

The Cult

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## **Part 1**

## Chapter 1

The whole world was in my hands. Without stopping I said the things they would fear most. The fantasy of the alien was hers and I shared it with my girlfriend Anne, my boss Daniel, and eventually, the entire world. None were ready for the truth except her, because she had discovered the truth and she was the real messenger, not I.

There wasn't anything about me that grouped me into a pack or helped me stand out as having leadership ability. Before school was over and I met her, my interests were useless. I could fold nice cigarettes into slinky fingers and smoke them by the lake. Another task I endeavored upon was intoxicating myself (illegally) in purposeful increments one beer at a time. The period of joy and happiness I had slipped into was that way because I was lazy and I didn't go to college. Precisely this description of a boy was what she had needed. My birthday was right-on, and after I guess four years of planning she introduced her sexual life to me.

But this was after I had broken my early curfew and driven to the lake and saw a man get arrested. I heard shouting, watched the man as the officer pulled him to the back of the police car and handcuffed him. By the time he was taken to the backseat, I felt the empty silence again. The lighted vehicle exited. My first thought was that the man had been vacuumed into space.

The next time I would remember the incident and think of it as an intense and relevant memory was a few months later. She was jumping into the backseat of a different cruiser, passing under my arms and out of the scene. That was her totally paranoid exit from the situation she had created at the casino.

I never felt safe. When I was eighteen and going to different lakes around the city for fun at night, I was located by her and taken into a scenario out of Star Trek, or maybe instead Blade Runner. To survive, anything I had discovered about myself that summer would need to be remembered. The test was if I had truly enjoyed myself at lakes and on bike rides to the library. I only had to know the meaning of pleasure and not really figure anything out intellectually. That wasn't known to me beforehand and it feels a little ironic that everything would have been over if it had been.

I was still in high school but had reached the point of apathy where smoking drugs before class seemed acceptable enough. School was almost over. I took special classes for students with a higher aptitude. I didn't enroll completely in advanced classes because I thought the work load would be too much. Instead, I took a basic credit Biology class in the morning which seemed like the main motivation for getting high before school. The class itself was extremely boring. The teacher's daughter was mentally handicapped after a traumatic brain injury sustained in gymnastics. He was a Christian and tried spiritedly to raise awareness for both creationism and traumatic brain injury (TBI) accidents. He tied it into biology. Our trek through this comedy drama of life could jump the shark at any moment, he said. Later he won twenty thousand dollars on a gay morning talk show. I could see his wife's discomfort when I saw her online. It must have been a terror for them to be on television with an openly gay host. In his lecture about personal health he actually drew a shark on the board, and explained what jumping the shark means.

It was ridiculous, yet I would remember the class with a strong attachment after I met her. Any sense of comedy or drama would be better than the nightmare of her acquaintanceship.

In the case of my own television appearance, that was explained by the way I was hooked into a brainwashing scandal. It amounted to me becoming a famous celebrity. In the commercial,

I was like any actor you see in a Disney movie or on a stupidly popular miniseries. I guess I looked most like Matt Damon but didn't have his stomach.

The organization which targeted me was not owned or subsidiary to anything of her status. She was an agent of that group. She had specified who she wanted and when she wanted him. She wanted me. My Mom had gotten the idea to move to the city during her doctorate studies. She called her move "action research," which is a form of social maneuvering to help change communities.

Mom met Macy and other addicts at the shelter where she volunteered. She told me Macy and I were a good match. Mom had told Macy everything about me. The information was processed quickly by Macy and related to me in the way that superficial facts can be used to arrest one's attention. An illusionist tricks someone with the simplest of distractions. She distracted me with a new version of myself. She mentioned she knew me well. Her idea of who I was needed to *feel* compete although it was, I see now, only partial in its understanding of me.

I felt like I had found a companion who could see into my soul. I thought she was the person I had prayed for the summer before. We seemed an identical match and of course she showed me her astrology companion which confirmed that our relationship would be "written in the stars." Her tarot interpretation was fantastic in its matching of us as lovers. The cards for a queen and the four swords were drawn. They represented her, and me.

Finally, the sex rendered me helpless. For months, I was a victim of her devices. I was her lapdog, or her sex monkey. She was forward with her disease, which I felt sorry for. I felt pity that she was an addict and a user. She said she was disappointed that she had hit the pipe again this weekend. She didn't want it to get in the way of us.

Mom was working all the time and Dad had no time for me being divorced. Macy's set-up was so effective that we slept together for four months before I lost interest for my own mental health. Being with her was dangerous. I imagine that someone had written down a law hidden by the court and the lawmakers. It could have been made by an officer or other agent, who could have writ our relationship in a few secret sentences. The purpose of this law was for her to reference should anyone of similar status to her be suspicious.

The law would say that we must have been illegal; but to keep us out of danger, we would be overlooked by the police. We must be combatants on a war on drugs, a battle of the mind, and by calling attention to ourselves we could free people from use. And she must do drugs, and I must do drugs. Perhaps even, the law would say, that we were allowed to manipulate the media to help us in our endeavor. All of this must have been written somewhere, because according to her organization the rule was that she didn't exist as a person. She was merely a legal cable or instrument of change.

It was inescapable, our time together. Eight months I spent in her sights, until now, aboard this aircraft typing it all out. It is in the nature of my own devices that I write this with nervous hands. I am honest company, and perhaps that shows why I have no friends. The story must be gotten out of the way before I feel safe with anyone else.

## Chapter 2

She had previous boyfriends and at least one of them dressed very nicely. I was fortunate to be marrying my future with hers. She was 31.

Our first physical connection was through a bauble she gave me the first night. I wore it around my neck and showed a few people before I lost it. Next came the hand job, and then coitus on my childhood bed in a green bedroom. The walls were adorned with printouts of her favorite drawings and a hanging corset, which I found so remarkable with awe I asked her if she made them. Her clothier had made it. My attraction to her was overpowering until that moment of first coitus. I broke into her by lying sideways. I was surprised by the sensation of penetration and I tumbled to the foot of the bed immediately and almost fell off. She thought it was hilarious. Unbelievably, I had found a woman of a culture so mysterious that it seemed I had manifested her out of the insanity of my own thoughts. These thoughts confused me because I knew it was wrong to date her as an eighteen year old the summer after I graduated high school. My own fears were both quelled and kindled by her overt kindness. The last blog post I made up until then mentioned my wariness in a short, cryptic update. I had forgotten about it until this moment, because I feel less overwhelmed now.

Then she was my girlfriend. I lost my job immediately. I was so obsessive about her I couldn't show up on time.

It was naive when I expected to be able to move out of my Mom's and get an apartment with her. Expertly she managed the landlord to do her bidding. However, I was two days too late when I delivered the remnants of my check to that landlord, and we didn't get the duplex. I planned to use it as a place for us to have sex. Missing the lease was a mistake which I told her in arguments was the last time on earth when I had any hope for a good future. I wasn't exaggerating. I believed everything would have been different if we had gotten the place. She said it didn't matter then and it most certainly did not.

Instead we moved in with her mother and Macy's four children. And she introduced me to the men and the drugs; and I took showers with cameras; and I saw backyard death cellars surrounded by metal fences for perching photographers. The house was characterized by large windows, drug traffic, and school buses created of solid bulletproof titanium from the inside out to protect them from explosions.

I was the fourth one she had introduced to the stimulant which is called by most people Chem 1. She was a Chem 1 dependent. I live now with a prescription to another drug, debaran.

The only time I felt jealousy was with her, when she was having sex with Mika in the other room. The conversation between her and him was an unconnected dialogue I could hear while lying in a bed adjacent the garage. They were using Chem 1 by smoking it, and I'm sure they were so extra-human themselves. That's what the Chem 1 does.

"He's been taking a lot of weed," she said. I couldn't hear very well. "Don't carouse him. All the people make him afraid. It's been like this for a few days. If he does nothing, then try talking to him about music. I like him. I love him."

I was on the stuff myself. Chem 1 wasn't a good drug for me.

"He thinks he's already dead," she told Mika.

I also talked with Jed at the house. Who is to say how long I talked with Jed? On Chem 1, time would pass in intervals that feel the same, but are different lengths. Two hours could feel

like thirty minutes. He said it was the same with a lot of drugs, but it was most noticeable on Chem 1.

I asked him how they had all gotten together. He said "similar interests," then answered more existentially. "We were brought together by an idea that the truth is there, and you have to work terribly hard to find that out yourself." He picked up a coin from the desk where we smoked.

"What truth?" I said.

"We don't know that, do we? You and me haven't found it yet. We look inside, and outside for answers to these basic questions like, how will we survive?" He rolled the coin across the table. "And where do we get more Chem 1?" he added. "That's a biggie. The addiction is like being mentally sick. If we don't have our medicine, we start, well, obviously seeing stuff and our thinking changes. But I guess it's more like a pain we feel."

"So it does hurt?" I asked.

"Hell yes, it hurts. Your body feels dead," he said. "Cold and lifeless, and your mind perceives it that way. You could do almost anything for a re-up."

I thought about how the body and mind could feel dead. I had always thought that I would die when I lost willpower, and when didn't want to live anymore that's when the clock would start ticking. I occasionally worried about this and it made me very nervous sometimes. I would try to reinvigorate myself, or heal whatever life essence gave me the power to survive. By managing my perception of myself and trying to get a grip on what risks I was taking at any given moment, things felt safer. The thoughts of being in danger were what confused me. Right then the risk felt pretty high.

"We're all going to die," he said. "The fact is you can preview death with Chem 1. It is a dead drug. We still all do it, but maybe something in the air or water makes us not feel as happy with it as we once did."

I wanted to say his tolerance was responsible for that, but he seemed to have the conviction that the drug itself was dying. We were both intoxicated with Chem 1 and I sat there and entertained the idea. Maybe Chem 1 had no more resources to survive. Maybe it had been alive once, and was dying. I thought, wouldn't that be a good thing? It was a horrible drug.

In the days leading up to then, I had been hallucinating sounds, the noises of men on the roof. I also felt like I was in danger although there was no apparent reason to be afraid. The stimulant effect made me feel like the superhero Batman, especially in the car where my power over myself seemed total and inhuman. When we would nearly crash the car into the carport upon returning to the house, the carport seemed like it was taking the full brunt of my power. The structure was strong, but could it withstand the missiles which followed us?

The kids went to school in the morning, apparently unaffected by our use. I wondered if they felt like superheroes. I used to when I was a kid. Our relationship, by the time fall had ended, was entirely life-long in my mind, as if I could die at any moment and the thing that would have defined me was my girlfriend Macy and Chem 1.

## Chapter 3

When I awoke she gave me oatmeal, the perfect gesture. I was scared and stressed out because of the drugs. I thought her offering to cook for me was very kind.

The marriage was tonight. She said Smith and Angie would be anointed by the archetype Iris after she fitted Angie's dress. I was completely interested and gave her my enthralled look but could not say much.

I discovered that night by listening to their conversations that a marriage was a special thing which linked two souls together when they were wed properly. Her children already seemed to know this. The scary part was that two people could be married or linked without them knowing. While this marriage would be unofficial it was special because Macy and her posse knew the correct ritual. And it was extra special because someone called Iris was coming.

I waited all day for her to finish the dress so that I could get attention from her. She was extremely distracted. Maybe I was her toy, I thought. She was much older than I was and I certainly couldn't be a father. I waited that day for a confirmation that we should continue dating, even though I did love her. The occasion of the marriage eventually bored me even with the mysterious promise of Iris. I asked her who was Iris.

She said I might find out if I paid attention. That was a little disappointing considering we hadn't had sex for days and I felt intimidated by Smith and Angie. The children were making fun of me. I felt like one of her kids.

I've never been a religious person but these two certainly practiced a form of worship. They seemed extremely devoted to the ritual and completely serious about their marriage even though it wasn't legal. Macy explained that it was an act, for all of them and I understood because of the Chem 1. In fact this entire household seemed like a bizarre carnival because of that drug. It made us child-like and weird, especially the veterans who needed it apparently to survive. Several hours before the scheduled wedding, a visitor came who appeared to be extremely strong and I was afraid again.

He said he had heard that Mika was here. Macy said that he didn't live here. I thought; 'why not tell him where he lives?' But that was the nature of Chem 1. It made us paranoid. Everyone was a potential threat. She saw the man out and I learned later that he was a good guy, but didn't do the same drugs as us. In fact he was a captain. His name was Jerry and he was on a different team.

Smith and Angie were bonded in marital ceremony at around 7:00. I sat and watched with the kids. I respected the newlyweds' fervor but was somewhat alarmed when Macy asked me to come forward before they said their vows. I lurched upward, being high, and tried to pretend to hurt myself. I was having a tough time with all my doubt. However, she asked me to anoint their marriage myself by wishing them well with all my heart for I was blessed by Iris and could do his bidding.

I stepped forward and said nothing. Their laser eyes waited for me and I twisted my body away from them. My head turned towards the ceiling for a few seconds until I finally uttered, "I bless your marriage with all of my heart. I hope you find happiness in your partnership." Macy was extremely pleased.

During the after party which made me feel small and rodent-like I started watching her for clues about what had happened and also for cameras. It must have been a symptom of the



intoxication. I really wanted out of this situation but couldn't tell Macy because I still was attracted to her. Did she like this drawing? Yes, very much. But I was one of her kids, not her lover. I became curious about the huge man asking for our captain and planned to go see him sometime. It had seemed like he was riding on a missile, the energy he carried was so strong. When I fell asleep, I dreamed of robots because that's what the children were watching on television. I really was just one of them.

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## Chapter 4

There was a time when I was away from her due to stress or morbid fear and stayed with my Mom across the city. I cooked food for her children once she moved closer to me with her entire family. She wasn't trying to get closer to me, however. There were a few people I visited with during this time and a couple of men I even invited into my Mom's house on the weekends which she was gone. The first man was Jerry, the captain. He was from California and had AIDS. He knew all about weed. Unfortunately I must report that he was not on the proper medicine and treatment for his disease. It wasn't irresponsible as far as anyone else is concerned. I would have hated to see his life shortened on account of a homegrown remedy.

The other two were black men who I felt needed respite from the cold and danger. I supplied it to them by allowing them to nap on the couch where I had spent my high school years sleeping after class. The couch now had been utilized as a detox center for Chem 1. I knew they wouldn't steal anything, and even let them stay there unattended while I busied myself with Macy's chores. I did try to watch some television with them but Mika seemed to have a problem with them and arrived in his huge black truck to demand money. Macy told us they were very shallow for not paying him earlier, and in order to get the cash I drove them to an abandoned apartment complex to steal the heating elements off air conditioners for scrap metal. I was listening to The Pens in my car. I didn't have a problem with it, because I felt so useless it was a service I was glad to get credit from Macy for doing. The music and the colder atmosphere were exceptionally depressing. Now, the smell of cigarettes reminds me of this time when I was forcing my limbs to move the heating elements into my trunk despite being stiff. I am reminded of the fear. I was afraid of Mika. I thought he might shoot me.

I was trying to figure out how much the men owed him. "Do you owe him for meth?" I asked.

The bigger man, curiously named Brown, responded patronizingly. "You think all we do is do meth, don't you?"

"I can't think of anything you would owe Mika for." Mika had a codename I couldn't remember. My imagination swelled at the idea they might have some other kind of trade going on.

"It's for tweak, what the hell do you think it was for?"

I shrugged though I couldn't be satisfied by that explanation. Being Macy's boyfriend I didn't have to pay for any drugs, although I did have my own weed which had lasted the entire time I had known her. I was pretty sure there was something else going on with the handling of the drugs.

The real story was much more fantastic than I even could have thought. The captain for the other team, Jerry, had a deal with Mika. He was telling me about it when I visited to see his weed, or kind bud. His friends in California were artists. Their company and time was their product, besides the Chem 2, or marijuana. They were "large-scale" media entrepreneurs. Any Internet video with them in it was guaranteed to get tons of hits, and you could pay a price to get into the films and market your own services. The videos were hypnotic, the captain was explaining. His friends were highly influential.

They knew how to control people's perception.

He began to get a little suspicious of me I thought. I was chain-smoking in the trashy fashion which I handled such magnanimous company and that's probably what started the questions.

"I heard that Macy thinks you've got the potential to be her Iris archetype. Don't you know what that means?" He asked.

I stumbled over the word archetype when I said I wasn't all that interested in it.

He explained that Macy herself was highly influential as well. "The archetype can be thought of like mental software. The ego is programmed and then downloaded to the collective unconscious, where others live and think as the archetype does."

"That doesn't make any sense," I said.

The captain told me I was worse than he had suspected. "The archetypes serve special purposes. The role they play is specified by the individuals who play those roles. You program yourself. The story is written by their character and personality. Do you know who you are? You're going to shape what her archetype for Iris means so you better get ready, and you better not be stupid when shit gets heavy. I'm telling you this as your bro. Right? The archetypes are based on the theory of the Tree of Life. The angels live at the topmost part of the Tree of Life, and archetypes below them, and regular people near the bottom. Inside each of us is the potential to be the archetype for the angels. Anyone could be an archetype," he said, then smiled. "But it's very expensive to get the attention a true archetype deserves. Macy has competitors on her own team. She needs you to be the strongest version of Iris out there. You can't choke at the last moment and rat her out." He blew into his pipe to clear an airway through the resin. "That's really what's trashy."

I didn't know what to say. These weird stories I had only pretended to believe up to this point, out of fear of rejection or insecurity.

"Your name, Adam, means something too. It means you're the archetypal 'man.' It's truly perfect. You're like a light saber, Adam."

I lost my speech. I went for another cigarette but dropped it and apologized and thought, 'this could get me killed.' I could get killed trying to make my girlfriend's insane plan happen, this nonsense about archetypes and angels, and whatever the Tree of Life could be. How complicated it all felt. She wouldn't tell me about anything, yet I didn't want her to anyway. The idea made me anxious. How much had I invested of myself into this relationship? I couldn't even fuck her. I thought I was losing it, and wanted to leave the captain there in his pad but knew that would be rude. He was a socialite and would have been offended and not invited me over again if I left then. I lifted myself with my legs to a halfway point and realized this at the last second and collapsed back onto the floor with crossed legs.

So why hadn't I kept my job and gotten the duplex? He was loading his weed pipe with kind. She was still doing Chem 1 and I wondered, Jesus, could I really help her? I could stand there with my conviction of my love for her and this other person would tell me things she had never even mentioned and I couldn't understand it anyway. I had been devoted before but now I felt like a harsh schism had bent itself between us. It was overwhelming and the room seemed to shrink from the contact high I was getting off the smoke he was trying to blow in my face. "Stop it," I said.

"My apologies," he said. "I'm here for you, if you ever have questions. Part of being the archetype fortunately is that you mustn't try too hard."

Jerry was my friend, where Macy was my girlfriend and nothing else. I felt like such a bitch. I finally asked, "so she wants me to be famous?" It seemed like a good question although I was barely paying attention to his company at this point. He laughed loudly.

"You're already famous. You're dating Macy."

"Famous how?"

"That's what you'll have to figure out for yourself."

"Oh."

I took some kind with me and ran a stoplight. The speeding traffic crashed headlong into my vehicle. The first car that was ever mine had been crushed from the driver's side. I regained consciousness at my Mom's after two days' hospitalization. The concussion was serious.

## Chapter 5

It took two weeks to figure out something wasn't right and I went to a psychologist. I told him I was irritable and scatterbrained and having a really emotional time trying to get my life back on track. I had recently broken up with my (I didn't say criminal) girlfriend and still felt like I was going to die all the time, despite being completely out of danger. I cried nonstop and I also told him I was upset because my high school friends weren't there for me. He said he couldn't do anything about that but told me I had probably suffered a serious and life-changing traumatic brain injury.

He gave me medication for depression and irritability. We were all going to watch me very closely for any more changes or even improvement. I had decided my life was over. But after a few days, I did feel better. I got a job.

I wasn't a waiter exactly but I did get tip-outs and had a lot of extra cash. Everyone who worked at the restaurant was exceptional and most of them were even in college, which I tempestuously envied and made large plans to enroll myself. The work was easy but I was really good at it, especially the details. The nights were intense and late, and I worked up and down the stairs attempting to hide the racket of dirty dishes. I could lean backwards and hold my hands outwards to keep the dishes in the bus tub. Fine dining has a special effect on someone that can be envisioned only if you meet the people themselves. Those people, who like to bill really extravagant checks on dinner and wine, have characters that are almost as magnanimous as the captains I had all but forgotten.

I was glad to be away from the Chem 1 and medication improved my mood so far beyond what I had felt before that I can say now I was definitely manic for the first few weeks on the job. The mania brought sadness but it was a healing type, where I could regain perspective on how traumatic my relationships had been for so long. I could talk to these people about music and other things I loved, and they liked me for that.

Whenever I would take medication in the mornings, I thought my imagination was somehow improved. The clarity with which I could perceive things now made me a newer person. I thought constantly of little scenarios where fantastic people came and went. The restaurant was the perfect environment for that. I wrote a story about a local dancer I met named Geronima. Actually, I wrote four stories but each one improved on the last and I considered my last story to be the only important one.

I had changed completely, but had issues focusing on conversation and communicating. That was the scariest part, and I began to feel like I was like my biology teacher's daughter. Was I retarded now? With horror I could recall conversations and my memory seemed to warp my image of myself. I felt convinced that I had become more handicapped than my family had thought. I began to get extremely anxious before and during work. But I still could assure myself that I was okay, because I really liked myself, and that was how I could function. I liked the stories I wrote, and my coworkers, and wanted to eventually start a huge, purposeful life. 'I am an adult now and,' I thought with humor, 'as soon as I could have sex I'd feel much much better.'

The one thing holding me back from either enrolling in college or becoming a full-time waiter, was the lingering idea that I was still in love with her. It was stupid, I knew. I was torn by one emotion, which felt almost confused but happy; and another which longed for my ex-girlfriend and even the thrill of her company. My Mom was still working at the shelter and that

would ultimately be the end to my life at the restaurant after the TBI, and a new introduction to my next life as a pedestrian of the pill I could call my own shelter, debian.

I met Anne at my Mom's house when I came home from work one night. I avoided her at first by going into my old room which was socially acceptable even to me who was insecure, and when I overheard her I felt that first attraction to her when she took my virginity. She approached me in my room and gave me her number. I asked her how she was. She said she was having a hard time taking care of her new boyfriend who was nothing like me. Curiosity would execute me mercilessly that night. I woke up in her new place. I felt much much better.

## Chapter 6

Macy wouldn't have me share this depiction of her, and would prefer I make a long letter about her other boyfriend, the captain. But as I sit in first class drinking short Cokes I think of how her ex-boyfriend Mika almost died in a shooting, which is how I met Macy at Mom's.

The path which led me to her was one I followed through weakness not courage and that must make her feel enraged. But she shall never read this, I suppose. No fire could take her but it was fire which consumed me when we were together. Although the way I see her all the time gives me wonder: will leaving help? Nor validation finds me, flying to my new home, nor comfort nor satisfaction. It is truly the outlaw of my conscience who could make me be so at unease for such a period of time. Exact matches we may be, we cannot say to each other that as lovers we made any kind of real progress. That is her loss. So I will continue about her.

At long last, I had been initiated into the cult of personality surrounding her family and personal life. I had hit the pipe and smoked enough cigarettes for her and her mother to design a short mission I could help execute at the casino. My girlfriend had arranged for us to meet the man who had shot the recently appointed captain.

I didn't know why the captain was so important, but apparently a man named Roger Ethan had shot him because of Chem 2, the substance which was going to be legalized very soon by our government.

That was the reason we were at the casino: to search him out. The captain had been hired by the government as a survivor on a war on drugs and did whatever Macy told him. He was simply a very strong man that Macy had dated. She use him in an important purpose to give Chem 2 a touch of legitimacy. Instead of being an uncontrollable cultural mythos, she wanted to create a plethora of realities that the organization imagined. It was the honor and courage of the captain Mika which allowed him to skip out on attendance.

He said I was going to get myself into to some crazy shit.

He was once a low-level drug lord and had been shot and survived. When Macy recruited him to comfort civilians who knew very little of the pathology of drug use, he began working towards the wake-up call about the reality of Chem 2 legalization. He focused especially on the strong stuff called "kind bud." It was tough for me with my high school diploma to understand, and I did a miserable job being of use which of course caused me intense anxiety and nearly got them all in real trouble.

The captain, who had with her thought he was above the law and now worked for peace, or civilians, was the player in a CIA effort to comfort us about the legalization of weed. The captain was a man with street experience who could lead us to a better understanding of Chem 2 by getting us the good, valuable "kind." Chem 2 was safer than Chem 1.

I was the newbie and the focus of everybody's attention who knew the mission at the casino: her, her mother, me, and Jed.

By the final hour I had without care accused her of stealing my car, although it was parked where I left it. That is enough detail to see the whole story. I thought the second half of the casino was too scary to approach at first. I imagined it was a place of dissection and torture where Mika would find me to execute eventually. By now you get the gist. I couldn't find Roger Ethan, and called Jed who was trying to help us stay organized from the parking lot. He said I was doing well, laughing. I told him I needed Macy.



\*

The objective of the mission was to trade cell phones for the benefit of Roger Ethan's gross rage and envy of our skirmishing ability. I would give her mother my cell phone in the casino in front of Roger Ethan who was at the lotto machines pushing away at buttons. It took me hours to find her mother, but I knew through odd hints on the drive with her to the place that was the plan and I had nothing else but to stick to it.

The bet-masters were watching me very closely, including security, as I trekked through the hallways into each room, scanning the crowd. I had lost her mother quickly because I thought she intended to hide from me. When I did find her, I realized she had gone off in search of Roger Ethan who had been tricked into coming by a phone call or weird suggestion from Mika.

My awkward, towering body approached her figure which had formed a vulnerable position right next to the huge man Roger Ethan. I was so intoxicated from the drug Chem 1 that when I reached her, my arm was outstretched, holding the phone. My hands opened without volition as I was shaking to drop it next to her and Roger Ethan. That was the closest I felt to death that night. Before I could tell if she picked up the phone, or if Roger Ethan saw my attempt to hand it over, I ambled off without trying to fetch either the phone or attention. I already felt I had enough from the people who worked there and yet the other gamblers barely noticed. My next goal was to find Macy and go home.

\*

Circling the blackjack tables, I heard my own voice speaking to me for the first time. It was hers. The influence of Chem 1 is ephemeral and memorable, like a cold version of hell. I regret that I was so intoxicated I went from one end of the huge complex to the other in search of her.

My quest led me to the parking lot, where I gathered she was sitting in a vehicle from another call to Jed. I couldn't find my car, though.

Eventually I panicked. I found a security guard who could have even been a police officer and desperately asked for help. Being strung out, it is surprising I wasn't arrested. He interrogated me in good humor, probably suspecting I was on not worth jailing.

"Who are you with?" he asked.

I told him about Macy and her Mom. I said I couldn't find my car, which is where Macy probably was. We walked to where I thought I had parked and I said she had stolen it.

I found the car soon after the cop wrote his report and ramped up on the highway to leave but a trucker on the wrong side of the road tried to crash head-long into me. Reality was definitely taking a turn for the worst, because I imagined Mika had arranged a hit on me. She tolerated this in her patient way when I told her afterwards. But, should I have been the one who felt ratted out?

I skidded to the side of the road and turned around and re-entered the casino parking lot. Itself was like an ashtray of cars which burned like cigarette butts. I saw a police vehicle.

I wasn't sure if she was being arrested. However, I did know that this was from where she monitored me. She shouted from the window I had lasted several hours and the car rolled away. That was an unreal yet calming vision. And I did think I was dead the entire time. She already knew me so well.

I finally left, leaving her mother and her, and went back to Macy's friend Anne's apartment. Macy had given me Anne's number beforehand in case the mission failed. Macy with her flip of red hair and her mother wearing a cowgirl jacket didn't show up at all or even call me. Did I get her arrested? It was their plan after all. If it failed, it could not possibly be my fault, right? I was a newbie.

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