sheath.

She was sucking on my pussy with her tongue in my slit, lapping at my juices, which were flowing quite freely. I was giving all my attention to her clit and the upper part of her inner labia, which were of modest size and didn't extend prominently beyond her outers. I could hear her moaning "Mmm, mmm," in a steady rhythm as my tongue played back and forth across her clit.

Her tongue slid up and down my slit as she sucked on my sensitive inners and my fleshy outers.

I reached behind to her firm bottom and pushed upward to force her pussy tighter against my face. I increased the rate at which I licked at her and her little sounds increased by the same amount. I knew from experience with her that she'd cum every time those moans came at a certain speed. We were quickly approaching that point.

I managed to reach around from under her and bring my fingers to her entrance. She was so wet there that my thumb easily slid inside her. I used her own juices to lubricate her down to her rosebud. I circled it with my fingers, my thumb still in her pussy. Then I inserted my middle finger into her tight rear, and added my index finger a few moments later. Now I was gripping her openings with fingers and thumb inside her, and I returned to rapidly but lightly ministering to her clitoris with my tongue.

In moments she came, shuddering and moaning with the force of her climax. Her contractions squeezed my fingers and thumb inside her. Her hands gripped my bottom, her fingertips pushing fiercely into my firm flesh and forcing my pussy so tight against her face that I thought I might smother her. Then I lost all thought as I came lying in 69 above her, the contractions from my climax causing me to pump my pussy against her face even tighter, over and over.

Finally I stopped and she pushed me off to the side so she could breathe again. I swung around and began kissing her. Immediately, both of her hands were in my freshly-trimmed hair, and I could tell that just feeling the short locks and bristly back were turning her on. With my mouth, breasts and pussy pressing against hers, she came again.

We rolled over and she was on top, partially propped up on her elbows. She looked directly at me, her hands still entwined in my short hair.

“My God, your hair is so sexy! I could cum just touching it.”

“I think you just did.”

“Yeah, I did, didn’t I? It just proves what I said.”

“You really like me like this that much?”

“Oh yeah ...”

Dyana started running her fingers through my hair, massaging my scalp at the same time. Her mouth found my nipple and she gave it the gentle attention I preferred. I’ll admit that her fingers felt wonderful, playing with the wisps of hair I had left, running over the very short hairs on the side and back, and the bristles at my neck. Delicious. Absolutely fantastic. No, I admitted to myself, it wouldn’t have been as good if my hair were still long. Probably not even possible to massage me so effectively. Coupled with her attention to my nipples, I was in heaven.

Then one hand reached down to diddle my clit by squeezing and massaging it using my inners and hood and I came within moments. I was stimulated from my pussy to the top of my head, and most everywhere in between. It was scrumptious, consuming.

Dyana pulled my hands above my head and began drawing circles on the inside of my upper arms. That drives me wild with passion! I have no idea why, and I don’t know anyone else who feels that way. But I do and, for me, both upper arms are erogenous zones like many women’s inner

thighs, including my own, especially when they're kissed, which she then started to do.

I was lit up everywhere. My scalp was still tingling and she continued to run her fingers through my short locks every few minutes. Her lips on mine seemed especially soft, warm and moist. Our tongues sought each other and I tasted her sweetness, ran my tongue along the inside of her teeth and tickled the inside of her mouth. Our kiss became more passionate, fiercer. Her hand reached down and her fingers entered my cunt – I don't know how many but I was filled. She sought my G-spot and tapped along it. That was enough and I came again, my screams of pleasure swallowed by her mouth.

And so it went. The days were filled with both fascinating work and delicious play, and for Dyana and me, the nights were always hot and intimate.

A few days later the three, six-meter diameter, two-meter high domes were assembled and folded for dropping into the water. We decided to position them over three of the primary five sites so that we could fill them with air and work on the seabed 10 to 15 meters down, without wearing our bulky, heavy breathing gear. The domes had small airlocks and were fed fresh air from hoses from the ship, which would be moored centrally above them, once they'd been lowered and anchored to the sea floor.

The transparent, portable, geodesic domes were a relatively new development that none of the crew or our team had used before. They each weighed about 250 kilos, or 550 pounds, and were dropped into the water and lowered by a crane on the ship. Once they were submerged, several divers would unfold them, and snap the struts in place, umbrella-style, to maintain the dome shape. Once that was done, they'd be lowered over the site.

They had to be anchored to the seabed by harpoons which were screwed into the sandy bottom by what was essentially a giant drill, maneuvered into place and held by two divers, each

keeping both hands on two of the four the *handlebars*; the ones facing that member of the two-person drill team. Once the drill penetrated about six feet into the seabed, the drill automatically reversed and turned the center shaft of the anchor in the opposite direction. That forced an umbrella-like tip to open six feet below the surface, further securing the anchor below the seafloor.

All this heavy-duty equipment was necessary to fasten the domes down. Once inflated, the buoyancy of the dome would push upwards with tremendous force. The six anchors per dome would need to hold tight with over a thousand pounds of upward force on each, trying to pull them out of the seabed.

This whole mounting process was a frightening, and somewhat dangerous undertaking. Tex and I practiced with an anchor and that hugely powerful drill and it scared the shit out of me. I was determined to be overly cautious, even with the big, strong Texan holding the other handlebars of the drill.

Dyana, Sagi, Tex, and I were swimming about in our wetsuits, swim fins, masks and tanks, waiting for the first folded dome to be lowered into the water. Our team of four would mount this first dome, right below where we were swimming. The anchors and drills were already positioned on the sandy bottom.

The site below was the location where we'd found the vulva statue depicting *before and after* female circumcision. We could position the dome on flat ground, between the debris, though the area was strewn with rough-textured rocks and the remains of cement walls and broken pillars.

The dome, folded like an umbrella, slowly entered the water, suspended by its central eyelet from the ship's crane hook. We all swam around it to steady it. Once the hook entered the water, we dove down and pulled the dome open enough so Tex could get inside and begin to screw the central hub upward, so the dome would open just like a giant, underwater umbrella. The other three of us each grabbed hold of the folded dome at every other anchor point. We swam

outward – hard work in this case – to keep the dome opening evenly as Tex screwed the hub.

Part way through the process, Sagi relieved an exhausted Tex and continued to crank the center support to open the dome. Finally, all the struts snapped in place. Dyana, wearing a bulkier helmet with a microphone and headphones, told the crew above to continue lowering the dome.

As the dome approached the sea floor, we had to carefully center it where we wanted it. The crew above moved the crane as necessary and, finally, we were a few feet above the bottom. Everyone gave Dyana a thumbs up on the position, and she told the crew to lower away. The dome gently settled to the level bottom, watched over by the four of us and a small school of rare-in-the-Mediterranean, fairly large, bluefin tuna, the first I'd ever seen in the wild.

Now we would anchor it down. The dome would seal pretty well along the flexible rim it rested on, which was buried about a foot, 25 centimeters, into the sand. The buried rim, along with internal air pressure maintained by the ship pumping air through the umbilical hose, would keep most of the water out. That was the theory, at least.

Tex and I swam over to our drill and one anchor, which was near the first anchor position. I saw Dyana and Sagi swim over to the another position on the opposite side. We had all decided to be careful, not fast. The hefty drill, electrically powered by a cable from the ship, still scared me.

I grabbed the heavy anchor and threaded it through the steel catch-loop on the dome's rim. Fortunately, this part of the dome, at least, had imbedded itself the full one-foot depth of the sharp flange into the sand, so the dome rim itself was resting on the sand, and the catch-loop was flush with the seabed. I twisted the anchor, screwing it in enough to keep it in place if I held onto it, and Tex maneuvered the cumbersome drill up and onto the top of the anchor shaft. Fortunately, the drill was supported from above by a single large, heavy-gauge Mylar *balloon*, which made it essentially neutral-buoyancy and easy to lift and maneuver under water.

At this point, the handlebars were slightly above my head, if I stood on the bottom. I had to reach up to grab them. Each of us had a *dead man's switch* (I preferred to think of it as a *dead person's switch*), which had to be held in, like hand brakes on a bicycle, in order for the drill to operate. I squeezed mine and saw Tex squeeze his. He looked at me, I nodded, and he started the drill, very slowly. It took about a minute before the handlebars were at shoulder height for me, and below that for Tex. As we'd rehearsed, he tilted his head to the side, asking me if he could increase the speed. This wasn't just to get done faster, the additional inertia developed by the faster-spinning drill, would force the anchor past any *soft* impediments, like pressure-squeezed mud. I nodded and the drill speed doubled. I could hear the higher-pitched whine through the water.

The bit – the anchor – wound all the way down to the metal loop of the rim. This was the most dangerous part. When the drill sensed the anchor tightening enough, it reversed direction to unfurl the anchor tip, about six feet below the surface. *Unfurl* is too kind a word. It violently drove the anchor panels outward into the surrounding medium - sand, mud, or whatever it was - to provide a much larger, thin steel mooring extending outward under the sand, in order to fix the anchor well below the surface.

The drill gave a mighty jerk and, even knowing what was coming, I almost lost the grip on, and control of, my handlebars.

I held, though, and the whining engine shifted. A few moments later, a green light came on, indicating that the anchor was secure! For our team, one down, two to go.

I saw that Dyana and Sagi had already finished and moved on, clockwise, to their second anchor.

Tex raised up his hands in a *WTF* gesture, but I just shook my head. I had too much respect for the power of this equipment to have any interest in racing them. This was a dangerous job, not a contest.

We moved clockwise also, and started to repeat the process with the next anchor. We had wound the anchor down to where the handlebars were at my shoulder height. I thought Tex was about to ask me if it were okay to speed up, but instead, he shut down the drill and pointed up to a school of tuna, which had been circling the dome from about 20 feet, 7 meters, beyond the perimeter, and were now circling closer. There was a very large tuna, which looked to be a couple hundred pounds at least, swimming with the school, apparently looking for lunch. Though not prone to attack humans, they are predatory, and can be dangerous if disturbed, just because some of them get so big.

I let go of the now quiescent handlebars and went around the dome to caution Dyana and Sagi.

They were focused on the drilling task at hand, and paying no attention to what was happening with the school of tuna just above them. The anchor was turning and the handlebars were at about Dyana's head level when everything went wrong. I was swimming up to them, still about 15 feet away, when the large tuna veered to the outside of the school and came right at Sagi, from behind and to his right. It swam directly into his right hand with considerable force, knocking the handlebar out of his grip.

I watched in amazement as the tuna ran into the handlebar itself, smashing its mouth on the grip and apparently bending the dead man switch, preventing it from being released. I saw Sagi fly off to the left, trying to hold onto the left grip of his handlebar, as it began to swing around.

Dyana could neither hold the handlebar which flew out of her grip, nor get out of the way fast enough. Sagi's handlebars spun toward her with tremendous force, and crashed into her helmet like hitting a watermelon with a sledgehammer. I saw the entire right side of her helmet collapse inward. The force of the blow literally flipped her upside down. If she had simply been wearing a hood and mask like the rest of us, she would have died instantly.

As it was, the drill kept spinning, actually gaining speed. It was only later that we found Dyana's glove had been ripped

off and wedged in her dead man's switch, keeping it from opening and thereby shutting the drill off. Dyana was upside down, apparently unconscious, and was slowly drifting toward the spinning drill handles. I swam as fast as I could to her but the spinning handlebars sliced across her inner thigh and impacted her groin with enough force to tear into her wetsuit and rip her leg open.

Blood was billowing from her thigh by the time I got to her. I grabbed her and immediately swam away from the drill and upward. Sagi had recovered enough to join us. He reached out to clamp his hands around Dyana's thigh to try to staunch the bleeding, but pointed to my utility belt first. I got the message, quickly took it off and wrapped it around her upper thigh at her groin. I fastened it slightly loosely, then removed my flashlight and stuck it into the belt and turned it to make a crude tourniquet.

We swam to the surface holding on to an unconscious Dyana, with me trying to keep the tourniquet tight. The crew managed to quickly hoist all of us up at once. Dyana still hadn't moved at all. I could see through her crushed, fiberglass helmet that her eyes were closed and her head was pushed sideways by the indentation on the right side.

After several minutes, someone brought a massive pair of tin snips and began to cut the helmet away so we could free her head. During all this she didn't stir, not even a little.

Chapter 6 - Broken

Dyana lay on the deck without her ruined helmet - deathly pale I thought - still unconscious. The water had been about 73° F, so we'd all been wearing 3mm fullsuits, since we'd planned to be underwater for several hours. Dyana and I were both slender, which meant we got cold faster than the typical, male diver. We always erred on the side of being warm. We'd left Dyana's wetsuit on her, but had cut up the right leg, all the way to her groin, to get to her wound. After applying both a tourniquet and direct pressure, we were able to completely stop the blood loss. A huge ugly, purple bruise was forming across her pussy and her upper leg, above the wound.

As soon as the crew knew of the injury, they called a hospital in El-Agamy, which was very close to the peninsula where we'd been moored when I arrived. They arranged for a helicopter to come to the ship to transport Dyana to the hospital. It arrived about ten minutes after we had her aboard the *Barbaros*, and landed on the aft deck, in an area that had actually been a helicopter landing pad when the ship was still a frigate in the Turkish navy.

The paramedics checked her out, put her on a stretcher, and hustled her aboard the helicopter. I went to jump aboard, into the last remaining seat, but Sagi held up his hand to quietly stop me. "I have her primary, medical power of attorney – that's the correct term in English, isn't it?" He asked me.

"Oh ...," I said. "Yes, of course."

"Follow us in the launch," he said considerately. "Ask for me at the hospital when you arrive."

"Okay, I will," I told him. I judged, by his words and the look on his face, that he was sincerely trying to help. For that matter, why wouldn't he be helping?

I turned around and the captain was right there. "I have a boat ready for you," he told me.

I rushed to the launch as the helicopter rose into the bright, blue, afternoon sky. In a few minutes, I was on my way to shore.

Each of us had assigned primary and secondary medical powers of attorney to two other team members, in the event we were injured, unresponsive, and needed medical decisions made. Dyana and Sagi, the co-project leaders, were primary assignees for each other, as I was for Tex and he was for me. Dyana and I were secondary for each other. Until she regained consciousness, Sagi was authorized to make decisions and sign papers on her behalf.

I arrived at the hospital about 80 minutes later. I was actually pleased with the speed at which I'd gotten there, though I was insane with worry while on the launch. Once on the shore, I was focused on getting to the hospital as quickly as I could, so that distracted me from dwelling on Dyana's current condition.

My Arabic was much better than when I'd arrived in Egypt six weeks ago, but still had a long way to go to be comfortably fluent. I was able to get my message across to the emergency room's receptionist, and about five minutes later, someone came out and told me that they'd checked Dyana's wounds in emergency, and had sent her directly to the women's surgery unit to be prepped. The receptionist took me up to the third floor of the five-story hospital. She introduced me to a nurse there, who took me down a long corridor. Dyana was already in a room there at the end of the hall.

Sagi was standing outside the room, talking to a woman in surgical garb. I went into the room with the nurse. I was actually pleased to see that Dyana was hooked up to modern instruments; she had an IV in her arm and she did have a breathing tube. The hospital, overall, seemed like an adequately modern facility, in spite of being in a third-world, somewhat primitive country. Or perhaps I was confusing fundamental religious attitudes with primitive. I can sometimes be parochial like that.

"She is stable, but needs surgery to repair her leg injury, as well as to get any blood loss under control. Then she can

heal, and become conscious again,” the nurse told me in understandable English. “If you like, you can join your colleague who has already provided information.”

“Thank you,” I said. Then I walked out of the room and up to where Sagi was standing, talking to the woman, who turned out to be a surgeon.

The surgeon was speaking in Arabic, as I would have expected. I picked up most of what she and Sagi were saying. I was fairly confident she said, “... to her head, causing some modest brain swelling, along with having sustained hard-impact head injuries. We will keep her unconscious, in a coma, until a week or more after the surgery. There is no doubt that she has a concussion. We must watch for other, less-evident head injuries, to make sure a serious condition isn’t hidden at the moment. Thus we err on the side of caution by inducing a coma.

“The cut or wound on her right leg extends up toward her groin. Her genitals are severely bruised and they are uncut. We will treat all her wounds, including damage to her head, leg and intimacies in the prescribed manner according to our best practices. Those are dictated by international standards and treatment criteria written into Egyptian statutes.

“She is here with us and we shall automatically follow all required procedures. As you have her medical power of attorney, we need your permission to treat anything else that arises from her condition. We will keep her in a pentobarbital-coma for her head injuries to heal, and treat her leg and genitals in an accepted manner to minimize her discomfort. Do you agree to the induced coma and treatment?”

He turned to me. “Does this all make sense to you?” He asked.

“Can her treatment wait until she’s transported to Europe or the US?” I didn’t want to offend anyone, but I wanted what was best for Dyana.

“There is immediate need to repair the laceration, and urgency concerning her head injury.”

That made total sense to me, having been there when all of that happened, and seeing Dyana in the room just now.

“I don’t see where we have any choice,” I said to Sagi.

He turned back to the surgeon. “Then of course, whatever you decide is best and must do.”

“You will sign for her the authorization forms.”

She led him to the desk where she went over several forms, asking him to sign each. I was surprised that, before he agreed to sign them, he asked me if I wanted to review them. I decided that I should, in spite of my spoken Arabic being barely adequate, and definitely struggling with the written language. I didn’t want to delay things by asking Sagi to translate them into English for me, but I had no choice. Sagi and I went paragraph-by-paragraph over the three pages of permission hospital-speak. He was very patient in translating. I felt more rushed by the need to get Dyana into surgery. Surprisingly, the doctor didn’t try to rush us at all.

There was a section about this being an Egyptian, Islamic hospital, and its rules and regulations were subject to evolving government dictates. We both asked the doctor about what that meant. She said that the new government had imposed all kinds of controls on them that hadn’t existed in the secular state that had preceded it. That apparently included everything from male doctors not being allowed to treat women without specific permission, to prayer observation times, to diet, and treatment requirements. She said the government dictates were changing all the time.

She offered to show us the file of regulations from the past six months, and allow us to review them before Dyana was treated. I could tell she was concerned about the delay so, after bouncing it off Sagi, we both decided to have him sign so they could get on with treating her.

“We will take her to surgery in five minutes or so. We will treat her carefully, and keep her in recovery to watch for reaction to the induced coma. Expect her back in her room in several hours,” the surgeon told us. Then she left for the surgery suite through double doors that locked behind her.

“Were you able to follow the conversation with the doctor?” Sagi asked me in his perfect, British-accented English.

“Yes, pretty well. Did she say anything else important before I got here?”

“Only that she expected Dyana to make a full recovery, but she was certain it would take a month or six weeks. The only uncertainty is the seriousness of her head injuries. They think they are moderate, not serious, but must wait and see.”

“I know you’re at least somewhat familiar with the medical facilities,” I said to Sagi. “I don’t want to sound elitist or be an ugly American, but should we consider sending her back to America or Western Europe for treatment, as soon as she’s able to travel?”

“I don’t take offense, and I’ve asked myself that same question. I’m not personally familiar with this particular hospital, or all the details of their procedures or improvements or problems from the government’s most recent regulations. It seems a well-run facility and the Alexandria area does have a good reputation for decent health care. As far as the surgery is concerned, it had to be done now and will soon be over, except for recuperation. Regarding the head injuries, I would be concerned with moving her too soon, causing additional trauma. Those were the doctor’s words to me. I believe they are capable of stabilizing her. When she awakens in a week we can decide, unless she worsens suddenly. Does that make sense to you?”

It did, and I had nothing to add. We would not seek to move her to the West, as long as she stabilized and continued to improve here.

While we waited, I had my first intimate, one-on-one talk with Sagi. There was no doubt that he had an ego as big as the Aswan High Dam, but in most ways, he was surprisingly down-to-earth. He had not grown up rich, though he was comfortable. He only used his family connections one time; his uncle, the former Minister of Antiquities, helped him get into Imperial College, London. Otherwise, he was a self-made

intellectual in the Western tradition, with a proud, deep Egyptian foundation.

The only thing I thought negative about him after getting to know him a little was that he had a homophobic leaning. Though he could apparently deal with LGBT people professionally without issue, he really didn't sanction things like the relationship between Dyana and me, which he did recognize for what it was: a sexual liaison between two women. He didn't understand it at all, and he struggled with it. That said, I have to give him credit for assuming a live and let live attitude about it. He didn't let it affect the project, or his professional relationship with Dyana or me.

Several hours later, they wheeled a still-unconscious Dyana into her room. Her color had actually improved. She seemed to be resting peacefully, though she was kinda trussed-up. Her legs were spread wide and her left ankle was strapped down. Her right leg was elevated, resting in a sling fastened to an overhead bar that was part of the bed. The nurse asked Sagi, but not me, to step out of the room, then pulled back the sheet covering Dyana. I could see that her right leg was wrapped in surgical dressing from just above her knee all the way up to her groin. Then the bandage went over her pussy to cover it, and up over her hip, around her waist, and back over her groin from the left, and ended around her upper left thigh. She had a catheter protruding through the bandages too.

"She has a catheter, and that's a lot of wrapping," I said to the nurse.

"It is more extensive than what is necessary for her wounds, but done this way, it tends to stay in place better for an unconscious patient. We'll change it every day, and remove the stitches in a week to ten days, at about the time we awaken her from the induced coma. Without the catheter, she would become uncomfortable in her coma state, and ultimately would pass fluid, which could easily contaminate the sterile dressings and promote bacterial growth. She has an anal catheter behind her, where you cannot see. It allows her to avoid a mess. Yes?"

I nodded that I understood. I thought my lover looked wan and diminished, but I believed she was on the road to

recovery. Everything appeared okay – better than I'd feared. Other than allowing time to heal, Dyana was on the road to recovery. In a month or two, I would have her back with me.

“You may stay as long as you like, but she will not know you are here, while she remains in coma.”

Then the nurse covered Dyana with the sheet again and left. I kissed my lover on the lips just before Sagi came back into the room. Her lips were warm, but dry.

We sat with Dyana for a while, talking quietly, but not saying much. Finally, we looked at each other as though to say, “What do we do now?” We decided at the same time to return to the ship. The hospital would call us twice per day to give us updates on her condition. Either Sagi or I, or another team member would visit her every couple days while she remained unconscious. I wanted to be there when she was awakened from the coma.

Dyana's vitals continued to improve steadily, if not quickly. They kept her comatose for twelve days. I think they were being extra-cautious, which was fine with me, though I was anxious to see her awake and functioning normally. I wanted my lover back with me and, if not completely well, at least far along the road to recovery. I'd missed her in every way.

By day twelve, they were certain that the slight brain swelling had returned to normal and that she was probably ready to be awakened. They'd left the stitches in and would remove them first, then awaken her. I wanted to be there when she woke up, so I took a launch to shore and a taxi to the hospital. By the time I got there, they'd removed the stitches and had stopped giving her the pentobarbital, which had induced and maintained the coma.

I had only been there about ten minutes when I saw her start to awaken. My heart leapt as I realized that soon, she'd finally be awake and talking to me.

I watched her stir. Her ankles and wrists were confined, though I didn't think that unusual at the time. Why would it be? Her waist and chest were banded and fastened to the bed also, but I couldn't see that because a sheet covered her.

She moaned and moved her head. I saw her right arm press up against the restraints. She tossed some more, as much as the restraints allowed her. Finally, her eyes opened and stared, blankly, at the ceiling.

My heart waited in poignant anticipation of her communicating with me in some understandable way. At this point, I wasn't yet sure that her mind would be alright. I thought it would be, but I wasn't sure.

She stopped moving, looking straight up. Her eyes wandered around the room, and alighted on me.

I saw her smile then, and it was like all the sunrises I've ever experienced, rolled into one.

"Hi Dyana," I said, tentatively. "You're in the hospital, but you're going to recover fully."

"Hi lover. I'm in the hospital?" She frowned, apparently trying to remember what had happened. "Throat feels raw," she managed to say.

"You've had a breathing tube for twelve days. It was only removed half an hour ago."

Her eyes got wider than I thought possible at that point, and she managed to choke out, "TWELVE DAYS?"

"Yes. But you're well on your way to a complete recovery."

"I don't remember anything ..."

I told her, in a few sentences, what had happened.

"Is my brain okay?" That was the first thing she asked.

"Apparently. You know I'm Sagi, right?"

"Ha, ha ... very funny. Okay, I guess my brain is working. I feel better already. Will I have any long-term trouble with my leg?"

“No. They told me it’s all healed up. Does it hurt?”

“No ...”

“That’s a good sign.”

“I can’t move it very much.”

“That’s because your ankles and wrists are restrained. Your chest too.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know. Probably because they were afraid you’d roll out of bed or hurt yourself some other way, since you were comatose.”

Before Dyana could say anything else, a nurse entered. She was young and, I thought, surprisingly stern for her age. I thought her smile faked. She asked how Dyana was doing, in Arabic.

Dyana responded fluently. “I feel fine. Can you release ...”

“You are American, yes?”

“Yes.”

“I will speak in English.”

“I understand Arabic.”

“I hoped to practice my English ...”

“Oh, sure,” Dyana said. The nurse immediately switched to English. I was glad because I still had to strain to understand the local Arabic. Or any Arabic, for that matter. I was a lot better than Tex, though.

“Now that you are awake, I am going to check your cuts, and interrogate you so that you can tell me how they are healing. Yes?”

“Okay,” Dyana said. She turned to me and joked, “Vie have vays of making you talk ...”

We both laughed as Dyana said, “Ask me anything, Mein Herr.” Both Dyana and I laughed at her quip. The nurse didn’t get it. She was going to do her *interrogation*.

She pulled back the sheet that had covered Dyana. There was, by now, only a light bandage over her leg wound, and a similar light bandage over her pussy. I thought that was strange. Why bandage her pussy now, when all she had was a bad bruise, almost two weeks ago?

The nurse did the old, “does this hurt ... can you feel that ...,” routine to Dyana’s leg. Nothing hurt and she could feel everything normally. She probed the upper leg near Dyana’s crotch.

“That feels completely normal,” Dyana told her.

The nurse made some notes on a chart, then began to probe carefully around Dyana’s bandaged pussy. At first there was no reaction from Dyana.

“Can you feel that?” The nurse asked, probing near Dyana’s groin, at the side of her outer labia.

“Not much.”

“Here?” I saw the nurse’s fingertips directly over Dyana’s slit.

“I feel a little pressure, but not much else. What are you doing?”

“Checking your cuts,” the young nurse said.

I didn’t understand. I saw her push harder against the middle of the bandages covering my lover’s pussy.

“Can you feel this?” She asked Dyana.

“It aches a little when you push hard.” Her fingers moved down to near Dyana’s vaginal entrance.

“Ouch,” Dyana said quickly. “I’m sore there.”

I could see the quizzical look on Dyana’s face. “Why am I still sore there? Was I bruised that badly?”

“This area,” the nurse circled it with her fingertips, touching the bandages lightly, “is where the Pharaonic is performed. It has healed on the outside, but still must fully heal internally.”

My heart was instantly in my throat. It couldn't be. I knew what a "Pharaonic" was, and the thought of it horrified me. No! No, no, no! They didn't do that to her. They couldn't. I had misunderstood.

Dyana looked confused at first. I think she was wondering if she still wasn't quite awake yet. There was a long pause while she and the nurse just stared at each other. Then Dyana said, in the smallest voice I'd ever heard her use, "A Pharaonic what? What do you mean?"

"A Pharaonic circumcision, of certain. Excision and, in your case, partial infibulation."

I felt myself get nauseous and I'm sure I must have swayed because I remember grasping the bedrail to steady myself. I don't know what was going through my mind. I know that I broke out in a cold sweat. I was instantly shocked into a riveting panic.

"What did you do to her?" I asked. But right then, I knew what ...

"The very recent social policies of the Islamic State of Egypt, dictate *tahara* - that you be purified, circumcised, when you arrive at hospital for any surgical procedure. The new regulations went into effect a couple days before you came to us. Since you are not virgin, you were only partially infibulated."

I felt like screaming. Dyana did scream and shouted, "YOU! YOU? YOU CUT ME? YOU CAN'T DO THAT TO ME!"

"Of certain I did not personally do it ... but, Dr. Berkley, ... it has already been done."

I'm sure that Dyana knew, at that point, that something had been done to her. Perhaps, she was only seeking confirmation of the outrage that had been visited upon her. Whatever she was thinking, the truth was too much. I watched her eyes roll back in her head, and she lost consciousness.

The nurse pressed a buzzer and called in Arabic for some medication I didn't recognize. I'm sure I was looking at her

with undisguised horror. I didn't even have words. We stared at each other for at least a minute, neither saying anything.

At last, I had the presence of mind to ask the nurse, "Exactly what was done to her?"

"In the surgery, they performed a deep removal of her clitoris, and its covering – the hood, I think you call it. They removed her labia minora, trimmed her labia majora back, and closed her pudenda by stitching the outer labia together both within her and over the place where her vulvar slit was, all the way back to her vaginal opening. They formed a new entrance to the vagina, and to her urethra. Since she was not a virgin, they left the vaginal opening large enough for a tight penetration by an average male penis."

Over and over I started to say something but words wouldn't come. I finally mumbled, "She is a lesbian. How can she find satisfaction in sexual relations now?"

"With another woman?" The nurse asked.

"Yes, of course."

"She can find no satisfaction in such a relationship anymore. She has no convenient means for arousal by a non-male partner. Even with a man, her own pleasure will be almost nothing, other than the satisfaction of pleasuring him. That is the way of things."

"NO IT ISN'T!" I shouted angrily. I took a step towards her and she jumped back in shock. I was ready to pummel the young nurse. I was breathing – more like panting - hard with my hands clenched into fists. My body was preparing to fight. At the last moment, I managed, barely, to bring myself somewhat under control, by recognizing that this nurse wasn't at fault ... at least not directly. Besides, I couldn't risk going to jail in Egypt, especially when Dyana would need me.

"It is the way of things here in Egypt," she said, defending her statement. "I have a full Pharaonic, myself, since I was twelve. If I were in America, I would be subjected to American laws. Here, in Egypt, all are subject to Egyptian laws. I didn't ask you or your friend to come here."

My head was swirling and I thought I might pass out like Dyana. “How could you do this without her permission?”

“The new law in Egypt, from just before your friend came to us, is very clear. All women who are *najasa*, unclean, must become *tahara*, purified or cleansed, if they have surgical procedures in an Egyptian hospital. Even if the authorization papers had not been signed, the surgeon would have been required to make the patient *tahara*, based on precepts in place a day or two before she arrived here.”

I was aghast! “But ... but ... but ... but no one told us!”

“It is written in the government dictates. It is addressed in the permission documents, though no permission is required for this to be done. The surgeon probably assumed you knew ...”

I was almost out of my mind. I hadn't had to handle a true horror since my Tia died in that mass shooting seven years ago. And even then, the horror was caused by a deranged killer, not by something a human doctor had purposely done that didn't need to happen! Something that a nation crazy with misdirected religious and cultural zeal perpetrated on the uninvolved and innocent! It was all unnecessary and totally unexpected!

“This is a nightmare!” I said aloud in English.

The nurse was staring at me, perplexed. It was obvious that she fundamentally, at her very core, didn't understand why I was reacting so strongly against what had been done to Dyana.

“Most every woman in Egypt is *tahara*, and now so is she. I am *tahara*. Honestly, I want all my sisters to be *tahara*.”

“She is an American! It's not *our* custom!”

“Yet she is in Egypt, subject to our laws and customs.”

I just stared at her as though she had two heads and six arms.

A fifty-something, woman doctor entered the room right then in answer to the nurse buzzing the station down the hall.

As I would realize later, she had been the chief surgeon when Dyana had gone under the knife.

“What is the matter?” She asked in Arabic.

“The patient, I believe, fainted when she was told that she had received the Pharaonic circumcision. She had just awakened from her induced coma and we were all talking. She had not known that she was now najasa.”

“How could you do that to her without her explicit agreement?” I asked in Arabic. “She was here because of an accident, not to be circumcised!”

“Female purification is the custom, the normal procedure in Egypt for as long as we know,” the doctor replied in English, somewhat perplexed at my shock, I think. “It has been our way since the time of the pharaohs. It predates Islam; it predates your Western culture by 2500 years! Now, of course, it is the law of the country, a law instituted merely a day or two before your friend arrived here.”

I felt like I had fallen into Wonderland. This was so unbelievable that it couldn't be real. For ten minutes or so I felt completely disconnected from the real world around me.

The doctor ministered to Dyana, who started to stir. In a couple minutes, she was awake again. I looked at the monitor and her heartrate was 138. “We need to get you to calm down,” the doctor told her in English, as she injected something into Dyana's IV.

Her eyes started to droop and then opened suddenly. “You cut me!” She shouted with a strained voice, apparently using all the force she could muster.

“Yes, of course,” the doctor said. “You were given the customary open Pharaonic circumcision, as per Egyptian custom and the new government's regulations. We had no choice, and neither did you. I would have done it even if we had a choice. No woman should be najasa.”

I wanted to shout that I was what they called najasa, or unclean, but I was afraid of what they might do to *me*! I could

see that Dyana was shaking and tears were forming in her eyes.

“Exactly what did you do to me? I want to see. Release my arms.”

“I can’t release your arms, Dr. Berkley. Though you are externally healed, your wound and your circumcision are still in a delicate state. We can’t have you aggravating them, either on purpose or in your sleep. You may see yourself when we change the bandages tomorrow.”

“I want to know what you did to me.” I could tell, because she was drugged, that it was taking all of Dyana’s concentration and energy to even talk at this point. I was simultaneously appalled at what they’d done to her, and in awe at her incredible fortitude, her strong, evident force of will.

“I did what the law required me to do, and what conformed to Egyptian statutes. I excised your clitoral hood and inner labia.”

That was when I discovered this woman had been Dyana’s chief surgeon.

She continued. “Then I removed your clitoris and the subcutaneous, attendant nerves and blood vessels, the clitoral crura, to an extent of two centimeters on each side, with vaginal, upward pressure and stretching to get everything that fed into your bud. In that way future stray sensations – either pleasant or most likely painful - are avoided, yes? I then excised your outer labia and stitched the two sides together from the top of your mons to the vaginal entrance, along the vulvar slit, both internally and externally, leaving only the opening for urination. The vaginal entrance is now an anus-like orifice suitable to male penetration. I placed a catheter in you to allow the urethra to form and heal within a new exit. The catheter will remain in you for another seven to ten days.”

Dyana, who’d been leaning forward to look down at her bandaged groin, let out the most heart-wrenching moan of anguish that I have ever heard and began to cry. She laid back and stared at the ceiling, abject despair etched onto her face.

I took her strapped-down hand in mine and bent to kiss her forehead.

“Sagi and I looked at the forms, we evaluated every paragraph, we questioned what was to be done. I swear we didn’t know,” I whispered to her.

“Yes, Love, I know,” she whispered back and closed her eyes.

I stayed with her the rest of the day and slept in a chair in her room all night. I couldn’t leave her alone, knowing what she would have to face whenever she awakened. What WE would have to face together.

I did call Sagi and told him what had happened. He was shocked, clearly distraught. We yelled at each other for several minutes. Finally, he seemed to wrap his mind around it, apparently trying to take it in stride. I suppose to him, as an Egyptian who grew up with the knowledge that female circumcision was so deeply rooted in the society as to be essentially universal, this wasn’t as huge an event as it was to Dyana and me. I suppose all of the women he knew in this country had almost certainly been cut. As Sagi pondered this, I tried to advance arguments against doing anything similar to foreign women. He had nothing else to say. I think he was honestly embarrassed for his country. He wasn’t at fault, any more than I, as an American, was at fault for the poor decisions of my country.

I told him I would stay in El-Agamy until Dyana was released next week. I’d bring her back with me. He understood and would cover parts of my work as necessary.

Chapter 7 – The Way We Were

Dyana slept fitfully and so did I. I woke up several times on my own, and at least twice more when she stirred and bolted upright – or tried to. The medical staff insisted on keeping her restrained. I talked to her and rubbed her head and kissed her until she calmed down and fell asleep again.

The doctor and a different nurse came in early. I was awake and Dyana was awakening when they entered. The doctor asked me to step out while they changed the light dressings on her leg and pussy.

I told her there was no way I was leaving Dyana alone to face what they'd done to her. I was staying. She shrugged and asked me to stand out of the way at the head of the bed.

That nurse, who didn't seem to speak English, unwrapped Dyana's leg. Considering how nasty and deep the cut on her thigh had been, I was surprised to see that there was only a thin, slightly jagged scar. It was still an angry red though. The doctor said it had already started to fade, and would eventually be hard to see, without close examination. The nurse rubbed a moisturizing and antiseptic cream gently into the essentially healed wound. The doctor then wrapped a few layers of gauze around Dyana's leg, and taped it fast.

The dressing over her pussy was held in place by what was essentially an oversized, disposable G-string that had a slot to fit it around the catheter. The nurse snipped the waist strap in two places and started to carefully slip it off from behind my lover.

"Sit me up, I need to see it," Dyana demanded. I held her strapped-down hand. The doctor pushed a foot pedal and Dyana rose to about half-way sitting up.

The nurse pulled the G-string from behind Dyana and slid it sideways and off of the catheter. Dyana's pussy, down to behind her crotch, was covered with what looked like a gauze pantiliner, also slotted to wrap around the catheter. It appeared to be specially made for covering that area. I realized with

revulsion that this would be in continuous demand in a country that cut almost 100 percent of their females, well over 800,000 per year!

“The scar will be prominent now, but will fade completely away with time,” the doctor told us. I guess that was a big deal to her. That was farthest from my mind right then. Dyana’s too, I was sure.

The doctor carefully removed the gauze pad; she said she wanted to make sure it didn’t adhere to unhealed spots, but didn’t think there were any, anymore. She lifted the pad and Dyana and I stared at her new pussy.

Except that it wasn’t a new pussy.

What I was staring at with wretched, anguished dismay and outrage had no resemblance to a pussy. If you took a *Barbie* doll, drew a faint red line from where the top of her vulva would be, if she had one, to a larger dot in front of where her anus would be, that’s what Dyana looked like. Except for the fading scar, there was a perfectly smooth surface from her lower abdomen, all the way to what I thought at first was her asshole, and then realized was some newly-created orifice that was her vaginal entrance! Her original anus was behind it. The *seam*, if I could call it that, was uninterrupted, save for a slightly puffy, red-looking opening where the catheter was, and through which she would eventually pee, more-or-less normally.

I fought not to puke. I felt the bile rise in my throat and I was about to lose the battle when Dyana screamed.

“WHAT THE HELL! WHAT ... WHAT THE FUCK **IS** THAT?” Dyana shouted, more horrified than I’d ever seen or heard another human be. Her face was beet red and the veins at her temples were standing out like worms on the side of her head. Holding her hand, I could feel her pulling against the restraints.

“YOU MUTILATED ME!” Dyana screamed at the top of her lungs. I was having trouble maintaining consciousness. I could feel myself hyperventilating, my vision narrowed, darkened and my head started to swim. Nothing in my 25

years of life had affected me like this, or prepared me for it. I needed to throw up, at the same time I needed to be here for my lover and friend.

“Your life was saved and you were treated like every other woman in Egypt, including me and this nurse,” the doctor said sternly. “Pull yourself together and start acting like the professional that you’re supposed to be.”

Her words incensed me. I let go of Dyana’s hand and rushed around the bed, intending to inflict bodily harm on the doctor and her nurse. I’d never felt this way anytime in my life, before this.

Dyana saw me grab the doctor by the lapels of her lab coat and position her for what I intended to be her execution. I started to shake the diminutive physician and Dyana called out, her voice surprisingly strong and level, “Don’t. Leave her alone. There’s no point anymore. You’ll just get into trouble, and I will be no better off.”

If anything, I thought those words were even more poignant than Dyana’s scream of mutilation. I turned to her, a hand still gripping the doctor’s coat, with tears in my eyes.

The anguish on her face was beyond any human emotion. It was a consuming sorrow overlaid with a monumental despair. They had destroyed my lover. And they’d only done it because of misguided, contemptible, unreasonable cultural inertia, reinforced and fortified by a misguided religious belief. Islam does not teach female circumcision.

I remembered the submerged statue we’d uncovered. Though certainly duplicated elsewhere, this had been an Egyptian practice for 3000 years!

The pussy I stared at bore no resemblance to a woman’s intimacies. It was blank, empty, neuter.

“Dyana?” I said, not knowing what else to say.

“I fear I am lost, lover,” she said to me, and I lost it. I crumpled to the floor in some hitherto unknown state between reality and oblivion.

“No, no, no,” I sobbed.

“Your reaction is unwarranted and groundless, and it reflects a fundamental misunderstanding,” I heard the doctor say.

“No, I understand completely,” Dyana said as I tried to rise to my feet. “I understand what you’ve done to me physically, and the social context in which it was done. That is what horrifies me all the more and casts such a deep, unforgivable pall over the culture you purport to represent.”

Somehow, I was able to stand and look into the eyes of the woman I was so intimate with. I tried to say something, but no words could come to me.

“Please surrender your dread, your despair for me,” Dyana told me. “What’s done is done. I am what I am. I am what they made me. Please just stay and hold my hand.”

Of course, she was right. There was nothing to be done. They had circumcised her. They had closed her pussy, save for a second rosebud, a second asshole that now marked the entrance to her vagina. Everything else was gone. Everything else ... everything ...

EVERYTHING ELSE WAS GONE!

Dyana held my hand but turned her head away from me, saying nothing else. She only emitted a faint “uh” when the doctor inserted a new catheter. Her eyes closed as the nurse applied a new pad, and barely stirred as another G-string gauze pad was positioned to hold the dressing in place.

The next week passed. They insisted on keeping Dyana restrained until the new shape of her body, which they had forced upon her, was cemented both outside and deep within her. It didn’t matter, as Dyana said, there was nothing to be done now.

I stayed with her all day and all night, every day, even though she asked me to leave so she could take a break from me. I wasn’t willing to leave her alone yet, and I told her so. She finally gave up and said no more about it.

Sagi called me several times to check on Dyana and me. I'm afraid I was more than a little terse with him. He was Egyptian, after all. In some unkind, freakish way, I blamed him for this because he was Egyptian.

For the first several days after we saw what they'd done to her pussy, there was mostly silence between Dyana and me. As the week progressed into the last few days that she was in the hospital, we began to talk more. I tried to control the despair I was feeling, because I thought it would do her no good, and because I thought she might be coming out of her melancholy a little. Maybe that wasn't it, exactly. Maybe her despair was simply rising to the level of melancholy.

"I will always love you," I said to her later in the week. "I will always be your lover."

"I will always love you," she said. "I don't know if we can be lovers now. We shall see."

"We can be lovers," I said with a confidence I didn't feel.

She looked at me with tragically sad eyes, but said nothing.

A day later, she told me, "There's a strange nothingness, a profound emptiness between my legs. I suppose that's to be expected, but lying here, I don't feel right. Even if they hadn't told me, I'd know they'd done something to my intimacies.

"I suppose that's not even a good term anymore. I don't even have intimacies now."

"Don't say that. Of course you do," I said automatically.

"Seriously?" She looked at me with an expression that said in no uncertain terms, "Don't humor me."

"I don't know, Dyana. I don't know. We'll see. It may not be as awful as we think at this point."

I wasn't sure if I should have said that, but she responded in a level voice, "Perhaps it won't be."

We left the hospital on her 23rd day. She was fully healed externally, and her leg was fully healed inside too. Her groin was still reforming, healing, and recovering inside her, but it

was completely healed where the wounds were visible, and nearly healed within.

Actually, neither the wounds nor her lost pussy were much visible. There was just the thin scar, and the new orifice, which was unlike anything I'd seen before. It was mostly like a second asshole in appearance. Very much like that. They had apparently reformed her muscles there, her Kegels perhaps, and she could actually open and close it somewhat under her own control, using a Kegel-like squeezing.

There was no sign that she had ever had a clitoris or minor and major labia. Her not-pussy was completely nondescript, featureless. My lover had no, visible intimacies.

We left the hospital numb and with little idea of what the future, our future, was going to be like for us as a couple.

By the time we got back to the ship, all three domes had been submerged, secured, and the water within them displaced with a continual supply of air from the surface ship. Teams were working in the second and third domes. The first was awaiting Dyana and me; we had selected that site for our own exploration, and no one on the expedition team was inclined to usurp that decision.

After spending the first day aboard the *Barbaros* with Dyana, to make sure she was as comfortable as could be expected, I dove down to *our* dome. I entered the airlock, and zipped it shut behind me. I signaled the ship and they set a valve to purge the water by forcing air into the lock. Then I entered the dome and removed my tanks, fins, and gloves. I could have stripped down to my bikini, but I decided to work in my wetsuit until I got too hot. If that happened, I'd strip down.

The dome was comfortable and essentially dry, though humid. I was glad for my short hair. My long locks would have been far worse than a mess in this place. I was actually happy that Dyana had cut most all of my hair. I made a mental note to tell her how appreciative I was of my new look, the freedom it afforded, and the comfort it provided. I intended to

do everything I could to make sure she knew how much she was appreciated, especially by me.

Because of its shape, I could stand up throughout the dome, until I got within a few feet of the curved walls. The sand below my feet was semi-dry, but I knew I'd encounter water before I dug a foot down. We had partitions with pumps that would keep small areas dry to a depth of several feet, however.

I started poking around the floor of the dome, trying to decide where to begin. I settled on an area just off center and started the painstaking task of excavating. For me, the expedition and survey had now become a dig.

I tried hard to be interested in the work that had seemed so fascinating, so important, when I'd accepted the position. Sadly, but not unexpectedly, the reality of my lover's anguish kept invading my thoughts and mood. What had been an incredible, interesting, compelling and addictive archeological exploration had turned into an endless string of necessary tasks that I had to complete, in order to ultimately escape from this unplanned ennui.

The days passed slowly, at about the rate Dyana regained her strength. I think her weakness came as much from the blow to her head, as any surgery that was done to her. After she'd been back on ship for about a week, I asked her to trim my hair. I thought it would make her happy and let her know that I wanted to please her as much as ever, that I still considered us a couple.

She smiled, agreed and half an hour later, I was back to neat and trim. I also think I was successful in making her happier. As she was running the clippers up the back from my hairline to taper it, she mentioned with some surprise, "Doing this is actually making me wet."

"That's a good sign," I said.

"I think it might be."

A couple weeks later, we found out whether it was.

I had gone ashore with Dyana to see the doctor who had operated on her, and in whose care she'd been at the hospital. She got a clean bill of health, and had no restrictions anymore. She was healed – fully reconfigured into the Egyptian idealization of womanhood. A nirvana state promoted and sanctioned by the fundamentalist Egyptian government and the laws they imposed.

God save us from social and/or religious zealots.

Until Dyana was cleared by her doctor – and I use the term *Doctor* with all the disrespect it deserves here - we'd avoided getting into any sexual activities, and had only kissed sporadically, because I was sure that if we did more, I wouldn't be able to stop, and might injure her. At this point, I ached for her. I honestly thought she felt the same yearning.

We couldn't keep our hands off each other during our trip back to the ship, on a launch now piloted by my rapidly-rising, bright, undergrad star, the hard-working young woman, Toni. She still reminded me a lot of me a few years ago. She was slightly plumper than I had been – maybe just a little more baby fat than average. She did have the same long, streaked, blonde hair I used to have, maybe not quite as long, but almost. Her hair was wavier or curlier though. Maybe it actually was longer. I couldn't tell anymore, obviously, since mine was gone – getting closer to long gone. I thought all that hair made her look like a kid, probably even more so because she has a sweet face and a pretty smile. I suppose I had also looked like a kid to Dyana, before I was brutally shorn.

Well, maybe not so brutally. I was laid claim to by the most desirable woman I've ever met – up to then or up to now. That's not brutal; it's awesomely erotic. But I did lose a lot of hair in the process.

Yep – and I am so glad to be short-haired. It turns me on every minute of every day. Call me crazy. Don't knock it until you try it.

If you're straight, do it if your hubby likes it. If you're lesbian or bi, do it if your lady likes it. Don't be a whiner.

“Hey Toni,” I said, taking a break from making out with Dyana and winking at her, “why don’t you let me cut all that hair off for you. If you’re going to be an archeologist, you need to grow up and lose those junior-high locks. They make you look so immature that some people are beginning to wonder if you have a parent in the staff.”

Dyana started to laugh but tried to suppress it. Toni had the expression of a young adult who was at first totally nonplussed, then scared to death, then frozen in fear like a deer caught in the headlights.

“Uh ... uh ... uh ... uh, I’m not sure. I don’t think I want my hair cut. I ... I mean, I don’t think I’m ready to have it cut. Do I actually need to cut it; do you think?”

I needed a release from the tension and, being a not very nice person sometimes, I intended to have some fun with this poor, overly-dedicated girl. I could tell Dyana was up for it too. After all, Dyana was the short hair aficionado.

“I’ll be totally frank, Toni. Yeah,” I said, “you really do need to fix this disruptive problem. I’m sorry to be the one to tell you. Dyana and I were both surprised to see you arrive with your hair that long and unsuitable.”

Toni was a lot of naïve things, but she also was as observant as you’d expect a budding scientist to be. “But ... but ... you came here with hair as long as mine!”

“Is my hair long now, Toni?”

“Well ... no. Obviously not.”

“There you go. Dyana knew I would have her cut my hair when I got here. So I waited for her to do it. She’s very good, you know. Maybe you should have her cut your hair instead of me. She was a pro, at one time.”

“A pro?”

“At cutting hair. She made money at it for years in college.”

“Uh ... uh ... I didn’t know.”

“So now you do. Do you have a few minutes to cut Toni’s hair as soon as we get back?” I asked Dyana, trying to hold in the belly-laugh I needed to let go of.

“Sure,” Dyana said, playing along. “Let’s all go to my cabin, where my bag of equipment is, as soon as we get back. I’ll take care of all those tangles and that unwieldy mess of hair that Toni has made even worse by zooming through the water with it blowing around.”

Toni reached up to touch her hair. It was definitely blowing back, and it was an almost-frizzy mess.

“I don’t see how you can dive with that,” I said to Toni.

“That’s much too dangerous,” Dyana added. “The project cannot be put into a position of liability because of it. It’s gotta go. We shouldn’t have let you keep it like this for this long. Time to correct our oversight.”

“But what do I need to do to be professional? How are you going to cut my hair?” Toni asked Dyana. She was in a panic, and didn’t know how to say no to two of the project leaders. Maybe she could have said “no” to me, but not both of us.

No one spoke for a long moment. We both pretended to carefully study Toni.

“The most effective, and simplest-to-maintain thing would be to just buzz her all over,” I said to Dyana, as if I’d expended all my mental power against this problem.

“Yes, I agree,” Dyana said, stone-faced.

“What does that mean?” Toni asked, her pretty eyes becoming huge. I really don’t think she knew.

“Dyana will use a clipper all over your head, and your hair will be an even ... say ... three-fourths inch, I think. All over.”

“That sounds about right,” Dyana quipped. We were simply trying to get Toni to beg for her hair. As it happened, the poor girl was too afraid of offending us, or maybe too in awe of us. I started to feel sorry for her.

“But ... but ... my hair will be shorter than yours then,” she said to me.

“Not at the sides or in the back,” I responded calmly.

“Oh ... yeah. Uh ... do I have to do this?”

“How much longer are you here?” I asked her, but I knew already.

“Through this quarter and next. Until Christmas, in other words.”

“Until Christmas? Then I’d say yes, you definitely do,” I told her, feeling deliciously evil. Maybe we were gonna get to do this! For some diabolical reason, I thought that was gonna be great! I was probably looking forward to the relief from tension, since Dyana’s injury and butchering at the hands of the Egyptians. Poor Toni was going to be the surrogate for the doc whom I couldn’t put my hands on.

“What do you think?” I asked Dyana, with another wink.

“Oh yes, without a doubt,” Dyana said.

“As soon as we get back?” Toni asked, still alarmed.

“Head down to my cabin right after you stow your things,” Dyana told her.

Little else was said on the rest of the return trip. Once aboard the *Barbaros*, Dyana and I went to her cabin.

“I want you and I need you,” I said to her.

“I feel the same way. Let’s wait fifteen minutes to see if poor Toni comes here. Meanwhile, I’ll get my things out, just in case. If nothing else, shearing her will restore some of our erotic inclinations.”

I was delighted to hear her say “our.”

Trying to focus our angst onto something or someone else was evil and unkind, but we started laughing, and kept mostly quiet, making jokes at the gullible, 20-year-old’s expense, until there was a light knock on the cabin door.

Dyana looked as surprised as I did and got up to answer it. Yep, it was Toni, our soon-to-be haircut victim.

“Hi Tony. I’m all ready for you,” Dyana told the poor, panicked girl. “Sit right here.”

“I don’t think I want to do this,” she said, but she sat where Dyana indicated.

“Requirement for the job,” I said. I really wanted this girl’s long hair gone. It reminded me too much of me. If I couldn’t have long hair, she couldn’t either. That’s how I was – sort of – feeling. For that matter, I didn’t want *any* other woman to have long hair, if I couldn’t have it.

Besides, Dyana was damaged and I wanted to take out my frustrations on someone. Any suitable victim would do nicely. Toni, naïve as she was, epitomized the perfect victim.

For a moment there, I didn’t want any other woman to have a pussy, including me, if my lover couldn’t have one. You can accept what is real and in your face, or not. I knew it was a reality for my Dyana, and I wanted someone to pay something, no matter who that was, no matter what we made her pay. It wasn’t right; it wasn’t fair. I knew the world had been neither to Dyana.

“Didn’t you ever hear of having to get a tattoo the first time you crossed the equator on a ship? Dyana asked her.”

“I have to get a tattoo too?” The girl was clearly in a panic and her thoughts were in total disarray. She was WAY too enmeshed in her hair thing. It was time to separate her from that. I couldn’t wait. I resisted the urge to grab her ridiculously long locks and just whack them off. This should be a moment of surrender and awakening to be relished, inhaled and appreciated, not rushed.

“Hmm ...” Dyana said, giving the impression that she needed to find an excuse, or the tattoo would happen too. She seemed deep in contemplation, and poor Toni was almost paralyzed with fear. “If you can manage getting your ridiculous mess of hair in order, I suppose we can let you off that one,” Dyana said (in reality, we were well north of the

equator – ha, ha), “but this is a tradition for expeditions in the Mediterranean. That’s one of the reasons why I had to cut Destiny’s hair. That and the safety aspects, of course.” Dyana motioned at me. I just smiled innocently.

Poor Toni had to cry out, “But Beverly has hair almost as long as mine!” I couldn’t tell if she were ratting Beverly out, or trying to argue why hers shouldn’t be cut. The fact was that, in this time period, 90 percent of girls in their teens and early twenties had long hair.

“Oh, I’ll get to her eventually,” Dyana said, “but the young women with leadership skills have to go first – it’s the only way to insure that the others will accept tradition.”

I was having a ridiculously hard time holding it in while this exchange continued. I just wanted to burst out laughing. However, I wanted Toni to be buzzed more than I wanted to go into hysterics. I held it. Dyana saw the gleam in my eyes and, once again, she almost burst out laughing herself.

“So what do you think?” Dyana asked me, “about an inch?”

Whoa! That was short. I guess Dyana was determined. I had to one-up her at that point – it was like a dare, after all, and you know how I respond to a dare.

“No longer than 5/8ths,” I said. “She is an undergrad, you know.”

Dyana looked at me, raising her eyebrows as if to say, “Are you kidding?” What she actually said was, “Yes, I suppose you’re right.” She paused in contemplation.

“Okay, 5/8ths of an inch it is.” I saw her reach down and snap a guard on the clippers. This wasn’t going to be a sleek, funky, fashionable haircut, it was going to be a buzzed massacre.

“Wait, wait, wait ...” Toni called out, moving her hands back-and-forth in a *no* gesture, like a referee in football indicating an incomplete pass.

“I don’t think I want my hair cut?” She said, making it a question. At that point, I knew we had her.

“You’ll love it,” I told her. “I do, honestly.” I realized as I said that, that it was true. God help me, I had no hair longer than two inches, some of it was practically shaved, and I loved it! After all, my lover had done it to me several times now! I felt great after each cut!

Dyana was combing Toni’s hair back off her face, which was basically how she wore it anyway. No style, I realized, just long, no-bangs hair. No-fringe hair for those of you of the British persuasion.

Here’s my contribution to international understanding: American bangs = British fringe. That’s my public service announcement for the day.

Toni didn’t move. Dyana tied her hair in a ponytail near her crown, and, before the terrified girl could say anything, she handed me the giant shears, held the ponytail straight out, and I wacked it off between her head and the elastic band holding it.

“OH!” Toni cried out, reaching back for her lost hair and trying to stand up. That seemed familiar, and I thought it must be a universal, automatic reaction.

Before our victim could do anything else, Dyana flipped the clippers on and, with no hesitation, ran them straight back from Toni’s forehead, just to the left of the middle of her head.

“Ah! Ah! AH!” Toni screamed, but it was far too late.

The girl held her hands right on either side of her head, as though she wanted to reach up and make it stop, but was afraid to. She started to cry.

“No tears, or you’ll spoil the ceremony!” Dyana cautioned her, smiling at me. “Then you may need that tattoo to prove yourself.”

“My ... my hair!”

“Really, Toni,” I said, “you’re going to find in a few days – or sooner – that you love this. I promise you!” I realized I meant that,

“My hair ...”

“Don’t be impatient, I’ll be done in a few minutes,” Dyana told the hapless girl.

“My hair ...” I think her mind had locked up; she kept repeating the same thing. Her hands were still at the side of her head, acting like she was about to touch her hair, but afraid that Dyana might cut her fingers off, I guess. It was crazy-funny.

Dyana was buzzing her like her life depended on it. What was left of those really long locks – I was pretty sure at this point that they had been as long as mine used to be – was flying everywhere as Dyana plowed the clippers across her head. In another minute, all she had was a carpet of 5/8 inch, teddy-bear-like bristles on her head. Dyana was using the bare clippers to trim her around the edges, though she wasn’t styling it like mine. Toni’s hair would be a simple, short buzz.

When Toni was done, we got her up and turned her toward the mirror. I should have felt sorry for her at this point, but I didn’t. Truthfully, she looked cute. No one would recognize her, of that I was sure, but she was cute and sexy in a boyish way.

She was about to faint as she looked at herself in the mirror. Dyana was brushing her off. Poor Toni turned to us and said, “What did you do to me?” In the strangest voice – centered between disbelief, confusion, and horror.

“We made you a professional like us!” I said cheerfully. I bent to kiss her and she greedily kissed me back.

I couldn’t believe it!

Dyana sent her on her numb way, telling her to shower off and just rub out her hair with her fingers. She even gave poor Toni a small jar of gel for short hair to use on it. Dyana told her to plan on coming back every two weeks to have it buzzed.

I told Toni that her eyebrows were way too thick for that hairstyle, and that she should either pluck most of them out, or come back and I’d do it. Frightened even more, she said she’d take care of them. I promised to look them over later that

evening, tweezers in hand, and thin them if they weren't done enough, or fix anything she missed. "I'll do them!" She promised, trying to run away.

"Make sure they're at least 80 percent gone!" I yelled after her.

I was hot and unquestionably turned on by the whole affair. I realized that I didn't feel guilty at all. That realization in itself should have made me feel ashamed, but it didn't. Dyana and I turned to each other and lost it for ten minutes of complete hysteria at Toni's expense!

I had barely gotten myself under control, finally, when Dyana, who had been looking down just then, stood up and stared directly at me, her face now very sober.

"I'm sorry to ask you this, lover, because it sounds so clinical. But I need you to test me, to see what I can still feel, still experience. Will you do that for me?"

It had been coming since we left the hospital. In spite of our brief, passing, somewhat cruel but comical relief, I knew it wouldn't be denied. We'd put it off, put it out of our minds, while we had our wicked fun with Toni, but now the moment was here. There was no way to delay it any more, to postpone it until a doctor visit, or further healing, or a better day. We both needed to face the issue at this moment. We needed to see what was possible for Dyana, and for us.

"Of course," I said, as we began to disrobe.

Chapter 8 – Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me

Dyana led me to the bed, hand-in-hand. She stood there and disrobed. I waited a moment, then took off my top and my jeans. We were both standing there naked.

I leaned in to kiss her. "I love you," I said. "Nothing has changed that." Then I gently pulled her onto the bed, placed her on her back with her head on a pillow, and I slowly spread her legs, one at a time. I tried to avoid staring at what they had done to her intimacies. I'd seen it in the hospital; I knew what it was – what it wasn't, actually.

"I've got a doll's pussy," she said. "Or a doll's lack of one."

I didn't reply. I knelt between her legs and cupped her groin with my hand. It didn't feel like anything I'd encountered before – maybe a little bit like cupping your underarm. My lover didn't feel like a woman.

I was determined not to dispassionately examine her as though she were a clinical subject. I wanted to make love to her.

The area was dry, with no hint of arousal. I wanted to remedy that, so I slid forward atop her and, holding her head from behind, began kissing her as passionately as ever I had. She responded with a slight murmur and an eager mouth. When she was breathing somewhat heavily, I turned her head and started sucking her earlobe, another of her erogenous zones. She wasn't wearing earrings so I was able to suck the soft skin into my mouth, nip at it with my teeth, and then bite it and slowly tighten the bite.

"Oh! That's good!" She said, so I worked on the other earlobe too.

When that had been enough, I slid down and began to circle her nipple with my tongue, and then suck on it. It

hardened almost immediately and my tongue could feel the bumps on her areola as it contracted with arousal.

I continued to finger that nipple while I turned my attention to her other, licking and sucking it. I felt her slowly wiggle beneath me, as she always did when she became aroused, and her murmurs of pleasure became louder. I was going to be patient; I wanted to maximize the chance for her to enjoy this, no matter what the final result was.

I kissed my way down her belly and my tongue entered her bellybutton. It was sensitive and, though I didn't play with it much, I wanted to cover everything that I knew pleased her. I could feel her tummy roll beneath me and her pelvis thrust involuntarily upward.

I cupped her pussy again. Where her intimacies had been, with no slit or lips to channel her juices it was still dry. But around her new, small, puckered orifice, it was very wet. With no labia to contain the moisture, the fluid had already dripped down from her vaginal opening and onto the bed.

I wet my fingers with her copious liquid and looked into her open eyes as I licked her essence off of them.

“You taste like ... Dyana,” I whispered. “You taste like my lover.”

She didn't say anything, but I saw her lips turn up very slightly in a nervous smile.

I bent my mouth to the smooth area of her groin, about where her hood had been. I repeatedly kissed and sucked at her as I moved downward. She jumped slightly when I reached her now completely exposed pee hole. I tried licking around it, and on it again, but I couldn't decide if that felt good to her or bothered her. I didn't want to break the spell by asking right then. Instead, after a little more attention there, I moved on down.

I lapped at the entrance to her vagina; I could feel the juices continue to flow as I did that. I circled it with my tongue, and she seemed to like that, judging by her needful moans. On my tongue, her new, puckered orifice felt almost

like her anus, but it tasted like her pussy always had. When my tongue slid inside it, it still felt like her rear rosebud, but not as tight. I did feel it open and close slightly, over and over, as my tongue probed it.

I licked up from her “pucker” to the top of her ... of her ... I didn’t know what to call it. It wasn’t a pussy anymore. In that instant, I decided to call it her sealed vulva in my mind. So I licked up her crotch from her pucker over her pee hole and along the center of her sealed vulva. I licked back and forth several times, ending at the top, above where her love bud would have been.

I let my tongue circle there, sometimes lightly, sometimes pushing hard with my tongue or tongue and lips. I felt Dyana tense, as though straining in expectation of arousal, focusing her energies to what had been, of course, her most sensitive spot. I glanced up momentarily, and saw her eyes squeezed tightly shut in concentration. She was trying as hard as she could to unlock, to bring forth, to experience the pleasure she needed.

She was like me, in that she always liked a light touch on her clitoris. Of course, she didn’t have a clitoris anymore, and I wasn’t sure whether or not there might be enough nerves left to arouse her. The spot from which her clit had been extracted was now under more than a quarter inch of tissue, which had been abraded and sealed together above it. I didn’t know if Dyana would feel anything, even if some of the nerves still existed and were buried there.

After a few minutes of licking up and down and circling, I felt her relax, as she let out a breath, which may have been one of exasperation. I was pretty sure it was because she couldn’t feel anything. I needed to try something else.

This time, I slid my tongue down to her pucker, around it several times, and then within her as far as I could push it. At the same time, I reached to the top of her sealed vulva and tried rubbing, then tapping with increasing force. She had always liked it when I did that to her G-spot.

She tensed up again and I knew she was trying so hard. I knew it and it brought tears to my eyes.

I kept on. I didn't think my tongue could reach her G-spot through her new vaginal entrance but I tried everything I could think of to arouse her there. After a while, during which time she tensed, relaxed when, I think, it became too much, and then tensed and focused again, I decided to push my fingers deeply into her new pucker.

I could only get two of my fingers into the tight opening at first, but finally managed three. There was no way she could be fisted, which I'd managed to do a couple times before.

I couldn't tell if I'd reached her G-spot. I couldn't feel the spongy vaginal lining designating that it was there. Maybe it was just beyond my reach.

By now, I'd had Dyana in bed for half an hour, and I couldn't get anything to happen. I was willing to keep at this all night, if necessary. Would I be physically able? I wasn't sure.

After I'd worked her pucker and vagina over to the best of my ability, and continued to touch, tap, push on, and play with her smooth, upper vulva, Dyana said, "There's a vibrating dildo in the top drawer of the nightstand."

I kept my fingers within her, because I didn't want the contact between us to be broken. I reached into the drawer and felt the dildo. It was a long, stiff, rubber-coated one, where the tip is slightly curved to one side (to be placed on the G-spot). I took it out and put it in my mouth, to make sure it was covered with the lubricant of my saliva. I held it near her pucker, removed my fingers, turned it on, and carefully guided it into her, so that the bent tip was toward the front of her sheath. The fit was very tight.

When I thought it was positioned correctly, based on Dyana's preference before, and my estimation of the added distance to her G-spot from her new pucker, I moved it in and out, but only slightly. When I seemed to hit the right spot, Dyana said, "There. Keep it there."

I continued to kiss her around her sealed vulva and on her inner thighs. I reached my other hand up to massage her nipple between my thumb and finger. I held the vibrator steady while making the tip circle a little, and varying the pressure against the front wall of her vagina.

Dyana's hips moved slowly up and down, as she started to become aroused. I kept up what I was doing for a long time. Her hips continued to move and rotate a little, but the frequency of their movement hadn't picked up, which usually happened with Dyana after a couple minutes of any kind of stimulation.

I shifted a little to get more comfortable, and lifted her legs so her feet were resting flat on the bed. That gave me access to her asshole, and I circled it with my tongue, probing a little within. I pushed harder with the vibrator. I tried swirling it within her. Her pelvis moved up and down, still slowly, never changing the speed of the regular motion.

"Push it all the way into me, then in and out," she asked, and I did. The frequency of her pelvic thrusts increased with the rate at which I fucked her with the vibrating dildo. I thought she was getting closer. She was definitely still oozing arousal fluid from her vagina.

This went on for another long time. She didn't seem to be getting any further along, any closer to climax. "Get the big rubber thing, then move the vibrator to my rosebud," she suggested.

"The big rubber thing" was an extra-large, penis-shaped dildo that was still in a wrapper; we'd never used it in our sex play. It could be strapped on or used by hand. I got it out while trying to keep her stimulated with my lips on her nipple. I wet it with my mouth, withdrew the vibrator, and watched her pucker stretch to its maximum as I pushed and rotated the large dildo against it. I was unable to get it into her. Her new pucker was too tight; she was too sealed up. I took a smaller one out of the drawer, wet it, and was able to carefully push the smaller penis dildo into her vagina, but it was very snug.

I had the penis all the way into her and was moving it in and out. She began to move her hips in time with my thrusts. I gradually opened her anus with the vibrator and carefully pushed it into her. With the two sizable devices within her, everything was now as tight as it could be.

“It feels good,” she said, “thank you, lover.”

“Are you close?” I whispered. I was afraid to do anything lest I spoil the delicate mood balance where we were at the moment.

“Not yet,” she told me. Maybe there was a little hope and anticipation in her voice.

I kept my mouth busy around her groin but I concentrated on the two probes I was using on her. By now, we’d been making love for about an hour. Before they had cut her, she could have climaxed five times or more in that hour.

I continued another half an hour. I left the probes within her and tried kissing her lips and sucking her nipples again, to expand the arousal in the hopes of moving her along toward climax. When her nipples were maximally hard again, I continued with the in and out of the dildo, and probing her rear entrance with the vibrator.

I was afraid she was going to get sore before she came. I was probably more afraid that she wouldn’t cum at all – maybe never again. I redoubled my efforts, as best I could. I was getting tired and we had been at this for over two hours. Before they butchered her, I could get her to cum in as little as a minute of not-very-intense foreplay. In particular, if her hands were in my short hair, it drove her crazy.

That thought gave me an idea. Her hands had been on her breasts, playing with her own nipples and massaging her smallish orbs. I reached up and moved them down onto my head. They rested there for a moment. Then, as I turned back to the devices I held within her, I felt her fingers go into my hair at the scalp and slide up the short locks, over and over again. The pace of her pelvic thrusts began to increase. She was calling out, “Oh, oh, oh ...” in time with the thrusts.

I thought she was going to cum. I thought for the next half hour that she was going to cum. Then I thought for the next hour that she was going to cum. It wasn't happening.

I had one more idea, "After you cum, you can buzz my hair like Toni's," I told her breathlessly. I realized I was actually getting wet at the thought of that. What the hell did that mean?

She quickly began to thrust and moan more rapidly. For another half hour we kept this up. Dyana was sweating all over. My muscles were cramping and I didn't know if I could even unfurl my fingers from around the dildo and vibrator. But we kept at it; we kept at it until ... until ...

Until Dyana finally wailed, "I can't do it!"

She began to cry, her body wracked and heaving in deep, mournful sobs.

"Lover?" I had stopped but hadn't removed the probes.

"I can't try anymore!" She cried in despair. "Take them out. I can't do this. At least I can't do this now."

We'd been at it for three and a half hours. My instantly-aroused, quick-to-cum lover couldn't climax. I didn't know if she ever would again.

It didn't appear that she would with a woman. Maybe a man could manipulate himself within her vagina better than I could using the dildo – maybe a real penis would work with or without the vibrator. Or maybe not.

We talked about this and cried for hours more.

I got up in the morning and felt angry at the world, and everyone in it. It wasn't right, it wasn't mature, but it was how I felt. Unfortunately for her, on my way to my little cabin, I happened to run into our cutely buzzed Toni in the tight corridor. I stopped to talk to her. She looked like a young woman stuck in shock. Her mouth moved but no words came out. She nervously ran her hand over her short buzz, causing the bristles to ripple like a fine pelt. I noticed her eyebrows were, perhaps, a token amount thinner. Given the mood I was in, that was not acceptable. I was determined to take my

frustration out on gullible, loveable Toni again. I made her follow me to my cabin.

I had her sit on my bunk while I sat on a stool in front of her and plucked away at her brows. Several times I thought the stinging was gonna make her get up and leave, but trooper that she is, she stuck it out. By the time I finished, she had a thin line of rounded, archless brows, at most no thicker than two or three hairs. I felt better, having altered her to my liking. It was mean in a way – in every way if I were honest - but satisfying. She looked at herself in the mirror and I thought she was gonna start swaying in shock for a moment there. Her eyes got big and round and they looked bigger and rounder with her brows that way. I did think she looked better and told her so. Maybe she believed me.

I smiled at her with cruel satisfaction as she numbly stepped out of my portal and went on her way.

Later that day, I confessed to Dyana what I'd done to sweet, dedicated, unfortunate Toni. Since we'd (I'd) been rather ruthless in our treatment of poor Toni, I suggested that she'd paid her dues, and we should name her to the lead team, to represent all the undergrads. Dyana heartily agreed. I tracked Toni down and told her the good news. Seeing her smile of excitement, I thought we'd mostly made up for what we'd done to the redesigned coed, who had happened to be in the wrong place at the right time for us.

Dyana and I waited another week, thinking – hoping - that maybe she only needed to heal further before we would be successful. Meanwhile, the dig was getting more interesting and occupying all of the days and most all the evenings. By late evenings, I was exhausted and crashed alone in my little cabin. To her credit and understanding, Dyana graciously accepted the reality of my daily near-exhaustion and need for rest. I'm sure she didn't feel slighted.

The whole team worked half a day Saturday and took the afternoon off. All the rest of the team and most of the crew went into Alexandria for sightseeing, dinner and an evening of

fun. As a diversion from Dyana's troubles, she and I had been working on Toni all week, trying to persuade the tender, innocent undergrad to take a leadership role and get a tattoo while they were ashore. We tried our best to link the two. Did you ever hear of a whipping boy? That was the person in the middle ages, who suffered the punishment the clear and present heir had earned for [mostly his, in rare circumstances, her] violation of expectations. The whipping boy was an abjectly pitiful soul, who lived an overall pleasant life, until some event really pissed off the powers that be, and caused him [or much, much less often, her] to suffer the punishment that the true heir deserved. It was kind of like if your child does something awful, and you beat your best friend in response. That best friend would be the whipping boy.

No, I don't get it. I was born near the change of the 21st century millennium, after all.

So back to Toni, our favorite victim, our whipping boy [girl]. Dyana and I got Tex in the frame of mind that Toni was terribly timid (she was), really wanted a tat though she wouldn't acknowledge that fact, and maybe he could help convince her to get inked while they were in Alexandria. We knew the big guy had eyes for Toni, and that he liked tats because he already had half sleeves on each arm.

Unabashedly, we played on what turned him on, and on what we wanted to happen to our eternal victim.

We'd see what happened after they returned. I briefly thought Tia might be disappointed in the way I was treating sweet Toni, but I also decided she might find it both amusing and a proper process for making Toni a complete woman in our erotic definition of that description. I did think Tia would understand my need for a semi-comical diversion, even one that was a little sadistic.

Much, much later, in my confined cabin, Tia did appear, actually holding hands with a nicely buzzed Toni. At first, Tia's expression was pleasant and understanding. I tried to call out to her, but she didn't seem to hear me.

Her expression became inscrutable. In the fuzzy background behind her, I saw an African girl, maybe six or eight years older than I. The girl was lying in something like a hut or a cave, her eyes filled with fear, her legs spread.

I remember that I screamed at that point, and the entire vision dissolved into nothing.

Before that happened, going back many hours, Dyana and I and a couple of sailors were the only ones who stayed aboard.

After a light lunch, Dyana and I tried again. We tried all afternoon to no avail. Dyana felt pleasure, and we still shared an intimacy, but she couldn't cum. I came only once - more at her insistence than anything I felt like doing. As supper time approached, Dyana suggested we stop, eat a little, and then see if we wanted to try again. She felt she had gotten as far as 75 percent there, but couldn't go the last lap.

I once again offered to let her buzz my hair, in the hopes that it would turn her on enough to push her over the edge. I knew she was deeply aroused by my short hair. It was both the fact that it was short, and that she had done this to me that was the turn-on for her. I would have let her shave my head if it would have made her cum, given her that last 25 percent.

She refused, of course. I could tell her frustration level was very high, which was why I thought she might take me up on my offer. I tried to convince her that she'd thrown a switch within me and that, now, the whole idea of her cutting my hair turned *me* on. Which was true. She bought the argument, but said she wouldn't buzz me just so she could cum. I couldn't change her mind.

We tried everything either of us could think of for five hours after supper. We were both sore and profoundly disappointed. They had apparently cut her deeply enough that the nerves to her G-spot were also seriously disrupted.

Dyana wasn't going to cum. Most likely, she never would. I suggested she find a guy with an average-size penis and excellent stamina and try it with him. She just looked at me, glassy eyed, and shook her head no. I thought, over time,

that she would at least try that. I truly hoped it would work for her.

After that unsatisfying, marathon session, both deep inside and right at the forefront of my mind, I finally realized that Dyana could no longer be successfully loved - fucked - by any woman, including me. She didn't have the capacity anymore. She was something less than a lesbian lover. Something much less ...

It was neither her fault nor mine, but it was there. It was very real to each of us and demanding to be recognized. We would not be able to ignore the reality that Dyana had been rendered incapable of satisfying sexual relations with another woman. At least, she could glean no orgasmic satisfaction from such a coupling. I thought it was probably unlikely that a man could satisfy her either. Her ability to climax had been stolen from her.

The sun had gone down a couple hours earlier, while we tried and tried, in the early evening, the dusk and the night. I didn't want the sun to go down on Dyana and me. But it already had.

I started to cry uncontrollably, and I refused to let Dyana see me. I kissed her as tenderly and lovingly as I knew how, and I returned to my little cabin. Sleep came much later. Somewhere in there I sensed and saw Tia, holding hands with a baffled, befuddled Toni.

We had our weekly leadership team meeting after lunch the next day. Robbie, the Ausie, had tied one on while ashore and wasn't up to attending.

A good portion of the Alexandria nightlife scene had apparently escaped the fundamentalist government's attention, making the ancient city something of a party stop for westerners now in Egypt. Dyana, Sagi and I were in the conference room when Tex bounded in, full of energy, and with a certain glow about him.

"You scored, didn't you?" I said laughing.

“Y’all know I don’t kiss and tell,” he replied, grinning even more broadly.

“Where’s Toni?” Dyana asked. Ted turned every color of red known to mankind.

“She’ll be along shortly ...” Before he could elaborate, she stumbled into the room in khaki shorts, a white tank top, and barefoot. She looked much worse for the wear.

“Sorry I’m late,” she said. “I look a mess. Had quite a day, yesterday.”

“Hair looks great,” I noted, smiling. Actually, it did. So did those thin brows. Then I noticed a large gauze patch over her bare, upper right arm. “What’d you do to your arm?”

She looked at me strangely and said, “Huh?”

“You’ve got a patch on your arm, Toni,” I pointed out to the obviously hung-over undergrad.

“Oh. Yeah. Uh ... it’s a tattoo. Tex helped me get a tattoo.”

Ted looked more sheepish than any other human I’d ever observed.

Dyana was about to bust a gut. I could tell she was trying as hard as she could to hold it in. “What did you get?” She asked, snorting back a laugh.

“Oh. Uh ... it’s ... uh ... I got a ... Tex? What did I get again?”

Ha! This was too funny! She apparently had killed off enough brain cells with ethanol that she’d forgotten what happened. Or her inebriated mind had never recorded it in the first place.

“We can take this off now,” Tex said, gently peeling the tape on the edges of the gauze patch. It came off to reveal a bright, beautiful blue dolphin leaping from a turquoise sea. Behind the dolphin was a yellow and orange setting sun. The tat was lovely – and big! It must have been almost five inches high and four wide.

Toni stood there with her mouth forming a huge “O” as she looked down at her rather impressive artwork. Her mind hadn’t yet caught up with what she was observing. “Uh ... it’s a dolphin,” she said needlessly. “A BIG dolphin with a sun behind it.”

At that point, we all lost it, including Sagi, who’d observed the whole exchange with an expression of curiosity, then borderline hysterics about him. Toni looked around at each of us in turn, then began to giggle nervously, before she finally broke out in loud guffaws herself. I remember thinking, chauvinistically, that at that moment, my innocent undergrad had finally been forced to grow up. By me.

During the next week, I slept with Dyana every night, cupping her from behind, holding her throughout the night as best I could. She was broken in body and spirit. It tore me up, and I tried to do my best to help, without getting in the way. I’m pretty sure she felt that, and appreciated it and me.

After all, we had been lovers. We still would be, except for her ... disability. Except for her accident and the misguided society that had cut her.

That’s the kindest I can be to Egypt, and what they did to my lover. To both of us.

My mature, successful, brilliant, beautiful, lover, my Mistress had been rendered less than a woman. This sick, misguided society had seen fit to ruin the most awesome human being I’d ever known. They’d left Dyana a shell of what she’d been. They’d mutilated her body, but even more, they’d dissected her soul.

Given Dyana’s funk during the day, I tried to make sure she did what she needed to do in order to keep the project on track. Sagi was heading off to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to present an update on our work at a conference there. He’d be gone about a week.

He actually surprised me by asking me, along with Dyana, to sit in on and review the slides and discussion he’d

use in Jeddah. Tex, and Robbie, the other senior team members, hadn't been included.

I told myself that I'd be quiet and listen attentively. Dyana was sitting next to me, and Sagi was standing in front of us, with a remote control for the PowerPoint slides being projected. He came across as smooth, poised and confident.

I never considered myself a submissive personality by natural inclination, though I've discovered that I can comfortably submit to someone as talented, sexy, in-control and knowledgeable as Dyana. At Sagi's rehearsal, however, in spite of my decision to be quiet, I reverted back to my more forceful, penetrating nature, and I couldn't resist speaking up to tell Sagi what I thought he could do better. I spelled it out in detail each time, and gave him a view of the talk at a high level, that caused him to think about what he was saying, and how it was being said.

Sagi seemed to genuinely appreciate my input, which kind of surprised me. After the run-through, I sat down with him for two hours to go over my thoughts, and watched as he made copious notes and changes based on my suggestions.

The night before Sagi was to head to Cairo and fly to Jeddah, we received a satellite call, relayed from his mother. His father had suffered a serious heart attack, and wasn't expected to make it. He decided to head to the airport in Cairo and to leave for Aswan as soon as he could get a flight. That completely toasted his plans for the Jeddah conference.

I got a message from him to come to his quarters. There, he asked me to cover for him in Jeddah. Dyana had suggested me instead of herself, because she'd been essentially off the project during her injury, and felt I had more detailed knowledge of what had been happening. I was also more generally up-to-date.

I was blown away, and really, really didn't want to go in either his place or Dyana's. I'd given a couple of conference talks, but only at regional meetings in the US, never at an international conference. The problem was that if I didn't go

and present, some of the grant funding agencies might not sign on to renew their contract with our discovery team.

So seven hours later, I was on my way to Cairo International to pick up a flight to Jeddah's King Abdulaziz International Airport, along with an even more disconcerted, freshly re-trimmed, tattooed and terribly-short-haired Toni, my reluctant, nervous assistant and traveling companion. We'd be met by a [required] male escort in Jeddah.

When the Egyptair flight left Cairo, we expected to arrive in Jeddah on time, at about 3:00 in the afternoon. It was about 2:20 when the pilot came on to say that there had been some kind of domestic terrorist incident in Saudi Arabia, and that our plane was being diverted to the closest available non-Saudi airport, which was about an hour and a half from our current position – in Massawa, Eritrea. Apparently, since this was an Egyptian plane, that seemed the safest place to land.

"I have never heard of Eritrea, Toni said fearfully."

"I haven't heard much about it," I admitted. "It's a mostly federated collection of sheikdoms between the Sudan and Ethiopia. I'm not sure, but I think Massawa is a port city on the Red Sea, which is below us right now. I think it's farther south than we were going, but I assume better safe than sorry."

Toni rubbed her short buzz in nervous irritation. I remember thinking that she was picking up a new series of expressions that went with her terribly short hair. I was pretty sure that she was a creature of habit. Since Dyana and I had given her a new normal, I doubted that she'd ever have longer hair again. I found that to be tremendously satisfying, for some reason.

So it was that we landed at Massawa International Airport, in the mostly unknown, former Italian colony that was now a conglomerate of principalities known as Eritrea.

We barely made a successful landing. The airport runway was almost too short for our plane. We disembarked and awaited word on what would happen next. Our expectation was, at the worst, that we'd have to hop back on a refueled plane and return to Cairo. That didn't happen.

There was apparently a dispute between Egyptair and Eritrea, about whether or not this airport's runway was long enough for a takeoff. The Egyptair pilot just wanted to refuel, gather everyone aboard, and get the hell out of there.

No, no. Not that simple.

In the end, they decided to bus us about 45 miles to the capital, Asmara, to take a plane from there. Okay, inconvenient, but not a catastrophe. Toni and I got on a bus. She'd struck up a conversation with a young Saudi businessman named Fouad, whom I'd sort of blown off when he started flirting with me while we were waiting around to see what would happen next. I like flirting as much as any single girl, but I thought the guy was something of an arrogant dick. I had probably made no secret of that fact.

While we were stuck there waiting for our bus to arrive, Fouad and Toni killed some time together in a restaurant in the airport. Meanwhile, I went from desk to desk, trying to make sure we were really going to get out of there.

When I returned, Fouad was nowhere to be seen, and little, buzzed Toni was alone, nervously rubbing her teddy-bear hair, and looking more than somewhat afraid. Of course, her new, high, thin eyebrows tended to make her look shocked all the time anyway.

She got up with her bag, purse, carry-on, and two other small packages. The small items were little toiletry kits that apparently Fouad had talked the airline into providing for all the passengers still waiting there. They were little canvas parcels with the Egyptair logo on the side. She told me to take one and after I did, she put the other in her own carry-on. Just then an airline agent came up to us and told us to hurry out to the bus, which was now waiting outside. I shoved the toiletry kit into my carry-on and we rushed out to our ride.

We boarded the bus for the hour or two ride to Asmara. There were only a couple of single seats left. Fouad had saved a seat for Toni so she sat with him. I squeezed in between a teenaged girl and a wizened, older man on the long seat in the back of the bus. There was barely enough room, but it was the

only choice other than standing, which the last two men aboard actually had to do.

On the way, we were stopped at the border between Eritrea proper, and a tiny principality, the self-declared “Kingdom of Salat,” which was actually a part of Eritrea, but was in the midst of a dispute with the mother country. Sort of like, but more seriously disruptive than Scotland/Britain or Quebec/Canada disagreements.

As I mentioned earlier, Eritrea was an agglomeration of separate sheikdoms, kingdoms and principalities. It was originally a colony of Italy. In this case, one of those agglomerated kingdoms had decided it didn’t like the way the government was proceeding in Asmara, and was trying to declare itself an independent country.

As a result, we all had to get off of the bus, go through customs, and then continue on towards Asmara. The other Eritreans wouldn’t stop us as we left the Kingdom of Salat, because they didn’t consider Salat a separate kingdom at all.

Fine. Just get me outa here.

Toni and I waited in line, but not together. Since I was in the back, she was already in line by the time I got off the bus, and I told her to just go through with Fouad. I saw her go through, straight ahead, and disappeared on the other side. Ten minutes later, I stepped up to the border guard/customs official to do all the usual stuff. He stamped my passport, but motioned for me to go somewhere other than where Toni had gone.

It was a customs’ inspection point. I’d been randomly selected. Oh joy, another delay.

A female agent was waiting at her station for me, the bored look of a bureaucrat evident on her face. She went through everything in my suitcase, finding nothing, of course.

She went through my purse, and finally my carry-on bag.

She pulled out the package Toni had given me.

“What is this?” She asked in Arabic. I told her it was a gift of toiletries from Egyptair, which was printed on the

small, canvas pack. Of course, I had no idea what toiletries it contained because I hadn't had time to open it before we had to rush out to the bus. I'd forgotten about it by the time I finally got settled into my seat.

She unzipped it. There was a tube of toothpaste, tiny bottles of mouthwash and lotion and a small washcloth on the top. She took them out and there, to my absolute horror, was a tightly-wrapped block of white powder! That shocked the hell out of me! I was even more shocked when she pulled out a gun and in seconds I was surrounded by three other border guards with machine guns in their hands!

She motioned for me to put my hands up and I was taken into custody, completely befuddled and having no idea what just happened!

The next thing I knew, I was in handcuffs, and was being led into an interrogation room. I suspected that I was in big trouble, and I had no idea where Toni was!

Of course, there were drugs in the package, specifically cocaine. As was obvious to me, the Saudi guy had substituted the cocaine brick for whatever had been in there. He'd then given the airline *gifts* to Toni, for us to unwittingly take through customs. Toni had apparently been duped and I had walked right into it. I was royally fucked.

I'm sure Toni tried to get to me but they wouldn't let me see anyone. Of course, there was no American consulate in the tiny, break-away Kingdom of Salat. There was no one I could call, and my rights in this place seemed to be whatever they said they were.

I demanded a lawyer and got one. Unfortunately, I never even saw him until I arrived in court the next morning, having slept a total of maybe an hour in a chair, hungry, alone and scared to death. I didn't know what had happened to Toni, but I asked and they said no one else from the bus had been detained. I thought that maybe she could help me once she got back to Egypt. I certainly hoped so!

The courtroom was in an annex to a mosque. I had no idea who the presiding judges were, but there were three of them – all older men with full, ugly, gray beards and blazing eyes. I assumed I'd enter a plea, and they would set a trial date. I expected to get out of here before I ever had to face a real trial.

It didn't happen that way at all. The trial began as soon as the judges were seated. A man in a huge turban stood and read from a hand-written document in barely understandable Arabic. My lawyer, in English, told me he was reading the charges. I was able to follow the Arabic a little. Basically, I was accused of being a drug smuggler.

I told the judges that I wasn't guilty, and explained what had happened, trying not to get Toni in trouble, on the outside chance that she was still in this hell-hole.

They listened, asked me a few questions which I answered as best I could, and listened to my lawyer try to convince them that it was all a big misunderstanding, and I had never intended to be here in the first place.

The judges looked at me accusingly. When there were no more questions, they nodded to each other.

If this were actually a trial, I was a sultana of the Ottoman Empire.

As it turned out, as I feared, it was a trial, but I was no sultana.

The three-judge panel exited the rostrum at the front of the courtroom with the stern, judgmental countenance of the righteous etched onto each of their faces. Their deliberation was brief, and they returned to the courtroom less than fifteen minutes later.

Chapter 9 – A Descent into Hell

“Destiny Michelle Hutton,” the lead judge intoned in a thick, Arabic accent, looking right at me with the same fierce, judgmental eyes I’d seen on all of them before. I was cloaked in a burqa, and my face was covered so that only my eyes were visible. The judge continued in Arabic as my solicitor translated. “You have been found guilty of drug trafficking in the Kingdom of Salat. In accordance with Sharia law, we hereby sentence you to seven and a half years’ incarceration in the Control Institution for Delinquent Women.”

When my lawyer finished the translation, I collapsed as my knees went weak, and I dropped to the floor in a heap of flowing black cloth before anyone could catch me. At that point, out cold, I had apparently been taken away and deposited in a holding cell while still unconscious. I was alone – no lawyer, no jailer and no fellow prisoners. A day ago, I’d been on my way to give a paper in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Now I was going to prison for seven and a half years! I HADN’T DONE ANYTHING!

“Prisoner Hutton,” a stern male voice shouted at me, bringing me back to the real world as I lay on a hard shelf in the cell within the local justice center. “Prisoner Hutton, stand and submit!”

I stumbled numbly to my feet. The last thing I’d remembered was collapsing to the floor in the courtroom. They’d found me guilty! I’d been sentenced to years of imprisonment and control!

Right then, I didn’t even know what control meant.

“Strip!” The man commanded. He was a giant, more than a foot taller than my five feet, four inches and easily twice as wide. My head was a fuzzy mass of confusion – a disposition that didn’t sit well with the monster in front of me.

“I want to see the US ambassador,” I told the blurry face above me, in Arabic.

“That is not possible. There is no US ambassador here. Besides, the time for that has passed. You are now under the authority of the Sharia Court of the Kingdom of Salat. You have been convicted and will be remanded to the Control Institution to serve your punishment sentence.”

“What are you going to do to me?” I asked, my voice cracking.

“I am going to take you to the Control Institution for Delinquent Women. Get up immediately and remove your clothes. If you fail to follow my instructions, I can beat you into submission. I would prefer not to do that, and I guarantee you that you would not want me to do that. NOW REMOVE YOUR CLOTHES!”

His hand leaped out and slammed across my face. Even through the cloth covering me, it stung like nothing I had ever experienced, almost knocking me unconscious again.

SMACK! Another blow hit me from the opposite side. I collapsed to the bench again. My head began to pound. I shifted uncomfortably on the hard surface; one leg had been knocked off the bench and my foot was resting on the floor.

“GET UP!” SMACK! Again he struck my face. I tried to understand his command through the confusion in my mind and the repeated interruption to my train of thought. I put my other foot on the floor and tried to get my senses back.

SMACK! He hit me again.

“No ... no ... Please don't hit me! I ... I'll try to get up ... to do what you want. I half stood up, then fell back down.

SMACK! SMACK! He'd hit me across my face and swept back to hit me again. I felt my jaw dislocate, then pop back with agonizing pain.

“Aaarrggghhh! NO! PLEASE! STOP HITTING ME! I'm getting up ... getting up.”

I stood on quivering legs.

“STRIP!” He commanded.

At that point, modesty was a lost, meaningless concept for me. I pulled off the head covering of the burqa, and dropped the robe to the ground. Beneath it, I wore only a simple shift and underwear. I removed that forthwith, and stood naked before the jailer.

“Hands behind you!” I complied groggily, still reeling from the blows to my head. I felt him snap handcuffs onto me. Then he bent to fasten rings to my ankles. The rings were connected by a short hobble chain.

I was hustled, naked, down a long corridor. I passed a few men, each of whom looked away from me, turning to the side so they were almost grasping the wall, their arms and legs spread like spiders. I remember thinking that they were timid sheep, and not men at all. I was taken outside, put in a dirty, dilapidated white van, fastened to a bench seat in the back, and driven to the prison, more than five hours away, totally hidden in a scrubby part of the desert.

Halfway to the prison, I called out to the driver and guard that I needed to relieve myself. They pulled over and took me out, indicating that I was to go on the side of the road where I was standing. Embarrassed, hot and getting dirtier from dust in the air blowing against my sweat-covered, naked body, I squatted down and pissed right there. There was no way to wipe and nothing to use so I got up, still dribbling. They shoved me roughly back into the van and I was locked to the seat again. The van continued on to the Control Institution for Delinquent Women.

I saw little of the remote, unremarkable complex, as we drove up to it. I was checked into the bleak, sandy-colored prison; my cuffs and shackles were removed. Still naked, I was taken to the inbound/outbound processing facility by a woman matron in a drab, olive-colored, army-like uniform and a male guard whose uniform was a bright white. The man held a long rod which, at first, I thought was something like a billy club. Then, seeing the two prongs on one end, I realized it was a cattle prod!

I entered a suite of rooms, bright and white like a doctor's or dentist's office. I was the only person there. They took me into a side room and fastened me into a chair that was, itself, fastened to the floor.

"What are you going to do to me?" I asked in a little voice rapidly rising in panic.

The matron looked at me strangely, and I thought for a moment that she didn't understand my Arabic. Then she responded, in only slightly accented English, "I am going to prep you for your control insert, and then inject the control device. After that self-installs, everything will be easy for us, and more-or-less automatic for you.

"What is your name, girl?"

"Destiny Michelle Hutton."

"What kind of name is that?"

"I don't know ... American, I guess. Michelle is sort of French."

"Here you will be known as ... ah ...," she looked at the clipboard she held. "Your name is now Karimah." She pronounced it KaREEmah, like *Carina* with an 'm.' "That is a reasonable Arabic name, which others will recognize." She jotted something down on the clipboard.

She handed the clipboard to the male guard and picked up a pair of nail clippers. I normally wear my fingernails fairly short because of the digs, and my toenails are medium length because they look nice on my pretty little feet. I've always been proud of my feet in general and my toes in particular. They're well-formed and delicate, without being prissy. I'd been too busy over the past week to trim my fingernails, so they had actually grown out to about medium length, and I'd kept the length and carefully polished them before we left for the conference.

In a few moments, my nicely-manicured, medium-length nails were history, as she removed the polish and cut them off completely, all the way down. Then she did the same to my toes.

“Long nails are potential weapons and aren’t allowed. You will keep them this short as a part of your daily ritual.”

I didn’t know what she was talking about. I did know that, because of how I was fastened, I couldn’t move anything but my head. As I was thinking about why I was constrained, she pulled on an overhead armature and extended the end of it toward my face. On the end was what looked like a rubber-coated, steel mouthguard.

“Open your mouth, Karimah,” she told me.

“What are you going to do?” I asked.

SMACK! Her hand shot out at once and slapped my left cheek, then my right on the return blow. My head was taking another pounding! I opened my mouth without saying another word. She pushed the rubber-coated guard into it. She must have used a foot pedal or something to trigger the contraption because it immediately expanded, holding my mouth painfully open and my head immobile, except for the small motion the armature permitted. Then she flicked a bar on the side of the armature and even that slight motion was impossible as the entire assembly was now held rigidly in place.

I couldn’t move my head at all because it was held by the immovable arm and the clamp tightly holding my teeth and expanding my mouth past the normal limit.

I heard a buzzing and my eyes immediately shot from side to side to see what they were doing behind me. I saw the matron walk around my right side, holding what was obviously an electric trimmer. She came up next to the armature and moved the trimmer up to my hairline in front.

“UHAAA! UHAAA! I screamed, which was as close as I could get to saying. “NO!” She was going to take my hair! She was about to shave me!

I started to shout again, and she hit me again. With my mouth held rigidly in the mouthguard, my teeth took the force of the blow. I feared another slap would knock them loose.

“SHUT UP! No inmates here are permitted hair at any time, and you are no exception.”

I felt the cold steel of the clippers on my forehead and then the buzzing pitch got higher as the clippers tore into my short, funky hair that Dyana had so loved to cut. The clippers ripped across my head from front to back.

The prison matron made short work of my pixie-cut, crowning glory. In a few minutes, it was all laying on the floor. My head felt much cooler, even though it was still very warm in the processing center. Tears were running down my cheeks. I'd just lost my short, remaining hair in the few minutes it had taken her to buzz it. The difference between having an edgy, short style and no hair at all is pronounced and it's enormously important in your mind, when it happens to you. I was in shock.

The matron had said none of the inmates were permitted hair. I wouldn't have hair again until I was released – in seven and a half years! I didn't think I'd even remember what hair was like by then. That thought made me cry all the harder.

The matron was putting some kind of tape over my eyebrows, pressing it firmly against them. She let it set for a minute or two and then ripped it off with a quick, painful pull, taking my well-groomed, slightly-arched eyebrows with it. She repeated that twice more, I assume to make sure they were completely gone.

The matron released the overhead arm and, keeping my head fastened through the clamp on my teeth and jaws, they tipped me forward, refastening me with my head pushed painfully down so that I stared at my legs. The armature was locked again, holding me in that position. I felt the matron wiping the back of my nearly-bald head with something containing a cold liquid. Then I caught the smell of alcohol and wondered why she was swabbing me with it. Out of the corner of my eye, I could just barely see her pick up something that looked like a gun with a flattened barrel. She came up behind me and I felt the end of the gun press against the back of my head, right where my neck met my skull.

“Hold perfectly still,” she commanded me. I couldn't move anyway. “If you move at all and I mess this up, it'll be your brain that's damaged.”

“What are you going to do to me?” I tried to scream. All that came out of my clamped mouth was a string of “Uh aaahh – ahs” and other gibberish.

“I’m going to count to three and then inject the control device.”

I didn’t have time to think about what she meant when she quickly counted and then there was a loud snap and a horrible pain in the back of my head as she fired something into me! Then, a brief moment later, I passed out.

I awoke fastened to a bed with the matron standing over me. The guard was nowhere to be seen. My head hurt terribly, not just in the back but everywhere.

“Karimah! Are you awake enough to understand me?” The matron asked.

“Yeah ... y ... yes,” I answered shakily. I was Karimah now, right? In my foggy mind, I thought she’d told me that.

“You always address me as ‘Matron.’ Do you understand?”

She’d spoken in Arabic, but I’d understood her. “Yes, Matron,” I said, using the Arabic phrase for *Matron*.

“Then listen carefully, Karimah, because I’m going to tell you what’s been done to you and what happens next, but I’m only going to tell you this one time.

“As you know, you’ve been sentenced to seven and a half years of incarceration and control for drug trafficking. The device I injected into your brain is the *control* part of that. It’s an excellent example of what our allies, the Chinese, can do, now that their bio-circuit design and fabrication technology is mature.

“The device will work so well at controlling you that it will sometimes seem like magic. As an American, though, I’m sure you can appreciate that it’s simply the application of some reliable old and remarkable new technologies. It consists of a receiver that is powered in the same way your body powers its own cells, so there is never a need for batteries or battery replacement. The receiver is a part of you now, and will

become even more a part of you over the next 24 hours. It is sending out tendrils into your brain which will allow you to be controlled by a small, hand-held device ...”

“NO!” I shouted.

SMACK! She slapped me again yelling at me to be quiet.

“If you speak again, I will not give you the rest of the information you need and you will have to suffer through this unknowing. Understand?”

“Yes, Matron.” They were doing something to my brain as I lay there bound to the bed, and I couldn’t stop them!

“The tendrils will grow within your head, into your brain, over the next day, until all parts of your body and a significant part of your mind are controllable. The process, once started, cannot be stopped so it is already irreversible. In addition, the control device will remain a part of you always. Attempts to remove it would turn you into a vegetable or even kill you, so it will always be with you. Furthermore, a coded control device will remain in the hands of the Kingdom of Salat. It could always be used on you in the future, even after you’re released, should you be suspected of violating the Sharia again, and be found within our reach.

“Once the controller has extended its tendrils throughout your brain, the process is completed. The device will then be tested and your induction controls will be put in place. Those controls are the same for all inmates; all but two are removed when you leave here. You will be subjected to five groups of controls:

“The first group is behavioral. You will be compelled to obey all orders from all authority figures in the prison, be rendered unable to harm yourself in any way, and be incapable of planning or taking part in any escape attempt.

“We don’t compel you to not hurt others, because there could be times when self-defense may be necessary. However, there are serious penalties for injuring others, if you’re judged at fault. We usually follow the eye-for-an-eye precept. That is, if you injure another prisoner, you get the same injury in

return, and possibly additional penalties. If you injure a member of the staff, you receive the same injury, and you will be, additionally, severely damaged. For example, you could lose the use of your arms or legs - for long periods of time or permanently. *Permanently* means they will not be restored when you leave.

“Secondly, you will be rendered mute, that is, unable to speak, though you will be able to understand others and read and write. All inmates are mute.

“Thirdly, your intimacies, including your clitoris, labia, inside your vagina, the entire vulva area, and your nipples will be rendered incapable of feeling sensation. In other words, they will be numb. Sexual arousal for inmates is forbidden.

“Next, you will be given a compulsion to shave your head and body and remove any eyebrows that may appear every morning after you first relieve yourself. Additionally, you will be compelled to keep your fingernails and toenails as short as I’ve cut them. This will keep you pure and clean. Should you try to fight the compulsion, you will find resistance increasingly difficult as the minutes pass, until the sensation of withdrawal and its concomitant anxiety become so painful and disruptive that you will have to perform the daily grooming. There is no avoiding it. Ever. This control will also be locked into the control device in your brain when it is programmed. In other words, you will have the compulsion to shave and remove all body hair, save your eyelashes, and wear your nails short, for as long as you are imprisoned here. That identifies you immediately as a convict.”

That was horrifying to me. What she was telling me was that I’d never have hair, eyebrows, or any nails except short, stubby ones for many years! I’d never allow myself to! To make it worse, if my eyebrows were plucked for only a fraction of my sentence, I knew for a fact that they’d never regrow. I started to cry, but was afraid to cry out.

“Finally, by means of the controller, you will be matched to your resident group. That means that certain *habits* of the group of eight inmates for which you’ll be the ninth, will be your habits as well. That insures harmony within the group,

and encourages acceptance of new group members, since you will all share a number of practices or compulsions in common. For your group, the obvious one is smoking. The group you're to join smokes, so you will also. It is in the interest of the Kingdom that inmates smoke, as it offers another method of control.

"You will come to regard smoking as an important pleasure which you will greatly relish while you are resident here. It will make you feel good and provide a modest outlet for the sexual frustration resulting from the numbing of your intimacies.

"In any event, you will have no choice. You will be compelled to smoke. This will be removed when you're released, though you'll be a committed smoker by then and will probably find it difficult or impossible to quit."

"Are you crazy?" I shouted. I didn't like smoking. I mean I REALLY didn't like smoking. Whenever I was anywhere near a smoker, I either went into another room, or left. I didn't castigate the smoker; I just went away. Now they were going to make me one? "NO!" I shouted at the matron.

SMACK, SMACK, SMACK! She hit me back and forth until my head rang like a church bell!

"Since you cannot be quiet, I will tell you nothing else. You are on your own," she admonished me. She turned and walked away.

I needed to know what she was going to tell me. I didn't have a choice. I yelled at her, "I'm very sorry, Matron! I spoke when I should have listened! Please forgive me, Matron! Please tell me everything else."

She paused, turned, and stared at me. Then she walked up to me and slapped me so hard that I blacked out for a moment. I found out a few days later that all the blows to my head had, somewhere along the way, caused a concussion already. That wasn't to be my last one either.

When I regained my senses, I was crying and begging her not to hurt me, and to tell me what I needed to know. She

stared at me and hit me again, then went on.

“Before you became insolent, I was about to elaborate on what benefits you’ll reap by smoking. You’ll not only have the relaxation most people derive from smoking and the pleasure nicotine provides, but you’ll also experience satisfaction at fulfilling a compulsion, and, perhaps most importantly, you’ll experience something of a tingling, sexual thrill while smoking. The thrill will be mental, not physical, but the inmates tell me it’s one of the few ways they can get a release from the frustration of having no nipple or genital arousal. In other words, you’re fortunate to be in a smoking group.

“The other women in your group also have made a commitment to daily canings, as penance for their past sins against Allah. This had developed into a compulsion for six of the eight of them, and has been added as a compulsion to the other two. It will also be programmed into you through the controller, as an irresistible impulse.”

I realized she was telling me that I would be caned each day, and that I would be given a compulsive need for that to happen because the controller would make it a part of my deeply-rooted desires and daily habits. I’d be essentially addicted to daily flagellation!

She went on. “The other members of your group, like all inmates, keep to a strict, Muslim diet of course, avoiding foods which are *ḥarām*. This includes food which is not prepared acceptably, but in particular includes all pork. You will be given an inherent aversion to these foods, which will be manifested as a violent, negative reaction to the very idea of eating them. Coupled to that, you will be compelled by your controller to perform the five-times-per-day salat – the Muslim daily prayers of the faithful. This is the Kingdom of Salat, after all. Both of these, the Muslim dietary restrictions and the compulsion to perform salat are control restrictions which are permanently etched into you by means of the controller. They will not, and cannot, be removed when you are released.”

So now I was going to get sick at the thought of certain foods or how they were prepared? This was more than a sentence for the *crimes* I wasn’t guilty of; it was a change to

the very nature of what I could do day-to-day for the rest of my life!

Besides, I love pork! Especially bacon! Does this mean they were going to make me get sick at the thought of eating some of my favorite foods?

Then on top of that, I was to be mentally bound to perform the five-times-a-day Muslim prayers of salat for the rest of my life! And I'm not Muslim! This whole thing was awful, and to make it worse, I'm innocent! I didn't do anything!

Except refuse to flirt with an Arab guy who might have decided to fuck me over. On the other hand we might have been targets of convenience. He probably thought he could eliminate his risk by getting me or Toni or both of us to carry his stash through customs. If one of us got caught, he'd just walk on, as innocent as he could pretend to be. Which is, of course, what happened.

The matron was talking again. "Finally, you are too thin. All of the women in your home group are well rounded. The prison maintains a range of populations, in order to give our customers a choice should someone decide to buy out a punishment contract and save the Kingdom the cost of incarcerating you. To match you with the group, you will be fed four times per day instead of the normal two, until you stabilize at a compatible weight, comparable to others in your group. You will probably have to increase your body mass by about 50 percent.

"You will be with us for seven and a half years. Unlike in the West, you do not get out early for *behaving*. If you don't behave, you'll serve additional time. You'll also be punished further. There is much we can do to you with the device that controls you. You'll see what some of those things are tomorrow, when the tendrils interlacing your brain have all grown into place."

Something alien was crawling through my head and there wasn't anything I could do about it! It made me want to scream and tear at my head in horror. But I feared being

slapped again. My jaw still hurt and had cracked loudly the last time she hit me.

She continued. “You have three ways to leave this prison: release when you have served your time, your death, or a citizen of this country buys your contract. That can happen any time after you’ve been here for at least 20% of your sentence, one and a half years in your case. Otherwise, you remain here. Learn to get along here and you will have far fewer problems.”

What did she mean, ‘buys my contract?’ I wanted to ask her, but I was afraid to speak. I didn’t want to be hit again. Perhaps there was a possibility that someone could buy my way out of here, and I could leave this God-forsaken, piece-of-shit country.

She apparently saw the wheels turning in my head because she spoke up, answering my unvoiced question.

“No, you cannot persuade someone to buy you and send you home. If your contract is bought, it must be by an approved, Kingdom of Salat citizen, and you must go to the home of the individual who purchased you as that person’s property. You are not allowed to leave the country until your full sentence is completed. After you are programmed tomorrow, your controller will prevent you from leaving. Once per day, starting after activation tomorrow, your controller will receive a continuation code. If that code isn’t sent to it, you will begin to randomly lose capabilities. You may become blind, or your legs will not work or your arms will be paralyzed, or you’ll be unable to swallow, and so on.

“If you go missing, the control system will be told not to send you a continuation code. Then, as the controller executes its incapacitating program, you will gradually become more and more disabled, until eventually you will be nothing more than a broken mind in a useless body. Now that the controller grows within you, there is no escape from the justice of the Kingdom of Salat.”

They were going to have more control over my body than I did! They’d have enough control over my mind to make me into someone else, into any kind of woman they wanted! I

could become a slavishly obedient woman, if that's what they decided to do to me!

I already felt barbarically violated, despondent, and more afraid than ever before in my life. I was to be stuck like this for seven and a half years! Then, even after I was released, I'd never be the carefree, happy, whole, independent young woman I was before! I wanted to crawl into a hole at that point, and pull my life in after me. As far as I could see, my freedom and my life were essentially over.

She still wasn't finished. "We are going to break you, Prisoner Karimah. In a few months, you won't even recognize yourself or your own thoughts. You have committed a serious crime against the nation, and we intend to punish you for that for many years to come.

Shortly after her lecture the guard returned and they tied me to a post, facing it, with my hands cuffed above my head, and my feet cuffed to rings in the floor. Then they beat my back and bottom with a cane – I think about twenty times. I screamed and cried until the Matron told me to be quiet or she would double the beating. About fifteen strokes into the beating, I lost control of my bladder and made a mess down my legs and onto the floor. The matron continued to beat me without stopping. I was hurting too badly to be embarrassed. I tried my best to reduce my cries to quiet sobs. That apparently satisfied her because she stopped after a few more vicious swipes with the cane.

They left me more-or-less hanging there while they did some other things in the clinic-like room. Then I was taken down and told to relieve myself in a small washroom. Little happened as I'd already emptied my bladder onto the floor. I did manage to clean up a bit. When I returned to the larger room, they handed me a small plate with a piece of crusty bread some olives, and some salty, dried fish. That and a cup of water was my dinner. In fact, it was the first food I'd had since the small meal I'd eaten in their jail, shortly after being arrested.

After I ate everything, they spread me out naked on the bed and fastened me down to it again. Then the lights were turned out when they left the room.

Struggling against the handcuffs that held my wrists and ankles was useless. I was bound; I wasn't going anywhere. I'd never been more terrified. I lay there staring up into blackness, unable to move enough to relieve the pain on my butt and back from the caning. I'm convinced that I could feel something crawling along under my skull, on the surface of my brain and deep within it, as the controller's tendrils wove their way into me. I could picture my brain being pierced and perforated with tiny, growing wires as they invaded my mind and connected themselves to everything that my brain could do.

I was losing myself, even as I lay there. How could a government be allowed to put something in the heads of the people who lived under it? Even if they supposedly had committed a crime? Where were the rights of the individual in all this? Where was my right to not have my body or mind violated against my will?

Even when I was arrested, I thought they would only send me back to the US. Two days ago I was my own person, even if I did face trial in a fanatical country.

They had decided to punish the person I was, by saying that I was someone else. That I was a criminal. At that point, I wasn't a person in their eyes; I was a felon deserving not mercy nor rehabilitation, but only entitled to punishment. The first thing they were doing to me was taking away my ability to have control over my own body.

More terrifying yet, they were taking away my ability to freely, fully control my own mind.

I wasn't in River's Edge anymore. I was under the control of fanatics; a stranger in a strange, horribly troubled land.

I didn't completely appreciate it yet, but I was in hell.

SLAP!

I'd fallen asleep, what seemed like an eternity later. Now I was being beaten awake.

SLAP! "Wake up you lazy infidel!" It was a man's voice. I opened my eyes to see a tall, thin, 30-something man with dark hair and a thick mustache, fire in his eyes, glaring down at me.

CRACK! He hit me again so hard I saw stars and almost passed out. I was pretty sure he'd dislocated my jaw because I couldn't move my mouth! Then he hit me again from the other side, and I felt a "pop," as my jaw was painfully knocked back into place. The pain was like a knife in my face! This was at least the second time it had happened.

"P ... P ... P ... Please, Master!" I said, begging. "Don't hit me. I'm awake now."

CRACK! He hit me one more time, but not as hard, and stepped back. A woman in a white lab coat, her hair covered with an equally white veil, stepped up to me and looked me over. She appeared to be a nurse. I didn't see hate or evil in her eyes, just bored acceptance of whatever it was that she had to do. The man left the room.

"You must get up now and use the toilet. Then you will take your breakfast and afterwards we will test your controller."

She stepped aside and I got out of bed, standing naked beside it on wobbly legs. My head was ringing and an ache was spreading throughout it. She pointed to the bathroom door and I went in, did the necessary things, and cleaned up a little. My head looked awful without my hair. I started to cry, but tried to bring it under control. There was only the barest of stubble where my pretty, delightfully short hair had been, after Dyana had cut it. It had been demolished by the buzzing the matron had given me yesterday. I felt it and it felt like whiskers all over my head. I hated it and once again struggled not to cry.

Almost worse than my bald head was the appearance of my face without any eyebrows at all. It made me look completely vacuous, devoid of personality, as though there

wasn't anyone home behind the blank façade that my face had become. I looked strangely alien, unearthly.

According to what I'd been told, this was how I was going to look for the next seven and a half years. What if I became so used to this that even when I could, I wouldn't grow my hair again?

My depressing self-examination was disrupted by the nurse throwing the door open and telling me to get out of the bathroom. I was instructed to sit on a stool over by one wall. There was a tube protruding from the wall.

“Place the tube in your mouth and swallow the porridge as it comes out. Do not miss any of it. If you do, you will be punished. This is how you will be fed four times per day, until you reach the desired weight, and then twice per day after that for as long as you are here. It is all that you will get. Each week on the Sabbath, you will fast all day and receive only one feeding, after sundown. On the following day, you will receive small portions of regular food at the prisoners' dinner, unless you are in punishment. That is the only time you will have anything other than the porridge. You may take water whenever you are free to do so. That means whenever you aren't involved in some required activity.

“Now set the dial to the blue position, place the tube in your mouth, and push the black button to begin dispensing your breakfast.”

I did as I was ordered. I didn't want to be beaten again. A moment after I pushed the button, a white, granular paste entered the tube, pushing the water that had filled the tube into my mouth, which I hastily swallowed. As the paste came through the tube, I began to suck it up. It was room temperature and tasted like almost nothing, perhaps with a tiny amount of salt. It had the consistency of overcooked oatmeal. In other words, it was a disgusting gruel.

I continued to suck it up until I had ingested it all, probably about two cereal bowls full. Then water came through the same tube again, flushing the remaining gruel out and giving me something to wash down the mess. The water

kept coming, clearing the tube and filling me up. Then it stopped and the nurse told me to get up and follow her. I noted that the guard had returned, a cattle prod in his hand. We walked into a side room, which turned out to be more like a padded cell. There were thick, springy, light gray pads completely covering the walls and floor. A small shelf was fastened at about waist-height in one of the corners.

“Your controller signaled its complete invasion of your brain just before you awakened this morning. That means that it is entirely situated in place. I will now test the installation, to determine that everything functions as it should. If there is a problem, you will be sent to another clinic where they will attempt repairs. That is very rare.

“We will test all of the functions of the controller. If I ask you a question, you must respond truthfully. If you lie, it is quite likely that the controller will pick up on the falsehood, and indicate that to me. If that happens, you will be severely punished, both physically and mentally. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Matron.”

“I am a nurse, you idiot! Not a matron!”

“Yes, Nurse. I’m sorry, Nurse.”

“Stupid girl.” She held up a device that looked a whole lot like a full-function, TV remote control. I was very, very frightened. I wasn’t at the edge of panic. I was definitely already panicked. They had done something awful and permanent to my brain, and now they were going to prove that they’d been successful in changing me – in changing me from a free, happy, young woman with a bright future, into a woman who was controlled by others to be what they decided I would be - forever!

I saw her fiddling with something on the remote-control-like object, and then she pushed a button on it. The next thing I knew, I totally lost control of my body. I crumpled to the floor mat like a rag doll, unable to move or talk. Breathing was a struggle. I couldn’t swallow at all, and drool quickly started to run out of the corner of my mouth. I couldn’t move my eyes or

my tongue. I couldn't speak. As I lay there, I realized my bladder had let go and I had no control over it.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the nurse making some notes on a chart that sat on the shelf. A minute later, I could move again and was told to stand.

“As you just experienced, the controller can instantly render you incapable of controlling your own body. We do not hesitate to use this function to prevent problems. If you are ever disruptive, or even if you're near a person or group which becomes disruptive, you can be rendered essentially inert in an instant.”

What she had done to me with the controller she held had instantly brought home to me that I was no longer in charge of my own body. I was at their whim. If I didn't do as they asked, I would become some sort of an automaton, which would be controlled by someone else, not me.

The matron manipulated the controller again, and suddenly I was blind. Totally and completely. There was only a black-like nothingness.

“I can't see!” I shouted. Then suddenly, I could. I staggered as she made other notes. I was shocked that they could do that to me.

A few moments later my hearing was gone. I told them. At least, I think I did. I couldn't even hear myself talk. I saw the nurse say something to me. I pointed at my ears and shook my head “no.” The guard walked up to me with the cattle prod. I yelled, “No! I can't hear you!” I was thinking that she'd ordered me to do something, and when I didn't, she told the guard to shock me. I backed deafly into the corner as he came at me. The prod touched my stomach and I felt an incredible jolt of electric pain radiate out from there along all the lines of my body.

She wrote something else down. Apparently, she was convinced that I really couldn't hear, once I'd been shocked.

Then, my hearing came back.

“I am going to disable your sensitive areas and then test them. There should be no pain. If you move when you’re being tested, you could permanently damage yourself. So spread your legs and do not move.

Scared to death, I did as I was ordered. As I stood there, I felt a strange numbness settle into my pussy and onto the tips of my breasts. Obviously, the nurse had used the controller to block my sensation there, or, at least, block whatever those erogenous areas were sending to my brain, or what my brain could detect was being sent.

The guard moved towards me, holding a sharply-pointed, six-inch-long needle.

I cringed back automatically.

“DO NOT MOVE!” The nurse shouted.

The needle was approaching my right nipple. I looked down as the guard pushed the sharp point into the very end of my nipple. I started to scream, then realized that I couldn’t feel anything – no needle poke nor subsequent pain. The same was the case with my left nipple.

Small drops of blood formed on the end of each nip from being pricked with the needle, but I couldn’t feel anything. Then the guard bent to my pussy, spread my lips, and I saw the needle enter the top of the ultra-sensitive nub of my clitoris. Again, I felt nothing. A bead of blood formed atop my clit.

The guard pulled out my inner labia and thrust the needle through both of them. I had no sensation of either pain or anything else. I couldn’t even see any blood when he pulled the needle out.

I saw him pick up the cattle prod. I screamed, “No!” as he approached me with it. No sooner had I spoken than I crumpled to the floor, once again unable to move.

My eyes had been frozen looking down so I could see the nurse spreading my legs apart as I lay helpless on my back. I saw the guard bend over me and push the cattle prod into my vagina. I thought I could feel a pressure, but I couldn’t move.

Suddenly, my body tensed from the force of an electric shock racing along my nerves. He had triggered the cattle prod inside me! I couldn't voluntarily or involuntarily move or scream, though my body quivered violently from the jolt. I wasn't in pain, but my consciousness started to fade. Then the shaking stopped and I hung in the balance, on the edge between consciousness and oblivion.

I could move again and I trembled with the effects of the shock. I lay there for quite a while, before the nurse told me to stand again.

“As required, you have no sensation in your genital area or in your nipples. That is the way you will remain while here.”

She'd turned off my sex, and any chance I had at pleasure, or pleasuring myself. I was devastated, and wanted to scream at the top of my lungs, and then crumple to the ground and cry. Somehow, I managed to avoid doing either. The cattle prod was too frightening; the beatings were too brutal.

“The physical control is in place as expected. Now we'll test the mind control.” She spoke as much to the guard as to me.

“I am going to more completely modify your identity and give you the submission compulsions to obey authority and resist both harming yourself and escaping.”

She manipulated the keys on the controller and I immediately felt dizzy. Something was changing in my head; I could feel it! I put my hand against the padded wall to steady myself.

“Tell me your full name.”

“Karimah,” I responded, breathless and without thinking. That was my name, wasn't it? For some reason, it didn't seem like my full name. I thought my full name was longer.

“Is that your full name?”

“Ah ... ah ... yes ... ah ... yes, I think so.”

“Who is Destiny Michelle Hutton?”

“Huh?” I said. I’d never heard that name before.

“If you don’t tell me who Destiny Michelle Hutton is, you will be punished!”

“But I don’t know her!” I shouted. I tried to defend myself by saying, “‘Destiny’ means ‘fate’ in English. What kind of a name would that be?”

“I am sure you know this person! Who is Destiny Michelle Hutton? This is your last chance to tell me!”

I saw the guard raise the cattle prod and step toward me. “I don’t know her!” I started to sob. They didn’t believe me and they were going to hurt me because they didn’t believe me. “I’ve never heard of this Destiny person!”

“Tell me your full name again.”

“My name is Karimah. That’s the only name I have!” I was still sobbing and shaking with fear. At that point I was certain Karimah was my full name. Why would I have any additional names? Why would I know that was my name, and they wouldn’t believe me? Karimah was a perfectly normal American name, wasn’t it?

“Please don’t hurt me! I’m telling you everything I know, everything you’ve asked. That’s the truth! My name is Karimah! I don’t know anything about this other person!”

I didn’t know Destiny Michelle Hutton. I did know Tia Malinda Morales, but I would never tell them that. I was terribly afraid they would beat me again. But I didn’t know anyone named Destiny!

“Very well, Karimah. We’ll put that aside for now. I won’t punish you for not knowing her. Forget that I ever asked you about that other person. You can calm down now.

“Go over and kneel before the guard, unzip his pants, remove his penis, and begin sucking on it,” the nurse commanded.

She wanted me to give head to a stranger! I didn’t do that sort of thing. I refused to move, shaking my head. Oddly, she

didn't threaten again. She just stood there looking at me.

I began to feel an internal itch, a need to move, an intense feeling that I should immediately do what she demanded. I was at war with myself! I tried to stand still, my hand pressing into the padding. I couldn't just stay there! I had to ... I needed to ... she had commanded me. The compulsion to obey became greater and greater and the anxiety increased incessantly as I tried to resist!

I couldn't stand the internal pressure within my mind. I had to obey! I had to!

Quivering with frustration and my own resistance on one hand, and the controller-generated compulsion on the other, I stumbled over to the guard, who stood there impassively. I knelt in front of him and unzipped his pants with trembling fingers. He was already hard and his member pushed against the opening through his white underwear. I reached in, fumbled but managed to free the hard shaft, and immediately placed it into my mouth and began to suck, my head moving back and forth as his penis slid within my mouth.

"Take him into your mouth all the way," the nurse ordered. I didn't hesitate. Somehow, my gag reflex didn't kick in, and I continued to minister to the swollen shaft.

"When he comes, swallow everything," the nurse demanded, just as the guard reached climax and his hot cum shot both into my mouth and directly down my throat. I swallowed without thinking about it further. When he stopped, I gradually pulled back, licking his shaft as I did so, and swallowing the rest of his load.

He put his relaxing penis away and zipped himself up. I sat back on my legs and looked down in disgust. I had an overwhelming need to vomit and I began to gag.

"Stop gagging!" The nurse shouted. I struggled but managed to get my reflexes under control. I was horrified at what they'd been able to make me do, now that I was totally in their control.

“As you’ve just experienced, you are required to obey a direct order,” the nurse stated needlessly. “Attempting to resist is useless. You will always succumb in the end. You can avoid the internal torment by doing what you’re told as soon as you’re given the command.

“Now you will be group-matched.”

“Please don’t do anything else to me,” I begged weakly, still sitting on the floor pad. I was overwhelmed, beaten. The nurse ignored me and fiddled with the controller again. I became even dizzy this time and had to lie on the floor for a few minutes to keep the room from spinning around me. I could swear I heard whispers in my head but I couldn’t make out what the voices were saying.

“You can bring the tray in now,” she told the guard. I was still lying there when he returned, carrying a tray with what looked like food serving covers on it. He set a bucket next to me. The nurse told me to sit up and brought one of the tray’s contents over to me. She lifted the cover, revealing a plate containing a pack of Turkish cigarettes, a lighter, and an ashtray.

Oh God how I needed a smoke! “May I, Nurse?” I asked meekly. Maybe she’d be considerate for once and at least let me have the comfort a cigarette would provide.

She surprised me by nodding her head and I reached for the unopened pack with trembling fingers. As I lifted the pack, I realized how wrong this was! I had never smoked a cigarette in my life! In fact, I hated to even be around smoke! I wasn’t militant about it, but would leave a room if someone were smoking there. How could I need one now?

Actually, I didn’t care how; I simply had to have one like nothing I’d ever experienced before. Shaking, I opened the pack, knocked it against my palm to free up a cigarette, pulled one out, and ... and then I didn’t know what to do! I’d never smoked and I didn’t know how to do it.

“I really want to smoke this, Nurse, but I don’t know what to do!” I said to her in an anguished voice.

“Stupid American girl,” she responded, but proceeded to instruct me on how to smoke.

Following her guidance, I lit it immediately and blew out the smoke without inhaling. A moment later, I took a tremendous puff and was astonished to realize I could inhale it as though it were the most normal thing ever. There was no choking or coughing, only a sweeping pleasure that suffused throughout me. Barely noticeable beneath the extensive pleasure was a tingling like I would often experience as the beginning of sexual arousal.

It made me want to take another big puff, which I did, squeezing out slightly more arousal-like tingling – or itching or scratching, I couldn’t exactly tell. Suddenly though, the dizziness hit me as my virgin body reacted to its first encounter with nicotine.

I puffed twice more and broke out in a cold sweat and felt like I was going to hurl. Cigarette in hand, I turned toward the bucket next to me, certain I was going to be sick.

“Sit quietly for a minute until the nausea passes, then resume smoking,” the nurse instructed. Of course, that’s what I did. I slowly managed to smoke the whole cigarette that way. I was temptingly turned on, very slightly sexually aroused, but far from meaningful, actionable arousal. It was something I wanted, but the cigarette would only allow me to sniff at the wine of arousal, not drink any of it, not reward me with more than a tantalizing sample. At that time, I couldn’t tell if that would help me, or make me more frustrated.

Then there was the effect of nicotine poisoning, and the resulting nausea. Mercifully, the nurse assured me that after a few cigarettes, that extreme reaction would go away.

I didn’t want to smoke! But I didn’t have any choice. The controller had hooked me before I ever lit that first cigarette! In a week or two, I’d be addicted to the nicotine itself, like any other smoker. They were going to compound a physical need on top of the emotional need they’d created within my mind! The cigarettes would always tempt me with enough sexual

feeling to whet my appetite, but then not let me satisfy the need they built within me.

I was told to stand up again, which I did. The nurse pulled an object on the tray from a tube and I realized that it was a short cane.

“Come over here and kiss it,” she ordered me.

I did and then looked up into her eyes. At that moment I suddenly had an overwhelming need to be beaten. “Please, Nurse,” I said, “please beat me with that cane. I haven’t been beaten yet today. You know that I need you to do that.”

She told me to bend over and hold my ankles. Then she began to beat me on the buttocks and back with the cane. “Count!” She ordered me. I counted after each stroke, relishing the stinging pain every time. I had to have this, and I deserved it. Once again, I felt something like a slight sexual thrill every time the cane crashed onto my flesh. After “ten,” she told me to stand with my hands clasped behind me. Then she beat my firm, perky breasts and stomach. It was glorious! At “twenty,” she stopped and put the cane down. My upper body on both sides burned with the residuals of the beating. It was painful and delicious at the same time.

I was to find out later that my body image was all messed up too. To my altered mind, I looked gaunt, almost concentration-camp thin. I’d always thought my figure and my weight were pretty much ideal for my height. They were on the thin side of fashionably trim. Using the controller, she’d changed all that and I had an overwhelming need to put on some pounds, until they told me and I finally accepted, that I was a healthy, desirable weight for my resident group.

They were fucking up my mind and I was helpless to stop them.

“You will now receive the compulsions to daily clean yourself of body hair and trim your nails. You will also receive the irreversible compulsions to avoid foods which are *harām*, and perform the salat. The last two will be permanent and remain with you after you serve your sentence.”

“No! Please don’t do that to me!”

The nurse looked to the guard and gave an almost imperceptible nod. SMACK! The guard hit me with enough force that I fell to the floor again.

“Be quiet unless I ask you something, Karimah!” The nurse insisted. “Stay seated on the floor mat.” She did something else with the remote control she held. Then she looked directly at me and said, “I’ve set the dietary and the salat compulsions. Now I will execute the command to make them permanent. You will likely feel a significant jolt to your head and may lose consciousness for a while.”

I saw her push a button on the device and instantly felt a blow to my head, as though I’d been kicked with a steel-toed boot. My vision shrunk to a point and I passed out.

When I regained consciousness, I was lying face-down, sprawled on the floor mat. The pain in my head was excruciating and my eyes saw double. The guard rolled me over and the nurse knelt next to me, shining a light into one eye, then the other.

“Sit up,” she commanded. I immediately moved but fell back against the pad, still seeing double and with a mind that was totally confused. What had happened to me? I needed a cigarette – something to focus on and put me back in balance.

“Please, may I have a cigarette?” I asked, mostly unthinking.

The nurse smiled, helped me sit up, handed me one, and lit it for me. She sat the cold ashtray in my naked lap and let me smoke. I sucked greedily at the cigarette and started to feel better, then dizzy again, and then better again. A faint shiver of arousal tickled within my head but then vanished like my last exhaled puff of smoke. Once I’d finished the cigarette, I was told to kneel.

The nurse brought a covered dish over to me. I instantly smelled the nauseating aroma of bacon.

Wait! I shouted to myself. I love bacon! I immediately realized what they had done to my mind. “Use the bucket if

you need to,” she said, removing the cover. I saw the crispy strips of bacon and immediately threw up half-digested gruel into the bucket.

That formerly delicious bacon was one of the most disgusting things I have ever seen. I was sure I’d react the same way to any pork products or anything else forbidden by Islam.

After I’d finished throwing up she handed me a glass. I went to take a sip and smelled lime and alcohol in the glass. Alcohol is forbidden in Islam and the smell of it triggered severe nausea and again I vomited violently into the foul bucket.

My days of drinking Margaritas, which were always one of my favorites, or any other alcoholic beverages, were over for good. That was to be the end of my love affair with wine too. The aversion had been burnt into my brain. I assumed the compulsion to say the salat was also burned into me.

They let me recover for several minutes. The double vision finally went away but my head was still in agony. Then the nurse handed me another plate containing tweezers, a triple-blade razor, soap, and depilation strips.

Seeing those objects, I began to feel anxious again, nearly the same as I had after I’d kissed the cane with which she’d beaten me. I ran my hand over my head, feeling the short bristles that had been left after the matron buzzed me the day before. It felt awful! I couldn’t stand to be like that. I felt dirtier than I’d ever felt before and disgusted with the whiskers on my head. I ran my fingers over my eyebrows and thought I felt a tiny hair in a couple of places.

“Please, Nurse,” I begged, “may I be permitted to clean myself up?”

“Of course, Karimah. Use the bathroom, then immediately return here when you’ve finished.”

The guard opened the door and I rushed into the bathroom. I quickly soaped my head and began to shave it. The feel of the razor sliding across my scalp was wonderful! I

shivered with another tantalizing, but unfulfilled sexual reaction as I felt my head finally become smooth. I didn't know it then, but that was going to happen every time I repeated this ritual, every morning.

From somewhere within me, I knew that I didn't want this. I wanted my hair. Going through my life for years without it was almost unbearably sad. But then I felt my head, where I'd rendered it smooth, and I knew that regardless of how much my hair meant to me – and maybe always would – the idea of having it was completely unacceptable. I felt like a recovering drug addict and my hair had been my drug. I had to stay away from it, no matter what. That realization put me at ease again and I felt the pleasure of shaving come back. That was so much better than having hair, wasn't it?

I went carefully over my entire head, double-shaving where it wasn't completely smooth and velvety. I felt so fresh, so clean! It was totally luscious!

I finally finished, rinsed off and dried my baby-smooth head. Then I applied one of the strips to the area where my right brow had been, pressed it on as they had done yesterday, and ripped it off, taking one or two remaining hairs they must have missed. Then I repeated it on my left brow. I found a couple ugly, stray brows that the strips missed and plucked them out with the tweezers.

A feeling of fervent satisfaction and relief flowed over me like a warm, soothing blanket. I would never have hair again while I was here, I realized, but why would I ever want to? It felt so dirty, and removing it felt so good!

Satisfied and pleased, despite a nagging, deep-seated anger at what I'd been forced to do to myself, I returned to the padded room. The nurse immediately felt my head and told me how happy she was with my shaving. I glowed with pride at her words. They had completely recast my self-image. For at least the next seven and a half years, the only paltry sexual tingling I'd experience was going to come from smoking, being caned and shaving myself.

“It’s time for the final induction control.” She did something else on the device.

“Prisoner, tell me your name.”

I started to say “Karimah,” but nothing happened. Then I tried to say my name again, but nothing came out then, either. I opened my mouth slightly and tried to talk. There was something wrong with my voice. Then I realized that my voice didn’t have anything to do with it. I realized that I didn’t know how to talk anymore!

“Speak up or face the prod!” The nurse was commanding, but not angry. Her voice maintained the same, bored tone. I could understand her without a problem. The guard moved toward me with the cattle prod.

Desperately, I tried to remember how to talk! I didn’t know what to do! I couldn’t figure it out! It were as though my brain had forgotten how to connect to my vocal chords!

“Prisoner Karimah! Speak!”

I wanted to scream, “I can’t! You know I can’t!” But nothing came out of my mouth. I stared dumbly at the nurse with my mouth hanging open. I couldn’t talk anymore, and I knew I couldn’t talk.

The guard pushed the prod into my abdomen, right into my bellybutton. I couldn’t tell him to stop! And then ...

ZAP! I felt the agony of an electrical discharge radiate from my navel up my chest and to my neck and face. I felt it plunge downward, and then dissipate at my unfeeling groin as I shook uncontrollably. I fell to the floor mat, writhing in silent agony.

They’d proven to themselves that I couldn’t talk anymore. I couldn’t utter any sounds, even those of anguish. When I’d tried to scream something, instinctively but without expecting anything intelligible coming out of me, nothing had occurred but a subdued whoosh.

I couldn’t even make a sound as meaningful as a dog could.

My brain was no longer able to use my voice box. Thanks to the controller, I was mute, exactly as they'd intended me to be.

I lay there shaking with the horror of my situation. She'd shown me that they now had complete power over my body and much of my mind. I wasn't my own self anymore; I was a prisoner and something of a robot subject to their power.

I was in fully-controlled bondage.

I was about to discover that every other woman here was exactly like me. Or, rather, I was exactly like every other female here – I wasn't a woman at all – I was merely a female who was being controlled as a part of her punishment. The authorities here were charged with disabling my personality and gradually replacing it with their ideal, submissive inmate. By the time I left this hell-on-Earth, I wouldn't be anything at all.

So they were to succeed and fail at the same time.

Chapter 10 – Loss of Control

The guard, still armed with the cattle prod, along with the matron from yesterday walked me out of the processing center toward another nearby, colorless building in the dust-laden, blowing, hot, dry air. I could see the high walls of chain-link fence surrounding the prison. They were the only feature visible that wasn't the same nondescript color as the desert itself. The fence enclosed a barren vista. Nothing broke the monotony of the prison buildings, the infrequent patches of scrub grass and the tan dust which covered the entire, parched compound.

In the distance beyond the far fence, a forest of royal poinciana attempting to bloom rose up a substantial hillside. To the right or left was merely more of the eternally beige, stale, grimy landscape. I was afraid to look behind me, but I remembered the dry scrub grass along the river that the rattling, rickety bus had followed to bring me to this hellish place.

We entered a shallow, U-shaped building to the right. There was a mirror-image building to the left. Together, they formed most of a square administrative center and dormitory. We passed through there and into an open courtyard. Naked, hairless women were playing ball, walking, or just sitting in the sun, a sun hazy from the dust in the air – the ever-present dust. A few women were sufficiently motivated to jog around the stifflingly hot courtyard.

Except for the footfalls and swooshing of movement, the eerie scene was disturbingly quiet. It was then I realized the impact of having the entire prison population mute, as I was.

The world around me was going to be as silent as I.

We finally entered yet another facility and they led me to a wing of the building housing, I was told, the eight other women of my home group, my triple of triples. By this time, it was late morning, but not yet lunch time. We walked along a corridor, past a dozen or more barred doors, until we came to

one labeled 17. The door opened, apparently under remote control, and the matron led me inside. The guard stood outside the cell door as it closed behind us.

There was a more-or-less circular area within, which contained tables and chairs, a few games like backgammon, and some things that looked like puzzles, along with several stacks of books. All of the books turned out to be Qurans, the Muslim holy book. Most were in Arabic, but I later found one in English. There was no television in the recreation room, nor did I ever see one while I was imprisoned.

There were women milling around. Another, smaller number sat in the cells that apparently surrounded the recreation room. About half looked up to take note of me, the others didn't seem to care anything about me being there. The matron motioned me to a seat.

“Altaf!” The matron called out loudly, startling me and a few of the other inmates. A bald, plump, characterless young woman – characterless because she had no more eyebrows than I did - perhaps one or two years older than I, came out of one of the unlocked rooms beyond. She carried a pack of cigarettes in one hand, and sat down on a chair at the table where the matron and I both sat.

Altaf lit up as soon as she sat. I could feel my hunger rise up at the sight of the cigarettes. She offered me one, looking into my eyes as she did it. I smiled and took one; she nodded at me and lit my cigarette, but she didn't smile back.

“Altaf, this is the new member of your triple, Karimah. She'll be with us for the next seven and a half years. Show her to her bed and help her along as best you can for the next few days.” The matron had said this in Arabic, which I had managed to understand, and then repeated it in English for me.

Altaf nodded understanding, reached out, took my hand and we both stood. I was to find that this was a common gesture in the prison, because none of the inmates was able to say, “come on, go with me.” The completely neutral expression on Altaf's face never changed. There was no smile nor frown. She seemed to be a woman totally bereft of

emotion. I tried a weak smile on her again and her expression still didn't change. I looked back at the matron who was getting ready to leave, but who had been watching us.

I must have had a questioning look on my face without realizing it – despite having no eyebrows to raise questioningly - because the matron assumed an evil grin and said, “Don't waste your smiles on Altaf. She can't smile back. In fact, she can't make any expressions at all. Her face is frozen, you see.”

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Altaf reach up and touch her own face tenderly. Still, her expression remained nondescript.

“Altaf was quite a jokester when she first arrived here, what, six months ago, Altaf?”

Altaf looked at the matron blankly and held up her index finger.

“Oh, so it's been a year, eh? Well, we got tired of Altaf constantly laughing and always being upbeat, as you Americans would say. She'd smile at everyone, even the most brutal of guards and matrons. She was friendly all the time. A regular, good-natured, outgoing, kind girl who always had a sincere smile and waved a greeting to just about anyone at all, even some of the absolute master bitches in this place. It was downright creepy. No one deserves to be that happy. After all, this is a punishment facility. In the opinion of the matrons – which is the only one that counts as far as you inmates are concerned - she wasn't taking her situation seriously enough. So we tried an experiment on her and it worked!”

The matron started to chuckle, obviously enjoying the story. “Using the controller, another matron and I managed to shut off her ability to make any facial expressions at all! It took us three days to figure out how to do that. What you see is all she's got. That was about four months ago, if I remember correctly. Come on, Altaf, give us a big grin!”

Using her fingers, the somber inmate pushed up on the corners of her mouth. Her dispassionate expression didn't waver.

“Ha, ha! Altaf is with us for six years so she has five to go. She apparently became an unlicensed prostitute to support her family, which was a very stupid thing to do. Did she really think the Kingdom would sanction that sort of behavior without getting its cut? Prostitution is legal in the Kingdom, if you have a license to operate, pay your taxes, get regular health screens and so on. Keeps the men happy.

“Anyway, about two months before she’s released, we’ll turn her face back on, assuming either the other matron or I are still here and remember what we did so we can undo it. We’ve got a lottery going to predict which, if any, of her facial muscles will work anymore by then. My money is on none. I think they’ll all be atrophied. So I’m betting that she’s going to look like that forever.

“What’s so great is the delicious contrast with how she was! You’d appreciate it, I’m sure, if you’d seen her overly-gregarious self before we fixed her.

“Interestingly, we think her disposition changed along with the loss of her ability to non-verbally express her unbearable, unending happiness. It’s kind of hard to tell, since she’s such a blank slate now, but I’ve observed her body language and she slumps in despondency all the time. So by taking away her ability to smile or express anything else, we appear to have taken away her infuriating, irrepressible capacity to be happy!

“Frankly, I don’t think she can get sad, angry or frustrated either. She’s completely unemotional and totally bland. My guess is she’ll be like this for the rest of her miserable life. On the positive side, her face will probably age more slowly, since we’ve essentially given her permanent Botox!”

The matron actually cackled at that point. It was one of the cruelest sounds I’d ever heard. I was appalled at the barbarity of what they’d done to this young woman – merely because they decided that she laughed and smiled too much!

I felt terrible for poor Altaf. Instinctively, I reached out to touch her cheek in sympathy. I felt her press her face against my hand, the only way she could express her appreciation to

me. I'm sure she could see the horror and sympathy on my own face.

The matron left the room, but not without one last comment.

“Karimah, it’s probably best not to get too friendly with Altaf. You don’t want her old habits to wear off on you. In my experience, Americans tend to laugh and joke around too much anyway, pretty much like Altaf used to. You wouldn’t want your face to end up like hers. On the other hand,” she smiled an unmistakably evil grin, “it might be interesting to have one full triple of completely blank women to laugh at!”

Besides the morose Altaf, my other triple sister was a dark, moody, chubby, slightly older woman named Erij. Erij was from Tunisia. It took more than a little while to elicit the story in some non-verbal way, but I came to understand that she’d been imprisoned for lesbianism a couple months earlier. She was sentenced to ten years. In her case, the total disabling and numbing of her genitals and nipples were permanent.

They’d done to her what the Egyptians had done to Dyana, but without the surgery.

Erij would never have physical sexual responses again. They’d rendered her brain incapable of receiving erotic signals from any part of her body. The Kingdom of Salat had set out to break her of her sexual orientation, and they had purposely broken her for any enjoyment of sexual relations at all.

Erij had the ring of a scar around her neck, as though someone had sliced her repeatedly with a small but sharp knife in an encircling pattern. I found out that she had tried to hang herself with something that cut her like that, after she was sentenced, but before she had been brought to this prison. Someone had cut or pulled her down in time, before she expired, but the rope or whatever it was had badly ripped into her.

Now, of course, her suicide or murder by any of us was out of the question. The compulsion against that kind of

violence was far too strong and profoundly infused into us by the controllers in our brains. I found that every few days, Erij would undergo a sexual tension that would almost incapacitate her. The only thing that brought her out of it was an extra beating by one of us. I did this for her often; it was a mercy at the same time it was appalling to observe or to do to another person.

That was barely below the surface of the depth to which we would sink while in this hole

Among the three of us, we were a sorry triplet, indeed, but we were no more broken than the other six women in our resident group, or most anyone else in this God-awful prison. I expected my life for the next 90 months would be a never-ending hell.

Fortunately, it wasn't quite that, though sometimes it was far worse than I ever imagined hell to be. Most of the time, it was mind-numbingly dull and monotonous. Once in a while, however, it was actually funny.

All the sleeping rooms were monitored by camera, but, since there were 300 triples arranged into 100 triples of triples, no room would be viewed often during the day or night. Thus, if someone or some triple were intent in causing a quick disturbance, they might try it, with little chance of being *caught in the act*, so to speak. Sometimes, a prisoner or two might pull some dumb stunt simply to break up the monotony of the place.

All of us who smoked could pick up cigarettes whenever we wanted. Given our well-established addiction, along with the minuscule-but-very-real, teasing arousal that smoking provided, we picked up a lot of cigarettes. Most of us did a couple packs a day. We were also issued rechargeable lighters. If you lost your lighter, you'd get a new one, accompanied by a punishment – perhaps a controller-induced headache or pain somewhere that would last a day, or loss of your arms or legs for a day or two, or loss of bladder control, which would embarrass you into never doing that again. If your lighter

simply ran dry, you could refill it from a lighter-fluid station. No, there were no butane lighters in the Control Institution. We all used that aromatic, oily fluid for our lighters. This is a third-world country, after all. More like a fifth-world country, truth be told.

Shortly after arriving there, one of the women in my triple of triples, motioned for Erij and me to follow her to the lighter refilling machine. It was well past lights out and all the corridors were darkened. Using gestures, since none of us could speak at all, she indicated that she wanted one of us to hold down the emission nozzle, while she filled a small bottle with lighter fluid, and while the other watched for matrons, or any indication that the room camera was focused on the events happening there, by the filling point.

I was sort of trapped and didn't know what to do, so I went along with the plan. I was scared. I thought we might be discovered and they would lengthen my sentence. But I also felt that I needed to support the inmates, of whom I was one.

We got the bottle filled and snuck away, apparently without being seen. Our conspiratorial leader had Erij and me follow her to another triple room a few hundred feet from our own. While we watched, she silently crept into the room with three sleeping inmates, and poured a large pool of the lighter fluid in the middle of the concrete floor, a few feet from the three sleeping women. She poured a line of fluid from the pool out of the room and into the main corridor. From the main corridor, she lit the thin stream. The flames shot along the stream and into the pool which burst into a bright, hot conflagration! The three women shot up out of their bed and you could see the horrified look on their faces and their attempts to scream their lungs out, which failed because they were, of course, mute.

At that moment we turned away before being seen, and ran back to our own rooms as quickly and quietly as we could. We were silently laughing our guts out at the joke we'd just pulled, and the momentary excitement we'd caused. For a few minutes, I felt more alive than I had since I'd arrived at the Control Institution.

Unable to make any noise, I still laughed myself to sleep as I remembered the looks on the faces of our victims. It had been well-worth the risk!

We were never caught. The event was the topic of conversation for days afterwards. You could see the mute inmates acting out the entire scenario in pantomime, over and over again. Even the matrons got into it and I heard many a matron belly-laugh as she told the story to matrons and inmates alike.

A few days later, as I was drifting off to sleep, replaying the lighter fluid joke in my mind, an idea struck me. It was a crazy long-shot, but it had at least some potential to let me get a message out of the Control Institution. I decided to build a hot air balloon to carry a message over the walls and as far as it could be blown, in the hopes someone might find it in the wilderness around the prison, or perhaps even see it passing overhead. Neither I nor anyone else was capable of planning or executing an escape, but there was nothing in my controls that prevented me from trying to get a message out. Luckily for me, that was a major oversight on the part of the administration!

Getting the hot air would be simple; after all, I had an unlimited supply of lighter fluid. Since the thin tubing that our gruel passed through on its way to our gullet was always clogging and being replaced, I could make a burner out of a piece of it, sealed at the bottom, stuffed with a rag, and filled up with lighter fluid. My problem was making the balloon.

My first thought was to use a plastic trash bag, until I remembered that I was in a third world country and we didn't have trash bags in our wastebaskets – which was probably why they smelled all the time. However, while I was sitting in the courtyard a few days later, I saw an inmate emptying one of the large garbage cans in an enclosed area, by pulling a big, dark green plastic bag full of trash out of it.

I walked nonchalantly over to her service cart and there, on top, in a yellow box with big English lettering on it was a supply of good ol' Glad garbage bags from the US! Needless to say, I pilfered one, rolled it up tightly, put it mostly hidden

under my arm, managed to sneak it back inside, and slipped it under my cot mattress. Now I had my balloon!

Over the next few days, I rooted around, trying not to draw suspicion, and came up with everything else I needed to make my “message balloon,” as I’d come to think of it. I found a couple long, thin strips of wood – like two triple-length chopsticks, and some duct tape. (Yep, the stuff you know. I think it can be found everywhere on Earth). I couldn’t find even a scrap of paper. The Control Institution didn’t want inmates writing notes to each other, so they controlled that medium as best they could. Eventually, I found a scrap of cardboard big enough, but nothing with which to write.

I decided to create my own pen, by taking one of the thin pieces of wood, and charring the end with my lighter. Then I began to write on the cardboard, re-charring the end as I needed. I brushed off the cardboard to see if the writing stayed readable, and it did. Only Altaf saw me do this, no one else.

For the next 20 minutes, I tried to let her know what I was planning to do. By the time I ran out of ways to act this out, I was pretty sure she got it.

I carefully crafted a note in English. It read, “HUGE REWARD OFFERED! US Dollars! Contact any American! Tell them you’ve found a missing American archeologist who goes by the name of Karimah. Call the United States at 01-283-555-2279. Tell everyone I am trapped in the Control Institution for Delinquent Women in the Kingdom of Salat, in Eritrea.”

The number was my parents’ land-line number. Writing it was very strange to me. I remembered their number without difficulty, but I couldn’t visualize what either of them looked like, nor could I remember what their first names or surname were. I only hoped that my description of me as an archeologist would convince whoever answered the call that I tried to communicate, if I, myself, had gone by another name than Karimah.

Of course, I wasn’t at all certain that this was going to work.

Though Altaf had seen me, I was reluctant to tell anyone else what I planned to do, lest they get in serious trouble should my plan be exposed. So with Altaf and me blocking the camera in my triple bedroom with our bodies, I bent over my work.

Using tape, I fastened the long chopstick-like sticks into a cross and taped them to the open end of the garbage bag to hold it open. I taped the cardboard message to the top of the bag. I sealed the end of the tube with duct tape and stuffed a piece of absorbent cloth into it. I used the same small bottle my group acquaintance had used to flame that surprised triple, and doused the rag-filled tube with lighter fluid. I expected to light it outside, wait while it inflated the garbage bag, and let it fly into the air and away from the prison.

In the end, I let Erij know what I was planning. As soon as she understood what I planned to do, she wanted to join us. In the middle of a moonless night she, Altaf and I snuck outside to launch the makeshift hot air balloon from the darkest part of the unguarded recreation area. There was no need for guards after all; no one could mount an escape here.

Altaf and Erij held the bag up as I lit my burner, the lighter-fluid filled-*candle*.

It appeared that there wasn't enough heat to produce sufficient hot air to inflate the bag. I was at a loss, until Altaf rushed back into the dormitory building and returned with a metal waste basket, filled with a small amount of combustible trash. She wanted me to light it, which I did. It flamed, but I didn't think too brightly. Then she and Erij immediately held the hot air balloon over the flaming basket. It instantly inflated, and we struggled to hold it down, as I lit the candle again. Altaf and Erij released it and it soared into the black night sky – up, up, and up!

It was several hundred feet overhead and the cool, late night wind off the desert was beginning to blow it away. As it appeared to clear the prison walls, I saw the burning, lighter fluid candle fall over against one of the supporting strips of wood. The fluid must have spilled along the wood because the flames shot down the wood strip and reached the plastic bag.

No sooner had that happened than the entire bag burst into flames, having been lit by the candle engine. My hot air balloon crashed in flames to the desert floor, perhaps a quarter mile past the wall.

It had been a long-shot, and I understood that. But I was hoping for the best. My hopes crashed into the barren soil along with the flaming bag. Fortunately, what we had attempted was never discovered.

I realized that I was glad I was now a smoker, and it went beyond the addiction they'd given me. It was about the only, tiny pleasure we had in this miserable place, where the staff had virtually total control over our minds and bodies. In addition, of course, there was the hint of carnality and the slight turn on that I got from each one. Never enough, but it was something. Even with only that tiny arousal I had, in my own mind, completely coupled the addiction of smoking with my requisite but unfulfilled addiction to sex. They'd found a way to keep us Control Institution smokers reminded of our sexuality, while always being tortured with the frustration of unfulfilled desire. We were barely able to start along the path to arousal, before we hit a dead end.

Nevertheless, over my time there, I observed that the women in the non-smoking resident groups were consistently more morose than the smokers. Oh, a few groups realized some titillation from their caning habit, but most only had shaving to substitute for the loss of their sexuality. Other than their daily grooming, they had nothing to sooth their minds and bodies, and nothing to remind them that they had been sexual beings before they were stripped of their capabilities as a woman by being controlled.

That first day for lunch (they called the meals dinner and supper), I sat at the feeding station in our resident group quarters and sucked down my portion of *prisoner porridge*. As a skinny newcomer to a chubby resident group, I was also required to eat the same gruel again, just before lights-out and first thing in the morning, to fatten me up. I found out later that the porridge at those non-standard feeding times, for those

of us who were required to take it, contained three times the calories of the regular slop. Those special feedings were designed to pack on the pounds, not maintain our normal or prison-designated weight.

A matron always came by to watch me swallow the paste during those meals. She stayed there for another half hour, to make sure I didn't puke it up. I never could understand why. They'd ordered me to eat, in order to make me plump, so that's what my well-controlled mind was determined to do. Even thinking about not obeying them regarding my eating made me intolerably anxious. Not following that direct order was unthinkable.

In addition, the bathrooms were all monitored from somewhere in the prison control centers – by a group of sick perverts, I presume. So if I somehow managed to get myself to toss my cookies there, they'd know. If I did it elsewhere, they'd know because of inmates ratting me out in exchange for some nebulous, anticipated, but rarely delivered privileges. If I didn't gain five pounds per week in my initial days at the prison, they would force-feed me in the clinic for a week. Even though we couldn't talk among ourselves, I found out early on that you DID NOT want to be force-fed.

When I arrived at the prison, I weighed 110 pounds (50 kilograms), and my height was the same as it was when I was 21 years old: five feet, four inches (162 centimeters). They intended to bump me up to 163 to 165 pounds (74 or 75 kilograms). That was *expected* to happen in a little over TWO MONTHS! If it didn't, I'd be beaten, force-fed, and the controller would be used to give me an obsessive, unrelenting appetite. At that point, I'd be allowed (or required) to 'suck the tubes,' as the matrons called it, any time I wanted for the next few months. And the compulsion would force me to suck gruel most all the time. That usually resulted in something over twice the targeted weight-gain, and the inmate would be stuck there once her weight shot up to whatever it got to. If that happened, I'd be assigned to the highest, weight group, the greatly obese *zenay vizhiden*.

The threat of even worse obesity was one of the things that made us (including me) eat everything we needed to get to and stay at the weight they wanted us to be: gaunt, thin, average, plump, chubby, fat, or greatly obese.

Apparently, Altaf and Erij had been as thin as I was, when they'd first come to the prison. Now they were comfortably plump, even chubby. Why had that happened to them? Luck of the draw.

I didn't want it, but for me, *chubby* had become the target, most-desirable, and earnestly-hoped-for configuration of my body. If I failed to achieve that, they would make me morbidly obese. That's just the way they thought about things. If you didn't do what they wanted, they made you do far more than they initially wanted. Through threats of controller-induced obedience, actual abuse, threatened punishment to come, and the specter of compulsive, uncontrollable eating, they forced me to embrace their ideal of the inmate in my particular resident group. They made me determined to get there to avoid worse fates, and because they'd programmed it into my mind.

In this dreadful place, there were no boyfriends to impress, no lesbian or bi lovers to entice, no one at all to care how we looked. Having a lover when you have no sexual response is pointless, because there's nothing satisfying that you can do about it.

There was little in the way of physical attractiveness either. None of us hairless female apes was gonna win any beauty contest. The bodies of some of the *nochhadn*, which I'd been myself, when I arrived, or the average-build *motowoseik* were pretty sexy, but since you couldn't satisfy or act on any twinges of arousal, pretty quickly, almost nothing aroused you anymore.

Long after my initiation to that underworld of controlled women, I was still only comfortable when I was a fatter gal. Yeah I, Karimah, at that early time in my prison life, and even after I'd moved on to another, different life, can't tolerate the idea of being slender, thin, or anything with fewer curves. They fucked me up and made me want to be – no, need to be –

a chubby young woman. Deep in my soul, I want to be thin, but the idea of it makes me so anxious that I could never consent to be there. In me, the prison tried to create a life-time, compulsively plump girl. I don't know what the future holds for me in that regard, but I'm that woman right now, and there doesn't seem to be anything I can do about it.

In this part of the world, that is actually a valued way to be.

Thinking back on even my first night in the prison proper, I slept more-or-less soundly on the small cot they provided. Altaf, Erij and I all shared a small room, with our cots arranged along three walls: left, right and opposite the door. Erij was an occasional snorer, but Altaf made no noise at all. Her sleeping was as bland as her face. I suspected that, in spite of her chubbiness, the lack of facial muscle control contributed to her not sawing wood at night.

Nobody cared when you went to sleep, or even to bed, but all the lights except for emergency lights went out at 9:00 pm local time, after the evening salat, and came back on again at 5:00 am, in time for the morning prayers that were called *fajr*.

We were all required to participate in the five daily prayer times of the salat – and surprisingly, we were required to perform it without clothes, since we were never allowed clothes in the prison. Specifically acceptable clothing choices are outlined in the Koran, but that wasn't observed here. However, in lieu of clothes, we were required to wrap ourselves in the blanket from our bed to perform salat. If for some reason we were away from our quarters at one of the prayer times, we would place a thin strip of black cloth over our head, which extended down far enough to touch our shoulders on each side. Those strips of cloth were strategically placed for use all over the prison.

After *fajr*, morning salat, we took turns showering and grooming ourselves in the small bathroom the three of us shared. We did that in order of seniority: Erij, then Altaf, then me. Once Erij had shaved her head and removed any stray eyebrows (all brows were strays by definition), she would go

into the shower and wash and shave her body, while Altaf shaved her own head and plucked her brows. We rotated through the process like that with me bringing up the rear.

We were “programmed” by our controllers to start becoming anxious about our need to shave and pluck and trim our nails as soon as we were awakened by lights on. That anxiety built during morning salat, and continued to build for me until Altaf was in the shower and I was removing those awful whiskers from my pretty little head.

Because of what the controller had done to the mind of every inmate in the prison, eyebrows were the worst. If you found one, it creeped you out like having some hideous bug crawling on your face. Showing any white on the tips of your nails was almost as bad from the standpoint of being disgusted. As a result, a high percentage of the inmates took to biting their nails – and their toenails too if they could manage it. I used to bite my nails back in my grade school and middle school years, though I finally broke myself of that habit before high school. As a result, I was determined not to start that habit up again here, so I meticulously trimmed my nails every day, sometimes making them a bit sore in the process. But I resisted biting them.

Shaving my head gave me something approaching a sexual thrill every time. They’d messed with my brain and emotional center very directly in that regard. Running that razor over my head, and feeling the soft smoothness of my scalp as the razor cleaned me up turned me on like a nude pic of the hottest guy or girl possible. More actually. It never lessened and I looked forward to it every morning. I suppose they didn’t permanently remove my hair to force me to shave it – and love and hate that act simultaneously. There were times when I would be both aroused and crying my eyes out at the same time. Such was how they messed with our minds.

Years ago – back in high school - I had laser treatment to permanently remove the hair on my legs, arms, underarms, and pussy, not even leaving a small “landing strip.” So in the shower, I had only to make sure no tiny, blonde hairs, which had persisted after the laser treatments, had reappeared on my

upper thighs or arms. When I finally emerged from the shower, with nary a hair on my body save my eyelashes, I actually felt good. Perhaps the best I'd feel all day. And it was that way every day.

Given what the controller had rearranged, disrupted, or taken over within my brain, I suppose every day of the rest of my time in the prison would feel that way, because of the programmed boost I'd get from the imposed obsession with shaving myself. I'd be shackled with those mental bonds for years. I realized that I both hated and looked forward to them exerting their power over me. My controller had bound them up with what little I was able to realize of my female sexuality. I had no erogenous zones anymore. Instead, I had the tantalizing but insufficient boost that shaving, plucking, trimming, caning and smoking gave me.

After my grooming, I had to take breakfast – at least until I achieved the weight they had designated for me, based on my resident group. The others usually went off to jobs of various sorts. I'd be assigned a job when I reached my target level of plump. In the meantime, after breakfast, my job was to clean the rooms that held me, Altaf and Erij. Once every three days, I'd clean the common areas for our resident group of nine.

Breakfast, in those early months, was a high-caloric gruel from the feeding station. I'd sit there, place the tube in my mouth, and press the blue button. The tube's water wash would shoot into my mouth and be easily swallowed. It would be followed by the fattening, prison porridge which I would try to swallow as rapidly as it came, and then by another water wash. If I got too much in my mouth, couldn't swallow fast enough, and had to stop the process, I'd press the blue button again and it would halt for one minute. When this happened, the machine would give me about 50 percent more gruel, after it resumed, until it stopped. That would make me gain pounds faster, but it would mess me up for most of the day – from how I felt, to whether or not I could actually poop enough.

So I tried to take it down as it came. Besides, I'd been told to plump up, and that's what I had to do. What I wanted – to be my historic slender-yet-curvy, pretty, sexy, long-or-short-

haired, highlighted-blonde, all-American girl – had nothing to do with it.

So I woofed it down.

A matron watched over me this whole time, and for at least half an hour afterwards. That happened every day, until I reached their goal. Yeah, there was no resisting whatever they wanted. This was the *Control Institution for Delinquent Women*, after all. The emphasis was on CONTROL.

After the semi-liquid breakfast, I did my chores. Then, in the later morning or early afternoon, a bell would sound, Altaf and Erij would return from whatever their jobs were, and join me for *zuhr*, the second prayer of salat.

After *zuhr*, we would beat each other. This was not only required, but all of us in my resident group needed it at this time. The same kind of anxiety that had plagued me earlier when I had head stubble, affected me at that time, except that it was directed at my need to be beaten.

I am not a pain person. At one time I thought spanking as a part of sex play might be fun, and eventually dabbled in it from time to time. But given a choice, I will avoid pain situations at every opportunity, unless I feel overwhelmed with the need to protect someone – for me, that means a need to protect children. Otherwise, I have no interest in pain.

I should have said that I used to have no interest in pain.

Now I love it. I realized that on the first morning that I was out of the clinic, and in the actual prison. To my altered consciousness, pain arouses me more than anything except the shaving, plucking, and trimming ritual. For me, the delicious, biting pain of flagellation - caning, beating, being lashed and slashed with a switch, whip or stiff branch - is secondary only to the daily, morning ablutions, in the pleasant but inadequate sexual stimulation it imparts to me.

As I was saying, after *zuhr*, we beat each other. That was an insistent, binding part of our resident group activities. We always did it the same way, and in the same order as our morning ablutions.

We each held the Middle Eastern version of a rattan cane, most of a meter long, and we formed a circle of sorts with Erij, Altaf behind her, and then me, and then Erij completing the circle behind me. We stood in the tight circle, about a meter apart. To start the beating, Erij would hit me on the rump with such force that, on that first day with my triple, I thought I would fall to the ground and pass out. Then I'd strike Altaf, who would then strike Erij. After five rounds, we'd switch directions – Altaf would hit me, and I'd hit Erij. We'd repeat this cycle until each of us had been beaten 20 times, ten from each triple mate.

With every stroke of the rattan cane, a searing pain and a sexual thrill would ignite within me like lightning. Unfortunately, the sexual thrill would fade about as quickly as lightning too. Nevertheless, I realized within minutes of the start of the first beating by my triple that I was totally hooked on their infliction of pain and punishment on me.

Such was the power of the controlling device that had wormed its way into my brain. Was it coupled to my own natural tendencies? I didn't think so, but I had no way of knowing for sure. That in itself was horrifying. I could no longer tell my own thoughts from those imposed on me. To make matters worse, I was sure that even if they went against my natural tendencies, the impulses I was being forced to follow would, over time, change me into whatever they wanted me to become.

Normally, the prisoners only ate a late-morning dinner and a somewhat late supper. The meals consisted of prisoner porridge, except on the day after Sabbath, when we got something that slightly resembled actual food. Of course, since that came after a day of fasting, and a single meal of gruel, it tasted wonderful to me and to everyone else.

It was hard to get to know anyone because we couldn't speak. I probably found out about the other women as much from the guards as I did from the inmates individually. The guards were surprisingly verbose, considering that they otherwise treated us with disdain at best, and outright cruelty most of the time. It was almost as though they sought to cover

their abominable handling of us by being erratic, and unpredictably friendly. As a result, you never knew whether one was going to talk to you in an almost comradely way, or beat you until you bled.

No one knew American Sign Language, of course, including me – with the exception of a few gestures I'd picked up over the years - but there was a sort of local sign language that had apparently grown up over time. For example, rubbing your thumb along your first 2 fingers – a gesture that usually meant “a lot of money” outside the prison, meant “how long are you in for from now?” To answer, in years, you held up the right numbers of fingers, or flashed them multiple times if it were more than ten.

There were the usual obscene gestures found mostly in southern Europe and the Middle East. In particular, the forearm jerk for “fuck you.” That would usually result in an instant fight between the sender and the receiver. I observed this my third day there while many of us were standing around in the hot, sandy courtyard at the center of the prison.

I saw one nondescript, stocky girl give the forearm to a tall, thin, and equally nondescript girl of about the same age. They instantly leapt at each other. They had, of course, no hair for hair-pulling, but there were swings and bites and eye gouging and attempts to use short nails to scratch. The fury of it was pretty impressive – for about twenty seconds. Then, as though we'd all been gassed, every prisoner in the courtyard, myself included, suddenly crumpled to the ground, motionless.

I'd experienced complete loss of control for a moment during a demonstration and test of my initial programming. This event wasn't at all planned, nor did it take place in a padded room. I instantly collapsed right in the courtyard, right where I'd been standing a moment earlier.

I lay there with my face halfway in the sand, unable to move anything. Even breathing was difficult. My eyes were open and I couldn't close them; my right eye was in the sand and covered by it. It was awful, and I couldn't do a thing about it.

After about five minutes, they released us and forced us to stand in a circle in the middle of the courtyard, surrounding the two combatants and several matrons. My eye was watering and in agony. I tried my best to clear sand from it, but it felt like there were boulders behind my eyelid. The best I could do at that point was to keep my eyelid pulled out from my eyeball, while my eye watered in an attempt to clear itself.

The punishment for the two offenders was immediate and, I suppose in the view of the matrons, appropriate to the offense. Each girl lost the use of her arms and hands for a month! Right on the spot, a matron used a controller to block their ability to move or control their arms at all. They'd be forced to have a member of their triple or someone else in their resident group attend to shaving, cleaning, and even pushing the feeding button for them – and anything else they were required to do.

Such was the level of matronly dominance in the Control Institution for Delinquent Women. They had all the control, we suffered a complete loss of control.

Chapter 11 – Count on Me

The forced – or, rather, the enforced – feeding started my second day of incarceration and continued without break, even when it was the Sabbath. Everyone fasted, but I got a double dose of extra-caloric gruel after the sundown dinner – just before lights out. I was being pushed to gain 2 and a half kilograms per week, or about five and a half pounds. This wasn't a matter for debate or anything I could resist. Using the controller they'd inserted the need deep into my mind and I couldn't neglect it.

So I ate. Or, rather, I let the machine feed me four times per day. Two regular meals, and two meals designed to pack on the pounds.

I've always been both healthy and slender. I've never been gaunt, but you would immediately know by looking at me that I was athletic and trim. When I arrived at the prison, I was more-or-less told that they had enough trim inmates. Totally by random chance, I'd been assigned to a group of chubbies. It appeared to be nothing more than the luck of the draw.

I found out much later that it hadn't been random. The warden, whom I never saw nor met when I arrived, for reasons known only to her, hated Americans. In particular, she hated American girls who looked all-American – pretty in a cute, loveable, shapely way, with clear skin, light hair and a winning smile. I was told by a matron who became borderline friendly to me, that the warden was determined to relieve me of all those attributes. Obviously, my light hair was easy and the first to go.

My cute shape was going to be next. Thus, I was assigned to a specific one of the eighteen openings when I arrived, which my friend told me was the only *fleshed-out* opening of the lot. Had there been a fat or very obese woman opening then or anywhere in the near future, I would have been sent to that. In fact, I was told that possibility still existed, if an

opening occurred and the warden decided I should be further abused by being sent to it.

My sentence, and that of every other inmate, required that we spend twenty percent of our punishment time in the Control Institution for Delinquent Women itself. After that, the system did, by far, prefer that we be *purchased* by a Kingdom of Salat citizen, and fulfil the remaining eighty percent of our sentence as an *indentured servant* to that citizen. In many cases, indentured servant was equivalent to concubine.

In order to encourage overall sales and placement of inmates, it was in the prison's best interest to keep a variety of women in all shapes, sizes, colors, body masses, and so forth. That would maximize the overall opportunity for placing inmates with sponsors, thus eliminating the state's cost, while providing a stable environment for continued control, bondage, and punishment. At the same time the system satisfied a societal need in the patriarchy that was the Kingdom of Salat.

As a result, women in the prison spanned the spectrum from concentration-camp gaunt (known as a *hazil*) to well-over morbidly obese. Coming in, I was considered a *nochhadn*, or thin inmate, but I was only a few pounds below the average weight for my height. The most commonly-desired form for potential buyers was *motowoseik*, what Americans would call average build, not slender (me), skinny, or gaunt. Next heaviest were the *dontoleh*, Arabic for "plump," which were present in the prison in the second highest percentage. My group was actually referred to as *gideen*, which essentially translated as "chubby." We're heavier than the *dontoleh*, averaging 40 to 60 pounds over the average group. Fat women, the *swomina*, were heavier than us at around 200 pounds (90 kg). The heaviest group are the *zenay vizhiden*, essentially the "very fat." Those poor souls are maintained at 100 to 150 pounds over the average weight. Apparently there is a significant group of buyers who want concubines of that large, fleshy body type.

Almost no one came to the prison as a *zenay vizhiden*. There simply weren't that many obese women who got into

trouble there. I think that's because there wasn't as high a percentage of people in this or nearby countries who are that much overweight as there are in the US. Remember the Kingdom of Salat was a semi-autonomous region within the country of Eritrea, which is more than half surrounded by Ethiopia where people have been starving for generations.

Where an inmate fell along this body type spectrum when she arrived in the prison was irrelevant. She was assigned to either the oldest available opening or one specifically picked by the warden when the warden decided to get involved, which was infrequent. The inmate's controller was programmed to get her to the desired body shape. That might mean gaining a little weight to a lot of weight, or losing a little or a lot. We had no say in it. Once inside, we were programmed to do what the system decided.

As I said, for me, that was to abandon my buff, athletic form, and join the *gideen*. Could I have resisted this enforced change to a body image I'd had all my life? Not a chance. Between the environment that forced me to do whatever it was decided that I'd do, and the imposition of needs and compulsions by the controller, I didn't have a prayer of doing anything other than what they'd decided I'd do.

So I got chubby, at the rate of about five pounds per week. I think the exercises I was compelled to do insured the weight would be distributed in the way they wanted. Or maybe they somehow used my controller to make it happen a certain way. Regardless, I didn't gain it all in my stomach or end up with a giant ass as I'd feared would happen, and I didn't suddenly become brutish-looking. The new forty-five pounds seemed to go everywhere.

By the time I reached 70.5 kilos or 155 pounds, my legs were significantly plumper from my toes to my calves and all along my thighs. My butt was bigger in about the same proportion. I could see it in the mirror and feel it when I walked – I wiggled or swayed more – and I could especially feel it when I sat down. The one blessing was that my tummy stayed mostly flat. My modest-sized, pert boobies were gone, replaced by what I considered substantial, somewhat drooping

breasts, with natural cleavage, even in the nude, which I was all the time. My shoulders became rounded, and were no longer the broad, sleek, somewhat muscular shoulders of a lifelong gymnast. My arms and face filled out. I think my fuller face somehow makes me look younger. I'm a pretty but evenly-chubby young woman. It's not a look I would have chosen for myself, but it isn't ugly or the end of the world, either. Certainly though, no one would call me trim and athletic anymore.

I stared at myself one morning after shaving and showering, for as long as I could get away with it. Until I shaved, I was so tormented and uneasy with need that I couldn't think of anything else. Afterward, though, I could think straight again – at least until the irresistible impulse to be beaten started to build a few hours later.

I stood there, examining my body. I thought: gosh, Karimah, you're definitely an extra plump denizen of the Control Institution. You're soft and curvy. Your supple, yielding body reinforces the picture of you as the submissive you've denied being for most of your adult life.

In the mirror, I thought I saw Tia hovering above my right shoulder, young, self-assured, and beautiful as always. She said nothing. She didn't condemn, praise or judge what I'd been forced to become in any way. Her expression was an unsettling combination of disquieting surprise tainted with desire. I couldn't tell if that were a reflection of my own feelings, my imparting of feelings to the apparition of a dead girl, or some truly real emotion that was unique to a spirit which somehow still had a part of herself fastened in the real world, and wanted to communicate with me.

The way Tia was looking at me bothered me. I was impatient with her popping up, saying nothing half the time, and then being totally – perhaps intentionally – vague when she did tell me something.

“What is it, Tia?” I said in my mind, in Arabic I realized. I'd become so used to hearing it that I was preferentially thinking in Arabic by that time. The tone of my thoughts reflected both my impatience with her, and irritation at what

this place had done to my body. I was alone in the bathroom by this time. Erij and Altaf had gone off to their morning jobs. No one was around to hear me talking to myself, though someone could have been eavesdropping remotely.

To my astonishment, Tia responded to me in Arabic. At least I thought it was Arabic at the time. Looking back, I'm not sure it was any language at all. Perhaps it was only a string of conceptualizations; thoughts passed from one person to another.

"You're soft and rounded and quite full of figure, My Love," Tia said, somehow.

"Yeah, I'm fat. They wanted me fat so I'm fat. I can't do anything about it." The irritation in my thoughts would have been evident to even the most ephemeral ghost.

"I would call you plump or chubby, but not fat as we always understood that to mean."

"Well they'd agree with you. They call my new body type *gideen*, which means *chubby*."

She looked at me with big, sad eyes. "Don't be unhappy, Lover. I find I quite like you this way."

That was so unexpected that I was speechless – meaning thoughtless. I just stared at her and finally thought, "I'm a fucking cow!"

"You look like a renaissance painting of a beautiful woman."

"For God's sake, Tia, I'm bald and eyebrowless!"

"I'm sorry, Love. But as for your hair, you have a beautifully-shaped head and a pretty face that I adore."

"I have no eyebrows, Tia! I look like some kind of alien! Or a honeydew melon with eyes, nose and a mouth!"

"When you leave this this place, you can have hair again, or even wear a wig. You can pencil on brows. You will be as beautiful as you were, just different. Many people on Earth appreciate a woman with soft curves. At many times in the past, your current shape was the ideal."

“But it isn’t now! I was a slender, blonde American beauty, wasn’t I?”

“Yes, but you still are a beauty. You are different, more exotic, but still desirable to me, as you will be to others.” I saw her look off beyond me and I sensed that she’d said all she intended. She had wanted me to understand that I was still a beautiful woman. I wasn’t completely convinced.

Ignoring the persistent vision of her, I resumed my train of thought about my future as a fat girl. Could I ever go back to being thin? If I lost weight sometime in the future, would I have all this excess skin which would make me sag and look terrible – possibly worse than I did being chubby? I suppose there’s nothing I could do about this in the next seven-plus years anyway. If someone bought out my punishment contract, would that person keep me this way? I assumed so. Otherwise, why buy me when he or she could have a trim, athletic girl from another prison weight group?

I assumed that if anyone bought my contract, they would keep me extra-plump. So I’ll be a *gideen* for at least a total of more than seven years. After that, I would be so used to this configuration of my body that it would simply become how I was, and how I was supposed to be, right? Not how I was destined to be, but how I was. To change I’d have to really work at getting back to average again, assuming I wanted to, or could convince myself that I wanted to.

Insidiously, they had altered me so that I couldn’t control my more distant future, even though it would lie beyond the control of this horrible institution.

Why were my body and mind soft and pliable? They’d done something to my brain and body, I thought. But they’d done something to my self-image too. I looked like a woman who wanted to surround her man or woman with the thick, warm, soft, luxuriant, yielding flesh of my body. The idea of pressing my voluptuous curves onto another person was surprisingly luscious to me. As you know, I was bisexual from at least my late high school times. I mostly thought I had a preference for men, but I could contentedly go either way. If I

thought about Tia and Dyana, I had to admit that, perhaps, I was more lesbian than bi.

Looking at myself in the mirror, I didn't really care, I just knew I needed another human to share me physically. I couldn't respond to him or her sexually, but I could share my warmth with theirs, and gain some sense of togetherness.

Was I curvy? Oh yes, without a doubt, even though I didn't like that form. But it was reflected in the mirror before me, and though I detested it, I had this deep, undeniable desire to be that way. I was positive in that instance that it was the controller influencing my thoughts, my wants and my needs.

Was I submissive? I'd always considered myself more of a dom than a sub. Now, as I thought about it – and I did – I came to the realization that I didn't care. I could be whatever some future companion wanted of me. I'd certainly been sub to Dyana, and that was before all the rest of these things happened.

I'd been forced to submit. Every inmate here had to submit; that was the very nature of the place. I was of the opinion that submissive was likely what I'd prefer at this point. Maybe they were forcing those thoughts on me with my controller. After all, they'd already made what they wanted of me.

In every aspect of my existence, from how I look, to what I can do, to how I think, I'm controlled.

Is the human spirit irrepressible? I used to think so. The Control Institution, though, was such a morose place that I'd begun to wonder if humor and *joie de vivre* had somehow been banned from it. There was no denying that the environment they'd created, both within the place and within our own bodies, seemed designed to drive the enjoyment out of everything. The future was beginning to look all sepia and uninteresting to me, almost as though I'd been trapped in some Arabic version of Dorothy's Kansas of the 1930s. At least the dust-bowl Kansans had the occasional tornado to break up the monotony.

Several matrons, in a sporadic moment of sharing and matron-prisoner camaraderie, had told me that prisoners usually reached the peak of their personal foreboding and dissatisfaction sometime in the first three to six months. There I was at that time.

I'd been at the prison for a little over 14 weeks. I remember it because I'd just reached my top-of-target weight range of 75 kilos or about 165 pounds, and had been dropped to a maintenance level of two feedings per day only a couple days before. I was not allowed to gain any more. They'd plumped me up by 55 pounds from when I'd arrived, and I thought I was delightfully chubby now. In my few moments of clarity, I didn't like it – If it weren't for the controller, I was sure that I would passionately hate it – but there was absolutely nothing I could do about it. The controller forced me to appreciate my attainment of the goal that had been set for me, with no consideration for what I wanted.

Fortunately, when I was nearing my highest level of despair and tedium, Tuba, a new matron, showed up. Her presence within the Institution turned out to be just the diversion I needed to keep myself, and most of the other, nearby inmates, out of the ever-worsening doldrums.

Tuba looked nothing like the big oom-pah horn that is her English namesake. She was slightly younger than I, with glistening dark hair and eyes, a petite figure, and a totally vain, arrogant, unforgiving, unpleasant disposition. I found it almost impossible to be on the same continent as she, let alone in the same building, even if she wasn't guarding me or my triple at that moment. The other matrons, unanimously older, crotchier, unattractive, and almost as bored as the inmates, hated her for her youth, beauty, and self-centered temperament.

To make it even worse for her acceptance at the Control Institution, she was, as I'd come to expect, the daughter of a Kingdom of Salat, break-away government official. These people must have invented the term *nepotism*, based on familial relationships.

It was crystal clear, during her first two weeks at the Control Institution, that the other matrons set out to get rid of her by making her life altogether unpleasant as they considered her to be.

Tuba had four groups of nine as part of her monitoring responsibility. One of those groups was mine, so I saw her most every day or evening. I tried to avoid her whenever possible. In addition to her caustic personality and condescending treatment of inmates, I hated her because this society had chosen to let her retain her beauty, while it had demolished mine. I had been every bit as lovely as she. Now, because of her society, I'd been turned into a virtually sexless, hairless, mute, Rubenesque automaton, under the control of their purchased, China-developed technology.

The first plot against Tuba that I witnessed centered around the inveterate, hardened homophobia which was rampant among the matrons and male guards. If a matron would ever be caught *in flagrante delicto* of the prohibition against lesbian acts, it would not only cost her job and career; she would end up here like Erij.

Another lesbian prisoner, not Erij but imprisoned in the same situation, had been offered a list of on-going *favours* by the matrons if she would be able to seduce Tuba, such that Tuba could be caught in a compromising position with the inmate. She agreed. That was unbelievable to me for two reasons: the fact that the woman believed the matrons would actually deliver the agreed-upon benefits, and the woman trusting that her own sentence wouldn't be extended if Tuba and she were found guilty.

Apparently, based on the gossip passed on by the matrons, the only denizens of the Control Institution who weren't mute, the inmate got close to trapping Tuba.

But she wasn't able to close the deal. There was apparently video of her and Tuba, hand-in-hand, walking down a corridor toward a small block of empty rooms. About half-way down the hall, Tuba had a sudden, stabbing pain in her lower, right abdomen. I was told that the video showed her

suddenly gripping her lower torso, near her right groin, and collapsing to the corridor floor.

She'd had a sudden, opportune attack of appendicitis.

I'd say that Allah was watching over her, but I believe the deity has better things to do. I buy God's interference even less now than when I was a child. God, Yahweh, Allah, the Noosphere, Krishna – if the BIG GUY were prone get involved, surely he would have taken pity on me. I can tell you plenty that he's allowed to be done TO ME!

Because we're in the middle of nowhere, they treated Tuba at the prison's clinic. She was laid up for a week, then had a week off before she returned to duty. By then the matrons, determined to put Tuba in her place had hatched a new plan, apparently inspired by Tuba's time in the infirmary.

Following their failure to trap Tuba in a lesbian relationship, the older, more senior matrons decided on another approach to destroy the career and/or the normal life of the errant, young prison matron. By then, with Tuba back, I'd been able to observe directly how cruel she could be to some of my fellow inmates. She not only treated every one of us with disdain, but she was quick to use her controller anytime she didn't like the expression on some prisoner's face. I saw prisoners collapsing onto hard, rough concrete floors and splitting their heads open because Tuba decided it would be funny to shut off body control all of a sudden, when someone was merely walking along.

Another day I saw Tuba blind an inmate who was rushing down the stairs. She stumbled from the shock of suddenly being unable to see anything and fell the rest of the way, breaking her arm and getting a concussion. She was lucky she didn't break her neck. Tuba claimed the inmate had wrinkled up her nose at Tuba.

According to the matrons, the warden was at a loss of what to do, since Tuba was an appointment from a ranking government official. At some point though, when Tuba continued out of control, one matron convinced the warden to

let her handle the situation. The warden approved the plan and would look the other way.

A couple weeks after the poor woman had been blinded and fallen down the stairs, a matron came to me and asked if I knew how to use a video camera. I sort of shrugged my shoulders and nodded my head. I was no expert, but I'd certainly used a number of still and video cameras as an archeologist, so I was confident I could do what they asked.

We prisoners would do most anything to break up the boredom, if it wasn't too dangerous.

I was called to a meeting with the warden, the prison nurse, Tuba, two other matrons and one other convict, a well-meaning but mentally slow eighteen-year-old named Inbar.

One of the matrons had *sold* the warden on the idea of making a video of the induction process for new inmates entering the Control Institution. The video was to be used as a training aid for new guards and matrons, as publicity for the Control Institution within the government, and shared with other prisons. All of us present would be involved in the production.

They wanted to show the entire process, from arrival to delivery of the prisoner to her triple. They wanted a young, attractive *star*, and that was to be Tuba. I could tell by her expression that Tuba was both proud of being the star, and somewhat concerned about what she'd have to do. The warden assured her that she "...would be able to handle the stresses of production and the demands of an actress who would become famous within the government and throughout the prison system."

The warden totally played Tuba who bought into the role, hook, line and sinker. One of the two matrons would oversee the production. The other would play the role of the induction matron, with Inbar being her assistant. The two matrons would set everything up, and we'd begin the project in two days.

I didn't know what was coming, and I probably wouldn't have guessed what they'd planned to do to Tuba in a million years. I was certain, however, that I was going to have a front-

row seat to whatever they were going to do to the sadistic but hapless Tuba.

Over the next two days, I familiarized myself with the equipment, experimented with lighting in the infirmary and outside, and did some trial shoots. For the first time in months, I found myself actually getting into something interesting.

We started on the third day. I shot several takes of *prisoner Tuba* arriving at the prison. By the time we were done with that segment, I'd already earned Tuba's ire – I suppose just for existing, and maybe for making a few suggestions via gestures and pantomime along with demands about how I could best film her, and what she could do to make the shots better. She took to calling me fatty, since I was the plumpest one there. I would have taken offense at that, but I decided not to react; I strongly suspected that Tuba would get hers before this was over.

By afternoon, we'd moved inside and the fun began. The matron playing the part of the induction official fake-slapped Tuba around a little. Tuba actually did a presentable job of looking shocked and hurt. That look turned to anger when the induction matron removed the polish from her long nails and trimmed all of them maximally short while I hovered over them with the camera. Tuba was pissed and said things to the effect that she didn't sign up for this to be disfigured.

At that point, I expected what was coming. I couldn't tell if Tuba did or not. Surely, I remember thinking, she must know what comes next. It didn't really seem so. Maybe she was expecting it to come later, because she was really surprised when her mouth was locked open by the mouthpiece of the armature. I suppose she'd never observed an actual induction before, so she was as surprised as she could be. That made the video that much better, because she was reacting like a real incoming prisoner would.

The arm holding her head in place was locked and I realized that Tuba was at the mercy of the production crew, and the matrons' and warden's plan specifically.

Inbar unfastened the clip holding Tuba's long hair in the back. A moment later, Inbar stepped up to Tuba's side, positioned the clippers right at her forehead, and held them there while I moved around Tuba to record. The directing matron told Tuba to look scared. That actually seemed to make Tuba relax; it appeared to her right then that this was all going to be faked or glossed over.

Not so. I was positioned to capture Tuba's face. Inbar was told to flip on the clippers. There was a snap and a buzz and a look of sheer panic on Tuba's face. At a nod from the director, Inbar pushed the clippers into Tuba's dark, thick hair which was no match for the vibrating blades. Inbar plowed a strip down the center of Tuba's head. Dark hair fell like stalks before a corn combine harvester. Tuba went completely crazy with panic; her body tensed and jerked as she tried hopelessly to free herself.

That was not only impossible, but far too late. In a couple minutes, Tuba's thick, black hair was history. I recorded away during the entire exercise. When Inbar finally switched off the clippers, I could see Tuba's body slump in exhaustion and resignation, tears streaming down her face. It would have been a performance worthy of an Academy Award, if it had been a performance. But it was no mere portrayal. It was the very real reaction of any woman, be she sweetheart or bitch, to having her head forcibly shaved. It was particularly poignant to Tuba because she had probably never thought that any such thing was going to be done to her.

Tuba was still locked into place. The director was praising the distraught young woman for the excellence of her acting, in a mostly unsuccessful attempt to get Tuba to calm down and listen. Finally, she managed to tell Tuba they were about to fake the controller insertion. I would film Inbar preparing the insertion gun, loading the controller probe, and positioning it where the occipital bone meets the neck.

Tuba was told that, before firing it, the controller probe would be removed and replaced with a shortened fake probe that, when fired, would only leave a small impression,

matching what the probe insertion point looked like, for me to record as part of the video.

I started filming Inbar loading a very real control probe into the gun and holding it in position against Tuba's now very bald scalp. After I had the video I needed, I stopped, nodded, and stepped back. Inbar stepped away to get the counterfeit probe and load it into the gun. As she went to remove the real probe, I saw the matron director shake her head, "no," and motion for Inbar to move back to Tuba. My eyes must have gotten the size saucers as I realized what they were about to do.

Inbar seemed confused at first, then apparently decided the matrons knew what they wanted. Her pleasant, simple mind forgot about her intention to switch to the inert, fake control probe.

The director spoke up, "Tuba, we're about done with today's production work. We'll film the controller firing, and then release you to rest. When the gun fires, you'll probably feel a hard jolt, but you won't be harmed as such. If you want, you can sleep here tonight, rather than return to your apartment in the matrons' complex."

The matrons' complex was about a kilometer from the Control Institution.

"Alright, let's wrap this up. Inbar, are you ready?"

Inbar nodded and positioned the very-much-loaded controller insertion gun against Tuba's head. With me recording, Inbar fired the gun and the controller was shot into Tuba's brain, just as it had been shot into mine months ago. I could hardly believe what they'd done, even though I'd witnessed it with my own eyes!

Tuba passed out before she could scream with the shock and pain. I doubt she even realized that she'd been injected with a real controller. The matron who had been acting as the induction officer stepped up to Tuba and injected something into the vein of her right arm.

“That’ll keep her until morning,” she said. Then the two matrons, Inbar and I unfastened Tuba, carried her to a hospital bed, and strapped her in. A matron would return later to sleep in an adjoining room, in case Tuba awakened before we returned in the morning.

Tuba had a headache all of the next day, but we were able to complete the video project, which consisted of the controller test examples that occurred post-controller-insert, and the delivery of a naked Tuba to her triple rooms. Tuba wasn’t very happy with walking through the prison naked, for everyone to see, but the director convinced her that there was nothing amiss in showing the inmates what a truly beautiful body looked like.

Everything in the video of the controller test was done by Tuba acting. Her clandestine controller wasn’t used or revealed. No one ever told Tuba, nor did she seem to suspect, that a controller was worming through her brain, even as we recorded her acting. The director praised Tuba, and even asked the warden to join us for the final scenes, to encourage the foolish, young woman. The warden was there for the last hour or so.

For me, the experience had been déjà vu, which I would have preferred not to remember.

For the next two weeks, the entire episode seemed to be over. The matrons weren’t allowed to wear hats or wigs, so Tuba had to perform her matron duties without hair. She did pencil on eyebrows, but they didn’t look anything like her original ones that had been waxed off, and were now reappearing as a few hairs here and there. For the most part, the inmates ignored her. She mostly left us alone too, save for a couple cruelty examples, directed at innocent, unsuspecting prisoners. Obviously, the hairless Tuba was just as acerbic as the fully coiffed one.

It was during the third week that we began to notice some things different about Tuba. The first change was the absence of the quarter-inch, black fuzz that had begun to cover her head. She still had penciled-on brows, but they were just a simple, very thin arc. The little bit of eyebrow regrowth was

gone, apparently waxed off again or plucked out. I overheard another matron ask her what had happened to her buzz cut. Tuba looked confused, then reached into the blouse she wore under her matron's jacket and began to massage her left breast! She was silent for an uncomfortable length of time, as though she were trying to figure out the answer to a very complex question.

She finally said, "The bristles really bothered me? I didn't like how they felt?" She ended both sentences with a questioning inflection.

The other matron looked at her with a *what the fuck* look on her face. "How are you going to grow it out again, if you can't stand the bristle phase?"

"It'll just grow until I need to cut it?" Tuba said, making no sense at all. Then she walked away, her fingers noticeably playing with her nipple under her blouse.

A few days later, Tuba was there for a check on our group area which I had just cleaned. I saw right away that her head was still cleanly shaved. She also had the thin, arc of drawn-on brows, and there was no evidence of brow regrowth. This time, her hand was down inside her skirt. There was no way that she wasn't fingering her pussy while she inspected the area. She didn't even seem to realize it. At least twice, she pulled her hand out, absently smelled her fingers, licked them off, and put them right back in her skirt. I had real trouble not bursting out laughing right then! I tried as best I could to pretend that what she was doing was the most normal thing. Obviously, the other matrons and possibly the warden were messing with her, using the controller she didn't know she had.

Every time I saw Tuba for the next couple weeks, her head was freshly, cleanly shaven, she was browless save for the thin lines drawn on, and she was playing with herself – either breasts or pussy, and one time both at once. I heard a guard ask Tuba if she were having any luck growing her hair back out. She responded that she'd let it grow as soon as it got past the whiskery stage. When the guard asked how that would happen if she kept shaving it, all she said was she didn't like it

when it wasn't smooth. Her brain was stuck in a quandary, and she couldn't figure it out. They had bound her mind in a Catch 22 – she couldn't have hair until it grew out, and she couldn't let it grow out until it passed the bristle stage and was considered hair again.

I started laughing right in front of her, I couldn't help it. She angrily asked me what was so amusing. I launched into this meaningless pantomime, looking at the guard for some support, to keep myself from being Tuba's target for something cruel. The guard started laughing too, and told Tuba I was laughing at something funny Altaf had done. Tuba sort of grunted, put her hand in her blouse, made an "umm" sound of sexual pleasure, and walked away. The guard and I laughed until we cried.

Behind her back, all of the inmates took to mimicking Tuba, playing with their numb nipples or pussy, obviously mocking the nasty, young matron bitch. Only the small production team knew what had really been done to Tuba. I think sweet Inbar had forgotten all about it.

The following Monday morning, Tuba showed up with a one-inch, gold ring piercing her through her septum and hanging down to the top of her upper lip.

Matrons and guards weren't allowed to wear jewelry for obvious reasons – it gave a convict something to grab onto and do some damage with in the seconds before she was paralyzed by a controller. According to another matron, the warden, apparently more than in on what was being done to Tuba, had given the young matron victim permission to get her nose and nipples pierced, since she was "Sponsored by an important government official."

The final alteration to Tuba that I noticed was her gradually changing attitude towards, or response to the inmates. I saw her get very angry at an older woman in the courtyard one day. Her hand flew back and she was clearly going to strike the prisoner. But when her hand came around, it went right into her blouse and cupped her breast! When she went to yell at the hapless inmate, she began to stutter and couldn't get any words out!

Tuba attempted to swing with her other hand, which ended up right down her skirt. More attempts to shout only resulted in more stuttering. That's when everyone around, inmates, matrons and guards, started to laugh. As soon as the laughter started, Tuba shut up and began to disrobe, right there in front of everyone, until she finally stood there as naked as any inmate!

Tuba moved right up to the prisoner whom she'd intended to slap and castigate, until their naked bodies were touching. Tuba reached down to the pussy of the older inmate and began to finger the woman's unfeeling intimacies.

Another matron, trying to stop laughing, went up to Tuba. "Tuba, you'll need to let her go and get dressed now. This recreation period is about over."

Tuba, still unable to speak, nodded numbly, got dressed, and stood there with her hand in her skirt as though nothing had happened. "Are you alright?" The other matron asked her.

"I'm fine now," she said.

As I understood it, the scene was more or less repeated a number of times. Finally, Tuba came to the realization that anger and outbursts would result in loss of speech and an overwhelming compulsion to strip off all her clothes. I don't think it ever occurred to Tuba that her response to anger was no longer normal. Whoever the matron was who had messed with her mind, she had done a masterful job of bringing the young bully under control.

Tuba was never the same again. I thought she might leave the Control Institution altogether, but she never did while I was there. During that time, she continued to shave her pretty little head, remove any eyebrows, and wear the nose ring. When she'd get angry, which happened less and less, she would succumb to an incomprehensible stutter and a frantic groping of herself beneath her clothes. If she was further angered, she'd strip off her clothes and grope the woman who was the object of her fury.

Her playing with her nipples or pussy never stopped. I did hear one matron say that she'd gone out shopping and to a

restaurant with Tuba, and Tuba played with herself in public, as though no one were watching. I had no doubt that her mind had been finely tuned to make her like that.

I became convinced that they had also done some things to her that lowered her overall intelligence, and left her somewhat confused all the time. I would have bet \$1000 that she had an IQ of 125 when I first saw her, and that they had somehow lowered it to 95 or less. They had affected her ability to think. They had changed her from nicely above average to below average. That very thought scared me to death, and I vowed never to give them a reason to do anything to me beyond what they'd already done at the time I'd been inducted into the Control Institution.

Unfortunately, happenstance and boredom caused me to draw attention to myself, and take risks I should have avoided.

More days passed in anonymous nothingness and meaningless incarceration. I wondered if Dyana would still find me attractive like this: hairless and chubby. I'd thought about all of them less and less as my time here continued with few diversions. I was sure they'd tried to find me and get me out, but nothing had happened. This prison was so overwhelmingly isolated, in a break-away principality that was even more remote than Eritrea itself, that I came to believe that nothing could be done to find where I was, let alone get me out. Without hope of rescue anymore, I tried to survive within my triple - Altaf, Erij and me - as best I could.

I had no idea, most all of the time, what was going through Altaf's mind, since she hadn't shown a single expression in the months I'd known her. Of course, she couldn't, thanks to what had been done to her. However, being with her, and we lived together so that was a lot, was borderline creepy. She was always there, and always inscrutable. Everyone tried to avoid her, because, as I found through many, tedious, rough sign-language *conversations*, Altaf tended to freak out most of the other inmates. They all knew that the matrons had broken her but apparently, ever since she was rendered completely inert when it came to her

facial expressions, the other inmates avoided her because they considered her not quite right in the head.

The Control Institution in general, and a couple matrons in particular, had broken Altaf, but there wasn't anything inherently wrong with her. The matrons had reduced her to an unfeeling shell of what she had been. They were quite happy to leave her that way.

I felt terribly sorry for the pretty little plump girl, who didn't seem to have a mean bone in her body. She had been a happy, sweet young woman, and she was still just as sweet, though they had definitely affected her happiness. I suppose my concern for her showed, and she came to realize that I cared about her.

I'll be the first to admit that, back in River's Edge hanging out with Tia, I was the upbeat, optimistic type, just as the matron observed about Americans in general. It was hard for me to think of specific examples, but I could picture myself with Tia, and I knew what my disposition was then. I'm sure I was that way even when Tia wasn't around.

That must have continued through college, though I did find that I had trouble remembering that period in my life, between when Tia was killed, and I first met Dyana. I was an archeologist, so I'd studied that and gone on digs, right? I had friends too, I was sure, though none of them popped out when I thought about that time.

Sorry. I was about to make a point about my feelings for Altaf. In spite of being the bright, upbeat type, I have a low tolerance for women who are always cheerful or wearing a plastic smile. Those people get on my nerves. I have no reason to believe that Altaf's formerly happy, outgoing disposition was faked, but I suspect I might not have liked her much, had I known her before they damaged her. As it was now though, I had a soft spot in my heart and a lot of sympathy for Altaf.

In spite of the fact that we'd never spoken a word to each other, nor had Altaf shared a single expression with me, we

sort of became friends over the couple or three months after I was sent to the prison.

Before and after the Tuba diversion, I tried to treat Altaf with kindness and consideration; Erij was at least civil to her. Most of the other inmates paid no attention to her. I got the impression that most never noticed her at all. Being as neutral as she was, she tended to fade into the background.

There were, however, a hand-full of women who appeared to go out of their way to torment Altaf, whenever they thought they weren't being observed by a matron, and sometimes, even when they were. The worst of these was a former meth addict from Saudi Arabia named Habiba.

Habiba was an all-around, classic, insecure bully. She was taller than I am by several inches, thin to the point of being gaunt, and saddled with a long, unpleasant face and the worst teeth I'd ever seen, probably as a result of her meth habit. One of the matrons told me Habiba was the daughter of some minor Saudi official, a very distant cousin to the current Saudi king. No one knew how she'd ended up here, but she obviously thought she was better than the other inmates, and a lot better than Altaf.

Fortunately, Habiba didn't see Altaf often. She lived in another resident group in a pod on the opposite side of the prison. However, as luck would have it, her group shared outside time with mine about once a week. In the informal setting of the yard, the prison tended to only mix groups which lived far apart, to avoid conflicts among closely-housed groups.

About every seven days, I'd seen Habiba walk over from her group of friends, followed by two of her flunkies, equally homely and gaunt but with totally non-feminine, man-like or butch, wiry muscles. Invariably, they'd single out poor Altaf and harass her.

The harassment took a number of forms, all non-verbal, of course. It amazed me how inventive humans can be when they want to be cruel, even when they look enough like their

intended victim to be considered family. That was the situation here because of everyone's hairlessness.

Sometimes they'd just surround Altaf, staring at her with blank expressions. Then they'd begin to laugh. Of course, they couldn't actually laugh because that requires some vocal cord control which no one had. But they could use expressions, and *acting out* like holding their stomach and bending over as though they were busting a gut, and so forth.

If there were no matrons looking, they would often grab Altaf, who couldn't cry out, of course. The goons would hold her while Habiba would get in her face and simply stare or make faces at her, while treating Altaf to a series of obscene gestures. The staring was the worst because it was an undisguised mocking of the sweet, damaged girl, who would try to hold it together, while the tears streamed down her frozen face.

One day I was with Erij, both of us sitting on a concrete bench that was sand-covered, because the sand blew constantly and covered everything in this hell-hole. We couldn't talk, but I knew enough of the makeshift sign language by this time to have a half-assed conversation with her. I was facing a prison entrance and didn't see what was happening behind me. Suddenly, Erij's head shot up and she stood, a look of anger on her face. I turned to see the two butch girls, friends or even triple mates of Habiba, holding Altaf bent-over, while Habiba tried to jam a narrow-necked bottle or something into Altaf's rosebud.

They were about 20 yards away and we both ran over to them. Puffing, I got there first and ran directly into Habiba with my hands in front of me to push her out of the way. My extra 55 pounds were enough to provide all the momentum I needed. She stumbled backwards and fell in the sand. I shook my head at her and gestured no as well. I don't think she'd expected anyone to come to Altaf's aid, and sat there moderately stunned. My adrenaline was pumping through me. I know if she would have gotten up or challenged me, I would have started swinging my plump little fists.

Erij had pulled Altaf away from the two henchmen, and was facing them in a threatening pose. I joined her and we stepped back a few yards with Altaf between us. For a couple minutes, the two triples just glowered at each other. Then a matron strolled up to see what was going on, and the others turned to walk away. Habiba was still glancing back, looking daggers at me. I held 2 fingers to my eyes and then pointed at her, the universal sign for *I'm watching you*. She gave me the forearm, of course, and followed it with a fist punch into her open hand.

I'd made an enemy.

The matron, who'd walked off a short distance, stopped, turned around, and came back to me. "It would be in your best interests, Karimah, to leave Habiba alone."

I couldn't decide if she were warning me about what Habiba might try to do to me, or what the administration might do, if I had another run-in with Habiba.

Ultimately, I decided it didn't matter. I'm the kind of person who not only roots for the underdog, but actively supports them when it's necessary. I would not allow Habiba to torment Altaf anymore.

A few weeks passed and nothing happened. In fact, we didn't encounter that belligerent triple again during that time. I think the matrons were keeping us separated on purpose. Then one day, about a month after my run-in with Habiba, there they were in the yard, sharing a break time with us again. They ignored us; I sort of assumed they'd been severely admonished by the matrons.

By the time Altaf, Erij and I left the yard, that other triple hadn't been anywhere near us. As we walked through the door to the stairway leading up to our quarters, I saw Habiba glance our way, but her face was expressionless.

A week later, I expected to see them in the yard again, but they weren't there at our time. Erij picked up a soccer ball and she and I and Altaf kicked it around. Running with all that

extra weight was hard for me. I guess my muscles hadn't caught up with my weight gain yet. I wanted to make sure I stayed limber though, so exercising was important. It would keep me supple and eventually add strength, but my weight wasn't going to change. I was helpless on that front.

After our yard time, we climbed the steps to our floor, a bit exhausted and definitely sweaty. Erij and I were silently laughing and all three of us were patting each other on the back, congratulating ourselves on a good work-out.

Erij opened the door at the top of the stairwell and she and Altaf stepped through, with me right behind. Before I could get through the door, I saw two mop handles swing through the air, and each one connected with the side of the head of one of my triple sisters. Both Altaf and Erij crumpled to the floor.

I rushed forward, shouting – but of course no sound came out of me. Someone grabbed me from behind and held my arms, pulling them behind me. Then I felt another person helping to hold me as Habiba stepped up to me and slugged me in the stomach. The air whooshed out of me and she hit me again. A moment later, I realized that I couldn't breathe!

I struggled to stand up, but I was bent over from the force of the blows. I felt a fist hit the side of my head, more in a fist-slap than a punch. My ear rang and I got very dizzy. If I didn't get away, I was going to be badly beaten. I was kicked in the groin, which did little because there's mostly no feeling there anyway.

I managed to straighten up a little, just in time for a punch from Habiba that missed my face and landed on my neck. I stomped down hard on the foot of one of the women holding me and felt a grip lessen. I stomped again and that person let me go. I spun around and the other woman lost her grip. I swung and punched her directly in her nose. She went down.

I took a vicious punch to my kidney from Habiba who was behind me. I turned again and pushed her away. That allowed me to bring up a kick to her lower abdomen. I kicked out, not up, and she took it right in her gut, not against her

numb pussy. As she bent, I put all my force – considerable because I'd been a competitive gymnast - into a kick up to her chin and landed a blow that snapped her head back as I heard a crunch, like someone jumping on a bag of pretzels. Habiba flew backward to the floor, out cold. I was positive that I'd shattered her jaw.

I turned to face the woman whose foot I'd stomped on and went after her as she turned to limp away.

The next thing I knew, I was lying immobile on the wet, concrete floor. The matrons had shut me and the others down with their controllers.

I was placed in a wheelchair and carted off to a solitary cell. Once there, I was released from the controller and allowed to move again. I saw four of the five others being taken past me to other solitary cells. Habiba wasn't among them, and I found out later she'd been taken directly to the infirmary. They locked five of us up, and ordered each of us to write down our version of what happened.

I thought I was at something of a disadvantage in that I couldn't write Arabic. I wrote my account of the ambush in English, hoping that they would take the time to translate it. Since Erij and Altaf were sprawled unconscious on the floor when I was fighting, I didn't think their accounts would shed much light on what happened.

As I discovered later, all of us were confined in solitary for a week. They apparently brought Habiba to a cell there at the end of that time, after she was released from the infirmary. It was two days later when each of us was summoned to speak to a panel about the incident. The other four were called individually before Habiba and I were called last.

Someone had apparently translated my account because each of the panel members had the original summary I wrote and an Arabic version side-by-side.

Habiba and her triple sisters had claimed they were mopping the floor when my triple appeared through the door and attacked them. Of course, Erij and Altaf said they'd been bludgeoned by the mop handles as soon as they'd come into

the hall. Habiba's henchmen claimed they hit them in self-defense after being attacked, of course.

They did know that Habiba had been harassing Altaf, and that's probably the one thing that kept the blame from landing solely on us. In the end, they decided both triplets were at fault. I couldn't believe it, and tried to hold up hand-written notes in English to defend us, since I couldn't talk, but they wouldn't bother to translate or try to read them.

The most injured party was Habiba. When I'd kicked her that second time, I thought I'd demolished her jaw. As it turned out, my blow had driven her lower teeth against her upper teeth with impressive force. Because they were already so rotten from her crystal meth habit, her teeth had shattered, essentially absorbing the blow which would have broken her jaw to bits.

They had to remove them all, of course. There was no repairing those wrecked teeth. She was actually a lot better off at that point; as soon as the swelling in her gums went down, she'd get dentures which would be infinitely better than the teeth she'd had. I decided I'd actually done her a favor. Unfortunately, the tribunal didn't see it that way.

I had no opportunity to adequately argue or defend myself to the warden, doctor and matron, who were judge and jury of this event. I was completely mute, of course, and I couldn't write Arabic, even if they'd allowed me time to do it, which they didn't. Their decision could have gone against me completely. In the end, they found Habiba and me equally responsible. I couldn't believe it!

They brought Habiba in with me to hear their decision. She wouldn't look me in the eye. She kept her mouth closed, her full lips tightly pursed, and only looked down. Because she had no teeth, her face appeared to be somewhat pinched, like a toothless old grandma. She had engineered this whole thing, of that I had no doubt. Given a chance, I was willing to beat her half to death. Certainly all the way to disabled. That's how much the unfairness of the situation she'd caused had angered me.

Maybe I'd have that chance later, but not now. They held us both at fault, and then it got much worse. Since Habiba had repeatedly hit me, and I had certainly kicked her, they decided we should both face what they called a "disabling" punishment for a month. The warden wanted to disable both of our arms and both of our legs. The matron said, in essence, that doing that would put a burden on the matrons themselves, because we'd be helpless cripples, and they would have to deal with that.

In the end, the three agreed to disable our bodies from the waist down for three months, since that would affect our ability to fight, and not require our triples, groups or the matrons to take care of us every time we needed to eat. Apparently, they hadn't thought about what that would mean to our ability to control our urination or bowel movements, in addition to not being able to walk. Regardless, that meant both of us would be wheelchair-bound.

I was incensed over that decision, and I would have become violent, except for the fact that they weren't done. There was more punishment, for me in particular.

Over the matron's objection – I think she knew the kind of bully Habiba actually was – the warden invoked the eye-for-an-eye maxim. I understood this when it was stated, but I didn't know what the warden meant by it.

"That isn't necessary here," the matron seemed firm in her belief. "Both have been punished equally in the eyes of the Kingdom."

"But they haven't," the warden stated frankly.

"Meaning what?" The matron asked. I realized that she was my advocate, whether or not I'd seen her in that capacity before.

The warden almost shouted at her. "Meaning that this inmate has no teeth! The other inmate shattered them to pieces!"

"In order to defend herself!" The matron retorted. "Habiba's teeth were rotted from years of using crystal meth!"

“That’s irrelevant. You agreed to hold them equally at fault,” the warden said to the matron. “If this Habiba had torn off the ear of Karimah, wouldn’t you have demanded Habiba’s ear?”

“Habiba’s teeth were garbage anyway!” The matron shouted. “Through no fault of Karimah’s!”

“If Karimah’s ear had been deformed, and Habiba had torn it off, would you not have demanded Habiba’s ear, even if Habiba’s was not deformed?”

“That’s not the same,” the matron pronounced.

“It’s close enough. It is the Sharia way. Do you agree, Dr. Adonay?”

The doctor looked like he simply wanted to get out of there. He answered, “Yes. It’s close enough.”

“Then Karimah’s punishment is self-evident,” the warden said.

“I’ll admit,” said the warden, “that doing this to Karimah will lower her value as an indentured servant. Nevertheless, we need to look beyond that, in the interest of justice.”

I stood up, ready to run, because I knew what the warden was going to say next. A guard stepped up behind me and pushed me back down, onto the chair, holding me down by pressing against my shoulders.

The matron didn’t respond to the warden’s pronouncement, nor to the doctor’s *laissez faire* agreement. I could see in her eyes, that what was transpiring was not what she believed was just. The warden looked at her. She stared back, then she nodded her head in submissive agreement.

“Since Habiba has lost her teeth,” the warden pronounced, Karimah must lose hers. Sentence to be carried out following the lower body paralysis of both defendants.”

HOLD ON! I thought. They were going to take my teeth? Not in a hundred years, I vowed! But I was truly powerless to prevent them from doing what they intended.

Habiba and I sat there while the warden turned away. The doctor and matron stared at us impassively.

The warden turned around, holding a controller remote, and pronounced the official sentence. “Habiba and Karimah, you are both sentenced to below-the-waist paralysis for a period of three months from today.”

A moment later, I lost all feeling below my waist, and all of my ability to move anything from my waist down. Then I saw piss run out of my naked groin as I wet myself, unable to make it stop. I saw Habiba reach down to cup her pussy, and raise her hand back up, wet with her own urine.

A couple minutes later, two matrons arrived with wheelchairs. Suddenly, I couldn't move anything at all and I slumped down in the chair I'd been sitting on during the mockery of a hearing. Apparently they didn't want me to put up any fight while they took me out to ruin my mouth.

I was placed in a wheelchair and wheeled off to the infirmary in a paralyzed panic. They were going to remove all my teeth! My beautiful, straight, white, ideal-American-girl, perfectly-good teeth! I had beautiful teeth; they'd been perfected by orthodontia when I was still young. I had never even had a cavity! These monsters intended to take them out as part of an insane eye-for-an-eye morality – and for a crime that I wasn't guilty of!

I was wheeled into the same place where the matron had injected the controller into my head, and where I had videoed Tuba's impersonation of a new inmate. They reached for me and I was unable to swing my arms or do anything to fend them off. Two male guards lifted my helpless, naked body into an already-horizontal, dentist office-like chair. A matron slid a diaper under me and fastened it in place. She strapped my arms and forehead down to the chair, I suppose to keep me from accidentally falling out of it. I certainly couldn't get up from it by myself. Something was inserted to hold my mouth open. My entire body, from my head to my toes, remained paralyzed and useless. I could feel everything above my waist except my always-numb nipples, but I could feel nothing at all below my waist. Nothing would move except my eyes and

eyelids, and I could only do that with intense concentration. Such was the power of the controller, which was now an integral part of my own brain.

As I half lay there in the dental chair, staring at the ceiling, I realized they'd done something else with my controller, and I could no longer feel anything on my lower face, or within my mouth.

A doctor or dentist, not the same person who co-presided at that mockery of a trial, entered the room, immediately sat on a stool and rolled up to me. He picked up a hypodermic needle from a tray next to him, stating that "This will insure that there is no pain, blocking what your controller is unable to manage."

I couldn't move my head at all of course, and I couldn't close my mouth. I couldn't have moved it even if the spacers had been removed. Since I was already mostly numb, I couldn't feel the needle as the dentist injected me over and over again, a series of little, deadened pokes all around my upper and lower gums.

THEY WERE GOING TO EXTRACT MY PERFECTLY GOOD TEETH! AS SOME KIND OF SICK PUNISHMENT!

I couldn't let this happen! In some ways, it was worse than being imprisoned. They were going to permanently damage my perfectly healthy, plump-but-still-attractive body. They were going to destroy my smile and change my face forever! I was beside myself with panic. I had to do something!

But there was nothing I could do! There was nothing I could do!

After the injections, the dentist told me he would make impressions of my teeth for the dentures they'd have made. He filled a mouthguard-looking thing with some goo and shoved it up against my upper teeth. He held it in place for about a minute, then pulled it off, making a sucking noise when he did it. He repeated the impressions on my bottom teeth.

Later, I was at least glad that I'd still look mostly like me when I got the dentures, made from impressions of my real teeth. At the time he took the impressions though, I was so upset that the only emotions I could recognize were my personal repugnance, outrage and horror at what they were going to do to me.

After the impressions, they fastened my mouth firmly in place with additional straps, to prevent it from moving while the miserable excuse for a dentist worked. I was held firm by straps and controller-induced paralysis. My entire mouth, already totally numbed, was left alone for ten or fifteen minutes. My legs didn't work anymore so I couldn't run or even kick out. I couldn't call out or beg because I had no voice! I was helpless. Drool ran from my immobile lips and down my face. Swallowing was almost impossible, and moving my numb tongue enough to clear my mouth was also out of the question.

In the corner of my eye, I saw the dentist roll a different tray up next to him. It seemed to be loaded with all the most frightening implements of dentistry. Things designed to extract damaged or diseased teeth were going to be used to remove my perfectly healthy ones!

Chapter 12 – Why Don't You Smile Now

The dentist picked up something that looked like a specialized pliers and I felt him tilt the chair and move my head back a little more. Then something entered my mouth. I heard a scrape and realized he'd grasped one of my bottom front teeth. My head, bound in place, didn't move. I felt something being used to loosen a tooth and then a painless tugging in the front of my lower jaw. The pliers jerked slightly upward, the dentist turned, and I heard something hard land in a metal dish.

Oh my God! Oh my God! Oh my God! He'd pulled one of my perfect teeth!

It didn't stop there. Like ninety percent of the other young people I knew, I'd had my wisdom teeth removed some years ago. That had left 28 impeccable teeth in my mouth. There were only 27 now.

With some difficulty I managed to close my eyes. I couldn't look at him while he did this to me. There was another tug on my lower jaw and another clink in the metal dish.

I could feel myself breaking out in a sweat. There was the intermittent tug followed each time by another clink in the dish. My mind was whirling in panic and I was unable to keep count. I felt him work around to the bottom right, then the left. I tried to feel with my tongue, but I could neither move it nor did it have any sensation, being numbed by the controller and the plethora of injections.

Something else was placed in my mouth and I felt a pressure in front and a strong pulling in back. I assumed the dentist was leveraging against my front gums, while he extracted my premolars and molars in the back. I felt the pressure and tugging six times, I think, and then it stopped.

My lower teeth were gone. All my perfectly good lower teeth were now sitting in a metal bowl.

They sopped at my gums and sucked crap out of my mouth, but I kept my eyes closed so I would see none of it. I could feel the perspiration running down my bald head, and some of it got into my eyes in spite of me having them closed. It stung and that additional modest pain was apparently enough to push me over the edge and I began to cry, even though I couldn't move.

One of the nurses or matrons patted me on the shoulder in an attempt to sooth me, I think, but that just made me feel worse and I cried all the harder. I refused to even try to open my eyes. I didn't deserve what they were doing to me in any way! This went far beyond the seven and a half years I was apparently going to be here, and would affect me for all of my remaining life. It was horrifying, humiliating and grossly unfair!

I felt the dentist's hand within my mouth again, apparently positioning some other wedges in the back of my mouth, I thought. It was hard to tell with everything numb. I didn't want to even try to create a mental picture of what they were doing to me, but it appeared in my mind anyway. Though I couldn't feel anything with my tongue, I was sure all my bottom teeth were gone now.

I couldn't even call out to beg them to stop.

Something scraped against an upper front tooth. Oh God no, I pleaded. Dear God, please make them stop. But the tugging started and in a moment. I felt the dentist's hand jerk downward, followed by the clink of my tooth in the metal bowl. Less than a minute later, it happened again.

On and on it continued. Nothing was going to stop what they were doing to me, nothing until all my teeth were extracted. The worst part was at the end, as my head was jerked against its restraints when the dentist sought purchase and leverage to pull the molars in the back.

I had never experienced, nor did I know anyone who had suffered permanent disfigurement and loss of function through

an intentional act. Now I was a victim, and I'd be reminded of it all day, every day.

Over the next half hour or so, the dentist apparently checked each former tooth socket and my gums for remaining nerves that might have been left. I suppose, over the long term, I should have been thankful for that, or I might have suffered chronic pain for years. He might have put in stitches here and there, I'm not sure. When he was done, they had managed to stop the bleeding in my badly wounded gums. They cleaned me up, rinsed me off, and transported my still paralyzed body to a bed in the infirmary for several days of recovery. The bed was raised to help keep me from choking on my own blood, if I started to bleed again. I was injected with something and in moments I was unconscious.

I woke up later. It could have been ten minutes, an hour or a couple of days for all I knew. It turned out to be a couple of days. I was wide awake almost instantly, and I immediately recalled what they'd done to me. I felt within my mouth with my tongue which was no longer numb and immobile. I expected to feel my mouth full of crap, like secretions and cotton and all that stuff. But it felt clean and clear.

I had no teeth. I could feel all along my vacant gums with my tongue. I would have moaned in despair if my voice had worked. As it was, I held my eyes tightly shut as I started to cry. I couldn't stop feeling my gums with my tongue. They didn't feel right, of course, and I worried them incessantly for many minutes, trying to come to grips with my empty mouth.

I finally opened my eyes and was shocked to see Altaf and Erij sitting there next to my bed. I'd been so focused on my mouth that I hadn't realized someone, Altaf, had been holding my hand.

Erij stood and came to the head of the bed and gently ran her hand over my head in sympathy. I was suddenly anxious, realizing that I hadn't shaved it, but it felt so smooth when she touched me that I realized someone had shaved it for me while I was unconscious. Altaf reached up and touched my cheek, turning my head toward her. She let go of my hand and her index fingers moved to either side of her mouth, where she

pushed her lips up at the corners in an attempt at a smile that she could make no other way.

I smiled at her in return. At least, I think I did. I could tell that my mouth was too closed because there were no teeth to keep my gums apart. I imagined I looked like Habiba now – like an old, toothless grandmother. That thought caused the tears to come again. I was wracked with silent sobs.

I couldn't decide how to hold my jaw. I didn't want my face to be all pinched up because I had no teeth, but I didn't want my lips to separate and show what was missing. The natural, life-long, closed-mouth position of my jaw was no longer instinctive or obvious to me and I found myself obsessing over it.

Eventually, my triple sisters managed to distract me with a cigarette. Altaf put one in my mouth and lit it as I sucked on it hungrily. I got a substantial head rush and a more important pussy rush from a couple days of abstinence, but I didn't care. The creamy smoke sliding into my lungs felt wonderful. I felt my groin stir with the tempting but unfulfilled twinges of arousal. I thought it was the best thing that had happened to me since I was taken out of solitary, until I considered that these were the monsters who had made me a smoker in the first place. Then they'd tried to cover my need, my addiction, with the tiny sexual stimulation that they allowed cigarettes to provide to me, without even a dribble of climactic satisfaction. Be that as it may, though, at that moment I was glad for the sense of calm provided by the habit from the shot of nicotine, and the trickle of arousal my controller gave me.

Altaf and Erij stayed, smoking with me. My arms worked again so I was able to smoke on my own. From the waist down, though, I was unfeeling and paralyzed. I'd be that way for weeks and weeks.

I'd be toothless forever. I assumed they'd give me dentures once I healed, but it wouldn't even be close to the same. Cosmetically, I thought it would be better, but I felt ruined and ugly. This had been a huge blow to my self-esteem, and I hadn't even seen myself yet.

With that thought, after I finished that cigarette and another, I tried to sit up more, and swing my dead, lower body over the edge of the bed. I couldn't *swing* it, of course. I tried to move each leg separately and found them to be truly dead weight and difficult to move. Altaf and Erij realized what I was trying to do and helped me. Fortunately, the paralysis hadn't affected my abdominal muscles, so I was able to sit, and not fall over. I was dizzy at first so sat I there for a few minutes and waited for it to pass.

I motioned toward a wheelchair that was parked nearby and Altaf brought it over. Somehow, they managed to get me into it and I wheeled myself into a bathroom. I faced the mirror, my head just above the counter in there, and reached up for the light switch.

I saw my face and it didn't look right. I had tried to hold my gums apart to lessen the pinched look my face would take on if I closed my gums completely together, but my jaw was still more closed that it had been and I looked like a toothless granny. I slowly opened my mouth and immediately saw the devastation they'd wrought on me. I had no teeth, of course. My gums were somewhat swollen, less than I'd expected, and they were their usual pink, not red and inflamed as I'd thought they would be.

I closed my mouth all the way and looked at myself. Yep, I looked like an old grandma, with my lower face all pinched up and my cheeks pushed out because my jaw moved up too far without my teeth to position it properly. It completely destroyed any attractiveness my face might have had.

I kept my lips closed but tried to move my jaw down to where it used to be when my teeth held my mouth properly in position. I was able to do that, but it made my face look puffed out a little, as though I were trying to say "oh," with my mouth closed. The natural position of my mouth – where it went when I didn't think about it – was to be closed too much, pinching my face. Unless I concentrated on keeping my jaws more open, that's the way I'd look now, at least until I got dentures.

I started to cry again and I couldn't stop, even after I turned off the light and wheeled out of there.

Altaf and Erij sat with me for a while, trying to make me feel better. That was both harder because we couldn't talk, and easier because they didn't have to search for something to say, and I didn't have to figure out how to respond. We probably sat there, holding hands, for more than an hour. Eventually, a matron, the one who'd been at least a little kind to me and who had been one of the triumvirate of judges, came into the infirmary and walked up to me.

"How are you doing, Karimah?" She asked me in Arabic, putting her hand on my shoulder. I wanted to shrug it off because I felt she hadn't done enough to help me out, then thought better of it. When I really considered it, there wasn't anything else she could have done. I think the warden had it out for me because I was an American. What happened, or something equivalent to what happened had probably been inevitable.

I looked up at her, tears forming in my eyes again, and I did shrug my shoulders in resignation.

"I know this must seem very cruel, especially because I suspect most all of the fault lies with Habiba. In the eyes of the warden and doctor, though, you injured her more than you were injured. They felt they had to invoke the eye-for-an-eye punishment. Frankly, here at the Control Institution, that's almost always done following a permanent injury, regardless of the circumstances."

I stared at her, sure there was anger in my eyes. "Fuck you," I mouthed in English. I could see that she didn't understand what I was trying to say. Once I'd done it, I regretted it anyway, so I dropped the whole idea.

"In a few weeks, they will fit you for dentures. Your smile and your pretty face will be as good as new," she offered.

I didn't believe it for an instant, but I knew she was only trying to help, so I just sat there doing nothing. She tried to talk to me a few more times, but I didn't have any interest in a

conversation – especially a one-sided conversation like this one.

Finally, she rose, patted me on the shoulder again, and asked if I felt well enough to return to our triple's quarters. I nodded yes. She asked Erij to push me back there, but I pushed her off and moved the wheelchair on my own. It took a while, but we eventually returned to my group's rooms. Every other one of our triple of triples, all six of them, came up to me, giving me a thumbs up and patting me on the back, in obvious admiration of what I'd done to defend my triple.

That was *something*, I suppose, but it sure wasn't enough. Look what the monsters who ran this place had done to me! I'd never be the same again.

A week later we were out in the yard when Habiba's triple appeared, separated from us by about 100 feet. Like me, Habiba was in a wheelchair. One of her flunkies pushed her toward us. Erij jumped up and glowered at the three of them. Altaf stood next to me with her fists clenched.

They got to within about 20 feet of us. Habiba opened her mouth, pointed to her empty gums, then pointed to me and bent over, faking a belly laugh. Erij immediately ran toward them. Before she got within ten feet, a matron came running up from the left, a Billy club in her hand.

"I saw that, Habiba!" The matron shouted in Arabic. Without hesitation she brought the Billy club down on Habiba's right hand, which had been gripping the arm of the wheelchair. Habiba's expression changed from fear to shock to severe pain in the space of a second or two. She silently cried out, gripping her right hand with her left. I thought there was a real possibility that the matron had broken Habiba's hand.

Another matron appeared and, between them, they stared down Habiba's two triple mates, who seemed about to leap at the matrons. I saw a controller come out but they didn't use it. The first matron told them to take Habiba to the infirmary to get her hand checked. She also said their yard privileges were suspended for a month.

I came to find that the matron who had presided over my punishment had passed the word to the other matrons that Habiba was to be watched and immediately handled if she did anything to another inmate, especially to me. It appeared that the presiding matron intended for something closer to true justice to be served. I appreciated the gesture, but it didn't make things better for me, did it? I was still toothless.

Another two weeks passed. I suppose it was a good thing that we were auto-fed prison porridge which required no chewing. Obviously, without teeth, I couldn't bite anything. I had to skip the meager, once-a-week, real food and suck down more gruel instead.

I was finally called to the infirmary where the dentist who had maimed me examined my gums, declared them healed, took impressions, and told me my dentures would be ready in about two more weeks. Two more weeks of my grotesque ugliness for everyone to see.

I wheeled back to my room, looking for either Altaf or Erij to change my diaper. I couldn't feel it, but I could smell the pungent aroma of ammonia and salt that told me I needed to be changed. My triple mates had been graciously doing that for me since I'd been paralyzed. I certainly couldn't do it for myself. They seemed glad to help and never appeared put out about it. They knew I'd been punished because I tried to help them.

Personally, I was ashamed and I couldn't shake the emotion. I was a 25-year-old and I had to wear a diaper and I had no teeth – exactly like a baby. I knew it wasn't my fault, but it's how I was anyway.

To gain a little relief – no, because I was hooked, but for some relief - I lit a cigarette and looked around for one of my triple. If you were in a smoking group like I was, you could smoke as much as you wanted within your rooms or out in the yard. The tiny kernel of "libido memory" they instilled in us required it. That was the best we could do to provide a few seconds of relief from our need for sexual satisfaction, while we were at the mercy of the controllers which were effectively

neutering us, save for the barest hint of arousal they allowed to slip through, or created within our minds.

The prison gave the smokes to us. A matron had told me that cigarettes kept those of us who smoked calmer, though sexually just slightly agitated, and we kept the non-smokers calmer by our presence. Usually. My battle with Habiba was apparently the exception. Habiba's group didn't smoke. I strongly felt that they should have.

I didn't know if that calming influence of smoking were true or not, but I certainly knew I needed the cigarettes. To be honest, I enjoyed them. I hated the habit, but it was about the only thing in the prison that gave you even an iota of pleasure during the day, after the morning's modest boost from shaving and caning.

You couldn't have much in the way of friendly conversations with your acquaintances. If you can't talk and can barely sign, I think it's almost impossible to tell jokes without exhausting pantomime – though you could, at some risk, pull jokes. You can't have sex – well, I suppose you could if you snuck off somewhere, but what would be the point? You couldn't feel anything. Our erotic zones were dead to us. Given that twelve meals out of thirteen were slop, you couldn't enjoy food either. And even though I was compelled to beat my triple mates and be beaten every day, there was only a hint of sexual pleasure in that. For the most part, it only satisfied a need they instilled in us. So what did that leave you? Shaving and plucking yourself - and smoking.

You did get a similar, but better sexual thrill when you shaved your head each morning. It was even better if you found a stray eyebrow to pluck, though it's discovery always made you feel disgusted and dirty. That's how they'd programmed me, and everyone else in there. It was bondage on a totally different level. A far deeper level than chains or ropes or rubber. I was bound inside and out. Now that I'd been plucking for several months, there weren't many stray eyebrows appearing anymore. That's one other thing that I'll never have again, thanks to these bastards. If you pluck

enough, your brows give up and go away forever. Probably 95 percent of my brow hairs had already cashed in their follicles.

So I suppose I was glad that I'd been made a smoker. There was that dribble of sexual need, and a tiny amount of satisfaction, every time you smoked. But it would never go beyond an appetizer, a taunting of sexuality, even if you smoked ten cartons! Exactly half of the groups smoked. Smoking gave me something, at least, to look forward to. An infinitesimal promise. But it was all I had. I don't know how the non-smoking prisoners could stand this place. Maybe they shaved or plucked several times a day to get the programmed thrill. I wondered if that would work.

I looked up at a mirror as I took a puff. I looked awful. Because I had no teeth, when I drew on the cigarette, my face would pinch up because my jaw closed too far. Then I really looked like an old, bald, smoking grandmother. I wheeled away from the mirror, actually sick to my stomach from seeing myself like this.

About the time I realized I was alone in our rooms, Erij walked in with a matron. The matron seemed to be talking informally, so for once, my guard didn't instinctively go up.

"Where's Altaf?" I signed. I knew she wasn't supposed to be working right then.

The cigarette pack was in my hand and I offered one to the matron and Erij; they each took one and lit up.

The matron answered, "She's at the auction. It's the first time she's been eligible."

I was somewhat taken aback. I hadn't thought about it, but I remembered that Altaf had reached the 20 percent point in her sentence about the time of the Habiba trouble. This was the first auction that had been held since she'd completed a fifth of her sentence. They were only conducted about once every two months.

In my opinion, they were slave auctions, though no one called them that. Nevertheless, the prisoner would become the buyer's indentured servant, meaning property, for the

remaining length of the contract. The Kingdom would make money selling the contract, and the owner would be responsible for the prisoner until her time was served, saving the state the cost of housing, feeding and guarding her.

Apparently, the prison somehow advertised that an auction would be held, and then interested citizens of the Kingdom of Salat would gather in a specific set of rooms on the prison grounds and bid on the contracts of eligible prisoners. There was a minimum bid for each woman. I have no idea how the minimum bid was determined, but it seemed to be a combination of the warden's perception of value times the remaining sentence length. If no one met the minimum bid, the prisoner returned, untaken, to her triple.

If the minimum or a higher bid were received, the winning bidder would *own* the prisoner's contract for the remainder of the sentence. I had no idea how the treatment of the prisoner might be regulated, once in the hands of the buyer, or even if it were monitored and regulated at all. What I did know was that most every woman in the place wanted someone to buy out her contract, because everyone wanted out of the Control Institution for Delinquent Women.

Looking up at the matron, I made the sign for Altaf, pointed to my face, and held my hands out in a questioning gesture.

"No, Altaf's face is still the same. I don't think the two matrons who froze her are here today and, besides, they have no intention of restoring her until her sentence is over. The action was filed as a disciplinary one to punish, control, and prevent what they called Altaf's 'disruptive behavior.' So the prison will continue to enforce it, unless her contract is bought out and her new owner requests that she be restored. Frankly, I don't think anyone will buy her. She's pretty enough, I suppose, but she looks so damn morose. It'd be like paying good money for a piece of bleached, desert driftwood."

I thought that was a cruel thing to say, but I could see her point.

I was stinking more and signed to Erij, asking her to change me. She got me down onto a pad, removed my diaper, cleaned me up, put me in a fresh one and got me back into my wheelchair. The matron stood there and watched. I was doubly embarrassed, but I couldn't do anything about it. That was my life, right then.

Altaf returned a while later. Her body language said everything her blank expression couldn't. No one had bid on her. She'd be put up at auction again in two months.

Usually, if a prisoner didn't *sell* within a year of their eligibility, she wasn't allowed to participate anymore. She might still be sold to someone at a private transaction, which was sometimes done for important clients, but usually not. After a year on the block without being sold, the inmate was pretty much destined to serve out her sentence in the Control Institution.

One afternoon slightly more than two weeks later, I returned to the infirmary to get fitted with my dentures. I had totally mixed feelings. I hated the idea of them. On the other hand, I hated how I looked now, with no teeth at all. I'm pretty, or I was. Some would say I was beautiful. I'm not bragging about myself. I didn't do anything to earn it, but I did take good care of this body I was lucky enough to get. Now, however, I was just plain ugly in what they'd made my *natural* state. I needed the dentures to look normal. So I would get them and hope for the best, which probably wouldn't be much in this hell hole.

Please don't hate me for how I look. Don't feel sorry for me either. I don't want to go through life with everyone pitying me. They damaged me out of a perverted sense of justice, obvious to them, but alien to western viewpoints.

I got caught up in that because I defended myself and my triple sisters. I didn't want that to happen, but it did. I tried to help my friends. The system in which I live saw that as a criminal act. Be happy you live where you do. And be happy

for me, because I have teeth again, and, for the most part, they're fine.

Apparently, I arrived a few minutes before the dentist. They put me in the chair, strapped me down, of course, and I lay there waiting.

The room contained the usual dental stuff. There were two, small, unopened shipping boxes on the counter.

The dentist arrived and spent the next five minutes trying to open the two small boxes with an X-Acto knife. Finally, a set of dentures were revealed in each.

“One of these is yours, and the other is Habiba’s,” he told me.

I looked over to my right, and immediately recognized my teeth – as they’d been before they were jerked from my mouth. I pointed to them.

“Thank you, he said. At that point, he took the lower set of dentures out of the box, looked it over, and positioned it over my bottom gums. He gently pushed it into place.

I was startled by the sharp discomfort – no, the very real pain - of an improper fit! He carefully moved the dentures around, trying to find the right position, I assume. After a couple of minutes, it was obvious that these weren't going to fit.

He tried the upper dentures with pretty much the same results.

What the fuck was going on here? I thought. How incompetent were these people? Was I going to live with a mouth in agony for the next almost seven years?

He fiddled with the dentures, looked them over, looked at my mouth and checked my toothless gums. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw him pick up the lower set from the other box. Those were decent-looking teeth, but they sure weren't a stand-in for my beautiful ones.

He had a bewildered look on his face while he examined the other, lower set. After a few more minutes, he tried to set it

in my mouth, over my lower gums.

It easily, comfortably, dropped into place! Those were my dentures!

But they didn't look like my teeth. The ones that looked exactly like my teeth never came close to fitting me.

He set the uppers into place, and they cupped my upper gums smoothly.

Obviously, they had mixed up the teeth. The generic teeth had been merged with my impression, and the models of my perfect, gorgeous teeth, had been fitted to Habiba's impression!

"They mixed them up," he said. "But I've got them straightened away now."

"No you don't!" I wanted to shout, but couldn't. I was mute. I was always mute now. I wanted my own teeth, even if they were bastardized fakes of the perfect teeth I'd had! I tried to tell him that though gestures and a quick grab at his collar with the evident intent to threaten him.

He managed to shake his head in evident apology and concern.

Straightening this out wasn't going to happen. The teeth that had been merged with my impressions were generic teeth, taken from some store of teeth images they had.

Over the next hour, the dentist did the expected fitting, carving, sanding and adjusting. He apparently did a good job because my dentures didn't hurt, rub, or feel uncomfortable, other than for the fact that they were there, AND THEY WEREN'T MY TEETH! So I cried and he worked.

In the end, they were comfortable, and I thought I could probably get used to them. I don't like being a victim; I was trying to avoid that happening here in a meager attempt to look on the bright side. Fortunately, it was working a little.

My new teeth didn't look the same to me because they weren't the same. My real teeth duplicates were there on the dentures that I assumed were targeted for Habiba. I couldn't

tell if my dentures felt strange because I'd never worn dentures before, or if it were because they were shaped differently than my real teeth. The teeth part didn't look or feel like my teeth used to, and of course, there was the plastic over my own, somewhat shrunken gums. To my tongue, resting against both, my mouth felt foreign to me.

Eventually, the dentist announced that he was done. He took the dentures out of my mouth, squeezed some adhesive into the lower set, and handed it to me. He told me to note the amount of adhesive, then told me to position it in my mouth and push down to set it in place. I did, gagging a little.

Next, he handed me the uppers and the tube of adhesive, telling me to apply it. I did, he checked, pronounced it okay and told me to push them up into position. I managed without gagging that time. He told me to bite down repeatedly. I obeyed and heard the clicking of the teeth. I couldn't tell if my bite was right or not, but he seemed to think it was. He handed me a mirror to see the result.

I was astonished to see how much better I looked! I had considered myself so ugly that the difference exceeded what I believed was going to be possible. I can't have my own teeth again, nor can I ever forgive the denizens of this place who did this to me. Nevertheless, the dentures were fantastic, probably because their absence was so awful. I was pretty again.

Don't get me wrong, they didn't look like my teeth. Apparently, whoever made them had mixed up my impressions with Habiba's, and put my teeth onto her gum impressions. What they used for a model of my teeth was what I could only call *generic teeth*. Added to the strangeness of my new teeth, I seemed to have a slight overbite which I certainly didn't have before. The upper teeth protruded forward more than my own had done, and were definitely shaped differently than my originals. Overall, both the upper and lower dentures seemed to fill more of my mouth than my old teeth had, as though they went back in my mouth far enough to cover half of where my long-missing wisdom teeth used to be.

However, they were every bit as white as my real teeth had been. Yes, Tia and I had gone together to get our teeth

cosmetically bleached by my real, state-of-the-art, talented dentist in River's Edge. My natural teeth had been gorgeous.

Were these new teeth gorgeous? At that moment, I honestly thought they were close to gorgeous. I was happier than I'd expected to be. A lot happier. But I was far from satisfied.

Via sign language and pantomime, I tried to ask the dentist if he could get the teeth mix-up corrected.

"The Control Institution only provides this service once. They wouldn't accommodate any attempt to have the teeth remade. I'm sorry, Karimah, I have no way to get this corrected."

Did that mean my nemesis, the hated Habiba, was going to be wearing MY teeth? The teeth that matched my own? That thought was too much for my mind to handle at that moment. Luckily, it slid away before I could focus any attention on it.

I certainly looked more like the old me than I did without the dentures, but I didn't look quite the same. The teeth were slightly different and the increased overbite changed my mouth, my smile, and my expressions somewhat. I realized that with the mix-up in the impressions taken of my old teeth before they extracted them, there was no way to match my new dentures to the molds of my own, lovely teeth. I was going to be like this: pretty again, but somewhat different.

I'm sure the angst about my teeth was an American thing. That said, I was an American, right? I just wanted to be me – as I'd always been. I wasn't interested in any more changes.

My desires were irrelevant. Everything about this place changed me, at least a little.

When I viewed my situation dispassionately, I knew that I looked so much better! Not quite like before, but good – a lot better than I expected.

The dentist looked at me looking at myself. I had a frown of concentration on my face. I was judging how I would look now. I had expected to be disappointed, angry, and wanting

further revenge for what was done to me. In reality, instead of a frown of immeasurable dissatisfaction etched onto my face, I was surprisingly, unexpectedly happy with how I looked. I realized I was about to cry with relief, but I didn't want to do it in front of the asshole who had taken my teeth in the first place.

“Why don't you smile now?” He suggested, trying to be friendly and encouraging.

I just looked at him, my eyes filling with tears, thinking for a moment that I wanted to grab his neck and choke the life out of him for pulling my teeth. Then, of course, being the understanding, forgiving soul that I am, I knew that he only followed orders, offered no malice, and did the best for me that he could have done in getting me dentures that were beyond my expectation.

It wasn't his fault that some idiot Arab had mixed up my impressions with Habiba's.

No, I'd not ever have my own teeth again, but he had made me pretty again, and done everything for me that he could.

The dentist helped me out of the chair and back into my wheelchair. I managed to hold it in until I wheeled out of the infirmary, then I cried all the way back to my triple. Deep, soul-wrenching, anguished sobs. Surprisingly, they were equally for my lovely lost teeth, and for the relief I felt at having been made at least a little pretty again.

Chapter 13 – Come Softly to Me

I wore my new dentures for the rest of the day without any problem; that surprised me. Every woman in my group stopped by and gave me a thumbs up on how I looked. I knew I looked significantly better and appreciated their acknowledging it. I was trying to get past feeling cheated from having my lovely teeth taken from me so cruelly, and replaced with these *generic* ones. I knew I could never get my own teeth back, that I needed to move on, and I was trying hard to do that. At least it was no longer eating me alive.

The dentist had told me not to wear my dentures to bed. He said my gums needed to rest and recover every day. That night, I took them out, scrubbed them off and put them in the container of cleaning solution. Then I went to bed looking like a toothless, bald grandma again. Like I would every night. Forever. I could almost hear Tia saying to me, “Suck it up, that’s no big deal. You’ll be fine.” So that’s what I did.

My daily routine was barely affected. When mornings came I awaited my turn in the bathroom. When Altaf finished at the sink, I went in and shaved my head, getting the usual unsatisfied titillation from doing it, thanks to my controller. I rarely found stray brows anymore because by now, after months of daily plucking, they were all but entirely gone, never to reappear again. I stepped into the shower to wash and shave the rest of myself, meaning any faint hairs that might have resisted my teenaged laser treatment.

After my shower and drying off, I took my lower dentures out of the cleaner, rinsed them off, applied adhesive and pushed them easily, comfortably into place over my lower gums. I did the same with my uppers. I opened and tightly closed my mouth several time to seat them completely. Now I had teeth again. I was both glad and unexpectedly satisfied each time. That was in spite of the minor change to my face brought on by the slight overbite the top dentures exhibited, which my own, perfect teeth never had.

As the days passed, I continued to believe that the dentures looked decent, maybe better than when I first got them because they weren't so foreign anymore. I managed to avoid obsessing about what this place had done to me. I'd forced myself to stop that hopeless exercise, determined to adjust to the way I was and, as much as possible, forget the way I'd been or, at least, put it aside. The constant regret would have killed me and could have destroyed my spirit and self-confidence over the long term. I realized this wasn't the worst thing that could happen to me. That said, once in a while I would start to think that it didn't have to be this way! They hadn't needed to do this to me!

Enough, Karimah, I'd tell myself. You look fine. It's a little different than it was, but you don't look ugly with your dentures in. The new teeth are fine, and the overbite is no big deal.

I had needed to move on and I did. I struggled and mostly accepted myself as I was.

Until, about six weeks later.

The despair I had pushed far into the background came roaring forward one afternoon as I rolled my wheelchair into the outside yard through an open door, and came face-to-face with Habiba. Alone.

Suddenly, there she was in her wheelchair, about six feet in front of me, heading to the door from which I'd just emerged.

We both stopped and stared at each other. She had a look of expectant fear on her face. Her eyes flipped back and forth, I thought in a frantic attempt to see if there were any one nearby who would provide her support. She wheeled forward a foot or so, and I repositioned my chair to block her – an intentional, aggressive move. Her expression of fear instantly became more evident.

I actually pushed myself up by my arms, as though I were about to launch my disabled body right at her, using my upper body strength alone. She immediately waved her hands back and forth and shook her head “no,” in an attempt to stop me. I

remained perched off my seat, my arms straining to keep the dead half of me off my chair.

Habiba held her hands in the prayer, or begging position, still shaking her head. She seemed to believe that I was really going to attack her, and that I would take her. I remember thinking that was quite perceptive, because I thought that was exactly what was going to happen.

She begged with her hands and eyes and body language. I was now a couple feet above my seat, my arms straining to support me. A bare moment later, Habiba started to cry! Right there!

Slowly, uncertainly she formed a fist with her right hand, with her thumb extended upward. She put her fist against her chest and rotated it clockwise.

I knew almost no American Sign Language, but I knew that gesture. It meant “regret” or “I’m sorry.”

I just stared at her, still off my seat. I suspect pure hatred distorted my face. I was biting down on my dentures so hard it hurt. I managed to push up a little more, threatening her as much as a paraplegic can.

She continued to shake her head “no” and gesture “I’m sorry.” We were at an impasse for several minutes. No one noticed us, as far as I could tell.

Finally, she must have decided I wasn’t going to attack her. Perhaps my expression had relaxed a little. She looked at me meekly, and attempted a weak smile, which grew as I settled back a little, about to return to my chair. My arms were aching in pain. Try holding yourself up by the arms of a chair with no use of your lower body sometime.

There was Habiba at that point, smiling at me. Then her smile got bigger and I could see her teeth and a sense of relief on her face. I was mesmerized by her teeth and immediately recognized them AS MY TEETH! In the mouth of my hated nemesis!

They were images, models, duplicates of my perfect teeth, set in artificial, plastic gums, and in the mouth of my

enemy! The woman who had caused me to lose them by her own bullying and dishonesty was wearing my smile as though it were hers! When Habiba opened her mouth, it displayed the teeth that belonged to me! They had taken a part of me and given it to my hated rival to own, to her beauty and my detriment! And she had accepted my smile as her own!

My mind immediately went ballistic. The miserable bitch had stolen my smile! Then I was overwhelmed by outrage, horror, and the nausea that accompanied them. I looked in disgust at Habiba and instantly threw up all over her. I sprayed her from her face down to her lap.

The shock on her face was one of the greatest things I've ever seen. Strangely, she continued the sign language "I'm sorry" as she wheeled away. She didn't even attempt to wipe the slime off herself. I prepared to swing at her, but held it back as she passed by.

But the abomination of her revolting smile, with my own teeth, has stuck with me to the present day. Someday, perhaps many years from now, I will hunt her down, and I will end her miserable life without mercy.

My new morning and evening routine continued, pretty much as it always would, after my encounter with Habiba. About two weeks later, they reversed my paralysis, and I could control my peeing and pooping again. I could barely stand up for even a few seconds though, and I couldn't walk at all. My muscles had atrophied during my paralysis. I had noticed that my legs seemed slimmer and less shapely, in spite of my overall plump shape. The ninety days of inactivity had taken a heavy toll on my legs, which had lost more than half their strength and about 35 percent of their muscle mass. Yep ... it happened that quickly. As a result, I had physical therapy every day for a month, and every other day after that. After about four weeks, I could get around with a walker. About a week later, as far as I could tell, I turned 26. Happy Birthday to me. I was a plump, still-crippled, bald, toothless 26-year-old convict who was sexually frigid.

It took a couple more months before my legs could support me for long periods. Even many months later, though they had completely regained their shape, the muscle tone was still lagging.

I didn't deserve any of what they did to me, but I was dealing with it.

Once I was no longer paralyzed and had recovered some mobility, about a month after my birthday, I decided to fuck Erij and Altaf. I'd been at the Control Institution for Delinquent Women for over ten months. Cigarettes weren't enough anymore. They never had been, even though I was essentially chain-smoking sometimes. I was going stark-raving loony with boredom. I needed an orgasm. I needed intimacy. I needed something other than the shit they fed us. I needed my old mouth back. I needed my old life back. I needed the things I'd worked so hard for. I ... I ... I ...

I needed Tia, who seemed to have abandoned me. Of course, she probably was never actually there in the first place.

With no Tia, I needed Dyana. I really, really needed Dyana. I would kill for Dyana.

I wondered how she was.

In my vacant, unstimulated mind, she became the focus of my need.

I wondered why she hadn't come for me. I wondered why no one had come for me. I was an American citizen, after all. That carried some weight, didn't it?

I felt that all the world had forgotten about me. Where were my colleagues, my friends, my family, representatives of my government?

The fact that I was stranded here led me to believe that I'd been either forgotten or passed over as too much trouble. As a result, I struggled daily, but cried myself to sleep most every night.

In order to shift my thoughts elsewhere, I was going to fuck the other ladies in my triple.

I took stock of my erogenous zones. Let's see ... There were ... uh ... my earlobes. Yeah, that was one. And my ... hmm ... my inner thighs. Sort of. Then there was my ... my ... my ... yeah! There was my butt hole! I thought about it some more. My lips were pretty good too. I could certainly appreciate a tongue in my mouth. I thought some more. Of course! For whatever reason, I had sensitive, erotic upper arms! I don't know why, but that had always been a turn-on spot for me. I had my whole, soft, warm body. It was even softer now that I was chubby. I'd use it as best I could. Altaf and Erij were as fat as I was. We could at least finger or tongue fuck our assholes. We could feel our curves and softness against each other.

I convinced myself this might work. Then I set about trying to convince my triple mates. As it turned out, persuading them that this would be worth trying took no effort. Altaf was enamored with me for protecting her and Erij was a lesbian anyway, which was why she'd been imprisoned and forever deprived of sensitivity in her erotic zones.

And therein lay the problem. Neither wanted to risk a longer prison term, and Altaf didn't want to gamble with her long-term sensitivity. Frankly, I didn't either, but I was becoming desperate. When I thought about it seriously, though, I was afraid. A conviction for lesbianism in this miserable kingdom would result in lifelong disabling of our erogenous zones, which had already happened to Erij. As I considered a way to pull it off, I knew we'd have to be extremely careful. That said, I was willing to take some chance. I was so incredibly horny!

I spent the next couple weeks trying to figure a way to be private with Altaf and Erij. Our bedroom was out; there was no door and there was a camera. I had no idea how often they checked the video feed, or when that would happen. All of the other rooms within my group's suite were also randomly monitored. We weren't allowed to leave the suite after lights-out.

In the end, it was Altaf who, knowing what I wanted to do, and being just as determined as I was, found a place we could use for a couple of hours in the afternoon. It was a place she'd noticed during her session in the auction house that week. Though we'd have to wait a couple of months, it seemed like it would work. As a result, my triple volunteered to do the next after-auction cleanup, a job hated by everyone so much that the prison actually offered a reward for any triplet that volunteered to clean up the mess in the auditorium where the auction was held, along with the usually disgusting sexual detritus left in the *private rooms* by buyers *trying out* potential indentured servants.

The reward wasn't much but it was something that would cover our clandestine interest in being in the place together. The reward was dinner with the matrons, which meant real, decent food. As my triple was *gideen*, chubbies, it was an easy sell to the head of housekeeping.

Two months later, Altaf wasn't bought, and so the three of us set out to clean the auction complex as rapidly as possible, and steal time together in one of the unmonitored private rooms. Three weeks earlier, I'd passed my first year in prison.

Altaf knew that, as a team, we'd be working alone. There was no need for anyone else to be there. We couldn't run off, and if we didn't work hard enough and well enough the final inspection would show it, and we wouldn't get our dinner reward, we'd likely be punished, and we'd have to finish cleaning it anyway. We had all day; the inspection would happen sometime in the mid to late afternoon, once one of us told the head of housekeeping to come and approve the work.

We worked our plump little butts off and finished in early afternoon. My legs weren't yet up to snuff, and they were killing me by then. I didn't care. I just wanted sex with my triple mates.

We'd been all alone since we arrived immediately after our morning toilet, gruel breakfast, and caning. We entered the largest private room, a windowless rectangle, which contained something akin to a double bed. Most importantly, we'd gone

over it carefully when we cleaned it, and there were no cameras or other sensors hidden anywhere in the gray, concrete-block walls, the slab floor, or the cheaply-plastered ceiling. We locked the door behind us. We positioned our cleaning equipment in front of the door. If someone tried to enter, we'd jump up and grab the cleaning stuff as though we were finishing.

I wasn't very worried, only anxious enough that it added some spice to our coming intimacy. We knew this would probably be a one-time thing, or at least it wouldn't happen again for many months. If we volunteered again too soon, we'd raise suspicions, even with the reward. It was hard, disgustingly dirty work.

We'd left the sheets on the bed; we'd change them to clean ones after we finished. As soon as everything was in position and the door locked, we began. We each smoked several cigarettes to get the itchy-bitsy arousal they provided. Then we snuggled under the sheets and really got to work.

We were sweaty and dirty from cleaning and that made no difference at all. We smelled like ... us ... not like Karimah and Erij and Altaf individually, but we all smelled alike.

Erij and I sandwiched Altaf between us, with Erij spooning her from behind. For a while, we just lay there, soaking in the first intimate time we'd ever shared. Altaf was a little shorter than I. Laying on her side facing me, she put her arms up around my neck, closed her eyes, tilted her face up and we kissed each other at the same moment. Her lips were the softest I'd ever felt, quite probably because she could do little to move them, given the disabling of her facial muscles. Our mouths opened and our tongues intertwined.

At Altaf's request, I'd left my dentures in their cleaning box. I didn't mind; anyone who'd see me would have seen me toothless before. Besides, I was hoping for a lot of kissing and tongue action, and I didn't want the sensitive parts of my mouth covered by plastic. So I had my first toothless kiss. It was probably Altaf's first facial-movement-inhibited kiss too.

I felt her tongue slide along my gums and probe everywhere within my mouth. When you're sexless, like we all were, any area of sensitivity becomes even more important. Therefore, there was a lot of kissing that afternoon.

We couldn't make any sounds. There was no moaning or whispering of endearments, or calls for sex acts. With Altaf, there was no way for me to gauge how well this was working for her, because she couldn't even express it with her face. She did push tighter against me when she particularly liked whatever was happening.

Her left arm let go of my neck and slid down to my pussy. That area was numb, meaning not only unable to feel arousal, but it couldn't feel anything. Her fingers went into my pussy, which was apparently wet from my mental arousal of kissing her. I could just barely feel some movement of her fingers within me, but, nothing else.

I moved a hand down to hers, thinking maybe she could feel more than I. She couldn't. She shrugged her shoulders and turned me around. As I rolled over, I noticed that Erij had her hand down by Altaf's rosebud. Altaf reached down to my anus with her still-wet fingers and began to play with my rosebud, pushing a short-nailed fingertip into me a little as she circled the opening.

Oh! I could feel that! I wiggled back against her hand to encourage her. I tried to moan with pleasure but, thanks to my controller, there was no connection between my brain and my vocal chords anymore, so all I could do was sort of whoosh. The combination of my meager noise and my pushing back against Altaf's hand must have encouraged her though, and she began to probe me with greater confidence and increased attention. Based on the way she was wiggling, Erij must have been working diligently on her.

I was horny and getting hornier. Anal isn't my favorite sex play, but it generated the most sensation for me under the circumstances and that was something. For some reason, to me there was always an aura of masochism associated with anal. That actually helped arouse me mentally, as I tried to put myself into a state of mind that would compensate for what I

couldn't feel in my preferred arousal areas, my nipples and my pussy. To further the feeling, I tried massaging my breasts, squeezing, rubbing and pushing on them. My nipples were as numb as my pussy and I ignored them, concentrating on the orbs themselves, which had grown as I gained weight. They'd gotten heavy and weren't as perky as they'd been when I arrived at the prison in my buff, slender body. I'd seen that in the mirror, of course, but I don't think what the Control Institution's fattening me up had done to my boobies hit home until I played with them there.

I discovered that feeling myself up added to my arousal. I now had a couple decent-size, heavy knockers there and that struck me as hot and arousing. I didn't want to be plump, of course, but in the heat of the moment, with my modest flame of masochism burning a little brighter, it was a turn-on, and I needed everything I could get. Altaf was working my rosebud like a pro and for a while there, I thought there was some chance that I might cum from her penetration of my butt. I kept going higher, slowly, but continuously.

I never considered myself to be into sexual gratification from being controlled or abused, but I was feeling it now. Maybe everything they had done to me had fanned my originally sputtering masochistic fire into something that was henceforth going to burn brightly in me. It was a fleeting thought. Time would tell, but it was certainly helping some right then. Thinking about what this place had done to me from an erotic, masochistic, fetish angle was actually turning me on!

I moved my hands under my own arms. My inside, upper-arm area was a noticeable erogenous zone under normal – make that previous – circumstances, but now it assumed a greater importance. As I did that, I felt Altaf's other hand reach under me to grab my left tit. She squeezed it, drew delicious figure eights on it with a light touch, then she squeezed it again. The woman was trying everything and she was surprisingly effective.

This went on for a long time. I was turned on in mind and body. I definitely responded to Altaf's ministrations – up to a

point. Eventually I plateaued, and stayed there, but couldn't climb higher. A climax wasn't going to happen. In some ways, it was like Dyana all over again, but it was I, Karimah, who couldn't climax.

It seemed that the Middle East and East Africa were determined to conspire against women in the most invasive of ways. I was sure it was a direct result of these patriarchal societies, whose values were firmly rooted in the seventh century.

The realization that we weren't going to climax hit all three of us at about the same time. Without anything other than the communication through our physical contact, we all rolled over so that I was facing Altaf's back and she was facing Erij's. Our playing began anew, with me determined to do whatever I could for Altaf's pleasure.

An hour later, we were exhausted and a little sore, horny as hell and orgasmically unsatisfied. We hugged and kissed each other for a few minutes, then got up, finished the room, and returned to our suite. The lack of climax weighed heavily on our collective state of mind, but it far more poignantly affected Erij.

At some point, Altaf and I would be restored to full sexuality. That would never happen to Erij. Her conviction and subsequent punishment for lesbianism had forever robbed her of the ability to be a sexual being.

Dinner with the matrons was a surprisingly pleasant affair and the food was good. I forgot for a little while what this place had done to my mind and my body and ate until I thought I would explode. One of the matrons even asked if I were trying out for the *zenay vizhiden* (morbidly obese) group. I smiled and shrugged my shoulders, while stuffing my mouth with another piece of *injera*, the local flatbread, which I'd just dipped into my third bowl of a spicy, savory *tsebhi*, the Eritrean stew.

At that point, I didn't care what they did to me. Karimah wasn't a person at all; she was nothing more than an unfeeling lump of clay. She was a synthetic person made by the milieu

that had been created by the Control Institution for Delinquent Women.

The days settled again into a monotonous boredom. Given the lack of true sexual stimulation and climax from our attempt at lovemaking, I didn't approach Altaf and Erij about it a second time. I found myself almost yearning for some tension with Habiba to provide a little excitement. Then, of course, I'd remember what had happened to me as a result of her bullying. I had no interest in further punishment, but I would have killed her without a moment's hesitation, had the opportunity to do it secretly arisen, and had my controller allowed it.

Such was the hatred I felt for her, and what she'd deceived the prison into doing to me. Perhaps, most of all, I hated her because she now had my smile!

Habiba did, of course, look much better now that she had my teeth from her new dentures, totally obtained courtesy of yours truly. I actually think she realized this. Occasionally, she'd appear in the yard with her triple when we were there. She mostly ignored us. I think I'd really frightened her, and probably disgusted her, when I confronted her and then tossed my cookies all over her by the door.

Once though, when we caught each other's eye, she actually acknowledged me with a slight wave of her hand in a shy, almost friendly gesture. I turned away without doing anything; I'd never forgive her for what they'd done to me as a result of her tormenting us. I'd live forever without teeth of my own because of her, and I'd do it while she wore mine! I truly thought I could kill her if the right situation ever developed. No ... I knew I could kill her.

I was thinking about Habiba's little gesture of acknowledgement as I lay in bed that night, poised on that boundary between awake and asleep. The anger and disgust I directed at Habiba was keeping my adrenaline levels up and preventing sleep. It was in those moments that I sensed Tia's

presence, for the first time since my fight with Habiba and subsequent punishment.

I couldn't see her, though I did open my eyes to look, but the feeling that she was right there with me was gripping. I wanted to call out her name – I'm certain that I tried – but, of course, I couldn't speak and hadn't said a word or made a vocal noise for a very long time. I tried to communicate with her in my mind, saying her name, asking if she were actually there with me.

The response, when it came a minute or two later, was like the faintest of whispers. "It's not like you to hate. What have they done to my Destiny?"

"You lost your destiny when you were killed, my love," I said to her, "and it was my fault that it happened."

"You don't remember," she whispered again. "They've even taken your identity from you. You were Destiny Michele Hutton. This place invented Karimah. They extracted the contents of your mind, warped them, and created Karimah, more or less in your image."

And then I remembered my name, the name I had growing up. I had been *Destiny Michelle Hutton*.

"What else have you forgotten; do you even know?" Tia asked me sorrowfully. "What do you remember of River's Edge?"

"I remember you. I remember a long friendship. I remember hanging out with you hundreds of times. I remember sex with you, but for a time too short. Far, far too short. I remember when you were killed."

"Did you have a family, Destiny? Karimah?"

"Of course I had a family."

"What do you remember of your family?"

"I ... I ... I ... I had a mother and a father, didn't I?" I realized I wasn't at all sure. I couldn't see their faces, any more than I could when I'd written the note for my ill-fated,

hot air balloon. I had remembered their phone number, though. That meant they had existed, right?

“What about siblings?”

I had no idea. Did I have brothers and sisters? I couldn't picture any. What had happened to my memory? I could see the things that I'd done with Tia – lots of things – but I struggled to find a single memory of my life in River's Edge when Tia wasn't present.

“I don't know, Tia! Did I have a family? I can only remember you, and things you and I did together! I don't remember anything else.”

“You had a mother and a father but you were an only child. Do you remember the first time you had sex with a guy? In the back of his parents' SUV?”

I thought I remembered having sex for the first time, and being scared of getting pregnant. I remembered that he was someone that I sort of liked but not very much. I thought I remembered him kind of fumbling around, not really knowing what he was doing. But I couldn't have told you his name or where we did it, and I couldn't have remembered him if Tia hadn't said something about it first.

“I remember a little, now that you've mentioned it.”

“Where did you live before River's Edge?” The dream-like Tia asked me.

“Europe: Belgium, Germany and the UK.”

“What do you remember of those places?”

I couldn't remember a single thing. “Nothing at all,” I admitted.

“What about college and grad school?”

“I'm an archeologist. I'm sure you knew that. You first appeared to me during that time.”

“Who gave you the shrooms? Whose room were you in when that happened?”

I couldn't remember. All I could remember of that event was seeing Tia for the first time since her death. Then Tia helped me again.

“Your best friend in college, the one whom you were visiting when Waki gave you the shrooms, was Mimi Eversole.”

And then I remembered more of college. Not a big percentage more, but some more. Somehow, they had locked much of my past from me when they changed me into Karimah. I hadn't simply lost my name; I had lost much of my own history.

I hadn't even realized it until that moment.

I suppose not being able to have a conversation with anyone contributed to not knowing what I'd lost, after whatever they'd done to my mind. No inmate could ask for and expect me to relate my biography, and no matron ever asked. So I'd had little reason to recall my own past, save for a little contact information for my balloon.

I still had no way to tell what else I'd lost. Such was my confused state, which had resulted from their tampering with my brain. Thanks to Tia, whom I thought wasn't actually real, I'd recovered part of an identity before Dyana, which I had lost from the conditioning imposed on me by my controller.

If Tia were not real, did that mean there was some piece of my own, former mind that had hidden itself away to watch over me? A mind segment waiting for the right moment to start to reassemble me?

I decided to ask Tia a question: one that I, as an individual existing in the real world, would be unable to answer, to see what Tia would say. I hoped her response wouldn't be ambiguous, but would tell me if she were a manifestation of my mind, or a real person somehow existing in the afterlife. “Why haven't my parents managed to get me out of here? Or at least contacted me?”

Tia's answer was tinged with the impatience of someone who knows the answer, but is too polite to castigate the asker.

“They are looking in the wrong place, Destiny. Quite by accident, your trail led everyone elsewhere. They have no information that says you are alive and imprisoned in the Kingdom of Salat. I’m so very, very sorry, but you are lost, Destiny; you are lost to me, and you are lost to your family and friends.”

I felt Tia slip away, still uncertain if she had ever been there, but with a handful of cherished memory nuggets restored to me, assuming that my own mind hadn’t dreamt it all up. Maybe I never had been Destiny Michelle Hutton. I was sure that was the name the matron had threatened me with knowing, when I first arrived here. It was right after I’d been altered by the control device, and the first moment I actually remember saying I was Karimah. I was terribly frightened at that moment, so maybe that’s why Destiny’s name had stuck with me.

I thought about the times growing up that I remembered. When I was with Tia, I imagined her calling me Karimah, not Destiny. I’m pretty sure I do now remember my college BFF, Mimi Eversole, but I remember her calling me Karimah too.

I have a mental image of Tia, and now Mimi and even Waki, who was of Native American descent. I still can’t picture my parents, and that greatly troubles me. I can’t picture Destiny at all. When I try to picture myself before I was brought here, all I can see is this plump, toothless, naked bald girl. I know that I had blonde hair and I was trim with modest boobies, but I can’t form that mental picture of myself, though I know I was that way then.

Perhaps both the phantom Tia and the person called Destiny are creations or aberrations in my own, damaged mind. I’m certain that Tia was real, but it’s hard to believe that she’s real anymore. Destiny may never have been real at all, just a name made up by the matron to test me, a name that became attached to some ragged brain cells that had been disrupted by the control device. How would I ever know, if I weren’t finally rescued?

The days turned into nights and then into days, on an on, over and over. To break up the tiresome uneventfulness, I tried playing little pranks on my triple mates or others in my triple of triples. I came to be known as something of a practical joker. My victims genuinely seemed to appreciate the little disruptions in the routine: a short-sheeted bed, a missing gruel tube, a soccer ball full of water and any other stupid thing I could come up with.

One of my best involved the sacrifice of a dozen eyelashes each from myself, Altaf, and Erij. I also managed to get a little help and some superglue from a matron. Late one night, with the matron using a controller to insure that the target triple didn't awaken, I carefully glued 12 or so eyelashes along the brow line of each person in the triple. Remember, plucking eyebrows is an unavoidable impulse we each were given. Finding one is akin to finding a nasty bug crawling on your face. The controller makes you feel immediately grossed out. However, when you manage to pluck the errant hair out, you get something very like a sexual thrill.

In the morning, our three victims awakened to discover that they had magically grown a horde of stray eyebrows, and immediately went bonkers! We were waiting and saw them point at each other and gesture and literally run around in circles, swiping at their foreheads as though they were trying to dislodge a face full of creepy-crawlers! All six of the other members of the group stood there, each of us silently laughing our ass off. We were joined by three matrons, and they weren't silent at all; I was sure their belly laughs could be heard throughout the prison.

The senior member of the triple finally made it into the bathroom and began to frantically pull at the glued-on eyelashes, which she was certain were stray brows that had mysteriously erupted in the night. I had only glued them at one end so she was mostly able to pull them off, apparently experiencing a sexual charge every time she did it, as I had hoped. By the time she emerged from the bathroom, she was grabbing at her numb pussy, obviously somewhere just short of a thundering orgasm.

She fell to the floor and rolled around, completely out of control. Meanwhile, the second member of the triple had rushed in to tweeze her eyebrows.

The matrons completely lost it in a display of hysterical laughter the likes of which I'd never seen. When the second woman stumbled out, also close to orgasm and also falling to the floor in awesome need, one matron had wet her pants, and the two others were crying from laughing so hard.

The third girl had been shaking with disgust at the hairs on her brows while she waited to get into the little bathroom and pluck them off. Afterward, she joined her triple sisters on the floor, writhing in sexual need as the first one began to calm down.

It might have been a cruel joke, but it was a joke nonetheless. I didn't feel bad, I felt happy and satisfied to have broken up the dullness of the place for a little while. When I found I'd scored some points with the matrons, however, I didn't feel so happy about what I'd done. If they thought it was so great, I must have stepped over a boundary I shouldn't have crossed. At that realization, I felt more like a traitor than an entertainer.

Fortunately, those triple sisters didn't seem to hold it against me. Later that day, I saw them acting out what had happened and silently laughing about it. They saw me and waved good-naturedly, to which I waved back and mouthed, "I'm sorry," in Arabic. They all flashed me the universal *okay* sign.

The prisoner's workload was surprisingly light, so I was able to spend a lot of time outside. I eventually got used to the hot, desert sun on my naked body. Despite being a dark blonde, I managed to get pretty tan, and was almost as dark as Altaf, who tended to avoid the sun.

You might picture the place as a medieval slave-labor camp, but it actually wasn't like that at all. They didn't treat us very well, and punishments were swift and severe if anything went wrong. Without a doubt, we were subject to control 24/7.

After all, they built that control into our bodies and our minds. However, when things were quiet, you could tolerate the place, if the boredom itself didn't drive you crazy. Of course, our controllers would try to prevent us from going crazy or, at least, do anything crazy like attempt suicide, even if we went around the bend.

I saw that happen to a woman out in the yard one afternoon, about a month after my mostly-unsatisfying tryst with Altaf and Erij. It was a month or so after the woman's first auction appearance. I think she'd expected to be bought and, thereby, escape from this controlled, restrained, monotonous hell. She was bitterly disappointed when that didn't happen. All of us were just sitting around, looking at the other inmates in the yard. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a rapid motion by this very skinny young girl, clearly a *hazil*, or a gaunt inmate, who was probably about nineteen. She jumped up off a picnic-like table where she'd been sitting with her head in her hands, and proceeded to run around the yard, right up against the fence and the buildings bordering the yard, waving her hands in the air and making strange faces at no one in particular.

The three matrons in the yard at the time stood there and watched her for several minutes. Finally, they noticed her actually foaming at the mouth from her uncontrolled exertion in the stifling heat. A matron near me pulled out her controller, fiddled with it for a moment, then looked up while pushing the dreaded activate button. The girl instantly collapsed to the ground, sliding across the scrubby sand on her face and the front of her naked torso with her legs bent up behind her.

She just lay there as the matrons moved toward her, one of them pushing a wheelchair that was kept in the corner of the yard for just such purposes. They managed to get the thin, lanky girl, who couldn't have weighed more than 80 pounds, into it and immediately wheeled her to the infirmary, apparently to clean up the nasty scrapes on her face, her little breasts and her stomach.

The next time I saw the guard who had frozen the girl in mid-stride, I asked her, through a few signs and a lot of

pantomime, what had happened to the girl. She told me they'd cleaned her up, kept her in the infirmary overnight for observation, and then paralyzed her from the waist down to prevent her from running around anymore, if she had another fit like the one that day. The doctor thought keeping her an almost concentration-camp thin *hazil* was a bad idea; she believed the food restriction was contributing to the girl's confusion and mental instability. The matrons thought it would be "fun" to see if they could really fatten her up, so they pushed to get her reassigned as a *zenay vizhiden*. There happened to be an opening for the extremely fat, so that's where she got reassigned. They'd try to more than triple her weight, a process that might take a year. Until she reached the new target, the poor girl would remain paralyzed, and wouldn't be eligible for the auction.

That matron, who wasn't all that bad a person in my experience there, thought the whole thing was hysterically funny, and a great joke to play on the pathetic girl. To me, it was another example of the underlying cruelty in this entire society.

I needed to get out of this place. Why hadn't anyone I knew before come to rescue me and get me out? Had they really been misled about my location, as ghost Tia had said?

To this day, I've never known for certain why I appeared to be abandoned by my family, friends and colleagues. I suppose in my heart-of-hearts, I believe many people must have tried to find and rescue me, but the Kingdom of Salat had made me disappear. That's what Tia essentially told me, when she said I'd been lost *accidentally*, assuming there was actually a Tia spirit, and Tia wasn't just a projection of my bewildered, tired, unhappy mind.

At this point, it no longer matters, though I'd like to know. If I could find out, or if I never did, it would make no difference. I could never go home now to Destiny's family - if that's who I was - or Karimah's family, or ...

More months passed. I found it increasingly hard to imagine my life before this place. That life seemed like something I'd read about or seen on television, not anything I'd experienced myself. I was pretty sure that I used to have two or three names, like Destiny Michele Hutton. Now my only name was Karimah. I wasn't sure whether or not that had been one of my names before – I didn't think so - but I had this mental itch that told me I had been Destiny for real. Now, Destiny was lost to me, along with my destiny.

Oh well. I was simply Karimah now. I suppose it didn't make much difference. Here in the prison, it didn't make any difference at all.

I was sound asleep one morning, a month or two after my eyebrow gluing joke. I usually managed to sleep until awakened by the morning call to prayer, *fajr*, which was broadcast loudly all around and within the prison, about an hour and a half before dawn. That morning, at the time I thought was *fajr*, there were a series of huge explosions, like cannons or mortar fire right next to my bedroom! All three of us leaped off our cots, our hearts pounding out of our chests as the booming continued unabated.

We couldn't decide whether to take cover or investigate. Something was clearly wrong. The other women in our group rushed out into the main corridor and we followed them. The explosions seemed to be coming from everywhere. Dozens of women were running along the main corridor in every direction. A few huddled together in one corner or another.

I pointed down and Altaf, Erij and I tried to find a door to take us to the small basement level beneath the dormitory wing. Erij found it and we dashed into the stairwell. The booms within that confined space could be felt in your bones. We dashed down the stairs.

As we emerged into the basement, I thought I heard music in the background of the explosions. At first, I thought it was simply my ears ringing from the never-ending bursts of cannons. Then it hit me.

Booming cannons. Sounds like cannons, not modern explosives. Background music. I threw my hands in the air and started silently laughing until I was shaking in amusement and tears ran down my cheeks.

Seeing me, I think Altaf assumed I was so afraid that I was crying with terror. She put her arm around me to comfort me. I shook my head and tried to indicate that it was alright, and that we had all been rudely awakened by the cannons in the finale of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, apparently playing through the call-to-prayer speakers!

It took a while to explain that last part via my poorly-constructed pantomimes. I think they both got it, but I doubted either had heard the music before. Even if they had, the prankster who had done this (my hat's off to her or them), had somehow boosted the cannon track and quieted the music track, or eliminated it altogether.

As I was finishing my impromptu charades, the booming stopped. Everything was deadly quiet. I motioned for all of us to return to our room. I suspected the matrons, once they stopped shaking, then pissing themselves, then laughing at the stunt would start a pogrom to find the responsible inmate or inmates.

I was right about the investigation. An hour later, having shaved and showered, Erij, Altaf and I were sitting at our table smoking, when three matrons showed up and started tearing our place apart, having just finished doing the same to our group sisters.

They were making a mess of everything; I was lamenting the fact that we'd have to clean all this up when they were finished. Oh well, it would at least be something to do. The hilarity of the event was worth it.

Then the matron who was ripping my cot apart lifted the mattress, reached down, and held up what looked like a mobile phone with earbuds attached! It turned out to be an old iPod. It had been lost by one of the guards who, apparently, was into Western classical music. You guessed it. It held an MP3 digital copy of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*! I was in deep shit.

I might have been able to convince them that it'd been planted there, if I hadn't developed the reputation for practical joking. Or maybe not. As it was, I was tried once again in a kangaroo court consisting of the warden, a matron, and the guard who owned the iPod. My English-written statement, which they'd had translated into Arabic, carried no weight.

The warden was her usual stern self, though I thought I saw the beginning of a smile and a gleam in her eye, when the matron read an account of what happened. More likely, it was her amusement of finding the American girl she disliked in trouble again.

Someone (me apparently) had either picked the pocket of the guard who had the iPod, or he had accidentally left it somewhere and the perpetrator had found it. Apparently the guards and matrons were allowed to carry iPods, but not mobile phones (which wouldn't have worked in the Control Institution anyway, because it was many miles from any cell tower). The perp had broken into the room that held the audio system that automatically produced the call to prayer by broadcasting a recorded voice over the prison's speakers. She had hooked up the cannon track to both stereo inputs and downloaded the MP3 file, overwriting the *fajr* call to prayer.

I tried in vain to convince them that I had no idea how to do what had happened, that I'd never touched an iPod, knew nothing about their system or downloading to it, and had no knowledge of how to break into a locked room. True, some of the women in my group were cat burglars, another had worked in the Eritrean equivalent of a *Best Buy* in computers and electronics, and still another had been a computer programmer.

Then it hit me! There was a burglar, the Best Buy woman, and the programmer in one triple – the one I had pulled my eyebrow joke on! I hastened to point this out by writing it down. The guard seemed to have enough English to translate it for the others, but, in the end, it didn't make any difference. I'd been caught with the goods. Besides, I was an American, and Americans all knew everything about technology. Yeah, right!

They found me guilty, of course, and I braced myself for something awful. At this point, the humor of the prank was lost to me and my heart was pounding with horrible anticipation. The last time I had faced a tribunal like this, I had lost my teeth!

When the judgement came, I was surprised, and actually relieved. They sentenced me to six weeks of leg paralysis to keep me out of trouble. In addition, in the hopes of adjusting my attitude to make me behave seriously, my face would be frozen like Altaf's, for the same six weeks. That was it!

A moment later, the matron judge produced a controller. I felt the inevitable tingling in my head, and then my body went dead from my waist down. I immediately pissed myself, right there in the chair facing the trio. Two matrons entered from my right. I recognized one as the matron who had first brought me into the prison proper, and had mentioned that she and another had frozen poor Altaf.

The two stood there pouring over a controller, making changes and adjustments and in general arguing with each other. I could see the warden becoming impatient. Just as she was about to speak up, one of the matrons exclaimed, "We've got it!"

The tingling in my head returned, and my face went dead.

I wheeled myself back to my triple. My face was immobile. I tried to smile and frown but nothing happened. At first I thought they had somehow frozen most all of the dozens of muscles in my face, but, thinking about trying to make any expression at all, I realized that I couldn't figure out how to make my mind communicate with my face anymore. I couldn't smile, or frown, or look scared or excited, or anything else, because I didn't know how. It was exactly like not knowing how to talk anymore.

When I wheeled back into our triple rooms, Altaf and Erij weren't outside where we had yard time, but were waiting for me, in the hopes I would come back and not have something horrible done to me. I waved when I saw them. Erij smiled, Altaf pushed up the corners of her mouth, and both hugged me

in my chair. Using signing, they asked me how long, and I told them six weeks. They seemed as relieved as I was.

Altaf looked at me curiously and I nodded and used my fingers to push up the corners of my mouth, then pointed to myself and nodded again. I indicated it was for six weeks also. I saw a tear form in her eye and she hugged me again. We were two women with broken faces.

After supper's gruel, I happened to see the three triple members I had tricked, and who I was sure had set me up. They looked at me curiously as I wheeled over to them. One asked how long and I told them. Then I pointed to them and nodded my head while punching my right fist into my other hand. They knew that I knew. I couldn't be angry, though; they had cleverly retaliated and I had to admire their creativity. I stopped punching, used my fingers to push up the corners of my mouth into an Altaf smile, and then began to clap.

It was almost worth it to see the big smiles breaking out on their faces, when they understood I wasn't angry, that I got it. They each came over, gave me a hug and a couple pats on the back.

Overall, not bad, I thought. There are still real human beings, with positive human characteristics like cleverness, teasing and laughter, left in the Control Institution for Delinquent Women.

Six weeks later, I was returned to normal with a few weakness side effects in my legs again and in my face. The first thing I did was smile until I thought I might break my face myself.

As time went on, I became more and more comfortable in my skin. This bothered me a lot when I thought about it, and there was plenty of time for introspection. I tried to put my contemplation in some perspective. One day, I concluded that I, Karimah, and everyone around me was insane. There was no other explanation for what had and was happening to me. I felt terrible at that realization, but I also knew I was at peace, because then I could open myself to whatever they did to me,

and know I was going to accept the changes which would move me along the path to whatever I would become.

I knew it wouldn't be the mystical, lost Destiny, or the Karimah I was then, but it would be someone.

Her name turned out to be Dohattn, though I had other lives to live before I was that person.

In Arabic, *dohattn* means “cuddles.”

Chapter 14 – Happiness in Slavery

More months passed and Altaf's last auction was coming up. That is, it would be her last, unless an exception were made, and she was permitted to take part in the auctions beyond her one-year of eligibility.

No one thought that was likely. Apparently, no buyers were interested in an otherwise pretty, plump, 20-something woman whose face was a frozen tableau ... of nothing at all.

At various times during Altaf's eligibility for the auction, I thought that surely the matrons responsible would restore her face, to increase the chance that someone would buy out her contract. That was a goal the matrons had for all prisoners. Apparently, part of their responsibilities was to push inmates out into indentured service, to save the Kingdom money and keep the prison population manageable. Nevertheless, they refused to repair Altaf, in spite of her clumsy, sign-language pleading and entreaties from Erij and me. Apparently their "cleverly conceived adjustment" (their words) to the poor girl's disposition was too rich of a joke to warrant undoing, in spite of their need to push prisoners out.

The day of Altaf's last likely auction came. Erij and I had scrounged some makeup from a couple of sympathetic matrons. There was little we could offer the matrons in exchange for favors, other than doing laundry if they brought it in or cleaning their personal cabinets in the matron's lounge. I'd heard some matrons would make exchanges for sexual favors, but that was a tremendously risky endeavor. If you were caught offering that kind of bribe to an unsympathetic matron, you'd get another ten years and your sexual equipment would be toast for life, like the unprotected intimacies of poor Erij.

Through sign language and my ridiculous charade antics that always cracked the matrons up and put them in a good mood, I managed to convince a couple matrons to bring in some old cosmetics for Altaf's last chance at auction. Makeup

was one of those things which wasn't allowed per se, but none of the prison staff cared about it. We all looked so bland with our bald heads and eyebrowless faces that I think they got tired of looking at us. A little makeup made their view that much more tolerable.

For the auctions in particular, they almost encouraged makeup, including foundation, eyeliner and shadow, lipstick and drawn-on eyebrows. They wouldn't restore Altaf's frozen face for their own, unkind reasons, but they let us fix her up with cosmetics. She was very, very pretty and looked much better, especially with the thin, lovely eyebrows we drew on her. We put them a little higher than her natural ones probably had been, and curved them smoothly, in the hopes of making her look a little surprised, since her normal look was no expression at all.

Seeing Altaf then, when we'd done our best for her, I realized that she'd been a stunning beauty. When I was able to imagine her with real hair, I decided she might have been the most beautiful woman I had ever seen.

I thought I could make out hope in her lovely eyes, though nothing showed on her face. Privately, Erij and I kissed her for good luck and sent her off.

No one bought out her contract. She cried for a week. Seeing any friend cry like that is awful, but seeing Altaf cry her heart out, while her face maintained that expressionless mask, was one of the saddest, most heart-wrenching things I've ever witnessed. I cried with her frequently that week.

Nobody should have had her sweet, joyous heart rendered so inert as my pretty, innocent Altaf. I suppose you think me a tragic figure, based on everything that's happened to me. Perhaps I am. But my Western upbringing and my strong personality have buffered me a little, at least. Nothing in her developmental years, nor in her family support, nor in the mercy of the Control Institution had supported dear Altaf. As a result, despite the best efforts of Erij and me, Altaf was left alone to face her fate.

Unfortunately, as I'd feared, Altaf wasn't allowed to attend the next auction, two months later. My year and a half of imprisonment, 20 percent of my sentence completed, occurred the week before that next auction. That time to be sold or rejected was to be my first.

Altaf, sweet soul that she was, and Erij spent all morning getting me ready for my first appearance at auction. It must have been hard for Altaf, who appeared to have missed her chance of getting out of the Control Institution early. On me, they used the makeup we'd obtained for Altaf's last auction two months earlier.

I'd paid even more than the usual attention to shaving my head and getting even tiny, light residual eyebrows out of the way during my grooming time that morning. I thought about this as Altaf and Erij applied my makeup. Had they changed me so much that being smoothly, naturally bald and eyebrowless was now my ideal of being at my most attractive?

I'd stopped missing my hair many months ago. When I thought about it, I was certain that was because my controller was affecting my brain. I was getting a slight sexual thrill whenever I shaved or plucked, and my hair had been gone for so long that I didn't think of it as a part of me anymore. That realization scared me to death! In the year and a half I'd been in this place, they'd managed to change how I thought about myself! The Karimah who had arrived at the prison had been replaced by someone strangely different, and indifferent. In fact, though I hadn't thought about it recently, I still didn't remember who I was when I'd arrived. I probably was Karimah, but I could have been someone else, like the almost mythical Destiny Michelle Hutton.

Erij and Altaf were making my face up in the Middle Eastern or East African fashion. I had heavy black eyeliner, and a darker eyeshadow. My lips were a deep red, and so were my short fingernails. All of that seemed to go well with my richly tanned, naked body. If the matrons at the prison were at all indicative of grooming norms in this part of the world, eyebrows were either very heavy or very thin. I thought my

brows had been on the heavy side of average when I'd arrived here, but I couldn't be sure anymore because my memory of myself before becoming controlled wasn't very clear. In any event, drawing on thick eyebrows had looked awful on Altaf, so we all decided on a thin smooth arc of brow for me. When Erij asked what I wanted, I managed to sign to her to do mine the same as we'd done on Altaf.

When I glanced in the mirror and saw my penciled-on, smoothly curved brows, it immediately reminded me of Toni, and how I'd plucked hers to a thin arc, more than a year and a half ago. I didn't have any time to further dwell on the memory of my young, naïve traveling companion, as it was time to finish getting ready.

A few, final touch-ups and I was as good as I was going to look. At least everyone up for auction would be bald like me, though the majority would have better figures than mine. Trimmer at least. Better by American standards. It was odd I remembered that kind of stuff, but struggled to know my own name.

Actually, my current shape was pretty good, just plump. I had bigger boobs, a still-flat stomach, a well-defined waist, and a cute, plump booty. My legs and arms were chubby but attractive – or so I told myself. I looked more like a bald Hispanic girl, truth-be-told, than a formerly blonde American-sweetheart type. I thought some men and women would consider me sexy, if they weren't hung up about hair and weight.

Because my mind was so disoriented when it came to self-image, I honestly didn't know whether I looked better or worse than when I'd arrived here. If I had my hair back, maybe I was just as pretty, equally desirable. At least to this culture.

Did I care? Yes, but only because it enhanced my chances of getting out of here early.

I was finally done and it was time to go see what this auction thing was all about. I was not enthusiastic about this for several reasons: it was essentially a slave auction, I could

very-well be mistreated, even required to have sex during the evaluation process, and I might be bought by a horrible master or mistress.

The upside was that it would get me out of here, and perhaps restore some of what they'd taken from me. I had known how to prepare, but I didn't know what to expect at the auction itself. Now it was time to go. I hugged and kissed Altaf and Erij, certain that I'd be seeing them back here later in the afternoon.

A matron escorted me to a waiting area outside the auditorium proper. Some months ago, I'd personally cleaned this room during my getaway attempt at sexual satisfaction with my triple. That afternoon, there were about twenty inmates in various amounts of makeup, most of whom I recognized from the yard. There was one other woman whom I knew was also a chubby *gideen* like me, one fat, young girl who was a *swomina*, and two obviously obese women, both *zenay vizhiden*. All the rest were *motowoseik*, average, or *nochadn*, thin. There were no *hazil*, or gaunt girls, like Habiba.

We were all lined up from thinnest to fattest and paraded onto the platform stage in single file, half of us at a time. I was in the second group, the fourth last in line. That meant there were only three women fatter than I was! I hadn't considered that before, and it made me feel awful. I was among the fattest 20 percent! That was not what my self-image had been when I was an archeologist - I knew that for a certainty - and it wasn't what I wanted it to be at that moment either. Maybe I'd be bought and my new owner would let me lose weight.

The first group returned about an hour later. Then my group was led out.

There I stood, looking into an audience of about 40 men, all dressed in desert garb: flowing white or beige robes called *ejetebobs*, and turbans, most of them white. There was one group of several women, all wearing white *Habisha kamis* trimmed in black or dark brown. Each also wore a matching traditional head shawl, the *netela*. The three women were quite

beautiful and I found I envied their long, dark hair, their sultry eyebrows, and their slender figures.

We inmates remained still on the platform, bald and naked, for about a minute, then we were told to turn one quarter so the audience could see us from one side, then our back side, then the other side. Finally, we stood facing them again. After another minute, the five heaviest of us went down the stairs to the left and off the stage, while the five thinner women went to the other side. Everyone in the audience got up at that point, and moved to examine one or the other group of us, up close and very personal.

As best I could, I remained frozen in place while I was prodded and poked and essentially felt-up. Fingers went into my pussy, where I could see but mostly not feel them, and into my anus, where I could feel them very distinctly. My mouth was opened by the first man to inspect me. I saw his face show a curious look and then he lifted my upper lip while pulling my lower down. He could obviously see my dentures. He looked disappointed, shook his head slightly and moved on. I was so ashamed. Tears started falling from my eyes right then. That look of disappointment and head shake at my missing teeth turned out to be much more disturbing and disheartening to me than fingers in my private areas.

It was a poignant affirmation of what they had done to me, and a judgment on the results.

Another man, tall and middle-aged with dark brown, beautifully clear skin, hefted first one of my breasts, then the other. He put a hand behind me and another on my stomach and pushed, testing the firmness. He pinched the skin of my cheeks, breasts, nipples, arms and thighs, apparently gauging the amount of fat on me. His fingers were everywhere inside and outside me. When he pulled them out of my pussy, they glistened with wetness, though I hadn't felt anything. He put those fingers to my face and told me in Arabic to clean them off.

I wasn't sure what to do and I thought, for a moment, that he was going to hit me. I opened my mouth and moved it over his fingers, cleaning them with my lips and tongue. I saw the

look on his face change then; he opened my mouth wider and ran his fingers along my dentures, at the top and the bottom. He pulled down on the top ones. They didn't move and he told me to take them out.

I shook my head no with tears falling again. I could tell he was getting angry with me, though he seemed to be trying to control it. Finally, he said in an obvious command that was not to be ignored, "Remove them!"

I reached up with both hands and pulled my upper dentures down and out, setting them on a table behind me, then removed the lowers too. He was ready with a cloth which he handed me to wipe off my mouth and gums. Then he inspected my mouth open, closed and by running his fingers along my empty gums.

He looked to the side and said something to a matron, who turned to me and said very clearly, "Obey this man in all things." That was, of course, a trigger phrase for my controller. He was now my Master, and I could deny him nothing. In addition, I saw her enter something into her controller remote and felt a tingle in my head. I reached for my dentures on the table and he waved the palm of his hand to indicate that I should leave them. He reached for my hand and led me off. He took me to the same room wherein Altaf, Erij and I had sex, or what had to pass for sex among three broken women in the Control Institution. He dropped his robe and pushed me down onto my knees in front of him. It was obvious what he was expecting me to do.

I looked up at him with frightened, sad eyes. I shook my head "No."

"You are to make me hard and then fellate me until I cum," he told me.

I did nothing at first, then felt the mental itch signaling to me that my controller was going to make me increasingly uncomfortable until I obeyed. It wasn't as though I'd never given head, but I'd certainly never done it with a stranger, an older man, or anyone whom I hadn't gotten close to and

propositioned in the first place. And I'd never done it without my teeth, for that matter.

In only seconds the compulsion to obey was overpowering. I resisted and realized my body was starting to quiver. I shook everywhere. I reached up to massage him, in the hope that would be enough. My hands shook so badly that I couldn't stroke him at first. Then, as I cupped his balls with one hand and slid up and down his shaft with the other, my shaking receded, but I was overwhelmed with the need to put his member in my mouth. I did it, holding it with my lips as it slid along my empty gums.

I thought I was going to throw up – just realizing what I was being forced to do to this strange man was enough to make me sick. But I didn't throw up. I sucked and licked and even used my gums to stimulate him along the soft underside.

He pushed deeply into my mouth and all the way to my throat. I don't know how, but I didn't gag. The controller must have shut down my gag reflex.

Given his middle age, and the rather sterile environment we were in, I was afraid he'd soften and I'd be blamed. I didn't know. I'd never been with a man older than mid-twenties before. Then I was afraid he'd hold out so long that I'd be here an hour or more with his disgusting rod in my mouth. It surprised me then when I felt him stiffen and say, "Swallow when I cum."

I continued sucking him off and felt the mass of his cum hit the back of my throat. It was hot and the ejaculation was forceful, but there wasn't all that much cum. Down it went with no problem. Once again, I was surprised that I wasn't sick.

"You are acceptable for a novice," he said to me in Arabic, with an accent I hadn't encountered before. "Oftentimes, I've found that American girls make the best whores. Would you like to be a whore, little one?"

I shook my head no. I was petrified with fear at the thought of it!

I didn't like being called "little one" either, not even by a man as tall as this guy.

"We shall see," was all he said, a faint smile on his face. With that, he put on his robe again and took me back to the auditorium.

I retrieved my teeth and pushed them into place. They weren't as snug as I preferred, but I didn't think they'd just fall out either.

I was inspected by several other men. A severely wrinkled much older man took me off to another room for a more intimate inspection. He appeared to be more interested in my physical strength than anything else, with the exception of my breasts which he spent a lot of time inspecting in a very clinical manner. He finally inspected my mouth and had me remove my dentures, then felt around my tongue and gums. The whole experience made me feel like a horse being evaluated by a potential buyer. It was even more humiliating than having to blow the previous man.

By the time he brought me back to the auditorium, the inspection period was over. We were all taken back into the preparation room. In a few minutes, beginning with the thinnest, smallest girl, they led each inmate onto the stage and tried to auction her contract.

As far as I could tell, about one prisoner in four didn't return, indicating she'd been sold and taken elsewhere. The ones who returned to the prep room had failed to get a bid equal to their minimum cost. When they came back some of them appeared relieved, while various levels of disappointment were evident with others.

I decided I didn't want to be sold. The devil I knew was better than the devil I didn't know. On the other hand, I didn't want to be stuck here for six more years. Look at what had happened to me in the first year and a half! Of course, I had no control over whether or not I was sold anyway.

A little over an hour later, I was waiting at the door to the stage. I was next up. The other *gideen* woman ahead of me had

been bought. I didn't know if that made my chances of being sold higher or lower.

I was pushed onto the stage as the auctioneer called out in Arabic, "*Hadha hu Karimah. Muhawalatuha alhadd al'adnaa hu 150,000 nakfa.*" Simply translated, he said, "This is Karimah. Her minimum bid is 150,000 nakfa."

The nakfa is the Eritrean currency, which the break-away Kingdom of Salat continued to use. That number set my minimum bid at about 9,000 US dollars, maybe as much as 9,300 dollars. It didn't sound like much to me, until I considered that the average Eritrean made only a few hundred dollars per year. Not that the price to *own* me was any source of pride!

Calls came out from various parts of the crowd of buyers. I noticed it was only about two-thirds the size of the original audience present when I had come out to be examined. Some men had already left, with or without any newly-bought indentured servants. The small group of women was also gone. It was hard to tell from the shouting and the general commotion in the auditorium, but I didn't think anyone had actually offered a bid for me.

The auctioneer had me turn, bend, lift my full, luscious breasts, and finally stand there with my knees bent and my legs apart, forcing me to thrust my pussy forward. I was embarrassed, but I was unable to resist his commands, since I was both under control, and warned that I would be severely punished if I didn't do exactly as instructed, as soon as I was told.

It was hard to make out what was being said either by the auctioneer or men in the crowd. They spoke very fast and tended to slur their Arabic words. I thought I heard something shouted about my teeth, and the auctioneer's indignant response. The banter kept on for several minutes. I was bent over with my soft, nicely-rounded butt pointed toward the crowd, when I thought I heard someone shout out a bid of 150,000 nakfa.

That would mean that my minimum bid had been offered and I was going to be sold!

The shouting continued. I thought there were other bids but I was trying to listen for the auctioneer's whispered instructions to avoid a punishment, so I couldn't focus on the crowd's discordant shouting. I realized my hands were shaking and I was becoming queasy with fear as the awful act of selling me continued.

I beg you to think about and understand my state of mind at what was being done to me, what was happening to me at that moment, and what it meant to my abused sense of self ... I WAS BEING SOLD LIKE A COW! I was becoming property!

After an eternity on stage, the noise finally died down, though it never stopped completely. I heard the auctioneer shout, "280,000 nakfa! Tubae!" I'd been sold to someone for 280,000 nakfa – a little over 17,000 dollars. I'd be leaving the Control Institution for Delinquent Women an indentured servant. I was in a panic, terribly afraid of whom would own me, or what I'd be indentured to do.

A matron nurse entered the stage from my right and led me back the way she'd come and off the stage. I'd been in this section of the auditorium facilities when I'd cleaned it with Altaf and Erij. I remembered being curious about this corridor, because it looked like a part of the infirmary. It was a collection of small examination rooms, each containing a reclining chair with gyno-exam stirrups, equipped with a plethora of straps. I didn't like being taken there. I didn't want to be bound, and I didn't want anything else done to me.

My concerns would have been ignored, if I'd even been able to express them. I was placed in the chair, of course, and strapped down: arms, legs, head and chest. The chair was turned so that I was facing the door to the small, white room wherein I was bound when the tall man, who had demanded that I fellate him, entered.

The matron turned to me. “This is Mr. Negasi Senai, Karimah. He has purchased your contract for your remaining six years.”

“You will call me, Negasi, as soon as you are able,” he told me as he gently but firmly squeezed my bound hand. I knew that Eritreans, including Kingdom citizens, typically had only one name, like I did. What appeared to be his surname, “Senai” would actually be the first name (the only *given* name) of his father. “When we are done here, you will return with me to my place of business.”

“Negasi owns the finest brothel in all of Eritrea,” the matron said, apparently trying to impress me.

“I prefer to think of it as the finest in all of East Africa and the Middle East,” he told her, a faint smile playing over his lips, I think to show he’d taken no offense at what she’d said.

From where I was bound, the words struck me like a sledge hammer! I was going to go to a whorehouse! Based on his occupation revealed by the matron, and the comment about American whores he’d made to me during our *encounter*, he was going to make me fuck people for money! Money paid to him – not that it made any difference. I WAS GOING TO BE OWNED BY A PIMP! I tried to shake my head side-to-side, to indicate that I didn’t want that life in any way!

My head was bound and I couldn’t shake it to relay my objection to their plans for me. I suppose it was impossible that they’d consider my wants and desires in any way, even if they recognized them. I lay there, bound and still incapable of speaking.

“Her controller is yours, Honored Sir,” the matron nurse said. “You can make of her as you wish, or allow your servants to do the same.”

“That is true,” he noted. “However, I need a few things in place before we depart.”

“I will do whatever you wish, Agha.”

“Does she speak Arabic?” He asked. “I assume she speaks no Tigrinya?”

Tigrinya was the language of the people of Tigrinya, a prominent area within the break-away Kingdom, and probably half of Eritrea. I’d heard the matrons speak of it.

“In the past year and a half, she has spoken nothing, Agha. Like all inmates, Karimah is mute. I don’t know what she can speak or understand. Karimah, do you speak and understand Tigrinya?”

I couldn’t move, of course, nor talk, so I said nothing.

“By Allah’s goodness, woman! Release her head from the strap holding it and her controller from its inhibiting her speaking! Then ask her again!”

I thought that was a sensible request. By the look on her face, the matron thought she might have screwed up with this apparently powerful man. She nervously fiddled with the inmate controller remote she held.

Once again, I felt a tingling in my head. Then I became very dizzy and somewhat confused. From seemingly far away, I heard the matron say, “What languages can you speak, Karimah?”

I didn’t know what to do. I couldn’t speak, of course, and my bound hands couldn’t move in any recognizable sign language.

“Ahrrrrggghhh,” I said, involuntarily. I had actually made some sounds! She must have released my mind from its inability to produce speech!

“You can speak, Karimah. Tell Azid Negasi what languages you speak.”

Azid is an honorific equivalent to *Mister* in English.

I realized then that I could make sounds with my vocal chords, but couldn’t make any discernable words. I tried again, attempting to speak English, my native tongue.

“Aaahhh spekkk Engllesht ahnnnnn Aribbbek, notung elzzeh,” I said. Suddenly, I could actually use my vocal

chords, though my control of them was totally inadequate for speaking.

I could see Negasi struggle with my words. Finally, he asked me directly if I could speak English.

“Yaaaaah ... Yeshhh,” I croaked.

“And Arabic?”

“Yeshhh, I said again.

“Do you realize that I now own you, Karimah?”

I paused and looked into his calm, almost-black eyes. This man owned me. HE OWNED ME!

“Karimah?”

“Yeshhh,” I said.

“Restore her pussy and nipples,” Negasi told the matron. I saw her fiddle with the controller remote. I felt a tingling in my brain, but I couldn’t tell if my nipples, clitoris and vagina had feeling again. After a year and a half, I didn’t even know what that would be like anymore.

“Pleesh, Zir,” I had tried to say “Please Sir,” but it had come out distorted, “Ma bodeesh ish dishrubded and I cand talk properdee.” I was trying to say that my body had been disrupted, and that I couldn’t talk properly. Some of my muscles didn’t seem to respond as I remembered.

“I will try to ask you yes or no questions,” he said then. I nodded.

“Can you feel this, Karimah?” He said, as he rolled both of my nipples between his fingers.

I could! My sensitivity was back! I slurred, “Yessh.”

He touched me between my legs and I felt his fingers on me! Oh! It was so wonderful to be alive there again!

“I see that you can feel this,” he said as I lifted my pelvis to him reflexively.

I *could* feel it, of course. I wanted to be whole again ... as whole as I ever could, at least. I would be forever without my

teeth and eyebrows, I knew, and I was also a chubby girl now, so I couldn't be the pretty American I was before ... that I thought I was before. My body could be alive, though.

"I have bought you, Karimah," Negasi said as though it were the simplest thing. "I intend to take you back with me. You will become a whore in my service. Do you want that, or would you prefer to stay in this place?"

I had enough presence of mind to ask, "Duh Ah haveh choize?"

"Do you have a choice?" He asked, repeating what I'd try to say. "Honestly Karimah, no, you don't. In a few minutes, you won't even want a choice. Do you understand?"

He was telling me that they were going to control my mind again, even as they let my body feel once more. I realized that there was no hope of me being my own person. At least not as long as I was controlled by that evil device. That would be six more years ... six more years!

I was already changed from the young woman I had been when I arrived here. Beyond the obvious physical changes, they'd played around with my mind. I didn't believe that my body was mine anymore. It was a pliable shell that imprisoned me. Its docility was controlled by someone else, other than by me. It would accept commands that whatever the person controlling me wanted it to do. I had a set of compulsions that had pushed my thinking down pathways I would never have chosen for myself. For example, I wanted to be beaten. I wanted to shave my hair, I hated the idea of some things I had truly liked.

We're the sum of our experiences, our choices, and our likes and dislikes. That makes us who we are. I no longer had choices that I could say were mine, belonged to me, or that I controlled at all. They had tampered with my likes and dislikes. All I had to tie me to my past were my experiences, and those had faded when they had first used the controller to overwhelm me with the new life I'd been forced into. Now my life would be differently constrained and I would be compelled to change again. I feared losing even more of Karimah, or

more of Destiny, if that's who I actually was before coming to this place. Sometimes I believed I'd been her, other times I thought she was just a story, concocted by the phantom Tia that I probably had created in my own mind. Even so, I had to acknowledge that I did think Destiny was in essence, even if not in name, who I really had been.

After a year and a half in the Control Institution, I was deeply frightened and suspicious of authority. Before all this happened to me, I thought that, as a basically good person, the authorities were on my side. I no longer felt like that at all. Everyone not an inmate was more powerful than I, and I was compelled to obey them. I couldn't avoid obeying; the gripping disturbance that even a slight delay in following orders caused in my mind was awful, all-consuming if I failed to act quickly. Any delay in obeying felt like the worst possible screeching of fingernails on a blackboard confined within my head.

I was a slave. I was more tightly bound than anyone who was simply tied up or chained or put in a cell or a cage. I was bound inside me, down to the base of my mind. They could make me do anything, or prevent me from doing anything. I couldn't even kill myself for a release from my indenture.

With every one of us in this place, they'd set out to create a submissive prisoner, a model inmate. They succeeded every time. They had wanted to completely alter my personality. They hadn't destroyed it yet, but it had been forever altered. I'd become a very different person.

I no longer even knew who that person was. I really didn't know Karimah at all.

I didn't realize it at the time, but this society was just getting started with transposing me.

"Alright," Azid Negasi said to the matron and me. "Let's get started. I want to get on the road soon."

"Of course, Sir."

"Tell me all the compulsions she has."

“The usual set plus a few others,” The matron stated. “Of course, she is unable to harm herself unless ordered to do so, and she cannot kill herself under any circumstances. She cannot plan an escape nor actually attempt escape, even to protect her own life. She must remain within the Kingdom to receive the scheduled electronic key to keep her controller from initiating her shut down. I cannot remove any of those compulsions until her sentence is served. As you know, that’s another six years. However, if you should decide to take her out of the Kingdom, arrangements could be made with the Minister of Corrections.”

“I understand.”

“She must perform salat the usual five times per day. She can eat no food which is *ḥarām*. Ever. Both of those compulsions are permanent. Removing either is impossible.”

“Yes. Of course.”

“I will list the optional compulsions. First, she must obey authority.”

“I am her authority now. She is to obey only me and whomever I designate. I want that compulsion as strong as possible. Make it so.”

The matron did something with the controller and I felt the tingling in my head, as my brain was molded to fit his intentions for me. The matron respectfully asked him to, “Speak the words, Sir.”

He touched my chin to get me to look into his eyes and said in Arabic, “Obey me in all things.”

Vertigo overcame me immediately and the room started to spin. I thought I was going to vomit, but suddenly the spinning stopped as quickly as it had started. I noticed then that he was unfastening my hands from the chair, followed by releasing my head from the forehead band that held it unmoving. He handed me a very long needle with a sharp point.

“Push this through your breast from the center of the underside until it emerges from the top,” he ordered me.

The compulsion to follow his orders was instantly overwhelming, and horrifying. I was unable to control myself. All I wanted at that moment was to please my master. That obedience was the center of my being and for that moment, all that I wanted in life. I reached below my healthy-sized right breast with my left hand and held it up, available for what had to be done. Holding the needle in my right hand, I positioned it at the center bottom of my breast and immediately pushed it through without hesitation. I screamed at the abrupt, stabbing pain but continued to push on the needle until I saw about an inch of the tip emerge at the top. My screaming went on until he told me to be quiet. I stopped yelling at once.

“Pull it out,” he commanded.

I did. I wanted to scream at the repeat of the pain but he’d told me to be quiet. I made no noise as I withdrew the needle that had pierced my entire breast.

“It appears that the test confirmed her obedience,” Azid Negasi said. “Continue.”

“She has a compulsion for daily canings,” the matron announced.

“Really?” He seemed surprised. It wasn’t common among prisoners at the Control Institution, but I’d discovered that it wasn’t exactly rare either. “Remove it. I can’t have her marked with welts or cuts. It will affect business.”

I felt the tingling in my head again.

“Done, Sir. She has a compulsion to smoke. It also causes a modicum of sexual arousal when she does it. Even if we remove it, she’d remain addicted to nicotine, an addiction which is well-established by now. You would have to break her habit, if you didn’t want her to smoke. If you leave the compulsion in place, it would be impossible for her to quit under any circumstances. In addition, it will somewhat prep her for sex, but be insufficient in itself.”

“Hmm ... leave it. Dependencies can be useful. If it ignites her sexual pilot light, all the better.”

“She was, but no longer is mute.”

“How long has she been here?”

“A year and a half.”

“That explains why her speech is almost unintelligible, I suppose.”

“Yes, Agha.”

“Can you make her able to speak, but with some difficulty? I want her able to converse, but I want her to have to think hard about everything she wants to say, and have to focus tightly on actually saying it.”

I noticed the matron almost puff up her chest and answer by way of bragging.

“Not all matrons here could do that, Azid Negasi, but I believe I can. May I proceed?”

“In a moment. Can you make it either impossible or very difficult for her to speak English, while making it only somewhat difficult for her to speak in Arabic?”

“Yes Agha, I believe I can do that. The controller allows for a selective aphasia.”

“Let’s try it then,” he said.

The matron told me to start telling about my childhood in English and to keep talking. My diction and clarity weren’t good, not only because I’d been mute for a year and a half, but also because I hadn’t spoken before with my dentures. I could at least talk. As I continued, the matron manipulated keys on the controller she held and then smiled as the tingling within my head began again, though it seemed to go on longer than it had before. My head prickled within and I became dizzy and disoriented for several minutes. In particular, I could tell that my eyes were vibrating rapidly from side-to-side, and I couldn’t make them stop.

I’d stopped talking and she told me to continue or I’d be punished. I started my dialog again but it was very difficult to find and form the words I wanted. The longer I spoke, the more difficult it became, until continuing was almost impossible. I was able to speak only one word at a time and I

could tell words were left out in between what I was able to say.

Five or ten minutes later, I couldn't exactly tell how long, the vertigo went away and my eyes seemed to stabilize. My Master turned to me and asked, "Karimah, tell me about your last year in school. Use English."

I didn't expect that question and I was astonished that he asked it. As a result, I couldn't say anything for a minute or two. I started to tell him and realized that forming the sentence and speaking it were very difficult. Speaking was much harder than it had been a little while ago when they released me from being mute.

I tried, as best I could, in English, to describe my last year at the university.

"Mash ... Mash ... Mashter, I wash a gra ... shtudent ... Archeology." Oh my God! It had taken me more than a minute to say that. Something wasn't working right in my head, and in the connection between my head and my vocal chords. In addition, I couldn't remember the words I wanted to say. "Ah ... Ah earned a Mashter's ... uh ... " I had wanted to say "degree," but I couldn't remember the word. I knew the Arabic word – it sounded like "*sahedra*" – but I didn't have the English word. I tried to continue. A Mashter's *sahedra*."

"Are you having difficulty speaking?" He asked me.

"*Ewan*, Mashter."

"Focus carefully on what you want to say, don't think of anything else. Switch to Arabic."

I did what he said, of course, and I did find it much easier, though it was mentally and physically exhausting to talk – more than I could attribute to not speaking for eighteen months. "That does help, Master. Thank you for the guidance." I'd said all that in Arabic. It required concentration, but it was possible for me to speak reasonably. I probably came across as a woman with a slow mind. Which I guess I was, thanks to what the matron had done to me.

I didn't think my Arabic was very understandable, but it was the best I could do with no actual practice for eighteen months, along with the dentures I hadn't worn the last time I could speak.

"In Arabic, try pronouncing 'Master' properly," he told me. The Arabic word for master, that he used, sounds something like, "Mazitir."

"Mashitir ... Mashitir ... Mashitir ...," I started crying; I couldn't do what he wanted.

The matron spoke up then, "Karimah was here and was already mute when she lost her teeth as a punishment," she told him. "Her distorted speech is probably a combination of not having spoken for a year and a half, along with her unfamiliarity speaking with dentures instead of her natural teeth. It's likely that practice and some instruction will fix the problem."

"Good advice," my Master said. The matron beamed. "I like these results; you did very well." At this point, I thought the matron was going to burst with pride.

She'd meddled with my mind again, of course. Henceforth I'd be able to speak Arabic, but it would require some effort, compared to how easily I could communicate before. No more easy, carelessly flowing conversations for me. I couldn't understand why, but my Master had commanded it. Even the little bit of speaking I'd just done had given me a headache. I would probably give up on English altogether. Almost no one spoke it here anyway, and I couldn't remember enough of it now to have a decent vocabulary or an ability to construct complex English sentences.

As it happened, I did lose English entirely. Even while I was being reprogrammed, the controller was continuing to dissolve my memories of the English language.

For that matter, my Arabic vocabulary wasn't great. I realized that what they'd done to me was going to seriously affect what I was able to convey to someone else, since I probably had the Arabic vocabulary of an eight-year-old now.

“Let’s continue with her preparation,” he told the matron. What else is already in place?”

“We’ve already unblocked her intimate areas so that she has sensation there again. Do you want me to re-block them?”

“No, I want her to have sensation in those places.”

At least that was a relief! I’d be a sexual being again! Though I suspected what was going to happen to me next, I didn’t realize, at the time, how true that sentence would turn out to be.

“She has the usual compulsion to shave her head and body and remove her eyebrows. According to her file here, her arm and armpit, leg, and pubic hair were permanently gone before she was sent to us. She now shaves only her head, checks for any stray hairs on her arms or legs, and plucks her brows. Of course, her brows are almost certainly gone forever now, after a year and a half of plucking. Do you have any stray brows, Karimah?”

“Rarely,” I replied after formulating the Arabic answer. By that point, English was almost dead to me.

I could see my Master ponder this. I wanted to speak up and ask for my hair back, but I was struggling some to put a sentence together. Finally, I blurted out, “Pleashe, Mashitir, may I have hair ... again?”

“You want your hair to grow back, Little One?”

“Yes, pleashe, Mashitir.” He ran his hand over my smooth scalp while studying me.

“I think not,” he finally said to the matron. I was crushed. “She’d have to wear wigs anyway until it grows out. Some customers might actually like her like this. She does have a pretty little head, doesn’t she? I like her chubby face too. So let’s just keep that compulsion in place.”

“As you wish, Sir. She also has the prison safety compulsion to keep her nails short on fingers and toes.”

“Remove that. I want the flexibility to do what my madam decides.”

My head tingled again. I assumed I could grow my nails at that point. I didn't like the Arabic term for "madam" he had used. It was clear from everything that had been said, that I was going to a brothel. I didn't want to think about it.

"Finally, Karimah has the mental impetus to maintain her current weight, as a *gideen*, to within fairly tight tolerances."

"Was she always *gideen*?" He asked.

The matron consulted the file. "It appears that she was *nochhadn*, almost *motowoseik*, when she came to us. She is up about 25 and a half kilos, about 50% as the *gideen* she is now."

Once again, I wanted to beg him to let me return to my former weight. I tried as he was looking me over. "Pleashe, Mashitir, let me be thin ..." I wanted to beg better, but talking was harder than it used to be. It made my head hurt every time I tried to speak.

"She's quite desirable like this," he said. "I suppose if I'd wanted a *nochhadn*, I'd have bought one of the ones offered. That said, it was the innocence of her face that drew me to her, not her plump shape, though I certainly need someone with her soft, voluptuous body. Most all of my 148 girls are skinny. No ... I don't want to mess with a good thing. Besides, she'd probably sag if the fullness were lost. Her breasts, in particular, would shrink and droop. Keep the compulsion."

For the second time in a row, I was disappointed. I would continue to be plump – so unlike my life before this awful place. I could feel the tears form and trickle down my cheeks. I reached up to wipe them away. Azid Negasi took my hand and looked at me with what I thought was genuine concern.

"Don't cry, Little One. I promise that you're going to a better life than you had here. Different, but better. This isn't the America you knew growing up. This is a foreign land that you've come to be a part of. That is your lot. Some would say it was your destiny. Because you appeal to a powerful man, me, you'll remain protected and valued. Perhaps even cherished; time will tell. You are upset because you are no longer your own person. It is true that you are not. I hope you find that is not, necessarily, a bad thing.

“I realize that your American upbringing gave you different values than you see prominent here. I understand, because I spent almost a year in the States, studying and understanding how to get things done. Your former countrymen excel at that. Here in the Kingdom, so do I. Yes ... thanks to what I learned from them. Or thanks to the West in general. After all, the United Kingdom birthed America, did it not?

“You came to be here, through your own fault or not. Either way, you *are* here. More than that, you are now one of us. And so shall you be for a number of years yet. When the time finally comes, perhaps you will be able to choose your own path again. Or perhaps not. We shall see then, won't we?”

I looked at him blankly. I didn't know what to say. He was going to make me fuck for money. I was sure of it. What I didn't know is what would happen to me if I didn't do what he wanted.

Given the controller within me, I didn't even know if disobedience were possible.

I found out that it wasn't, at least, not in the way I envisioned.

Chapter 15 – Mind Control

“Is there anything else that you wish me to do for you?”
The matron nurse asked Azid Negasi.

“... for you,” meant “to me,” of course.

He fingered my pussy as he thought about doing something else to mold me into what he wanted. I was responding to his ministrations with a lot of moisture down there and soft moans of pleasure. I couldn't help it! It had been so long since I was able to feel anything at all associated with my sex!

“She's quite luscious, don't you think?” Negasi asked the matron. “Her body is so softly plump and she juices quite heavily. I think I'll name her Fatina, *luscious* in Arabic.”

He had pronounced it “FA-ti-na,” with the emphasis on the “Fa” syllable.

“Program the name Fatina into her mind. Make it her name now. Make her forget any other names, or that she had any other names for as long as she's with me.”

“As you wish, Agha.”

As always, when they were messing with my mind, my head began to tingle. I felt a little dizzy too, then I passed out.

“What is your name, girl?” Negasi, my Master asked me in Arabic as I awoke. I didn't understand why he was asking me that. He certainly knew who I was. I couldn't quite remember what had been going on when I apparently fainted. Maybe he was testing me.

“My name is Fatina, Master, if it pleases you.” I supposed he could call me anything he wanted. That was my name, though. It meant *luscious* in Arabic.

“Who is ...” The matron looked down on some papers and read an unfamiliar name. “Who is Karimah?” She asked me. I had a distinct feeling that I'd heard that name before, but I couldn't remember if it were recently or a long time ago.

Then I thought I remembered. That might have been the name of the nurse who did my induction to the Control Institution. Or perhaps not. I recalled thinking it was an odd name.

“I’m shorry but I don’t know that pershon, matron.”

“Who are Erij, Altaf, and Karimah?”

“Erij and Altaf are the other members of my triple ... of my former triple. Like I said, I don’t know any Karimah. I’ve never known anyone by that name.”

“That’s satisfactory testing,” my Master told the matron. “Fatina, can you read and write?”

“I’m shorry, Mashitir. I am almost illiterate in Arabic. I am unchertain about English. I ushed to be able to read and write English, but I don’t know if I can anymore, given my difficulty shpeaking it.”

The matron handed me a page. It was obviously English. I tried to read it and I thought I could. Since I couldn’t speak in English anymore, I told them in Arabic what the first paragraph said.

My Master asked the matron if she could make me illiterate in English, meaning unable to understand both the spoken and written language.

“Probably, Agha. There is a chance that the process to make her illiterate could leave her without the capacity to learn to read and write in any language, whether or not she knows it now. In other words, she might become incapable of learning to read or write as long as the control was in place. If I make her illiterate in the way you want, using the controller to give her alexia and agraphia, I can make her unable to understand English at all, though I suppose she’d at least be able to learn to speak it all over again, and to learn other languages as well. She could never read or write any of them, though.”

“All the better,” he said. “I don’t want her literate in any language. In fact, I’m wondering if we should just render her that way permanently.”

“Oh!” I exclaimed. I couldn’t help myself. I didn’t want to be illiterate at all, and definitely not forever! I had to change his mind; I had to say something, even if I kept slurring my words. Speaking was wasn’t getting any easier for me. “Please Mashitir! Don’t do that to me. Someday I will have served my time and may be released. I’ll need to have the ability to read and write. I was an educated woman. Please don’t take that from me. I would even work hard to learn to read and write Arabic, in order to be more useful to you, if you allow me to keep the ability to learn.”

He studied me. His eyes were probing but, I thought, kind. “I can’t imagine why an indentured servant who is to be a prostitute would need to read and write, or understand English, which very few people speak where you’re going. It seems an unnecessary distraction. Once your indenture period is over, no one will want you for anything other than sex, sex-related activities, or simple labor. You’d have no need of literacy then either.”

I couldn’t let this happen. I didn’t want to be illiterate for the next six years! I didn’t want to be unable to understand my mother tongue! Rudely, I interrupted him.

“No!” I screamed, clearly angry. “You can’t do that to me! You have no right!”

I could see anger flare in him for an instant, then it dissipated as he brought himself under control.

“No, Little One. You are the one without rights. You will be what I would make of you, no more, no less. It seems, though, that you need a dose of respect. I find your attitude wanting.”

He turned to the matron. “Make our little Fatina completely forget how to speak English, and to forget how to read and write English permanently, to the greatest extent you are able to do that. Also make her permanently illiterate, such that her mind no longer has the capacity to learn to read and write anything, and never will again.”

“NO, NO, NO!” I screamed at him.

“This is to be a lesson to you. I can and will make whatever changes in you that I desire, temporary or permanent. If you are EVER disrespectful, you will be severely punished. This is a small thing. I could have you made into a permanent whore. Perhaps, that would be a good thing ...”

“NO, NO, NO, Mashitir! Please. I will be good. I’ll always be respectful and obedient!”

“Oh, I know you will, Fatina. Your permanent illiteracy and your loss of English will be a constant reminder.”

“Do it!” He commanded the matron nurse, who had apparently already set the controller.

I saw her push the button and my head exploded as I passed out, a brilliant flash consuming my consciousness.

I awoke sometime later, my head throbbing. This time I remembered what they’d done to me. I was numb from the shock, but I started to cry. If they had truly done what they intended, I’d never be able to read or write again!

Think about what that would mean to anyone in their mid-twenties!

I would be forever unable to have a career at anything other than manual labor. I could never read a book, write a book, or even write a short email! I couldn’t read packages in stores, let alone any details about the product in the package. Everything I ever knew would have to be told to me verbally – in Arabic - since I could no longer handle English!

If I ever had children, I’d never be able to read to them. At that thought, I began to cry uncontrollably.

Master tried to speak to me, to order me to do something ... but I was so distraught that I didn’t listen to him. Then, suddenly, my face was slapped harder than I’d ever been hit. The blow was hard enough to knock me unconscious.

Someone was using smelling salts to awaken me. My head jerked back against the chair into which I was still

fastened. I was confused. My eyes were having trouble focusing. My head hurt everywhere, and my ears were ringing from the blows I'd taken, apparently to both sides of my head.

The matron nurse started to unstrap me while I was still trying to get my senses back. She spoke to me but I didn't understand her.

"I ... I don't understand," I replied in Arabic, after I'd formulated what I wanted to say. Speaking was tedious because of what the controller had done to me, and more so now because of the blows I'd received.

"I told you, in English, to remain seated after I unfasten you," the matron nurse told me. Then she showed me a tablet computer that was displaying a page with some sort of meaningless print on it.

"What is this?" I asked. I thought it might be Cyrillic script, or maybe just senseless scribbling.

"It's simply a short article from a few months ago about a young American woman who's been lost for a while. It's in English."

"Is it about me?" I asked, astonished.

"No, nothing here about Fatina," she said.

That would have been too big a coincidence, I realized.

Even to my befuddled mind, it was clear that I hadn't recognized a single word she had said or I had seen printed in English. Somehow, the controller had taken even the simplest remaining knowledge of my native language from me. I couldn't even make sense of letters. When I tried to think about it, I couldn't understand how marks on a screen or paper could be related to a language. Based on the way I'd passed out, and the incredible pain in my head which still hadn't lessened much, I knew they had permanently damaged me, damaged my brain and my mind.

"I'll call for my car shortly," Negasi told the matron, "but I'd like two things done before we leave."

"Certainly Agha."

“First, hand me the controller,” he said, reaching out his hand. He did something and pushed the *engage* button. I felt a tingling in my head yet again, but didn’t know what he’d done to me.

We all stood there, more or less idly, waiting for I knew not what.

I felt what I thought was an insect moving down my leg. I was about to reach down when the feeling expanded and I realized I was getting wet.

I was pissing myself. I tried to stop, but couldn’t. I didn’t know how to control my bladder!

I didn’t know what to do! I kept on until, I assume, my bladder was emptied onto the floor. Using the controller, my Master had made me incontinent!

“You seem unable to control yourself, Fatina,” he said to me with a twinkle in his eye. He thought it was funny that I no longer had bladder control! “We aren’t stopping, so this will serve well for the drive ahead. I know you would try to hold it, rather than soil yourself. Now you have no choice. I’ll restore your control when we get to the Enakazin.”

He turned to the matron and gave her instructions. I didn’t think Negasi ever asked, he always commanded. “Clean her out with an enema, and clean her up everywhere afterwards.”

I saw the look of disgust or disdain on the matron’s face. I thought it was a fine reward for what she’d done to my mind, even if Negasi had requested it. It was the best I could have expected. I knew I wouldn’t enjoy the enema, but I resolved that the matron wouldn’t either. Then, my Master undercut me.

“I’ll make it worth your while.”

She smiled and bowed her head. Apparently, the matron knew he’d be as good as his word.

Negasi left the small clinic room holding a mobile phone to his ear. I remember being surprised that he had any signal at all. The matron removed an impressive selection of items from

the cupboard, and told me to stand still, bend over, and grasp my ankles.

A probe was inserted into me, into my rosebud, and I felt a growing pressure, as though the entire entrance to my ass were being expanded. She was inflating the probe so that I couldn't expel it. Five minutes later, my bowels were flooded with some sort of cleansing solution, and I was cramping from the effect of all this fluid within me.

I moaned and begged the matron to stop and release me. Instead, still more fluid, and the concomitant pressure, were added to my lower abdomen. An eternity passed. I wanted to eject what she had infused into me, but I couldn't! It was as though I were stoppered shut – which I actually was!

I thought I would die. I needed to poop, shit, expel waste, eject the fluid filling me beyond any words to describe it. Finally, a seemingly infinite time later, the matron positioned me over a drain, and released the inflated plug closing me.

I exploded from my ass in a disgusting spray of detritus, most but not all of which sloshed down the drain. This continued for another eternity. Then I was done.

I was sprayed with a hot-water hose, doused with an antiseptic solution – or so I was told – wiped down, dried off, and fitted with a diaper.

I WAS WEARING A DIAPER AGAIN! I had never been so ashamed because this time, I wasn't paralyzed. Negasi had made me incontinent so that I wouldn't hold back voiding myself on the long trip to wherever he was taking me and, according to him, possibly damaging myself. Then, before I left that awful place, everything got worse, as I felt a wetness develop in the front of the diaper, where I'd wet myself, yet again. I couldn't stop it! I didn't know how!

I left with my Master in his limousine, a very short while later. Save for the diaper, I was as naked as I'd been for the last year and a half. I was far more embarrassed in the diaper than I'd ever been naked, because being naked had become

totally normal for me. There had always been a good dose of exhibitionism in me, which was probably why initially being naked in front of the other prisoners and staff hadn't bothered me much at all. I'd become more self-conscious after they fattened me up, but at this point I'd even adjusted to showing off my now Rubenesque body.

Now, though, I wasn't naked, I wasn't paralyzed for punishment, I was a baby in a diaper! I pissed myself! They had taken even that little bit of dignity from me!

We drove out of the gates of the Control Institution for Delinquent Women in a Mercedes limo. I hadn't noticed when I'd arrived, but there was no barbed or razor wire around or above the gate at all. I'd never considered it in the eighteen months I'd been in the Control Institution, but I realized then that there had been nothing but a high, chain-link fence surrounding the entire prison. Most anyone could climb over it. But there never was an escape attempt, nor had there ever been one, based on what several matrons had told me in casual conversation.

We were all controlled. The controls and the controllers had a grip on our minds. Escape was impossible, because none of us had been capable of either planning or doing it.

I realized – like I never had before – that no one who entered the Control Institution, ever emerged the same. I may have entered as a talented, educated, stable, free American. I left as a piece of deformed clay, to be molded by whomever held my controller.

As best I could remember, I'd been a good person. I was responsible; I contributed to the betterment of society; I used my talents for the difficult acquisition of knowledge valuable to everybody. I was fair and not prejudiced; I was respectful and thoughtful; I had been a good, loving child, teenager, young adult, adult friend, and lover.

It hadn't mattered. The universe didn't care. In spite of all my good intentions, I'd been turned into the sub-person that those who controlled me wanted me to be.

Ashamed and distraught in my diaper, I was escorted to a doorway that lead outside. The hot blast of dry, dusty air was exactly like every day in this hellhole. I was certain that I would now depart this place, only to be carried to yet another level of hell.

As the gates closed behind us, I also realized that I'd probably never see my friends Altaf and Erij again. I sat almost naked in the rear compartment, belted into the seat across from my Master. The belt seemed to cut into my naked, pudgy skin everywhere it touched me. I began to cry, my deep sobs wracking my little body, made chubby through no fault of my own. The Institution had altered my body and my mind. Already, my new master had further transformed me. I'd lost the only friends I had; I was disappearing even deeper into this strange part of the strange Middle East; and I was about to be turned into a whore.

“Consider yourself rescued, Little One,” my Master told me.

I couldn't. I didn't. I wouldn't. I was now merely enslaved by someone else.

Epilogue – Reflections of My Life

We had driven through never-ending desert for about an hour. I was still totally distraught. My eyes were surely red and puffy, my nose was running, tears wouldn't stop, and I had managed to dampen a mountain of tissues that rested on the white leather seat next to me.

“Fatina,” my Master said, interrupting my morose, self-pity party. “Unfasten your belt, get a waste container out of that cabinet, and dispose of those tissues.”

It was a command so, of course, that's what I did. I returned the wastebasket to the cupboard, closed the door, and started to refasten my seatbelt. He offered me a cigarette, which I took and smoked hungrily. I felt that stirring of arousal.

“Don't refasten the belt,” Negasi told me. “Remove your diaper, scoot down a little, spread your legs, and massage your slit and clitoris until you cum.”

I shook my head in response. In my current state, that was not something I wanted to do.

Negasi just sat there and looked at me, not saying anything else. I felt that itch start to build in me, that need to obey his command. Resisting it would only increase my anxiety, which would build until it was true agony. I looked at him sadly, then did what he commanded and began to play with my newly-restored pussy.

I thought I might be slow to respond because my intimacies had been dormant for so long, but that didn't happen. I could feel the beginnings of arousal almost at once, and the pleasure built steadily. My tears stopped. In minutes I'd reached the peak and was at the edge, about to cum for the first time since I left Dyana on my ill-fated trip to give a talk in Jeddah. I moaned in pleasure.

In a second or two, I would climax. “Continue to pleasure yourself as you are, but you cannot cum,” Negasi told me.”

It was too late; I knew it was going to happen right then. I kept at it, trying not to care about what he'd said, while I anticipated my first orgasm in eighteen months. I was there and nothing would stop me ...

I was still there, working myself in the way I knew would bring me over the top. I was right there, unmistakably at the edge, about to sail over. Oh! The anticipation was sublime! I was finally a sexual being again! I was about to cum!

I was about to cum! I was right there! Another stroke, another manipulation of my screaming clit and ...

I didn't cum. I stayed right at that sweet point - that delicious moment before orgasm - for several minutes, working, working everything in my genitals. I used my left hand to squeeze my enlarged, rock-hard nipples. I rubbed and pushed and pinched all of my erogenous places.

And I couldn't cum!

I had to continue. My Master had ordered me to. But I couldn't cum. I had intended to disobey him, expecting to climax before the itch to obey got too severe. I was edging, but edging with nowhere to go. Nothing I did could make me cum. Was I broken? Had something not returned to normal in my pussy, in my clit?

I continued on for five minutes, ten. Somewhere in there I wet myself and it ran down my slit, between my legs and onto the seat. I didn't care. I kept on but stayed at the top of my arousal. I couldn't go over the top into that glorious culmination of my diligent effort – an orgasm!

I looked at Negasi who dispassionately returned my stare. Then without changing expression, he simply whispered, "Cum."

Instantly, I exploded in an orgasm so wonderful and simultaneously so painful that I screamed uncontrollably. My plump curves shook and my vagina squirted so hard that I wet Negasi's shoes. It was the most powerful, all-encompassing feeling of my life.

That orgasm was so consuming, so agonizingly strong and painful, that I never wanted to experience its like again. It was too much. More than a person would ever care to bear. I sat there, physically wrecked from what he'd made me do, how he'd controlled the level where I was stuck, and how a word from him pushed me into a crazed climax that was beyond what any woman would care to experience.

Negasi pulled his robe up to his waist, then over his head. He sat naked and very, very erect. He reached into a small compartment and removed a hand towel and tube of lubricant.

"For your rosebud. Dry yourself first," he said evenly, as though it were the most normal thing.

I was weak from the shattering climax. I didn't want to obey but I couldn't help myself. I could deny my Master nothing. *He controlled me.*

I squatted on my haunches and liberally lubed my asshole. I was no anal virgin as such, but I wasn't much experienced. The last time had been the sorry attempt Erij, Altaf and I had made when we'd snuck off to be intimate. I'd taken Altaf's and Erij's fingers within it. Prior to that, I could count my other anal incidents on one hand.

"Sit on me," Negasi said. "Ease onto me slowly."

I turned, facing away from him, and reached behind to grasp his relaxed upper arms to guide me. Slowly, carefully, I positioned his cock at the entrance to my well-lubricated rosebud. I eased onto his rock-hard penis, rotating my hips slightly to facilitate moving him into me. My first impulse, as it had been every time, save with Altaf and Erij, was to move away and reject the intrusion. Either his command to my controlled mind, or my own need to obey for fear of the consequences of my disobedience, kept me slowly, slowly twisting around and dropping carefully onto his steel-like rod, pushing it ever deeper within my rectum.

Negasi held my still-shapely waist in his big hands and I moved up and down on him, trying to relax enough to avoid more serious discomfort and backlash from the intrusion of his large member. He pushed up into me deeper and I gasped from

the force and need to expel him. I continued to ride him, though, and tried to make myself squeeze him when he reached maximum depth. I could tell by his murmurs that it pleased him, so I continued to do that. I found that it took my mind off my need to be rid of his cock within me.

Tia chose that moment to appear to me from the place where I'd been sitting. She was dressed in a beige, Eritrean Habisha kamis trimmed in royal blue, and the netela head shawl. Her deeply brown hair, flowing behind the netela, was longer than I remembered it. She held her hands in prayer, her fingertips up by her lips, her head bent and her eyes downcast.

For a moment I panicked, fearing Negasi would see her. Then I realized that there was no chance of that. She was either a figment of my imagination, or a spirit that would appear only to me. I wanted to speak out loud to her, but I couldn't, of course. She sat there looking at me being penetrated from behind.

Negasi continued to pound into the rear entrance of my body, and I tried to perform as best I could for my Master. I tried not to let Tia's presence, or vision, affect what was very real and immediate. I couldn't let her disrupt what my Master had commanded.

I felt my Master reach around to my sensitive pussy, and circle my clitoris with his long, slender, talented fingers. My clit was ultra-sensitive and sore, but he managed to manipulate the area around it, causing my arousal to build again.

I tried to use the image of Tia, sitting there in prayer, to shut down my increasing pleasure, but it had no effect. My upward movement toward another orgasm wasn't to be denied.

He played me like a master would play a del Gesù violin. He knew what to do with the combination of his anal penetration of me, and his digital manipulation of my sexual center. I thought I would surely melt away. I hoped I would.

"Little One, cum for me," he said and I found I was putty in his hands; his command utterly controlled my body.

His words immediately catapulted me to the top and I came again with uncontrollable force, not at all sure of where the arousal had originated. I rolled over the climax into another piercing, consuming orgasm as, only seconds later, Negasi exploded into my rectum. Having no personal control at all, I squeezed and pumped him with my anal contractions until I knew he was spent. My sweet Tia, if the apparition had any connection to her real essence, watched the man who now owned me finesse my clit and fuck me up my ass to a blistering climax.

Tia slowly raised her head and looked up at me, tears in her eyes. I thought I heard her tell me something but her voice was little more than a slight breeze.

My mind was mush, coming off another orgasm over which I had no control. When I came down, Tia was still there.

I heard Tia say, “Destiny ... we were so good together ... as high-school friends, and briefly as lovers. Don’t punish yourself anymore over what happened when I perished and left the real world of existence. You were imperfect and so was I. You’ve done right by your friends, including me, Mimi, Dyana, Altaf and Erij. Stop believing you deserved what’s happened to you. That’s not how it works.

“No, you cannot return to your original path. There have been too many disruptions, detours, and doors closed. Perhaps my demise was the only event needed to lead you off the track. Regardless, others have taken your destiny and bound you to follow them. Live as best you can.”

She faded quickly, but before she vanished I thought I heard her say, “Seek out the Sisters. You’ll know when the time comes. I’m so sorry I couldn’t be there for you. Now, the most I can hope for is to be allowed to observe.” A moment later, I was alone with Negasi, who was shrinking out of me. I had no idea whom Tia meant by “the Sisters.”

My Master handed me a cigarette, which I lit and sucked on like a baby with her pacifier. I discovered the greater erotic pleasure they gave after sex.

He had complete control over me on this new path. I donned a new diaper, moved back to my seat and began to cry again.

There was more to come. Some of it would redeem me, some of it would devastate me. Friends would come, and friends would dissolve in the disruption of their own universe, to which I was a mere witness. Through it all, I would be there. I would become more and less, then more again.

But I would never be the same.

**The story of *Destiny/Karimah/Fatina*
continues in **Destiny Bound**
Coming in Fall, 2016**

Chapter Title Songs

The chapter titles in *Destiny Taken* are all from songs: some older, some contemporary. In case you're interested, here are the songs, and artists. If you try each song at each chapter, I think you'll like the way they connect to what you're reading.

Prologue – *Fireflies*: April Kry, 2015.

Chapter 1 - *Yesterday*: The Beatles, 1965.

Chapter 2 – *Life Goes On*: Poison, 1990.

Chapter 3 - *Landslide*: Fleetwood Mac, 1975.

Chapter 4 – *This Girl Is a Woman Now*: Gary Puckett and the Union Gap, 1969.

Chapter 5 – *Real Love*: Mary J. Blige, 1992.

Chapter 6 - *Broken*: Lifehouse, 2008.

Chapter 7 – *The Way We Were*: Barbra Streisand, 1974.

Chapter 8 – *Don't Let the Sun Go Down on me*: Elton John, 1974.

Chapter 9 - *A Descent into Hell*: Michael Wilson Jones, 2014.

Chapter 10 – *Loss of Control*: Green Day, 2012.

Chapter 11 – *Count on Me*: Bruno Mars, 2010.

Chapter 12 – *Why Don't You Smile Now*: The All Night Workers, 1965.

Chapter 13 – *Come Softly to Me*: The Fleetwoods, 1958.

Chapter 14 – *Happiness in Slavery*: Nine Inch Nails, 1992.

Chapter 15 – *Mind Control*: Stephen Marley, 2007.

Epilogue – *Reflections of My Life*: The Marmalade, 1969.

About the Author

Thirty-something Giulia Napoli grew up in East Lansing, Michigan. She has a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Journalism from a prestigious Great Lakes area university. While an undergraduate, Giulia studied abroad for three years - a year each in London, Florence, and Brussels. Her interest in the many forms of erotica started and grew during her time in Europe. Giulia writes contemporary adult fantasy - romantic erotica - with themes of submission, fetishes, body modification, unusual bondage, and both M/F and F/F sexuality. Her stories have frequent surprising, unexpected, erotic twists thrown in. Her settings are often exotic and global in scope, reflecting the broad travel experiences of this creative author.

Gi is married to a brilliant, totally non-nerdy (her words) industrial scientist and executive. She has a three-year-old daughter. She and her husband live in a large metroplex in the Great Lakes region of the USA.

Liked *Destiny Taken*? Hated it? Just want to say hi? Don't hesitate to Contact Giulia Napoli at:

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Giulia and the publisher hope you've enjoyed reading *Destiny Taken*. We would very much appreciate it if you would take a few minutes to return to the online store where you purchased *Destiny Taken*, and/or *Goodreads*, and leave a review for other potential readers. Our thanks in advance.



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