

The Debt Proxy



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Chapter 1: To the Courthouse

As an afterthought, apparently, Mrs. Lamore presented to her daughter a thin manila envelope.

“Oh,” she said, obviously feigning absent-mindedness as she withdrew it from her purse, “this came in the mail a few days ago, I meant to give it to you earlier, but then everything was happening, and . . . you know.”

Priscilla took it nervously. Something about her mother’s behavior this morning seemed off – or at least, more off than it should have been, even if they were heading to a grim event.

“It’s already been opened,” Priscilla observed.

“It has?” Mrs. Lamore replied, this time trying to sound surprised but doing it badly.

“Yes,” said Priscilla firmly, and she set it in her lap.

She was wedged between her mother and her stepfather, Hoyt, riding in his truck to the Fulton County Courthouse, and she realized she didn’t want to know what the envelope held. She looked out the window to her right, toward the neighborhood known informally as Druid Hills, a collection of modest houses on a treeless, rolling plain that stretched off into the haze toward downtown Atlanta.

“Maybe you should read it, Prissy,” said Mrs. Lamore, a little urgently. “It might be important.”

“What does it say?” Priscilla challenged.

“I don’t know,” replied Mrs. Lamore.

“Aren’t you the one who opened it?”

“You’re a little feisty today, ain’t ya?” said Hoyt. He tapped his foot nervously on the gas, so that now they were doing 65 in the beltline’s 55.

“You need to read it,” Mrs. Lamore insisted. “It might have something to do with today’s things.”

“So it does, or it might?” Priscilla retorted.

Hoyt hit the gas again – now he was doing 70, and he chuckled in what sounded to Priscilla like an attempt at humor but came off hollow sounding: “I’d say you read it,” he asserted, “and if it’s got nothing to do

with the hearing, no harm no foul, but if it does . . . well, you don't want to wish you'd taken a look after it's too—”

“Hush now,” Mrs. Lamore said reflexively, and she waved her hand as if trying to slap Hoyt's words out of the air. Then she paused and collected herself. “Prissy doesn't need you telling her what to do.

“But you know,” she continued, turning to her daughter so that her forehead was almost touching Priscilla's chin, “he does have a point. Please give it a read.”

Priscilla, her annoyance with the conversation finally overwhelming her apprehension, slid the contents from the envelope.

There were several sheets inside, perhaps three or four, stapled together in the upper corner. The first page was a letter from Fulton County Bankruptcy Court, with the same return address as on the envelope, and it was directed to her and dated three weeks ago.

“Dear Ms. van Dross,” the letter began. “This letter is to notify you that you have been nominated as Debt Proxy in Case Number 12-104611, American Financial et al vs. Hoyt Lamore. A resolution has been scheduled for this matter on Tuesday, August 14, 2018. Please appear at the Fulton County Courthouse by 9 a.m. on that date for disposition.”

Priscilla looked up. They'd reached a busy part of the beltline, and Hoyt hit the brakes. She blinked twice and returned her eyes to the letter.

“Should you not appear at the appointed time and place, or in the event your appraised value is not sufficient for resolution in the above-styled matter, your candidacy will be revoked. If you are accepted as a Debt Proxy, you will be immediately disbursed to the creditors' receiving party, which at the date of this letter is listed as Atlanta General Female Laboratory and Services. The creditors reserve the right to name a different receiver.

“Please familiarize yourself with the attached materials. Note that awareness of these materials may be required prior to your acceptance as a Debt Proxy.”

Priscilla set the letter down and looked out the window again. The Atlanta skyline was visible above the haze, and she stared at it and wished she was in one of those buildings right now, an anonymous speck who never got letters from the government. Her hands were shaking, she noticed.

“Well, what's it say?” Mrs. Lamore demanded.

“It says I’m just a candidate,” Priscilla replied, and the words brought her some comfort: just a candidate. “You said the court just needs to see me there, right? And that will help Hoyt get through this, right?”

“That’s the plan, Sugar,” said Mrs. Lamore, and for the first time that morning she seemed like herself. She squeezed Priscilla’s leg, and then reached across her daughter to pat Hoyt’s leg. “That’s Hoyt’s plan. Hoyt’s always got a plan.”

Mrs. Lamore tapped the documents. “What do the other pages say?” she asked.

Priscilla turned to the next page. It seemed to be a bunch of legalese in fine print, describing what a debt proxy was, and Priscilla decided she wouldn’t be reading it, at least not in its entirety.

“What’s it say?” Mrs. Lamore repeated.

“Why don’t you read it and tell me?” Priscilla suggested.

“Damn,” Hoyt muttered. Traffic was getting thick, so instead of speeding, he’d taken to mild cursing. He pulled an old red bandana out of his shirt pocket and wiped his face.

“I’ll get sick reading it in the truck,” said Mrs. Lamore. “You read it.”

“No,” Priscilla said firmly. “It’s too much to read right now.”

Hoyt laughed hollowly again. “College girl can’t read so good?” he asked. “All that money your momma pays to keep you in school, and you can’t even read a little bit?”

“I’m on a full scholarship,” Priscilla reminded him, perhaps more proudly than necessary. Hoyt had bragged more than once that everything he’d accomplished was without a high school diploma, and it never impressed Priscilla, in part because he had actually accomplished very little.

“Like your momma don’t give nothing to keep you there,” Hoyt jeered, “sending you brownies that time. Oh, and that quilt. And all she done all your life, too. Like birthin’ ya. How ’bout that?”

“Hush, Hoyt!” Mrs. Lamore shouted. “I’m the only one who can guilt my own children. I—”

Mrs. Lamore froze, as she always did when she spoke of her offspring in the plural.

“Oh, God, I did it again,” she lamented quietly, in almost a whisper. “Child,” she said. “Child. Not children. Those days are gone, gone, gone.”

Mrs. Lamore leaned over, covered her face and shook as if she were crying, but her voice was suspiciously clear on her next words. “Prissy, just do it for your poor old momma. Just the big parts, okay? Just the big parts?”

Priscilla studied the document on her lap and noticed that the text was indeed in two different font sizes, with a paragraph here and there large and bolded.

“If the appraised value of the Debt Proxy is sufficient to satisfy all outstanding obligations,” Priscilla read, “and if the Debt Proxy accepts disbursement voluntarily and with fully informed consent, then shall the Debt Proxy be immediately disbursed to the Receiving Party as designated by the Creditors.”

Priscilla read the paragraph over several times, but wasn’t clear on its full meaning. Still smarting from Hoyt’s last jibe, however, she looked up and waited for her mother to speak.

“What’s it say?” Mrs. Lamore asked, as if on cue.

“It’s talking about disbursement to, to a receiving party,” Priscilla stammered.

“Oh, that only happens if things don’t work out,” said Mrs. Lamore.

“What does disbursement mean?” Priscilla asked.

Hoyt laughed as if he were amazed anyone alive could not know what “disbursement” meant, much less an architecture student about to start her fourth year of college.

“It just means you go there,” said Mrs. Lamore.

“Go there?” Priscilla asked. “Go where?”

“To whatever the receiving party is,” replied Mrs. Lamore.

“And what do I do there?” Priscilla asked.

“I guess what they want you to,” Mrs. Lamore said, and it became obvious to Priscilla she was not going to get straight answers this morning, and that worried her anew. But then, maybe her mother just didn’t know.

“Are there any more papers?” Mrs. Lamore asked. Priscilla knew that there must be, that her mother wanted her to read them, and that she and Hoyt would make it impossible for her not to.

The traffic had cleared out, but Hoyt was doing the speed limit for a change, and Priscilla was hoping the unpleasant interactions were over.

The third document was a copy of a brochure about Atlanta General Female Laboratory and Services. The type size was sufficiently large, so Priscilla read willingly this time, starting with the first inside panel:

“Atlanta General Female Laboratory and Services (AGFLS) is an essential resource for organizations that wish to conduct research, medical experimentation and other procedures requiring live female subjects. Research at AGFLS has been conducted on a wide array of topics, including reproductive systems and responsiveness, general physiology, pharmaceutical interactions, and social behaviors. AGFLS maintains an inventory of more than 250 subjects in a highly-secure, hygienic facility.

“As of November 2017, AGFLS has played a role in more than 1,200 studies and trials, many of them cited in both scholarly and popular articles. AGFLS has also contributed to the development of more than 400 medical or commercial products, generating estimated average sales of over \$175 million per year between 2008 and 2016.”

The rest of the brochure was mostly pictures: a large, windowless building surrounded by barb wire, stock photography of smiling researchers in lab coats, and testimonials of scientists in the US and other countries who’d contracted for research at the facility. On the last panel was a website, an email address and a phone number to call to schedule a tour.

It wasn’t clear to Priscilla why the brochure had been included, or what exactly it was talking about. She was getting distracted, by Hoyt’s driving and her mother’s annoying insistence on things.

“How far is the courthouse from here?” she asked.

“About 15 minutes,” Hoyt said. “Gonna be early.”

“And what’s supposed to happen?” Priscilla asked.

“We already been over that, Prissy,” Mrs. Lamore replied. “Hoyt’s gonna smooth-talk the judge. Got a silver tongue, he does, don’t ya, Hoyt?”

Hoyt grunted.

“So Hoyt’s not, um,” Priscilla began, finding it difficult to finish the sentence. “So Hoyt’s not going to prison today?”

“Aw, hell no,” Hoyt said abruptly and with surprising confidence. “Gonna walk out a free man. As long as they — “

Mrs. Lamore waved her hand in the air and Hoyt shut up again.

“But I’m just going to show up, and then leave, right?”

“Yes,” Mrs. Lamore said deliberately, and her next words seemed to have been rehearsed. “They’re just required, by law, to send all that mess to you, so they sent it, since you’re helping out Hoyt. And me, too. You’re helping me too. When you help out my husband, you’re helping me. And I’m your mother.”

It made enough sense that Priscilla was quiet again, and her hands were still in her lap and her heart stopped pounding. They turned on to Bickley Avenue, the Fulton County Courthouse looming before them, big and white and domed, one of the few antebellum buildings that wasn’t destroyed when General Sherman had the area torched in 1864.

Priscilla ran through the history of her hometown briefly and decided that the documents she held in her lap would suffer the same fate. She would burn them all, with their cold words and legalese. She’d burn them in the backyard, where the grass had all died under the water oak.

They reached a guardhouse at the top of a ramp that descended into a garage beneath the court building.

“I’m here for a 9 a’ clock,” Hoyt said to the attendant. “Hoyt Lamore. Hoyt Lamore vs. a bunch a’ bastards, to be quite honest. Ya got me on that list?”

The attendant nodded, a gate lifted and Hoyt descended into the dark, subterranean parking lot.

As Hoyt parked, Priscilla thought suddenly about leaving, abandoning this little project. She had never resisted her mother, although there had been many times she’d wished she had. If she walked out now, back through the dark garage to wherever the light was, and if Hoyt subsequently went to jail, there’d be hell to pay. How much hell she didn’t know, but she’d probably have to move out. Her mother could probably get her scholarship revoked, or even get her kicked out of school, too, and she just might. She could be that spiteful.

On the other hand, if she went into the courtroom, and her presence got Hoyt out of trouble without getting her into any, all their problems would be solved, and she’d burn everything she held in her lap and go back to school in two weeks and put all of this behind her.

The parking spot Hoyt chose was not far from a small glowing sign set into the garage ceiling that read “Elevator.” He turned off the engine, but instead of opening his door and getting out of the truck, he just sat. So did Priscilla’s mother.

“You in or you out?” Mrs. Lamore inquired coldly.

“I don’t know,” Priscilla said. “I don’t like this. These letters, they’re —”

“Just a joke,” said Mrs. Lamore. “Think of them that way. But you need to ahead and sign it all, now. Every page. With your name.”

Priscilla returned to her natural obedience, did as she was told, her mother deposited all the pages into her purse, and the three of them left Hoyt’s truck, rode the elevator to the courthouse’s third floor and emerged at a brightly-lit hall, windows at either end revealing treetops and blue sky.

Immediately before them was a sign with two arrows, the right arrow pointing to “Debt Hearings” and the left to “Debt Proxy Resolutions.”

Mrs. Lamore tugged on Priscilla’s elbow to direct her to the left, and all three were waved into a small hearing room by a security guard who seemed to know why they were there.

The little room was occupied by a judge – an older man in a black robe – as well as a middle-aged, female court reporter and a sturdy, balding bailiff.

The hearing began without any formalities. Priscilla and her mother sat down at the table while Hoyt stood and answered a long, tedious series of questions from the judge. The judge wanted Hoyt to verify, for the record, his name, address, date of birth, social security number, and everything he owed to all his creditors:

For the fishing boat he got drunk and wrecked. For the business loan he spent not on a business but on three collector shotguns which were lost in a poker game. For his truck loan. Priscilla already knew most of the details, at least in general, so this part was exceedingly boring to her, and her mind wandered off.

She was going to start her final year at Georgia Tech in a few weeks, she told herself. Ten months more and she’d be an architect. Maybe she’d meet a boy who was worth her effort, too. The males she’d spent time with so far had all, ultimately, proven unworthy. The sex would be nice, if hurried, then by the third date something invariably started going wrong. None of them, in the end, knew how to talk to a girl, so they’d meet somewhere, have pizza or some other cheap food, and then whoever it was would be in a hurry to get back to her place, or his place, and if she complained about the haste, the lack of conversation – even if she

complained but had sex anyway – he’d act surprised, as if he couldn’t conceive of any purpose for her other than her body. And if she called one of them for sex – something she’d done a few times and was never proud of – it was like she’d given them the keys to everything, and the sex was a thoughtless, coarse bang that left her feeling worthless.

Invariably, she’d grow tired of the boys she’d met so far, stop answering their phone calls, ignore their texts and emails and instant messages, dismiss them quickly if they showed up in person, and they’d go away.

Mrs. Lamore nudged Priscilla out of her reverie.

“He’s talking ‘bout you,” she whispered.

The judge, a kindly, avuncular man, was staring at Priscilla with what seemed to be a little sorrow, or maybe it was just weariness.

“So this is your debt proxy?” the judge asked.

“It is,” Hoyt replied.

“Young lady, please rise,” the judge directed her.

Priscilla stood and, in a soft, shaky voice she struggled to control, affirmed her vital statistics to the judge, as Hoyt had done: Name, date of birth, address, social security number.

“And now, you know why you are here?” the judge asked.

“She does,” blurted Mrs. Lamore, digging furiously into her purse. “She read all that paperwork. And she signed it.”

The judge raised his gavel and seemed ready to bang it, but instead just pointed it at Priscilla’s mother.

“You are out of order, Ma’am,” he said.

“Sorry, your Honor,” Mrs. Lamore said. “I was just trying to be helpful.”

“Who are you?” he asked.

“I’m Mrs. Hoyt Lamore,” she said, standing, and she looked at Hoyt. “This man is my husband.”

“And the proxy?” the judge asked.

“It’s my daughter,” Mrs. Lamore said, looking straight ahead.

“Alright, bring up your paperwork,” the judge ordered.

Mrs. Lamore complied, and the judge flipped through each page of Priscilla’s documents.

“Is this your signature?” he asked, holding up a page.

“It is,” admitted Priscilla, “but I don’t—“

“It is, it is,” interrupted Mrs. Lamore. “I watched her sign it, had her do it, she read every page.”

“And you’re willing to do this for your father?” the judge asked.

“He’s my stepfather,” said Priscilla. “And I’m not sure, I don’t—“

“She is, she is,” blurted Mrs. Lamore.

The judge directed a pair of impatient eyes at Mrs. Lamore, and she sat down.

“How long has he been your stepfather?” the judge asked.

“Six months,” Priscilla replied.

“And how long have you known him?” the judge asked.

“Six months,” Priscilla answered. She hadn’t met Hoyt until after he and her mother had gotten married. Their courtship was secret and exceedingly brief, no more than a weekend, Priscilla suspected, although her mother refused to confirm the time involved.

All Priscilla knew was that, sometime around Valentine’s Day, Mrs. Lamore had introduced Hoyt as the love of her life, the source of her hope and, most importantly, her new husband, and she made it clear Priscilla was to accept him as her father.

The judge laughed. “So this gentleman comes into your mother’s life with a pile of debt,” he observed, “and six months later he’s got you signed up to proxy for him?”

“Yes, Sir,” Priscilla replied. “I guess so, but—“

“So, you doing this for Jesus?” he asked.

“No, your honor,” Priscilla replied. “I’m not—“

Mrs. Lamore opened her mouth to interrupt again, but the judge beat her to it.

“This whole thing stinks to high heaven,” he observed. “High heaven. Who brokered this?”

Mrs. Lamore and Hoyt just stared at the judge like two Easter Island statues.

“I’ll bet it was Jim Magnum,” the judge declared. “Wasn’t it Jim Magnum? Ha! You’re not saying anything, so I know it was him.”

He looked one last time at Priscilla, then he turned to the bailiff.

“Well, the law’s the law,” he said. “Let’s get her appraised.”

Chapter 2: The Appraisal

The bailiff had been leaning against wall, but he angled forward with the judge's words and approached Priscilla. Things were happening too quickly again, and she was having trouble focusing.

"This way, Miss," the bailiff said, touching her elbow and pointing to a door at the side of the courtroom. She followed him to it, and he drew out a set of keys and unlocked it and allowed her to pass through.

Priscilla stepped into what looked like a room at the doctor's office, except that it wasn't what she was expecting so she wasn't sure. It was white and sterile, with an examination table in the middle. She stared at it, wondering why it was there, then noticed the woman standing by the sink in the corner, wearing nurse's scrubs and a white surgical mask.

The door closed behind her and she turned instinctively to open it back up, if not to leave altogether, and she grabbed the knob, but it had been locked. Or maybe it stayed locked all the time.

"Hi," said the woman, approaching her and offering her hand. "I'm Fatima Etwan."

"I'm Priscilla."

Behind Fatima's surgical mask, her eyes were well made up, Mediterranean and kind, if not beautiful, Priscilla thought.

"Have you ever been appraised?" Fatima asked.

"I don't think so," Priscilla admitted.

"Well, we'll get you through it," Fatima promised, and Priscilla thought she seemed a little grandmotherly, even though she looked to be in her 30's and probably wasn't a grandmother yet. "It's a little like a trip to the gyno, but a little different. So just let us do our jobs, okay?"

"Sure," Priscilla said, exhaling with relief. If Fatima was the worst thing that was going to happen to her today, this was not going to be nearly as bad as she'd feared.

"Great," said Fatima. "Let's get you undressed, then."

Priscilla had chosen a sundress that day, one of her better ones, yellow with a white sash, as if she thought she were going to a picnic.

She slid off her flats, unsnapped the sash, reached behind her and unzipped the dress, and looked quizzically at the woman behind the surgical mask.

“Just put everything on the floor,” Fatima said. “Bra and panties too.”

Priscilla dropped her clothes where she stood, undid her bra, slid out of her panties and stared. Fatima was wearing ill-fitting scrubs, and Priscilla allowed herself a brief moment of superiority. Fatima wasn't in Priscilla's shape, not nearly – bulges showed at her waist and on the outside of her thighs while, on Priscilla, there was no unnecessary fat. She was five foot eight and built, as one of her useless ex-lovers had joked, “to a really hot blueprint.” Priscilla knew it and now Fatima did as well. She put her hands on her hips and arched her back, as if just stretching, raising her D-cup breasts high, her hardened nipples pointing over Fatima's head.

It had been almost two weeks since she'd last trimmed around her genitals, the pink slit of her vulva almost invisible behind a thick triangle of pubic hair.

“Jewelry too,” Fatima instructed. Priscilla removed her earrings, undid her necklace, slipped off her ring and dropped them on the pile of clothes on the floor.

“Oh, and then your hair,” Fatima said, and Priscilla removed the ribbon and let her black tresses drop to her shoulders.

“Some of the girls, this next thing is the worst part of the whole appraisal,” Fatima admitted. “I need to weigh you.”

Priscilla laughed, stepped on to the scale and Fatima recorded her weight at 133 pounds.

“Okay up on the table,” Fatima said, and Priscilla obeyed, crossing the little clinic, backing up to the exam table and sitting on a sheet of paper that crinkled beneath her.

“Now, lie back and put your feet in the stirrups,” Fatima said, “and we'll get your appraisers in.”

Priscilla lay back, sucking in her breath as her feet touched the cold metal. Every other gynecologist she'd been to put little wraps over the stirrups. They didn't believe in them here, apparently.

Fatima did a quick inspection of Priscilla's mouth and ears, slid a thermometer up her anus, stepped back to the sink, picked up a phone on the wall and said, without dialing, “Okay, she's ready.”

Within a minute, Priscilla heard a knock at another door, this one presumably leading to the hall and also kept locked all the time. Fatima opened it and a man and woman entered, neither looking clinical at all.

Both were dressed for business, the man in a navy blue suit and tie, the woman in a gray skirt and matching jacket. Both were around 30, and the woman, Priscilla noticed with some disappointment, was far more fit than Fatima.

“Roll the kit over,” the man said to Fatima, and she went to the corner and wheeled a squeaky cart to the table. Priscilla glanced at it, saw almost nothing she recognized as equipment common to a medical or gynecological exam, and thought briefly about rolling off the table and running to one of the doors.

But then what? She knew the bailiff wouldn’t open the door to the hearing room. And what lay behind the other door, if she could even get through it? She was naked, after all. She could grab her clothes, but she was confident she’d be stopped before she could put anything on. And then, just run naked into the Fulton County Courthouse? They’d probably arrest her, and then she’d be worse off than she was now.

Fatima removed the thermometer from Priscilla’s anus, checked it and put it away.

The man pulled out a phone and hit a few buttons. “Suzy? Hey, Suzy, it’s Hank, starting that appraisal for you. Yeah, me and Stephanie doing this one.”

With his free hand, Hank pulled a piece of paper from his coat pocket. Then he pushed a few more buttons on his phone and pointed it at Priscilla.

“Okay, can you see her now?” he asked. Stephanie took her place on the other side of the table, at Priscilla’s hip, and Hank pointed his phone up toward her face briefly, at himself, then back toward Priscilla.

“I can see everyone,” a woman’s voice replied over the speaker on Hank’s phone, sounding thin and not quite human. “Hey, Stef!”

“Hey, Suzy,” Stephanie said, waving but not smiling.

“Alright, you recording?” asked Hank.

“It’s on,” Suzy replied. “Go ahead.”

“Okay,” said Hank. “We’re at the Fulton County Courthouse. It’s 10:15 a.m. on August 14, 2018. This is a debt proxy appraisal, commissioned by Atlanta General Female Laboratory and Services. We’re going to just refer to it as the Lab from here on. Hoyt Lamore vs. American Financial et al, case number 14-5-15542. This is his debt proxy. Priscilla

van Dross. I'm Hank Pesci, license number T-51243, and this is Stephanie Sawyer. Stef, what's your license number?"

"P-51290," Stephanie replied, and she put one gloveless hand on Priscilla's thigh and the other on the tray beside the table.

"And now, what's your name?" Hank asked the nurse, pointing his phone at her.

"Fatima Etwan," she replied.

"Alright," said Hank, "and Fatima Etwan, representing the Lab. Good."

"Let me open a file on her real quick," said Suzy. "Okay, got it, go ahead."

Stephanie looked down at Priscilla's middle and unceremoniously pushed her knees apart. Hank stepped around the table to stand between the stirrups, and he pointed his phone at Priscilla's vulva.

"This coming through, Suzy?" Hank asked.

"Yeah, got what I need there," Suzy's voice replied. "Keep going."

Stephanie reached down and grabbed Priscilla's labia, pinching them, pulling them away from her body, spreading them, while Hank continued to capture everything with his phone.

"She's clean," Stephanie said, and she pressed a finger against the opening of Priscilla's vagina. "No disease, no scarring."

Fatima pulled a bottle of lubrication off the tray and offered it to Stephanie, who pushed it away.

"Ovulating," said Stephanie, and she put her middle finger up Priscilla's sheath and pressed against the front wall.

Priscilla gasped and raised her hips off the exam table. What Stephanie was doing felt good, of course, but this was clearly not a normal exam.

"Don't you need a glove for this?" Priscilla asked.

Fatima touched Priscilla's shoulder. "It's okay, Honey," she said in a voice just above a whisper. "Let us do our jobs."

Stephanie drew her finger out of Priscilla's vagina, a smear of ovulatory fluid clinging to the tip. "Can you see that?" she asked, holding it in front of Hank's phone. "Healthy discharge." She pinched the fluid between her thumb and finger and then separated them, a heavy string running between them. "Suzy, can you see that?" she repeated.

"Yeah," Suzy replied over Hank's phone. "That's good."

Stephanie closed her eyes and put her finger against her tongue, apparently to taste, Priscilla realized with a mix of surprise and disgust.

Stephanie removed her finger from her mouth, pulled a marker out of her coat pocket and wrote “F=10” on Priscilla’s belly. The ink was cool and smelled a little like cinnamon.

“Okay, responsiveness,” Stephanie said, and for the first time that morning, she looked into Priscilla’s eyes briefly as she put two fingers back up her vagina, then pulled them out and rubbed the fluid across Priscilla’s vulva and clitoris.

Priscilla raised her hips again, opened her mouth and sighed out. Stephanie was no doctor, but she knew what she was doing and, despite Priscilla’s embarrassment with three total strangers witnessing her sexual response in person – and a fourth on the phone – she allowed herself to enjoy the attention. She gasped again, stuck out her lower jaw and tensed her muscles. Her feminine hole immediately began pumping out lubrication, and Stephanie ran her fingers through it until everything was moist from Priscilla’s anus to the coarse black hair around her clitoris.

“Suzy, can you see her fluid?” Stephanie asked, and she spread Priscilla’s labia again while Hank captured it on his phone.

“Yes, it’s coming through,” Suzy replied.

“Clitoris very responsive,” Stephanie said, stretching the flesh at the top of Priscilla’s vulva, forcing her enlarged pink member into sharp relief.

Priscilla wondered briefly if she had been dropped into a very peculiar pornographic movie, and she was aroused enough now she daydreamed about the role she might play. She looked over at Hank, imagining what would happen if he propositioned her.

The scenario was unthinkable, of course, but she felt a slight sense of disappointment with Hank, who betrayed no arousal as he pointed his phone between her legs.

And then, this part of the exam seemed to be over. Stephanie turned to the sink to wash her hands, Fatima used a paper towel to wipe up the fluid between Priscilla’s legs, and Hank put his phone in his pocket and stepped over to the tray.

After she’d finished at the sink, Stephanie wrote another series of numbers on Priscilla’s belly. They were upside down to Priscilla and

scratched out in a hurry, and as Priscilla slowly deciphered them, she realized they were meaningless to her: 17, 143, .02.

Now it seemed to be Hank's turn, and he grabbed the most intimidating item from the tray beside the examination table, a thick white rod with buttons and a small display screen at one end.

If this was a porn flick, Priscilla thought to herself, it was one of the worst-acted and oddest ones ever created. Everyone but her kept their clothes on, the dialogue was strictly clinical, and no one exhibited even the remotest sexual energy. Not that she'd seen many pornos, but she knew enough to recognize that the standard porn flick dialogue, acting and gratuitous sexuality were profoundly more interesting than what was going on here.

This was, apparently, exactly what Fatima said it was, Priscilla concluded – an exam she had to get through to fulfill her commitment to her mother; an appraisal of some kind, after which she would put on her clothes, leave, and forget everything as quickly as possible. If she was going to be “disbursed” anywhere, Fatima would have told her. She trusted Fatima. And the next time Mrs. Lamore or Hoyt asked for a favor, she would say no.

Hell no.

She wasn't sure if she'd get to burn those letters, though. The judge seemed to want them.

“Alright, Suzy, if you're ready, I'm going to do the emvee now,” Hank said, handing his phone to Stephanie.

“Go ahead, I'm watching,” Suzy said over Hank's phone.

As Stephanie aimed the phone, Hank spread Priscilla's lips and touched the tip of the device to her opening. The rod or the probe or whatever it was seemed unusually thick, bigger around than a penis, but not so large she was frightened of it. Priscilla had held a good-sized dildo on a few occasions, something she sometimes borrowed from her roommate, and this was only a little larger than that.

Hank inserted the device slowly, Priscilla rocking her hips to assist with her penetration. By the time it was halfway up her, her vagina was registering the normal pleasures of being filled, along with the minor discomfort of being forced around an unusually large object.

Hank kept pushing until he met the resistance of her cervix.

“Uh,” Priscilla groaned with a mix of pleasure and pain. A part of her wanted to reach down and press her clitoris, and she wasn’t sure the three strangers in the clinic with her would care, or even notice. But she was no exhibitionist. She’d been seen naked by a handful of male doctors and nurses, not to mention every boy she was with, and she wasn’t shy about her body itself, or her physical responses to stimulation. Nor was this the first clinic she’d been to where her lubrication flowed and her clitoris firmed up. But the sexuality in her mind was another matter, and she knew if she gave in to arousal, if she relieved herself now, or even briefly stroked her clitoris, it would feel good and then she would be immediately embarrassed – whether or not anyone seemed to notice – and the shame would linger far longer than the pleasure.

No, overt sexuality was out of the question. But she was getting used to the rod and saw nothing wrong with rocking gently back and forth, tightening her sheath around it and drawing her breath sharply. When she clamped her sex, she noticed, she could feel a slight hum, not enough to stimulate her, but it was apparently doing something inside her. Sensing her, perhaps.

She had been on her back but now she raised up on her elbows to study the device buried within her. The paper underneath her crinkled, her feet lifted off the stirrups, and Hank glanced up at her briefly before returning to his work. He pulled his phone back out of his pocket and brought it to his mouth. “Eight and a half inches deep,” he said.

Priscilla studied the device, noticing that there were faint lines scored into the rod, like a ruler.

Hank handed his phone to Stephanie, and she aimed it at the device’s display screen as Hank interpreted the data there.

“Very thick walls,” he said. “Wow. Very dense muscle, all the way up to the cervix. I’m not sure I’ve ever seen a vagina this well-endowed.”

Tonight, Priscilla promised herself, she’d drive by Chastity’s and maybe at last find the courage to park, go inside and pick up one of the serious sex toys, a dildo almost as thick as what she was holding now, and she’d go to bed early and wrap herself around it for an hour. No one would dare bother her after what she’d been through today.

“I’m seeing traces of latex, a little vinyl, some acrylic,” Hank said. “Pure guesses here, but I’m thinking there was a condom up her two to three weeks ago. She’s masturbating regularly, maybe every couple of

nights, usually with a toy. She masturbated last night, used an acrylic object.”

With those words, all of Priscilla’s enjoyment ended in a crunch of humiliation. A total stranger, a man, was telling other strangers her deepest secrets.

The next words came to her through a sort of mental fog, echoing and not really meaningful. She glanced at Fatima, especially ashamed that she was hearing this, but the woman didn’t seem to care, all but her eyes hidden behind the surgical mask, and her eyes focused on the device Hank was operating.

“I’m going to say she’s top notch,” said Stephanie. “A real find. Hank, you with me?”

“Absolutely,” Hank replied. “Suzy, that’s two high appraisals. Ready to give her a number?”

“I’ve been ready for five minutes,” Suzy said. “All just a formality since then. Okay, number’s going to be 14067.”

Fatima drew out a pen and wrote the number down Priscilla’s thigh, down her left arm and, in smaller characters, across her jaw.

Priscilla, still certain she was about to go home, decided washing the ink off would be the afternoon’s first project.

“Congratulations, Honey, you passed,” said Fatima. “Now, we need you to slide off the table, turn around and put your hands on it so I can get your number on your backside.”

Priscilla obeyed and felt the pen across her upper back, and then lower down, just above her panty line.

“Hank, can you give me one more, all over, with the numbers?” Suzy asked.

Hank pointed his phone at Priscilla’s hips.

“Start with her vulva this time,” said Suzy. “Have her spread her legs and put the camera underneath.”

Priscilla turned and parted her legs without having to be asked, and Hank made a single continuous video that ran from her sex, down along her thigh, to the numbers on her belly and arm, across her back and finally to her face and the number on her jaw.

“Good, got it all, thanks,” Suzy said.

While Hank was making his video, Fatima went to the corner of the clinic, retrieved something from a plastic crate and returned, standing

before Priscilla.

“Okay,” Fatima said as soon as Hank had put his phone away, “hold your hands out in front of you.”

Priscilla complied, looked down at Fatima’s hands and saw a pile of chain. Fatima pulled what looked like an open cuff from the pile and placed it against Priscilla’s wrist.

Priscilla jerked her hand away as if the metal were unbearably hot. “What’s that?” she demanded.

“Your restraints,” Fatima replied.

“What are they for?” Priscilla asked, and she backed up until she hit the exam table with her bottom.

“I need to restrain you,” Fatima said, as if the answer were obvious.

“Why?” Priscilla asked.

“To go to the lab,” Fatima said.

Her mask was still covering her mouth, but her eyes registered surprise as Priscilla looked into them.

“I’m not going to the lab,” Priscilla asserted, and she looked at the place on the floor where she had dropped her clothes, but there was nothing there now.

“I’m sorry, Honey,” Fatima said softly. “The appraisal’s done. You passed. You’ve got your number.”

“But,” Priscilla said, otherwise speechless.

“Please hold out your hands,” Fatima repeated.

“No,” Priscilla said firmly.

“Fatima, are you going to need any help?” Hank asked. He and Stephanie had been typing on their phones, but both looked over with concern as Priscilla’s voice rose.

“No, we’re fine,” Fatima assured, and then she looked at Priscilla. “You’ve got to let me put these on you.”

“Okay, okay, just wait,” Priscilla said. “What are they?”

Fatima grabbed the cuff she’d tried to put around Priscilla’s wrist and allowed the rest of the chain to tumble out of her hand and down toward the floor.

“It has four cuffs,” Fatima said, as if lecturing. “I’ll put these two around your wrists. It’s like handcuffs. And the other two go around your ankles. And the long chain here joins everything together.”

Priscilla raised her hands halfway, then lowered them again. "I'm sorry," she said. "I'll go. But I want to put my clothes back on, and you don't need to chain me."

"You're going to the lab," Fatima repeated. "I have to chain you."

"Okay, okay, wait," Priscilla said. "This isn't what was supposed to happen. I wasn't—"

Fatima reached up and took Priscilla's left hand gently in hers. "Please?" she asked.

Priscilla wasn't ready to get in a fight with Fatima, or anyone else for that matter. Obviously, there had been a mistake, but she'd have to go to someone else to straighten things out. Slowly, reluctantly, she lowered her hands, allowing Fatima to secure a cuff around each wrist.

"Thank you," Fatima said. "Now, lower your hands so I can get your feet."

Priscilla did as she was told, and Fatima knelt and secured the cuffs around her ankles.

Priscilla looked down at the metal restraints, trying to convince herself this was still her body, chained and covered with writing.

"Why is this necessary?" Priscilla asked.

Fatima stood and checked the fit of Priscilla's wrist cuffs, tightening one. "All the girls wear them on the way to the lab," she said simply. "It's something you should have known about."

Fatima walked to the tray beside the exam table and picked up the lubricant bottle.

"Now, turn around and put your hands on your knees," she instructed, upending the bottle.

Priscilla, not certain what was about to happen, obeyed.

"Have you ever been checked for contraband, Honey?" Fatima asked.

"No," Priscilla said.

"Of course you haven't," Fatima said. "Just hold still and we'll get this done in no time."

Fatima put one hand between Priscilla's shoulder blades, the other on her rear. Priscilla started when Fatima began stroking her anus with one gloved, heavily-lubricated finger.

"Just relax, please," Fatima said, and Priscilla drew in her breath as Fatima slid a finger into her chamber.

The exam was brief but humiliating, Fatima methodically searching for anything in Priscilla's rectum that shouldn't be there.

When the inspection was done, Fatima pulled off both gloves, dropped them in the trash in the corner, turned toward the door that led to the hearing room and knocked.

"Where are my clothes?" Priscilla asked, straightening, her face red and taugth.

Fatima pointed to a plastic bag by the hearing room door.

"No, I mean, what am I supposed to wear now?" Priscilla asked, well aware she would not be putting her sun dress back on, at least not at this moment.

Priscilla heard keys jangling in the hearing room door, and it swung open. Fatima pulled her mask from her mouth, leaned into the hearing room and announced, "We're ready for disposition."

"She passed the appraisal?" the judge's voice asked.

"Yes, she's been acquired," Fatima replied.

"Okay," the judge said, "bring her in."

Fatima motioned to Priscilla to follow her into the hearing room, but Priscilla backed up and shook her head in horror. "I need clothes," she said in a hoarse whisper. It was one thing to be nude in front of strangers during a medical exam, but it was entirely another to walk into a legal proceeding wearing nothing but chains.

Once again, Fatima was insistent. She stepped over to Priscilla, grabbed her arm and tugged her toward the door.

Priscilla, her ankles restrained, and unable to use her arms for balance, almost toppled over before she regained her footing and walked, clanking softly, back into the courtroom.

The judge, whose name Priscilla still didn't know, looked at her sadly and said, "The matter before us is hereby resolved with the disbursement of this party to the Atlanta Female Laboratory. It is so ordered."

He banged his gavel.

Priscilla looked behind her, hoping for rescue, but all she found were Mrs. Lamore and Hoyt, stone faced and staring down. Even when Fatima handed Mrs. Lamore the bag with Priscilla's clothing, Mrs. Lamore never looked up.

“Momma?” Priscilla said, overwhelmed with terrified confusion, but still, her mother looked elsewhere. “Momma?”

Fatima wrapped her fingers around Priscilla’s arm and pulled the girl out of the hearing room, back through the clinic and to the other door, the one Hank and Stephanie had come through. She knocked and it opened and she was drawn into a dark corridor with a freight elevator at the end.

“This way,” Fatima said.

Priscilla’s chains rattled as she made her way toward the end of the hall. Speechless, it was the only noise she made.

At the elevator door, Fatima hit the down button and smiled at Priscilla in a sympathetic way.

“You’ll get used to them,” she said.

“Why do I have to wear them?”

“Everyone does.”

“When will I get some clothes to wear?” Priscilla asked.

The nurse seemed like she was about to answer, but the elevator arrived and the door opened with a loud groan.

Chapter 3: On the Bus

Priscilla stepped in, the door closed and she and Fatima descended four floors, to the basement of the courthouse. This was another parking garage, but better lit than the level where Hoyt had parked his truck. A courthouse guard, a tall man with blond hair, was seated at the door of a small office, and he looked up as Priscilla and the nurse exited the elevator. Priscilla, desperately humiliated, covered her sex but had no choice about leaving her breasts exposed.

“Hey, Fatima,” he said, eyeing Priscilla carefully, “how many you gonna have this morning?”

“Maybe one or two more before lunch,” Fatima answered. “Are you ready to load?”

“Sure,” said the man, and he rose and walked to the back of what looked like an old school bus that had been painted gray. A set of wooden steps had been shoved up against the bus’s back door, and he climbed them, unlocked the door and motioned Priscilla to follow him.

Priscilla, with Fatima guiding her by the elbow, ascended the steps carefully and entered the vehicle. The space was dim, the windows painted gray and covered with metal grating, but as Priscilla’s eyes adjusted she saw, instead of benches, a narrow hallway extending the length of the vehicle, lined on either side with bars.

The guard stopped just inside the bus door, at a wall equipped with what appeared to be handles in rows and columns. “Put her in cage 3,” he said.

As she stepped further into the darkness, Priscilla noticed that the bars were actually individual doors, and behind each was a tiny space, about the size of a closet, solid sheets of metal on either side.

Just ahead, one of the doors clicked, and Fatima grabbed it and swung it open. A number 3 had been crudely painted on a metal plate soldered to the bars at about eye level, and Priscilla realized with growing horror this was where she was about to be put.

“No,” she said, and she stopped.

“Almost there,” Fatima said, tugging Priscilla’s elbow, oblivious to her fear. “Step inside.”

Fatima had obviously done this many times, applying just enough pressure to keep Priscilla moving without knocking her over, and Priscilla was quickly deposited into the tiny space.

“Okay, open the hook,” Fatima said.

Priscilla heard another click, this one from the floor, and she looked down and noticed a small metal barb rising between her feet. Fatima knelt and positioned the ring in the middle of Priscilla’s ankle chain under it. “Close it,” she said. The hook dropped through the ring, securing her to the floor of the cage.

“How’s everything feel, honey?” Fatima asked, standing.

“I’m not supposed to be here,” Priscilla immediately blurted. “Let me go.”

“We’ve already been through that,” Fatima said. “This is your last chance to have your cuffs adjusted, and then we’ll lock the door and you’re all set. Is anything too tight?”

“They all are,” Priscilla replied, believing for a moment that this might free her.

Fatima and the guard both laughed, and Fatima knelt again and tugged at Priscilla’s ankle cuffs, then grasped Priscilla’s forearms and slid the cuffs around her wrists. “We want you secure, but we don’t want to cut off your circulation,” she said. “Okay, you’re all set.”

Fatima closed the cage door and stepped away, and the guard appeared.

“There’s a hole in the back for you to relieve yourself in,” he said. “Can you see it?”

Priscilla looked toward the back of her cage, saw a dark place that she assumed was the hole, and nodded.

“How long will I be here?” she asked.

“Until you get to the lab,” the guard replied.

“When will that be?” she asked.

“No idea.” he answered, turning to leave.

“Wait!” Priscilla cried, but she was answered only by footsteps, and then the slamming of the bus door. She heard the jangling of keys and realized that escape was virtually impossible. Locked in a cage in a locked bus, chained by all four limbs to the floor, and naked, there was no scenario she could imagine where she could be free until they decided to let her go.

That became her hope, that someone in the courthouse upstairs would suddenly realize their error, come down and set her loose, no doubt with a great deal of apology. And then she'd go home, describe her ordeal to Hoyt and her mother and, in no uncertain terms, promise that she would not be helping him with any more bad debt. Or any other problem. Ever.

She sat down, her bottom on the cool metal, and leaned her shoulder against the bars of the door. As her eyes adjusted to the dimness, she looked at the hole in the back of her cage. If she pulled her ankle chains tight, she'd be able to position herself over it. But she was determined not to use it. She'd hold it in all day before she'd go to the bathroom in a hole in the floor.

For a time, Priscilla inspected her shackles. She'd never seen a key in Fatima's hand, but she found a small slit in the cuffs where a key would likely go. She had no idea how locks worked but wondered briefly if she could free herself with something – a paperclip, a piece of wood, a fingernail. Of course, in the unlikely event she was successful four times, she'd still be caged. Nevertheless, because she had nothing else to do, she picked at the cuffs with her fingernail, not caring that her red polish was breaking off with every tap of the nail against metal.

Thirty minutes later, she was still alone on the bus, and it occurred to her she might not be freed until she got to the lab and someone checked her paperwork. She had no idea where the lab was. The address on the letterhead was unfamiliar to her.

Fine, she thought. Once she got there, she'd just borrow some clothes and a phone and ask her mother to pick her up. Don't bring Hoyt, she'd tell her. She didn't want to see him, nor ever ride with him again.

What if they didn't realize their mistake when she reached the lab? The thought terrified her, and her heart started pounding and her breath came sharp and shallow. It was a panic attack, like the kind she often fought off during final exams. Calm down, she told herself. Stay calm. They'll figure it out. You're going home tonight, and back to school in two weeks. And besides, she thought, I'm not going to a prison. I'm going to a lab, where scientists work. Maybe even doctors. Worst case, I'll just explain things to someone there, and if they won't listen, I'll just walk out and find my way home.

Priscilla was lost in thought when the sound of jangling keys brought her back to the present. The bus door opened with a squeak, and

she heard chains rattling and knew someone else was being brought in.

“Cage 5,” the guard said, and Priscilla pressed her forehead against the bars.

In the darkness, she could make out a black woman, probably about her age, nude and chained as she was, being ushered by Fatima into a cage across the narrow hallway. “Okay, open the hook,” Fatima said, and Priscilla heard a click and the shutting of the cage door, and then the guard giving instructions about the hole in the back of the cage.

Throughout, the newcomer said nothing.

Priscilla thought about calling out but didn’t see what good it would do. To her surprise, however, Fatima came to her.

“How are we doing?” Fatima asked brightly.

Priscilla looked up from where she was sitting. “I want to leave,” she said.

“Of course you do, Honey,” Fatima said. “Stand up so I can check your cuffs.”

Priscilla rose clumsily to her feet and Fatima reached through the bars, tugging at each restraint. “How do they feel?”

“I want them off,” Priscilla said simply.

“Pull your middle chain,” Fatima said.

Priscilla yanked on the long chain that joined her wrists to her ankles, hoping she might pull hard enough to break it loose, but it remained hooked to the floor. Fatima turned and left the bus and the sound of clanking keys told her the back door was locked again.

“Hello?” Priscilla cried out.

The sound of chains shifting betrayed the presence of the other girl, but still she said nothing.

Priscilla was about to cry out again, to insist that the new girl speak, but then she heard the deep rumbling that told her someone had just turned on the engine of the bus, and the vehicle lurched forward.

For almost an hour, the bus rumbled through the streets of Atlanta, stopping, starting, turning, and Priscilla quickly gave up trying to guess which way they were going, or how far. She remained seated, peering into the darkness between the bars, desperate to talk to the other girl but not wanting to call out again and be ignored. She needed to urinate, but she was determined to hold it until she could use a proper toilet.

The bus was getting hotter, and she felt sweat bead up on her forehead.

After what felt like five minutes with the bus idling but not moving, the engine shut off and there was the telltale rattle of keys at the back door.

Priscilla pressed her face against the bars, listening as the door swung open with a creak and a set of chains slid rhythmically along the floor of the bus.

“Cage 7,” said a voice, and a new woman appeared, someone who probably did the same job as Fatima at whatever courthouse the bus was parked at. She swung open the door of the cage directly opposite Priscilla’s and guided a blonde girl inside.

The girl, perhaps 20, her face and body bearing the same writing that was on Priscilla’s body, noticed Priscilla as the chain between her feet was hooked to the floor.

“Hi!” she said, smiling.

“Hi,” Priscilla said, so relieved to be spoken to she almost forgot her condition.

“How do your cuffs feel?” the woman asked.

“They feel fine,” the blonde replied, holding out her wrists. As Fatima had done, the woman tugged at the new girl’s cuffs, then closed the cage door and turned to face Priscilla. “Stand for a cuff check,” she instructed. Priscilla stood, looking curiously at the newcomer as the woman reached through the bars to ensure Priscilla was still adequately restrained.

The woman checked the black girl’s cuffs and departed, and the tall blond man appeared and gave the same instructions that were given before, about the hole in the back of the cage. The girl nodded and said “Thank you!”

As soon as the man turned away, Priscilla whispered, “What’s your name?”

“Rachel,” she said. “You?”

“Priscilla,” she replied. “How did you end up here?”

“It’s for my church,” said Rachel.

Priscilla stared for a moment, confused. “What do you mean?”

“We’re doing the Lord’s work,” Rachel said.

A second girl with short dark hair was brought in, directed to cage 2, hooked in place and given her instructions.

“Debra!” Rachel shouted. “You made it!”

“Hey, Rachel!” Debra replied, and Priscilla sensed a hint of stress in her voice. “Are there any more?”

“Just the two of us so far,” Rachel replied, “but I heard Ruth got through. I’m not sure about Mary or Jess.”

Two more girls were brought onto the bus, the girl named Ruth hooked to the floor of the cage beside Priscilla’s, the one named Mary further down the hall, and as they chatted excitedly among themselves, Priscilla gleaned that there were five of them from one church, and only a girl named Jessie didn’t pass her appraisal.

“I didn’t think they were going to chain us,” said Ruth. “I tried to tell her I was going voluntarily.”

“I think it’s just the rules,” said Rachel, leaning forward to study her compatriots through the bars. “Mary, they took your glasses.”

“Yeah,” Mary replied. “Put them in the bag with everything else.”

Rachel seemed to be the de facto leader of the little band, and once they were all caged and the bus door was locked, she began singing Amazing Grace, the other three quickly joining her, each producing her own harmony in what was clearly something they’d rehearsed.

The bus rumbled to life, lurched backward and continued on its journey, and the singing continued. Priscilla never went to church and didn’t know most of the songs, but some she liked. Others she found annoying, but she was glad for the company.

The vibrations of the bus were shaking her bladder unbearably, and Priscilla at last succumbed to the need to relieve herself in the rude hole at the back of her cage.

She looked at Rachel self-consciously, glad to see that she was singing with her eyes closed. Priscilla eased backwards, pulling her ankle chains tight, steadying herself with her hands on the floor in front of her, positioning herself over the black hole. She released a test stream, made sure her aim was good, and followed it up with a thick golden rush of fluid that looked black in the dim light.

There was no toilet paper, and she didn’t want to use her bare hands, so she returned to her place at the front of her cage, tucking her ankles under her and resting her chin in her palm, ignoring the trickle that ran around the back of her thigh.

As humiliating as using the bathroom this way was, she was glad she'd done it, and she felt a slight twinge of optimism. They were on the way to the lab, she'd get her chains off and some clothes on, and then she'd go home and give Hoyt and her mother two pieces of her mind. And then, back at school, she'd get her degree and leave her mother's world behind for good.

After another half an hour of driving, the bus stopped again and the engine shut off.

"Do you think we're there yet?" Ruth asked, a little anxiously.

"In good time, Sister Ruth," said Rachel, trying to sound wise.

"We might just be picking up more girls."

Priscilla thought there was something a little coercive in the way Rachel answered, and she wondered if Rachel was Ruth's Hoyt. Maybe Rachel had somehow tricked Ruth into going to her appraisal, the same way Hoyt and Priscilla's mother had tricked her.

"So you're doing this for your church?" Priscilla asked.

"Yes!" said Rachel. "Riverdell Hall of Grace. We lost some members and money got tight, but a wonderful man came and did a presentation last month about the lab, and they asked for volunteers, and the four of us were blessed to be able to help. Isn't that right, sisters?"

The three other girls assented, although none of them sounded as enthusiastic as Rachel, Priscilla thought.

Someone unlocked the bus door, and two more girls were led to their cages and hooked into place. One of the new girls was put next to Rachel, and Priscilla looked at her and noticed that she was crying softly to herself. The bus cranked back up and they were off to their next destination.

Priscilla guessed it was late afternoon now, and she was growing hungry and thirsty. The bus was hot and they were obviously in the sun, judging by how bright the light was as it peeked through the cracks in the paint over the windows.

They rode in silence another 45 minutes before the bus came to a stop. Immediately, Priscilla heard keys at the back door and a large black woman in a security uniform entered.

"Everyone stand up for a cuff check," she said, and all the girls rose to their feet. The woman started with Priscilla, tugging at her cuffs.

"Middle chain," she barked, and Priscilla grabbed the chain that ran between her legs and tugged.

“Are we at the lab yet?” Priscilla asked.

“No,” the woman said.

“How long are we going to be here?”

“All night,” she said. “Lab doesn’t take girls after 2”

Priscilla gasped. “Where are we going to sleep?” she asked.

“In your cage,” the woman replied, turning to tug on Rachel’s cuffs.

“I need water.”

“You’ll get some later.”

“I’m hungry.”

“They’ll feed you at the lab.”

“We’re being tested, Sisters,” Rachel announced, but none of her fellow church members agreed, at least not audibly, and Priscilla heard a snort from someone else, possibly the black girl who’d gotten on second.

“I’m not sure I want to do this,” said Debra after the guard had left.

“Be brave, Sister,” Rachel said quickly.

“No,” replied Debra quickly. “I’m not ready for this. I wanna go back home. I might come back next month, but I can’t do this right now.”

For the next few hours, there was brief chitchat, but mostly silence as each girl pondered her situation. Debra, apparently resigned again to being on the bus, wondered what kind of food they’d be serving at the lab. Rachel speculated about the clothing they’d wear there, something about hoping for the right color, and Priscilla couldn’t tell if she were joking.

The light through the cracks in the window faded, and Priscilla knew night had fallen. Keys jangled in the bus’s back door, dim overhead lights came on, and a new guard came in, a stocky white woman with her hair tied back.

“Cuff check,” she announced. “Everyone stand.”

The girls got up slowly, and the guard moved from cage to cage, reaching in to tug at each girl’s cuffs. Once satisfied each girl remained securely restrained, she commanded each to pull her middle chain to ensure it was still secured to the floor.

The smells on the bus were growing overpowering to Priscilla, sweat and waste, and she glared at the woman and felt hate for her, and for everyone.

The guard left, locked the back door of the bus, and the girls were quiet again.

Priscilla wasn't sleepy – she was too angry to be – but she had nothing else to do, so she tried to lie down.

Her cage was too small, even with her legs against her belly, but she did her best in the cramped space, daydreaming until she fell asleep, waking only when the night guard returned for another cuff check. Hoping for light, she saw only darkness through the cracks in the window. She rose stiffly, wishing it were morning but knowing it wasn't.

“Anyone want water?” the guard asked after she'd checked everyone's restraints.

Priscilla gulped all she could of the warm water, served from a metal bucket with a spout that extended between the bars to her mouth.

“I need a tampon,” said Debra. The guard went to the back of the bus, opened a cabinet and returned to Debra's cage.

“What should I do with the used one?” Debra asked.

“Put it in the hole back there,” the guard instructed.

Priscilla heard the squeak of a small door, then the sound of paper tearing, and knew Debra had received a tampon. That surprised her.

The guard left and locked the door, and everyone settled down until the next cuff check.

Soon, most of the girls were breathing deeply, clearly asleep, but Priscilla stayed awake this time, too furious to sleep again, and she heard from somewhere on the bus the muffled, rhythmic clink of chain, and knew one of the girls was masturbating, trying to do it quietly, her wrist chain bouncing off the floor. Priscilla wasn't about to allow herself that pleasure, but the sound reassured her, and she listened as the rattle became faster and more urgent, and then the girl climaxed with a gasp and a sharp jerk of chain, followed by silence.

Priscilla put her head down and drifted in and out of sleep, dreaming that someone was holding her or attacking her, waking to see that she was still alone, naked and chained to the floor of a tiny cage on a converted bus.

She was sound asleep when the bus engine cranked to life. She moved her head and it immediately struck the bars at the front of her cage. She attempted to reach up, forgetting that her hands were still restrained. Everything hurt – her hips, her wrists and ankles, her back and neck – but she slowly angled herself up until she was crouched on her feet. The bus was a dark gray now, the first daylight oozing through the windows. Still

groggy, she played out the events of the day before, remembered where she was and how she'd gotten there, and moved to the back of her cage to urinate.

It was still too dark to see anything, but the sound of rattling chain told her the other girls were waking up, and she felt the bus back up, and then move forward, first slowly and then faster.

No one wanted to talk, so they rode in silence for perhaps 30 minutes, and then the bus stopped, someone unlocked the back door and a new guard, a man, walked in.

“Wake up, we’re getting off,” he said. “Empty your bladders, empty your bowels, you got 10 minutes. Stand up when you’re ready to leave your cage.”

Rachel stood immediately, and the guard stepped to her cage.

A second pair of footsteps told Priscilla someone was at the controls at the back of the bus, and she realized with a mix of relief and dread that they had probably reached the lab.

“Seven,” the guard said, and the door to Rachel’s cage opened, her hook was released and the girl, looking tired and disheveled, stepped into the narrow hall. “Walk that way, they’ll tell you what to do next,” the guard told her, and she obeyed.

Priscilla was third, and she staggered down the hall, off the bus and onto a covered loading dock swarming with what she guessed were lab workers, all in matching jumpsuits, mostly red, but a few in blue and black.

Chapter 4: At the Lab

Priscilla looked back, seeing sky, a chain-link fence with loops of barbed wire at the top and, beyond that, a horizon with trees. She wanted to look at it, drink in something she'd always taken for granted, but one of the lab workers immediately grabbed her shoulder.

"Position 3," she said, pointing her toward the other two girls, both standing and facing the doors to the lab.

As Priscilla neared the pair, she noticed that, as on the bus, the chain between each girl's feet had been secured to the floor of the loading dock with a hook. A similar hook rose from the concrete near a crude number 3, and Priscilla approached it.

"Put your restraint in the catch," the worker commanded.

Priscilla crouched and slipped the ring between her feet under the hook, watching as it snapped shut. She couldn't tell if someone had closed it or it had happened automatically, and she rose and looked down for a moment, noticing the holes in the concrete behind each girl. Because of their position and size, she wondered if they were more crude toilets. The thought horrified her.

Rachel turned and smiled at her and Priscilla nodded grimly back, refusing to treat this as anything other than an ordeal that must be endured until she'd gotten through it. Still groggy, she returned to her last thoughts of the night before, about notifying someone in authority that she had been taken into custody by accident and that she needed to go home. First, though, she needed to get her chains off and get dressed.

The fourth girl was one of Rachel's churchmates, and Priscilla turned and whispered a hello to her after the girl's chains were fastened to the floor. She offered no response, her eyes on something distant, and Priscilla wondered if she were in shock, or simply tired.

Another bus arrived, and Priscilla watched as the females were walked off one by one, all nude except for their chains and their appraisal markings.

Two employees, a woman with a tablet and a man pushing a cart, approached Rachel. She said hello but they ignored her. The man began reading numbers off Rachel's thigh while the woman punched the tablet.

"Okay, found her," the woman said. "Keep reading."

The man read the same number from Rachel's lower back, her arm, and from her jaw, and the woman said "Confirmed" and tapped her tablet, and the man used a marker to draw a bright blue line diagonally across Rachel's front, from her right breast to her left hip.

"Bend over, hands on your knees," the woman commanded.

Rachel obeyed as the man rolled his cart behind her. It was filled with ominous looking semicircles of metal, with chains at each end. Priscilla stared but had no idea what they were for.

The male lab worker inserted his finger up Rachel's vagina, and then her anus, checking, Priscilla assumed, for contraband. Rachel responded by staring straight ahead and smiling, as if she'd expected this to happen, but her red face told Priscilla she was profoundly embarrassed.

Finding nothing, the man picked up one of the metal objects.

"Part your legs," he said, "so I can slip this up your holes."

Rachel looked back at him in shock, but she obeyed and he placed the object between her thighs, over her anus and sex. That's when Priscilla noticed the two short, thick prongs, wet with lubrication, positioned to slide up Rachel's chambers.

"Each of you will be fitted with sanitary plugs," the woman announced to Rachel and the girls behind her. "Do not attempt to remove your plugs. Do not attempt to pass wastes while wearing your plugs."

As the man worked Rachel's plugs into place, Rachel stared at the ground, grimacing and trying to smile, but Priscilla could tell the prongs were at least humiliating, and also possibly painful.

The metal arc was less than an inch wide and just long enough to touch the top of Rachel's pubic hair in front, barely reaching her lower back behind.

"Stand up straight," the woman commanded. With some effort, Rachel complied, and the man pulled a pair of chains at the front of the arc and hooked them together to the other end of the arc at Rachel's lower back, padlocking them in place.

After the next girl's number was confirmed, she bent over without needing to be told, grunting as the plugs were installed, then straightening on command as the chains were secured in back.

Priscilla struggled to prepare for what was about to be done. After the number on her thigh, lower back, arm and jaw was matched and the

blue line was drawn across her front, she bent over and parted her legs to have her cavities searched and the plugs inserted.

The artificial lubrication, mixed with her own ovulatory fluids, allowed the vaginal prong to fill her comfortably, and she couldn't help but groan quietly as the man pushed it inside. The prong in back was another matter, a little pleasure as it opened up her anus, followed by discomfort as it filled her rectum.

Priscilla felt that progress was being made, uncomfortable as it was, and that gave her a new confidence that she'd be going home soon, and she cooperated as the chain was wrapped around her waist and locked.

The man and woman worked their way down the rest of the line quickly, issuing the same orders to each girl, the girls having no choice but to comply, grunting or gasping quietly as their chambers were searched and plugged.

Priscilla was desperately tired and wanted to lie down on something soft. She shifted her feet, swung back and forth and silently cursed Hoyt and her mother. They wouldn't be getting a word from her now. She'd come home, pack her things, storm out and spend the night somewhere else. With a friend, maybe. Denise, or Robbie.

Then, comforted by the thought of her impending release, she resumed her observation of the procedures on the dock. A third bus had arrived, then a fourth, each disgorging a half dozen or so naked, restrained girls, covered with appraisal markings, unceremoniously hooked to the floor, each then processed the same way, numbers matched to the list, vagina and anus searched and plugged.

There were white and black and Asian women, mostly in their 20s, as far as Priscilla could tell, possibly a few in their 30s, and she wondered how each had come to this place. No one talked except the lab workers, and then only to issue orders. There was the occasional walkie-talkie squawk, the rattling of chains, but otherwise just silence. It was as if everyone had come to be executed, and no more words were necessary.

Empty now, the four buses pulled away one by one, presumably to pick up more females. How many girls were in this building? she wondered. The brochure had said more than 250.

As the last girls were being inspected and plugged, a second set of workers appeared at the building's opening with several large carts, and they headed for Rachel.

“Hands together,” a woman instructed. Rachel complied and a second woman fastened a new set of cuffs around her wrists.

The girl in front of Priscilla was placed in similar cuffs, as was Priscilla and, eventually, everyone else on the dock, and she stared at them and wondered over their purpose. The cuffs were heavy, and tighter than the restraints Fatima had put on her. They weren’t handcuffs, exactly, just a single piece of metal with various slots cut into it whose purpose Priscilla could only guess at.

More workers and more large carts appeared, and Priscilla had her answer. Long, poles, with various clamps and handles along their length, were set one by one into the holes just behind each girl’s feet.

So the holes weren’t crude toilets, Priscilla realized. The fact they held ominous poles brought her little reassurance, though.

Two workers approached Rachel first, removed the cuffs she’d been put in after her appraisal, and grabbed her elbows to raise her arms over her head. A third worker fastened her new wrist cuff into a slot in the pole, then turned a crank, slightly reminiscent to Priscilla of the crank one uses to open a patio umbrella, and the top half of the pole rose, lifting Rachel until the chains that secured her feet to the floor were drawn tight.

A second set of cuffs were put around her ankles and affixed to the pole, and her original chains were removed from her ankles.

Priscilla watched with a mixture of horror and morbid fascination as the next girl was stretched against her pole.

When the workers came for Priscilla, she offered no resistance, her arms were raised over her head and her body pulled tight and cuffed in place.

“How long will I be on here?” Priscilla asked, not expecting an answer.

To her surprise, the woman behind her spoke. “Just until you’re stamped,” she said.

“What’s stamped?” Priscilla asked.

There was no answer, so Priscilla tried to turn her head to see who had spoken, but her arms were in the way, so she dropped her chin to her chest and looked side to side. To her left, she saw Rachel and the other girl and to the right, dozens more females, a few already cruelly hung, the rest about to be affixed to their poles. Several other girls stared back at her, mouths taut and eyes wide with shock, and she knew she must look the

same way, and for the first time since her ordeal had begun, she wept, quietly, the tears running down her face, with no way to wipe them.

She hung on her pole for what seemed like another 30 minutes before three workers arrived at Rachel's position, lifted her pole out of the hole in the floor and set it sideways on a large cart. The second girl's pole was set in the middle of the cart, her head beside Rachel's feet, and then Priscilla was dropped onto it, her face, her breast, her hip and thigh against the rough metal. This latest indignity enraged her anew, ending her tears, and she might have cried out, screamed against her treatment, demanded to go home now, but Rachel's ears were less than a foot from her mouth and besides, she knew protesting would do no good.

Some of the other girls were starting to despair as well, and Priscilla heard weeping, a "Please!" and several unintelligible shouts. But the work went on, relentlessly.

Priscilla's cart began moving slowly across the loading dock toward the building's big doors, and she raised her head awkwardly in the hopes of seeing inside, but all she could spy were worker's legs, so she put her face down against the cold metal and looked at the feet of the girl beside her, and at Rachel's blonde hair on the other side of the feet. Priscilla's cavities were throbbing around her plugs now, and she realized that, more than anything else, she wanted them out of her, even more than she wanted to be released from her pole.

Inside the room, workers took their places at either end of Rachel's pole and raised her up, and Priscilla got her first clear view of the space they were in, lined with deep shelves, with a single table in the room's center.

Rachel and her pole were carried over and set on the table, and then Priscilla lost sight of her behind the lab workers.

The second girl was picked up, disappearing from Priscilla's view, and Priscilla was lifted and set on a shelf at waist level.

The shelf was made of smooth metal, and Priscilla rested her face against it and tried to see what was happening. Most of the time, lab workers blocked her view, but she could hear carts being pushed into the room, and she occasionally caught a glimpse of another female, naked and stretched tight on her pole, being deposited on a shelf.

Priscilla heard a lab worker's voice, and at first she thought it was counting, but then she realized the voice was reading out Rachel's number:

“1-4-0-7-1.” Someone else read it back, and then a third time, and then there was a scream of pain.

Priscilla raised her head, trying desperately to see what was happening. The same voice screamed again, and then Priscilla heard the voice say “Ahh, no no no!” and knew it must be Rachel crying out.

Rachel groaned, screamed again and then her suffering seemed to be over. There were four distinct beeps, then Priscilla caught a glimpse of Rachel, being removed from the table, a worker at either end of her pole, carrying her away. She couldn’t see Rachel’s face, but she thought she could hear her crying.

“What are they doing?” Priscilla whispered, hoping the girl on the shelf with her might hear her. Her question was met with silence, though, which didn’t surprise her.

For another half an hour, the pattern was repeated over and over, with girl after girl. Numbers would be read off, and then the voice of a new girl would cry out, once, twice, at least three times, but usually four, with a groan or two in the middle, and then there were four beeps, and it was over. This was what the worker who had spoken to her meant by “stamping,” Priscilla assumed, and she imagined that it was painful but not fatal, and she tried not to panic, tried to prepare herself for what was to come. Perhaps it was some sort of inoculation?

Eventually, they came for the girl on the shelf beside her, who issued a quiet, anxious “ah” as she was slid off the shelf, four distinct cries of pain as she was stamped.

And then it was Priscilla’s turn. She was shivering when they finally came for her, a worker at either end of her pole, sliding her off the shelf and carrying her to the table.

The table, like the shelf, was made of cold, smooth metal, and they slid her to the middle of it and turned her pole so she was face up, staring at the ceiling.

A man leaned over the table and studied her thigh. “1-4-0-6-7,” he said, carefully pronouncing each digit.

“Okay, found her,” said a woman’s voice. “Keep going.”

“1-4-0-6-7,” he said, peering at the number on her arm, then her jaw. “1-4-0-6-7.”

“Okay, here we go,” said the woman’s voice, but Priscilla heart was beating so hard she barely heard her. She felt cold metal against her left

hip, not far from the upper corner of her pubic hair, and then searing pain, like 100 needles boring into her flesh at the same time. Priscilla screamed, a deep, piercing scream of anguish, as much from the uncertainty of what was being done to her as from the pain.

The cold metal was next pressed against the upper part of her right breast, and the pain followed immediately.

“Stop!” Priscilla screamed. “Wait! Why?”

Her pole was raised and she was flipped over and set down on her front, the table pressing against her nose and mouth and breasts and thighs. She felt the cold metal against her upper right shoulder, and she screamed before the pain began, and continued to scream as the same thing was done to her lower left back, what felt like needles or scalding water or a hot poker, jabbing the flesh of her rump.

She heard two beeps, was flipped back over, then two more, coming from a small scanner one of the workers was pointing at her new wounds.

Her pole was lifted and she was carried, sweating and gasping, into another room. She looked down and saw blood where they had stamped her breast, hundreds of drops, some tiny and some bigger, a few running in long red trails, and beneath the blood she saw a series of thin black lines, of varying lengths and thicknesses, and a five-digit number that she guessed was the one they’d been reading out: 14067.

The lines and numbers made a rectangle, about an inch wide and two inches long – relatively small, but horrifying in their import. These were barcodes, tattooed into her skin, in four places.

Permanently.

She began to suspect for the first time that she would not be going home anytime soon, that her mother had lied and she belonged here as much as any of the other girls. The thought left her numb. She wasn’t ready to cry again, and she’d felt all the rage she could stand for one day, so she just hung limply on her pole as it was brought into the next room and set upright in another hole in the floor.

The pain subsided quickly and now just felt like a minor burn, and she once again could feel her other pains, the plugs up her vagina and rectum, and the growing aches, in her shoulders, elbows and wrists, of being hung. Priscilla dropped her head and looked side to side, noticing the blood and the black stamps on the backs and fronts of the girls nearest her.

Workers wearing rubber gloves and bearing wet towels circulated among the girls, wiping off the blood, and Priscilla stared straight ahead as a male staff member scrubbed each of her stamps. The towels were cold and brought a minor relief.

Priscilla heard before she saw the next step, guessing from the sound of chains rattling and the instructions being issued by various lab workers that they were releasing each girl from her pole and returning her to the chains she'd been brought in. As much as she hated the restraints Fatima had forced her to wear, the pole was far worse, and when they came for her, Priscilla was glad to cooperate, complying as she was lowered and her wrists and ankles were released from the heavy pole cuffs and returned to their original restraints.

An older woman in red, heavysset with graying hair, touched Priscilla's elbow and pointed toward a doorway where another girl was being guided out.

"Where are we going?" Priscilla asked.

"Orientation cage," the woman replied.

"What's an orientation cage?" Priscilla asked her.

"It's where you're kept while you get trained for the lab," the woman replied. She seemed not to mind Priscilla's questions, so Priscilla kept asking them.

"When do I get my plugs out?" she asked, walking slowly out the door, through a hall and to a locked door with a small window.

"As soon as you're in your cage," the woman replied. She pulled a tag out of her pocket and held it before a small scanner set beside the door. It beeped and she pulled it open, ushering Priscilla into a hall. "I'll take your chains off too."

The woman's words were hardly a comfort, but Priscilla was glad for the news.

"How long will I be in orientation?" Priscilla asked.

"It takes most girls about a week," the woman replied.

"And then where will I go?" Priscilla asked.

"To the main part of the lab," the woman replied. "General population."

They passed through the hall and stopped at an elevator, and the woman pushed the up button.

“So then, where?” Priscilla began haltingly. “Where will I stay then?”

“You’ll have your own cage, with the other girls,” the woman replied.

“Oh,” Priscilla said. The answer didn’t surprise her, but she felt the panic returning. “I’m not supposed to be here. There’s been a mistake.”

“A lot of the girls say that,” the woman replied, and she almost sounded kindly. “That never gets them out, though.”

“What are we here for?” Priscilla asked, heart sinking as she stepped onto the elevator.

“It depends,” said the woman, pressing the button for the second floor. “Lots of things, probably. Experiments and things.”

“What kinds of experiments?”

“I don’t know,” the woman replied, and Priscilla suspected the woman really did know and just didn’t want to say.

On the next floor up, they left the elevator, turned a corner and walked slowly down a long hallway lined with heavy metal doors. Two other girls were being escorted ahead of Priscilla, and as she watched, each was stopped before one of the doors and then led in. Priscilla heard a “hello? hello?” from somewhere down the hall, and a scream, and then the woman stopped her before one of the doors, unlocking it with a jangle of keys.

Just inside the door were a chair, a small table and a sink, and then a wall of bars, like those of a prison cell, with a second door made of bars set into it. Wielding her keys again, the lab worker opened the second door and motioned Priscilla to enter.

Priscilla complied and the worker swung the door shut and locked it. Priscilla turned, but the woman motioned her to turn back around.

“Let me get your plugs out first,” she said.

Priscilla obeyed and the woman reached through an opening in the bars and removed the padlock.

“Bend over,” she said.

Priscilla gasped with pain as the anal rod left her body. The vaginal prong, coated with Priscilla’s own fluids, slipped out more easily.

“Are you ovulating?” the woman asked, dropping the harness into the sink and washing her hands.

“Yes,” Priscilla said, straightening and turning back to face the worker. “I started two days ago.”

“Do you need to masturbate?” the woman asked.

“What?” Priscilla replied, shocked by the question.

“Do you need relief?” the woman asked.

“No,” Priscilla blurted. Pleasuring herself was the last thing on her mind right now.

“When was your last orgasm?” the woman asked.

“I’m not comfortable talking about this,” Priscilla said, using a line she’d spoken often enough to unwanted suitors, even a professor once.

“That’s not how you answer a question here,” the woman said, and she suddenly seemed far less kindly as she regarded Priscilla through the bars. “You’re new so you don’t know any better, but you can be punished for that kind of thing.”

Priscilla just stared at the woman, trying to appear calm, but her heart was pounding again.

“When was your last orgasm?”

“Two nights ago.”

“Okay, let’s get your chains off,” the woman said. “Put your hands through the port.”

In the door of her cage, wide, horizontal slots had been set into the bars at hip level and down by her feet, with a vertical slot running from one to the other. Priscilla slipped her hands through the upper slot and the woman unlocked the cuffs from each wrist, pulled the chain through the vertical slot and let it fall to the floor. The woman knelt, reached through a second port at Priscilla’s feet and removed the cuffs around her ankles, then turned and hung the set of chains on a hook on the wall near the sink.

Priscilla rubbed her wrists and turned to look at her confines.

Her cage was a tiny space, about four feet wide and perhaps eight feet deep. Only the front of the cage was bars. The side and back walls were solid, painted a sterile white, with no windows. At the back wall was a toilet and a sink and what looked like a second toilet that Priscilla realized was a bidet.

A bed on hinges had been folded up against the wall, and Priscilla unhooked it and lowered it. It contained a thin mattress and a single blanket. Priscilla hooked it back against the wall and turned. “Is this a prison?” she demanded.

“No,” the woman said. “It’s a lab. They do experiments here.”

“What kind of experiments?” Priscilla asked, hoping for more information this time.

“It depends on what they need you for,” the woman answered. “Someone will be here to feed you and start your training in the next few hours, and they might have more information.”

“When do I get something to wear?” Priscilla asked.

“You won’t get anything to wear,” the woman said. “All the girls here stay nude.”

The woman pulled a small towel and a bar of soap from under the sink by the door. “Get washed up, and use the bidet too,” she said. “And it’s okay if you want to masturbate.”

“Okay,” Priscilla said, and she turned because she knew she was blushing.

“Just make sure to wash up afterwards, so you’ll be ready for your first inventory pass,” the woman said. “Are you hungry?”

“Yes,” Priscilla blurted immediately, wondering if hunger might mean a trip to a cafeteria where there might be someone she could talk to.

No such luck. The woman turned and retrieved a small package from under the sink and handed it through the bars, along with the soap and towel.

“Are there any more questions?”

“No,” Priscilla lied, just not wanting any more answers right now.

“Okay, come to the bars for a scan,” the woman said, and she pulled what looked like a large laser pointer out of her pocket.

“Stand here,” she said, pointing to a place by the cage door, and she directed a red beam at the stamp on Priscilla’s pelvis, and at a small metal plate affixed to the bars. The laser pointer beeped twice and the woman turned it off and put it away.

“What was that for?” Priscilla asked.

“Inventory,” the woman said.

“What do you mean by inventory?”

“We track everything here,” the woman said. “You’ll learn more about that in training.”

“What are these marks?” Priscilla asked.

“They’re your ID,” the woman said. “They’ll be used to track and identify you. You’ll need to memorize your number.”

With those last words, the woman left and locked the outside door. Priscilla just stood and stared at the door for a long moment, fighting the urge to scream, to slam her fists into the wall or the bars or the ridiculous bed that swung down. She knew none of that would help her, however, so she put down the towel and soap and unwrapped the food. It was a large bar of various things, grains and nuts and fruit and possibly even some vegetable matter, bland but not terrible. She looked at the wrapper, clear plastic with black numbers stamped on the side, no ingredients or nutritional information, no manufacturer. She finished it quickly, unaware until now how hungry she was, and wished she could have another. On the last bite, she turned to the sink and pushed the cold water as wide open as it would go, cupping her hands, gulping greedily, grateful that needs tormenting her for hours were getting met.

She used the soap and towel, and water from the sink, to rinse off as much as she could of what they'd written on her at yesterday's appraisal, along with the grime and sweat of the last day. The woman had forgotten to give her shampoo, but she did her best with the soap.

After she was done with her hair, she shook it and let it fall loose and wet on her shoulders. Lastly, she sat on the bidet, the first she had ever used, allowing the lukewarm water to run against her anus and vulva, liberally soaping both openings, touching herself more than she needed to.

Lacking a dry towel, she stood in the middle of her cage, letting the water drip off next to a drain in the floor, to evaporate off her skin. The things they'd written on her were faded but still visible, and she considered washing up again. Nothing could be done about the black marks they'd stamped into her flesh, of course, and she looked away, furious this had been done to her.

Once she was dry enough, she lowered her bed and lay on top of the blanket, closing her eyes, tired but considerably refreshed, ready to think anew about her situation and the best way out of it. She returned to the conviction that a mistake had been made and she'd be freed as soon as people realized.

But then her mind turned to other matters. As horrible as everything had been – the chains, the nudity, the plugs, the cage, and the invasive questions - they had left her liberatingly unashamed. No one could fault her for anything she might do here.

She'd been caught masturbating a few times by roommates, and it was always awkward, but it wouldn't be here. If someone walked in on her now, she wouldn't care, and to her surprise, the thought aroused her.

Priscilla parted her legs and reached down between them, massaging her lips and clitoris, stroking them tentatively at first, then faster and harder. Soon, she was rocking her hips, as she had the day before, during her appraisal, when the device, thick and white and smooth, had been forced up her vagina. She allowed herself to fantasize, briefly, about other ways she might have reacted to her examination.

"Can you leave that in me?" she could have asked. "I'd like to relieve myself before you pull it out."

The three people there, Fatima and the two appraisers, might have agreed, waiting patiently while she pleased herself.

It was on that thought that she climaxed, groaning and shaking with a surprisingly powerful orgasm.

As the last waves of pleasure washed over her and the arousal ebbed, she became shy again, glad she hadn't been walked in on, and she pulled the thin sheet over her and closed her eyes.

Chapter 5: Inventory Cuffs

She had no idea how long she slept before the sound of keys jangling woke her again. She sat up in confusion, unsure where she was, as the door opened and two heavyset men walked in, one older, one about her age, both in black jumpsuits.

She pulled the sheet up to her neck, frightened by the new visitors, but neither seemed interested in her. Each had brought a tool box, and they set them down at the front of her cage, opened them up and pulled a variety of objects out, none of which Priscilla recognized.

Finally, the older man looked at Priscilla and spoke.

“Step up here, Miss,” he said.

“Why?” she asked, clinging to her sheet.

“Just do as you’re told,” he said without anger, and Priscilla realized, once again, that resistance would be useless. She removed her sheet, slid off her bed and approached the front of her cage.

“Put your feet here and here,” said the older man, pointing to either side of her cage door.

Priscilla drew in her breath and fought another panic attack. If she obeyed him, her feet would be almost a yard apart, her legs spread and her sex organ exposed at the vertical slot in her door.

“Okay,” Priscilla said, “but can you tell me why?”

“We’re fitting your inventory cuffs,” said the older man.

“What are inventory cuffs?” she asked.

“They’re for holding you at the front of your cage,” he said. “Arms over your head, legs apart.”

“Why?” Priscilla asked.

“Inventory,” he explained patiently. “Mainly.”

Priscilla, deciding not to press her luck any further, put her feet where the man had pointed, her heart pounding.

The younger man looked directly at her sex. “She’s about two inches too high,” he said.

“Long legs,” observed the older man. “Okay, miss, move your feet out just a few more inches.”

Priscilla obeyed, the younger man looked briefly at her middle again and nodded to the older man. “That puts her hole about where it needs to be.”

“Raise your hands,” said the older man, “to here and here.”

Priscilla obeyed and each of the men stood and set to work, fastening what Priscilla realized were two cuffs to the bars near her outstretched hands.

“Put your hands inside the cuffs,” he directed. “Press against the hinges – you’ll feel a spring in them – until they close.”

Priscilla obeyed and the cuffs snapped closed around her wrists. She tried to pull away reflexively, but the cuffs held.

Sensing another panic attack on the way, Priscilla bit her lip and looked at the two men as they knelt to attach another set of cuffs to the bars near her feet. They were focused on their task, she told herself, something they’d obviously done many times before. They didn’t seem to have any interest in her beyond getting her help to finish their project. They weren’t here to rape her or hurt her, she kept telling herself. If they were, they would have opened her door. For the first time, she thought of her cage as a safe place.

“Feet in, push the hinge like you did with your hands,” said the man, and she obeyed and the cuffs closed around her ankles.

Both men studied her sex, then stood back and looked her over completely. The older man touched each cuff, opening them with what was apparently a simple button push, and she stepped away from the bars.

“Let’s try left hand up three inches, right up two,” said the older man, and the two raised her wrist cuffs accordingly.

“Back in,” said the older man. Priscilla returned to the restraints, which stretched her tight against the bars. She sighed but said nothing.

“Looks right,” the older man said, and he pulled a laser pointer out of his pocket and scanned the bar code at Priscilla’s hip, then both men picked up their toolboxes.

“Wait,” Priscilla gasped, “you’re leaving?”

“Yes, Miss, got 10 more girls to do today before lunch.”

“How long will I be like this?” she asked.

“We’ve let ‘em know you’re ready for your first inventory pass,” the man replied. “They should be here in half an hour or so. They’re keeping up with us pretty good.”

“Who?” Priscilla asked, but the men either didn’t hear her question, or didn’t want to answer, and they left, locking the door behind them.

Priscilla looked down at herself, too numb to worry about anything but the way her breasts extended through the bars. She imagined someone looking at her cage from the side and seeing nothing but a pair of breasts, but she was stretched too tight to do anything about it.

She heard a scream from somewhere, muffled through the walls but audible, and knew she wasn't the only one here, that something like two dozen girls had arrived at the lab in chains today, had their cavities searched by a stranger, then filled with humiliating plugs, had been stretched on a pole and cruelly stamped, had been caged and placed in cuffs against the bars, and the thought gave her comfort.

She was not alone.

The sound of jangling keys told her someone new had arrived.

The door swung open and two women and a man entered. One woman was in blue, pushing something along the floor, a strange box with an arm in front. The other woman and the man were wearing red.

They all appeared to be in their thirties, and none of them looked at her face, just bent to examine her sex.

"They've set her about right," said the woman in blue. She reached down between Priscilla's legs, spread her lips, put one finger up her vagina, and then stroked her anus.

Priscilla – already so used to being violated what the woman did barely bothered her – looked down, studying the device that had been brought in, and realized immediately what it was for. It bore two black rods, made of smooth glass or plastic, pointing up from the arm. Done examining Priscilla's openings, the woman pushed the machine up to the bars so that the arm passed through the access slot in the cage door, and Priscilla braced for what she knew was coming.

The woman tilted the machine up slowly, easing the rods into Priscilla's anus and vagina. The anal rod was narrow but long, and Priscilla gasped as it bit deep into her bowels. The vaginal rod was long as well, and almost as thick as the probe that had been pushed up her the day before. She groaned and pulled at her cuffs as it filled her sheath.

"Hold still, Honey," the other woman said, and she reached through the bars to steady Priscilla's hip.

"Why are you doing that?" Priscilla asked.

"It's for data," said the woman, her hand still on Priscilla's hip, and she seemed surprised by her question and looked into her eyes for the first

time. "Temperature, fluids, where you are in your cycle, digestive issues."

The device beeped and all three looked at a small display screen set into its top. Priscilla looked down too, but the numbers and letters were upside down and meant nothing anyway.

"Still ovulating," said the woman in red. "Like, third day."

"She masturbated," she added. "Maybe an hour ago."

The observation didn't bother Priscilla nearly as much as it should have, but she felt her cheeks redden slightly and wanted desperately for this to end and everyone to go away. She wondered, not for the first time, if this were all a dream, and the thought gave her a small comfort.

The man's phone beeped and he looked at it. "They want her for the table now," he said.

The woman operating the device looked at the man in surprise. "They're already doing work on her?"

"Just today," he said. "They want to do an examination before she's finished ovulating."

The woman eased the rods out of Priscilla's holes and the two females left, pushing the strange machine before them.

"Alright, time to go," he said, pressing a button on each of her cuffs to release her. Priscilla rubbed her wrists and turned to look around her cage, wondering if this would be the last time she'd be here, if she might be about to leave unrestrained, given something to wear, allowed to explain her situation to someone, but those hopes were dashed when the man turned and retrieved her chains from the hook in the wall.

"Time for a quick lesson," he said, and Priscilla looked at him, noticed he was tall and dark-haired and handsome, and hated him nevertheless.

"Any time you leave your cage," he said, not showing the slightest interest in what she thought of him, "you'll need to get your chains on. First the wrists. Put your hands through the slot."

Priscilla obeyed and he locked a cuff around each wrist, allowing the rest of the chain to drop to the floor.

"Then your feet," he said, unnecessarily. Priscilla dropped her hands and held still while he secured each ankle.

He unlocked her cage door, scanned the tattoo at her hip with a beep, and motioned her to follow him through the second door and into the hall.

Priscilla followed him with her mind whirring, trying in vain to piece together everything that had happened since she took off her clothes for yesterday's examination. Was it yesterday? It seemed like a week ago. Nothing made sense – how she'd gotten here, what they had done to her so far, why she was being treated like a prisoner. Like worse than a prisoner, really. What jail treated women this way?

She glanced at other doors as they passed them, knowing that many probably hid other girls who had been bused in that morning. She tried to imagine them, sleeping, or awake and staring at the wall, or crying. All afraid, no doubt, even Rachel and the other Christian volunteers.

They passed through a set of doors and arrived at another hall where she heard the voices of two women chatting up ahead, having what sounded like a strangely normal conversation. The voices seemed to be coming from a place in the wall, and she focused her eyes on it, saw as she drew near that the wall was lined with cages, like the ones on the bus, and several girls were confined there, standing naked and chained to the floor. She looked at each in turn, and they looked back at her as they talked. One smiled at her.

Farther ahead, three chained girls were walking toward her, two in sanitary plugs, the third completely naked, being escorted by another worker in red – a short, dark-haired woman.

“Hey, Brian,” the woman said to Priscilla's escort. She stopped and the three girls stopped with her. As they drew near, Priscilla noticed short chains running from the woman's hand to the chain between each girl's wrists.

“Hey, Amy,” he replied.

“Where are you taking her?”

“Lab 17, gonna do an initial inspection.”

“Already?”

“I know, but she's grade A, and still ovulating.”

Priscilla looked at the girls with Amy, two Asians and a Caucasian. One of the Asian girls looked at her, the other two stared at the floor, expressions dull but not sad. All three bore stamps on their hips and shoulders, but their skin was otherwise bare, and she looked down at herself and realized, in the glaring fluorescents of the hallway, that the things they had written on her the day before were obvious, and marked her as a new arrival.

“See ya at dinner,” Amy said.

“Sounds good,” Brian replied, and they parted company, Priscilla following Brian, the three other girls obediently trailing Amy.

They turned another corner and reached an elevator, where Brian pushed the up button.

The door opened and he led her in.

“Where are we going?” she asked, concentrating on gathering her wits, focusing..

“To one of the labs,” he replied without looking at her, pushing the button for the fourth floor.

“What are they going to do to me?” she asked.

“I’m not sure,” he said. “They just said to get you. Probably to look at your vagina, because you’re ovulating.”

“You mentioned a table,” she said.

“Huh?” he asked.

“You said I had to get on a table or something,” she said. “Earlier.”

“Oh yeah,” he said. The elevator stopped and the door opened.

“What are they going to do to me on it?” she asked.

“I don’t know.”

“Is it going to hurt?”

“Probably not,” he said absently.

Suspecting they were about to reach the lab, desperate not to waste the opportunity this man might offer, she turned to him.

“Can you get a message to someone?” she asked.

The man laughed, surprising her, but he looked into her eyes while he smiled, and he didn’t say no.

“Call my mother,” Priscilla said, reciting the number. “Tell her Priscilla needs to talk to her. Tell her to come get me.”

“Who’s Priscilla?” the man inquired, still smiling.

“Me,” she said.

“No you’re not,” he said, leaning over to read the stamp above her breast. “You’re 14067.”

Priscilla looked at the tattoo on her hip and her shoulder and confirmed that was the number they’d put into her skin.

“That’s just a number,” she said, trying to control her voice. “I’m Priscilla.”

“No one will call you that,” he said. “You’re 14067. That’s your name. That’s who you are here.”

Priscilla her throat closing, heart pounding, decided to say nothing more, and they approached the lab in silence, a neat stencil above the heavy doors identifying it as Lab 17.

The man reached to pull the door aside for her, but then he stopped and turned.

“Don’t make a scene,” he said sternly, as if irritated because he was certain she was going to.

The command was so ridiculous Priscilla just snorted, staring back at him defiantly.

“You have no idea yet,” he said. “But in there, you do things one way. Don’t speak unless spoken to, don’t argue, don’t ask questions, and don’t pass wastes without permission. Just obey.”

“What are they going to do to me?” Priscilla demanded again, her mouth going dry.

“It won’t be worth it,” he said. “You don’t want to be punished.”

“I’m already being punished,” Priscilla hissed, looking down and making fists with her chained hands.

“This is nothing,” he replied in a sharp whisper. “You’re new, so you don’t know about the, uh, certain places, but you don’t want to go there. Trust me. They’ll be covering it in orientation, so just believe me for now.”

Priscilla, still glaring, nodded slowly and remembered the casual, unrelenting cruelty of stamping. If they could do that to one girl after another, none of whom had done anything wrong, what else were they capable of?

The man swung the door open and she walked in slowly, trembling, trying to take in everything at once.

She counted almost a dozen people here, three naked women chained to examination tables, two naked women standing near the women on the tables, three naked men standing, and a man and a woman, fully clothed, in lab coats.

“14067,” announced the man who’d brought Priscilla.

“Good,” said the woman in the lab coat. “Put her on table 4.”

The man guided Priscilla to an empty exam table.

“Sit here,” he said, and he pointed to a low step and helped her climb it, then eased her back onto it. The table featured four cuffs on short chains, beside her hips and at the stirrups, and her hands and feet were placed in those and her original restraints were removed and set under her table.

Priscilla, fighting panic but reassured that nothing horrible seemed to be happening here, raised up on her elbows and continued to study the room. Several of the women on other tables looked at her and smiled or nodded, but said nothing.

The two naked females who weren't on tables seemed to be lab workers, Priscilla thought. Both were free of chains, and neither bore stamps, although each wore a metal collar around her neck. Similar collars adorned the three men, each of whom was standing behind a small pillar, about waist high. Priscilla first got the sense they might be urinals, but the men seemed to be thrusting toward them, slowly, and Priscilla guessed with a vague sense of fear and fascination that the pillars were holding their penises.

“Alright, John, she's ready,” said one of the naked females, and one of the men backed away from his pillar, exposing a large, erect penis, and he stepped over to one of the girls on the exam table and put himself up her sex. She groaned quietly and pulled at her chains, and the female worker touched her shoulder. “Doing good, Honey.”

The woman in the lab coat stepped over to the table with a tablet and began talking to the man, asking questions Priscilla couldn't hear, or that didn't make sense.

“I've got it from here,” the woman in the lab coat said to the naked worker. “Go get 14067 ready.”

Priscilla recognized the number as hers and lay back, wondering what was going to happen.

“Hi,” said the worker, turning to Priscilla. She was tall and blonde, thin and small-breasted, her black pubic hair shaved into a thin strip. Priscilla looked up at her but said nothing.

The girl put one hand on Priscilla's knee and dropped the other hand down to her vulva, spreading her lips and sliding a finger up her vagina.

Too nervous to be wet, Priscilla gasped and tried to squirm away from the worker's hand.

“Sorry, Honey, let me get you ready.”

As the worker stroked her sex, Priscilla closed her eyes, furious that this was being done to her, and that it was working. She rocked her hips and moaned as the worker squeezed her clitoris, rubbed her lips, slid two fingers in and out of her sheath.

“That didn’t take long,” she announced. “Okay, she’s ready.”

The man in the lab coat stepped over, bent down at the foot of the table and peered at Priscilla’s vulva, pinching her lips, rubbing her clitoris and sliding a finger inside. He seemed to be examining her, not trying to arouse her, and she fought the urge to ask him if he was a doctor, and if so, what kind. The female doctor at the next table turned briefly and leaned over, joining the man wordlessly in his inspection of Priscilla’s sex organ.

The woman returned her attention to the girl chained to the next table, grunting as her mate plumbed her chamber, and the man turned to one of the naked males. “Okay, Ted,” he said.

The man withdrew a large, wet penis from his pillar and stepped between Priscilla’s bound feet.

“Anything in particular to look for?” he asked. He was talking to the man but staring at Priscilla, and she stared back, first into his eyes, then at his penis, just inches from her opening.

He was going to put it inside her, she knew, and there was nothing she could do about it.

“Just a general inspection at this point,” the doctor said.

With another glance into Priscilla’s eyes, the man reached down, parted her lips and slid his penis slowly into her opening.

“Oh, God,” Priscilla groaned. She looked up at the man named Ted, in his 30s, thinning hair in front. He was ordinary looking, of average build, and at this moment he was raping her. Technically, at least, this was rape, Priscilla told herself. And yet, he seemed to be just another worker here, doing a job.

The man in the lab coat retrieved a tablet from a nearby table, consulted it as he studied the place where Ted’s body had joined with Priscilla’s, all his shaft embedded within her now.

“First impression?” asked the doctor.

“Worth whatever you paid,” he said, and he pulled his penis halfway out of Priscilla’s sheath and drove it back in.

“Uh,” Priscilla groaned.

“Very strong,” Ted observed with another thrust. “Very thick walls, very firm grip. But a very soft lining.”

“Darling,” said the doctor, looking down into Priscilla’s eyes, “can you tighten up for us?”

Priscilla looked away, at the other table where the same thing was being done to another girl, and she obeyed, tightening the muscles of her sheath.

Ted groaned and drove his penis deep into her vagina.

“Again,” said the doctor.

Priscilla complied and the man groaned again, grinding his organ within hers.

“She’s got a lot of natural ability,” said Ted, a little breathlessly. “Pretty even, too.”

“Where’s she strongest?” asked the doctor.

Priscilla looked down but pretended not to watch as the man pulled his penis out and pointed. “A really tight band here,” he said, touching the first few inches at the base of his rod.

“And some good control up here too,” he added, touching behind his head. “She’s weakest at the middle of the shaft, but still very firm.”

The doctor typed something into his tablet and the worker put himself back up Priscilla’s hole.

“Can I finish in her?” he asked.

“No, sorry,” replied the doctor, “I need Jack to check her out, and then we’re sending her back clean. But you can finish now in anyone else. I’ve got two relief units here.”

Ted, still moving slowly in and out of Priscilla, looked at the girls chained to the other exam tables, then looked at the girl who had stimulated Priscilla and was still standing beside her table. “Are you available?” he asked her.

“Yeah,” she said, “but I’ve already done relief twice today.”

“What about the others?” he asked.

“They’re both fresh,” said the doctor, “got them out of their cages less than an hour ago, and 11231’s ovulating.”

“Okay,” he said, and he withdrew from Priscilla and walked to a table at the other end of the lab, where a black girl had been chained. She smiled weakly, lifting up on her elbows to watch him slide inside her. Priscilla stared at the couple, both gasping for air as the man moved

rhythmically, almost mechanically, in and out of her. He came in less than a minute, crying out. After a brief pause, he looked down at her.

“Do you want to cum?” he asked.

“Yes,” she quickly replied, and he thrust back into her and held still as the girl moved back and forth on his penis, panting through her own orgasm, seemingly oblivious to the fact she was making love while restrained to an exam table, in front of other people.

In the meantime, the doctor had summoned Jack from his post to Priscilla’s table, and he went inside her while she was still watching the couple at the other end of the room. For a moment, she lost track of time, the lab spun and she realized she was close to fainting.

“Uhh,” she groaned as Jack pushed his way up her sex. He was not as thick around as Ted, but longer, the head of his cock striking her cervix.

The doctor ordered Priscilla to tighten, she obeyed, and he and Jack repeated the earlier conversation, Jack agreeing with Ted that this was an excellent vagina, with a lot of strength, especially at the mouth and deep inside.

“Okay, thanks, that’ll do for now,” the doctor said, turning away. “Go ahead and get relief.”

Jack, moving slowly in and out of Priscilla, looked at the blonde standing next to the table. “Finish in you?” he asked.

“Yeah,” she said, and she turned around and bent over, resting her elbows on the empty table beside Priscilla’s, and Jack mounted her from behind, panting through his climax. The blonde’s expression never changed, and she didn’t seem to need to orgasm. She just stared at the wall, as if reading something written there, servicing Jack until he was finished, her elbows moving back and forth on the table with small squeaks.

Jack withdrew, went to a sink to wash his hands and wipe his penis, and the girl straightened and turned back to Priscilla.

“Do you need to cum?” she asked.

Despite herself, Priscilla looked at the girl’s wet sex, her fluids and Jack’s semen glistening on her lips, in her hair and on the insides of her thighs.

“Do you want to orgasm?” the blonde repeated.

“How?” Priscilla asked. For many reasons, the question seemed ridiculous. Her chains were too short for her to touch herself, and both men had been ordered out of her before she could get any real pleasure from

them. They were only supposed to feel her vagina, apparently, not actually have sex with her.

But it was still rape.

The blonde reached under Priscilla's table and pulled out a device not unlike the one that had been put up her the day before, during her appraisal, a thick white rod with a box at the end, but equipped with a small white hammer that she knew was for her clitoris.

"Do you want me to put this in you?"

"Yes," Priscilla said simply, surprised at her own shamelessness. The blonde parted Priscilla's lips and deftly eased the rod up her, and Priscilla groaned quietly to herself and rocked her hips as the girl clamped it to the table and turned it on.

"Aaah!," Priscilla gasped, and she became briefly self-conscious, but no one else seemed to care what she was doing. The man in the lab coat was standing at a computer, and the blonde had stepped over to him to look over his shoulder. The woman was still studying the girl chained to the next table, speaking quietly to the man as he stood between her legs, servicing her slowly.

The device Priscilla held seemed to know her, shaking rhythmically within her sex, speeding up if she tightened, throbbing when she relaxed, pounding her clitoris, and soon Priscilla was writhing, picking her hips up to press against the machine, to take it deep within her chamber, to force her swollen pink member against the hammer. "Auh, auh, auh," she grunted, lost to everything but the pleasure between her legs until she came, crying out once more, every limb straining against her bonds, her fluid gushing from her hole and around the quivering machine.

The shame came fast and fierce in the lucidity that often followed climaxes for her. She had just been raped, twice, and then relieved on a machine in a room full of strangers.

"This isn't a dream," she told herself, and for the first time she realized that's what she'd been thinking all along, that she was asleep somewhere, and soon she'd be waking in her bed, at home. But no dream could produce an orgasm like that. No, this was real, entirely real. The room began to spin again, she felt suddenly queasy and disoriented, and the lab went black as she passed out.

Chapter 6: Saddle Purge

Priscilla, not sure how long she'd been unconscious, awoke to the sound of voices. She opened her eyes and saw the nude blonde standing beside her examination table, looking down at her.

"Right after she came," said the girl, apparently in response to a question Priscilla hadn't heard. "I saw her go limp as soon as she finished groaning."

Priscilla wanted to roll over on her side, or better yet roll off the table and crawl into a corner, but she was still chained to the table, her wrists beside her hips, her feet secured to the stirrups.

The blonde looked at the man in the lab coat, and Priscilla looked at him too through blurry eyes. He was in his 30s, with a goatee that made him look a little like a devil.

"Get that out of her," he said, looking between her legs, and Priscilla realized she was still holding the white rod up her vagina, and she raised her head weakly to watch the blonde unclamp it from the exam table and withdraw its wet, glistening length from her body.

"Bring it here," the doctor ordered, and the blonde complied, stepping over to him shamelessly, as if working in the nude was completely natural. The doctor grabbed the rod with one hand, mindless of the fluids Priscilla had released around it, and with the other hand tapped the box at the end of the rod. Priscilla wondered if there was more information there, if he could tell not only that she'd orgasmed, but how strongly, how long, and then she put her head down against the table and tried to convince herself she didn't care. She wanted to faint again, but that wasn't something she could just order up, so she looked at the sterile, fluorescent ceiling lights and began imagining the things she might do: scream that she'd been raped, perhaps, or call everyone in that room sick, or just scream wordlessly. She'd been warned about being disobedient, that some sort of punishment awaited those who spoke out of turn or refused to cooperate, but she was ready to test the limits of this horrible place.

What could be worse than what had already been done to her?

Behind her, the door opened and a female voice spoke a number: "14067."

That was Priscilla's number, she knew, the one they'd stamped into her skin that morning, in four places, at her hip, over her breast, behind her shoulder and high on her rump.

"What do you want her for?" the doctor asked, looking up from the white rod, his eyebrows raised in what looked like annoyance.

"Saddle purge," said the voice.

Still weak, Priscilla raised herself slowly on one elbow and looked toward the voice and saw it belonged to a young woman in a red jumpsuit.

"I'm not finished with her," the doctor said.

The other doctor in the room, the woman who had been supervising the girl on the table beside Priscilla's, turned and glared at the man. "What else do you want to do with her?" she asked.

"Further inspection," said the doctor, with an awkward smile.

"She's had enough," said the woman. "She's already fainted once."

"Take her, fine," said the man, and he handed the white rod to the blonde, his annoyance obvious. "Clean this up."

The new girl stepped to Priscilla, retrieved her restraints from under the table, released her limbs one by one and returned her to the chains she'd been brought in, handcuffs and leg irons joined at the middle by a chain that kept her hands down at her middle. Then she pulled a pen out of her pocket and pointed it at the stamp at Priscilla's hip. The pen beeped and the girl put it away.

"You fainted?" the girl asked as soon as they'd left the lab.

Priscilla, still groggy and disoriented, trying to recover her consciousness and make sense of everything that had happened, struggled to keep her balance as they walked down a long hall. She didn't hear the question the first time it was asked.

"Did you faint?" the girl repeated. She had short, dark hair and a small build, and Priscilla wondered if she could beat her in a fight if she weren't chained.

"Yeah," Priscilla admitted.

"Why?"

Priscilla looked at the girl, surprised she cared. "They put a thing up me," she said blankly.

"Oh yeah," said the girl, nodding. "I love that thing. Never fainted, though. You got here yesterday, right?"

“Yeah, I’m not supposed to be—” Priscilla replied, stopping in mid-sentence because she knew it was futile.

“Usually they don’t take you to the lab until you’ve finished orientation.”

“Where are we going?” Priscilla demanded, not interested in talking anymore about what had just happened.

“Saddle purge,” the girl replied.

“What’s that?”

“They clean you out.”

“What do you mean?”

“It’s just one of the things they do to you when you first get here,” the girl replied. “Usually before you go to the lab, though.”

They reached an elevator, dropped two floors and arrived at a door that said “Saddle Purge.” The girl opened it for her and motioned her in.

“14067,” she announced as she entered what looked like a medical clinic waiting room, except with bare white walls, no furniture and no windows.

“She’s late,” said a heavyset woman in a blue jumpsuit, standing behind a counter. “Where’s she been?”

“One of the labs,” said the girl.

“Already?”

“Yeah, I know,” said the girl. “But that’s where I found her.”

Black strips of leather hung on the wall behind the woman, and she pulled one off, stepped around the counter, wrapped it around Priscilla’s neck and buckled it. She slipped two fingers under the collar and turned to the girl who had brought Priscilla.

“Thanks, got it from here,” she said, then she motioned to Priscilla. “Follow me.”

Priscilla obeyed, stepping through a doorless entryway into a long room that made her heart skip a beat. Almost a dozen girls sat naked, straddling a dozen machines, each girl chained by the ankles, her wrists held in stocks before her, her collar fastened to a pole, her mouth forced around a thick tube.

“Why?” Priscilla blurted, more a lament than a question. The worker ignored her.

“Stand here,” she said, pointing to the nearest machine. Priscilla obeyed and the woman clamped a cuff around her left ankle, securing her to

the floor. Priscilla looked quickly around the room, noticing a row of small cages in the back, all empty, as the worker freed both ankles from the restraints Priscilla had walked in with.

“Swing your leg over the saddle,” the woman commanded. Priscilla, one ankle chained to the floor, her wrists still cuffed, thought briefly about resisting and knew immediately it would be hopeless. She swung her leg across the machine and the woman stepped around, knelt, grabbed her free ankle and fastened it with a second chain to the floor.

A few inches from Priscilla’s belly, a pair of bent iron bars, joined at one end with a simple hinge, had been mounted to the machine, and the woman raised the top bar. “Put your hands in the stocks,” she instructed. Priscilla looked down, saw that the bar had been bent near either end to accommodate her wrists, and she positioned her hands in them, holding still as the woman brought the top bar down and tightened it. She removed the cuffs from Priscilla’s wrists and hung her chains on a hook in the wall directly in front of her machine. Priscilla looked at the wall in front of the other machines and saw an identical set of chains in front of each. Every girl had been brought in these, she knew, and every girl would leave the same way.

“Stand up and bend over,” commanded the worker. Priscilla obeyed awkwardly, her wrists bound in front of her, feet secured to the floor, and the woman began massaging her vulva, touching her lips and putting a finger up her sex.

“What did they do to you in the lab?” the woman asked.

“Two men,” stammered Priscilla, and she realized that she was having trouble speaking, that she might faint again. “I was raped.”

“Did either man ejaculate in you?” the woman asked without the remotest concern.

“Huh? Oh, no. No.”

“Did they put a relief rod up you?”

“What?”

“You’re really wet and I need to know why,” the woman said. “Did you orgasm?”

“Yes, I guess so.”

“Were you holding something when you came?”

“Yes,” Priscilla admitted.

“Okay,” said the woman, “hold still while I slide this up you.”

“No, please,” Priscilla protested, certain another object was about to be pushed up her weary sheath. Instead, she felt the pinch of a catheter being slid into her urethra.

“Tighten your anus,” the woman said.

“What?” Priscilla said, certain she’d misheard.

“I’m going to put a tube into your anus. Tighten it if you don’t want it to hurt.”

On the rare occasion Priscilla had borrowed her roommate’s anal plug, she’d been given the same advice: Tighten for a good 15 seconds before inserting it to make the process more comfortable.

Priscilla was still tightening when the woman spread lubrication across her opening and probed her roughly, sliding a finger inside her first, then putting in something larger, what felt like a thick plug being pushed up her as she groaned in discomfort. The mouth of the tube was the widest part, presumably to hold it in place, so once it had reached her rectum, the tube was still uncomfortable but not unbearable.

“Sit down,” said the woman. Priscilla obeyed, positioning herself so that the tubes dropped into a slot that ran the length of the saddle.

The woman stepped to the front of the machine and picked up a long clear tube draped across it. Priscilla glanced around the room one more time, quickly, knowing she was about to be restrained the way the other girls were, with a tube in her mouth, a foot of chain securing her collar to a metal post that rose from the machine to about eye level.

Three saddles away, Priscilla spotted Rachel, the girl from the church who’d occupied the cage across from hers on the bus, and she was suddenly reminded of the first day of college, when someone you stood in line with at the start kept reappearing the rest of the day.

This wasn’t college, and Rachel wasn’t here for school. Priscilla saw the tears on the girl’s face, remembered her enthusiasm from the day before, and felt a deep pity for her.

“Have you had anything to eat today?” the woman asked.

“Just some kind of bar thing, I think,” Priscilla replied.

“Open your mouth,” said the woman. Priscilla obeyed and the woman slid the tube past her lips and down her throat, clamping it to her collar, fastening her collar to the post.

Priscilla, fighting the urge to gag, heard a familiar beep and knew the woman had scanned one of the places where she’d been stamped, and

that the information about where she was, that she'd been secured to the saddle purge, was noted somewhere in the huge building. She cursed in her mind everyone who had done this to her, her mother, Hoyt, the judge in bankruptcy court, the people who had appraised her, and all the cruel people who worked in the lab.

"Okay, all set," said the lab worker, and she turned and adjusted something at the front of the machine, and Priscilla felt the tube go cool against her lips, and then a liquid rush into her belly.

Barely able to turn her head, Priscilla stared at the wall before her, furious and numb at the same time. What were they doing to her? What was being put into her? How long would this last?

Within 15 minutes, her stomach grumbled and she felt things stirring, a strange emptying that confirmed that she was indeed being purged, her insides cleaned of any evidence of the life she'd lived before she got to the lab. As her bowels drained, she shook, drawing the attention of the lab worker.

"Stand up," the woman said, and she tapped Priscilla's rear with what felt like a rod or stick. Priscilla rose, felt the woman tug at her anal hose, inspecting it perhaps or making sure it was still firmly in place. Or maybe, Priscilla thought with disgust, she was checking its contents.

Next the woman inspected her catheter, pulling on it, pushing it a little deeper into her.

"Sit down," she said.

Priscilla obeyed and the woman repeated the procedure with the other girls, tapping each girl's thigh or butt with whatever she was holding. If the girl didn't stand immediately, she spoke again, louder, "Stand up," and struck harder, the slap of wood against the girl's flesh clearly audible.

"My mother sold me to this lab," Priscilla said to herself. If there weren't a tube in her mouth, she would have said it out loud. It was a new idea, but so obvious now the truth was overwhelming to her. "My mother sold me."

She blinked away tears as she pondered what that meant. That's what all this had been about.

Money.

Hoyt got his debts paid off, but there must have been some extra. How much? Hundreds of dollars? Thousands? It must have been substantial, or Mother wouldn't have been so insistent, and so devious as

they drove to the courthouse, handing the letters and brochures and legal documents to Priscilla in the truck, giving her barely enough time to read anything, much less truly process it, before she ordered her to put her signature on each page, unwittingly signing her freedom away.

How long would she be here? she wondered. When would the lab be done with her? She didn't even know that.

Priscilla was left alone with her thoughts, staring at the wall and the chains that hung from it, hating everything and everyone. The fluid was released into her belly every 15 minutes or so, and her bowels continued to drain, the worker returning occasionally to tap her thigh or her rear, tell her to stand so she could check her tubes.

The next insult came perhaps an hour into the procedure, when the woman sat in front of Priscilla's machine, grabbed each finger and wiped the polish carefully off each nail, then trimmed them down to nothing. She felt but could not see as the woman did the same to Priscilla's toes.

The girl on the machine at the other end of the room was the first to finish her purge, and Priscilla heard her yelp as the tube was yanked from her anus, then the sounds of chains and cuffs as she was released from the machine, returned to her restraints and walked to the back wall of the room.

"Step all the way into the cage," said the woman. "Now, put that ring between your feet into the slot in the floor, so I can bolt you in." Priscilla heard a metal click and knew the girl's ankle chain had been fastened to the floor of her cage. Next came the clang of the cage door being shut and locked, and she guessed the girl would be forced to wait there until someone showed up to take her away.

Priscilla heard the process repeat several more times, each girl released from the machine, crying out briefly as the tube left her rectum. Then she was returned to her original restraints and caged.

Priscilla listened absently to the steps, concentrating on her own predicament, until she heard Rachel's voice.

"You can't do this to me!" Rachel cried as soon as the tube was withdrawn from her throat. "I want these chains off now!"

"Oh!" Rachel shouted as her anal tube was pulled out.

"I want to talk to your manager," Rachel said. "Now!"

The woman ignored her, her voice calm, almost leaden. "Swing your leg off the saddle, feet together."

"Why?" Rachel demanded.

“So I can put your chains back on,” the woman replied.

“You’re not chaining me.”

Priscilla heard chains rattling and sensed commotion out of the corner of her eye, and then Rachel screamed, short and sharp.

“What did you just do?” she asked. “What was that?”

“Feet together now.”

“No!”

This time, the scream was long and loud and terrifying, and Priscilla knew something horrible was being done to Rachel, the girl who had joined three other girls to sell themselves to the lab to raise money for their church, who seemed the day before to think it was all a great, holy crusade.

Rachel continued to wail, but not in pain anymore, just in fear or sorrow or frustration, and Priscilla could tell from the sounds her chains made, from the sound of the cage door, that Rachel had cooperated, that whatever had been done to her had broken her, at least for now.

Priscilla added what she’d just heard to the other awful things she knew about this place, and she listened to Rachel’s whimpers, and then to the sounds of more girls being retrieved one by one from their cages, scanned with a beep, walked out.

More girls were brought in, secured to their purges, scanned, forced to suffer in silence, before Priscilla was at last released from the saddle, returned to her chains, put in a cage. Had it been bigger than a tiny closet, she would have lain down. There was a strange, unpleasant emptiness in her middle, and she was exhausted, but she had no choice but to stand and watch the new girls as they were purged, the muscles of their backs and bottoms flexing as their bowels contracted.

When the worker came for her, another young woman, she followed numbly, nothing more to say or ask. To her relief, she was brought directly back to her own cage, first through the heavy, solid door, and then through the door of bars, turning to have her chains removed through the slot, glad for the small comfort of having her limbs freed for the first time in hours.

“Come back to the bars so I can scan you,” the woman said.

Priscilla obeyed, staring off into space, barely hearing the beep, until the woman spoke again.

“They left a blanket for you,” she said, turning to the counter against the wall, retrieving a thick, heavy, blue blanket. She handed it through the bars and turned to leave. “As a reward.”

“For what?” Priscilla asked blankly.

“Did you already go to the lab?” the woman asked.

“Yes,” Priscilla replied.

“Probably for that, then.”

Chapter 7: Cecilia

Priscilla lowered her bed and set the blanket on it.

The woman who had returned her to her cage turned to the wall and hung her chains on a hook, then reached under the sink for something.

“Here’s dinner,” she said, handing Priscilla a pack of food in a plain plastic wrapper, identical to the meal she’d been given earlier that day.

Standing naked by the bars at the front of her cage, Priscilla took the food and opened it slowly, realizing for the first time how hungry she was.

She chewed, watching the woman complete a few more chores, washing something in the sink and arranging some items beneath it, and then she left, locking the outer door behind her.

They turned down the lights soon after she was brought back to her cage, and she climbed onto the bed, wrapped herself in the blanket they’d given her – thick and soft – and did her best to go to sleep.

Tired as she was, Priscilla slept fitfully, waking now and then in the half-light to believe she’d just stirred from a dream, reminding herself this was all strangely real.

It wasn’t just that she’d been chained and raped, tattooed painfully, purged. It was how it had all been done: calmly and professionally, as if this was what was done all the time here, and it was ordinary, even boring.

She could still hear the screams of Rachel, who’d refused to cooperate and paid severely for it.

But in the end, what bothered Priscilla most was having her nail polish removed, from her fingers and toes, while she was restrained to the saddle purge. One by one, all the traces of her past life were being erased.

Priscilla had no sense of having slept at all when a voice woke her from a deep sleep.

“Good morning,” said a woman.

She opened her eyes, looked around groggily, then sat up, looking toward the bars where a new woman stood.

She was in a red jumpsuit, dark hair cut in bangs straight across her forehead, and at the level of her cheekbones on either side of her face.

“We’ve got a lot to cover today,” she said. “Get up and empty your bladder.”

Priscilla, moving quickly from new day's fog to anger, swung her legs briskly over the side of her bed and reported to her toilet, staring at the woman as she obediently drained herself.

"Do you need to defecate?" the woman asked.

"No," Priscilla replied curtly.

"When will you have your next bowel movement?" the woman continued.

"I don't know," Priscilla replied, shocked by the question.

"Let's try this afternoon," she said. "Do you want to masturbate now?"

"No," Priscilla said emphatically.

"Good," said the woman. "Put your bed up, and keep it up any time you're not in it."

Priscilla obeyed, clamping her bed against the wall.

"Now get on your bidet and wash up, anus and vulva. Use the soap."

Priscilla mounted the basin, running her fingers through the folds of her sex, and then around the opening in back, still tender from what had been done to her the day before.

"Dry off," commanded the woman. Priscilla stepped to the front of her cage and the woman handed her a towel through the bars.

After she passed the towel between her legs and across her sex, Priscilla handed it back.

"I'm Cecilia," said the woman, reaching out her hand.

Priscilla stared for a moment, uncertain what to do, before she realized that Cecilia simply wanted to shake hands through the bars. Priscilla obliged, although she thought it strange.

"My job is to get you into the general population as quickly as possible," she said, and she smiled and added, "Yesterday was awful, wasn't it?"

"Yes," Priscilla agreed, nodding, and she looked at the stamp tattooed in the skin above her breast and at her hip.

"I'm sorry," said the woman. "I wish they'd do it differently, but the philosophy is to get all the worst things out of the way up front."

"I was raped," Priscilla blurted, thinking she might have found an ally at last, maybe someone who would sympathize, who would agree this had all been a terrible mistake.

“Raped?” the woman asked, arching an eyebrow.

“By two men.”

“Here?”

“Yes. In one of the labs. I was chained to a table.”

“Were you being supervised?”

“Yes,” said Priscilla. “By, I guess, a doctor.”

“Oh,” said the woman, laughing. “That wasn’t rape. They were just examining you.”

The woman turned, retrieved Priscilla’s chains from the hook, and stepped to the bars. Priscilla put her hands through the service port and Cecilia cuffed her wrists, then knelt to chain her ankles.

“Did either man ejaculate in you?” the woman asked, standing.

“No,” replied Priscilla, stepping back in the expectation the woman was about to open her cage door. “They both came in someone else.”

“Yeah,” said Cecilia, “you were just being examined.”

“Why do we have to be chained?” Priscilla asked, and she looked down at her restraints and thought back to the first time they were put on her, two mornings ago, as soon as she’d passed her appraisal.

It seemed like it had been years.

“I know, I hate that we have to do it,” replied Cecilia. “But it’s policy. It’s for everyone’s safety, too. Yours and everyone else’s.”

“Okay,” Priscilla said, not satisfied with the answer, but not surprised either.

“Now, step up to the door,” said Cecilia.

Priscilla obeyed and the woman grabbed the long chain that ran from Priscilla’s handcuffs to her leg irons, pulled it through the slot in the cage door and slid it over a pair of hooks on the outside of the door, one at hip level, one near her feet.

“When we need your attention, this is how you’ll be restrained, a lot of the time,” said Cecilia, pausing before she added, “It’s also a form of punishment.”

Priscilla looked down at her chains and imagined herself stuck like this for an hour, or several hours. She could sit down, with her hands raised over her head, but it wouldn’t be comfortable, and she wouldn’t be able to lie down. She looked into Cecilia’s eyes and the woman seemed to feel sorry for her again, briefly, smiling in a pained way.

“Do as you’re told and follow the rules, and you’ll keep your punishment to a minimum,” she said. “But let’s go ahead and cover what happens if you need correction.”

She looked at Priscilla, as if waiting for her okay, so Priscilla nodded but said nothing.

“There are three kinds of punishment,” said Cecilia, speaking quickly, as if she wanted to get the words out. “Simple restraint, stress restraint and corporal. Simple restraint is extra chains or confinement, like wearing leg irons in your cage, or being confined in a smaller cage. Stress restraint is usually where you’re held in a certain position, like the stocks, or hung by your hands, or you’re put in this.” Cecilia turned and retrieved something beneath the sink, a pair of bent metal bars hinged at one end. She snapped the bars together and they formed four holes in a line. “Your hands go through the two inside holes,” she said, “and your feet go in the two outside holes, and it’s tightened down to hold you, and you’re left like that.”

Cecilia returned the device to its place beneath the sink, and Priscilla noticed for the first time that there were many other things down there, and she felt herself starting to tremble. What Cecilia was telling her calmly and without emotion was terrifying.

“Finally, corporal punishment. That’s usually done on the third floor.”

As the woman spoke, Priscilla’s vision blurred and the words sounded like they were coming from far away. With some effort, she snapped back to the present.

“Wait,” she protested, straining to focus. “What?”

“The punishment matches the crime,” Cecilia continued. “Or, the severity of the punishment matches the severity of the offense. It’s meant to be exact, really. Scientific. We’ll go down there later today.”

Priscilla nodded, simply to nod. She wasn’t really hearing everything Cecilia was saying.

“On the more positive side,” Cecilia continued, “there are also plenty of ways to be rewarded.”

Another nod.

“I see you’ve already gotten a blanket,” she said. “And there are all kinds of physical rewards.”

Cecilia turned back to the sink, pulled out a few items from underneath. “Better food,” she said, holding up a packet of something.

“Another blanket. Some time with this.” She held up what looked to Priscilla like a dildo.

“A dildo?” Priscilla asked, trying to sound dismissive. She knew what it was, and pleasuring herself was the last thing she wanted right now.

Cecilia stepped closer, holding it up for Priscilla’s inspection. It was thick and black, covered with ridges and bumps, tipped with a large, swollen head.

“You put it up your vagina during masturbation,” Cecilia said, unnecessarily, holding it by the base with one hand while she passed her other hand up and down its length.

“And then, you might get time with a staff member,” she said, returning the dildo to the cabinet.

“What do you mean?” Priscilla asked.

“Intimacy,” said Cecilia. “Lovemaking.”

Priscilla stared.

The door to the hall opened, and two female staff members in blue jumpsuits entered, the first pushing a device along the floor.

Priscilla recognized the machine from the day before and shuddered.

“You’re early,” Cecilia complained, quickly drawing out a key and removing Priscilla’s restraints.

Priscilla turned, rubbing her wrists, desperate to be alone.

“Get in your cuffs for morning inventory,” Cecilia commanded. “Wrists first.”

Priscilla returned to the front of her cage and raised her hands to the cuffs affixed to the bars above her head. As before, pressing against the hinges closed them tightly around her wrists.

“Now your ankles. Always wrists first, then ankles.”

Priscilla looked down, spreading her legs as she positioned her ankles in each of the cuffs and pressed, feeling them snap shut.

The girl pushing the machine positioned the device’s narrow front in the slot in Priscilla’s cage door, pushing down on the handle, driving the two black spikes upward until the tips reached Priscilla’s openings.

Priscilla angled her pelvis forward, then back, allowing the spikes to go straight into her.

“Very good,” said Cecilia, as the girl continued pushing, forcing the spikes deep into Priscilla’s chambers.

Priscilla bit her lip and looked down, as humiliated by the procedure as the day before, but she felt Cecilia's eyes on her and gazed into them, surprised to find more of that strange sympathy there.

"It's something you'll get used to," she said.

"Why is it done?"

"Inventory," Cecilia replied. "We can learn just about everything we need to know by checking your anus and vagina."

"But why do you need to check?" Priscilla asked, her voice rising, her vagina tightening around the probe as if it had a mind of its own. "What is this place?"

"Once you've been inventoried in the morning, different departments bid on you, and whoever wins gets to use you that day," Cecilia replied.

The answer made no sense, so Priscilla just stared back at her, and then she looked down, at the machine that had been put inside her, willing it to be removed.

"For now, let's put it this way," Cecilia continued quickly, as if this was something she said often. "Below the waist, we own you. Between your waist and your neck, it's 50-50 yours and ours. Above the neck, it's as much your property as you can make it. Does that make sense?"

"No," Priscilla shot back.

The device beeped and the girls looked at the monitor. Satisfied with whatever it told them, the first girl raised the handle, pivoting the machine out of Priscilla's rectum and vagina. She gasped, the sensation not painful, exactly, but strange.

The girls left, rolling their device out the door. Cecilia watched them depart and then reached through the bars, stroking Priscilla's sex, spreading her labia and inserting a finger. Priscilla gasped again, and Cecilia smiled.

"You're already wet," Cecilia said. "Just from being inventoried. Very responsive."

"Why am I here?" Priscilla asked.

"You're here because you have a vagina," Cecilia replied simply. "We do research on vaginas, and we need a lot of them to get valid data."

"Can't you just pay people?"

"Yes, but this is much less expensive."

The true nature of the last few days began to dawn on Priscilla, that this was a place that bought females, that she had been bought, that she was going to be used for research, that she was their prisoner.

“How long . . .” Priscilla began, struggling to control her voice.
“How long will I be here?”

“Usually it’s indefinite,” Cecilia replied.

“What does that mean?”

“Until we decide to let you go.”

“Like, months?” Priscilla gasped.

“Usually years,” Cecilia replied.

“How many years?” Priscilla blurted, panic growing.

“Hard to say,” Cecilia answered evasively.

“No!” Priscilla cried, and she looked up at her cuffed wrists and pulled, jerking her body in sheer, mindless panic. “No! NO NO NO NO!”

The cuffs held firmly as Priscilla writhed and screamed, the horror of her new life crashing in on her. Cecilia, for her part, leaned against the wall and observed dispassionately, as if she watched variations of this drama unfold regularly, girls guilty of nothing more than gullibility suddenly finding out everything they had ever known was gone, lost, forever.

Priscilla’s mad animal panic yielded to something slightly more rational, a desperate, futile sort of bargaining.

“Can I have a phone?” she babbled. “I need a phone. I need to call my mother. Or a lawyer. I have some friends. I need to see them. They need to know where I am. I need to call my school. I need to get my assignments. I . . . I . . . I . . .”

Through it all, Cecilia merely watched, only the slight tightening of her mouth betraying any discomfort.

“This can’t be legal,” Priscilla said, attempting a new approach in her panicked reason. “If someone knows I’m here, they’ll get me out. They’ll arrest you. You’ll be arrested.”

Thinking she had arrived at a winning argument, Priscilla stared at Cecilia, waiting for her to agree, to open Priscilla’s cuffs, unlock her cage, give her something to wear and tell her to go home.

“It’s all legal,” Cecilia said quietly.

“It can’t be,” Priscilla replied.

“The law says this is all okay.”

“What law?”

“Federal law.”

“You can just imprison people? And keep them forever?”

“This isn’t a prison.”

“It’s like a prison. It’s worse than a prison.”

“It’s a research facility,” Cecilia said. “It employs almost 1,000 people. It generates nearly a billion dollars a year in revenue. A lot of it comes from other countries.”

“That doesn’t make it right.”

“If it’s legal, it’s right.”

“So they wrote a law in Congress that you can . . . you can chain up naked girls, and . . . give them . . . four tattoos, that make them bleed . . . and put them in a cage . . . and . . . and rape them?”

“Everything you’re describing,” Cecilia began, taking a breath, “falls within the law.”

“No,” said Priscilla, calming while she debated logically. “Who would ever write a law like that? Or vote for it?”

“I don’t know all the politics,” Cecilia replied, “but you can get any law passed if you pay enough. That’s how it works. We paid for the law. We even wrote it, I think. And then Congress passed it. Or enough of them passed it. Anyway, it’s the law. It’s legal.”

“If people knew about this, they’d—”

“They can’t,” Cecilia.

“Why not?”

“We got the livestock rules extended,”

“What do you mean?” Priscilla demanded.

“You haven’t been allowed to film or talk about commercial animal operations for years. Same rules for research humans now.”

Priscilla arched her back, looking up at her bound hands, down at her breasts, her naked middle.

Livestock.

“The truth could come out,” she said, chasing the clouds of desperation from her mind. At this moment, as she did her best to understand, to wrest what information she could from Cecilia, she was certain she wouldn’t be here for decades, or even years. Inspired by a lingering faith in the goodness of others, in their ability to discover wrongs and right them, she tried a new tack with Cecilia.

“People are going to find out. And they’ll be mad. Congress will get changed.”

“Changed?” Cecilia asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Yes. Elected. New elections.”

“Do you vote?” Cecilia asked.

Priscilla was silent, and knew she had answered the question by saying nothing. She was busy with school, after all. Studies, the architectural honor society, friends, sex, boys.

“That’s why we pay them,” Cecilia said. “We contribute so they can run ads about how the other guy is going to take everyone’s guns. And we do that, and the right people get scared, and they show up and vote for our guy, and then we get our laws.”

“If someone finds out, they’ll—”

“No one would publish something like this. It would be illegal. On multiple counts.”

Priscilla had no more arguments left. Cecilia, and the people who employed her, and the people who wrote the laws and passed them, and built this building and filled it with bars and chains and females, were all arrayed against her, a nude girl in a cage who, at present, was standing stretched out, helpless and hopeless, in cuffs that she had put herself in.

They were taking complete control over her, even as she gave it up.

She should be fighting, she told herself, staring at the wall but not seeing it. She should scream every waking moment, she thought, refuse the cuffs and the probes, curse everyone who worked here.

“Can I release you now?” Cecilia asked, her voice breaking the silence like a clap.

Priscilla looked at her, considered spitting on her, wondered if she could reach her. But she wanted out of her cuffs, and whether she was released or not seemed to be up to Cecilia.

“Yes,” she said simply.

Cecilia knelt to open the ankle cuffs, freed Priscilla’s wrists, and Priscilla turned away, took toilet paper to wipe her eyes and blow her nose, went back to her bed, unclamped it and lowered it, climbed on and closed her eyes, her only desire to sleep for the rest of her life.

She didn’t know how long she lay there, if she slept or not, if years had passed. But eventually, Cecilia’s voice sounded again, quietly, with a

softness that belied her iron authority over Priscilla's existence.

"I need to take you now."

Priscilla rolled over, looked at Cecilia, raised her head.

"Where?"

"Punishment."

Chapter 8: Punishment and Practice

“Why am I being punished?” Priscilla asked, already so miserable the thought of further punishment barely registered.

“You’re not. It’s just the first stop on the tour.”

“I don’t want to see it.”

“You have to.”

“I’ll close my eyes.”

“If you do,” Cecilia said, and she squared her shoulders and stepped close to the bars, “I’ll leave you there for awhile.”

“Right now,” Priscilla began, sitting up, swinging her legs over the side of the bed and glaring at Cecilia, “I’m not really worried about anything you could say to me, or do to me.”

She went to her toilet, relieved herself, continued looking at Cecilia, wondering about her life, where she lived, how she felt about her job.

After looking back at Priscilla with an unreadable expression, Cecilia turned to the wall and retrieved Priscilla’s chains.

Priscilla wiped, noticing for the first time that the toilet paper in her cage was basic, not at all comfortable, simply rough sheets that cleaned her.

“Is this the only toilet paper we get?” Priscilla asked.

The question seemed to surprise Cecilia. She raised an eyebrow, studying Priscilla wordlessly, saying nothing.

“So what do you get?” Priscilla asked. “Where you have your toilets? Better, right?”

Cecilia remained silent, just raised the chains.

Priscilla flushed, stepped to the bars and put her hands through the port.

“You went to college, right?” Cecilia asked. Finished restraining Priscilla, she opened the cage and headed to the door that lead to the hall.

“Yes,” Priscilla replied, following slowly, still getting used to walking in restraints. “I was going to start my senior year in a few weeks.”

Priscilla wanted to believe there was sympathy throughout their interaction, and this last sentence was meant to elicit more of it. But if she worked here, could anything like that bother her?

Shuffling into the hall, Priscilla turned to ask, “Are there any other college students here?”

“Yes,” Cecilia replied. “Every demographic, just about.”

“How many? Total?”

“Almost 300. With this week’s acquisitions, maybe over 300.”

Cecilia turned right, heading toward a part of the building Priscilla hadn’t walked through yet. But it all looked the same: bright fluorescents, white walls, numbered doors with locks and little windows behind which, Priscilla assumed, girls like her languished.

“They all cry, don’t they?” she asked.

“No. Most know what they’re getting into, so it’s not as much of a shock.”

“What do you mean?”

“They’ll run up their credit card bills, or embezzle or steal, and then they get caught. And if they have the right kind of vagina, we’ll buy them. So it’s this or prison, and this is better than prison.”

“No it’s not,” Priscilla blurted.

“Yes, it is,” Cecilia said. They reached an elevator door, and she pushed the up button.

“They don’t keep people naked in prison,” Priscilla observed.

“You’ll get used to that.”

“They don’t rape people in prison,” Priscilla persisted.

“Have you ever been in a prison?”

“Yes. Here.”

“Before here?”

“No.”

The elevator door opened and Cecilia led Priscilla on.

“If you do as you’re told, there are rewards you don’t get in a prison.”

“Like what?”

“Do you like boys?”

“Yes.”

“Boys.”

“I like boys on my terms,” Priscilla retorted, stating the obvious.

“Yeah,” Cecilia agreed.

The elevator rose one floor and the two stepped out, a door reading “Female Punishment” directly across the hall.

Cecilia opened the door and Priscilla, with no way to guess at what lay within, proceeded through it, sucking in her breath only when she had something specific to respond to.

Along the far wall, three nude girls hung by their wrists, arms stretched overhead, ankles chained together, each girl raised until just her toes touched the floor.

Five tiny cages lined the wall to the left, two occupied by girls, held so tightly they could only stand, chains holding their hands at their middles.

To the right, a row of tables stood, perhaps a dozen, three holding girls who had been stretched out on their bellies, their wrists and ankles chained at either end. Two lay still and might have been asleep, but the third raised her head when Cecilia and Priscilla entered, turning to look at them, her face strangely dispassionate.

For a long moment, Priscilla and the girl locked eyes. She was Priscilla's age, blonde, her eyebrows dark, her skin pale, and she offered an enigmatic half-smile before she dropped her head back down between her arms. Each girl's rear bore wide red welts.

"What did they do?" Priscilla whispered, the horror of the room slowly sinking in.

"Why don't you ask them?"

"No!" Priscilla hissed.

"Why don't you ask her, then?" Cecilia hissed back, tilting her head toward a female staffer in the corner. Dressed in gray, her eyes focused on her computer, Priscilla hadn't noticed her until now.

The woman glanced up at the visitors and smiled.

"Hey, Ceci," she said.

"Hey, Bette."

"Just doing a tour?"

"Yeah. But she's curious. About what the girls here did."

Bette stood up, stepped over to the three girls hanging by their wrists, and motioned Priscilla to join her.

With a growing sense of fear, bordering on physical illness, Priscilla hobbled over.

She looked at each girl's face, trying to get a sense of how it felt, if they were in pain, if they wanted to die. Two girls looked back at her, one looked at the ceiling.

“What did you do, 13152?”

The girl closest to Priscilla looked at Priscilla, then at Bette.

“I was disrespectful toward a female staff member.”

“Elaborate.”

“I called her a bitch.”

“Why?”

“I don’t have an excuse, Ma’am,” she answered.

“Why do you think you did that?”

“Because I was frustrated about something, and I wasn’t handling it well.”

“Very good.”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“How long do they hang?” Priscilla asked quietly.

“An hour at a time,” Bette replied. “With 15 minute breaks in between.”

“How many hours?”

“Two for 51152,” Bette answered. “Maybe a little less, for good behavior.”

The girl Bette was calling 13152 smiled tightly. “Thank you, Ma’am,” she said.

The door to the room opened and two girls walked in, one with a male, one being led by a female staffer, both bearing the fading black marks of the assessment on their bellies, their thighs, their jaws, and the blue line put across their fronts on the loading dock. Priscilla turned to look just as one of the girls wailed, a deep, wordless cry of despair followed by a shout to no one: “No, God please no!”

Bette walked over to her desk calmly to check her computer, the presence of an adult in distress having no effect on her.

“Just a tour, right?” she asked, looking at the newcomers.

“Yeah,” the woman said.

“You can’t do this to people!” the girl choked.

Priscilla looked at her, understanding that her sorrow was for the girls suffering here, not for herself. She admired that, even as she saw it as futile. Was she already going hard? she asked herself. She had felt mostly curiosity as she stood before the three hanging girls. Did that make her complicit in the inhumanity?

“What should we do?” Bette asked. Priscilla thought the employee was being condescending, but the question seemed serious, as if she really wanted an answer.

The query had its effect, forcing the compassionate girl to go quiet, to focus on alternative punishments.

“Worse food?” she stammered. “Loss of privileges? Isolation?”

“Thank you,” Bette said, as if considering the idea.

Cecilia tapped Priscilla’s elbow and turned toward the door, and Priscilla followed her, with one last glance at the room’s forlorn occupants.

Her eyes went again to the girls in the tiny cages. One of them seemed noteworthy for some reason, and Priscilla stared for a moment before she recognized her:

Rachel – the Christian girl, the girl who’d bravely, faithfully led three of her friends with her into chains, onto the bus, into a place of cages and cuffs and humiliation.

Rachel’s eyes flickered with recognition and went blank again. Priscilla remembered the glee, the hope, the singing two short days ago, and she felt a wrenching sorrow for the girl – broken joy, crushed optimism, body emptied of spirit.

When she reached the door, Priscilla heard a yelp, glanced back and saw Bette standing next to one of the girls chained face down on the table, holding a long rod above the girl’s rear.

“We do three at a time,” she told the two new girls, forced to stand and watch. She brought the rod down against the girl’s bottom again, the girl cried out sharply, and the compassionate girl screamed as well, her body jerking so violently the staffer grabbed her elbow to steady her.

By the time Priscilla left the room, the tears were rolling down her cheeks, as much for Rachel as for the girl who was being beaten.

She couldn’t wipe her eyes, so she did her best to blink away the tears, shaking her head and following the glimmer of Cecilia across the hall and back into the elevator.

The elevator door closed and she turned toward Cecilia, her mouth opened in silent anguish.

“I know, I know,” Cecilia whispered, and Priscilla felt a hand on her cheek, then a tissue under each eye, beneath her nose. It was this act of unexpected kindness that tipped the scale. Priscilla wailed, blew into the tissue, leaned against the elevator’s cold steel, wailed again.

The elevator reached its destination, the door opened, and still she cried with a sorrow like nothing she had felt before, a bottomless, sobbing misery.

Through her tears, Priscilla saw that Cecilia had left the elevator and was holding it open for her with one arm.

Still crying, Priscilla stumbled out and followed Cecilia back through the halls to the door she was beginning to recognize as hers, painted light green, with a narrow window at eye level, a horizontal slot at hip level, a brass lock.

“Orientation Cage O-1015,” had been stenciled just under the window.

With a jangle of keys and the opening and closing of doors, Priscilla was back in her cage, turning toward the bars automatically, like a machine, so Cecilia could remove her chains. Then she was back on her bed, crying into her pillow, screaming through pains that had no language.

She wanted to cry herself to sleep, to sleep forever, but sleep would not come, so when she had exhausted her tears, and the undefinable feelings that provoked them had yielded to numbness, she opened her eyes and stared at the wall.

Cecilia was gone.

Good.

She sat up, dropped her legs over the bed and swung them, reminded briefly of sitting on the dock at her cousin’s lake house, swinging her legs, heels splashing the cold spring water. A world away, now. A lifetime away.

“They will not break me,” she whispered to herself. Then she said it out loud. “They will not break me.”

How, specifically, she would resist, she had no idea. She knew only that she would never follow the path of Rachel, soul barely alive, staring out of a punishment cage.

There were hundreds of girls here, she reminded herself, and Cecilia had suggested that once she was done with orientation, she would join them. She imagined sharing space with other girls in an apartment. Or perhaps they were caged separately. But surely, they were allowed to talk, at least.

She didn’t like being in this space, alone. What seemed a refuge from the cruelties here was now, in her mind, crueler – solitary

confinement.

She would stop crying, stop whining, and do what Cecilia asked.

She closed her eyes and listened. This place was full of noises she hadn't noticed before, doors closing with distant clangs, muffled voices, both male and female, the rattling of chains as someone was walked just beyond her door. Did they keep boys here too?

From there, her thoughts turned to her mother, and Hoyt. She hated them both, and she imagined what she would say, or do, if she ever saw them again. Or what she wouldn't do. She would never, ever, speak to either of them again. Except maybe through a lawyer. Could one sue one's parents for this?

For awhile, she thought only of hate, until her belly began to hurt, and she reminded herself that hate would do her more harm than those who had earned her hate, and she tried to think of other things.

All of it was too strange, too foreign, for her to formulate even a basic set of questions. But she would pay attention, and learn, and seek to understand.

When the keys jangled at the door, she slid off her bed with what felt almost like joy when Cecilia walked in.

"Hey, Cecilia," Priscilla said, trying to sound, if not cheerful, at least less hopeless than she'd been when Cecilia left.

"Hey 14067," Cecilia replied.

With the reminder that even her name was gone, a cloud crossed Priscilla's face, but she stepped to the bars and tried to sound brave.

"What happens next?"

"Practice lab," Cecilia said, turning to the cabinet under the sink. "Hungry?"

"Yes."

Cecilia pulled a package out and handed it through the bars.

"Practice lab?" Priscilla echoed.

"Yes. They'll train you on the basics."

"Like what?"

"They'll go over it there."

"Do we ever get anything to eat besides this?" Priscilla asked, unwrapping another bland bar and handing the wrapper back to Cecilia.

"If you earn it," Cecilia said.

"What else can I earn?"

“We went over that.”

“I want to know again.”

“Better food, comforts for your cage, reading material, intimacy, enhanced relief, additional freedom—“

“Additional freedom?” Priscilla interrupted.

“Yes.”

“You’ll let me out? Out of here?”

“Out of your cage, yes.”

“No, out of here? Out of this place? This building?”

“No.”

It was the answer she was expecting, but she had to try.

“Am I going somewhere now? To that lab?”

“Do you want to?”

“Does it matter?”

“We’ll give you leeway when we can,” Cecilia said, and she leaned against the bars of Priscilla’s cage and continued talking casually, as if they were merely friends talking over coffee. “There are other girls I can take to the practice lab, if you’d rather rest here longer. You seemed pretty upset earlier.”

“I’m okay now,” Priscilla said. “I want to go now. I want to be part of the general population. I don’t like being alone.”

“Okay. Wash up.”

Priscilla finished her food, washed her hands, urinated although she didn’t really need to, then went to her bidet to rinse her vulva and anus.

She stepped to the bars, and Cecilia pulled her chains off the peg on the wall and turned back to her, raising them expectantly.

Priscilla slid her hands through the port and watched as she was restrained, wrists first, then ankles.

“What’s it like?”

“What’s what like?” Cecilia asked, unlocking Priscilla’s cage.

“General population. I think that’s what you called it.”

“Each girl is individually caged,” Cecilia said, unlocking the door into the hall, leading Priscilla through it. “The cages there are like your orientation cage, but there are bars on the sides, and you can see the girls next to you, and talk to them.”

“Are they nice?”

“Yes,” Cecilia said. “Some are nicer than others. It’s like anywhere else. But maybe they’re a little nicer, because we can punish them for being rude, or mean.”

“Are there boys here?”

“Yes.”

“I mean, that you keep here. In, in . . . cages?”

“Yes.”

“How many?”

“About 50.”

“You got them the same way?”

“With males, it’s more often minor crimes. With females, it’s usually bad debt.”

They reached an elevator and Cecilia hit the up button.

Priscilla heard voices and the faint rattle of chains from a nearby hall, watching until a girl and the staffer escorting her appeared.

The girl was no more than 20, red hair bleached almost white on the ends, a heavy pair of breasts bouncing between her restrained arms, her bare pubic mound visible behind her hands. Fading marks on her skin revealed her as a newcomer.

“Hi, Cecilia,” said the other girl’s escort.

“Hey, Angie,” Cecilia replied. “How’s your mom?”

“Better,” Angie replied. “Her cast comes off next week.”

The elevator door opened and all four females stepped on, Angie and Cecilia continuing their banter about Angie’s mom, who had suffered some sort of accident, the sort of thing that could happen to anyone.

During the ascent three floors up, Priscilla stared at the wall until she felt the girl’s eyes on her and looked back.

“Hey,” the girl said, looking only at Priscilla, as if the two women escorting her didn’t exist.

“Hi,” Priscilla replied quietly. Were they allowed to talk here?

“What’s your name?”

Priscilla looked at the tattoo above her breast, reading it upside down.

“14067.”

“I mean your real name.”

Priscilla looked at Cecilia, but she was still talking to Angie, apparently not concerned about the name Priscilla provided.

“I’m Priscilla,” she said, quietly.

“I’m Wendy,” she said, and she looked down at her hands and smiled ironically. “I’d shake your hand if I could.”

She was oddly cheerful, and Priscilla wondered if she was in shock, or mentally unstable.

“How did you get here?” Priscilla asked, shooting another glance at Cecilia.

“My parents started working on it about six months ago.”

“Working on it?”

“Getting me here.”

“Why?”

“They needed the money.”

“They sold you?”

“They were desperate.”

“You seem okay with it.”

“It was this or the streets.”

Priscilla studied the girl. She didn’t look poor. Of course, everyone looked the same when they were nude and restrained.

“They did their best to get me ready for it. Tours, brochure, all that.”

“Tours?” Priscilla asked, too surprised to keep her voice down.

“Yeah. When my parents mentioned it, the first time, I wanted to know more, so I called, and they let me look around.”

“You let them take you after you saw what it was like?” Priscilla asked incredulously.

“You didn’t do a tour?”

The elevator door opened, Cecilia concluded her conversation with Angie, stepped into the hall and looked back at Priscilla.

Priscilla sidled reluctantly toward the opening, looking back at Wendy, wanting to know more.

“There’s more than you’ve seen so far,” Wendy said as the elevator door closed between them.

Priscilla followed Cynthia around three more corners, looking for the support beams and load-bearing walls that would give her a sense of the building’s skeleton – the “bones,” they were sometimes called.

Understanding the building’s layout would be a project for her mind, she decided, something to distract herself.

She heard voices around the next bend, turning it and found five girls, along with their handlers: Mary from the bus, the rest vaguely recognizable from the loading dock yesterday morning, all gathered before a door marked “Lab 12: Orientation/Inspection/General”

Mary had been studying the floor, her face blank, but she looked up and smiled when Priscilla approached.

“Hey,” she said. “Um, Penelope, right?”

“Priscilla,” she corrected. “You’re, um, Mary?”

“On, sorry. Priscilla. Priscilla. Yes, I’m Mary.”

Priscilla studied Mary’s face, looking for despair, or hope, or madness. She found none of the above, just a girl who seemed to be adapting to nudity and chains, as Priscilla was trying to do. Had Mary seen the punishment room yet? Did she know of Rachel’s desperate condition? Should Priscilla tell her that the girl who had led her friends into this place was suffering, apparently beyond her ability to endure?

“Hi, Priscilla,” one of the other girls said, dark-haired and olive-skinned, maybe Greek. Priscilla looked up at her, startled to hear a stranger say her name. This girl was just repeating what she’d heard, being friendly, trying to impose some normalcy, some decency, on an environment that had neither.

After a brief pause in which she pondered the right etiquette, Priscilla looked at the girl, tried to smile, spoke: “Hello. What’s your name?”

“Anna.”

“Hi, Anna,” Priscilla said. “How did you—?”

The door into the lab opened and five girls and their handlers filed out, talking quietly. Priscilla studied their faces, looking for traces of pain or shock, finding neither. But not finding joy either.

Cecilia tapped Priscilla’s elbow and she joined the rest of the girls as they ambled into the lab.

It was set up like the lab Priscilla had been brought to yesterday, a dozen exam tables in two rows, empty chains and cuffs waiting, desks and computers at one end of the room, three women typing, two in red, one in a lab coat.

The memories flooded her mind, of two strangers putting their penises inside her vagina, her sex organ spoken of like an object, a device inserted up her that forced her into an orgasm so strong she fainted.

“Do you need to empty?” Cecilia asked. Priscilla shook her head, glanced at the three toilets placed side-by-side along the wall, out in the open. One of the girls opted for relief, staring at the floor as her bladder drained.

Priscilla and the other girls were guided to tables, helped on, wrists chained at their sides, ankles chained to the stirrups, walking chains set on the shelf underneath with the scraping sound of metal against metal.

Once all the girls had been secured, the woman in the lab coat, older and stocky, with red hair tied in a bun, rose and approached the tables, the five handlers falling back against the far wall.

“My name is Dr. Doris Leafer,” she said, and she clasped her hands together, tilted her head back and looked down her nose. “I’m assistant research director, which means you’ll be seeing a lot of me. I look forward to working with each and every one of you.”

Chapter 9: Dr. Leafer

Priscilla stared at the woman, trying to reconcile her demeanor – not unlike a biology professor on the first day of class – with the reality here, five captive females before her, chained nude to tables, legs forced open, being introduced to life as research subjects.

“We have a lot of girls to talk to today, so I’m going to speak quickly. Please hold your questions until I ask for them. And you can ask your handler anything after you leave the lab.

“Okay,” she began, “your day will begin with what’s called an inventory pass. After you secure yourselves in your cuffs, probes will be inserted up your vagina and rectum, and the data will be sent to what we call Labserv – our internal research database. More on that a little later.

You will always be chained before you leave your cage, and you will always be restrained in the lab. Complaining about that is a punishable offense, and it won’t change anything, so please don’t waste your time.

“Once you arrive in the lab, what is done to you will vary widely. However, there are two things to keep in mind – first, you are an extremely valuable resource, and second, we always adhere to the highest standards for humanity and professionalism. These aren’t our standards. They’re set by the Association of Human Research, and if we don’t follow them, we’ll lose our accreditation. And if we lose our accreditation, we’ll lose most of our business. So you may not always enjoy your treatment in the lab, but you will not be injured, damaged or forced to suffer unnecessarily.

The woman paused and looked at the five girls. “Questions?”

“Ma’am?” Mary asked quietly.

“Yes?”

“May I ask a question?”

“Of course,” Dr. Leafer replied, stepping up to the girl and smiling.

“What kind of studies are you doing? I mean, just generally?”

“We have eight major areas of inquiry: reproduction, clitoral responsiveness and behavior, the anatomy of the orgasm, pharmaceuticals, facility operations, lubricant production, and vaginal quality, which includes the characteristics of the vagina that maximize pleasure and fertilization.

“But there are always side studies, temporary research, manufacturing, collection, visiting faculty, and new efforts. So expect the unexpected.

“To the extent possible, you’ll be treated as a colleague. You have the hardest job here, and it’s not necessarily something a female would volunteer for, and that’s why you’re caged and chained. But if you’re obedient and professional, you’ll be treated with respect and given rewards.

“Now, if you’re disobedient, you’ll be dealt with quickly, and fairly. We have a list of infractions and recommended punishments that you’re welcome to review, all in conformance with AHR standards. Just let your handler know if you want to see the list.”

Dr. Leafer paused, looked down her nose again.

“Any more questions?”

Priscilla looked at the other girls, wondering if anyone was going to speak, feeling too overwhelmed to say anything herself. This was already starting to seem normal, and that frightened her.

Dr. Leafer turned back to one of the younger girls, seated at a computer in the corner.

“Bev, go ahead and get everyone scanned.”

The girl, wearing a blue jumpsuit, rose, pulled a scanner out of her pocket and approached the girl on the table nearest her, scanning the barcode over her breast, then a code imprinted on the side of the table.

As she made her way down the row, Dr. Leafer stepped to the nearest PC, eyes shifting from the screen to the girl being scanned, and Priscilla suspected her data was being fed immediately to the computer.

“14067,” Dr. Leafer said, stepping away from the desk.

The number sounded vaguely familiar to Priscilla, and a quick check of her barcode confirmed that was what passed for her name here, at least among the staff.

“Yes, Ma’am?”

“You’ve already been to the lab,” she observed.

“Yes, Ma’am,” Priscilla said, trying to keep her voice even. “I went yesterday.”

“Is there anything to be afraid of?”

“Ma’am?” Priscilla replied, unsure of the woman’s meaning.

“What did you do in the lab? Tell the other girls.”

Priscilla opened her mouth to speak, but her voice caught in her throat.

“I was . . .” she stammered . . . “I was . . .”

“Did you orgasm?” Dr. Leafer asked sharply, as if that’s all that mattered.

“Yes, Ma’am, they put a thing . . .”

Priscilla, not sure if she was about to cry or simply shut down, closed her mouth and looked at the other girls in the room, unable to say more. Mary stared at her sympathetically, the rest gazed elsewhere, perhaps made uncomfortable by her silence.

“Well, it sounds like you survived it,” Dr. Leafer said brusquely, and she turned to the girl who had scanned everyone. “Monitors in.”

The girl stepped over to a cabinet set into the wall behind the desks, pulled out a shallow tray, grabbed a handful of something from it and slipped them into her pocket.

“14067,” the doctor said, “did you wear a monitor in the lab yesterday?”

“I’m not sure,” Priscilla replied.

“Did they put anything into your anus?”

“No, Ma’am.”

The girl grabbed a bottle of lubricant and stepped up to Mary.

“Pelvis up, relax your anus,” the girl instructed.

Mary looked from Dr. Leafer to the girl quizzically but obeyed, raising her hips off the table, angling herself up. The girl squeezed a small amount of lubricant onto a small black object and pressed it into her rear opening.

“Ah,” Mary said quietly. Priscilla, watching from the table next to Mary’s, guessed she was more surprised than hurt by the device, whatever it was. When the girl stepped between Priscilla’s feet and looked down at her holes, Priscilla angled herself up without being asked, studying the object that was about to be put into her body.

It was completely black, shaped like a small butt plug, no more than three inches long, with a conical tip, a narrow stem and a wide base.

Priscilla watched the girl lubricate the device and tried to relax, but she was unable to keep from tightening her anus as the monitor was pushed into her. She bit her lower lip and stifled a gasp.

The girl moved down the line, each girl responding uniquely to this violation, one laughing, one breathing out sharply, one with no discernible reaction at all.

Dr. Leafer stepped to the desk, picked up a large tablet and cradled it in her arm, tapping it briefly before looking back up.

“You are now connected to a system that cost us more than 20 million dollars to develop,” she said. “The monitors we’ve put in you can track virtually everything happening in your genitals, and a lot of general physical things as well. Blood flow and pressure, clitoral arousal, menstruation, lubricant production, bladder volume, pulse, ovulation, orgasm. And any form of penetration – fingers, toy, penis. The data is fed in real-time to Labserv, and I’m accessing that now.

She turned the tablet around to Priscilla and the other girls. Priscilla saw five squares on the screen, charts and lines and colored numbers too small to be read, and she guessed each square represented one of them, the private functions of their private parts converted to computer data for anyone to see.

“We know when it’s in you, and when it’s been removed, of course. There may be times when you’re wearing it without any restraints on, and you might be tempted to pull it out. But removing it without permission is strictly prohibited and will result in punishment.”

Horrified anew by the idea of this place, that hundreds of females had been reduced to their sex organs, Priscilla squirmed restlessly, raised one foot from the stirrup until the short chain securing her ankle went taut. Dr. Leafer glanced at her and resumed her lecture.

“Each of you will be submitting an orgasm profile in the next day or two,” she said, “so we can get a sense of your unique characteristics and best assignments.”

She took a breath and clasped her hands together again. “Now, masturbation. You can relieve yourself when you’re given permission. You may not relieve yourself when you’re not given permission. It’s as simple as that. Unauthorized masturbation is considered a class 3 offense, class two if you’re a repeat offender, and will result in in-cage discipline or a trip to the punishment room.”

She looked into each girl’s eyes. Priscilla glared back, refusing to give any indication that she agreed they had any business telling her when she could do that most personal of things.

“You’ll have plenty of chances for pleasure in the lab, and for rewards afterwards,” Dr. Leafer continued. “And you can always ask for

relief. We might say yes, we might say no, but we should be able to accommodate you often enough.”

Dr. Leafer looked at the girls again, studying them the way a researcher might study a new batch of guinea pigs.

“Last thing we’re going to cover, and then I’ll let you go: Intercourse. Yes, your assignments will include being penetrated by males; unprotected males, who will occasionally ejaculate into you. You need to get used to that idea. Now, I promise, when it is done to you, it will be professionally monitored, in a clinical setting, and you will be asked for input at times during the procedure. And we won’t ask more of you than you can perform.”

Priscilla remembered what had been done to her yesterday and concluded Dr. Leafer was lying. No one had asked her for input. They’d simply chained her to a table and had two men put their penises up her vagina.

Dr. Leafer looked at her tablet.

“Okay, we’ve got three girls ovulating,,” she said. “14067, 14070, and 14075. So let’s do a demonstration.”

She stepped over to Mary, reached down and, as Priscilla watched, ran her finger up the girl’s slit. She stepped to Priscilla and repeated the examination, pausing with her finger against Priscilla’s clitoris. Priscilla looked away, trying not to scowl too obviously, beginning to suspect that Dr. Leafer was going to have a male brought to them, and was choosing the vagina he’d enter.

Dr. Leafer examined the third girl and nodded to the female staff member, who left the room.

“Ma’am?” Mary said.

“Yes?” Dr. Leafer replied, turning to the girl.

“I’m a virgin.”

“Yes?” Dr. Leafer repeated.

“Are you going to have someone . . . be in here . . . to do . . . to do . . .?”

“Are you volunteering?” Dr. Leafer asked, smiling.

“No, Ma’am, no, I’m just . . .”

Priscilla saw that Mary’s face had turned a frightful shade of red, and she pitied the girl, imagining what it would be like to lose her virginity in a place like this. She’d lost hers at a fraternity party her freshman year, to

a guy she sort of liked, in his room upstairs, and at the time she thought it was a nice way to have it done, but he was strange after that, calling her and texting her and saying things that made it clear he just wanted sex again. She let him, a few times more before breaking things off forcefully, because he was so insistent, and she'd come to regret the whole thing.

Still, this would be far worse.

The door opened and all five girls turned to it, staring at the female staffer and the male she'd brought with her, nude but for his black collar, his penis already fully erect, bobbing up and down as he walked.

He was beautiful, Priscilla thought with disgust, dark-haired, tall, probably 25, with the sort of healthy musculature that indicated a respect for his body, but not an obsession. He probably ran, worked out, played outdoors. And now he was here, his attractiveness a sort of bribe, as if good looks justified what he was about to do.

Priscilla looked back at Mary, wondering if she was still blushing, or about to faint.

The color was gone from the girl's face now, her jaw tight, her eyes straight ahead, her will unreadable.

"Alright, 14075, we're going to let you help with the demonstration."

"Yes, Ma'am," Mary replied, almost inaudibly.

The male stepped over to her, between her legs, his penis pointing straight at her opening, and she rose up on her elbows and looked down at it, squinting, as if it were far away.

"Hi," he said, smiling.

Mary looked up at him, trying to smile back, managing only half a smile, trying to open her mouth to speak, failing at that as well.

He stepped forward and touched her lips, and she immediately flinched as if he'd shocked her down there, her limbs jerking, chains going taut with a sharp rattle.

He drew back slightly and looked at her and she attempted another smile, and then she nodded, slightly, lowering her chin and raising it.

Perceiving this as her approval, he returned his hand to her middle, spreading her vaginal lips wide now, and she grimaced and watched as he began easing into her hole, pushing until his sharp hips rested against her round thighs, his own mouth tight now, his whole body responding to the sensation of having his penis swallowed.

“Ohhh,” Mary sighed, a sound Priscilla heard as the death of something, of her youth, her innocence, her hope. Was this rape? Were Priscilla and the other girls guilty of abetting it, by their silence? But then, Mary had volunteered for this – even if, as Priscilla suspected, she didn’t know exactly what was going to happen to her. Were she and the other girls from Rachel’s church told they’d be having sex in chains? How could any girl agree to such a thing?

Mary seemed to be adjusting to it, though, sighing as the male put all of himself into her sheath, their hips locked together, their eyes locked together as well.

Maybe it wasn’t rape, but it wasn’t lovemaking, Priscilla thought, and no amount of gazing into each other’s eyes could make it so.

He pulled out halfway, drove back into her, and she sighed again.

Dr. Leafer stepped over to Mary, tablet still on her arm, and looked down at the place where their bodies had joined.

“You won’t be asked to accept insertion if you aren’t properly lubricated,” she said. “If you aren’t producing enough fluid, a staff person will masturbate you or, when necessary, we’ll use an artificial lubricant.”

Mary rose up, chains clinking, and pushed back against the male. Was she enjoying it? Was she faking it? Had she ever had anything inside her? Would an innocent Christian girl use a dildo?

For perhaps another two minutes, the male grunted, strained and drove himself up Mary’s organ fiercely, and then Priscilla knew by the change in his breathing that he was cumming, that he was squirting without protection into her hole.

“Uh, uhuhuh,” Mary grunted in reply, her hips bouncing, manacled hands balled into fists. Was she going to cum too?

As he finished his climax, the male’s thrusts slowed, then stopped altogether, until he was just resting up the girl, breathing heavily, eyes half closed.

Dr. Leafer, still standing beside Mary, raised the tablet, tapping on it, sliding her finger across it.

The male withdrew, his wet penis still firm but softening, and Dr. Leafer put her hand on the girl’s mound of jet black hair and pressed her vulva, raising it, spreading her bright pink lips until her firm clitoris was drawn tight.

Still studying her tablet, Dr. Leafer began working Mary's knob, tapping and stroking while the girl's moans grew to frantic cries. It took the woman less than two minutes to bring Mary to rapture, pelvis rocking, hands and feet straining against her restraints, voice raised in unembarrassed moans.

Once she had finished, once the chemicals of pleasure were done coursing through her mind, Mary looked dazedly at the other girls, and Priscilla wondered if she'd ever cum before, if she knew that other girls came, if she thought she'd just done something new to humanity.

Not only had Priscilla herself cum like this, she'd done it on an exam table, in chains, after she'd held a penis – two penises – and at this moment, the memories returned. But to her surprise, she realized she wouldn't have minded cumming again; even here, in front of everyone. As Mary had grunted through her ecstasy, Priscilla had felt the stirrings in her own loins, as if the orgasm was washing off on her.

"Thank you," Dr. Leafer said to the male, who nodded and left the lab, wet, softening penis bouncing under Priscilla's steady gaze.

If Dr. Leafer wanted to put something inside her, or rub her, or just inspect her organ, she thought, she would not protest.

When the doctor left Mary's side and moved to Priscilla's table, however, Priscilla realized she just wanted to be alone, to be brought back to her cage, to sleep, or maybe to masturbate, in isolation.

Dr. Leafer, studying her tablet, reached between Priscilla's thighs, tapped her opening, pressed a finger against her clitoris. Priscilla did her best to hold stone still, chasing thoughts of sex out of her mind.

"Why are you resisting?" Dr. Leafer asked.

"Pardon me?" Priscilla replied, her heart suddenly in her throat.

"You had the strongest reaction to the demonstration, but you shut down as soon as I touched you," Dr. Leafer observed.

"I'm sorry, Ma'am," Priscilla stammered, trying to think of what to say. "I'm just a little shy . . . about things."

"Of course," Dr. Leafer said, and she stepped away, back to the desk, set down the tablet, washed her hands at a little sink behind the desks and returned to lecture mode.

"Does anyone know what the colors we wear represent?" she asked.

“I know white coats mean researchers,” the girl named Anna volunteered.

“Yes,” Dr. Leafer agreed. “Any others?”

“Guys in black put in my inventory cuffs,” Anna offered.

“Black coveralls represent engineering,” Dr. Leafer said. “They manage the building, take care of restraints, maintain punishment equipment. You’ll see them when your inventory cuffs need work, if you’re having problems with your chains, or a punishment device is failing while you’re on it, but otherwise, you probably won’t have much to do with them.

“Punishment staff wear gray, and you’ll see blue on research technicians. They’re the people that help out in the lab, operate the inventory rods and the other equipment.

“Now, red,” Dr. Leafer continued, turning toward Cecilia and the other staff, still congregating in the corner of the lab. “Red is for what we call wranglers. They’re the ones you’ll see the most of. It will almost always be one of them who brings you from one place to another, who applies and removes your restraints, and who gets you through orientation.

“White is for new employees,” she continued, “trainees and interns. They’ll almost always be with another staff member, but they hold the same authority as anyone who works here, and disobeying them will result in the same punishments.

“Last but not least, yellow coveralls are employees trained specifically for sexual interaction. Except under unusual circumstances, they are the only employees you’ll have relations with, and they’re the only staff members who will work in the nude. They all get a locking collar at the start of every shift, and it stays on until they clock out, so we can keep track of them. Again, do what they say, and respect them like any other employee.”

Dr. Leafer looked down her nose and clasped her hands together.

“The last thing I need to share with you is what we call the daily protocol. Lights on at 7:30. You’ll need to secure yourself in your inventory cuffs by 7:45. If you’re not in your cuffs when the team gets to your cage, you will be punished. No exceptions. After you’re inventoried, you’ll be released and fed, with the goal of getting you out of your cuffs and eating your food by 8:30.

“Normally, you won’t be taken to your assignment any earlier than 9 a.m., so you’ll have until then to eat, bathe and get restrained. Now,

what's happening on our side until 9? After your inventory data is collected, our researchers refer to it for the morning bid, where they choose the females they want to use that day, place bids on them, and determine who is going where. There's no way to predict who will win you, and complaining about an assignment is a waste of breath that will only get you punished. If you've been scheduled for punishment, incidentally, that almost always takes precedence over other bids.

"Occasionally, a researcher might need more information than the inventory pass gathers, so more tests might be required, or someone might visit your cage for an interview. Just be prepared for the unexpected, and you'll do fine."

Dr. Leafer looked at the girls again. "Questions?"

After a brief pause, Anna cleared her throat.

"Ma'am?" she said cautiously.

"Yes?"

"When do we get rewards?"

"It depends on the reward," Dr. Leafer replied. "Better food at mealtime, comforts when you return to your cage, recreation and intimacy when it doesn't interfere with your research schedule."

"Thank you, Ma'am."

"Alright," Dr. Leafer said, looking back at her assistants, "let's get your monitors out and send you on your way."

Priscilla did her best to relax her anus as the girl who'd inserted the monitors stepped up to each female, removed them and put them in the sink.

After that, each girl was returned to her walking chains, helped to the floor and scanned. Standing upright after reclining for almost an hour, Priscilla fought wooziness, staring at the toilets absently.

As Cecilia led her into the hall, Priscilla glanced at the next group of girls, waiting for their turn on the tables. Which one of them would be penetrated? Would the rest just look on in silence?

She glanced back at Mary, walking just behind her, first looking at her eyes, then at her hips, at the place between her legs, behind her hands, where the boy had put himself. Mary was looking down at herself, and Priscilla saw that one hand was pushed against her mound, a finger exploring an opening that had been forever changed.

Not wanting to be caught staring at another girl during a profoundly private moment, Priscilla turned toward Cecilia.

“Where are we going?”

“Back to your orientation cage.”

Priscilla scowled discretely, uncertain why Cecilia’s answer was so disappointing.

A few minutes ago, she’d wanted to be alone. But the thought of being returned to that lonely, sterile place filled her with despair.

“How long will I be there?” she asked.

“Possibly the rest of the day,” Cecilia said.

They rounded the corner to another hall, the other girls and their handlers going separate ways. Mindful that complaint earned punishment, Priscilla weighed her next words carefully.

“How much longer do I have to be there?” she asked.

“Orientation usually takes four or five days,” Cecilia replied.

“Could it take less? For me?”

“You won’t have any privacy.”

“I don’t want privacy,” Priscilla said, shuffling behind Cecilia, her chains ringing faintly. “I don’t like being alone.”

“We don’t know where we’re putting you yet. We need to do a bunch of assessments.”

“When?” Priscilla asked. They were on her hall now, and she was feeling more desperate. If she had to be alone again, for the rest of the day, or several days, she wanted at least to know for how long.

“I can ask,” Cecilia said. “Maybe they can get your tests done a little earlier.”

“Could they be done today?”

They were at the door that held Priscilla’s cage now, and Cecilia drew out her keys. “I doubt it,” she said, opening the door. “You’ll need to orgasm a few times, and that can’t all be done at once.”

Priscilla followed Cecilia into the little space with the sink and cabinet, waited while Cecilia opened the cage door, then slipped through it obediently, turning to get her chains off while Cecilia locked the door.

Cecilia hung the chains on the peg and reached under the sink for a bar of food.

The food here was unlike anything Priscilla had ever eaten, but it wasn’t terrible, and she ate slowly, staring at Cecilia as she tapped on her

phone.

“Are you asking them?” Priscilla inquired.

“Yes,” Cecilia replied, glancing up with mild annoyance. “And don’t ask what people are typing on their phones. Usually they can’t tell you.”

“Okay.”

Cecilia turned to leave but took another quick glance at her phone, then she stopped, turned toward Priscilla and looked at her with surprise.

“Okay,” she said.

“Okay what?”

“They’re ready to start with you.”

Cecilia tapped her phone again. “Wait . . . when was your last orgasm?”

“Yesterday afternoon.”

“Good. Do you need to use the toilet?”

Priscilla sat and relieved herself.

“Where are we going?” she asked, her voice betraying something akin to hope.

“Up to one of the offices, then probably to a lab or two. Wash your holes.”

Chapter 10: The Sixth Floor and Dr. Morrow

Priscilla moved from the toilet to the bidet, turned her back to Cecilia and looked down to run the water between her legs. They were going to make her cum again, she thought. Maybe with a device. Or with a male. At this moment, either was fine. Or at least, better than being alone. If this was what was done here, so be it. She knew, in the back of her mind, though, that what seemed good or arousing one moment could evaporate in a cloud of shame the next.

Nevertheless, she rose, water dripping from her crotch, and moved to the bars with optimism, accepting the towel Cecilia offered, drying her wet places, then slipping her hands through the port to be returned to her chains.

“What kind of assignments do you get here?” Priscilla asked once they were back in the hallway. She was growing accustomed to walking in restraints, her feet extending to the limits of her shackles. Two other girls were being escorted in the other direction, the fading marks on their skin indicating they were new. Priscilla looked at them, wanting to make eye contact with both, wanting a connection with her fellow captives. One looked at her and offered a half-smile, one kept her blank eyes on the floor before her.

“Do you remember what Dr. Leafer said about it?”

“Yeah, but she was just being general. Like, lubricant production, or vaginal quality. That doesn’t tell me anything about what is actually happening.”

“There’s a bunch of areas,” Cecilia replied. “There’s a whole area on reproduction. Like, what conditions get the most semen inside the uterus. And female responsiveness is a big deal. What makes the female produce lubrication, what stimulation gets her most aroused. They study vaginal tightness, and how the girl controls that. Then they test out drugs and chemicals. There’s a place where they try out new equipment, like restraints and punishments.”

Cecilia fell silent until they turned another corner, heading down a hall where two handlers and five girls with their chains leashed together stood, the handlers talking, the girls waiting patiently.

“We do manufacturing here too. Blood, hormones, milk. We sometimes use females to collect semen.”

Priscilla’s mind was whirring, almost audibly, she thought. Had she heard of such a place before she’d been forcibly brought to it, she would have wanted to know more. It was interesting, she admitted to herself. But it was also horrible. For now, she would keep seeking to understand, and try not to panic.

She played all she could remember of Cecilia’s words as they passed a long series of doors with stenciled labels like “Female Cageroom 7” and “Labserv Backup 2.”

“Milk?” Priscilla queried, returning to the word, not certain she’d heard correctly.

“Yes, we have a few dozen women who are producing.”

“They’re milked?”

“Yes,” Cecilia said casually, as if the answer were obvious.

“So, what kind of chemicals?” Priscilla asked.

“What do you mean?”

“What kind of chemicals do you test on the girls?”

“I know they’ve been working a long time on something that will reliably arouse females without side effects. I don’t think they’ve made much progress.”

“Anything that causes cancer?”

Cecilia laughed. “Who knows? I mean, we wouldn’t want that, treating cancer isn’t something we’re set up for.” She paused, perhaps considering the implications of Priscilla’s question for the first time. “Look, we have to comply with basic standards. Dr. Leafer talked about that. I mean, we can’t poison you. We’d all go to jail.”

They reached a new elevator, with sky blue tile floors and dark wood paneling.

“This must go someplace nice,” Priscilla observed.

“It goes up to administration, on the sixth and seventh floor.”

“Why are we going up there?”

“Someone wants to talk to you.”

“Who?”

“Dr. Morrow.”

“Why?”

A sudden, brief hope flooded Priscilla's mind, that Dr. Morrow would apologize profusely, free her, give her clothing and a cab ride back home – or to wherever Priscilla wanted to go. She didn't want to go home, to her mother. Or Hoyt.

This newest hope died quickly.

"You're a candidate for the vaginal track," Cecilia explained, pushing the button for the sixth floor.

"What does that mean?" Priscilla demanded, making no attempt to hide the irritability borne of the latest wrenching disappointment.

"I don't know," Cecilia replied brusquely, answering Priscilla's tone with her own tartness. "I guess they think your vagina's interesting."

The elevator stopped, a beep announcing it had reached its destination.

"Don't do anything on the floor," Cecilia said.

"What do you mean?"

"If you need to relieve yourself, ask for a toilet," Cecilia said.

Priscilla looked at Cecilia, trying to decide if she was being serious. She just looked back as the door opened, unsmiling.

"What?" Priscilla blurted, stung to the core. "You think I would . . . I would do that?"

"Some girls have," Cecilia said. "It doesn't go well. For the girl."

"I know how to control myself," Priscilla said quietly, and her eyes filled with tears. Why was this bothering her so?

Cecilia turned on her heel, headed into the hall, Priscilla ambling after her.

This space was as nice as the lower floors were sparse: thick, patterned carpet, tables and lamps along the walls, which were hung with large, ornately-framed pictures of executives and doctors – the people who had created this place, Priscilla thought. They looked like normal human beings.

She imagined emptying her bladder or her bowels here, on the carpet. Surely, if it had indeed happened, it wasn't just a girl losing control. Surely, it was an act of defiance, of profound courage. She wondered if any of the victims in the punishment room had done that. What was the punishment for peeing on the floor of the administrators?

A pair of glass doors stood closed at the end of the hall, a woman behind a desk visible through them. Priscilla assumed they were headed

there, and she was walking ahead of Cecilia when she felt a touch on her arm.

She stopped and turned, Cecilia's hand wrapped lightly around her elbow.

"Most girls don't come up here this soon," Cecilia said. "It's better if you've had some time to absorb how things work. So just be cool."

"Yeah, I won't pee on the furniture," Priscilla said, still annoyed.

"I have written girls up for less than what you just did," Cecilia warned.

"That means they went to punishment?"

"Whatever," Cecilia replied. "Something bad happened. I don't always know what they do."

"Sarcasm's punishable?" Priscilla asked.

Cecilia stared at Priscilla, something frightening in her eyes Priscilla couldn't read.

"I'm sorry," Priscilla said. "I'm just trying to understand. I sincerely want to know what's okay and what's not."

"You've been to a bunch of college," Cecilia observed, "so you should be able to handle this. Treat everyone who works here like a professor. Like the president of your school. You don't have to worship us, but you have to be polite. If you need to be sarcastic, save it for the other girls. When someone asks you to do something, do it. Answer every question to the best of your ability."

"Okay."

Priscilla looked down, wanting the conversation with Cecilia to be over. Of course she'd be polite. What choice did she have?

They continued their journey down the hall to the double glass doors. Cecilia opened the left door and Priscilla shuffled in, looking at the woman behind the desk. She was in a red dress, bare-shouldered, hair professionally done. This is how the receptionist looked at Zabert & Wright, the best architectural firm in Atlanta, where Priscilla had done an internship earlier in the summer. She'd been polite to the woman, but perhaps more distant than was necessary. She regretted that now.

"14067, here to see Dr. Morrow," Cecilia said.

The woman typed something into her computer while Priscilla inspected the reception area, noting the chairs and loveseat finished with striped silk, the cabinet, armoire and coffee table in cherry, the photographs

on the wall behind the receptionist of those Priscilla guessed were the top people here, a man and two women, each photo framed in dark wood, each with its own light, illuminated from above.

To the left and right, long halls extended from the space, lined with doors, with narrow tables, more pictures.

“He’ll see you now,” the receptionist said, picking a scanning device out of the marble cup that held pens. Priscilla turned toward her and she scanned the bar code at her naked hip.

Cecilia tapped Priscilla’s elbow and the two went down the long hall to the left. Some of the doors were glassed, and Priscilla looked into those, seeing one or two or three employees, all professionally dressed, talking around small tables or huddled over their computers.

Other doors were solid, labeled with names and titles – Medical Director, Chief of Pharmacy, Vice President of Grants.

Dr. Morrow’s door was solid. “Frank Morrow, MD, Anatomical Directives,” read the letters, stenciled in gold.

Cecilia knocked gently.

“Enter,” said a voice immediately.

Cecilia turned the knob and pushed the door open cautiously, as if she thought a live animal might be on the other side.

Priscilla sensed anxiety in the handler and decided Dr. Morrow must be several levels above her, which made her nervous. If she said the wrong thing, brought the wrong girl, or the girl she brought urinated on the carpet, Dr. Morrow would say something to one of his underlings, who would say something to Cecilia’s boss, and Cecilia would be gone.

Priscilla would not be nervous, she decided, and she followed Cecilia into the office with her hands chained at her middle but her head high, staring at the man behind the great ebony desk, looking up from his computer as they entered. Her eyes took in the rest of the room’s incongruous contents quickly: a mounted sailfish, a floor-to-ceiling bookshelf, diplomas, and a large, clinical diagram of a vulva, parts labeled.

To Priscilla’s surprise, there was also a window, through which the sky was visible, bright and blue, the first time she’d seen it in two days. She studied it and imagined briefly running to it, diving through it. Chained as she was, running was impossible, of course, and if the glass didn’t yield, she would probably break a body part. If the glass did yield, she would be

horribly cut and fall six stories to her death, and probably still be within the lab's fenced perimeter.

A table was set before the window, a jumble of items on it, and she focused on that briefly, spotting a cross-section of female hips, with a half-vagina, uterus and clitoris in profile. There was a penis, a vulva, a magnified model that she identified as just the clitoris, both the organ above the vulva and the network of specialized, highly-sensitive nerves that ran through that part of the body.

She returned her gaze to Dr. Morrow. He was handsome, in a fatherly way, probably in his late 40's, his thick dark hair just starting to gray, his face bronzed with what she guessed was the real tan of a man who went deep-sea fishing on the weekends.

He made one more tap on his PC, stood, stepped around his desk and smiled in a way Priscilla found completely disarming. He was at least six feet tall, solidly built but not overweight. Priscilla imagined that he played football in college.

"Fourteen-oh-sixty-seven," he said, looking only at Priscilla, not even seeming to know Cecilia was there. Unlike the other staff, who said each number – "one-four-zero-six-seven" – he had shortened it, as if it were a nickname, as if they were already friends.

Priscilla just continued to stare. That wasn't her real name, and they both knew it. She would answer to her number, but she wouldn't nod and smile and act like the person who had spoken it was addressing her as a friend.

And yet, to her surprise, he seemed willing to treat her as a human, rounding his desk and offering his hand.

She raised her right hand as far as her restraints would allow, and he grasped it firmly, his own hand warm, large, soft.

"The way they chain you girls makes proper introductions difficult," he said, his smile apologetic now. "But I'm Frank Morrow, and it's very nice to meet you."

"Nice to meet you," Priscilla said, not trying to sound sincere.

"Let's talk for a bit," he said, sidling back to his desk, pointing to a chair in front of it, a white towel spread across the seat.

Priscilla shuffled over, sat down, set her hands in her lap and marveled at how strange this was. She'd been ushered into offices like this often enough – senior partners at Zabert & Wright, college provosts, even

the president of her school once. But never nude, certainly never chained. Did Dr. Morrow find it strange?

He opened his mouth to speak, stopped when Cecilia squeaked from her place by the door.

“Dr. Morrow?”

He barely glanced at her. “Yes?”

“Will you need anything else?”

“No,” he said, and he waved his hand dismissively, as if Cecilia were a fly he was trying to shoo away. Priscilla heard the door close and knew Cecilia was gone.

“It’s very nice to have you here,” he said.

“Thank you,” Priscilla replied, keeping any other thoughts to herself.

“Do you see that little catch in the floor between your feet?” he asked.

Priscilla leaned over, noticed the small hole in the floor and immediately understood its purpose.

As she watched, a little rod within the hole slid back.

She looked up at Dr. Morrow, and he smiled expectantly.

“So I should . . . I should put . . . it in there now?” she asked.

“Please.”

She leaned over, grabbed the large ring in the middle of the chain between her ankles, and pushed it into the hole. Under the control of Dr. Morrow, presumably, the rod slid through the link and closed with a click.

Dr. Morrow stood and leaned over his desk to make sure she had secured herself, and then sat down.

“Thank you,” he said, leaning back. “Now, how have your first two days gone?”

“They’ve been difficult,” Priscilla replied.

“Yes?” he said, raising one eyebrow, as if her answer surprised him.

“I didn’t know what I was getting into,” she said. “I feel like my mother tricked me. My mother and her new husband.”

Dr. Morrow looked down, his thoughts unreadable.

“You didn’t do the tour?” he asked softly, more in sympathy it seemed than as criticism. Clearly, this isn’t what he wanted to talk about, and there was nothing he could do about it anyway, Priscilla was certain.

She chided herself and blushed. Naked, chained and secured to the floor in an executive's office, it was her own futile words that she found embarrassing. Complaining to the wrong people would not get her freed, she reminded herself, and might get her punished.

"I didn't know about the tour," she said, rushing her words. "I'm sorry. It's all been very unexpected. I'll try do to what you need."

"That's the spirit!" Dr. Morrow boomed, and he laughed. Under other circumstances, Priscilla thought, she would like this man.

His laughter ended, he crossed his arms, tilted his head and looked at her clinically, one eyebrow raised again.

"Did, she – the girl who brought you – did she say why I wanted to see you?"

"Uh," Priscilla stammered, "she said, um, it was . . ."

Priscilla looked at Dr. Morrow, wanting him to finish the sentence, but he just stared at her, so she forged ahead. "She said it was . . . about my vagina."

"That's right," he said, nodding. "You've got some very interesting features. Impressive tone, but with a very soft lining. And outstanding fluid production. Do you know why that's important to us?"

"No," Priscilla replied, adding for good measure, "not at all."

Now they were discussing something *she* didn't want to talk about. She felt he was treating her almost as a peer when she was brought in to him, shaking her hand warmly and waving Cecilia away. Now, she thought, with a flicker of both regret and dark humor, she knew he was interested in only one thing. Even if it was a strictly professional interest, she found it humiliating.

I am more than my vagina, she told herself. I will be more than my vagina here.

She looked into Dr. Morrow's eyes. He looked back without any indication he knew he'd given offense.

"People have a lot of hang-ups about certain things," he said, "and they shouldn't. Vaginal quality is as valid an area of anatomical study as any other. It impacts sexual pleasure, for both partners. But there's more to it. A vagina that meets certain criteria makes a measurable difference in the emotional quality of the relationship, and ejaculate quality too. Greater volume, increased viability, improved motility, higher rates of fertilization."

Priscilla just stared at him, blank-eyed, not so much surprised with the clinical details of their research as with the presentation, with the way Dr. Morrow casually talked about the place between her legs.

He leaned back, speaking less like a doctor, more a corporate executive now. “If you don’t measure something, you can’t improve it,” he said. “We measure vaginas, and when we find one that sets a certain standard, we spend a lot of time on it, and we measure others against it.”

“But you already measured mine,” Priscilla said, and she glanced down at her middle, half expecting it to look different. It was the same though, thick pubic hair hiding her opening, the pink folds at the top of her vulva barely peeking out.

“We have two sets of data,” he said, smiling, and shaking his head, “one from your assessment, one from yesterday. That’s barely a snapshot.”

“What else do you have to do to it?”

“Keep measuring,” he replied, “but at different times in your cycle, under different stimuli, with different equipment, different males, different positions.”

“I’m not comfortable with that,” Priscilla blurted before she could stop herself.

“With what?”

“With males. Going into me.”

He smiled again, but a tight smile, not amused or friendly now, more a “Yes, but that’s how it is,” expression. He didn’t say anything, just left that face on until he seemed to sense that Priscilla understood him.

She needed that to be said, she realized. She’d failed to resist her mother, and now she was here. Punishment or no, she wanted to at least give voice to the words:

“I feel like it’s rape.”

Dr. Morrow turned to his computer, pressed a button on his mouse, glanced at the screen.

“Your record says you requested relief after you were penetrated by two partners yesterday.”

Priscilla clenched her fists as they rested on her thighs, fighting the urge to curse, or stand up. It would be futile, though, in her restraints. So she closed her eyes and considered her next words carefully, pondering moral questions that had, until this moment, been completely abstract.

“That doesn’t make it right,” she said.

“No,” Dr. Morrow said. “No, it doesn’t.”

Priscilla stared at him, certain she’d misheard.

“How you feel about things is very important,” he said, and he raised his hand, as if taking an oath. “I’m speaking God’s honest truth.”

He dropped his hand, then raised it to his temple, tapping with one finger. “Vaginal quality is as much a function of the mind as the body. If you’re not comfortable, our research is compromised.”

He stared at her, and Priscilla realized he was waiting for her reaction. She nodded, not in agreement, but just to move the conversation forward.

“Will you meet us halfway?” he asked, his face returning to full smile.

“What do you mean?”

“There are certain things only a penis can do. None of our equipment is sensitive enough. And even if it were, the penis affects the vagina in ways no equipment can.”

“Hmmm,” Priscilla replied, not ready to agree, not seeing the use of disagreeing.

“But we’ll use equipment whenever we can. We’ll give you as much notice as possible before we bring a male to you. And if you develop a preference for certain males, we’ll prioritize their scheduling. And this will always be done in a clinical setting. Supervised.”

If Dr. Morrow wanted to muddy the waters about what had previously been cut-and-dried rape, he’d succeeded. If he’d wanted Priscilla to feel she’d been heard, even if her violation was going to continue, by machine and by male, he’d succeeded at that too. This is how it was.

For now, she’d endure. She didn’t seem to have a choice anyway.

“Are we good?” Dr. Morrow asked her. “For now?”

“Yes,” Priscilla replied. “I guess.”

“Any time you have a concern, raise it,” he said.

“I’ve been told not to complain,” she countered.

“There’s a difference,” he said. “Do you think you can tell the difference between whining and constructive input?”

“Yes.”

“Good. Focus on the latter.”

“Okay,” she said, not sure she would always know the difference. Her mind went briefly to the punishment room, girls hanging, being beaten,

confined to tiny cages. She would have to err on the side of caution. Surely, he knew that. Surely, he knew what was done to girls on the third floor.

He tapped on his computer, looked back at her.

“Ready to go to the lab?”

“Yes,” she said, and she felt a small stirring at her opening, a brief anticipation that was not completely unwelcome. She was ovulating, she hadn’t had an orgasm since yesterday, and she was starting to understand this place. Even if Dr. Morrow wasn’t being sincere, the fact he seemed to want her approval, her acceptance of what they were going to do to her, created at least the illusion that she was on a team, not simply a brainless lab animal.

He focused on his computer, tapping, moving his mouse, while she waited, looking at him, looking around his office, wondering about the sailfish, if he’d really caught it, if he felt any guilt for removing something so beautiful from the ocean; or if he felt any guilt that a girl in chains sat on the other side of his desk, taken from her own world as well, her own life.

And yet, the idea that her vagina was admirable, that it set a certain standard, was mildly satisfying to her. She didn’t know why the other girls were here. Maybe there was something special about each of them. Mostly, though, it seemed the lab just took what they could get, girls from courthouses, from churches, from poor families, from who knows where else.

An exceptional vagina was just the luck of the draw.

Maybe they’d give her a sash, she thought: Best Pussy.

Recognizing the nonsense in the idea, fighting the urge to acquiesce so easily, she reminded herself that this place was madness, and she mustn’t succumb.

And yet, being valued for any reason was probably a good thing here. Did any other new girl get to visit one of the lab’s top doctors on her third day, sit in his well-appointed office, and talk about their plans for her?

Probably not.

So she would cooperate, she decided, for as long as it made sense. She would do her best in the lab, with the machines. And the boys.

Done typing, Dr. Morrow turned and looked at the floor, pressing a button or shifting a lever near his foot, perhaps, and Priscilla heard a click at her feet and saw that the little bar there had been opened, the chain between her ankles released.

He stood and looked at her, and she rose as well, looking down at the chair, seeing that she'd left a small oval of fluid where her vulva had been. She guessed the towels were changed between girls, but that wasn't her problem.

She followed Dr. Morrow into the hall, chains making little noise on the thick carpet.

"Hey, Frank," said a male.

Priscilla turned to the sound of the voice, saw a man approaching, quickly recognized him as the lead researcher from yesterday's lab session, the man with the goatee who supervised what may or may not have been her rape by two strangers.

"Hello, Douglas," Dr. Morrow replied, and he turned to Priscilla, shortening her name for the introduction. "Sixty-seven, I think you know Dr. Bank."

Priscilla looked at him, remembered what had been done to her yesterday under his direction, and tried not to hate him.

"Hello, Dr. Bank," she said.

Chapter 11: Dr. Bank and the Lab

“Hello, 14067,” he said, speaking each number, stopping a few feet from her, not offering his hand. “Ready for another trip to the lab?”

“Yes,” she said simply, and more or less honestly. The two men turned, heading past the other executives’ doors, back to the receptionist’s desk, and she followed, shuffling after them as quickly as her chains would allow.

They stopped long enough for the receptionist to scan the bar code at Priscilla’s hip, and then led her down the hall to the elevator.

“You were in college?” Dr. Banks asked.

So he was going to make small talk with her? Priscilla marveled.

The elevator door opened and she followed the men on.

“Yes, a full scholarship at Georgia Tech,” she replied, looking into his eyes, willing herself to become his peer. “I was going to be an architect in a year.”

“You had a job lined up?” he asked, and he smiled sort of wickedly, or just curiously. Yes, Priscilla thought, he looked as much like a devil this afternoon as he did yesterday.

“No, but I did an internship at Zabert & Wright, and I made a good impression, I think. They made me promise to call in the spring.”

She looked at Dr. Bank and Dr. Morrow, wanting them to feel the dream she’d had, that they were in the process of killing.

Dr. Morrow’s face betrayed the slightest guilt before he turned to Dr. Bank, whose face betrayed nothing.

“What do you want to do with her today?” he asked.

Dr. Bank looked at Priscilla. “You were still ovulating in this morning’s inventory pass,” he said, making it sound as much like a question as a statement.

“Yeah, I think I started a few days ago,” she said. “So it might last another three days.”

“Good,” he said. “I didn’t get a good look at her yesterday, A lot going on in the lab. So let’s go to a lab and put one of the new sensors in her, and then I want to see how she does with a penis.”

They dropped to the fourth floor and Priscilla, who was closest to the door, stepped off first, stopped, then followed the men as they walked ahead.

“Which sensor?” Dr. Morrow asked.

“The new Farmingham,” Dr. Bank replied. “They say it’s the best at—”

“Dr. Bank?” Priscilla interrupted.

“Yes?” he said, stopping to look at her, his eyes wide with surprise.

“Did you say you were going to put a penis up me?”

“I did.”

Priscilla looked at Dr. Morrow. “We sort of have a deal.”

Dr. Morrow laughed, booming, and put his hand on Priscilla’s shoulder.

“We do indeed,” he said. He turned to Dr. Bank, still smiling.

“Sixty-seven has agreed to let us study her vagina without complaint, but she’s asked that we give her some say on who penetrates her.”

“Who do you want?” Dr. Bank asked, smiling now, and Priscilla wasn’t sure if they were both toying with her.

“I don’t know anyone’s name,” she said. “But neither of the men who went inside me yesterday.”

“Was there something wrong with them?” Dr. Bank asked.

“It was traumatic for me,” Priscilla replied. “I didn’t know that was going to be done to me. So I’d rather not see either of them again, at least not today.”

“You seemed to enjoy it at the time,” Dr. Bank countered.

Priscilla was ready for the comment this time.

“Getting relief on that, uh, machine, doesn’t mean I liked what was done to me,” she said, speaking softly, hoping her words would be heard as constructive criticism and not whining. “There were two different things going on.”

“What do you mean?” Dr. Bank asked.

“The fact I was aroused doesn’t mean I didn’t feel violated.”

“Okay,” he said, nodding noncommittally and turning.

But Dr. Morrow caught her eye and winked.

Was he colluding with her behind Dr. Bank’s back?

They continued their journey down the hall, and Priscilla was forced to refine her opinion of this place again. What little she knew of what went on in prisons didn’t include interacting with – and arguing with – executive, presumably wealthy doctors.

They stopped at a door – Lab 3 stenciled on it – and Dr. Morrow opened it and allowed her to pass in first.

This lab was set up like the others, a dozen examination tables with chains and cuffs dangling from stirrups. There were tables and computers along one wall, toilets near the door. Along the far wall, three tiny cages stood empty. These seemed to be everywhere – in the punishment room, in the room where she was purged, along the halls – cages so tiny one could only stand in them and wait to be freed. Why were they here? Just to hold girls who weren't on a table? Or instant punishment for the recalcitrant?

Seeing the toilets reminded Priscilla she needed to urinate and, oddly, that she was hungry. Famished, in fact.

“What do you want to eat?” Dr. Bank asked.

Priscilla stared at the tables, wondering which one she was going to be chained to.

“67?” Dr. Bank said.

“Huh?” she replied, turning to him.

“What do you want to eat?”

“You were asking me that?”

“Yes.”

“You mean, I get something other than one of those bars?” she asked in a tone just short of contempt.

“Yes. Today, for lunch, you do.”

“What are my choices?”

Quickest is going to be Chinese, or Greek.”

“What are you having?” she asked.

“Greek.”

“Just get me whatever you're having,” she said. She was trying to sound nonchalant, but the idea of ordering food through these men overwhelmed her with its incongruity. One ordered food with friends, study partners, colleagues. She wanted them to see her as an equal, but she certainly didn't think it would happen immediately.

Dr. Bank took out his phone, hit a few buttons and began speaking, placing a precise order that included two types of olives, a particular kind of tea, and extra romaine lettuce.

She was listening, gazing absently when Dr. Morrow tapped her shoulder.

“Do you need to relieve yourself?”

“Yeah,” she said, regretting her answer as soon as she’d spoken it. Dr. Morrow tilted his head toward the three toilets along the wall. She looked at them, back at him, then back at the toilets, shuffling toward them, wishing beyond hope that the two men might suddenly have to leave. To pick up the food, maybe.

She reached the toilet, turned around and sat down, cursing herself as her long chain clanked against the bowl.

Dr. Bank, phone still pressed to his ear, turned to look at her, turned away. Dr. Morrow stepped over to the computers to turn one on.

Her urine splashed noisily into the toilet, and she stared at the floor and wished for it to be over. The chemicals that had stripped her bowels clean yesterday had stimulated her bladder too, and she drained for what felt like more than a minute.

Reaching the tissue, set into the wall behind the toilet, required that she turn on the seat. She twisted and bent, chains rattling against the side of the bowl again. She stole one more quick glance at the doctors. Dr. Bank had finished placing his order and both men were standing, staring at the computer screen, before she made a quick pass over her vulva, rose and flushed.

Uncertain what to do now, the two doctors still preoccupied with whatever they were looking at, she moved slowly toward them.

Dr. Morrow, alerted perhaps by the sound of her chains, glanced up, smiled and stepped over to the table.

“You’ll sit here to wait for lunch,” he said, touching one of the chairs.

She sat, noticed the little slot in the floor at her feet and looked up at Dr. Morrow.

He nodded, walked to the wall and waited for her to slip her ring in. With the push of a button next to the light switch, a little rod drove through the ring, securing her to the floor.

He pulled out his phone and, still looking at Priscilla, tapped on it briefly and raised it to his mouth.

“We’ve got some food coming, Dr. Bank’s name on the order,” he said. “Can you have someone bring it to Lab 3? And we’ll need a female chained to a table.”

Dr. Morrow returned to the computer, and he and Dr. Bank spoke quietly to each other, talking technically for the most part, but she heard the word “Farmingham” more than once and knew they were talking about the thing they were going to put inside her.

She tuned out, glad for a chance to sit and do nothing, but her ears perked up when she heard Dr. Morrow say something about “size” and then “how thick is it?”

“She needs to be filled to capacity for a complete reading,” Dr. Bank said.

Dr. Morrow squinted at the screen. “She’ll yelp,” he warned.

Priscilla studied the men, understood what they were talking about and yet felt strangely unafraid. She wanted something inside her, and large was preferable to small. She knew they wouldn’t injure her. If it stretched her a bit, she’d survive.

She looked down at the towel spread across her seat, saw she was leaking onto it. If she were alone, she’d masturbate, with or without permission.

It took her less than 10 minutes to lose her patience, forced by her chains to sit unnaturally still, with nothing to look at other than mostly bare walls, and nothing to listen to beyond the murmuring of the two doctors, talking jargon and looking at the screen. Her mind went to the beautiful boy in the orientation lab, who’d unceremoniously taken Mary’s virginity with his beautiful penis.

It wasn’t until the door was opened by a female employee in red pushing a cart that Priscilla realized she’d have to be fed by someone. She could reach her hands to the edge of the table but no higher than that, couldn’t operate a knife and fork. Would they just set a plate in front of her and tell her to lap from it like a dog?

No, she said to herself, I will starve before I’ll eat that way.

“Just set everything there,” Dr. Bank said, pointing.

The girl spread the food out before Priscilla, the smells tormenting her, and she closed her eyes and willed herself to stay calm.

“Is this the one you want put on a table?” the girl asked.

“Not yet,” Dr. Morrow replied. “What hand do you eat with, Sixty-Seven?”

Priscilla looked at him, the reason for his question unclear at first.

“Right,” she said.

“Let her right hand go,” Dr. Morrow told the handler.

“Sir?” the girl said, raising her eyebrows in surprise.

“She’s having lunch,” Dr. Morrow said.

“She’s eating all this?” this girl asked.

“No,” Dr. Morrow said, smiling but speaking in a quiet, condescending tone that Priscilla found frightful. “We are all going to have lunch. Although why I have to discuss my lunch plans with you isn’t completely clear to me. If you would just do what I asked, that’s all we’ll need from you at present.”

Priscilla studied the girl’s blushing face, saw her humiliation and felt, briefly, sorry for her.

Tight-lipped, her eyes on the floor, she rounded the table. Priscilla raised her right hand and the girl opened the cuff, returned to her cart and pushed it out of the lab, no doubt wondering if she’d just lost her job. Did it pay well enough to make up for this kind of treatment? Priscilla wondered.

With one hand free, and the doctors still at the computer, Priscilla decided not to wait, because she was hungry and because she wanted to see what she could get away with. Obviously, research females didn’t have lunch with executive doctors, or the handler wouldn’t have been surprised. Would executive doctors mind having a research female go through their food?

She picked up a salad in a clear plastic container.

“That’s mine,” Dr. Bank said, still hovering over the monitor.

She set it down, grabbed a hot aluminum tray.

“That’s Dr. Morrow’s.”

The next thing she picked up, another aluminum tray, was confirmed as hers. She found the plastic utensils, tore the lid off the tray and dug into a steaming chicken primavera, devouring a third of it before Dr. Morrow took the seat beside hers.

“Is it good?” he asked.

“All I’ve had is those bars for days,” she said. “So, yes.”

Dr. Bank sat across from her, opened his salad, grabbed a Styrofoam cup of tea for himself and set two more in front of her and Dr. Morrow.

Dr. Morrow turned toward her, working at his own primavera.

“We’re going to put a large model up you,” he said.

“I know,” Priscilla replied. “I heard you.”

“We’ll be gentle.”

She laughed. “Whatever,” she said. What else could she say?

“That first, and then the penis?” she asked.

“Yes,” Dr. Bank replied.

“How long will it take?”

“About two hours, probably,” Dr. Morrow told her.

“I know who I want it to be,” she said.

“Pardon me?” Dr. Morrow said.

“The penis.”

Dr. Bank laughed, awkwardly, perhaps not quite sure he was hearing her right.

“There was a boy, in the lab this morning. For orientation. He put himself inside a girl there. I don’t know his name, but that’s who I want.”

“Who was supervising?”

“Uh,” Priscilla replied, looking up and searching her memory, “Oh, Dr. Leafer.”

Dr. Morrow pulled out his phone, set it on the table and tapped at it with one hand while he continued to eat with the other.

So they were going to humor her, Priscilla realized. If the beautiful boy was available, he would be hers, at least in here.

Dr. Morrow looked up from his phone at Dr. Bank, and Dr. Bank looked back, and Priscilla read their eyes and believed she had unlocked volumes of information from the moment.

Dr. Morrow was an ally. Of that she was certain. For some reason, he was concerned about her desires, at least for now. Capable of a devastating condescension toward the workers here, he had decided she deserved respect.

Dr. Bank, on the other hand, didn’t see what all the fuss was about. She deserved to be treated like anyone else, he seemed to think, no worse, no better.

Dr. Morrow was old enough to have a child her age. A daughter perhaps. Could that be it? If Dr. Bank had any children, on the other hand, they were elementary school age at best.

She thought about the boy and felt her mind suddenly turn, to shame and anxiety. What if he didn’t like her? Was it appropriate for a girl to ask to be penetrated by a certain male? A male she’d never met?

No, she said to herself, I won't go there. This is a place of new rules. A place where I can make up some of the rules, apparently.

As they finished their meals, Dr. Morrow continued to tap on his phone. More than once, he sighed with what sounded like annoyance, giving Priscilla the impression he was arguing with people.

Good, she thought. Whether she got the boy or not, she was causing commotion.

"I assume you had relations?" Dr. Bank said.

Priscilla looked at him. He was looking back at her with a blank face, and she guessed that's how he had to look when he talked to the captive females he used in his research.

"Huh?" Priscilla asked.

"Before you got here," Dr. Bank said. "You had relations? With boys?"

"Oh, you mean, did I have sex?" Priscilla asked with a quick laugh. "Is that what you mean?"

"Yes," Dr. Bank replied.

"Relations?" Priscilla said. "Is that's what it's called here?"

"It's a recognized term," Dr. Bank shot back, "in any context. Most people know what it means."

Priscilla bit her lip and blushed, stung for reasons she didn't at first comprehend by Dr. Bank's words.

"I know what it means," she said. "I have just always called it sex. Or, I guess, intercourse."

Dr. Bank just stared. Could he have her punished for being sarcastic?

"I have," Priscilla said quickly. "Like maybe 10 guys. I didn't do it the first time until I was a freshman, though. In college."

"How did they react?" Dr. Bank asked.

"To what?"

"To you."

"It depended on the guy," Priscilla said. "They were all disappointments, though, in one way or another. I've never really had a boyfriend."

"No, I mean, specifically, how did they react physically?"

"Oh, you mean, uh, to my vagina?" Priscilla said, and she laughed again despite herself. Why didn't Dr. Bank just ask her that to start off

with?

She heard Dr. Morrow chuckle quietly, looked at him, looked back at Dr. Bank.

“They liked it,” she said. “But I didn’t think there was anything special about it.”

“How long did it take them to orgasm?”

“A minute or two.”

“Literally?”

“Huh?”

“Literally?” Dr. Bank repeated. “As in, 60 seconds to 120 seconds?”

“I never timed it,” Priscilla said, hoping that the statement would be seen as obvious and not sarcastic. It was a dumb question, though. It deserved sarcasm. “But yeah, it always seemed like it was over sooner than I . . . than I, um, wanted.”

“The reason I’m asking,” Dr. Bank said, and he smiled and set down his plastic fork, “is that pronounced vaginal quality leads to quicker orgasm for a male not trained for it. I assume none of your partners were trained.”

“Trained?” Priscilla said. “What do you mean trained?”

“One can train for such things,” Dr. Morrow said, pocketing his phone, annoyed or feigning annoyance. “The boy you’ve demanded – whom I’ve been able to obtain with considerable trouble, incidentally – has received extensive training.”

“Does he belong here?” Priscilla asked.

Dr. Morrow just stared at her, blank-faced.

“Is he owned? By the lab?”

“Yes,” Dr. Morrow replied.

That small piece of information affected Priscilla oddly, and she stared at what was left of her food and pondered. He wasn’t there to rape girls. He was just there to do as he was told, like Priscilla. Like the rest of them. He was a victim too.

“Why wasn’t he chained this morning?”

“It’s up to the handlers,” Dr. Morrow said. “I believe he’s been with us awhile, and he’s trustworthy.”

Priscilla took the last bite of her lunch, grabbed a paper napkin with her free hand to wipe her mouth, and looked at the doctors.

“So, Dr. Bank?” Priscilla began, needing to get something resolved.

“Yes?”

“When you said relations . . . I’ve heard of that. I’ve heard of sexual relations, of course. It’s just not an expression I’m used to. That’s why I didn’t know what you meant.”

“Of course,” he said dismissively.

This was all the resolution she was going to get, Priscilla knew, but she felt better about it. Hoyt’s contempt two days ago, when she didn’t know what “disbursement” meant, still stung. That, she thought ruefully, would probably never be resolved.

“Ready to get going?” Dr. Morrow asked.

“Yes,” she said. “I guess so.”

He tapped on his phone, stared at it for a moment.

“They’ll have someone here in five minutes,” he told her, and he turned his chair to face her. “I’ll release your ring, but I’ll need to put your cuff back on first.”

She looked at him, then down at her chains, her left wrist cuffed, the cuff for her right wrist dangling between her legs. She grabbed it, handed it to Dr. Morrow and watched as he closed it around her wrist, so loosely she could almost have worked her hand out of it. Normally, she concluded, the doctors and researchers didn’t handle chains.

He moved to the wall and pressed the button to release her from the floor. She stood and slid her chair back while Dr. Bank cleared the table, tossing everything into a bin in the corner.

“Can I see what you were looking at?” she asked.

He raised one eyebrow.

“I think you were calling it the Farmingham. The thing you’re going to put up me. Is it on the computer? Can I see it?”

Dr. Morrow laughed again, resignedly, and Priscilla’s sense grew that rules, or at least lab convention, were repeatedly being violated for her.

Dr. Morrow motioned her to follow, and she shuffled after him to the computer.

Posted at the top of the page were the words “Inventory – Research – Sensors – Vaginal,” with dozens of small images beneath. Dr. Morrow clicked one of the images, and a single product filled the screen. It was a variation of the other devices that had been used on her, a thick, pointed rod

with a box and screen at the end. Underneath it, in red all caps, was a warning: NOTE ROD DIMENSIONS: THIS IS A LARGE DEVICE

“What does it do?” Priscilla asked.

“It will give us a better analysis of your vagina,” Dr. Morrow said.

“I know,” she said. “I mean, how? Where?”

“All along the rod,” he said, running his finger across the picture.

“How does it work?”

Dr. Morrow laughed. “You’re asking about trade secrets,” he said.

“You’d have to interrogate the engineers at Farmingham, and I doubt they’d tell you. But we know there’s ultrasound, and it’s got gauges for temperature and pressure.”

The door opened and a girl in a blue jumpsuit entered the lab, holding a small case in one hand.

“Hi, Frank, hi, Doug,” she said brightly, holding up the case, then setting it on the table where they’d just had lunch. “Got the Farmingham.”

“Thank you, Georgie,” said Dr. Bank.

“I’m supposed to warn you about the size,” she said.

“I know, I know,” Dr. Morrow said. He seemed annoyed, but just at the reminder, not at the girl they called Georgie. Her blue jumpsuit identified her as a lab technician, and Priscilla guessed that her role put her higher on the lab hierarchy than mere handlers like Cecilia.

“Is this our girl?” she asked, looking at Priscilla.

“Yes,” replied Dr. Morrow. “14067.”

“Hey,” she said, stepping over to Priscilla and offering her hand. “I’m Georgie.”

Not seeing a reason to stretch her chains to their limit, Priscilla lifted her hand just enough to be polite. Georgie took it and grasped it firmly, smiling and looking into Priscilla’s eyes.

“I’ll be with you the whole time,” she said. “I won’t let them be too mean.”

“Okay,” Priscilla said.

The door opened again, the handler who’d brought them lunch stepping in meekly.

“Hey, Nina,” Georgie said.

“Hey,” Nina replied quietly, casting a quick glance at Dr. Morrow, who was tapping on his phone again.

“Put her on table 5,” Dr. Morrow said without looking up.

“Yes, Sir,” Nina said.

Chapter 12: On the Table

Nina stepped over to a table in the middle of the row and motioned Priscilla to join her.

Priscilla, familiar with the routine, ambled over, backed up and allowed the girl to ease her onto the table, sliding up until her head was against the cushion at the top.

“How was lunch?” she asked quietly.

“Way better than the bars,” Priscilla said.

“That usually doesn’t happen,” Nina said, releasing Priscilla’s right ankle from its cuff. “That’s why I was confused.”

“I know. I could tell,” Priscilla said, setting her foot in the stirrup, holding still as Nina cuffed it.

“What was it?”

“Pasta primavera.”

“It smelled good.”

Priscilla laughed. Nina was, presumably, going home tonight, where she was free. Priscilla was going back to a cage. Nina could quit anytime. Priscilla might be here for years. She was certain she wouldn’t be, however. The possibility simply couldn’t be accommodated by her mind.

Restrained to the table, hands at her sides, feet in the stirrups, legs spread wide, Priscilla surveyed the room and reminded herself this wasn’t normal, even if she was getting used to it.

Dr. Morrow tapped on his phone and Dr. Bank stared at the computer screen, neither looking up when Nina asked, “Will there be anything else?”

Receiving no answer, she slipped out of the lab silently, and Georgie walked over to Priscilla’s table.

“Ready for a little research?”

“I guess so,” Priscilla replied. “Everyone’s going to be careful, right?”

“Yes,” said Georgie, moving down to Priscilla’s knee and looking into her eyes. “You won’t be injured. I mean, you’ll definitely feel it. It might even hurt a little. But if we rip you, I’m out of a job,”

“Okay,” said Priscilla, far less reassured. How much pain would they allow her to suffer before she was at risk of tearing?

“I’ll be fired, and you’ll go to punishment,” Georgie said.

“What do you mean?” Priscilla asked.

“If you let us damage your vagina, you’ll get some of the blame.”

This latest example of the injustice of this place burst onto Priscilla’s conscious before she could temper her reaction.

“So, you tear up my . . . my . . . my pussy, and I’m the one that goes down to that . . . place?”

“Yes,” Georgie said. “Nobody wants that. Nobody. So just pay attention. Tell us if it’s too much. Err on the side of caution. It’s your body, you’re the only one who can feel it, so it’s up to you to take care of it.”

Priscilla looked away and scowled. She felt justified complaining about this, and Georgie seemed to understand.

Dr. Morrow put his phone away and stepped over, standing between Priscilla’s feet.

“Dr. Bank and I are going to start with a manual examination,” he said.

“Okay,” Priscilla said. “What does that mean?”

“We’re going to examine your sex organ,” he said. “By hand.”

“Okay,” Priscilla said, and she looked away and waited for the touch. She didn’t want to be here anymore. She didn’t want that thing put inside her, she didn’t want Georgie supervising and making sure she was okay. She didn’t even want the boy. Everything, suddenly, seemed horrible.

When the touch finally came, gently, against her outer right labia, she kept staring at the wall, willing herself not to react.

She knew that Dr. Bank had joined Dr. Morrow between her legs, but she didn’t know who was touching her. And their words, spoken quietly, were mostly indecipherable jargon.

One of them was tugging on her inner labia, now, pulling her lips away from her body, stretching them, parting them.

She knew she was wetting herself, and when one of them inserted his finger, it slid into her easily.

It felt good, and she gasped quietly to herself and raised her pelvis, hoping neither response would be seen as approval for what was being done.

The finger left her body, replaced by two fingers, probing her sex organ deeply, thoroughly.

“Are you tightening?” Dr. Morrow asked.

“No,” she replied, still looking at the wall.

“Tighten,” he said.

She clamped down obediently and briefly imagined having enough strength to break the fingers that were violating her. No one howled in pain, however. Instead, her vagina seemed to be delivering pleasure, of the professional variety.

“Hmmm,” Dr. Morrow intoned with satisfaction. “Now, relax.”

The fingers left her sheath, a second pair of fingers entered and probed her.

“Tighten,” said Dr. Bank.

These were the fingers she really wanted to break, and she gripped them with all her strength. Again, though, the response was not pain but professional approval.

“Remarkable strength,” he said. “Her tone is the best I’ve ever felt. Let’s see how she does on the rod. And I’m going to send her scores to Cooper. We may yet get him on the team.”

“You’re talking to him again?” Dr. Morrow asked.

“Yes,” Dr. Bank replied, a little defensively. “He’s not happy in Kansas. We just need to offer the right package.”

“A waste of time,” Dr. Morrow said.

“We’d own all his research,” Dr. Bank shot back.

“I’m not saying don’t. I just don’t see how we can afford him. The demands he made the last time we talked . . .”

“He’s a perfectionist. All his demands were for research integrity.”

“Except for the seven-figure salary.”

“I believe we can talk him down.”

“Fine,” said Dr. Morrow. “Let me know if there’s progress.”

The doctors left the place between Priscilla’s legs, walking over to the sink to take turns washing their hands.

“Who’s Cooper?” Priscilla whispered to Georgie.

“Ben, Cooper, the best in the field,” Georgie replied. “He practically created it. We’ve been trying to bring him on for years. But so has everyone else. It’ll never happen.” Georgie paused. “The Farmingham – you have him to thank for it.”

“He made it?”

“No, but he basically designed it. He believes you have to really stretch the girl for the best reading. He told the company what he wanted, down to the kind of plastic to make it from. And all the electronics.”

Priscilla gazed at the backs of the doctors as they finished washing up, wondering what was next.

Georgie retrieved the case that held the Farmingham, set it on a small table in the corner and rolled it over to Priscilla.

“Okay,” Georgie said, “now we need to get a little bit personal.”

“What do you mean?” Priscilla asked.

“My job is to get you ready for penetration. So you need to be masturbated.”

“Okay,” Priscilla said, not in the mood for this, wishing she could be alone. But at least Georgie was a professional at it, presumably, where the doctors had just fumbled with her.

Georgie reached down, parted Priscilla’s vaginal lips and pressed a finger against her opening.

“Already flowing,” she observed.

“I’m ovulating,” Priscilla said. “I’ve been wet all day.”

Georgie drove her finger up Priscilla’s hole, stirred it around, pulled it out and ran it up her vulva to her clitoris, making quick circles around her member.

“Yeah,” Priscilla sighed, angling her opening up, her feet shifting in their stirrups, chains swaying.

Priscilla’s clitoris quickly firmed up, sending jolts of pleasure to Priscilla’s mind as Georgie pressed it, squeezed it between her fingers, wetted her fingers in Priscilla’s hole and returned to it.

“She’s ready now,” Georgie announced, stepping to the cabinet, pulling something off a shelf and returning to Priscilla’s table.

“You know what this is, right?” Georgie asked, holding up an anal monitor.

Priscilla stared at the monitor and nodded, raising her pelvis.

Georgie reached down, parted Priscilla’s lips and put the monitor up her front slot.

“We prefer natural lubrication when it’s available,” she explained, moving the toy inside Priscilla’s sheath, then withdrawing it. “Ready?”

“Yeah,” Priscilla replied, lifting off the table, trying to relax her anus.

Georgie touched the tip of the monitor to Priscilla’s rear opening, Priscilla held still, and suddenly the device was in her. It had slipped in

easily, with almost no resistance, and Priscilla realized she was getting used to having something there, even if its presence was an insult.

Georgie opened the case, and Priscilla saw both the same white machine Dr. Morrow had shown her on the computer, and several other items: a slightly smaller rod, wires, a small box with a little computer screen on it.

The doctors had returned to her, one on either side of her table while Georgie took her place between Priscilla's legs.

Georgie's fingers returned to Priscilla's middle, massaging her hole and clit. Priscilla looked at both doctors, reminded herself this is what they did for a living and there was no shame if she liked it. She grunted quietly, closed her eyes and raised her bottom off the table to press against Georgie's hand.

"You're doing great," Dr. Morrow said. Priscilla opened her eyes, noticed that he was staring at his tablet, and knew he was looking at the data from the sensor in her rear.

"Alright," Georgie said, "now we're going to open you up a little."

Georgie grabbed the smaller rod from the case, put the tip against Priscilla's opening and slid it in.

"Uh," Priscilla grunted. It was thick, and it stung and felt delicious at the same time, and Priscilla allowed herself a second grunt of approval, closing around it, gripping it with her walls.

Priscilla's slot adapted quickly, Georgie's quick, deep thrusts provoking nothing but pleasure after less than a minute.

"Ready for the big one?" Georgie asked.

"Yes," Priscilla replied, catching her breath.

Priscilla closed her eyes again, carnal desire fighting fear in her mind.

The first rod was pulled out, and she leaned back and tried to relax.

The fingers pried her lips apart and the pointed tip of the larger device arrived at the mouth of her chamber, and she flinched involuntarily.

"Steady, steady," Georgie said, putting a hand on Priscilla's knee.

"Sorry," Priscilla said, settling back onto the table and opening her legs as far as the stirrups would allow. "Go ahead."

Georgie proceeded cautiously, testing Priscilla's chamber, pushing the device into her body, stopping, pressing again. Priscilla raised herself on her elbows, first to study the machine as it entered her. But she sensed

Georgie's eyes on her, looked up and realized Georgie was watching her face. If there was a problem, it would probably register there first, Priscilla knew.

Georgie continued to thrust, the thick instrument beginning to bite at Priscilla's organ. "Uh," she grunted. Georgie stopped pushing, but Priscilla offered a tight smile and a nod, and Georgie resumed the insertion.

The rod had filled half her sheath when she finally issued the yelp Dr. Morrow had predicted:

"Ow, damn!"

"Are you tearing?" Georgie asked, holding the device in place but no longer pushing.

"No," Priscilla gasped. "I'm okay. I'm okay."

Georgie applied an almost imperceptible pressure now, and Priscilla did her best to relax, holding still and willing her body to swallow the rest of the object.

It hurt, and it felt good, so she focused on the pleasure, on the way her wet, swollen tunnel was devouring the device even as her body cried out for mercy. If she'd had a hand free, she would have immediately brought it to the top of her straining slit, tugged her clitoris and brought herself to climax in a matter of seconds.

"Would you like to orgasm?" Dr. Morrow asked quietly, reading her mind, no doubt with the assistance of the tablet in his hands.

"Yes," Priscilla replied, without hesitation or shame.

Georgie, one hand pressing the tool deeper, brought the other to Priscilla's clitoris, circling it, tapping it, squeezing it.

The climax came hard and fierce, roaring through Priscilla's body. She issued a guttural cry followed by rapid-fire grunts, her middle spasming, hands balled into fists, feet pressing against the stirrups.

The orgasm lasted what felt like two minutes, ebbing slowly with gasps that softened to sighs, muscles relaxing.

With the passing of intense relief, Priscilla felt the rod again, still stinging her insides, but far less painfully. She sat up, looked down at her middle and saw that the device had disappeared, that Georgie had fed all of the rod up her hole while she groaned through ecstasy.

"Congratulations," Georgie said.

"It's all in?" Priscilla whispered, already well aware of the answer.

"Yes. How are you doing?"

“I’m good.”

“Can you keep holding it while we get your stats?”

“Yes,” Priscilla said, closing her eyes, feeling slightly dizzy but at no risk of fainting.

“Is your monitor bothering you?”

“No,” Priscilla said. “I forgot it was in.”

She tightened her anus, confirmed that the little invader was still firmly embedded in her second hole, and watched as Georgie stepped out from between her legs, ceding that space to the doctors. They pressed in, against the insides of her thighs, and studied the little screen at the end of the probe.

“Fifteen pounds,” said Dr. Bank, pointing to the screen.

Priscilla laughed, and they both looked at her, startled.

“Sorry,” she said. “It’s just, like, you’re telling me how much my baby weighs.”

Dr. Morrow smiled, Dr. Bank didn’t, and both returned their eyes to the little screen, talking jargon quietly to one another while Priscilla stared at the wall.

She knew that she’d passed a test of sorts, and that felt good, in a relative sense. As badly as she wanted to leave this place, to be free again, doing well here was better than not doing well.

“Can you squeeze?” Dr. Bank asked, looking into her eyes.

Priscilla complied, fantasizing now about breaking the machine, snapping it in half, so they’d have to call Ben Cooper and tell him they’d found a girl whose vagina was stronger than his design.

The machine held together, but she got the next best thing, raised eyebrows from Dr. Bank, who tapped the screen, looked at Dr. Morrow, looked back at the screen.

“Twenty-eight,” he said, looking up at Priscilla again. “Keep going. Twenty-nine. Twenty-nine point seven. Thirty. Thirty point four. Thirty point four. Thirty point two. Okay, relax.”

Priscilla relaxed her vagina, exhaled deeply and realized she’d been holding her breath while she clamped her organ.

Thirty point four. That seemed to be an achievement. She looked at the wall again as the doctors huddled over the machine, reading data and conversing.

Dr. Morrow looked up at her. “Well done,” he said. “Beautiful.”

“Thanks,” Priscilla replied, immediately feeling stupid. They were congratulating her over a body part. It was all ridiculous.

Dr. Morrow nodded to Georgie and both doctors stepped away from Priscilla, giving the space between Priscilla’s legs back to the technician.

“This can hurt worse than having it put in,” Georgie warned, and she grasped the end of the device and began slowly working it out of Priscilla’s sheath.

“Ow, god,” Priscilla complained, responding to the twinges in her hole, raising up on her elbows to watch the process. If her hands weren’t chained, she would have tried to do it herself. But then, it was probably better someone with Georgie’s experience was emptying her.

Once the instrument was removed from Priscilla’s body, Georgie went to wash it in the sink while the doctors sat where they had at lunch, studying Dr. Morrow’s tablet. Priscilla heard the word “orgasm” more than once and wondered what her pleasure looked like after it had been converted to data by the tool lodged in her anus.

Finished cleaning the equipment, Georgie dried everything off and returned it to the case beside Priscilla’s table.

“Good job,” she said with a half-smile.

“Whatever,” Priscilla said. She knew she was being flippant, even disrespectful, and she guessed accurately that it didn’t matter.

“Do you still want a penis?”

Priscilla had forgotten all about the boy, and now that their time together was at hand, she wasn’t sure how she felt.

Her vagina was still throbbing, but not unbearably so, and she knew the boy would be smaller than the instrument they’d put up her.

But they’d be watching. She imagined Dr. Bank and Dr. Morrow observing, from either side of the table, as the male serviced her, tested her, thrust in and out of her.

“Yes,” Priscilla said.

“He’ll be glad to hear that,” Georgie said, nodding toward the row of small cages along the wall.

The boy was confined there, standing naked, as beautiful as before, arms at his sides, penis soft. Their eyes met and he smiled at her.

“How long has he been here?” Priscilla asked, looking away, blushing in deep mortification.

“He showed up while you were cumming.”

All Priscilla’s interest – in the male, in sex, in research, in possessing an exemplary vagina – evaporated in that moment. She just wanted to be alone, caged by herself.

But backing out now probably wasn’t an option, given the trouble Dr. Morrow had gone to accommodate her.

Had asking for this particular male inconvenienced the male himself? The question hadn’t occurred to her until now. Had she taken him away from something – or someone – he would have rather been with? Did he know she’d asked for him? Did he think she was a whore? Was “whore” even a relevant term here?

Her head was spinning, so she lay back and closed her eyes.

She would endure the use of her body, she decided, speak if spoken to, and get it over with.

“How are we doing?” Dr. Morrow asked.

She opened her eyes, looked up and saw the doctor’s not-unpleasant face hovering above her, next to Georgie. Dr. Bank stood at her other hip, looking particularly devilish from this angle as he stared at the tablet.

“I’m okay,” she said, lying.

“We got some outstanding data from you today.”

“Good.”

“Are you ready for a male?” he asked, tilting his head toward the cage.

Priscilla looked at him, quickly looked away.

“Yes.”

Georgie stepped over, unlocked and opened the cage door, and the boy followed her back to Priscilla.

Now she stared without shame, her eyes wandering over his body, from his face to his penis, down his legs and back up to his middle.

Even as she watched, he started to harden, his member angling up, bouncing with each step.

He rounded her stirrured foot but stopped there while Georgie reached down, gently masturbating Priscilla’s clitoris and labia.

“She’s still got plenty of lubricant,” she said, slipping one finger up Priscilla’s sheath. She looked at the boy. “Any time you’re ready.”

Priscilla studied the boy's face as he stepped into position, penis straight out, tip inches from her opening. She didn't even know his name – or the number that passed for his name here.

Georgie opened Priscilla's lips, the last, unnecessary step apparently before the boy unceremoniously impaled her, his head and shaft reopening her tired slot, pushing deep and methodically until he'd buried all of his member inside her body, her thick black pubic hair mingling with his in a single shock of darkness.

Priscilla sighed, rocked her pelvis and squeezed him gently. She didn't want to break him, or imagine breaking him.

He grunted, pulled an inch or two of his penis out of her hole, thrust it back in and looked up from her middle to her eyes.

There was a pain in his face she hadn't noticed earlier, a sort of sympathy she detected even as he grimaced with the pleasures of being enveloped by her well-endowed organ. Did he want to talk? Did he even know how to make love, to talk and joke with his partner, to stroke her hair and kiss her neck before he slipped inside her? Did he hate her for demanding him?

"First impressions?" Dr. Bank asked.

"Outstanding," the boy replied, and he pulled all but his tip out, then pushed back in, closing his eyes as if he were evaluating a fine wine. "The best vaginal tone I've ever felt."

"Tighten," Dr. Bank said.

Priscilla gripped again, this time more firmly, but still not with the same force she'd used on the measuring device.

"Oh," he gasped. She'd surprised him with her strength, apparently.

He was barely moving now, quick shallow thrusts meant to get a sense of her tone.

"Her grip is consistent everywhere along the shaft," he said.

"Maybe a little stronger at the base and tip."

"Lubrication?" Dr. Morrow asked.

"You're ovulating, right?" the boy asked.

Priscilla had been looking at his belly, but she looked up and realized he was talking to her for the first time.

"Uh . . ." she stammered, uncertain why it was so difficult to talk to him. ". . . yes. I think so. Yes."

He pulled his penis halfway out and held still. Priscilla lifted up on her elbows, looked down and saw the thick, clear fluid she'd coated him with.

"I can't tell what's ovulation and what's arousal," he said. "I'd need to do this again right before or after her period to be sure."

Priscilla played the words over in her mind: "do this again." Was he propositioning her? Or just trying to do his job properly? Did he really want her again? Was he raping her? Had he fallen in love with her? Or, most likely, were all these questions irrelevant in a place like this?

She looked up at his face again. He was deliciously attractive, he'd been in her longer than any other male in her life without cumming, and he felt good despite what had been done to her organ in the last hour. Perhaps that's all that mattered. They were simply colleagues, fulfilling their assigned roles.

She squeezed again, wrapping her sheath around him in what she wanted him to interpret as professional encouragement, her way of saying thanks to him, privately, to let him know he felt good, and that she'd be glad to take him again.

He smiled at her and pressed himself up her hole again, and she realized they were sharing something here, sharing in a way the three people studying them couldn't perceive.

"Don't tighten unless instructed to do so, please," Dr. Bank said, studying the tablet.

Priscilla relaxed her vagina and cursed the doctor, furious at him for violating what she thought had been a private moment, furious at herself for forgetting that there was a monitor in her anus, and it knew all.

"Am I ejaculating inside her?" the boy asked, looking only at Priscilla's face.

Dr. Morrow looked at Dr. Bank.

Apparently, this hadn't been decided.

"How quickly can you get a relief girl?" Dr. Morrow asked Georgie.

"At best, five minutes," Georgie replied. She paused, then added. "I can do relief in a pinch."

"You've done the training?" Dr. Bank said. "I didn't know that."

"I got certified last week," Georgie said. "I haven't serviced anyone yet, though."

Priscilla looked at Georgie, realizing after replaying her words what was being proposed. Georgie was ready to remove her clothing and allow the boy to put himself inside her, and to ejaculate.

No, Priscilla said to herself. Absolutely not. She wanted his semen. She didn't know why, but the thought of simply warming him up so he could deposit into another girl crossed a line in her mind.

No.

She tightened again – to hell with Dr. Bank and his monitor – but this time she focused on different parts of her hole. First the opening, then the middle, then around his tip, massaging him, caressing him, doing everything in her limited power to force an orgasm.

“Uh,” he grunted. “Can I . . . can I . . . finish in her?”

“Go ahead,” Dr. Bank said resignedly, eyes only on his tablet.

The boy pulled almost all the way out, drove back in, then started pounding Priscilla, tip sliding up her hole mechanically five or six times before his breathing changed and his thrusts became more urgent, faster, the bone above his penis grinding against her clitoris.

Then he stopped, shaft fully inserted, and he issued the first deep grunt of orgasm.

Priscilla believed she could almost feel the jet of cream shoot into her body, and she closed her eyes and felt him pull halfway out, then push up hard again, timing his thrust with the next squirt, working to inject his semen as deep into her body as the laws of physics would allow.

Priscilla had not been expecting to orgasm again, or to really want to again, but as he filled her with cum and banged against her clit and vulva, another climax became unavoidable, and she yielded to it with a quick cry, and then a series of low groans, her thighs closing around the boy as his thrusts slowed and his moans quieted.

For another minute, they communed like that, Priscilla lying still and panting while the boy worked slowly in and out of her hole, and then she lay back on the table, completely satisfied, blocking any thought of her restraints, the lab and the people around her, focusing only on the penis, still within her, softening now, moving gently.

Then the boy was gone.

She kept her eyes closed, hearing as if very far away voices, drawers being opened and shut, a door opening and closing.

She lost track of time, until the voice of Dr. Bank jarred her from something akin to slumber.

“You broke the rules,” he said quietly.

Chapter 13: Caught

Priscilla opened her eyes, looked up at him, standing beside her table, holding the tablet, looking down at her.

“What?” she asked. Her eyes swept the room. It was only the two of them here now. Georgie, Dr. Morrow and the boy were gone.

“You broke the rules,” Dr. Bank repeated.

“What rules?”

“I told you not to tighten.”

“Oh, yeah,” Priscilla said, returning to the present but not particularly alarmed. “I guess I did.”

Dr. Bank just kept staring at her.

“Am I in trouble?” she asked.

Priscilla, at that moment, didn’t care if she were in trouble. She could feel the boy’s semen leaking from her hole and down to her anus, where the monitor was still firmly lodged, and she was glad. Not having him ejaculate inside her would have been painful in a way that nothing she saw in the punishment room could have countered. She still didn’t know why taking his ejaculate mattered, only that it did. Attempting to explain it to Dr. Bank would have been completely impossible.

“Yes,” said Dr. Bank, “you are in trouble.”

“What’s going to happen?”

“This will be between you and me,” he said.

“Okay, what are you going to do to me?” she asked.

“Intentional disobedience, in a way that disrupts lab operations, is a class one offense.”

“I don’t know what that means,” Priscilla said. She lifted up on her elbows, looked at her feet, still chained to the stirrups. It was dawning on her now that she was going to suffer, but nothing Dr. Bank could do to her would make her feel guilty. There was the strange, arbitrary morality of the lab, and then there was a higher morality she had never pondered but was beginning to believe in. Being punished for answering to the higher morality would, at least sometimes, be acceptable to her.

“It’s worth two hours in the punishment room,” he said.

“Okay,” Priscilla replied, mind quickly imagining two hours in that place, listening to the cries of the other girls, joining them in misery.

“But this is just between you and me,” he added.

“What does that mean?” Priscilla asked, beginning to wonder if he was going to do something he shouldn’t to her.

“Inventory cuffs,” he said.

“Huh?” Priscilla said.

“I’m going to schedule you for another inventory pass.”

“Oh, okay,” Priscilla said. This didn’t sound that terrible.

“We’re going to keep you waiting.”

“What do you mean?”

“You’ll get in your cuffs, but you won’t be inventoried . . . for awhile.”

“How long?”

Dr. Bank stepped between her legs, reached down and grabbed the base of the monitor. She raised her bottom off the table and relaxed, and he eased the device out of her anus. He was surprisingly gentle, and it barely stung as it was removed, but she gasped quietly in the hopes he might feel a little guilt.

“I don’t know,” he said, stepping to the sink to wash his hands.

“Hours?” Priscilla queried.

“I don’t know.”

“Days?”

“No.”

“Okay,” Priscilla said, feeling the first twinge of regret for what she’d done now she had a specific consequence to anticipate.

“Why is it just between you and me?” she asked.

“Because if I put you in for formal punishment, Dr. Morrow will find out, and he’ll suspend it.”

“Why?”

Dr. Bank, still at the sink, turned toward her.

“He’ll come up with a reason,” he said, sounding a little annoyed. “You’re still in orientation, you’re too valuable, it might interfere with the research. Or maybe all three. But you violated a direct order, and I saw it.”

“I’m sorry,” Priscilla said simply.

Dr. Bank’s features softened, slightly. Was he capable of sympathy? Priscilla wondered.

“He likes you,” Dr. Bank said.

“What do you mean?”

“I don’t mean in an unprofessional sense,” Dr. Bank said, “but if he likes a girl, he’ll treat her differently. He won’t send her to punishment, he won’t push her to her limits in the lab. So that’s why I’m here.”

“Okay,” Priscilla said.

“To keep everything fair,” Dr. Bank continued. “If you’re one of the girls he likes, I’ll make life a little harder for you. If you’re one of the girls he doesn’t like as much, I’ll sometimes make things easier.”

“Okay,” Priscilla agreed again. So this was justice. She’d worked in other places with unwritten rules like this, but normally it took months to figure out who was nice, who was mean, who showed favoritism to whom. Maybe the nature of the work being done here meant you could be explicit about everything, not just girl’s bodies.

A male staffer walked in, one of the people who wore red, and Priscilla guessed correctly he had come for her.

“You want me to take her now?” he asked.

“Yes,” Dr. Bank replied absently, staring at his phone.

The man stepped over and scanned Priscilla’s hip. He was in his 40s, Priscilla guessed, hair just beginning to gray.

He looked at her feet, didn’t seem at all interested in her sex organ, and she cooperated as he began the process of returning her to the restraints she would wear on the way back to her cage.

At this moment, as the man helped her off the table, Priscilla’s mind returned to utter darkness, the sorrow and hopelessness of this place, and the special pain that awaited her.

She was going back to her orientation cage, where she’d have to put herself in her cuffs, then stand there, alone, for an unknown amount of time, until her sentence concluded with the invasive humiliation of another inventory pass.

Even if she hadn’t been chained, she would have struggled to make the long walk back to her cage, but her steps were utterly leaden as she followed the worker out of the lab and into the elevator.

She glanced up, her heart skipping a beat as the worker selected floor 3.

“Shouldn’t we be going to the second floor?”

“No,” he said simply.

The punishment room was on the third floor. The orientation cages were on the second floor. Had Dr. Banks been lying to her? Was she going

to punishment after all? For two hours?

“Are you taking me to punishment?” she asked.

“Why would you be going there?” he countered.

“No reason, no reason,” Priscilla stammered. “It’s just that I know punishment is on the third floor. My cage is on the second floor.”

“Your cage is on the third floor,” he said.

“I thought it was on the second floor,” Priscilla said. She was certain she was right, but telling a staffer he was wrong didn’t seem like a good idea.

When the elevator door opened, she wracked her brain, trying to remember the layout of this floor. She was listening for cries, for the screams of pain that punctuated time in the punishment room. Instead, she heard voices, laughter, a female shouting something in a deep voice, imitating a man. More laughter.

The sounds were coming from behind the doors that lined the long hall where she walked, each neatly stenciled with letters and numbers over little windows set at eye level: F-26, F-28, F-30.

At F-32, her handler stopped, slid a key into the lock and pushed the door inward.

Priscilla followed, stepping into a hallway lined with bars, understanding after a final moment of anxiety that she wasn’t going back to her orientation cage, and she wasn’t going to punishment. This was her home now, the general population, the place where she would live with the other girls.

She ambled slowly down the path, chains ringing faintly against the concrete floor, two girls’ voices talking quietly. The cages were set up like her orientation cage – a bed on hinges, a sink, toilet and bidet. A solid wall stood at the back of each cage, but instead of walls on the sides, the cages were separated only by bars.

Most of the cages were empty, but in the third cage to her left, a blonde girl sat cross-legged on her bed, laying cards out before her. Still getting used to seeing strangers nude, Priscilla’s eyes took in the girl’s body quickly: small breasts, light pink nipples, and a vaginal slit behind a thin covering of dirty blonde pubic hair. The girl looked up from her cards, offered Priscilla a half-smile, looked down again.

To Priscilla’s right, two girls sat on the floor, facing each other through the bars.

“But then, you’d know all about that,” said the younger one, white with dark hair in loose ringlets.

The other girl, black and in her late 20’s perhaps, laughed. She heard Priscilla’s chains, turned, looked into Priscilla’s eyes, then down her body and up again.

She seemed surprised, and Priscilla guessed that she noticed the marks of her assessment, still fading along her thigh, across her belly, on her jaw. Few girls get through orientation before their marks had vanished, she knew.

“Hi,” said the girl.

“Hey,” Priscilla replied.

“Welcome to 32,” her neighbor said with the wry smile of someone sharing an inside joke.

Priscilla did her best to muster a smile for them both.

The man stopped and she halted beside him. He withdrew another key from his pocket and pushed it into the lock of a cage in the middle of the row, just across from the two girls who had greeted her. She glanced at the door as it swung open, saw the number 12 on the upper corner, noticed that each door was numbered neatly, sequentially.

Inventory cuffs had been affixed to the front bars of most of the cages, but there were none at her cage yet.

She stepped in, wincing as the door clanged behind her and was locked with a cold, efficient click.

She turned toward the door, offering her hands through the chaining port.

In a ritual already seeming strangely familiar, the man freed her wrists and her ankles and strode to the front of the room, beside the door, to hang her chains on a peg under a plate that said “12.” There were two pegs for every cage in the room. Twenty cages, Priscilla noted, counting quickly. Forty pegs for twenty girls.

Many pegs were empty. Some bore chains like the once she’d been brought in. Some held other things – the awful sanitary harness she wore to be stamped, and rings and belts and collars whose purpose she could only guess at.

At the other end of the cage room, four small cages stood, no larger than the cages in the punishment room. Priscilla thought at first they

must be used for punishment as well, but she noticed shower heads and handles and understood grimly that this is where she would bathe.

The man returned to her door.

“Okay,” he said, “let me scan you.”

She turned her hip toward him and he lowered the little scanning pen to it.

She heard the beep of a successful scan, and then the vibration of some other electronics. He reached into his pocket, pulled out his phone and glanced at it.

“Okay,” he said, prompted to read something out loud by his phone, apparently. “This is a general population cage. Being here is a privilege you can lose. Don’t reach through the bars unless specifically permitted to do so. Keep your bed up and latched unless you are on it. Always flush. Do not masturbate unless specifically permitted to do so. Lights out, no talking, at 11:30 p.m. Lights back on at 7:30. Items from the recreational cart may be checked out at staff’s discretion. They are a privilege you can lose. Respect your neighbors. Never resist restraints. Answer any question. Don’t be late to inventory cuffs.”

He looked up at her expectantly, as if waiting for her to question him, to challenge him, to ask for a different set of rules.

“Okay,” Priscilla said simply, wanting him to go away.

He continued to stare at her, so she turned away, surveyed her space. A small towel, soap and shampoo, a toothbrush and toothpaste rested on a shelf beneath her sink. Small comforts, but she was glad to see them. She went to her bed and unlatched it as if she wanted to make sure it worked properly. She wanted to urinate, but she didn’t want to do it in front of him.

She looked again, and he was gone, just the quiet click of the door into the hall marking his departure.

She sat on her toilet and took stock of her tiny space, feeling nothing but relief for the moment.

Her vagina was still leaking semen, so she wiped thoroughly, returning to the idea that getting the boy to ejaculate in her had been a victory.

She stepped to the front of her cage, looked at the two girls sitting there.

The white girl stood first.

“What’s your name?”

“14067,” Priscilla replied.

“That’s not your name,” she said, and she pointed at herself.

“Me, Jane.”

The black girl laughed uproariously.

“So, we’re allowed to use our names, right?” Priscilla asked. “I mean, among us, among the girls they . . . use in research?”

“No,” the white girl said. “But we do anyway, and we almost never get into trouble for it. And my name really is Jane.”

“Okay. I’m Priscilla, then.”

“Hey, Priscilla,” she said.

The black girl stood. “I’m Doria.”

Priscilla found herself suddenly fighting back tears. After three days of isolation, deprivation, random cruelty, she was having a normal conversation. Normal, that is, if one ignored where it was taking place.

The girls quickly shared the details of their arrival at the lab. Doria’s mother needed a new kidney, so Doria sold herself to pay for it. Her mother tried to stop her, but she was too late, so she accepted the kidney and got off dialysis and mourned her daughter every day.

Jane met the wrong boy, used drugs and dropped out of school, and had been declared derelict by the state by age 15. At 16, she was transferred from juvenile hall to the lab, and she’d been there ever since. She was 21 now. Doria was 27. She’d arrived at age 23.

Both girls were petite, small-breasted and slim. Jane’s pubic hair grew thick around her opening, while Doria’s mound was bare, and Priscilla wondered if it were a choice, if they were given razors, or shaved by someone at the lab if they requested. Or did it depend on how they were studied?

Both girls seemed genuinely shocked by Priscilla’s story. Jane wasn’t sure she would still be alive if she hadn’t been brought in. Doria had taken a tour before her sale and knew what she was getting into, and helping her mother was an obvious source of pride.

There was no benefit here for Priscilla that any of them could arrive at. Freeing Hoyt from his debt seemed like a terrible thing, not a benefit at all.

Unjust as it was, however, they seemed to agree nothing could be done.

“What track are you on?” Doria asked. “Do you know yet?”

“Vaginal, I guess,” Priscilla replied.

“Oooh,” Jane said. “You’re going to get fucked all the time.”

“Yeah,” Priscilla agreed.

“Already?” Doria demanded.

“Twice,” she said. “No, three times.”

“Oh, who, who?” Jane asked.

“I don’t know their names,” Priscilla said.

“You didn’t ask?”

“I’m allowed to?”

Both girls laughed. “Of course.”

As they chatted, Priscilla scoured the contents of the other cages. What seemed at first to be a spartan existence was revealed to be at least somewhat more interesting. The shelves under every sink held a variety of things: books, paper and pens, newspapers, games and toys, even a chess set.

But was this enough? Could she live for years like this? Priscilla chased the question out of her mind

The girls fell silent when a man in black coveralls entered the room and approached Priscilla’s cage.

He seemed to be consulting something on his tablet as he fixed her inventory cuffs to her bars, measuring to make sure they were at the same location as the first set of cuffs she’d been fitted for.

She angled her bed down, saw that it had been neatly made, wondered who had last slept here. To her surprise, the thick blue blanket she’d earned yesterday was here, covering her bed. She climbed up on it and watched the man do his work.

“Okay, get in,” he said.

She angled her bed up, stepped to the man, put her wrists in the upper cuffs, pressing against them until she was secured. Then she spread her legs wide and set her feet in place, allowing the cuffs to close around her ankles.

Determined to remain stoic, she tried to keep her face expressionless as she prepared for what was probably going to be hours of standing here.

The man looked at her hands, at her feet, then at her middle, at the place between her legs where the inventory pegs would go.

He seemed to be satisfied with his work and pressed each cuff, opening them. She stepped away, wondering if there'd been a mistake.

He packed up his things and left, and Priscilla, imagining she might have escaped Dr. Bank's retribution after all, returned to conversing with Doria and Jane. They were surprisingly knowledgeable about politics, and passionate as well, describing a female politician in venomous terms. Her support for a law making it harder to adopt had them particularly incensed.

She heard a beep from the speakers overhead, then a strange electronic voice, saying something unintelligible. She thought she heard the word "elve."

"Oh, damn," Doria said.

"What were they saying?" Priscilla asked.

"They were talking to you," Jane said.

"What?" Priscilla asked. "Why?"

"Inventory cuffs."

"Oh," Priscilla said. "Now?"

"More or less," said Doria. "Five minutes. Enough time to use your toilet, basically."

"That's how they talk to us?"

"For simple stuff, yeah," said Jane.

Priscilla walked up to her cuffs, studying them, as if seeing them for the first time, and realized she was profoundly embarrassed. Putting herself in them in front of her new friends was particularly humiliating for some reason. And she'd be standing here for possibly hours. Surely, they'd know she was being punished.

"Okay," she said, as if preparing to jump into very cold water. She raised her arms, pushed the catch with her wrists, felt the cuffs close with two quiet clicks.

She repeated the process with her ankles, trying not to think about how she looked, body stretched and exposed, legs spread wide, breasts extending between the bars.

Would the girls, overwhelmed by the awkwardness of the cuffs, stop talking to her, ignore her, pretend she was no longer with them?

"They usually don't do inventory passes in the afternoon," Doria observed, and she looked at Priscilla with an eyebrow raised, clearly

curious about why this was being done, wondering if Priscilla knew the answer, and would share it.

She was tempted to reveal everything – her decision to break the rules and take the boy's semen for herself, and Dr. Bank's resulting judgment – but she knew he didn't want Dr. Morrow to know, and if she told anyone, it would probably get back to him. She had no idea how information flowed here, but she guessed it moved among the girls and staff the way it did among any other group of people.

"They inventoried me a bunch of times in orientation," Priscilla said, her humiliation easing as she spoke. "Not just in the morning. I guess they want more information or something."

"When did you get here?"

"Three days ago, I guess. The days are kind of running together."

"Usually girls don't get out of orientation for almost a week."

If she could have, Priscilla would have shrugged. This was something else she wasn't going to reveal, at least not now. She'd asked to be released from orientation early, and they'd agreed. She'd demanded a certain boy to partner with, and she'd gotten him. She'd had an Italian lunch with two doctors.

Dr. Morrow liked her, and he didn't like everyone.

She'd been teacher's pet once, in third grade. She was delighted when Mr. Pandrino singled her out repeatedly over the first week of school, and then horrified by the scorn of her classmates, particularly the girls. Never again, she swore to herself at the tender age of eight. Never again.

The door to the hall opened and two girls, chained, leashed together and escorted by a female staffer, entered and moved to their cages. The blonde was put in a cage near the showers, and the Indian girl was caged next to Priscilla. Doors made of iron bars were opened, closed, locked, then chains were removed and hung.

To the extent she could, Priscilla studied the newcomers, wondering if girls caged beside each other were expected to develop closer relationships, the way girls assigned to share a dorm room at college were.

"Well, that didn't take long," said the Indian girl. "The last girl only got moved out last night."

"This is Priscilla," said Doria. "Be nice, she's been through some shit."

“Oh, baby,” said the girl. Priscilla tilted her head back, caught a glimpse of her neighbor moving to her toilet, heard the splash of urine and returned her head to a more comfortable position.

The toilet flushed, Priscilla looked again and saw the Indian girl standing at the corner of her cage, facing her.

“So, you’ve been through it?” she asked.

“I don’t know,” Priscilla said. “I’ve only been here a few days.”

“Why’d they cuff you?”

“Inventory,” Priscilla replied. “I guess.”

“I’m Dani.”

“Hi, Dani.”

“Tell me about your shit.”

Priscilla talked, occasionally endured the discomfort of looking at Dani, but mostly faced forward as she once again shared the sordid history of her arrival here.

Dani expressed the standard shock, but her story was, arguably, worse – at least, if her story were true: She’d been working at a dress shop, the woman who owned the shop started gambling online, tens of thousands of dollars disappeared, and the woman’s husband confronted his wife. She blamed Dani, Dani was charged and convicted on scant evidence, and she chose the lab over prison.

As she spoke, Dani stood facing Priscilla, sometimes leaning against the bars between their cages, sometimes wrapping one or both hands around the bars. Her skin was light olive, her hair dark and long, breasts large and high, pubic hair thick like Priscilla’s, her vulva all but hidden behind it.

More girls were brought in, walked to their cages and unchained, the sound of female voices echoing as the girls celebrated the end of a day.

Priscilla shared her story, or parts of it, a half dozen more times, with the girl in the cage on the other side of hers, with a girl across from her. No one else asked why she was in inventory cuffs, or why she’d been in them so long. Such things were probably common here.

Her neighbors gossiped, talked about politics, passed the day’s newspaper from cage to cage. The chess set came out and two girls played, sitting cross-legged and facing each other, one reaching through the bars to move her pieces, presumably with the approval of the lab.

It might have been an hour, maybe two, before Priscilla was at last inventoried. Time had flown, but she was ready to be released, and she did her best to cooperate, arching her back and pressing forward to admit the probes.

Her vagina was still wet, and the little rod fit up her hole comfortably, but the rear probe stung her anus, prompting her to gasp and strain against her unyielding cuffs.

And then she was free, her punishment over. It was more an inconvenience than the hours of torment going to the punishment room would have represented, but Dr. Bank had made his point: Follow instructions.

Dinner was served, the same bars she'd been eating here since her first day, and she and the other girls ate and talked and washed up until the lights flickered and went to half power.

"Is that lights out?" Priscilla asked Dani. Dani continued to stand, but Priscilla, weary now, sat on the floor and leaned her back against the front of her cage.

The address system squawked to life, with an unintelligible word, then something that sounded like "villages."

"What did they say?"

"Full privileges," Dani replied. "We all must have done okay today."

She sat down and looked at Priscilla with dark eyes.

"You don't know what that means, do you?"

Priscilla just looked at her.

"It means we get to play."

"I still don't know what that means."

"Masturbate," she said, pausing. "And . . . through the bars."

"Through the bars?"

Dani tilted her head toward the cages on the other side of the room. Priscilla turned to follow her gaze, saw that Jane and Doria were standing now, arms extending, embracing each other, kissing lightly. Priscilla's eyes swept the room, saw a girl on her bed, staring blankly at the floor while she rubbed her vulva. Over Dani's shoulder, the girls in the next two cages were crouched down, not touching, but speaking softly, intimately, until one laughed.

Priscilla was far less surprised by what she saw than she would have been a week ago. This was a place of raw, unashamed sex, a place she never imagined existed, or could exist. The sex happened in the labs, in front of everyone, and it followed the girls back to their homes, to the little spaces where they slept.

It didn't make up for the cruelties and restrictions, but it was something.

Which brought her back to the question of the girl who sat before her.

Priscilla had never been with a girl, had never desired any girl sexually. She'd imagined it, of course, like any girl who reaches a certain age and learns such things are possible. But boys were her passion, such as they were. She thought about the boy she'd been with that day, decided that, overall, it had been a victory, Dr. Bank's little punishment notwithstanding.

She looked around the room again, returned her eyes to Dani's, felt a sudden deep awkwardness and laughed.

Dani smiled, not feeling at all awkward, apparently. She sat cross-legged on the floor, leaning forward, chin resting on one hand, elbow against her knee, the other hand in her lap, and she stared into Priscilla's eyes without obvious expectation, or need, or desire. She was simply there, open to anything Priscilla wanted to do, even if it was nothing.

Priscilla decided to be practical, to seek first to understand. Being forthright had served her well all day, with Cecilia, with Dr. Morrow, with Dr. Bank. She would be forthright now, with Dani.

"Who was here before me?" she asked, looking behind herself at the small space that held her.

"Another girl," Dani said.

"Did she have a name?"

"Not really."

"Where did she go?"

"Another cageroom. I think 9."

"Okay," Priscilla said. "Did you like her?"

"She was okay."

Priscilla paused, studied Dani's face, realized she was one of those people that would take a long time to get to know.

"We don't get to kiss that much in the lab," Dani observed.

“That’s true,” Priscilla said. “I mean, I’ve only been to the lab twice, but no one kissed me.”

“You got fucked?”

“Yes, three times.”

“Do you like kissing?”

“I do.”

Dani angled forward, subtly, but Priscilla knew what she was trying to convey.

“I’ve never kissed a girl,” Priscilla admitted.

Somewhere in the room, a girl groaned as if in pain, but Priscilla concluded quickly that this was orgasm, that some girl was getting pleasure, from herself or her neighbor. Priscilla decided not to look to see which it was.

“I never kissed a girl before I got here,” Dani said. “But I like it.”

Priscilla, neither hungry for Dani’s mouth nor opposed to bringing their lips together, scooted forward until her knees were pressing against the bars. Dani did the same, knees against bars, knees against knees, olive skin against Priscilla’s paler flesh.

Priscilla leaned forward and closed her eyes, letting Dani decide when there would be intimacy, or even if there would be intimacy.

When she felt the lips against hers, sensed Dani’s soft breath on her cheek, she allowed herself to sigh, to return her own soft breath.

Both girls kept their mouths closed for the first kiss. There was something in it Priscilla had never felt before – an honesty, perhaps. Dani wasn’t there to mount her, squirt inside her and leave. As far as Priscilla knew, this kiss was all she wanted.

They held their mouths together for half a minute before Priscilla leaned back and smiled. Maybe that was it. Dani was satisfied, done for the evening.

Somewhere in the room, girls continued to express the grateful sounds of a certain kind of pleasure. Someone grunted, someone cried out. There was laughter, soft words, and the wordless communion of lovers brought together by force or fate, making the best of things.

Dani leaned forward again, closing her eyes now, and it was Priscilla’s turn to connect. She found herself doing so immediately, without any need to ponder larger questions.

This time, Priscilla opened her mouth, and Dani reciprocated, tongues exploring each other, licking each other's lips, teeth, tongues. For a time, Priscilla heard nothing but Dani's breath and the tiny clicks of wet mouths exploring.

Still kissing, she felt a hand on her thigh, brushing it lightly, then moving up, to the place between her legs.

Priscilla pulled her mouth away, briefly, to whisper. "I've already cum twice today."

"I came once," Dani whispered back, clearly not believing orgasms in the lab had anything to do with this moment.

Priscilla decided to follow Dani's lead, to let Dani's fingers wander up her thigh to her vulva, to her lips and hole, to stroke and touch and squeeze the folds of profoundly sensitive flesh peeking out through her thick pubic hair.

When Dani's fingers found Priscilla's clitoris, they became suddenly insistent, tugging and circling and pressing Priscilla's knob, which responded with a speed that surprised Priscilla, hardening, becoming excruciatingly sensitive.

Like the day's first two orgasms, Priscilla's third came fast, hard, as something of a surprise, and her grunts of pleasure sounded through the room, mingling with the other sounds of females done with a day that had been lived well, at least by the standards of the lab. She rocked her pelvis as Dani continued her attention, massaging her until she was completely spent, her climax complete.

Priscilla pulled away, separating her mouth from Dani's, looking at her with surprise.

"I didn't think that could happen," she said. She took Dani's hand in both of hers, brought it to her mouth, kissed the fingers that had brought her pleasure, sensing her lubricant, her ovulation, her essence on her new partner's hand.

"I looked at you, and I could tell."

"No you couldn't," Priscilla said, and she laughed again.

Dani just smiled. Did she want something? Did she expect something?

Priscilla decided to be practical again.

"Your turn," she said.

Now Dani laughed. Her laughter was strong, comfortable.

“I’ve never made a girl cum,” Priscilla confessed.

“I’m already halfway there.”

“Tell me what to do,” Priscilla said.

“Oral?” Dani asked.

“Okay,” Priscilla said without thinking. “Um, how?”

Dani rose up on her knees, turned away from Priscilla and dropped again, on her hands and knees, crawling backwards, putting her feet and calves in Priscilla’s cage, pressing her bottom against the bars, bowing her back to raise her vulva.

Priscilla, after studying the two holes before her, working through her uncertainty, moved to her hands and knees and lowered her mouth to Dani’s front hole.

The taste was strange, disconcerting, a muskiness and salt that Priscilla didn’t think she liked. But, focused on paying back a favor, she stuck out her tongue and ran it up Dani’s slit, from her clitoris to her hole and back.

Every time Priscilla’s tongue brushed Dani’s growing knob, Dani arched her back and groaned, so Priscilla focused on that, licking and sucking to the best of her ability, even though the angle wasn’t ideal.

Dani’s orgasm arrived after less than a minute of attention, her pelvis rocking, her rear grinding against the bars, her organ pressing against Priscilla’s tongue, and she screamed, once, and then panted, “uh uh, uh,” until she was done.

And then, it was over, whatever connection they’d made together finished for now. Dani rose, went to her toilet, closed her eyes and urinated.

Priscilla continued to study Dani, but Dani seemed to be entirely in her own world, moving from toilet to bed without glancing up. She released the catch on her bed, lowered it, climbed on and covered herself with her sheets.

Priscilla, stung at first, worked through the logic as she went to her own toilet, imagining that shutting down socially at the end of the day was a necessity in a place where one was always naked and never alone.

Priscilla followed Dani’s lead, lowered her bed and climbed on, listening to the fading sounds of pleasure and companionship.

The lights went off as Priscilla rested her head on her pillow and a voice announced, unnecessarily, “Lights out.” The room was dark but not

pitch black, and she could make out the shapes of girls separating, sharing a final kiss, moving toward their beds.

It still might all have been a great mistake, Priscilla told herself. Someone might come to her cage tonight, or the lab tomorrow, and tell her to get dressed and leave. If it happened in the next 10 days, she could still make it to school in time to start her senior year.

For now, however, this was more interesting than passing the remains of the summer with her mother and Hoyt. Not that she'd ever go back there. If she were released tomorrow, she'd have to find another place to live. If she were told to leave tomorrow, she might offer to stay, at least for another few days, or a week. She'd have food and shelter. And friends. Overall, it was not a terrible place.

END