



Tesla's Succubus

A dark story of TG erotica
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Smashwords Edition

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I woke up bleeding.

I was lying on my back in the rear of a room that I didn't understand. There was smoke and screaming all around me, terrible smells drifting through the air, and sparks crackling through the air. I sat up in stages, my body creaking and protesting, and waited for my brain to make sense of it.

I'd been on a trip. I was going to a new town to start over after the last one hadn't worked out. I'd been on a bus.

That's when the room made sense again. I was looking at the interior of the bus. It was on its side, the entrance pinned against the ground. The smoke was gathering around me and I knew that I had to get out. I remembered a terrific shock and a huge flash of light that had left purplish afterimages on my retinas. I'd landed badly and I was bleeding from a wound on my head somewhere.

I worked my way out from underneath a seat that had me pinned and started to crawl toward the front. That seemed like the best way since there were strange things all over the place and I didn't trust my balance enough to try and step over them. I heard a woman crying up ahead, begging for help, but before I could get to her I had to make my way around a body lying crumpled near the ceiling. It was burning and was so far gone that I couldn't tell whether it was a man or a woman. It was the source of the smoke, though, I knew that. It burned brightly, without any indication that it was ever going to stop.

I worked my way past it, doing my best to not get singed by the strange fire. Whoever it was, I couldn't help the victim. I kept moving toward the screaming, picking my way around other bodies and debris. One man only had a skull where his head should have been, picked clean as if by ants and the elements. I looked away and saw a ghost sliding through the wreckage. He was trying to grab ahold of anything as he was pulled toward the back of the bus by an invisible force. I felt him slide through me, and the contact was like standing in ice water for an instant. He made no sound, but the expression on his face said that he was screaming. I couldn't tell what was pulling him but it pulled him right through the back of the bus.

I tried to concentrate on the screaming, so shocked that I felt like I was observing things from outside my body. It was the same feeling of removal that I

got at a scary movie: sure, things were terrible, but they were on the other side of a screen.

I finally found the source of the screaming. A woman was hanging from the “wall,” where the row of seats was on my left. She was still in the same position as she’d been when the bus had been in its normal orientation but instead of sitting normally she was fused with the seat somehow. Her right hand was sunk wrist-deep into the set in front of her and she was half-immersed in the one she sat upon. I saw that her back was a part of the seat as well. Her breaths were quick and shallow. She kept screaming for help over and over, not seeing me even when I was right in front of her. I saw that her necklace and her clothing had become partially embedded in her skin as well, and that was enough to make me skitter away from her. She didn’t notice.

I turned my back and considered closing my eyes, but I had to get out of there. The smoke from the burning body was starting to gather in a cloud and I didn’t want to suffocate or burn to death if the heat caught the fuel on fire. Turning away from the screaming woman was a lot easier than it would have been if I hadn’t already been traumatized by the other things I’d seen.

I was glad to see that the windshield had broken out. I gingerly kicked some of the glass out of the way, trying not to think about the driver who was staring sightlessly above me, the steering wheel embedded in his chest as if it had grown there.

I crawled out and looked around. It was early evening in the desert, the sun already down and the air starting to turn cool. I stood, bracing myself against the downed bus. I felt dizzy and I barely kept my balance while I staggered away from the vehicle.

I collapsed on the road about twenty feet away from it, and that’s where the rescue vehicles found me. A pair of medics worked on me to stop the bleeding from my scalp wound, and one of them kept saying, “Ma’am, you’re going to be fine! Ma’am, stay with me!”

My last thought before spiraling into darkness was, “Why are they calling me ma’am?”

Deep in the darkness with me, something moved and chuckled.

I woke up slowly. For a while I wasn't sure if I was actually waking up or not because it was so dark, but my eyes adjusted and the gloom around me resolved into a small, dark room. I was on a bunk that was bolted to the wall, with no blankets or anything else familiar around me. The door was sealed as if someone was scared of germs getting in. Or out, whispered part of my brain. There was a toilet and a sink bolted to the opposite wall, and that made up the extent of the furnishings. There was no pillow or blanket, and the room was just cool enough to be uncomfortable. I sat up and immediately lay down again as I was hit with a wave of dizziness. Nothing felt right, though I couldn't say exactly what was wrong.

I looked down to inspect myself. I was wearing an unfamiliar one-piece outfit that could have been any color in the gloom. My body looked lumpy and misshapen and it took me a little while to figure out how to unzip the front of the jumpsuit to find out why.

I felt the breasts on my chest before I saw them, sliding the zipper down between them to open the suit. They were warm and soft, I felt, springy. My hand kept moving while my brain tried to shut down, and I wasn't able to look away. Breasts indeed, attached to me and half-revealed along with bottomless cleavage. I unzipped further and let them out, staring at them. They sat proudly, larger than average but not overly so. A peaked nipple pointed at the ceiling on each side, puckering in the coolish air.

I opened my mouth but nothing came out. There was no sign of scars or other operations, and no soreness. I just had that pervasive feeling of wrongness. When the first shock was over I started noticing other things. My hand was slimmer, the fingers longer and the nails painted some pale shade that was hard to see in the dim light. My body didn't appear misshapen anymore now that I had some idea of what had happened. Instead I could see that my legs were longer, my hips wider. I closed my eyes and felt my face, confirming that it had changed as well.

My fingers trailed over fuller lips and high cheeks, slightly tilted eyes and an upturned nose. I sucked in a breath and let it out again, and something in the

sound told me that my voice had changed to match my new body. I said, “Hello?” very quietly, shocked again at how different I sounded.

I said it again, louder, hoping to attract a guard’s attention. Then I shouted it, standing awkwardly while I stuffed my chest back into the one-piece. I zipped it shut, shivering as my breasts bounced and my nipples traced patterns over the rough material. No problem with sensitivity, at least.

I kept shouting, pounding at the door with the flat of my hand. For a few minutes nothing happened. I was about to give up when a bright light clicked on overhead. I yelped and covered my eyes against the sudden glare, so I didn’t see the door open.

When I was able to blink into focus I saw a man in an Air Force uniform standing there watching me with no expression. Beyond him I saw the open door with two guards facing into the hallway.

I didn’t care about them. I cared about him. Something inside me chuckled again and surged forward while he said, “Ma’am, I’m Captain Elm, and-“

I felt my mouth open, and heard myself hiss, “Sssssteven. MMmm...” I licked my lips as if tasting the word and took a step toward him.

Whatever was inside me whispered things into my mind. “Take him,” it said. “Do him fuck him take him own him caress and scream and CONSUME him.” At the same time I felt desire roaring inside me. It felt like standing too close to a bonfire, listening to it gibber and purr while it sucked air in and turned it into heat. The other things in the room fell away and I focused more and more on him, on this Steven Elm.

The thing inside me, the roaring desire that spoke in need and twisted like a snake, saw into him. It tore through the unimportant parts of his mind, deeper and deeper into something primal, and returned to my body with it. I felt myself heat up even more, burning and melting with the desire. Nothing else in the world mattered but him and if I had to change my form to match his ideal then so be it. I groaned, my back arching as I lost height and gained fuller curves. I shrank down below his eye level, moaning and squealing while he shaped me into something that would satisfy him fully. My breasts shrank as well, and I could feel my hips widen. I wanted to get closer to him but the changes made me unable to take a single step.

After forever, the changes ended. The desire hadn't ended, though. I wanted him even more, wanted nothing so much as to possess and consume him over and over. The thing in my head shrieked in hunger, baring fangs made from pure need.

Elm stared, shocked at my transformation, and I was able to get close enough to put a hand on his cheek. He moaned, his eyes half-closed and his pants tight. He started to raise one hand to touch me but was stopped by one of the guards. The other guard pushed me away from him, shuddering, and they dragged the captain out of the room before slamming the door.

I huddled in the corner, my arms wrapped around my shorter legs, and whimpered. I still felt nothing but the overwhelming need for Steven Elm's touch and seed. After a short time I felt the thing in my head pull back, disappointed. The bonfire inside me started to burn down, leaving only banked embers. At the same time my body slowly shifted back to its original female form, leaving me taller and less curved though bustier.

I shivered, not leaving my spot. What was happening to me? What had happened to the bus? Where was everyone else? Were they prisoners like me, being put through some sort of terrible punishment like mine?

I dragged myself over to the bunk again once I was sure that I was done changing. The thing in my head chuckled and withdrew, settling into a dark place in my brain. I didn't know what it was, but I knew that it was alien. I also knew that it was hungry; a big part of the desire that I'd felt had come from an empty gnaw that corresponded to hunger in my mind.

I didn't have to wait long before the door opened again. This time a woman entered, looking scared. The thing stirred, looking her over and dismissing her; it would take too much energy to accommodate to this little creature's desire. I felt it look at one of the guards before they closed the door, and then it lost interest and subsided again. It was so strange that I missed the first part of what she said and was forced to ask her to repeat herself.

"I...I said I'm Lieutenant Majors."

I blinked, waiting to see if she was playing some kind of prank. She looked too scared to be doing anything like that, so I said, "What's happening? Where am I?" They weren't anything like the sum total of the information I wanted, but

they were a start.

Majors stayed pressed up against the door, as far from me as she could get. “I can’t tell you. I mean, it’s classified. Captain Elm wanted me to find out what happened to you when he came into this cell.”

“Why should I tell you anything at all?”

“Um. Well, if anyone can fix whatever’s happening to you, it’s probably going to be us. Any information you can give us will be helpful. Like, say, your name. What’s your name?” Majors looked marginally less terrified, but she wasn’t exactly crossing the room to give me a hug. She hadn’t lost the note of fear that wove through her words, either. I couldn’t blame her.

“My name’s Thomas Bernhall.”

She stared at me, mouth hanging open. “Bwuh...” she said. I was not reassured.

“You didn’t KNOW what had happened to me?” I said, starting to feel angry.

“How did...that’s impossible,” she said.

“Get out!” I yelled. “Get out and get someone who can tell me something useful! Get OUT!” I kept screaming at her while she pounded on the door and the guards got her out of there. I wasn’t upset enough to try to brave their guns but I made damn sure to get rid of the idiot who’d invaded my space without any idea of how she could help me.

I waited a long time for the next thing to happen. I used the toilet a couple of times and then just laid on the bed, one arm over my eyes, trying not to think about the changes my body had undergone. The thing in my head didn’t offer any suggestions other than to remind me from time to time that it was slowly getting hungrier.

I tried communicating with it, thinking at it in words and then in pictures, but it just crouched where it was and sent out hunger signals. I toyed with the idea that I had gone crazy from the things I’d seen during the crash, but I felt clear-headed in every other way. I tried to come up with tests to see if I was crazy, making up stories and doing math in my head, but nothing seemed to point to a dislocation of reality. I was forced to assume at least for now that the thing in my head was

real. It felt amused by my efforts.

A small slot in the bottom of the door opened and a tray slid in. The food was plain but there was a lot of it and I was suddenly very hungry. I drank several glasses of water with the meal and even ate the gristle that I normally would have rejected from my mystery meat.

I clanged the tray on the door when I was done, and the slot opened again. I slid it through without a word, and it closed. Great. About five minutes later, the light went out.

I felt my way to the bunk and lay down on it, trying not to curl up into a ball to cry myself to sleep. The thing in my head shifted and growled, still hungry even though I was sated. I didn't know what to do for it, so I tried to send it soothing images. It responded with a sudden flood of incredibly vivid sights, sounds, and other sensations, all having to do with red-hot, screaming sex. I could smell the sweat on my partner's body, taste the salt, and hear him grunt while feeling him thrust urgently into me. I saw him arch his head backward and heard him howl while he started jerking inside me, filling me again and again. I screamed back at him, my own orgasm starting to fill me while I bucked my hips into his.

Then suddenly I was back in the cool room, lying on my back and panting. I was covered in sweat and aching from the orgasm that hadn't quite started. I panted, realizing that this was what the thing in my head wanted. It wanted what it had shown me, nothing but sex and desire. "No," I said, horrified. "Never ever."

It chuckled again, wrapping itself up in itself, and then it was quiet. I could feel it watching me and the world around me, though. It was waiting, confident that it would feed.

I closed my eyes and thought about other things until I started to slip into a dream. The world got weird and I noticed, jerking awake. I did that several more times before allowing it to take me away. My dreams were nightmares, full of hopeless wails down empty, windswept corridors that writhed around each other until there was no way to tell which way you were going.

When the door thumped open, I opened my eyes and once again went through the process of trying to figure out where I was. I didn't get very far because the thing in my head immediately focused on the man who'd entered my cell. He'd left the light off so that I couldn't make out many details but to my companion it

didn't matter what our nighttime visitor looked like. He was male, that was the point, and he certainly desired.

I felt the fire build inside me again and I stood to approach him. He wore no identifying uniform, just an undershirt and cargo pants, but a name popped into my head anyway. "Douglasssss," I whispered, enjoying his shock. Everything he did, from the set of his shoulders to the way that he widened his eyes as I spoke his name, caused me to feel hotter. Then my passenger dove into his mind as it had with Elm. It returned and the bonfire exploded, reshaping my body while I stood there and whimpered.

I was shorter when it was over, though not as short as Elm's desire had made me. My chest was much heavier and a quick glance told me that I was filling out my one-piece much more thoroughly than before. My hips were slimmer, and my hair longer. My eyes had tilted even more, and I knew that I had a more Asian appearance. I reached out and touched his cheek, letting the hunger and desire flow into him, and the front of his pants tented immediately.

I groaned at the sight of it. There was a small piece of me shrieking at the rest of me to stop, but my passenger's need had shaped me and now drove me. I knew where to touch him, and how, and I did. He groaned, fumbling with his belt, and I unzipped the front of my suit.

I spilled out of the jumpsuit, my breasts round and bobbing in the half-light. No woman with breasts this large had ever been this firm as well, but my passenger wasn't interested in such details of biology. By the time Douglas was able to get himself out of his boxers I was standing with my back to him, supporting myself on the bed and aiming my butt in his direction. I panted, saying, "Yessss! Come in, come and fill me, come into me!"

He was rough. I didn't care. When he sank into me the first time, awkward and at a bad angle, I felt as if the world's greatest chef had lifted the lid on the first course of the finest meal ever made. The thing in my head cried out with my mouth, moaning encouragement to him.

Every time I started to protest, I drowned in a wave of pleasure. The creature was able to cause my body to orgasm over and over, whimpering and yelping softly so as not to alert anyone else. Douglas was glad to help, pushing in and out as he found the right angle, bringing me to climax after climax as the thing in

my head silenced me. I was stoned on pleasure, barely noticing that Douglas hadn't come even once.

He got more frantic as the minutes went on, pounding into me desperately. I remembered the images that the thing had sent me, realizing that I could smell his sweat and hear his harsh breaths in my ear. Everything just drove the need higher, even the repeated climaxes, and I was able to peak twice more before the thing inside me finally allowed Douglas his release. He came in a torrent, filling me until our combined juices gushed down my leg.

The thing in my head bathed in the sensations, making Douglas pump into me again and again, long minutes passing as it drained him completely dry of energy and need. When he didn't have anything else to give, it let him go. Douglas pulled out of me with a pop, collapsing on the floor. I fell on the bunk, weakly pulling myself onto it as my body started to regain its height and less dramatic curves. The thing in my head sent me a feeling of smug contentment, commenting on its lack of hunger and the fact that I hadn't even slowed it down.

I curled up into a ball and wept, crying for my lack of control and my lost self.

I woke up to shouting. Two guards were in my cell, dragging Douglas out. They were obviously trying their best to get him out fast but he was still unconscious and his limp muscles didn't help. I felt the thing in my head start to focus on them, to try to figure out what they desired. It wasn't hungry right then but it was still starting to build that bonfire inside me. I closed my eyes tight and it let me with an indulgent chuckle.

Once Douglas was gone from the cell, the guards slammed the door shut again. It wasn't long before it creaked open again and I turned to see Majors standing there. She was still shaking, but this time she had her arms crossed over her chest and stood there clenching her hands over her elbows. Her face was pale and she spoke through clenched teeth. "What did you do to Corporal Sarks? He's comatose. How did you knock him out? How did you change like that?"

"You...you saw?"

She flapped her hand, waving the question away. "Of course we saw, there are cameras. How did you do what you did?"

"I told you already, I don't know! There's this...there's something in my head,

and it makes me...makes me change, and do those things, and...you have to get it out! You have to!"

I stood and approached her, pleading. Majors backed away, looking at me with distaste and fear. I stopped in the middle of the cell and she said, "We're going to find out what happened. Until then, don't...don't do anything. We will deal harshly with you."

She thumped on the door while I tried to think of something to say to that. She edged out the door when it opened, never turning her back on me, and I stood there in the middle of the cell for a while afterward. I stood still for a while, staring at the door, trying to figure out what to do. It was obvious that they were scared, both of me and whatever had happened to me. I was starting to suspect that they also weren't sure what to do about it. That scared me almost as much as the last day and a half; what if I was stuck like this?

My passenger squirmed, re-situating itself until it was comfortable. I mirrored it, sitting and shifting about until I was able to watch the door. I was very aware of my new curves, particularly the way my ass and hips filled out the jumpsuit and made sitting normally feel uncomfortable. Adjusting to a new sitting posture took a while, but I had the time for it.

They didn't come back that day. There was another full cycle of darkness, sleep, and waking to the light clicking on before they opened the door again. My passenger was starting to get restless, complaining that it felt peckish. I tried not to think about it. Every time I attempted to communicate with the thing, it assaulted me with a barrage of sensations. They covered the same topic each time, always with me in the woman's place, and I quickly learned not to disturb the thing. It felt disappointed, as if I was depriving it of its fun, but I didn't have much sympathy.

When the door finally opened again, three women in uniform entered. They weren't the mousy kind like Majors; these were the kind who would have looked right at home acting as bouncers at a biker bar. They were all taller than me and they were in much better shape even when you considered the smooth muscle on my new form. The one with the most stripes on her shoulder said, "We've been ordered to take you to the labs."

I wanted to ask questions but she and the others gave me looks that said that any

questions or comments would be met with violence. They didn't pick me up and carry me but I got the impression that was an option. I followed meekly, trying to keep my head down. I tried not to think about the way my hips swayed and my breasts jiggled with each step.

They led me down several halls that were well-lit and clear of any people. I was glad to see that they weren't taking any chances, but the thing in my head kept complaining every time we turned a corner and met another blank hall. We ended up in a large bathroom. Two of the amazons stood at the door and the leader pointed toward a neat pile of toiletries and a new jumpsuit. "Shower and dress. You have fifteen minutes. Starting now." She clicked her watch and then stood at parade rest next to her companions.

I scrambled to get to the showers and turn on the water. I stripped out of the jumpsuit, glad to see it go even though it revealed a body that was no longer mine. It was the first time that I'd really had a chance to inspect myself since the bus had tipped over but I didn't have time. I registered that my soft skin was more sensitive now, and that my legs had no hair at all despite several days without a razor, but that was about it. I barely had enough time to finish the shower and dry before the leader of the amazons was standing there with my new jumpsuit. She was also carrying a bra and a pair of what looked like boxers for me. The clothes were scratchy against my smoother skin but I knew better than to complain. The bra took a little while to figure out. It was a little small, but again, I knew better than to bring it up. It was better than nothing. She watched me dress with no expression and then the three of them took charge and led me into the empty halls again.

They took me a different way, leading me toward a different part of the complex than the one that housed my holding cell. I said, "Where are we going? What's happening?"

No one said a word. When I slowed down to protest and ask again the two behind me put their hands on my shoulders and kept me going at the same quick pace. I wasn't quite ready to test them so I went along with it.

After another couple of halls we stopped at a door a lot like the one that kept my cell sealed. The leader turned to me and said, "We're going in here to find out how it is that you do what you do. If you resist I will personally shoot you in the leg for starters. Am I incredibly clear."

I nodded, feeling like a deer facing down a tiger. She grunted and turned to punch a code into the keypad on the wall next to the door. The door beeped and unsealed, and we went through into an airlock. She repeated the procedure after the first door sealed again and then she led me into a room with a table and two chairs. Her amazon companions stayed outside, watching. She re-sealed the door and pointed to one of the chairs. "Sit."

I sat, worried about where this was going. Rather than sitting across from me, she opened the door on the far end of the room and left, leaving me alone again. I noticed that a large mirror covered one wall, and I assumed that it was one-way glass. I stared at my reflection, wondering who the gorgeous woman was and why I was wearing her body. I stood to get a better look. I was tall and slender, and my pleasing curves were obvious even in the jumpsuit. I could have been a model or a queen or a call girl, my regal looks capable of lending credence to any of those roles. It was especially impressive when I considered that I was wearing little more than a cloth sack; if I looked like this now, I'd have been blinding with some makeup and the right clothes.

My head jerked and I realized that I'd been standing there for quite a while, contemplating myself. I'd even unzipped my suit part of the way, showing the points of my collarbones and my smooth throat. I zipped back up, blushing, and the thing in my head coiled itself back around the back of my mind again. It snickered at my embarrassment and rage.

I sat and stared at my hands folded on the table in front of me.

Another few minutes went by before there was a crackling noise and the speakers embedded in the ceiling spoke with a man's voice. "Is your name Thomas Bernhall?"

I looked up at the mirror, startled. "Um. Yes?"

"You don't sound very certain. I ask this because I have a file in front of me that states that Thomas Bernhall is a male."

"I am Thomas Bernhall. I don't understand what's happened to me. Where am I? What's hap-"

"I'm asking the questions here. We've set up this interrogation room this way because of your reaction to male personnel. You're on an Air Force base in

America, that's the best I can do for you. As to what's happened, that's classified. We need to know the extent of your abilities, and how you alter your shape. We also need to know how you stunned Corporal Sarks so effectively, and how long the secondary effects will last." I was fairly sure that it was Captain Elm doing the questioning, safe behind his glass and speakers.

"What secondary effects?"

He didn't answer me directly, but over the course of what felt like several hours I picked up a few things. Sarks was no longer in a coma but he didn't remember going into the cell last night and seemed unable to become sexually aroused at all. I didn't have any information for them besides what little I knew about the thing in my head. I didn't want to talk about the images or about my semi-rape the night before, but he kept at me and kept at me until I told him all the details just to make him stop.

Then he made me go over it again, and again. I don't know how many times I told what I knew, but my throat was raw by the time I finished. It was almost a blessing to see the amazons re-enter to take me back to my cell. Once there I devoured my food without tasting it and then fell asleep listening to my passenger complain about its own hunger.

The amazons returned in the morning. They had name-tags on their uniforms, but I didn't think there was any reason to learn them. They obviously didn't have any use for me; I was just an annoying assignment. They led me to the same interrogation room and left me there. At least this time there was a plastic pitcher of water on the table. I drank from it while waiting for the questions to start up again.

The speakers crackled again, and a different voice said, "Bernhall. We're going to do something different today to verify some of your claims. We're going to run some tests on you today."

The amazons re-entered, taking me out the other door. Once again the halls were empty. I tried not to think that it had to do with me and whatever had happened to me but I knew better. There should have been guards and other personnel all over the place. I heard noises and voices from the other side of a lot of the doors we passed, so I knew it wasn't deserted. They led me to a door marked with a red cross and opened it, leading me inside in the middle of the flock as before.

There were only females in there, all in various uniforms. One of them signed something that the lead amazon handed her and I was turned over to the med techs. When Elm had told me that they were going to run some tests on me, he'd understated the case.

I spent the entire rest of the day being scanned, stabbed, cut, and assessed. They took readings of my oxygen use during exertion and then did a full-body MRI on me. I lost eight vials of blood that day, along with a small skin sample and several locks of hair. There were psychological tests, sensory tests, tests that I'd never heard of before. By the end of it I was so tired that I just wanted them to slip me some cyanide and have done with it. None of the doctors would respond to my questions except to tell me that pretty much everything I was asking was classified. After a few rejections like that I settled into silence, just doing what they told me to do. There was no way to resist; I found out that if I didn't do something they would call the amazons in and they would make me do whatever it was.

I was sore and exhausted when they finished, glad to see my cell after a forced march through endless empty hallways. I had enough strength to devour my meal and collapse into the bunk; not even my passenger's whining about hunger was enough to stop me. It had gotten stronger, not as strong as that first day but louder than any other time. Soon I was going to have to do something about it. I wondered briefly about just curling into a ball and denying it what it wanted until it just died or went away or something. As soon as the thought passed through my mind, I was fed a five-senses movie about me breaking away from the amazons in search of prey and dying in a hail of bullets. It left me shaking and crying on my bunk with the thing in my head smirking at me while it coiled into the back of my brain again.

I was almost eager for the amazons the next day. My dreams had been wild and graphic thanks to my passenger and I was looking forward to explaining about its needs again. Maybe it would get some attention this time and quit bothering me. It was whipping my new body into a sort of constant low-grade arousal, and even though I had resorted to masturbation a few times there'd been no relief. It hadn't even let me orgasm; each time I'd given up in disgust.

They took me to the showers again, and then to the interrogation room once I was clean. Everything was as it had been, including the pitcher of water and the glass next to it. The amazons left me alone once more, and I sat again. When the

speakers crackled, it was the voice from the first day. I was almost sure that it was Captain Elm. The thing in my head growled at that thought; it wanted Elm's energy, though any man would do. I tried not to think about it.

Probably-Elm said, "Bernhall, we're going to try something different today. You'll be glad to know that you're in good health. Incredibly good health, actually, given what you've been through. It lends some credence to your claims about an extranormal entity, and we've only found one way to test for that. Please have some water now; it will help you relax."

I shrugged and poured, drinking a glass off and then pouring another. About halfway through the second glass, time started to slow down around me. I put the glass down and sat. My muscles relaxed further than I expected, and I realized that the water was drugged. I wasn't unconscious but it relaxed me to the point of nearly falling out of my seat.

I enjoyed the sensation until the door opened and I saw who entered. Two men came in, both looking slightly nervous. Relaxed or not, the thing in my head was alert and took the opportunity to surge forward. I stood, approaching the closest man while I felt the heat build inside. I put my hand on his cheek and sighed, "Curtissss." The heat grew to bonfire strength when the thing dipped into his mind and found his fantasy. I felt my body shift and melt while I whined with a combination of need and pain. My passenger let me see my eventual form: a short blonde with impossible measurements, dead eyes and cocksucking lips. Curtis wasn't in it for love; he wanted a bimbo to use as a depository.

My passenger was happy to oblige him, using my body as the canvas for Curtis's dreams. He stared at me while I changed, and I assume that the other man did as well but I was only interested in Curtis. It wasn't that he was better-looking or anything; he'd simply been closer. The thing in my head was interested in the other man as well but its interest was different for him somehow. It wanted Curtis for food, but it wanted the other man for something more.

I wasn't allowed to care. As my body solidified I worked my way out of the jumpsuit. I whined quietly, an animal noise of need that cut right through his mind and down into the lizard parts of his brain. Naked, my ridiculously developed body bobbing and shimmying with each movement, I knelt in front of him and unzipped his pants as if I was unlocking the door to an incredible treasure. He was hard, his shaft barely protruding past the start of a potbelly.

Curtis was short and stout, a day or two past his last shave, and didn't smell the best, but it didn't matter right then. Thanks to the thing in my head, he was the most desirable creature I'd ever seen and I wanted nothing but to do what he wanted.

What he wanted had to do with my lips. I'd recognized that they were well-formed for the task, but I hadn't realized how plump they really were until I kissed the head of his cock and then started licking my way down the shaft. Fed on his desires and dreams, I had an impressive education in the art of fellatio over the course of my next few orgasms. My passenger fed me pleasure even while it kept Curtis from climaxing. I licked and sucked and swirled, using my hands, breasts, and even my hair along with my mouth to keep him groaning and excited. I could my unexpected talents driving his tension higher and higher, though it was hard for me to focus through the pleasure that kept washing through me. There was nothing I could do to cause even the slightest pause in my movements; the passenger was in total control, feeding pleasure and need into me until I was crazed with it. The orgasms were incredible, wiping my conscious mind out with so much ecstasy that I lost track of what I was doing.

Curtis certainly wasn't complaining. I didn't know what the other man was doing until I felt his hands on my overinflated breasts. I felt his need as well, distant echoes of the overwhelming desire that drove me to Curtis. My passenger handled both of them with aplomb, making sure that Curtis didn't lose interest during my long treatment and at the same time breaking down any of the other's inhibitions against being near his naked colleague.

All of this was distant to me. I had a focus and I had a goal, and I went after those things with all the skill that I'd acquired. Sweet pleasure screamed through me in waves, rising and falling like a lighthouse beam, lending additional enthusiasm to my activities. I could feel his eruption coming closer, still held in check but soon to power through the block that was keeping him from his climax. It went on and on until I thought I'd go insane, and then my passenger removed the block and Curtis erupted into my mouth. I clamped my lips down on him, sucking his seed down my throat eagerly while my passenger supped on the energy draining into me. I don't know how long it took, but when he staggered and went down I knew that he didn't have enough energy to get another erection for a good long time.

I turned to the other man, feeling my passenger shift its focus at the same time. I stood and touched his cheek and the thing in my head found his name and dreams. "Ah...Xavier..." I whispered, drawing the name out into a pleased purr while the heat burned inside and started the alterations again. I stood holding his shoulder while I changed, keeping my balance and making sure that he wouldn't run at the same time. My passenger mentally snorted at the idea, feeding me the knowledge that Xavier wouldn't be going anywhere. Indeed, he watched eagerly while my skin darkened and my impossible breasts shrank to a more realistic size. I felt my hips and behind spread, becoming wider and deeper until both were breathtaking. I noticed the deep brown of my soft skin and felt my hair curl and tighten on my head. I glanced at the mirror and saw an ebony beauty standing there holding Xavier's shoulder. He was skinny and white, no greater possible contrast to my new form, but it didn't matter. He was my goal and my hunger.

But it wasn't the same kind of hunger. It still burned in me, but it felt different. I tried to understand what had changed while I gently stripped him of his clothes but the thing in my head was busy with something. I couldn't imagine what it was. It didn't matter; Xavier was there and needed me almost as much as I

needed him, and he was going to get all of me.

I turned and put my palms flat on the table, arching my back and presenting my incredible rear to him. Xavier licked his lips, looking vaguely ridiculous in his naked state, but neither one of us cared about that. I was so ready for him that I was dripping, and he was obviously ready for me. I bit my lip when he took hold of my hips and positioned himself, moaning when he pushed in. I gripped him gently, massaging him with muscles educated by his desires, and I moaned back at him. Xavier was content to find a slow rhythm and stick to it, driving me crazy with slowly mounting pleasure. I peaked after a while, working hard to keep gripping the table while I yelped and shuddered, pulsing around him while he kept his slow assault up. The thing in my head kept busy with whatever it was doing, leaving me and the desire to keep him entertained. I don't know how long it went on but I know that each one of my climaxes was stronger than the one before. Soon I was screaming out my ecstasy and barely able to keep my grip on the table, much less stay vertical.

My passenger's surge toward Xavier was strange this time. It allowed him to climax, groaning and pulling his hips tight against mine to try to make sure that I was completely full, and it swallowed his energy as I filled up, but then it didn't just go back to its den. It seemed to catch the energy and change it somehow, and it turned the energy and funneled it right back into Xavier. I was squealing with pleasure while it happened, another orgasm wracking my body, so I didn't get all the details.

I heard Xavier cry out and slip out of me, and then he fell on the floor. He writhed as if in the grip of some kind of seizure, gripping the sides of his head with both hands. I watched in pleasure-stoned shock while his body started to alter, the muscles and bones under his skin seeming to melt. His skin darkened slowly while his body shook and changed, becoming taller. I watched his hips broaden while his chest sprouted twin bumps that swelled outward and his face and skull changed. The whole process must have taken no more than five minutes but it felt like forever. When he finally relaxed and went limp, his form had changed into a familiar one; it was the same one that I saw when I turned and looked at the mirror, the same form that his desires had changed me into. The thing in my head turned and coiled around the back of my brain again, sending out all kinds of tired and satisfied sensations. As a side note it started the process to turn my body back into its usual female form.

I was still shifting into that form when the doors opened and the amazons stormed in. I was so tired from the sex and the shifting that I barely noticed when they grabbed me and pulled me out of the interrogation room, heading for the cell that I was starting to think of as home.

I was in there for another cycle of darkness and light, what I assumed was a day. The thing in my head was my only companion, and out of boredom I asked it what the hell it had done to Xavier. It considered the question for a while and then sent me a set of carefully constructed scenes. I found myself lying on my back while a man pumped into me, bringing me to orgasm while he himself emptied into me. I stayed in the scene, but time accelerated around me. It paused to show that my belly was swelling and then it picked up speed again. My belly and breasts swelled until I was tight, and then suddenly there was a huge wash of pain as I gave birth in the dream. It was so intense that I almost fainted, but soon I was holding a baby to my milk-engorged breasts.

Then I was back in the cell, belly flat and breasts just large instead of engorged. “You...you had a baby?” I said. The thing didn’t respond, just gave the impression of a yawn and stopped moving.

The door opened again and someone stumbled in. It shut behind her, sealing her in. It took me a moment to adjust to the surprise of the movement, but once I did I recognized Xavier. Or rather I recognized the woman she’d become, wearing a jumpsuit a lot like mine. She stumbled through the cell toward me as if half her strings had been cut, stopping and staring at the bunk for a moment before sitting on it. She stared at the opposite wall.

After a moment of silence, I said, “Um...Xavier, right? Are you...” I thought of several different ways to end the sentence, but none of them made a bit of sense.

She whispered, “What...what happened to me?”

It was kind of a big question, and one that I’d been trying to answer myself for a while. I said nothing.

She turned to look at me, beautiful eyes full of pain and confusion. “What happened? There’s...I feel like there’s this thing in my head, saying things.”

I nodded, and my passenger suddenly came forward and made me stare into her eyes. I felt something echo from inside Xavier, something lost and sad like the

screams from the nightmares that haunted me. My passenger felt joyful for a moment, but the longer the communion went on the more that feeling faded. It was replaced by confusion and then sadness, even horror. I whispered, "What is it? What's wrong?" Besides all the obvious, of course.

The thing started sending me images of other species, things that lived and thought and loved like humans, but were alien in different ways. They were all intelligent, though, and they had shared the same parasite that lived in my mind. It showed me how its people had spread through the species, creating huge empires that thrived and lived and eventually died out, leaving the parasite behind to wait for its next host.

Then it showed me humanity, and rather than giant numbers of its offspring all breeding and subjugating the world, it showed me standing in the midst of a group of faceless women. They had no offspring.

Something in us made its offspring sterile. I couldn't help but feel a vengeful pride in humanity; at least it would die with me and the few people that it managed to change. The expression on Xavier's face told me that she was hearing and seeing the same things, and she grinned right along with me.

My passenger felt my pride and punished me for it. I was subjected to a stream of five-sense movies of me being beaten and killed a hundred different ways, of me losing dozens of children, of anything that it could think of to hurt me. By the end I was curled up in the corner, wailing, and the amazons were trying to make me stand up. I'd gone the whole night in the grip of my passenger, experiencing lifetimes during those hours. Xavier was asleep on the bunk, looking exhausted and beautiful.

I lay down on the bunk next to her, the thing in my head apparently having lost interest in torturing me. I tried to think about the things it had shown me. I suppose it was a little uncouth of me to take joy in something that was obviously causing it so much pain, but come on. It had done nothing but try to ruin my life since the wreck. The Air Force wasn't much better, but at least I could put a face to them. The thing in my head was amorphous, just a concept rather than something that I could see.

I was musing over the idea of a living meme when Xavier started to wake up. Her quiet snores came less evenly and she opened her eyes to look around. I was

struck by them, so deep and clear and dark. Her own desires had shaped her body, and I wondered who had shaped mine. I was incredible, no doubt, but not exactly my personal ideal.

Her eyes widened when she recognized me. She scrambled backward on her hands and butt, nearly falling off the bunk. I stood and backed away, giving her plenty of room. She looked around the cell frantically, then went back to staring at me as if I was an angry bear. I put my hands up in a comforting manner and said, "It's okay, it's okay...don't freak out, it's okay. Xavier. I need you to breathe, okay, just breathe." I actually thought that freaking out was a reasonable reaction to the situation, but the thing in my head no longer seemed interested in him so there was no reason for her to be scared of me.

After a while she stopped trying to scream and claw her way through the wall and I was able to sit on the other end of the bunk. "What happened?" she whispered, her voice rich and sexy. "What did you do to me?"

"I...I have the same questions. What did you guys DO? I was a guy! This never happened to me before!"

She stared at me and said, "What's this thing in my head? I can feel it...hear it. It sends me pictures sometimes."

"I don't know. I have something in my head like that, too. I think...I think that yours might have split off from mine, or budded, or something. It felt like it was gathering energy and sent it back, and it must have done something to..."

I trailed off when I realized how crazy I sounded. It was a crazy situation, but still. Xavier kept staring at me. I had a feeling that was going to be pretty common from now on. "Look...I don't KNOW what happened!" I said. "What did you guys DO?"

She sighed, shifting to sit curled up with her arms clasped around her knees. It made her new breasts bulge against the rough material of the jumpsuit, and she shuddered while trying not to look down. "Well, I wasn't involved with much of it. The brains found something in these papers from the thirties, right? You ever heard of Tesla?"

Of course I had, but I didn't know why he was important. Xavier wasn't totally sure either, but she knew that Tesla was involved with some extremely strange

applications of electrical energy. A lot of the theories that he'd talked about had been crazy, but some of them just hadn't worked because he hadn't had the technology or materials available to him. "But a lot of it was just nuts. Things that didn't make any sense at all, you know?"

I didn't, but I figured that she was heading somewhere with all this so I was willing to just nod and let her get on with it. She said that there were tests going on here, in the middle of nowhere, based off of Tesla's ideas.

"Hang on," I said. "Should you be telling me all this?"

Xavier shook her head and leaned it against the wall, staring at the ceiling. "It doesn't matter. We're never getting out of here. You know that, right?"

I sat next to her in the same position, our hips touching. I said, "I don't believe that. I mean, I'm an American citizen. And this is the US military, whatever branch."

She laughed, bitterness wreathing the sound. "You're cute. Look, it's not the normal operating procedure, but we're not in a normal situation. Have you heard of the Philadelphia Experiment?"

"Uh, I guess? It blew up a ship or something, right?"

She shook her head, eyes still distant. "They were trying to make it invisible. They were using theories that they'd pulled out of Tesla's papers, some of the wild stuff that Einstein talked about, things like that. Stuff that the boys in the Manhattan Project were too scared to mess with, and they were worried that they were going to burn off the entire atmosphere. But yeah, when they hooked it up to the ship and turned it on, it just vanished. A little while later, it came back, but it was wrong. See if this sounds familiar. Some of the personnel on board were on fire, and burned for days. Some of them had turned into ghosts, and some of them were fused with the walls and bulkheads of the ship, as if they'd grown there."

My mouth opened and closed a few times before I was able to get a sound out. "That...that's what..."

She nodded. "That's a lot like what happened to your bus. Exactly."

“But how is that possible? We were just a...a regular bus! And how far away were we? We didn’t turn invisible or anything, right?”

She shrugged. “They were trying to see if they could create some kind of gate, something that would let them move from point A to point B without crossing the space like we normally do. They thought they had it figured out, I guess. I’m gonna go ahead and say that I don’t think they did. It used a lot of the same stuff that the Philadelphia Project did, though, I know that much from the schematics. And I saw it open a hole in the air, so I know that we did something, anyway.”

She sounded detached, as if describing something that had happened in a book. I stood and paced, running my hands through my hair. “But...but why would it do this to us? To you and me, I mean?”

“What, you think you were the only one? The base is full of people who were screwed up in the explosion. Nothing happened to some of them, but some of them are halfway through walls, or ghosts, or whatever. Some of them disappeared but came back, and a lot of them are screwed up. I really don’t know if there are enough personnel active to keep the base running, but they’re doing the best they can.

“I was running on two hours of sleep in the last forty-eight when I volunteered to be a part of whatever experiment they were running on you. I’d heard rumors, you know. Supposed to turn into your fantasy, and then suck your brains out your cock, that kind of thing. If I’d given it any actual thought I wouldn’t be in this mess.”

“Experiment? What were they trying to do?”

She shrugged. “Sorry, man. It’s just a brand new branch of physics, and they were trying anything at all.”

“That’s reassuring.” I shivered as a wave of fear and hopelessness swept through me. The thing in my head was sulking, and offered no commentary. I sat down next to her again, my shoulders slumped.

She sighed, sounding as if she felt the same way. “At this point I’m hoping that they don’t just forget about us.”

A chill went through me at those words. “They won’t forget, right?”

She shook her head, still staring at the ceiling. Her hair twisted and rippled with the motion. “Too many forms, too many people know about us. But we might get lost in the system on purpose.”

“Well that’s-” I was cut off by a deep boom. It came from the hallway outside the door and was enough of an impact that it shook the cell.

Xavier finally tuned in, lifting her head and looking at the door. There was a tiny window set in it, but I knew that all it would show was a scratched view of about a third of the door across the hall. I went and looked anyway, surprised to find that the lights were dimmed. Ours remained constant.

“Oh come ON,” she whispered. “They can’t be trying again, can they?”

“Wait, trying what?” I said.

“That’s the noise that the generators make when they first turn on. The only thing that we use them for is opening that rift. They CAN’T be planning to try it again. There’s not enough personnel.”

“So they’re going to open it up and then the same thing again? Didn’t they learn anything?”

“Sure doesn’t look like it.” Xavier sighed and leaned her head against the wall again, staring up at the ceiling once more.

“Don’t give up, what can we do about it?”

She smirked. “Hell, we’re probably safer than anyone in here. We’re behind several inches of steel plate. Of course that didn’t help the guys on the Philadelphia, but it’s better than nothing. And there’s nothing we can do about it. Not from in here.”

“How long does it take?”

“Last time, it was something like fifteen minutes between the time the generators started to the point where the event took place.”

I didn’t have much else to say. The thing in my head was still sulking, and no one had come to the door. I sat down next to her again, wrapping my arms

around my knees once more.

I waited, counting in my head. I know that it's very easy to get thrown off a count in that situation, but I still hadn't gotten anywhere near fifteen minutes when there was a huge flash that was so bright that it seemed to come through the door. I screamed and covered my eyes, vaguely aware of Xavier doing the same thing.

The initial flash passed and nothing seemed to have changed. The thing in my head was curious about it, but that was all. Xavier reported no changes in her situation either. Outside the door was a different story; we could hear people screaming, shots being fired, and over it all there was a huge roaring noise that was coming closer. It brought clangs and thuds, shaking the walls as if someone was hitting them with a wrecking ball.

The roaring was coming closer, and now I could make out footsteps as well. They were just as heavy as the other noises, shaking the floor and walls with each step. They got closer and closer, along with the noises of whatever it was destroying the walls and ceiling. It sounded like a localized tornado.

Then the door shook in its frame. It creaked and a dent appeared in the middle of it while something outside blocked the light from the window. Xavier and I huddled under the cot, clinging to each other and hoping that whatever it was wouldn't kill us. There was a huge impact and the door dented further, one of the hinges popping under the pressure. A set of fingers appeared in the crack between the ceiling and the door, hauling backward on the damaged metal. They were the largest fingers I'd ever seen, reminding me of a picture I'd seen of Andre the Giant holding a beer can; these things would have swallowed his hand, though.

The fingers sank into the metal and tore the door completely out of the wall. The figure outside threw the door back toward the destruction it had already created.

He was huge. His body was so tall that he had to bend almost double just to fit into the hallway, and muscle bulged and twisted over every inch of his frame. He looked as though he'd been twisted around at birth, deformities running rampant throughout his body. Knobs of bone and muscle that served no purpose were at random points all over, and his face was barely human. His skin was stretched tight and red over his muscles, and he kept making that terrible roaring noise the

entire time. I locked eyes with him and saw nothing that resembled human thought.

The thing in my head swam forward immediately upon seeing the thing and I braced myself for the change and terrible result. Nothing happened. Instead, my passenger seemed to sense something familiar in the giant that stood outside our cell. There was a tiny ping of mutual recognition, the feel of two workmen nodding in greeting as they passed each other on the way to the job. The giant stared at me and then at Xavier, quieting his scream to a mere grunt for a few moments. Then he roared again, startling me once more, and continued on down the hall.

“Captain Elm,” Xavier shouted in my ear.

“What?”

“That was Captain Elm! I saw the insignia on what was left of his uniform!”

We stayed huddled under the cot until the crashing and roaring had turned a couple of corners. There was another bright flash of light, but nothing else happened. Xavier looked up and said, “I think it’s still running.”

“We have to stop it!”

“I don’t want to get any closer to it! What if it does something else to us?”

“Like what? Implant an alien from another dimension in our heads?”

I didn’t wait for her, just stood up and headed for the flashes. They were nauseating, giving the impression of extra colors just on either side of what I could see, but nothing more happened to me. The thing in my head kept watching with interest, apparently not bothered by the strange light. I followed the trail that Captain Elm had left behind, a tunnel through the annoying walls and cells between the laboratory and whatever his destination was. After a couple of minutes of picking my way through the rubble I heard Xavier following behind me. I slowed down until she came closer, and we helped each other through the wreckage.

Whatever had happened to Elm, he’d become something capable of destruction on an industrial scale. His trail led through ruined walls and cells. It meandered

rather than following a straight path, with turns taken in random, illogical places. Occasionally we'd find the remains of someone who'd been in that path. There wasn't a lot left, or at least not a lot that was recognizable as human. Most of them were buried under the broken walls, a fact I was grateful for after seeing someone's arm lying in a hallway.

The flashes were getting brighter, which was impressive. They didn't leave any afterimages, nor did they seem to mess with my vision in any other way besides their presence. The thing in my head kept up its attitude of mildly interested indifference, and I kept heading toward the site. Xavier was muttering about doing stupid things, but I wasn't about to stop; there was no other way that I could see of ever getting this thing out of my head and maybe getting back to a normal life. Whatever the rift was, it might kill me, but at least then I wouldn't have to worry about fucking any men to death.

When I got to the testing lab, I almost turned around and headed back to my cell.

The room was the size of your average high school gymnasium, and it was packed with machinery and chaos. A thick pall of smoke covered the ceiling and was getting deeper. The smoke came from several machines that burned merrily. Some of the smaller burning patches, I saw, were humans. A groan to my left caught my attention and I turned to see one of my amazons embedded in the wall. Her right arm and leg were fused to it as if she had grown there, and the right side of her head and ribcage were also partially submerged. She groaned again, unable to move her jaw to form any words, and tears ran from the eye that was still functioning. I backed away, moving my mouth but just as incapable of speech as she was.

I flattened myself against the wall behind me, trying to get as far from her as I could. Xavier saw the situation, picked up the amazon's discarded pistol, and aimed it. I turned away just in time to avoid seeing the results, but the gunfire was so loud that I wasn't sure if she'd stopped groaning for a while. She had.

I tried not to look, tried to focus on the rest of the room. It looked a lot like my bus had, just on a larger scale. There were the burning bodies and people melded with the walls and ceilings. One man was translucent; he stood at an angle to the floor, as if gravity had given him another set of rules, and he looked like he was fighting something. I couldn't see it, but it was definitely getting some shots in. I could see wounds opening on his head and chest, all silent like his screams.

At one end of the room was a huge bank of machines I didn't recognize. Most of them were still functioning, feeding power into a hole torn in the air. It was emitting the huge bursts of light at regular intervals. I turned to Xavier and said, "How do we stop it?"

She pointed down at the computers set around the rift machine's base. I was sure she'd do that, but I didn't like the idea of getting anywhere near the thing. I followed her lead, trying not to let my male mind get distracted by the sway of her very female hips. The fact that I even had the thought brought home how strange the situation was; apparently my brain was trying to find pleasant things to contemplate instead of my actual surroundings.

Xavier led me closer, and I smelled something like ozone when I got close enough to the rift. It wasn't a stable hole; the edges rippled and the whole thing pulsed. Looking at it made my eyes want to veer off in different directions but the thing in my head was interested in the world that was barely visible beyond. Xavier went over and looked at some of the readouts.

"It's set to a few days ago! It's set to just before the last test!"

"So on the other side is our world? Just...back in time?"

She shook her head. "No! It's a timeline that's almost identical to ours, but not exactly. There's some tiny variation somewhere, but it's otherwise very close to ours. They've learned how to fine-tune a lot of it."

"So it's a way to a whole other world?"

She nodded, still reading the displays. "And if I just jumped through, then what? I would end up there, right?"

She shrugged. "In theory, but theory's what's gotten us into this situation."

"Can you move the focus? So it ends up pointed at something else?"

She shook her head, long curls bouncing around her shoulders. "Not once it's open. We'd have to shut it down, recalibrate, and reopen it, and that would cause the same problem again. And even then the science geeks said there's no way that we could re-open it on the same dimension; we're just not that advanced."

I nodded. “What if I went through it?”

“Why would you want to do that? There could be anything over there.”

“It’s got to be better than staying here. You think they’re going to let us go after seeing all this? Look around, dead people all over the place, top secret machines, come on. Seriously, come with me.”

Xavier looked around at the carnage and chaos. She sighed, heavy breasts pushing gently against the front of her jumpsuit. “You’re right. But we’ve got to go; it’s about to close.”

We climbed up onto the platform, staring through the rift and into another world. It was nighttime there and all we could see was some scrub brush. I said, “So what, just step through?”

She nodded. “It’s going to be at a weird angle by the look of it, but yeah.”

We stared for another few seconds, neither of us making a move toward the rift. I said, “Okay, I guess...I’ll go through first. See you on the other side.”

I closed my eyes and stepped through. It felt like stepping into a clear pool: the rift was a lot deeper than it looked. It wasn’t some slim window. I felt like I was falling down a tunnel. I opened my eyes and looked around. I was falling through a tunnel that branched into a thousand others. Each of those branched the same way, and again, until my brain refused to try to make sense of it. The tunnels carried wind and shrieking noises, and I couldn’t tell what they were carved out of.

The thing in my head gave a triumphant cry and swam forward. I felt it leave me and I caught a glimpse of something swimming through the air away from me. For the first time in days I was alone in my own head.

I didn’t have time to relish it, though. Just as I realized what had happened, I fell through the other side and landed heavily. The rift wasn’t visible from this side, so I rolled away from the landing zone to give Xavier plenty of room.

I waited there for a while, but she never came through. I hope that she got out somehow, that she didn’t get trapped somewhere in those looping tunnels.

I finally stood up and looked around. I was in the desert, standing next to a worn road. The moon was high and I could see just fine. Certainly it was enough for me to see a bus on the road heading my way. I looked behind me and just barely caught sight of the lights above an air force base.

Flagging down the bus wasn't that difficult. I was a shockingly beautiful woman wearing nothing but my underwear, after all. I talked to the driver for a good ten minutes, convincing him that I was the victim of some sort of carjacking. I kept talking until the driver looked up and squinted and said, "What the hell was that?"

I looked back and saw a dying flash of light. "No idea. Who knows what those guys are up to, right?"

He grinned and shook his head. "Sometimes I wonder if they know themselves. Come on, hop in. I can get you as far as Vegas."

I got in and took a seat, shivering in the cold air. I only glanced at a familiar man sitting halfway down the aisle, and then I smiled to myself. It wasn't going to be an easy life here, but at least I had a chance. There would be a fresh start for both of us this time.