



"I am back in Rapture, after so many years. The little ones I rescued are grown up, und think of me no more. After what I once did to them it was a joy to be forgotten."

- *Brigid Tenenbaum*

Letter of Recruitment

Mr. Christian Perkins,

Tired of taxes? Tired of bullying governments, business regulations, unions, people expecting a handout from you? Want a new start? Do you have a skill, an ambition to be a pioneer? If you're receiving this notice you've already been considered and selected to fill out an application for a life in Rapture. This amazing new enterprise will require emigration. But it will cost you nothing but sweat and determination to come and take part in a new world.

If our vetting team has done its job, you are not a trade unionist; you are a believer in free enterprise, competition, and carving your own path through the wilderness of the world. There is room for up to twenty thousand pioneers to thrive in this new society. We ask that you show this letter to no one, whatever your decision. If you're interested, fill out the application form attached to this letter and mail it to the postal address on it, and you will hear from us soon.

Best regards,
Andrew Ryan

PART I

The Lighthouse, 1952

It always starts with a sentence. No gods or kings, only man. An intimidating sentence and the imposing face of the Andrew Ryan statue met a group of people as they entered the atrium of the lighthouse out in the middle of the ocean. As they met all who migrated to the undersea colony. Some of these people knew Andrew Ryan, the tycoon, the magnate, from news papers and news reels. And some didn't. Most people who were there seemed really bright or talented in some way. They just gave that impression. People had brought their entire families even. There was a colored lady that kept to herself on the boat ride. The woman had a smooth voice, as if naturally blessed to use it. Another guy had a pregnant wife and a yelling kid who seemed to beg for a beating from his ever more frustrated father.

And then there was a writer. He was silent and mostly just watched. A shy man in his early twenties, he preferred to speak when spoken to. And thus he watched, making up stories about his fellow immigrants in his mind. He'd chatted with the black woman a bit on the boat, but that was it. Her name was Grace, and she was going to sing and start a family. The writer didn't really have a family. His mother died years ago and his father just recently joined her. Never had friends and no significant other. He wasn't significant enough. What he did have was a good imagination. He'd published several short stories in pulp fiction magazines and when he received the invitation he felt he had the chance to make it as a writer. All the stories in his head could finally be let out.

Still, when he looked at the others on their way to this new promised land he couldn't help but feel he didn't belong. Although, he always did among others. His father, the professor, would have belonged. Well here he was. And there was nothing else to do but pass the banner and the statue, down the beautiful staircase and to the bathysphere. The people all gawped in awe, struck by the construction placed so inconspicuously out at sea. The interior of the lighthouse was decorated in artful style that blended stylish art deco lines with the cultivation of ancient Babylon and there were plaques on the walls, dedicated to science, industry, art, and the Great Chain of Industry, each plaque stylizing what they ought to be - free and independent. Hidden speakers played the musing *La Mer* instrumental by Django Reinhardt, flowing easily with the lines of the lighthouse.

The writer walked among the crowd down the great stone steps of the stairs, going round and down into another chamber, beneath the atrium. There, bobbling safely in a well of water, was a spherical contraption with an open door to let people inside. It looked like a bathysphere, which the writer had seen in photos of Bermudan divers, but incredibly advanced. A Rapture representative was waiting there, smiling and directing them into the bathysphere. There were several of them there and they'd have to take several turns. The writer waited anxiously for what seemed like forever while everyone else, it seemed, got go before him. Meanwhile, people would try and ask the representative questions, but he just smiled vexingly and said:

"You'll see, soon enough."

At last, there were only the writer and Grace left when the bathysphere popped up into its place in the well. The door swung open for them and the representative bade them enter, before stepping inside himself.

On each side of the bathysphere were red velvet cushion seats for the ride down. The writer swallowed, still not convinced the other people hadn't been taken to some ship waiting a half mile off to be shanghaied. Grace also seemed a bit nervous, thumbing her skirt lining. The representative pulled the bathysphere lever and the door was closed behind them. Immediately the bathysphere descended into the Atlantic water. 10 fathoms. 18 fathoms. And from there, give in to fate. A fate for each of them to shape. Only man. The writer felt a bittersweet sense of reflection as he kissed the surface good bye.

"Are you nervous?" The representative asked, with a slightly smug smile. Grace looked at him and nodded, as did the writer.

"So why do you, uh, come here? Why come to Rapture?" The representative continued, looking at them both in turn. They didn't answer immediately.

"To start a family", said Grace at last, "and to sing. My family lived in the Hooverville back in St. Louis. I've been working as a jazz singer, but..." she silenced for a moment, looking down with a painful expression, "let's just say I'm looking for a new beginning."

The representative nodded understanding during Grace's story, then turned to the writer and looked him dead in the eyes.

"And you, young fella? I'm assuming you don't come together..."

The writer shifted in his seat, uncomfortable having to share his life's story with strangers, just like that. A short introductory film was playing on a screen on the bathysphere door, where Andrew Ryan asked, 'Is a man not entitled to the sweat of his brow?'

"I..." the writer started, "writing has been my dream since I was a kid. To write and publish books, you know. My father recently passed away and I feel like there was no reason not to give this a go. Owe it to myself to try."

"Writing, huh? Ernest Hemingway junior?" The representative asked.

"I always preferred Poe and Lovecraft, actually."

He didn't get any further before Ryan ended his speech and the bathysphere rolled over a smoking underwater volcano and revealed a stunning sight before them. The city of Rapture.

The bathysphere steered them straight into the city and guided them among the scrapers of the undersea Manhattan. The writer watched entranced at the city, not believing it could be true. How could it be possible! Neon signs in the colors of the rainbow glimmered on the walls, advertising this company and that; liquors, casinos, art galleries and theaters. Then the bathysphere flowed into a docking tube, heading right into one of the buildings. Big, bright neon letters above read, 'All good things of this earth flow into the city'. At the first sentence starts a story. A tale of deep, burning horror and unanswered prayers.

Welcome Pavilion, 1952

Setting foot in the underwater city, the writer gasped. Unable to contain his exhilaration, he dropped his suitcase to the floor. He had seen the city from the bathysphere, of course. Its towering buildings and glimmering neon lights beckoning him through the murky Atlantic water. But it had been so abstract still. Unreal in a way. But now he was here, and before him stretched the grandiose welcoming hall of Rapture's Welcome Pavilion, with its meticulously perfect decor. His fellow immigrants to the undersea colony seemed to be equally awestruck.

For quite a while, it seemed, they stood staring, trying to take everything in. They didn't even notice the welcoming committee before Andrew Ryan began to speak. The writer was enthralled by the oratory gift the man possessed. As Ryan spoke, the writer listened carefully. Ryan was

welcoming them, cursing the parasites of the upper world and, in a fatherly tone, uplifting the concept of his undersea colony. It was basically the same speech as the one on the monitor on the way down, only a little different and his tone was more booming, as if he was tired yet resilient.

Ending it, Ryan said: "and with the sweat of your brow, Rapture can become your city as well. Welcome, my friends, to Rapture!"

By Ryan's side stood several people. His most trusted. They seemed almost pale and small in comparison to the tycoon. Filled with the promises given, the writer entered the city, ready to make it his new home and make a name for himself. When he first received the letter of recruitment it seemed like a joke. Who was the kook who would send him this, he'd thought at the time. But he had thought it over and each time it appeared to be a better and better idea. The best and the brightest - how could he be part of that? - united under the sea. And considering the stalemate his life was, he accepted.

He had taken a chance and exchanged all his money for Rapture currency and set for the Atlantic Ocean. A gamble if there ever was one. The moment he stepped into the lighthouse and saw the giant statue of Andrew Ryan and the banner with it, the words 'elaborate hoax' drifted through his mind. Even when he saw the city through the bathysphere window it was distant. Abstract. But setting foot in Rapture made him realize: this was real.

The writer's apartment, 1952

Standing by his window, the writer wondered how all this was possible. How do you build a city under the sea? The brothers who designed it, Wales, wasn't it? They must be geniuses. He took a zip of coffee. Not like what he would have had back home, but it wasn't too bad.

Starting a new life in Rapture required some changes, he had soon realized. It was three weeks since he arrived in Rapture. He had put a down payment on an apartment before coming, and though it was expensive, it was furnished by the time he moved in. A service Ryan Industries provided. Not for free, of course. It wasn't exclusively beautiful, but he had a single bed, a couch and a coffee table of coral. And, most importantly, a brand new Rapture made typewriter. There was a blank page in it, waiting to be filled with stories. He had been scared that he would come up with nothing, but after just a few days in Rapture he started getting ideas.

The writer's apartment was located in Artemis Suites. It was one single room and a small kitchen and an even smaller bathroom. It had a single window which let in the ominous blue green glow of the ocean. That took some getting used to; the physical changes that came with moving to Rapture. There was no real natural light, so in order to see what he was doing he used several lamps. Right now, though, the sun must be shining over the Atlantic ocean, because the wavy moving of the ocean scattered with a brightness only seen when weather topside was good, and it danced glittering light blue on his window and on the wall in the room. Not exactly lighting he was used to.

The notes for his story was handwritten and littered the coral coffee table. The writer turned from the window and started looking through the notes for a place to start. Then he left Rapture behind and sunk into fantasy. He sat down in front of the typewriter and started to write, the words flowing and the keys clicking willingly as they formed the world he was creating.

Mercury Suites, 1953

Just walking around Rapture was inspiring. Wonderful how such a place could exist in the darkness of the deep. Endless ocean, almighty deep. A million years old, and you never, ever sleep.

The writer was in Mercury Suites. Fancy neighborhood. And the apartments were just as fancy as the people. Far from his single room place. But he wouldn't want to live here. Not yet, at least. Maybe when he was Rapture's most famous writer and had someone to share the place with. For now he simply watched the place. The people all seemed busy, and no one met his eyes. Then again, these were important people. Back home in Artemis Suites there were mostly the working class. But he still liked coming here, sometimes. If only to watch the kind of place that a guy like him couldn't afford. From there he took the train over to Fort Frolic. Maybe when his book was released he could buy a personal bathysphere.

Fort Frolic was even better than Olympus Heights and Mercury Suites. Full of people and life, and he felt included, even though no one ever noticed him. He didn't have a penny to spend there, though. The advance he'd been given by the only publishing company that wanted to take the risk wasn't very big, and he had to stretch it out. Writing a book is a long process, and he was running out of time. He was looking for a job to make some extra cash, and it seemed there might be something opening up on the leading newspaper in town, the Rapture Tribune. The editor had seen potential in his pulp fiction stories, at least.

Fort Frolic, 1953

Ah, here he was. Fort Frolic. Now here there were people. Always something going on. Some new exhibit by that Sander Cohen at his collection, a new play at Fleet Hall, or some exotic new dancer at Eve's Garden. In fact, one of Sander Cohen's latest songs was playing on the public address system. The writer hated that kind of music. He liked faster stuff. Stuff he felt didn't quite exist. But there were some swingy acts he liked. Overall, though, he wasn't very into the music in Rapture. Maybe he should look up Grace and see if she got her career started. As he walked, the music in the public address system shifted and became something else. He went over to Rapture Records, the store owned by the eccentric Silas Cobb, to look for albums by Grace Holloway, but he couldn't find any. There were a lot of records though. They were stacked in shelves from floor to ceiling. Evidently, by having decided he didn't like the music in Rapture, he was missing out.

From there, he went over to the Pharaoh's Fortune Casino, where people were spending their money. Repulsively posh, yet at the same time approachable, the casino was ready to part any and every sucker from his hard earned Rapture dollars. The two floor enterprise had several slot machines and gambling tables and there were serving girls peddling drinks to keep the gamblers happy and spending. The writer thumbed a couple of dollar bills in his pocket. It'd be so easy to just gamble them away. Have a little fun, he told himself. No, he had to spend them more wisely. He had to go by the Farmer's Market. God, that sounded boring in comparison.

"Mister! Mister!" Someone was tugging at his shirt sleeve, dragging some sense into him. He looked and saw a small girl, maybe four or five years old, tugging at his sleeve. She looked small and frail. Tears were running down her cheeks. He bent down.

"What's wrong?" He asked, real worry in his voice.

"I can't find my mommy", the girl pouted, still holding his sleeve.

"Well", the writer said, "let's see if we can find her. She can't be too far away, can she?" The girl sniveled, but said nothing more. The writer looked around.

"What's she look like?" He asked.

"She's all small and has big brown hair and she has this big ugly purse and she's-"

"We'll find her. Let's go look."

"Won't she come looking for me?"

"Well, we'll have twice as big a chance to find her if you're both looking, won't we? Anyway, I won't leave you. Don't worry." He gave her a reassuring smile and she took his hand instead of his sleeve. He had to look for a short woman, he guessed. But, why would anyone just leave their kid at a place like this. Not everyone in Rapture was an angel.

"Where were you two heading?" He asked.

"Eve's Garden. Mommy works there. But I can't find it all on my own", the girl said, drying her tears with her own sleeve. The triple X joint? Well, didn't this have 'awkward' written all over it.

"Should we go have a look? I- if she's there, I mean", he asked. She simply nodded and he led her to Eve's Garden, holding her hand the entire time. People were looking at him with disgust - and for some people, some other emotion he'd rather not know what it was - and his face was all red. But making sure the girl got to her mother safely was his goal right now, no matter what.

Eve's Garden wasn't hard to find. The neon signs shone bright in big, bold letters. Under the name of the establishment were the three X's that signified that children generally shouldn't be there. A place like this on the surface would have been shut down within a week. In any God fearing town, at least. There were posters advertising the dance club all around Fort Frolic, and indeed in several places all over Rapture. Many of them were specifically designed to draw attention to one miss Jasmine Jolene. Andrew Ryan's favorite gal.

"This is it!" The girl said as they approached, "this is where mommy works!"

Inside, the writer immediately saw miss Jolene herself, dancing around a pole on center stage. He watched the lovely young woman for a moment, but was taken back to reality by the little girl yelling:

"Mommy!" She let go of his hand and ran off. He wanted to leave immediately, but conscience told him to make sure the girl was safe. She'd run up to a short woman with really long, brown hair. She was barely clothed.

"Anna? Where have you been, li'l missy? Got me all worried", the woman said. The writer went up to her, just to check that everything was in order, and she turned to him. "And who are you? Get in line boy."

"Mommy, he's the one who helped me find you."

"That so. Anna, go to the back and play. Mommy will be there in a couple hours."

"Yay!" The girl ran off, looking happy. Her mother went on:

"You helped out, huh? Well thanks, I guess. Can I get ya anything? Dance? Show?" The woman looked anything but thankful, but thanks still meant thanks.

"Uh, no, thanks. I'm fine. Just wanted to make sure little Anna got home safely", he looked at the woman. Clearly, she was beautiful, in a traditional way. Like the kind of woman that the writer would have problems talking to, because he would find her beauty intimidating. But she had some skin condition that didn't look too appealing.

"Then leave some room for paying customers", the woman said briskly. He hurried out of the way and was just about to leave when the lady called out to him and said:

"Hey kid. Thanks." And she smiled. He never saw her or the girl again.

He felt good though, about helping the girl. It was the joy of doing a good deed. It sent good energies out into the cosmos. And while he felt good he went out from Eve's Garden - giving Jasmine Jolene what he thought was a subtle look, but which was very noticeable, as he left - and back to Pharaoh's Fortune Casino. He did have a couple of dollars in his pocket, and a few tins of potted meat in the pantry back home.

The first time the writer gambled he put a coin into the slot machine, took a deep breath, and pulled the lever. It was kind of a rush, seeing the three wheels spinning. Before they stopped, he was convinced for a moment that he was going to win the jackpot. But then they did stop and they all showed different pictures and the machine fell silent. The writer chuckled, took another coin from his pocket, and even though he knew he shouldn't have, he put it into the slot machine. The lever cranked as he pulled it. A moment later the wheels started spinning anew.

The first one turned up apple. And the second one turned up apple, too. Then came the clinking of coins as the third one came up apple as well. The writer's heart jumped at that. He won! Not the jackpot, but still. He wouldn't need to eat the potted meat tonight after all. He picked up his winnings. Two tries and a win. He'd still go out here a winner if he tried just one more time. He put two coins in this time. Double the winnings, he figured. The slot machine figured otherwise, and spat no coins at the third try. A serving girl came up to him, all smiles, with a drink on a tray.

"Hey there, big spender", she said, swinging her hips, showing a feminine quality that the writer decidedly lacked in his life, "do you want a drink? First one's on the house." She winked at him, hooking him in.

"Sure", he said. The serving girl giggled, a sound that felt a bit too made up. The fourth try on the slot machine, too, came up nothing. And the next drink cost him a dollar. Just one more time, he thought. And of course he ended up munching potted meat that evening.

The Rapture Tribune, 1954

Up through the corridor of the office of Rapture's largest newspaper, the Rapture Tribune, walked a girl whose every step was an act of confidence and independence. Though she was young - just out of her teens last year - she knew what she wanted, or so she thought. She was wearing brand new clothes that she'd saved up for at her temp job, and had a camera around her neck that her parents had given her for a birthday presents many years ago. Under her arm she had a folder with some of her best and select photos and a recommendation from her former employer. Some people looked her way as she walked, maybe even wondered who she was. She held her head high and had a determined face, rounding a corner and pretending she knew precisely where to go. She'd stepped out of the elevator on the floor that the bellman had directed her to, and walked along a corridor adorned by framed first pages of old editions of the paper. It all looked very professional. With bright, scarlet dyed hair, the girl who'd never been there stood out, but she refused to be something that you just look at.

Coming to Rapture a few years ago was a major life changer of course - leaving her friends and her fiancée and her studies behind on the surface. Her parents had said she was too young to marry Robert anyway; that she'd have to go to college first. But then they got the letter of recruitment, and brought her along. She'd cried, but not any longer. In her mindset, she was over it by now. Staying at her parents place she'd gotten a temp job as a clerk in a shop, meanwhile

studying photography on the side. Now she considered herself good enough at it to make something of it. Just to find the way.

Her heels clacked hard and loud as she walked. She wasn't used to wearing shoes with high heels and frankly, she preferred not to; she preferred a solid footing. But you do what you must in order to seem professional. The girl stopped for a few seconds, unsure of where to go, then hurried along, unwilling to seem lost. She stopped at a desk where a gentleman was sitting, working.

"Excuse me", she said with a youthful voice and a little, pensive smile, "would you be so kind and tell me where to find the editor in chief?"

The man looked up at her, saying nothing for a few moments, but looking her over. Then he said: "Sure, doll. He's up in that office right ahead." He pointed to a door behind him, just on the other end of the room. Then he got up, stretched out his hand and, clearing his throat, said:

"Name's Stan P -"

The girl didn't take his hand, but simply thanked him and walked off and up to the door ahead, confident as you please. She nodded politely at the editor in chief's secretary and walked by her without a word. The secretary hurried after her, saying: "Miss! Miss!"

But the confident girl with the camera had already reached the door. When she reached the door, she stopped and took a deep breath.

"This is what I want", she whispered to herself. Then she straightened her blouse and knocked on the door.

"Come in", said a voice on the other side of it. As she opened the door, the girl took note of the name stenciled upon it. Then she entered and saw the editor in chief sitting behind his desk, smoking a cigar and looking over a news article for publishing. She walked quickly up to the desk and stretched out her hand.

"Hello, Mr. Reid. I'm Julia Jensen."

The editor, looking a bit confused, took her hand, saying: "Good day, miss Jensen. Is there something you want?" She stretched her back and looked him dead in the eyes with a slight smile.

"I'm your new photographer", said Julia Jensen.

Artemis Suites, 1954

A furry little something had been separated from its mother at birth, being as the mother had died. It had lived for some two or three months in a janitor's closet in the basement of an Artemis Suites apartment building. For these months the janitor himself cared for the little being, feeding it with milk and keeping it warm in place of its mother. But sure enough, if life starts out bad, it's liable to turn even worse. The janitor, a surly, elderly man, straight out of the stereotype, was forced to be let go. True to the spirit of Rapture, the janitor decided to leave the furry creature to fend for itself - he couldn't well bring it home, his wife would go bananas. He'd simply carried it a few floors up on his last day, and left it in the hall for someone else to find, and then he'd forgotten all about the life that he had nurtured for months. Just like that.

"Don't you worry", he'd said, "some little girl'll find ye, and take ye home. I don't have time for the pest."

From then on, the furry little something was on its own.

For a long time the little fur ball sat there, exposed and alone. No one came, or even passed by. After an hour or so, it took its first, stumbling steps of a new life. One of independence, forced

upon it. Its stumpy little legs carried it off, down the corridor. How could it know how to survive? Along the corridor, all doors looked the same; large, imposing, each concealing a mystery and an adventure in its own right. The furry little creature had better learn what was behind them. And beyond. Before one door, the kitten sat down. This one, this door, it would be the first. It smelled nice. He began to meow, softly, and waited patiently for a minute or so. Then the door opened.

A face peeked out, wondering what that sound was. It looked to the left; no one there. It looked to the right; no one there. Might be a dense one. The kitten meowed again and stood up, tail high. The human looked down and was genuinely surprised. For a few moments they read each other. When they'd decided that they were no threats to each other's existences the writer bent down to pick the kitten up. The furry little fuss ball purred gently at that, and the writer looked into its eyes.

"Want to come in? Maybe I have something to feed you with", he said. The kitten was carried inside and the door shut behind them. Great choice, the first door. To survive in Rapture, the kitten would have to open all of them, and master what was behind.

Atlantic Express depot, 1968

Screaming in agony. What was left of a human inside the metal casing of a Big Daddy was awakened by the electric shock. There was chaos, both in and around. Splicers were shooting and firing plasmids. Among the gunfire was heard the sound of a girl screaming.

"Help! Mr. Bubbles! It's got me!" At that the Big Daddy had an instinctive flash of rage and with a wide swing of an industrial drill struck down the Little Sister's attacker. The splicer was crushed by the brute force. Another electric shock hit the ever more aware Big Daddy, who again screamed inside its suit. Still, the only sound that was heard, was a hard grunt. Seeing the Electro Bolt wielding splicer sparked a sudden memory and the Big Daddy answered by raising its own left hand and shooting a bolt of electricity back at the rogue splicer, followed by a strike of the drill. Shocked and clocked. Next to him, the girl shouted:

"Get him, Mr. B!" There was one splicer left. Wielding a Tommy gun, he had grabbed the Little Sister by the wrist and was pulling her away while she screamed.

"Come on, little girl", the splicer cackled. He saw the charging Big Daddy too late, and a second later the industrial drill was spinning inside the leadhead, twisting his intestines. The metal machine man then discarded the corpse, face down on the cold, hard floor. Merciless as could be. The Big Daddy defending his Little Sister.

With the coast clear, the newly awakened husk of a human looked around. A vast hall, ornate and beautiful, but dark and taken over by an aura of emptiness. In the middle of the hall stood a collapsed train car, since long taken out of service. All around was the musty smell of metal corroded by sea water. There were several leaks, each dripping in its own pace. At some places mere drops and at others the water gushed in, only to be drained back out to sea through the drainage system. The Atlantic Express train station gave the overwhelming feeling that the sea was reclaiming what once it lost to the greedy hands of a man.

"Mr. Bubbles?" The small girl beckoned below, "can I come up to play?"

Bending down, and stretching out his hand, heart warmed by her smile, Mr. Bubbles let the Little Sister climb up on his back. Mr. Bubbles looked out over the murky remnants of Rapture, trying hard to remember his name. Or her name, for that matter. Trying hard to remember who or what it was. Everything was heavy, and its heart was aching.

"Come on, Mr. B! Let's go find the angels. It's this way!"

Mr. Bubbles answered with an elongated, haunting sound, echoing through the train station. The... thing, metal incarnate, stepped on to the platform, his heavy feet clanking against the metal floor, and into the metallic husk of the train, still not remembering what this feeling, this pain, was. Awaken, haunted king, without your queen.

Topside, 1951

The writer stood gloomy eyed and dressed in black, and watched his father being lowered into the ground for his final rest. The coffin was polished and neat, but a few drops of rain fell upon it as it was lowered. Only the writer remained, not only at the funeral which was visited by very few people, but also in his family. No tears were shed. His father used to say 'don't cry for me. I'm already dead'. He'd been in the war and gotten home changed. The well educated man, a professor of history at the university, got home from the war different. His brother - the writer's uncle - was in the war, too. He didn't come home at all. Now the writer watched his father become one with the Earth, after struggling with health problems both physical and psychic for years. He was forty-three years old. The writer was left alone with the inheritance that had been passed on since his father's grandfather died. Dusty bones left dusty money. The writer didn't earn them. Let the bank have them.

The sky was dark grey and an autumn rain was beginning to put its cold taint on the red and yellow leaves and the whole world. He left the graveyard in silence feeling the rain thump on his hair and shoulders. Just a few days earlier he quit his job at the factory. Walked into his boss' office and said 'I quit', and that's all there was to it. Didn't show up again. He didn't even tell Johnny, with whom he usually worked.

And so that's why Johnny stopped by the writer's home on the day of the funeral. To ask where the hell he'd been. Johnny had probably noticed the writer changing when his father died a couple weeks back. Complete loneliness. Johnny was his only friend, really. They sometimes went bowling after work. But the writer wasn't in the mood for questions. In hindsight he was probably a bit short with Johnny, telling him he wanted to try for a writer. And he told him to go work at the factory if he liked it so much. And Johnny did go. The last thing Johnny said to the writer was:

"You've got a letter." Then he walked away like all the others. Or maybe it was the writer who walked away. No one wanted anything in return. He put the letter on the kitchen table and went out. He had to attend his father's funeral.

A few hours later he returned back home, all wet from the rain and somewhat tipsy from the drinks. A couple ideas for stories in his head. Something about the moon, no doubt. He came back to the empty house where he'd lived with his father during the man's last years, and found the letter still sealed and unread on the kitchen table. All that could be heard was the ticking of the clock on the wall and the sweet drumming of the rain against the window. The darkened sky cloaked the house, and indeed the entire world, in a somber veil of silence. With a sigh he took the letter and opened it.

He read the first sentence aloud: "Letter of recruitment."

PART II

Market Street, 1955

Rapture's Market Street, and the adjoining High Street, was a center of commerce, featuring many small and large businesses and shops. There was a music shop and an art gallery, book shops and DeWitt's private investigation business, as well as restaurants and Sander Cohen's eponymous club. Market Street overlooked the entire underwater city of Rapture, and the district itself was one of Rapture's finest, adorned beautifully and with a modern streamlined decor. Both it and High Street above it were a place where the finest people in the city lived and shopped with style.

The industrialist, magnate and founder - creator! - of Rapture walked among the people. Bustling business, just as he loved it. And all the advertisements peddling this product or that, always looking for an edge over the competitors. That was the spirit of entrepreneurship, and the reason Rapture existed. He'd come with Bill McDonagh who always lent an ear. 'Come along, Bill', he used to say. Right now, they were only for a walk. Ryan had a lot on his mind, but he was in an unusually cheery mood, and felt like a walk.

"Right, guv", Bill said, "I reckon it'll take a week or two before pressure is entirely -"

"Now now, Bill. We'll discuss it later", replied Andrew Ryan, "take a moment, Bill."

Bill nodded. There was a lot that he needed to talk about, but when Ryan didn't want to hear it, he wouldn't hear it. People nodded politely at them and said:

"Good day, Mr. Ryan." And Ryan was in a good mood, despite Fontaine and Lamb - seeing his city working like he intended did help - and he nodded back, smiling the faintest of smiles. In fact, he stopped by some people standing by the bookstore. The men took off their hats and Ryan shook their hands.

"How do you do? He asked politely. He could be chummy when he wanted to.

"Good day, Mr. Ryan. We were just talking about this new book. It's called The Moon. They say it's a reflection on Rapture."

"Not a bad one, I hope", Ryan said. He turned to the poster in the shop window. It showed the cover of the book, which was just a stylized picture of a yellow glowing moon, on a deep blue back drop. It said:

READ THE EXCITING NOVEL BY RAPTURES UP AND COMING YOUNG WRITER
THE MOON, BY CHRIS PERKINS

"No, no. They say he's captured the very essence of Rapture", one of the men said. It sounded almost like he was advertising the book.

"Me missus likes it", Bill said, "romantic, she says."

"Well, Bill's wife likes it, so it must be good", joked Ryan, "I'll have to make time to read it."

The men nodded and Ryan wished them all a productive work's day.

"See, Bill", he said as they moved on, "Rapture is doing well, despite all... we'll deal with the parasites, but a good mood shouldn't be wasted on that. The city will forget them. Rapture will endure. There's no place for parasites."

Bill just nodded. Ryan only wanted to think aloud, to ensure himself that everything would be all right. It's in the human nature. Ryan had noticed the word young on the poster, but it slipped his mind just as quick. He took some pride in the book, though - inspiring the like minded. The

writer should not fear the censor, but a writer who 'captures the very essence of Rapture' might be one he could endorse, or even employ. He thought a moment of going to Eve's Garden, to see Jasmine. But he shouldn't when Bill was with him. Instead he said:

"Should we go see Sander, Bill? I hear he's working on a new show."

"Uh, sure, guv. Why not." Bill sighed unnoticeably. Didn't like that prat Sander Cohen himself. A marvel really, that Andrew Ryan did, Bill thought. He wanted to go see Elaine and Sophie, but he went with Andrew Ryan instead, even though there were a million things he needed to do. And probably a million things that Ryan needed to do.

The Rapture Tribune, 1955

There were some murmurs of discontent in Rapture. Some stuff was bubbling. Unions and the like. From what the writer could make out, Andrew Ryan was displeased. Talks of unions in his utopia. He'd take care of it. Ryan was a brilliant man and his city was blooming. Some incidents should be expected. They were unavoidable. In fact, there was alarmingly much of it, especially among the poor parts of the city; plasmid addicts running rampant, random acts of senseless violence, shootings... he'd seen some of it up close, living in Artemis Suites. He was still lucky though, to live in a slightly higher end part of it. A few buildings down there'd be five families to a two roomer and only two people of them drawing a wage.

It was three years now since the writer came to Rapture and his novel had been published about a week ago. He also wrote a column for the Rapture Tribune since about two years. Until then he'd been living sparse on saved money and by publishing his short pulp fiction stories that brought some income. That was where he got some inside information on what went on in the city, even though he didn't take part in investigatory journalism.

Well. Maybe none of that mattered. To him it was usually what was here and now that mattered. What was here and now was the typewriter and his job. He was trying to come up with a witty remark to end this week's column. But he kept getting distracted. By Julia Jensen. She was his boss' daughter's best friend, and she, too, wrote for the Tribune. She was a journalist and a photographer, and from what he'd read, a good one for being so young. She was only twenty-three years old. The writer watched her, typing dutifully on her typewriter. She had auburn red hair, neatly put into a ponytail. Bangs were hanging across her face, but she was so into what she was doing that she didn't notice.

Her face was entirely concentrated. She actually looked rather feminine, with soft round cheeks and big blue eyes. And he noticed her lips, rich and full, and colored red. Her pale complexion made a somewhat large contrast. And Julia had a slender neck and a youthful body. Not that he looked at that. No, she was a co-worker, and there were codes of etiquette to adhere to, after all. She was staring intently at the paper in the typewriter through a pair of glasses. As the writer watched, she suddenly muttered and drew the paper out, made it into a ball and threw it in the bin on the floor next to her.

"Get over it pal. It ain't gonna happen." It was Stanley Poole. He stood by the writer's desk and smiled mockingly. He continued: "a dame like that, it just ain't gonna happen. You ain't her type. And even if you were, she'd be way outta your league, pal."

Poole was acting like he was the king of the world around the writer. A confidence thing. The writer knew that Poole was a bit like himself around others. Poole wasn't a handsome man. His rat like appearance and bent back told the writer that if Julia Jensen was out of anyone's league,

it was Poole's. Julia sneezed over at her seat, and blushed. Poole turned to look, and then looked back at the writer.

"Besides", he said, "I have it on good authority that li'l miss Jensen is hot for someone else." The writer looked skeptically at Poole. The man must be twice her age, for pity's sake! When the writer didn't answer, Poole went on: "yep... li'l miss Jensen has the sweets for yours truly."

"Eat your heart out, Poole", the writer said and got up from his seat.

Behind her desk, Julia Jensen sat working. She was thinking hard about how to form the sentence. Mostly she was a photographer for the Tribune, but she also had to write some small articles and notices here and there. It was frustrating, though - she had no patience for penning; she was a photographer. She noticed in the corner of her eye, how her colleague Stanley Poole was talking to the new fellow, who called himself a writer. She even noticed how they nodded in her direction, but took no further notice of it, concentrated on her work as she was. She mumbled the sentence she'd just written.

"Yesterday afternoon, a few ladies had decided on occupying Market Street by way of protesting in the nude..."

Then, muttering to herself, she yanked the sheet of paper from the typewriter and crumbled it. How would you ever make a small, insignificant demonstration at an art gallery into exciting news? The naked ladies had been politely escorted from the scene - no dramatic shootouts or rogue constables at all! Leaning back, she took a deep breath.

Looking over at them again, the writer seemed angry at Poole, or at least annoyed. She understood him; Stan Poole wasn't the nicest person she knew. A sycophant when he could gain on it, and a rat if he needed a way out. Plus, he actually looked a little bit like a rat. The writer seemed nice enough, though. A shy, introverted person, it seemed. She'd only spoken to him shortly a few times, but she had the feeling he was crushing on her. It was in the way he blushed and avoided looking her in the eyes. Julia noticed herself smiling when she thought about him, too. Well, he seemed an okay sort. Maybe she should ask him out for coffee? No, better let him ask her, if he was interested. Because she might be. Sighing and placing a red bang of hair neatly behind her ear, she returned to her task, mumbling the words as she typed them.

"Naked ladies cause a stir... art gallery exposed."

That could work. Now just the rest of the article left.

Riding the elevator at the Rapture Tribune building was usually silent and comfy, but today it happened that both Poole and Julia Jensen was riding it, too. The writer stood in the back and listened to Poole bragging and coming on to Julia. He probably wouldn't be able to do that if the writer wasn't around. Evidently, he was unsuccessful. After Poole having finished a little speech about his 'extravagant' apartment she finally spoke:

"Why, it sounds simply marvelous, Mr. Poole. But say, won't you feel awfully lonely there tonight?" At that she took a step closer to Poole, looking into his eyes for a moment. Almost as if she was showing off her seductive skills. Then she stepped back.

"Or will your mother be there to keep you company?" Poole's jaw dropped as the elevator door opened. Julia stepped out and turned to them once again.

She said: "have a nice evening, Mr. Poole. And do say hello to your mother from me." Julia nodded and looked at the writer. Their eyes met and she smiled, slightly. Then she looked at the floor and blushed slightly for an indecisive moment. The writer remained silent, and as luck would have it, so did Poole.

Back at his apartment the place looked big and empty. He'd never had an easy time making friends, and moving to Rapture hadn't changed that. He knew some of the guys from the Tribune, but having Stanley Poole as your best friend was not in the cards. He thought of Julia Jensen. She was a lovely young woman. And he hoped he could muster enough courage to tell her so.

Atlantic Express depot, 1968

"Hello? Who is in there?" White noise blended with the sound of a voice in Mr. Bubbles' ears. White noise crackled and sputtered and the voice seemed lost. Then it returned, the frequency right and the signal strong.

"I see you are awakened", it was a woman, speaking in an eastern European accent, "I do not know your name, and I am sorry. But I do wish to help you." She sounded sad. She continued: "you are a Big Daddy. A bouncer. Und you are powerful. The girl with you, she is a Little Sister und you are her protector. She gathers ADAM for Sofia Lamb, but she is an innocent und I am here to help her. If you bring her to me I will help you to find out who you are. I believe, there is a cure for you, as well."

"Mr. Bubbles!" The girl yelled from the other end of the train car, "come quick! There's an angel here!" She was bending over a corpse, looking happy.

"Quick!" The woman on the radio said, "when she gathers, the splicers will come for her! Do not let them take her! I will explain more, but for now you must protect the little one."

The Little Sister held a large syringe attached to a baby's bottle, which she proceeded to thrust deep into the neck of the corpse. Immediately the bottle started filling up with blood, glowing red with the ADAM contained within it. And from outside the train car, shouting voices could be heard. The splicers were coming.

The first one opened the door of the train and noticed only the Little Sister, and not the drill swinging it back out on to the platform. As the next one got the same treatment, two others came in through the door at the other end of the car. One yelled, getting Mr. Bubbles' attention. He rushed over, the ground shaking under his heavy feet. The first of the two splicers wielded a shotgun and he struck her twice, then finished her off on the floor. Meanwhile, the other one was beating at him with a wrench, metal clanking against metal. Mr. Bubbles lifted the splicer up high with his left hand, high into the air. The splicer yelled in fear. Incomprehensible gibberish. The drill made short work of him.

Lastly, over by the Little Sister, tugging at her arm, was a thin and squeaky one. Its face was wildly deformed due to the excessive plasmid use. In its free hand it held a fish gutting hook. It cackled and laughed. Until Mr. Bubbles lifted his hand and fired a bolt of electricity at it. He felt lightning. The shock incapacitated it briefly, making it dance. It recovered quickly though, and in retaliation flung the curved hook towards Mr. Bubbles. It hit with tremendous speed, slightly piercing the metal skin and getting stuck in the process. The spider splicer came after its blade, kicking Mr. Bubbles with both of its legs. It looked as if it flew through the air. When it landed on solid ground, Mr. Bubbles again made it dance using the power of plasmids. Then the drill carved through its flesh, finally killing it. The air in the train car was oozing with death and the iron smell of blood. It was eerily silent, except for the drill revving down and finally stopping completely. And of course the happy chirping of the Little Sister.

"Mr. Bubbles! I'm ready!" She said, as if nothing was wrong. As if nothing had happened.

"She is safe! Und not a scratch on her", the woman on the radio said, with a sigh of relief, "I am upstairs, in the ticket booth. Please, bring the little one to me."

Mr. Bubbles grunted and picked up the Little Sister to let her ride on his shoulders.

"As I said, I do not know your name", the woman said, "so for now you are Herr Bubbles. My name, it is Tenenbaum."

All the haunted tears and woes, in the dark at night, they turn so cold.

Sofia Lamb's office, 1955

Giving something away for free went against the spirit of Rapture. Accepting something that was free, was the very spirit of Rapture. Dr. Sofia Lamb held free mental counseling on Sundays, offering people advice. He didn't quite know why, but the writer had come for some reason and was now lying in Lamb's couch feeling like a mental patient. He felt exposed and vulnerable. Not a good feeling. He wasn't about to spill his guts to a complete stranger.

"Tell me, Mr. Perkins, why is it that you came to Rapture?" Lamb asked. She had a British accent, and her voice was formal, and cold. It seemed to go perfectly with her minute clothing style and neat way; nothing seemed to be uncalculated. Everything with her was exactly the way she meant it to be.

"I got the letter of recruitment. Just like everyone else", the writer answered, dodging the question.

"That's a cheap answer, Mr. Perkins. Why would you accept the recruitment? What is it that drove you to come here?"

The writer was silent for a few seconds. Then he said: "To write. Begin something that resembles a new life."

"You aspire to write then? Artistry?"

"Yes. It's going pretty good. That's not really what's frustrating."

"I see", Lamb said. She tapped her pen once, and twice. "But you feel unable to establish yourself, in order to begin anew. You seem a person who would not rush into things without thought. Do you feel as if Ryan fooled you in making you come here, with promises of gold?"

She's trying to put that thought in your head.

The writer didn't answer. Lamb frowned. There wasn't much of a conversation. Lamb asked some questions and he answered as easily as he could, and revealing as little as possible. On her end, Lamb got a bit frustrated. These shut in types did. But she did enjoy the challenge.

"I get the feeling", she said, after he'd shared nothing but silence for a minute, "that you're holding something important back. Why did you come to see me today?"

"Uh, it was free?"

Lamb frowned. "Mr. Perkins", she said sternly.

He sighed, "I wanted to know what's wrong with me."

"Everybody does. What exactly are you referring to?"

"I can't seem to be able to talk. You know, around people."

"This much I construed already. Social anxiety is normal among many people, though it is not often spoke of. People who suffer from social anxiety are often seen as abnormal, a great deal of them see themselves as abnormal. But introversion might well be linked to some traumatic event in your childhood. Tell me, who is it you wish to talk to, more exactly?"

"I, I feel like that's irrelevant", he deflected.

"It's a woman", Lamb said, slightly annoyed. The writer just nodded. This man was not what you might call a winner, Lamb thought. But she saw some use in him, if he could be convinced to join the Rapture Family.

"Mr. Perkins", she said, "in Ryan's Rapture, there is no room for those fall down. The moment one falls from the grid, getting back in is impossible. But in the Rapture Family, we help each other through strength in unity and metamorphosis; we grow as one, though we are many. Unlike Ryan's philosophy, where each man is to fend for himself and take without giving, the Rapture Family strives to evolve through a social conscience, in which everyone has an equal part. I am extending to you a formal invitation to join us, at my artist's retreat in Dionysus Park. It is a place for growth, where we would help you overcome your social anxieties."

"Is that so?" He asked, crossing his arms. She noticed this. He continued: "And what do you want from me?"

"Your loyalty, Mr. Perkins. To me, and to the Rapture Family. I do not demand an answer straight away, I only ask that you think of what I propose."

"Frankly doctor, it sounds like you're trying to convert me", the writer said, "and my old man always taught me to think for myself. I guess he did something right."

Lamb frowned, then said: "As I said, I ask that you think about it. It is a way for you, Mr. Perkins, to not only help yourself, but to help Rapture."

"Fine", the writer said, sighing, "I'll think about it. You were kind enough to see me for free, it's the least I can do, right?"

"Fair enough", Lamb said, smirking in the corner of her eye. Before he left, she presented him with a blue butterfly broche to wear at their next meeting, if he was interested in joining the Rapture Family. On his way home, he threw it in a trash bin, and he never went to see Dr. Lamb again. The woman was a collectivist and cult leader. He didn't have the nerve for it.

Arcadia, 1956

Serene and simple was the green garden of Arcadia in Rapture. The nature there was only simulated, of course, but Julie Langford had done an outstanding job bringing the plants and trees to life in the underwater metropolis. The forests of Arcadia did serve an important role to the city, producing all its oxygen, and the many bees from the bee farm nearby pollinated the plant life. Julia Jensen had come here for some peace of mind and to take some photos of the underwater forest. The thought seemed impossible, yet it was true. The walkway of Rolling Hills was nice and all, maybe romantic, Julia thought, but she walked on the side of it, on the grass, touching the bark on the trees. It was peaceful to come here to avoid thinking. For several years now she'd been on her own, for the most part. She hadn't really dealt with all the pent up emotions of leaving the surface. She could see a shrink of course, but pay from the Rapture Tribune didn't really make her a rich woman. Besides, she felt better and better about living in Rapture. Seeing Arcadia really helped, too. She stopped by a bush to look at a bee gathering nectar in one of its flowers.

"Stay there, little bee", she whispered as she readied her camera. She turned the objective to get a good focus. She was saving up for a new Rapture made camera. When the bee was clear in focus she clicked the shutter button. Of course, that's exactly when the bee flew away and a moping Julia was left with a photo of a boring flower and a blurry bee.

As she continued onward along the path, the trees actually seemed looming and towering above her, blending out the light and creating an odd sense of claustrophobia and a darkness that didn't quite seem real. It felt as if though there was something else there with her. It was

odd, like an actual forest, but without the slightest gust of wind. The tree branches were all still and unmoving. She ignored the feeling and went on, a bit faster than before.

But the feeling persisted still, and soon enough, she heard a voice. She stopped to listen, and heard that it was a sweet little voice that spoke as if half singing; a child humming a tune. As she drew closer to the child, or whatever it was, she found that her heart was beating rather fast. Soon she was overcome with a faint but foul odor, that began to manifest itself, as if something had died and begun to decompose. The towering trees seemed all the more unreal as she continued onward, towards the child. Darkness almost completely covered the path, odd though it seemed. Then, finally, she saw her, around the bend and in a clearing where there was a bit more lamplight to shine upon her. A sickly pale little girl, wearing nothing but a ragged little dress, dirty with dust and mud. Dirty, blonde locks held together by a once pretty bow, and glowing yellow eyes. It was a Little Sister.

At first, Julia was petrified. Then her curious side took over and she readied her camera, sneaking closer.

"Where angels fall, the roses grow tall", declared the little girl in a sweet, singing voice. As Julia came closer, she could see what the Little Sister was doing, and it made her sick. The girl knelt before a body and drew glowing blood from it, using a large, dirty syringe, giggling and humming her childish tune as she worked. Julia approached the girl warily, knowing full well that these girls used to be accompanied by Big Daddies. The girl, humming her solemn tune, did not notice Julia approaching. She got really close, before she knelt down, still on her guard. She held up the camera to snap a photo. The girl simply ignored her and kept drawing blood. The shutter snapped and Julia snuck even closer, heart racing in her chest. All of a sudden, the very air was tainted with a mournful, metallic groan and Julia almost swallowed her heart and fell to the ground.

"Almost done", said the Little Sister in reply to the sound. Julia looked around, terrified, but could not see the originator of the sound. She decided to snap one more photo of the girl before she left. The Little Sister had finished drawing blood and now raised the container, to which a child's bottle was attached, to her mouth. Staring as if petrified, Julia could scarcely believe it. The girl was drinking the blood! It seemed like the girl wasn't human at all, but something decidedly alien inside a girl's body. She took another photo of the blood drinking Little Sister and then stood up.

Just then the Little Sister spoke up: "Mr. Bubbles? Where are you? There's something here! Help!" She began to cower before Julia, as if Julia was a monster who'd come to take her away, making Julia shrug and she decided to leave, quickly. The Little Sister continued shouting and then, seemingly from out of nowhere, her guardian Big Daddy appeared; a large monster of metal, dressed in an oversized diving suit, its porthole glowing yellow. It wielded a great, big mining drill on its right hand, and wore big air tubes on its back. It was ready to defend its Little Sister - and Julia stood between them. The Big Daddy groaned, the sensors in its porthole turning from a neutral yellow into a steaming red as it began to rage. It raised its drill high in the air.

At the last second, Julia realized what was about to happen, and jumped to the side, scraping her knee on the ground. The industrial drill hit the ground and cracked it with a loud crash. Julia, scared out of her senses, hurried to her feet and began to run back from where she came. She heard the cry of the Big Daddy behind her, but didn't stop to look back. She just ran, grasping her camera tight and fighting to hold back the tears. She didn't stop until she got out of the simulated forest. Then she stopped, panted and cried.

"Hey, hey! What's the matter?" Someone said, bringing Julia back to humanity. Julia looked up, seeing a woman, looking confused. It was good to see someone who was not a product of a laboratory somewhere.

"What's the matter?" The woman asked again, touching Julia on the shoulder. Julia panted and sniffled, but took a deep breath and kept it together.

"There was one of those horrible brutes, a Big Daddy", she explained, "and one of the little girls. It, it attacked me, I-"

"Not again", the woman said, "well you're safe now. They're not following you anymore. Come with me, I'll get you a band aid for your knee."

"Oh", Julia said, drying a tear. She hadn't even noticed the scraped knee at all, until the nice lady pointed it out. Then it started to sting. She thanked the woman and went with her to a first aid station. On the way, the woman tried to make her feel better by talking about other things.

"My name's Langford", she said, "Julie Langford. Curator and head scientist here in Arcadia."

"I'm Julia Jensen", Julia said.

"It's nice to meet you Julia", Langford went on, shaking her head, "I'm sorry you had to come across one of those Big Daddies. More and more of them every day now, in Rapture. I wonder what it is that they do. I've heard they gather ADAM, somehow. But you should be safe as long as you let them mind their own business. Why exactly did they attack you?"

"I got between them, I think."

"Ah, that explains it. Those Big Daddies protect the Little Sisters with their lives if they have to. I'm sorry."

Julia didn't mention what she'd seen the Little Sister do. She didn't answer at all. The nice lady Langford followed Julia out of the park and made sure that she was fine before they parted. At least there was some humanity left, Julia thought. She was still all shook up, but she got home keeping a straight face. When she got home, she fell down exhausted in her soft bed. Her legs were shaking and she was still terrified. But she was alive, and she had a few good photos and an experience with no counterpart.

The writer's apartment, 1956

Tyger purred and licked his paws. Then he used them to clean the back of his head; he had some standards. Couldn't run around all dirty. He was lying in a comfortable bed, enjoying life without care, as cats do. Tyger was a perfectly content tabby, for the moment. The writer, whom Tyger had blessed with his presence, was typing away on his typewriter. Typical human behavior; always ignoring the kitty cats. Oh, Tyger had more humans, behind other doors, but only his writer called him Tyger. The lady down the hall called him Max, or Marx, or something, after one of those tedious human philosophers. Then there was that blonde fellow who was a bit too into plasmids - plasmids... turned humans into wizards. Tyger knew not what they did to felines - who had knighted Tyger.

When he felt that he was all nice and clean, and well rested, Tyger stood up on all fours, stretched his slender body and nimble legs. Then he yawned and jumped off the bed and onto the floor.

"Time to wake up, huh?" The human said. Tyger meowed softly in reply, turning on the charm. It was time for food, he thought.

"Food? Not yet. Just one more page. The Hawk and Isabela are about to, uh, you know..." the writer mumbled, blushing. Blushing, even though he was talking to a cat. Tyger meowed dismissively. One page? More like one eternity.

"No? Don't like it? It's not like she's an actual hawk, it's just a code name." Tyger turned around, showing his backside whilst he stretched some more.

"She's a spy, it's perfectly- aw, you're right. This story smells." The human tore the sheet of paper out of the typewriter and crumbled it, muttering to himself. At that, Tyger hurried on his silent paws over to the human's food storage. He knew there was a half eaten tin of tuna in there.

"Right then. Food it is." The human joined the hungry feline and opened the refrigerator. He rummaged through it a bit in search for something edible.

"Tuna? Yuck! That's for you. I better get over to the Farmer's Market, this cupboard is emptier than Andrew Ryan's heart." The writer human served Tyger the tuna he deserved, and then continued talking to himself. Like Tyger was listening. Honestly. Tuna, for crying out loud!

Don's Gymnasium, 1956

For a big man like Lloyd Bonham boxing seemed like it'd be a piece of cake. A real cakewalk. Been a fan of boxing his whole life, but being as how he was poor as a church rat growing up he'd never been able to take proper training. Except for the other boys of course, but they usually went down in the first round; one punch and it was a K.O. And with the Japs he carried a Browning. Not much of a sport.

"You're only striking with your hands", Bonham said, "gotta use your whole body, like I showed ya."

Now Bonham was too old to take up boxing, nearing his fifties. He was already sporting gray hairs. But in his free time he was a boxing trainer at Don's Gymnasium, near where he lived. Mostly, he taught what he'd picked up from an old military buddy named Franklin who used to be a boxer. That is, until a Jap shell blew him to bits. Bonham didn't talk aloud about working at the gym; volunteering was not very Rapture-like.

"I can't do it boss", the kid he was training said. Prangley, his name was. Colored kid.

"You can", Bonham said. He was wearing trainer gloves, standing in front of his student. Real slow, Bonham made a punch in the air, turning his whole body as he punched. "Like so. See how I turn my entire torso by the hip? And how I bend at the knee?"

"Uh huh..." Prangley said, looking a bit confused.

"You did it last week", Bonham recalled, "and the week before that. How come you've forgotten, when you could do it no problem one week and two weeks ago?"

Prangley closed his eyes and took a breath. Then he repeated Bonham's air punch, bending perfectly at the knee and turning his torso to give his right hook the perfect angle.

"See", Bonham said, "now let's go. Try to move with me."

Prangley began to throw some good punches into Bonham's gloves, and even followed when Bonham backed up.

"See!"

"Uh huh", Prangley was panting, keeping the punching up while watching his steps. "I'm burning gasoline! Think I can beat Mikkelson this Saturday?"

"What?" Bonham lowered his hands. Prangley stood up straight, sweating and panting.

"I'm up against him on Saturday, at the Fighting McDonagh's -"

"We've just gotten started, Prangley", Bonham interrupted, "you won't be ready for months. Besides, Mikkelson's out of your weight class."

"It ain't like he's the champ or anything. Besides, I got a secret weapon."

Bonham frowned. "What secret weapon?" He crossed his arms and leaned back, skeptical.

"Wait right there, I'll go get it", Prangley said, gleeful as a kid, and rushed off to his pack, just outside the ring. A few moments later he came back with a syringe in his hands. A tonic. The processed ADAM that could give a man super powers. Bonham didn't know quite how to react at seeing his student holding it up in front of him. Following a half minute of silence, he said:

"That's cheating."

"Not if they don't find out. Besides, it's legal for this tournament. C'mon, share it with me boss. You look like you could use a little more muscle. You look sorta soft."

Bonham looked at the serum. It was pale green in color, and have out a sickly glow. It was the kind that improved a man's physical prowess. Like speed, or resilience to incoming blows, or even his strength.

"W-which kind is it?" He asked, heart in his throat.

"Gives ya super strength", Prangley said, "can I try it boss? I swear I can beat Mikkelson."

Bonham didn't answer immediately. He watched the green ooze pulsing in the syringe, wanting out. Wanting to improve. Then he cleared his throat and looked around real quick.

"I'll go first", he said, "see how it feels. Might be it's no good for a sportsman such as yourself." Disappointed, Prangley handed the syringe over to Bonham. The constable hadn't even thought of splicing before. *If you hesitate you die! Point, shoot and duck, boys!*

Bonham put the needle to his skin, and - *don't hesitate* - spliced. Every muscle in his body grew with the ADAM pouring in his veins, improving him. He felt himself towering, a usurper in his own body stretching the limits of human physics. His head spun faster and faster and faster. Inside his head he screamed; not of angst, but of ecstasy. Suddenly, the spinning stopped. Then there he stood, same as before, and he drew the needle out of his skin.

"How's it feel boss?"

"Not bad", Bonham mumbled, shaky voice. He handed the syringe back. There was about half left. Prangley took it, but before he could use it, Bonham said, "I'm gonna try it out, see what it does."

Then, without thinking, Bonham struck Prangley straight over the jaw. Didn't even feel the punch in his knuckles. Prangley went down like a sack of yesterdays potatoes, and for a moment, Bonham stood looming over him, victorious like.

"Shit kid", he said the moment he realized what he'd done, "I'm sorry." He hurried to help Prangley to his feet.

"It's awight boss", the kid answered, wiping away blood that was pouring from his nose. "Ow! By dose!" He grimaced in pain.

"Is it broken?" Bonham said, worried. Prangley nodded. "Shit", Bonham went on, "just lean back, I'll get ya to a med pavilion."

Bonham guided Prangley out of the boxing ring and helped him out the door. He could still feel his muscles growing and getting stronger.

Farmer's Market, 1956

The Farmer's Market was the best place for food in Rapture. Sure, there were local grocery stores, but here you could get fresh vegetables and bread, and other stuff that almost seemed like a luxury in Rapture. The writer kind of felt like people were looking as he walked around. He'd gotten a little publicity from the book, but he wasn't a recognizable face. People didn't really care. He was looking at a fresh tunafish when he heard Julia Jensen's voice.

"Mr. Perkins?" She said. He looked up, blushing as he saw her. Odd, really, how a woman could be out shopping for good and still be so gracefully beautiful. She was looking at him with a slight smile and big, curious eyes. She wore a dark blue dress with white spots. Fitting her tightly, it showed her forms. The forms of a young woman in good shape. It was cut low in front, showing off her natural bosoms.

"Mr. Perkins. Fancy meeting you here."

"Miss Jensen, I'm sorry, I wasn't expecting, uh, I mean, I didn't see-"

"Oh, Mr. Perkins, no need to make a fuss", she said, and giggled, "I simply noticed you and stopped to say hi. A polite little stop, if you will."

"Well, hi", he said, trying his best to smile naturally. Christ, how was he supposed to know what to say? He had no social skills. Luckily, she went on:

"Oh! Mr. Perkins, have you met Sandy Reid? She's Mr. Reid's daughter, you know?" Next to Julia stood Sandy, daughter of the editor in chief of the Rapture Tribune. A tall young woman, with somewhat feminine features and a harsh way.

"Miss Reid, of course. Pardon me, I didn't see you there", the writer said politely, now even more nervous than before. Talking down the boss's daughter and all.

"Don't sweat it", Sandy Reid said nonchalantly and turned to Julia, "so, Julie. This him?"

Julia's face became instantly red. "Shush, Sandy!" And she gave Sandy a stare that could kill.

Shortly put, the writer had never felt more awkward in his life. But their conversation was interrupted, as the shop clerk demanded:

"So, you want the tuna or not?" In a typically annoyed Brooklyn accent.

"Oh, forgive me", Julia said, "here we are, babbling away while you-"

"*You* are babbling", Sandy pointed out.

"Anyways, I shall see you at the Tribune. Good day, Mr. Perkins."

"Of course", the writer said, relieved, "miss Jensen. Miss Reid." They walked off and he turned to the salesman, who said:

"Fuckin' finally. It'll be four bucks."

"W-what?"

"The tuna, ladies man. You wannit or not?"

"Y-yes, of course." He paid the man and went on his way. Naturally he happened upon Julia Jensen and Sandy Reid again, on the way out of Farmer's Market. Luckily they were heading in the other direction, and so he only took great care to nod politely, while noticing miss Reid's mischievous smile and miss Jensen's blush. How many words had he spoken during that conversation, really? Enough to call it a conversation? It wasn't that he didn't want to talk to them. He just didn't know how. What to say or how to act. He had no idea what people usually talked about these days. Not much weather when you looked up. And still, he felt a tingle when he realized she stopped to talk to him.

He took the long, scenic route home, to watch the city. The art deco facades, the Manhattan like skyline that was showcased through enormous windows and the vast halls decorated with fine statues and beautiful decorations. Impossible to build, but it was real. Those Wales brother truly must be geniuses. The writer stopped by a window overlooking downtown Rapture, just to stare at it. Neon signs displaying company names in bright colors and the ocean worked exceptionally well together against the gloomy city skyline. It was grand. Watching it, he decided that he had to start dare talk to people, and to Julia Jensen, and to find what you really saw when you looked up.

Siren Alley, 1956

The red haired woman looked out of place, and she was. She'd heard stories about Siren Alley that had spiked her curiosity. Maybe that wouldn't be a good enough reason for anyone else, but for her it was. She didn't see many women around that weren't whores. And those didn't exactly follow the dress code she was accustomed to.

Julia Jensen's unusual curiosity and unique lust for exploration had led her into a number of odd situations. Like the time she'd ended up examining a line of fishermen who thought she was a nurse. All she'd done was to go down to Fontaine Fisheries, all curious like, just to watch what went on there. They must have been expecting a nurse or a doctor for some kind of check up, odd as that might sound, because the moment they saw her the one that was obviously the head honcho yelled to his mates to get in a straight line.

"All right, li'l betty's here to check up on stuff for doc Tenenbaum!"

With no way to get out of the situation, she simply played along and acted as if she knew what she was doing as the fishermen stood still, everyone showing her different body parts. Boy, did they smell! And the lumps one of them had on his private area made her steer clear of those parts of Rapture since then. But, finding herself in Siren Alley was something else entirely. Of all the things she'd encountered, this one was all new to her: human sexuality.

She walked slowly, almost hugging the wall. Trying not to stand out, but doing exactly that. As usual, she had her camera with her, hoping to get a few shots. Of what exactly she wasn't sure. The depravity? A spider sitting neatly on the wall, doing no one any harm, made her jump out into the walkway. No one else would have noticed it. But she did. Like every sane person, Julia Jensen was deathly afraid of spiders. That's why she loved Rapture. Spiders to a minimum. Mostly. But she lived in constant fear that they one day infiltrate the city. Like Ryan and his parasites. Only hers was a rational fear. She smashed that bastard dead. Someone gave her a look, but overall, no one seemed to really care. Over by the Pearl the women were more fancily dressed, like they were the better whores around here. The Mermaid Lounge seemed an okay enough place though, almost like it could be a refuge from the rest of the place. A lot of shops were still in business around, too, but the whole place had been turning into more of a red light district as of late, with businesses going down and violence and tensions in the city spiraling up. In one of the dark alleyways stood a smoking woman, barely dressed and leaning against the wall. As Julia passed, the woman said:

"Evenin' sweetie. Twenty bucks for a quick rumble." Julia turned around, startled and looked at the woman who simply blew smoke into her face.

"Excuse me?" Julia said, coughing.

"Look, doll. I'm providing a service here. Either you pay up or get outta the way so someone else can pay up."

"Are you offering-?"

"You got the money or not?"

Julia nervously started to look through her purse. "T-twenty dollars?" She produced a couple of Rapture dollar bills with Andrew Ryan's face on them.

"Yeah, that's right", the woman said, suddenly a lot friendlier, "thirty if you wanna record it with your fancy camera." Thirty dollars was so little money, Julia thought as she handed over the bills. Managing a smile, the whore took Julia by the hand and led her to some shack of a building. Part of Siren Alley was used as a living quarter. She lived here.

Some thirty feet away from where the young, beautiful redhead was standing, two young men were sitting, leaning against the wall. Both had cancerous blotches on their faces, and one was shooting blue liquid up his arm using a large syringe. Leaving half of the EVE he handed the syringe over to his friend. The other one spliced as well, using the same syringe, and they started to quiver and shake slightly, as their rush started and their DNA realigned itself. While the second one shook with the approaching high, the first seemingly realized he'd just handed over half of his hard gotten EVE to someone else.

"Hey Billy!" He shouted, getting up, "ya stealin' my EVE, ya lousy good for nothin'?" The other one contorted and shook for another moment. Then, suddenly, he opened his eyes wide.

"Whaddaya mean, Sam? We're sharing", his voice smooth and slow, as if trying to talk quickly while his body was in slow motion. He looked up and smiled, his eyes dazed.

"You're stealin' my EVE! I oughta burn ya into a crisp!" The splicer named Sam shouted. He took a step backwards, rage and the rush of the high shining in his eyes, and stretched out his hand against where Billy was sitting. For a moment his hands glowed, and then a small flame was ignited in his palm. Within a moment the flame grew to a ball of fire.

"I'll teach ya to steal from me!" Sam screamed and hurled the ball of fire at his friend. Only, Billy wasn't there anymore. Flickering blackness shifted in the air where he'd been just a moment before, and the incinerating flame hit the wall instead. Just then Sam's splicer friend appeared out of thin air, specks of light and darkness swirling in the air, behind Sam. He held a knife in his hand and put it to Sam's throat.

"I ain't stealin' nothing, Sam. We're sharing", Billy said, his eyes open wide and pupils small as dots. Then he cut Sam's throat and watched the blood spurt out at the ground. The whores around stared, appalled. People were watching Sam's teleporting friend. And Billy was watching back, for a moment. Then, again, he simply wasn't there.

The whore put out her cigarette in an ashtray she kept inside the shabby apartment. It had two rooms and was a complete mess. Things lying about, since no one cared about picking them up and dust collecting, since no one cared about cleaning. The ashtray looked like it hadn't been emptied in a long time.

"Well", the woman said, looking at Julia, who looked around nervously, "you don't really look like the type who'd like women." Julia didn't answer, she just tugged her own blouse.

"Don't you worry, I'm gentle and kind", the whore said, "or I can be a hellcat. If that's what you want. You lookin' for a spanking? Been a bad girl?"

"I don't, uh..." Such talk made Julia blush. She had thought of such things, but never delved into it, as she was now on the verge of doing. The whore smiled, genuinely amused.

"Just come here and ol' Rose will give you an all different kinda blush." She stepped close and grabbed the young woman's collar. The shabby living hole wasn't romantic, the entire setting was disturbing if anything. That's where Julia Jensen became a woman. For the cost of thirty Rapture dollars.

Back out in the marketplace Sam's corpse had stopped its death throes and was lying face down in his own blood. The wall he'd shot fire at was smoking, but was not on fire. Siren Alley truly was a wonderful place to lose one's innocence.

On the second floor of one of the dingy apartments in the red painted district known as Siren Alley overlooking the market street below, was Sandy Reid. She was Julia Jensen's best friend, the daughter of the editor in chief of the Rapture Tribune, and one of the working girls under Daniel Wales' employ. Neither her father nor Julia knew of it, and now Sandy watched her best

friend down there, speaking to one of the girls. On the bed, putting his socks and shoes on, was her last customer. A man of about fifty, who seemed rather successful, wearing a full suit and tie. He was probably rich. Rich guys had the weirdest kinks. He'd strangled her during the act. Choked her until she almost passed out. As she watched Julia down below, she stroked her still aching neck and throat.

"I know you liked it", the customer said, "and you don't have to pretend you didn't, because you'll get no sympathy from me."

She just gave him a quick glance before turning to look out the window again. Julia was walking off with the whore she'd been talking to. In a way, Sandy wasn't surprised. She knew about Julia's many excursions now and then, but she also knew that Julia didn't have any experience in this.

"Hey? You listening?" Her customer barked. He got up from the bed and stroked the crease in the suit neatly.

"That's my friend down there", Sandy replied, silently and absentminded. The man walked imposingly over to the window and looked out.

"Who?" He demanded.

Sandy crossed her arms, nodded in Julia's direction, and said: "The redhead."

"Nice", the customer said, tying his tie, "next time, she gets to join us."

"Very funny", Sandy said, grinding her teeth.

"You think I'm joking?" The customer said, "I'm going to find out who the hell she is. Bet she's tighter than you." He chuckled and turned to leave, dusting a hair of his collar. That's when Sandy burst.

"Hey!" She blurted out, no longer thinking - he'd insulted her best friend - "don't you talk about her! Don't you even fucking think about her, you hear!"

"What's this?" The man said, amused, but untouched, "a whore who talks back? That can't be good for business."

Sandy walked up to him with determined steps. She'd see this through.

"I mean it", she said, almost screamed. Tears welled up in her eyes.

"Oh, are you going to cry?" He laughed at her, "nobody likes a crying whore."

In anger, Sandy shoved her finger close to his face, to give him her angry reply. But he was faster.

"Get your filthy finger away from me", he snarled, and grabbed her hand, twisting it, and thereby forcing her to turn around. Then he grabbed her throat and pulled. Saying nothing, he strangled her for some time. She could feel his breath on her ear, as she struggled to retain hers. At first, she refused to resist, as she knew it would only make him pull harder, but as asphyxiation drew closer, she began to tear at his hand and his arm.

The terror of feeling life escaping - he pulled harder when she struggled - and the blackening in front of her eyes... she felt dizzy. Fading. A slow gurgle rose in her throat and her eyes began to roll back white. For a moment, dying felt sweet, but when she lost consciousness he let go. A hard lump of human waste, she fell to the floor, hacking and coughing, sucking in air to her lungs whilst drooling. But still alive. Sandy Reid crawled up on all fours, laying in the shadows of her customer, lover and assailant. For a moment, she felt like throwing up, but she resisted the urge, and as air returned to her lungs, the feeling faded.

"You're pathetic", the customer said, leaning down to inspect her. And then he laughed. Before he left, he threw a wad of single dollar bills over her, covering her in the bitter fruit of her labor.

"Ain't life in Rapture grand?" Was the last he said. She heard him laugh as he left and she was still on the floor, trying to breathe. Color returned to her face, and she could start to breathe normally. Inside, she wished he hadn't let go.

Fighting McDonagh's, 1956

Bill McDonagh was an avid boxing fan himself. He'd named his tavern down in Neptune's Bounty after his old man. And that's why he held boxing matches there on Saturdays. This particular night, Lloyd Bonham was there to see his student, Prangley, take on Mikkelson. Bets were placed - mostly to Prangley's disadvantage - and people got plenty amped up for the fight. It was a tournament open to boxers who used plasmids; they weren't illegal, and both Prangley and Mikkelson used them. Bonham stood outside the ring, in Prangley's corner, giving the kid some last minute pointers. Or as he wanted to call them, warnings. Prangley was nervous, and with good reason. Mikkelson had fought in the Danish resistance movement during the war, came to Rapture and started boxing at forty. And he was big as a house. He had at least twenty pounds on Prangley, who had insisted on the fight for a long time before he was heard. Sure enough, Prangley had bulked up using plasmids and a lot of good, hard training, and Bonham, trying to stay optimistic, thought there might be a chance. A slim one. Then, there was Mikkelson, who was probably on all kinds of steroids.

To introduce the combatants, Bill McDonagh, who was Andrew Ryan's right hand and one of the chief engineers in charge of constructing Rapture, took the stage. There was a lot of chatting and drinking going on among the audience who had come to see a great Dane beat up a black kid. McDonagh asked for silence before beginning his introductions.

"Welcome all, to fight night at the Fighting McDonagh's, where tonight we have something never before seen", he began, speaking in his thick Cockney accent, "this is a fight for plasmid users, meaning that both combatants might use plasmids as part of their training. I've been told that both are happy and pleased with Muscle Gro, for sale now by Ryan Industries-" Bonham noticed how McDonagh slightly shook his head "-now, in the red corner is the defender, a man whose name I have long since stopped trying to pronounce; the Beast of Scandinavia, Oivin Mikkelson!"

Most of the people there cheered, and when they simmered down, McDonagh went on: "The challenger, in the blue corner, is a new comer, who has especially requested this fight. One might wonder how he fits his balls in those trunks, eh?" People laughed. Prangley stared sternly at McDonagh, and Bonham couldn't decide if it was scorn or determination. "He trains at Don's Gymnasium, who has helped sponsor tonight's event. It's the starting place of all future champions!" Bonham noticed how McDonagh yet again shook his head and sighed, ever so slightly. "Introducing, first time in the ring, Albert Prangley!"

The cheer for Prangley was smaller than Mikkelson's, by far. But he had some friends who were there to cheer him on, and Bonham clapped his hands in support. Looking at the big, bulky Mikkelson, Bonham knew that Prangley needed all the support he could get. McDonagh exited the stage. He wasn't comfortable with all the product placement, but he'd sucked it up.

Bonham turned his attention again to Mikkelson. What a mountain! He couldn't help but admire his strongman look, even though he was there as Prangley's trainer. The referee took the stage next and declared the rules. Prangley was really worked up, jumping up and down in place, and punching the air. Mikkelson just stood there with a rock hard expression on his face. It was just impossible for Bonham not to admire the Dane for his strength and his muscle mass. It was

what he'd always wanted for himself. But he also admired Prangley. The kid had courage the likes he'd never seen, to go into a bout with Mikkelson. The referee demanded that they both follow his order at all times, and they touched gloves. The referee then backed up and the bell rang, starting the fight. Prangley skipped about, fists raised and looking sternly and concentrated at his adversary. He jumped up to Mikkelson and threw a couple of punches, which the Dane easily dodged. Then came an uppercut that sent Prangley flying. He landed over in his own corner, and Mikkelson won the fight on a knockout.

The Limbo Room, 1956

"Nobody knows you... when you're down and out... in your pocket, not one penny. And as for friends, you don't have any..." Grace Holloway sang with such passion, feeling every note as it touched her tongue. The lighting wasn't optimal and it wasn't really much of a show, but by God, Grace could take tone. She completely blew the writer away. He sat in the audience that night, and swiftly changed his mind about the music in Rapture. Ryan and those fancy pricks could keep Sander Cohen, and even Anna Culpepper. Grace Holloway was one of the people. She sang their songs. Songs about what it was really like to live in Rapture and Pauper's Drop. The writer sure was lucky to inherit his father's money when the man passed away. And living alone, he could stretch out his money and afford the place in Artemis Suites. Without that money, he would never be able to support himself as a mere writer and columnist. He still had some saved, in his mattress. The old fashioned way.

The people in Pauper's Drop weren't as fortunate. On the way here he'd seen beggars on the streets. Beggars in Rapture! People expecting a handout. Some of them had nothing. That's what happened in Rapture, he realized, when people ran out of money. They would have nothing to fall back on. Social security and the likes were forbidden in Ryan's Rapture. Maybe, he thought, this was why he had the job at the Tribune. To try and make a difference. Up till then, his columns were all light news. Simple observations of society, that in a way strengthened Andrew Ryan's beliefs and visions. No, the writer had to get more involved in what went on in the city. He'd always thought that these things didn't matter, but seeing the state of Pauper's Drop and the people living there awakened the rebel within him, and he knew whose side he'd eventually have to take. But to openly speak out against Ryan and his policies wasn't the way to go about it. And he still thought Ryan was right in some principles. It was just a matter of small changes. But any change in Rapture could impossibly be a small one. The seed was sown in his mind.

He clapped as Grace took a bow. Then she came down to meet him. She'd noticed him and she hadn't forgotten his face, even though they hadn't met since arriving in Rapture.

"Chris Perkins", she said, "how come you haven't visited until now?"

"Uh", he blushed, but she smiled.

"I'm only joking", she said, "so tell me what you thought."

"You were great, Grace. I'd have never thought you were that good."

"Wasn't she?" They were joined by a man approaching behind Grace, and bending down to kiss her on the cheek before sitting down.

"James, honey", Grace said, "this is Mr. Chris Perkins. He and I came to Rapture together. Chris, this is my husband, James."

"Chris Perkins?" James said, "oh sure, I know you. You're that writer, saw your poster down by the book store."

"It's my pleasure, Mr. Holloway." They shook hands. Then James turned to his wife:

"You were great tonight, my dear. I'm sorry for being late, I was, uh-"

"I know what you been doing", Grace said sternly, "I told you, I don't want you speaking against Mr. Ryan. What would I do if something happened to you?"

James sighed, remaining silent. The writer said nothing.

"We're trying to get pregnant", Grace went on, "and meanwhile, you're trying to organize against Ryan. I don't like it."

"I know, dear. Me neither."

Feeling the tension, the writer excused himself.

"Do come by some other time", Grace asked, smiling genuinely. She didn't have many friends in Rapture. She didn't fit with these people.

"I promise", the writer said, looking back at them and smiling.

Unpublished column found among Mr. Perkins' belongings. Status: not publishable. Notes: Some words unreadable due to blood on the paper. Subject: Pauper's Drop & the poor. Word count: 196

Today I went to the Limbo Room, to see Mrs. Grace Holloway perform. On my way there I witnessed firsthand the depravity and the hunger of the people who live in the part of the city which is called Pauper's Drop. Such depravation and hunger should not exist in a utopia, or any civilized society for that matter. This much should be clear, even to Andrew Ryan. I am not the right person to even declare the state of Pauper's Drop and its inhabitants. This I leave to the aforementioned Mrs. Holloway, who does so with great passion.

I am, however, skeptical to the manifesto of Dr. Sofia Lamb, which is handed out between songs, as I do not believe this Dr. Lamb to be entirely truthful in her motives. Call me paranoid. It is, lastly, clear to me that something must be done to help the poor people of Rapture, those at the bottom of our society, be it through altruism or taxation or some other means. Some way to give these men, women and children another chance. No civilized human, God fearing or not, could visit Pauper's Drop and not feel as I feel.

PART III

Fighting McDonagh's, 1957

Immediately after accepting, the writer regretted the decision to have a beer with Stanley Poole. But it was too late, and so he was at the Fighting McDonagh's waiting for Poole to show up. Of course he was late. How did the writer not see that coming? The writer sat down with his greenish looking Old Harbinger - quite tasty, actually - and had a look around. The tavern was owned by Bill McDonagh, Andrew Ryan's right hand. But he didn't seem to be there. There were dock workers there, though. Plenty of them. The writer must really stick out. At last Poole showed up.

"So what's the matter, Poole?" The writer said as Poole joined him.

"The matter?"

"You seemed pretty adamant on me coming here."

"Nothing's the matter, pal. Can't a man wanna go for a drink with a friend, without him thinking I wanna make wild whoopee or something?" He chuckled nervously.

"Sure. I guess." The writer kept thinking there was an angle, but he didn't mention it again. He told himself to make the best of it and try to enjoy Poole's company. Then he told himself to remember to leave early.

They chatted a bit and Poole was chummy, for about an hour, when Poole overheard something and said:

"Hey, sch... listen." He pointed to a group of three dock workers around a table close to them.

"-so I try to tell him, he needs me, okay? He tells me, yeah, he does, but with the economy this way he just can't afford to pay me anymore. Next thing I know, he's hired one o' those splicers to fill in for me", one of the workers said.

"Sounds like bullshit", one of his friends said, snorting.

"Sure does", the first one remarked, "told him as much, too. But he just says splicers will work for less. They do a half assed job, I say. Someone oughta do something. Can't just go fire people left and right, when they got a family o' four to feed. Gotta be rules, just gotta -"

"You know that ain't allowed in Rapture", the third man said, "besides, don't you know what's goin' on up in Pauper's Drop?"

"You mean this Atlas fella?"

"Some say it'll be a workers revolution."

"Yeah, right, and I- hey!" They noticed Poole and the writer listening. "You two eavesdropping?" They weren't happy about that eventuality.

"Uh, no. No", Poole said, looking nervous, "just, just happened to overhear a bit. Heard ya lost your job. How 'bout a round of drinks, on us?" That heightened the men's spirits, though they still didn't seem happy that someone had heard them. What were they doing anyway, talking about that in a bar owned by one of Ryan's closest people? The writer felt he had to excuse himself before things got heated, so he got up and told Poole something about his publisher wanting to see him first thing in the morning.

"Wait up, pal", Poole said and hurried with him.

They made some distance from the tavern before Poole said anything. Then he looked around to see no one was near before even saying a word.

"Can you believe those people, talking unions and what not. Ryan ain't gonna be happy to hear it", he said, his eyebrow twitching slightly. Out of exhilaration or some other reason, maybe just tics.

"What do you mean? Why would Ryan, uh, you know", the writer asked.

"Uh, nothing. Never mind." Poole realized he'd said too much and switched the subject. "So, uh, you hear about this place Dionysus Park?"

"Sure. What about it?"

"It's this artist's retreat I've been going to. I'm, uh, trying for novelist, too. Like you. You should come by sometime."

The writer remembered all too well his meeting with Lamb. Dionysus Park was *her* artist's retreat. He couldn't decide if Poole was trying to recruit him for it, or if he was trying to be a nice guy and just wanted a friend. What's more, he couldn't decide if Poole was on Ryan's pay roll or on Lamb's. But sure enough, he promised to come by sometime. He immediately regretted the decision.

Julia Jensen's apartment, 1957

Julia had recently moved out of her parent's apartment at Mercury Suites. She'd gotten herself a small two roomer near Artemis Suites. Work at the tribune and a modest contribution from her parents had made her somewhat independent. Now, her mother was there to visit, getting the grand tour. Julia knew what the topic would be as they sat down for tea. And of course, she was right. It was something that had been welling up in the last weeks, living with her parents.

"Julia, really. Your father and I both agree that you're old enough to -" Barbara Jensen began, sounding somewhat official. But Julia cut her off.

"Mother..." She said, with a slight groan.

"I'm just saying, you should really find yourself a nice husband. I know. I know, it was difficult to leave Robert behind, but it's been several years now. You're a grown woman now, and as such you need to think about the future. You'll need a family, Julia."

"Why? Why do I need a family?" Julia was offended, and her voice was near bursting, but she kept it under control. "Coming to Rapture meant putting so much of my life away, and the moment we're here you just expect me to forget all those years I lost. I had to start over, you know. You can't just continue where you left off."

"You were fine about moving here Julia. I don't seem to remember you complaining about it once, before we left."

"Because you never listened!"

"It was supposed to be a new start, Julia. Well, you've started, but how far have you gotten?"

Julia shook with barely controlled anger.

"I was not..." She began, voice shaking, "I was not fine, mother. I lost several years of my life, just like that! I had a nice life back then, and you! You cut off. Can you even remember me crying on the boat over here? You forced me to abandon all my friends and now you expect me to pretend I'm fine? Like nothing ever happened? Like moving to this pustule of a city was a good thing? I am not fine!"

"Julia... you've felt like this for all these years? Why didn't you ever say... I... I had no idea", her mother said, the first time that she ever seemed to actually take in what Julia said. There came a sort of sadness into her face, but it manifested as anger.

"Of course you didn't, mother. You. Never. Cared." Julia said.

Mrs. Jensen shook with anger, and regret. But she couldn't bear to utter another word. Julia merely stirred her tea, looking down into the rings that the spoon made in its surface. With a sigh, Barbara got up from her seat, leaving her cup of tea untouched, and put on her coat. The anger turned into an ice cold defiance. As she opened the door, Julia said:

"Mother... there might... might be someone." But Barbara Jensen had already went out the door and shut it behind her, leaving Julia alone with two cups of tea. She sighed and got up, picking up her photo album from its place in the bookshelf. She turned to the first page, where she'd put the photos from Vermont that once seemed to mean so much. Usually when she felt like this, she was homesick, but now as she looked at the photo of her and Robert she felt the opposite. The opposite of missing him, and rather, though she didn't acknowledge the feeling at first, missing someone else. Looking at Robert in this state of mind made her wonder what she ever saw in him; the man child who at 19 still liked to ring doorbells and run away. Then she put the photo album aside, and sat back down, thinking. The thought had bubbled in her mind for some time, but she'd pushed it aside. She'd passed it off as a crush, but now she wondered when, when did she fall for the writer? Later that day, she was supposed to see Sandy for coffee, but right now she didn't feel at all like seeing anybody.

Sandy Reid's apartment, 1957

Sitting alone in her apartment - a shabby hole in the wall that consisted of no more than a bed, a few chairs, a table, a corner for cooking and a toilet - was Sandy Reid. Ever since that time, every now and then she felt like she had that man's hands over her throat. Even woke up screaming in the middle of the night sometimes. She was smoking a cigarette and applying makeup using a small, hand held mirror. Her hand was shaking, and a tear welling up in her eye made a black streak of mascara as it rolled down her cheek. Other than that, she stood out. The room was bleak, the walls painted a dull beige and the furniture old and beaten. But despite that, she made herself pretty. In half an hour she was having coffee with Julia at the Shark Bite Diner, and then she was going to apply for a job as a waitress there. Anything's gotta be better than Siren Alley. The horror of that time... feeling death just crawl into her veins... last night that had become too much and she wanted - needed - change. First, she'd cried. Then she'd bought a plasmid. Then she'd thought of blowing her brains out. Then she'd fallen asleep, and when she woke she was determined to give applying for a job a shot.

The plasmid, which they said could make you shoot lightning, lay on her dresser, on a pile of worn clothes. Now and then she cast a glance at it. If she spliced up, became like the people in the ads, then no one would dare to... to attack her again. She froze in place for a moment, remembering that fateful first time that uncle Pete touched her. She was just a kid. Never told anyone either. When her daddy told her they were moving away - forever - she liked that idea. Moving somewhere where no one knew you, and you knew no one. That meant no one knew how broken you were on the inside. And it worked at first. Even made a best friend in Julia Jensen. But as time passed, Sandy realized that she was good for only one thing. And today she'd decided to try and be good at something else. She would not be beaten.

And to be her best, she needed to make sure no one could do what the man did to her that night, and every night since then in her memories. Never again. Moving as if in a dream, she picked up the plasmid and pulled up her sleeve. Seeing the pale skin on her arm, she hesitated. She liked the way they looked; not a bruise or a scar on them. Then she pulled down the neck of the shirt to look at her neck in the little mirror. She'd put on a shirt with a high collar to hide the

bruises. Of course, they'd faded, but she could still see them clear as day. With a careful hand, she put the needle of the EVE hypo against a vein in the neck, and spliced without further hesitation. Ten minutes later, she left, both stronger and weaker, to see her best friend for coffee.

Atlantic Express depot, 1967

Technically, they were lost. Debris was blocking Mr. Bubbles' way to the elevators, so they'd have to take the long way around. A nuisance when one moves as slow as possible, encased in metal and heavy armors. Mr. Bubbles moved slowly, hunched over, in a small alcove. The Little Sister led the way, gladly hurrying ahead of him. Her blonde ponytail dangled as she skipped.

"Hurry, Mr. Bubbles", she sang dreamily. To her it was easy, but Mr. Bubbles was a Big Daddy. Not the fastest of Rapture's inhabitants. They were nearing the end of the tunnel like alcove. Indeed, the Little Sister peaked out into the room beyond, from where light was coming. Then she looked back at Mr. Bubbles, smiling, and waved at him to hurry. She went around the corner and out of his line of sight. He hurried as best he could but it went no faster. Then at last, he too reached the end, and black gave way to blue. Darkness gave way to beauty.

It was a big hall, lit up by the ocean through large skylights. The roof of the hall was dome shaped and the light made it seem airy, and spacey. Almost like the stars would peek back if you looked up. At the center of the room was a large pile of debris, upon which a large leak from the ceiling spewed seawater which then poured down and back out to sea through the drainage system. It was lit in blues and greens by the shimmering sea. Everything glistened. Mr. Bubbles had seen such beauty before, he recalled. But he couldn't place it. The Little Sister stood in front of him. She was getting impatient with his sightseeing.

"Enough dilly-dallying, come on!" She said. Slowly, Mr. Bubbles became aware of silhouettes watching from the shadows. The Little Sister saw them too.

"Mr. Bubbles?" She whispered. Splicers. They approached slowly, reaching for the light. But they didn't move like splicers. Clearly human, but simpler motions; smoother. Not as direct as splicers. Not as blunt and hard. As they reached the light, they stopped. All but one. As the man approached closer, the Little Sister scampered around Mr. Bubbles and hid around his leg, peeking out at the man with her big eyes.

The man who approached was sleek and thinly built. He wore soldier type boots on his feet and a round hat on his head. His face was covered by a mask that looked a bit like a gas mask and connected to a canister on his back. He carried a pump action shotgun in one hand. On one of his arms there was a symbol of a chain, broken in two. He stopped a few feet in front of Mr. Bubbles and looked straight at the portholes, into his eyes.

"Greetings", the man said, his voice nasal and wheezing under his mask, "you do not seem like the average protector. You can see me, can you not?" He looked Mr. Bubbles up and down. Then he continued, "no... the average protector would not let me get this close... I daresay, you are aware."

"Be careful", this was Tenenbaum, whispering to him, "you cannot trust anyone."

"We are survivors", said the slender man and gestured at his shadow friends, "we are the ones who rejected both Andrew Ryan and Sofia Lamb and their visions, and have stayed sane enough not to fall into ruin. Mostly."

His tone was condescending. Like he was better than Mr. Bubbles. Not the smartest way to address someone dressed in armor and wielding a colossal mining drill which was already musty with the iron smell of blood.

"Watch out", said Tenenbaum, "he looks like he's up to something." Mr. Bubbles agreed. The man was up to something and indeed, the man bent down to take a look at the Little Sister.

"Well hello there, little girl", he said.

"Mr. Bubbles... I'm scared", said the girl. Mr. Bubbles started his drill, ready to fight to the death to defend his Little Sister. The man instantly stood up straight and pointed his shotgun at Mr. Bubbles. Several of the shadow silhouettes came closer. They, too, seemed to be carrying weaponry of different kinds.

"Now just give us the girl so we can get to the ADAM, and you can be on your way", the man said, threateningly. He held the shotgun without shaking. The drill was spinning.

"Do not let them take her!" Tenenbaum called in his ear. Out of the two of them, he was inclined to trust her. And the quick reflexes within him acted. Mr. Bubbles stretched out his hand, knocking the shotgun away, and grabbed the man by his throat. He lifted him into the air. The man started kicking the air and yelling:

"Kill it! Take the girl!" At that, all the survivors around came out of the shadows and into the light. Mr. Bubbles threw the leader of the survivors through the air. His bones were shattered when he hit the wall. Then he grabbed the girl and had her climb onto his back.

Luckily, most of the survivors carried melee weapons, but they were still at least eight people, gathering around him. He singled out one, wielding a Tommy gun and rushed him, smacking him dead in an instant. Immediately, the one next to him started hitting him with a brass pipe, but he got his comeuppance straight in the face by Mr. Bubbles' spinning drill. Just as a third survivor began pistol-whipping him, another fired his Tommy gun. A few bullets missed, and the pistol-whipping one went down. Mr. Bubbles, too, was hit, but was protected by his metal armor. They were gaining on him. Another started firing. He was hurting, but he *had* to protect the girl. He shot a bolt of electricity at the one wielding a Tommy gun, and then rushed the other who fired, drilling straight through him. Then he, too, got a taste of plasmid power, being set aflame. His suit of armor was protection, but it still hurt and burned like hell. He retaliated by shooting lightning and then striking the fire caster down. It was getting heavy to move. He was weak. But he charged at the Tommy gun wielding survivor, as the man reloaded. He struck him down and drilled through his intestines. The two that were left seemed younger. One had a gun and the other a crowbar. They hesitated; seeing an angry Big Daddy make short work of six men so quickly was a sight to behold. The one with the gun was shaking with fear, and when he noticed Mr. Bubbles heading for him, put his gun down and ran.

"Coward!" The other shouted, instantly gaining extra courage. He raised his crowbar into the air, ready to strike. Instead, he met his demise through an industrial drill, and became a blood stain on the floor.

Exhausted, Mr. Bubbles climbed the debris in the middle of the room. He felt revitalized by the water pouring all over him, like it was the fountain of youth. And he looked up at the sky of water. Large buildings towered around and sea plants danced with the currents. But where were the stars? There were no stars in the sky.

"Come on, Mr. Bubbles", the Little Sister said, peeking over his shoulder, "let's see if we can find more angels."

He groaned. Looking at her made the lack of stars seem worth it. In her sweet face, the stars were there. She took his giant hand and he guided her down the debris and down to the corpse littered floor. Then she went, almost as if she smelled something, directly to the opposite wall from where they'd come.

"Please", Tenenbaum said, "find the elevator und come to find me."

It took another walk through a cramped tunnel, since the survivors had blocked the doors to their dying hall, but then Mr. Bubbles and the Little Sister was back at a waiting area, where there were working elevators. The Little Sister wanted to go the other way, but she was smaller than him, and he carried her, taking her with him into the elevator.

Siren Alley, 1957

A trip to Siren Alley was a trip far out of the writer's comfort zone. Still, he went there as a detour on his way home from the Fighting McDonagh's. This place gave him bad vibes; putting people for sale, male or female, didn't really tingle him right. But it was also a place he realized he could see another part of the human spectrum, and how could he be a good writer if he didn't explore other ways of life? That's what he asked himself as he walked, hands in his pockets along the promenade of the district. Or maybe it was the human sex drive that made him come here. Or maybe it was just curiosity. As he looked through the streets, a few stores were closed and some still managed to get by. It was hard to believe that Siren Alley used to be one of the finest places in Rapture. As of late, it had fallen since the city's economy began turning bad. And that's when people began selling themselves and their bodies, the walls and storefronts of the district aptly painted red.

Among the people walking around - some having places to go, and others just walking aimlessly, kind of like him - he noticed one face that he knew. At first, he had to place the face, but when he did he tried to look away. Problem was, she saw him, too. Sandy Reid; his boss's daughter. It was one of the most awkward moments of his life; he realized from her clothing that she was one of the working girls. But he thought it best to at least say hello. After all, he couldn't bring himself to judge her for something she chose of her own free will. At least, he tried not judge her. Within a few steps, he stood just a few feet away from her. She was scantily clad, showing off feminine curves. He made a point of looking her in the eyes. His cheeks probably matched the walls.

"G-good day, miss Reid", he said, "didn't quite notice you there at first."

Sandy took a puff of her cigarette, "It's Chris, right?" She asked, "Julia's writer? You looking for her, she's not into this sorta stuff. Not yet, anyway."

"No", the writer mumbled, embarrassed beyond words, "I was just-"

"Trying to get some experience, I get it. Girl like beautiful little miss Jensen probably has some standards, huh?" Sandy sounded irritated, but the writer got the feeling that it was not at him.

"E-excuse me?" He said.

"Listen, kid", Sandy said. She was younger than him. Years older in experience. She took a puff on the cigarette and blew smoke into the air, away from him. "I get it. Everybody gets it. You're sweet for Julia, just like everyone. No one looks at the cow beside her until they wanna know how to work her. Then it's cow to the rescue!"

"Cow?" He avoided her eyes now. What did the woman want from him?

"All right, Mr. Perkins. It was Mr. Perkins, right?" - He nodded - "You want experience or not, 'cause I can't just stand around all day talkin' and lose money."

"Miss Reid, I'm not her for, uh, experience. I was just visiting for... research. For a column." She probably didn't believe him.

"Sure", she said, rolling her eyes.

"It's true. And frankly, you've given me lots to write about. How about an interview?"

"Shit, are you insane? No!" She suddenly turned nervous, "listen, don't mention me, all right? Daddy doesn't know I'm working here." Sandy looked pleading at him. He just nodded.

Sandy dropped the cigarette and put it out with her shoe, then she looked down in silence for a moment.

"Listen", she said, "I gotta go. And when I do, I have to push you away. They don't like it when people waste our time, 'kay?"

"Okay?" He didn't quite understand. A moment later, Sandy shoved him, hard, and he almost fell backward, but managed to keep on his feet.

"Get away, creep!" She yelled as he regained his balance. People looked over. Sandy had a fake disgusted look on her face. The writer felt like sinking through the earth. But in Rapture, if you're not paid to care, you probably won't care, and within a moment or two, everyone around went on with their own business. The writer nodded discreetly at Sandy and turned around.

"Wait", she said, not coming closer and talking quietly, "I didn't mean... I've never sent anyone to Julia. I think she kind of likes you, too." The writer nodded. She finished, "Please, don't tell daddy. I don't want him to... to know I'm like this."

"I promise", he said, giving his vow, and then he left.

Sandy Reid looked quickly back at him as she walked away. He was so naive. He and Julia both were. They hadn't seen the shadow side of life, like she had. She'd entered the shadows that first time that her uncle touched her, and she hadn't left since. The thought of it made her want to eat a bullet, but lately, she'd gotten into the habit of splicing instead. Had been doing it regularly since the time that rich bastard almost killed her. Last time she saw Julia, it felt as if she knew. Knew everything. Christ, Sandy just wanted to leave Rapture. Sighing, and holding the tears back, she went into one of the alleyways where it was dark.

It wasn't just to splice that she sought out the dark. In the dark, no one can see you crying. In the dark the bad men that made her life into Hell couldn't find her, and the monsters in the dark were nothing compared to them. When she reached the safety of the dark, she couldn't hold the tears back, but began to cry. And not a single soul cared. She envied Julia - to whom she had not spoken in over a week - who had the love of the writer. To Sandy Reid, there was no salvation from the shadows. The waitressing job had lasted a whole two days before she was fired and had to return to the shadows. From her purse she produced an EVE hypo, which she, without even thinking, stuck into her own neck and injected the living cells.

The writer's apartment, 1957

In his typewriter was a half written page and beside it a half written book. His previous book - a story of a group of people who leave Earth behind and start a new life building their own colony on the moon - had sold well and his publisher wanted a follow up. He realized the story was obviously his fictionalized version of building Rapture, glorifying it. It had now been several months since its release and he was working hard on the new one.

He was taking a few minutes to gaze out the window. A school of colorful fish swam back and forth outside and he wondered what they were up to. But it didn't really matter. His attention shifted to the water itself. Rapture always had the same weather, no matter when you looked out the window. He kind of missed that about the surface. The rain, the sun. And especially thunderstorms. And the stars...

The autumn rain passed at nightfall and the sky became clear. It was mid October, the day the writer's father was buried. The whole day had been grey and dark but come night the clouds cleared and the sky opened. He put on his old jacket and his shoes and went for a walk. It was cold outside. Almost freezing. As he walked the pebbled ground crackled under his shoes. White steam rose from his nose at every breath. In his pocket was the letter of recruitment. A lady walked by him, but he hardly noticed her. His eyes were glazed and empty.

It was a moonless night and the further he walked the darker it was, as he went further from the streetlights. Finally he reached the little park in the neighborhood. Sighing to himself he took the letter from his pocket and looked at it. He couldn't read it, of course, in the darkness. He sat down on the cold, hard ground and looked at the paper again, still not able to make the words out. But he knew them by now. Then he looked up.

And saw the stars.

The multitudes, the infinity. The galaxy, the nothingness and the beauty. Around him black shapes of trees towered to the deep blue Heavens, framing them. This amazing new enterprise will require emigration. What if he could migrate to the stars. What opportunity lay there waiting for him, in the multitudes, the infinity. What lay there, that wasn't already inside him. The color red streaked across his mind and he watched the stars. He grew colder and he watched the galaxy. He shut his eyes and decided to reach for the horizon...

Obviously, these thoughts came from the writing of the new book. The lunar colonists, the few men and women, had grown tired of their precious paradise and longed for their loved ones and their home world. Quite dramatic and very different from the optimistic outlook from the first book. He had finished the first half and had the second half left. The return to Earth. In a sense he did long to go back, too. Not because Rapture was a bad place - there seemed to be an awful lot of splicers around lately, though - or because he missed the surface overmuch. No, it was simply a longing for familiarity. There were some people there that he missed. Though none of the ones he left behind had probably even given a thought to the fact that he was missing.

He had meant for Rapture to be a new start, but... he was feeling more lonely as the days passed. Stars... As he stood and looked out the window, his eyes drew upward. To the surface. He couldn't see that far, of course. He couldn't see the stars from here. All he saw was the wavy shimmering of the blue green ocean as it danced and twirled along the surface scrapers. There were no sky scrapers in Rapture. Because there was no sky. The neon signs glimmered as far as the eye could see. All these businesses competing, without regulation. Could they all really take society such as this forward? His father would have thought so. The writer wasn't so sure though, what with all the plasmid businesses making products that were clearly unstable available to the public. And what about the poor people in Pauper's Drop? And all the working men who got fired just out of the blue? Someone had to be their voice. Atlas. Who was he? A pretender for the throne, or someone who genuinely believed in what he said. Though, the writer must agree, that some of what Atlas said was probably right.

He let go of the thought with a sigh, and returned to work. As he sat down his thoughts turned to miss Julia Jensen. It was not too late yet to make this new life work. And suddenly he knew how to finish the book. And he wrote all night to make a happy ending for his lunar colonists, and dead set on making one for himself as well. There is no pain in the Garden of Eden.

Unpublished column found among Mr. Perkins' belongings. Status: not publishable. Subject: Atlas & unions. Word count: 203

Regarding Atlas, who fights for the working man. I do agree that workers need work security, and I do agree (with Mr. Andrew Ryan) that a market free of, at least most, regulation is the way of the future. I do not believe it to be anybody's business how one company handles its finances. If a man is not willing to take a job at the offered wage, he is free to apply to other jobs, elsewhere. On the other hand, I too have worked the factory, before coming to Rapture.

I worked full time, meaning I would not have had time for another job could I get one. And I did so at minimum wage, meaning that I would have been paid less, were the company not under union pressure. Thus I would not have survived were it not for the union. It is the same situation that many workers in Rapture face. I am not saying that unions are the answer, but surely there must be a middle ground. And until Andrew Ryan and the council finds that middle ground, the working men of Rapture will instead turn to the man who calls himself Atlas, thereby making the situation even worse.

Ryan Amusements, 1957

The writer had come here to take his mind off some things. Mainly how he couldn't get up the nerve to talk to Julia Jensen. And also, it might make for something fun to write about in this week's column. He wanted some new ideas for those, especially now that his book was finished and finally released, a mere couple of days ago. In fact, he had some plans for the day. First, Ryan Amusements and then he'd go see Grace Holloway. He'd heard about James' disappearance. It unsettled him, and he wanted to make sure she was fine. But first, he'd go on Journey to the Surface. He'd heard some things about Journey to the Surface that could make Andrew Ryan explode with rage.

Those living Ryan robots - living mannequins - were real creepers. He'd heard a lot of Ryan Industries, knowing full well what to expect, but still not expecting any of it. As he approached the replica of Andrew Ryan's office with the somewhat stiff, waxen Ryan sitting behind its desk, standing behind a few kids who were there all alone. They were giggling and talking and snickering among themselves, but fell eerily silent when the puppet came alive.

"Why, hello there, my name is Andrew Ryan", it began, speaking in Ryan's own canned voice, brimming with fatherly authority and welled up pride over his own well chose words. The children looked at the mannequin with big eyes as it went on: "I built the city of Rapture for children just like you, because the world above had become unfit for us. But here, beneath the ocean, it is natural to wonder if the danger has passed, if those we left behind will ever come to their senses. So, let us imagine, you and I, what might befall us... on the surface."

"Oh, brother", the writer mumbled to himself.

"Is it alive?" He heard one of the kids whisper, a heavy set boy with a striped shirt and a little, funny looking cap.

"No, stupid", another replied with fake toughness, "it's just an automatron, my dad told me."

The kids hurried onward, down a set of stairs and to a row of ride cars, designed to look like bathyspheres, just like the one the writer first came to Rapture in. The writer took care to make notes in his notebook, just so it didn't seem like he was there for anything else than to write a column. He'd paid for a ticket everything - half price for children under three.

He got into a bathysphere a while after the kids had gone off and set off himself, along the journey to the surface to see what might befall him should he dare the audacity to grow gills and swim out of the city. The bathysphere lurched up and into the attraction. The first stop was at a farm hold, where an honest man was working his land until giant hands reached out from above, both scaring the bejesus out of the writer and reaching into the farmer's home, because, as Ryan explained:

"The parasites say 'NO!', what is yours is ours! We are the state, we are God, we demand our share!"

Fitting that those giant hands taking the farmer's livelihood wore a bureaucrat's costume. The writer had never seen a photo or news reel of Andrew Ryan wearing anything else. An amusement ride to scare children into obedience. Half price for children under three.

But Journey to the Surface was actually amusing. Especially the street names. Curfew Alley and War Road, though some truth to them, he still smiled. From the courthouse, another giant hand came stretching out, reaching for the bathysphere, making the writer jump in his seat and hope there were no cameras around, capturing that moment. The bathysphere moved onward, shoving Ryan's skewed views on the children, declaring at last, in the final display of his own office:

"Unable to provide for itself, the need of the Parasite grows until war is made to justify it. Your parents brought you to Rapture, where you need never fear the Parasites again. So you see, there is no place for you on the surface, but you may bring the world to you! If you know someone who belongs in Rapture, write a letter to the Ryan Industries mailroom. And you never know! The next new face... might be familiar."

The writer shook his head, in disbelief almost, of an amusement park like this being seen as educational, as the bathysphere finished its journey to the surface by reaching the very last display. The Sander Cohen penned opera 'Rise, Rapture, Rise!' played on the speakers and a fake, starlit sky glowed over a fake ocean and a replica of the lighthouse, signifying the children's eventual descent - or ascent as it were - into Rapture, where they'd be free of the parasites.

As it turned out, Ryan Amusements was nothing but one man's glorification of himself. Though the writer had long ago learned to think for himself and decide for himself what he thought right, he realized many people would just accept Ryan's version of the story, when in fact no other versions were allowed. A marketplace of ideas, sure, but how come this Sofia Lamb had disappeared after those public debates a couple years ago? Maybe she felt defeated, or maybe Ryan just didn't want her to peddle her Bolshevik fever dreams to his people.

Then again, a man *should* be entitled to the sweat of his own brow. The writer himself had worked many night shifts at the factory back home, busting his back for minimum wage and finding that a lot of the money he worked for went to taxation. But not all taxation was of evil, was it? Without it the educatory system might just turn out like Ryan Amusements, teaching propaganda as fact in exchange for profit. Then again, many fine schools and universities topside worked like businesses. But those were exclusively for wealthy people. Shouldn't the working man's children be able to have that same good education, paid for by the working man's own taxes? That sort of thing made the writers' head hurt. He didn't care for politics. All he knew was, it wasn't black or white. Mostly grey or some other color in between. Or all of them, shifting shape and form.

The day and the excursion wasn't a total bust. He did chat with a few of the workers, most of them plasmid users by the look of it, but not as far gone as some others, and they were friendly. At least for now. Partly as training, as he wanted to learn how to talk to people, but also because it was easier to talk to people he wouldn't meet again. Strangers. He wanted to hear if they had any interesting wrinkles for the column. Turned out no one wanted to talk about the park - no one wanted to risk saying anything they shouldn't to the press and lose their job - but one young man named Devin LeMaster did have something else on his mind. He was a kind of funny looking, colored fella, sporting a pair of round glasses. He spoke in a bit of a nasal voice.

"I've got a little dating tip for you, it'll get you out of that lonely hearts club for good. This scheme works one hundred percent of the time, guaranteed. First, find some Betty and take her to Ryan Amusements. Then, ya go to the gift shop, buy her a teddy bear. This is key, I ain't kiddin' around. Then... ya buy her a ticket on Journey to the Surface. Soon as you hit that first scare: Bingo! Tunnel. Of. Love."

It might have sounded stupid, but before he left, the writer made sure to go to the gift shop, and even though he had no one to give it to, he bought a teddy bear, thinking to himself that maybe he would have the chance to give it, some day.

Julia Jensen's parent's apartment, 1957

Julia's parents were of the sort that agreed with Andrew Ryan wholeheartedly. The only exception being that they were Christian. They even had a contraband bible hidden away, sold to them by means of smuggling. A weekly tradition for the Jensens was to have their only daughter for dinner, every Sunday, ever since she moved out after getting her job at the Rapture Tribune. Julia's mother was a bit disappointed that she decided against studying to become a doctor or an engineer, but she was proud, albeit silently. Besides, you needed journalists in a free society, to expose those who worked against the powers that be, to expose the parasites and stop them before their ideas could take root. Even ideas can be contraband. You needed journalists, and Julia was good at it. She'd taken some courses before, and then in the evenings even after she'd started working at the Tribune.

But that was not the topic of discussion as they sat by the dinner table in Julia's parent's fancy Mercury Suites apartment.

"What is it really that goes on down there in Pauper's Drop with all that rabble? I've heard talks of unions! Unions, in Rapture." It was Julia's mother.

"Perish the thought", said her father, not really caring. He was eating.

"And who is this Atlas I keep hearing about on the public address system and in the newspaper? He seems to be some sort of communist organizer. Is it really true?"

"Now, now, Barbara. No need to get all riled up."

"They're calling it a workers revolution, mother", Julia said.

Barbara Jensen chuckled. "Really? It's cute, isn't it. I made my way by working hard and earning my place. Not by taking it. And I'm a woman!"

"It's not a gender issue mother. They just want-"

"Parasites, that's what they are. And you're taking their side", Barbara was angry now. It was like having dinner with Andrew Ryan.

"I, of course not, mother. You know I-"

"Calm down you two", Julia's father said. He agreed with his wife, but he liked quieter topics at the dinner table. He liked eating in peace. "Julia can form her own opinions. Ryan will deal

with Atlas in due time. Meanwhile, I'm sure there are other subjects to discuss that aren't quite as... heated. This soup is delicious. Is it calamari?"

"Thank you daddy." Julia winked at her father, who winked back as Barbara fell silent. For a little while. It was always the same with Barbara.

She had indeed worked her way to where she was, but when she came to Rapture with her husband and their daughter, and finally started making good money she'd become high strung, looking down on the poor. The poor, where she'd actually started out and thought she'd always remain. She'd been going to Dr. Steinman several times as of late, too, and his treatments were beginning to become a bit of an addiction.

"So, Julia", she finally said with forced cheer, repressing the urge to regurgitate Ryan's speeches, "your father and I have been dying to hear about this boy that Sandy Reid mentioned."

"She did, did she?" Julia blushed.

"So?"

"First, he's not a boy. He's a man. A writer in fact."

"So tell me. What's his name?"

"Mother..."

"Barbara, please. I'm trying to eat, will you leave the poor girl alone?"

"Thanks daddy." They winked at each other again.

"Oh, for crying out loud", Barbara said, sighing. A few moments later she was again talking and asking questions. No eating in peace for Peder Jensen, the Danish man who'd married a pretty young thing who wanted to make her way in a man's world.

He admired her for that. Always would. But he did not like what she'd become since moving to Rapture. It wasn't just that she looked down on people who had it tough, it was all these plastic surgeries she'd been doing. Sure, sure, he was a fan of the increase in bosom size, but her face wasn't... the one he married. And next Sunday it'd be the same thing all over again. He felt more and more like taking that Sports Boost he had in the back of the freezer, but he had to wait until Barbara went to sleep. She didn't like him using that stuff. What's the worst that could happen, he figured. He only took the occasional tonic to improve himself. Sports Boost, that was his thing. He'd been going out with the guys a couple times lately, and sure enough, nine out of ten women prefers the athletic man. The tenth being his wife. He kept thinking, though, that maybe he should try one of those plasmids. They had all kinds of effects that made a man able to do anything. Maybe that Decoy thing could be something. Another him, to listen to Barbara's nagging, and the real him could eat in peace and take Sports Boost. No, he was being careful, it's not like he was addicted or anything. A man got to know his limits. Then expand them with Sports Boost.

Unpublished column found among Mr. Perkins' belongings. Status: not publishable. Subject: Ryan Amusements & propaganda. Word count: 204

It has become clear to me that Andrew Ryan's establishments - and I speak first and foremost of Ryan Amusements - are part of one great propaganda machine. I found Ryan amusements, and especially Journey to the Surface, befitting of the name 'amusements', in a comical kind of way. But perhaps it is only I who have this twisted sense of humor. Still, Ryan Amusements is a park made for children, and it is of my opinion that no child should be subject to propaganda. He should instead be allowed to form his own opinions based on his own experiences and values.

This is not possible when propaganda spewing establishments such as Ryan Amusements take the place of actual, unbiased education. Of course, my good friend and colleague, the handsome devil Stanley Poole wouldn't agree. He worships the very ground Andrew Ryan walks upon. Or is paid to. When I think of Ryan Amusements, I am reminded of the three things that the parasite hates; free markets, free will and free men. It is the second one, free will, that Ryan seeks to eradicate within your children, using Ryan Amusements as the tool. Indoctrinate them young. In Rapture, Ryan is the tyrant, the parasite.

Grace Holloway's apartment, 1957

Grace Holloway, who came to Rapture on the same boat as the writer, lived in the fanciest apartment in the Sinclair Deluxe. Though, that didn't say much. The whole neighborhood of Pauper's Drop was run down, filled with Rapture's least fortunate. The writer sat across from Grace, sharing a cup of coffee that he brought himself. In her room, Eleanor - a girl of four or five years that Grace was looking after - played with an audio diary, speaking gibberish about barbarism and eating dogs into it.

"I'm sorry I don't have anything to offer, making you bring coffee and all", Grace Holloway said, averting her eyes.

"Don't worry about it. I have more money than I need right now, anyway. Kind of funny how I call myself lucky that my father died... but I did inherit some of his money. Strange thing to say in Rapture, 'I have more money than I need'."

Saying it, he felt bad. He wasn't a rich man, but he lived sparingly. Meanwhile, Grace lived in Pauper's Drop, in a hotel originally meant to be temporary housing for the men building the Atlantic Express railway. Grace's apartment was scantily furnished, the most luxurious item being her rather ornate vanity. In one of the corners she had a little stage of her own; a spotlight directed into the corner, where a few loudspeakers and a microphone stood, now silent.

Grace smiled, but without being happy about the situation:

"Isn't it time you found someone else to share all that money with, then?"

From what the writer knew, Grace's life wasn't a dance on roses, but when she looked at Eleanor, she smiled. She smiled with all the happiness in the world shining. Her husband, James, was gone, but the writer didn't want to touch the subject. She did seem fine.

"What about you?" The writer said, "I hear you're no longer performing at the Limbo Room."

"That's right", Grace said, her voice lowered, "I got blacklisted. Seems Andrew Ryan don't like me telling the people here the truth..."

She fell silent and started thumbing a brooch on her blouse. She refused to say anything more about it. The writer meant to ask her about the brooch. It was a blue butterfly, and he tried to place it in his mind. He'd seen it before but right now it slipped his mind. Like that Simon Wales. He'd seen photos of him wearing that same brooch, hadn't he?

But he didn't get the chance to ask, because little Eleanor rose to her feet and came up to them from her room, stepping up to Grace, but avoiding to look at the writer. Somehow it seemed uncharacteristic of her, to be shy of him. He didn't know why.

"Aunt Gracie", she said, "can I go out and play? I promise I won't go far."

"Not now, child", Grace said, "it's getting late and we have company. Wouldn't be nice to leave then, would it? We'll go out for a walk tomorrow and you can play." Little Eleanor turned to the writer. He smiled at her. "He's Chris Perkins", Grace said.

"Hello, Mr. Perkins", Eleanor said, stretching out her hand but avoiding his eyes. The writer shook her little hand.

"Hello, Eleanor", he said, "I've heard a little about you-

"I'm a dog eater", she said, interrupting him and suddenly turning to stare intently into his eyes. Looking back into hers he saw something. Power and greatness, marked by her innocence and growing in her.

"You were born to change the world, weren't you?" He said. She nodded and Grace told her to go play in her room when they talked about grown up stuff. Eleanor seemed a bit grouchy at that, but did as she was told. The writer noticed her eavesdropping on them.

"Gorgeous, clever little child", Grace told the writer.

"What's her story?" The writer asked. Grace looked a little nervous at that and thumbed the broche again.

"Her mama's not around, so she asked me to take care of little Eleanor. Sofia remembered that I... that I was barren and... I'm looking after Eleanor for her till she comes back."

The writer nodded sympathetically and thought he wouldn't ask anymore about it. Grace looked over at little Eleanor Lamb again, and smiled.

"Nobody's supposed to live down here, city pissing on us. Never dry", Grace went on, a shudder of anger and a tear of desperation in her voice, she didn't want to have Eleanor live in this dump, "Ryan doesn't care and Fontaine's a damn crook, but Doctor Lamb cares. She's offering free mental counseling on Sundays. When I go, I get the feeling she's got a plan for Rapture, and for me." She sighed, her cup trembling in her hand. She felt so strongly about this. The writer didn't quite know what to say. Might be, a man could be taken away for saying what Grace was saying. She noticed his silence and went on:

"You're a grown man, you can make your own decisions, choose for yourself. I'm not trying to recruit you or anything, only a slave does as he's told and don't ask why, but Doctor Lamb showed us that down under the skin, down under the money, down under our very name we are family. I want you to think of that. Thanks to Doctor Lamb, we can all be family. One people, one cause. We're still people to her. "

"Sofia Lamb?"

"Yes..." Grace cast a glance at Eleanor.

"Is she...?"

Grace nodded. It bothered the writer that Grace was so close to Lamb. That woman gave him bad vibes. And Grace clearly wasn't in a stable state of mind. She fingered the butterfly brooch again. He remembered it now; Lamb had given him one, too, but he'd thrown it away.

Looking into Eleanor's room, the writer saw a bit of a mess. Children's books - some seemingly directed at children a bit older than Eleanor was - and he saw a deck of those Zener cards with a bunch of symbols on one side; the telepathic test where one person is supposed to sense - or not sense - what symbol is on the side of a card that he can't see. The writer was open minded, but that stuff seemed like hogwash to him. But what caught his eye the most in the little alcove was a pink banner. Eleanor had designed it herself, it said 'ELEANOR'S ROOM', and was adorned with flowers and a sun. He didn't make the connection at first, but then he realized - *Eleanor Lamb had no idea what sunshine felt like.*

"I guess it is getting kind of late", the writer said. He didn't want to walk through Pauper's Drop too late, but he didn't say that.

"Yes, it is. Thank you for coming by. And thanks for the coffee. Say good bye to Mr. Perkins, Eleanor." Eleanor got up from her audio diary to say good bye. Again she looked into the writer's eyes, her big eyes looking intently into his.

"You know", she said, "I think you were born to change world, too. Not all worlds are the entire world."

The writer had to leave them there. A child shouldn't have to live in Pauper's Drop. But he also saw that Grace was happy. Maybe Eleanor really was born to change world. Maybe, just maybe, she was going to set the whole world aright. And he thought of the state of Pauper's Drop and started to write a column in his head. A column that wouldn't be publishable in Rapture. And those dock workers at the Fighting McDonagh's. They really didn't have anywhere to turn, except Atlas. Maybe he could go to the tavern again and try to listen in on some more talk. All this, it watered the seed within him. It was not alone in him. His was a soul in turmoil, hoping for ease. For something to bring calm, but his alone was fate. A fate for each and every man to shape. He had to make a choice, as Grace had put it.

Siren Alley, 1957

She'd seen this ugly bastard before, but she couldn't place him. Not one of her regulars. He was a splicer, no doubt, but not too far gone - he still looked mostly human, and she'd had worse. One of those that could climb the wall, even. This guy... looked far more insane, but mostly human, nevertheless. Damn it. She knew she was too far gone, when being whored out to a spider splicer seemed normal. She'd begun sneaking money lately, too. Get herself enough to make something better of herself, then ditch Siren Alley and Daniel Wales.

"What's your name, sport?" She asked of the man, turning slightly to show her figure. She was a bit tall, not very skinny and had large breasts - the opposite of what many came to Siren Alley for - but she wasn't bad looking. And many guys would still screw anything that moved.

"B-b... fucking Billy", he stuttered, licking his lips. So far, she was hooking him, and beginning to reel him in.

"Well, Billy. What do you say? Twenty bucks, and I'm yours the entire evening."

"Show me them tits and I'll pay anything", he blurted out. Inside she sighed, but on the outside she smiled seductively at him.

"Come with me", she said, leading him into one of the apartments Wales had arranged for the girls work... and housing. This one was empty, hadn't been cleaned in a week and smelled thereof. She'd learned to block all that out for the most part, and it didn't seem to bother her companion.

"Twenty bucks and I get all of you, right?" He asked, drool dripping from the corner of his mouth.

"That's right Billy", Sandy said, squeezing her breasts together. She had him now. Unfortunately for her, after that, a whore without any semblance of self respect quickly loses control of the events.

The spliced up fellow looked at Sandy with flickering eyes and his hands trembled. She saw that they were dirty as he stretched them out toward her. As they neared her breasts she slapped them away.

"Hey buster", she snapped, "pay up first. Then I'll be all yours. Twen- thirty bucks or you gotta go. Rules are rules."

"F-f-fine!" The guy snarled back. He reached into his pocket and grabbed his mostly empty wallet. Then he produced three ten dollar bills and handed them over, hands still trembling. Sandy grabbed them quickly, and stuffed them away.

"Now how about them fucking tits?" The spliced demanded. Sandy sighed, and in a fell swoop, drew the breast cups aside to reveal her bosom. She refused to look at him whilst he ogled her body and her breasts. Without delay, he began touching her with his dirty hands.

"Those thirty bucks, they pay for the whole deal, y'hear?" He said, slapping on her breasts, "and that includes your firm fuckin' ass."

He laughed and took Sandy by the waist. This far into the game she just followed, even though this far into the game, it was no longer actually a game. And it certainly wasn't funny anymore. With harsh, demanding hands he bent her over and, breathing heavily, tore her skirt off. Sandy Reid closed her eyes and prayed while Billy the splicer had his way with her.

Atlantic Express depot, 1968

He waded through knee deep water, emptiness reigning with the ocean raining. He'd somehow made it into a maintenance run off pump, and was looking for a way out.

"Mr. Bubbles! There are no angels down here! I'm bored."

That, and they were blocked by the giant pumping propeller, behind which was a way up and to Tenenbaum. Grunting, he turned to go back through the darkness and the debris. But then he spotted something, lying there in the filth. An audio diary. How in the world did it get there? He bent down and picked it up with his big hand. As he pressed Play a young girl's voice spoke:

"Hello Mr. Diary. Want to play?" She then distorted her voice, portraying the diary:

"Actually, I'm quite busy right now, miss Eleanor. Maybe later."

"Well alright. But do you mind if I take you apart while I wait? I promise I'll put you back together!" Said miss Eleanor.

"Wait! You can't do thaaaat..." the sound was distorted as miss Eleanor must surely have begun taking the audio diary apart, "nooo... waaaaiiit, wait, Eleeeaaanooooor -"

There, the recording abruptly ended with a crash, as the diary was smashed.

Mr. Bubbles recognized the voice, but he could not for the life of him put a face to miss Eleanor. There were just sparks of innocence and power. He played the recording again, still not being able to place the memory. As he began to walk away, the Little Sister stopped him:

"No! You must leave it here, Mr. Bubbles, for daddy to find."

Then when he looked into her eyes, it was as if that power and innocence was in there, too. Like the Little Sister had spoken the audio diary. But she couldn't have. Mr. Bubbles saw in the Little Sister's eyes a girl who was born to change the world, and he remembered little Eleanor Lamb. He left the audio diary where he found it, and together the two went back the other way.

As they treaded the darkness of the run off pump, he got the distinct feeling that he was being watched. And not from the rotting surroundings or the salty smelling shadows; from within. Soon, his suspicions were confirmed. From inside his helmet he heard a voice.

"I see. You are awake." A woman spoke. Her voice was ice cold, as the dark and empty Atlantic. "I know who you are", she went on, speaking in a British accent, "but whose word do you follow? Sinclair? No... you... are Tenenbaum's puppet."

The voice was familiar. In his gut, Mr. Bubbles knew not to trust it.

"What has Tenenbaum promised you? A way out? Wouldn't you rather be reunited with the family, and serve a true purpose?"

Family. A familiar word, but a distant and strange feeling. He knew of it, but couldn't relate.

"You are not aware", the woman said, "of who you are. Are you?"

He didn't answer.

"You are part of the Rapture Family."

What good was that? He groaned.

"Won't you join me in Persephone, and we will have your little... 'problem' taken care of, and you can return to serving your family." Her tone was condescending and she was very well aware of it. He ignored her, and finding his way back out of the pumping tube, set off again to find Tenenbaum.

PART IV

Fighting McDonagh's, 1958

Though the writer didn't mention it to her, she heard the boastful Stanley Poole mention visiting the Fighting McDonagh's with him the other night. And the adventurous young lady in Julia Jensen just had to know what kind of place it was. It was in the docks. She'd not been there since the nurse incident. Surely no one would recognize her. She wasn't *that* memorable, was she? Just a quick visit, maybe a glass of beer and a look around to see what it was like, perhaps a photo or two, then out again. She was all made up, too. For some reason her mind told her the writer might be there, and she wanted to look her prettiest. Like she wanted to impress him. Her hair was prettily let out, her locks wavy. She had red lipstick on, to match the hair. Her rogue was lively, to give her cheeks a round feel to them and the mascara was black, in great contrast to her clear blue eyes and pale complexion. She wore a black dress with a push up bra that made her chest more ample than her genes allowed and a corset with white laces that squeezed a bit too tight, but it made her figure curved and even more feminine, as her waist seemed rounder. With that she wore black pumps. A fine looking young woman in black and red. And with that, she had her camera.

She entered the tavern and immediately understood she would draw attention. Not a one in there looked like she did. And the writer wasn't there, like she knew he wouldn't. Still, part of her was disappointed. The patrons there were crude looking men and the few women there were equally crude. No time to look fancy, just a beer at the tavern. Julia kind of wished she'd brought Sandy Reid along, but when Julia was exploring and adventuring, she set out alone. And Sandy was busy working these days. They hardly saw each other anymore. She was an only child, so she didn't have any siblings to teach her this stuff, and due to her mother's income, combined with that of her father's, they were quite wealthy, so Julia never had the chance to explore life beyond the safety zone until she moved out of her parent's place. It was rather funny how her mother was the one to earn the big bucks. She worked for one of Ryan's engineering research branches that developed new ways for Rapture to function at the basic level, considering it was a city built under water. Julia's father worked, too, of course, but this reversal of gender roles would never have worked on the surface, where women were being continually oppressed, as Julia remembered it.

Now she walked through the door of Fighting McDonagh's, looking pretty as a woman can be, and she instantly drew eyes. To these people, this must be how the most luxurious people in town looked like. At this time Rapture was on a downward spiral, but Ryan was still in control and many businesses were still going strong and there was a general belief that better times were just around the corner. These people in here, they were working men and women, and she'd been lucky enough to not have to worry about that. Though with the way Rapture was turning, she probably would soon. She barely got over to the bar before the first man came up to her. A young man of about her age, face tired from working too many night shifts.

"My, my", he said, slight stutter in his voice, "who are you to visit a place like this?" He eyed her up and down, desire in his stare.

"I'm only looking to whet my whistle a bit, as you say." She gave him a smile.

"How 'bout I whet your whistle?" He said giving her a positively indecent look.

"I think... for now, I'll be just fine with a drink", Julia said and then she winked, trying her best to flirt with him. To toy with him. "But how about a photo of you?"

"F-f-fine", he said and did his best to smile. When she saw the so called smile, she thought maybe she should save the film, but she did take one photo of him before she turned to her drink, and he left her.

In a corner of the bar stood a shady character, watching the redhead. She was a pretty dame, all right, but she was talking to all these other guys, so he decided to leave her to her business. And boy, was she over dressed! And taking all those photos, what the hell for? Was she gathering intelligence on 'em or something? Besides, he had something else that was far more appealing than any woman. A syringe of Incinerate that he'd stolen.

He remembered Incinerate well. It was his buddy Sam's favorite. That is, until he had to kill Sam. Billy and Sam had come to Rapture together, to work on construction of the city. Been there almost since the beginning. Lots of years ago. Then, when the city was built, he had to stay and what work was there when the city was finished. None! Not a one job for people like him. He always had a hard time focusing on stuff for too long. That psychiatrist that gave free evaluations for a while, Sofia Lamb, said he had some kind of learning disorder or whatever. It meant no one wanted to hire him. He took it like a man though. Drank a bit, but he didn't turn to plasmids then. They came later. No, Billy did what he could. He stole, just to survive. Dealt in petty crime. Bunked at Sam's place most of the time. Then Sam tried those plasmids and Billy figured, what the hell! They became addicted together. There was no fooling yourself; Billy knew he was addicted. Didn't matter, all that mattered once you got into it was the next fix. Billy's favorite was Teleport. You could disappear into thin air and go anywhere you wanted. And Sam was really fond of the Incinerate plasmid...

Fuck. He didn't want to remember all of that. He looked up real quick, saw some ugly fisherman trying to woo that redhead. Did he know her from somewhere? Who gives a shit, here goes. He produced the syringe from his coat pocket and looked at it dreamingly. A shot of whiskey and then he thrust the needle into his arm. He could feel the ADAM coming alive in his veins. A moment later that glorious rush began, the storm building quickly within him. It manifested first in his skin. It was all tense and it felt like his spirit was trying to crush its way out. His eyes were wide open and he sucked in air to fill his lungs. He was standing literally on his toes, his entire body becoming rigid and stiff, but feeling numb. His arms began feeling warm, first in the shoulders. Then the fire in his blood rushed down into his hands and his fingers. They were glowing red and orange and yellow. Channeling his entire being into his hands, he aimed at the whiskey bottle on the table in front of him and set the entire world ablaze.

There seemed to be some sort of contest going on among the men. The one to get Julia into bed wins. And they were getting more vulgar, finding it amusing to try and shock her with bad language. Maybe that should shock a girl from the finer parts of Rapture, but her parents were, at core, as much workers as these people and they used the same language. Not as much after moving to Mercury Suites, but still. As for the first guy to talk to her, the guy with the stutter, he stood in a corner, looking grouchy. He hadn't come up to her since his first attempt and it looked like he didn't like it when she talked to the other men. Julia remained the sweet girl in the sexy outfit to see if she could get him to come over again. She gave him glances, the occasional wink and a smile. Acting like she wanted him. In a way, maybe she did. Since her adventure in Siren Alley, she'd felt an even bigger desire to explore the realm of fleshly desire, having even explored it on herself. Actually, who she really wanted was the writer. She couldn't kid herself on that point any longer. But he was a mystery she wanted to explore when she knew how to properly

do so. And she also wanted to be a mystery for him to explore. But perhaps, she realized as she gave her first suitor another wink, she should just skip the drama and talk to the writer. She knew he wanted her, too. Just a matter of time, really. Maybe Rapture wouldn't give them all the time in the world. But she liked the play. She liked the chase, now that she was the one being chased. And unlike the men here, the writer - Chris - wanted her for more than a spin in the sheets. And so did she. When that first, stuttering young man finally came up to her again she didn't want him to anymore.

"Finally decided you want some of Duncan, huh?" He said, his stutter even more prominent than before.

"I already told you, no", Julia said, no longer smiling. The game wasn't funny anymore; it had flipped just like that.

"Hey! You can't just... can't just toy with people like that!"

"Listen, I don't want to-"

"You'll do what I tell you to do", the stuttering man said and grabbed her arm.

A bright spark of fire flashed in a corner of the bar, the burst making a sound almost like a small explosion. It was that splicer. He'd set fire to a bottle of whiskey and it, in turn, exploded, setting the table on fire. People started shouting and quickly went to extinguish the fire before it made any more damage. The splicer who'd caused the fire just stood there grinning, but when someone tried to get a hold of him he used Teleport and just vanished from the scene, sucking the air with him as he went. Julia took the opportunity of the chaos and quickly rushed out the door. She didn't notice how the angry stuttering man followed her out from the bar.

Sandy Reid's apartment, 1958

The junkie that was Sandy Reid lay half naked and half unconscious on her bed, staring at the boards in the ceiling. The inside of her head was twirling and she felt somewhat dizzy, having just spliced. The empty hypo lay beside her, small residues of glowing ADAM inside. And just before she spliced, her last customer walked out the door. She'd been taking more and more money lately. She was the one who collected all the girls' earnings at the end of each day to hand over to Wales. It was so easy to snatch a few bucks now and then. There could have been hundreds of dollars in her mattress by now, but somehow she'd spent most of it.

The rustic wooden look of the ceiling boards, set in natural patterns and colored brown, was all she had to entertain her when she lay broken and alone. She noticed a small, black dot of a spider hurry along a board, following the veins of the fake tree, to find an opening. And she giggled, remembering that time that Julia had noticed a spider when they were having coffee last time, and had Sandy smash it.

That one time at the Shark Bite Diner. That was the last time she'd seen Julia... Julia judged Sandy, for splicing and for being a whore. Sandy just knew it. It was so easy for Julia, who got all she pointed at. Little miss Pure and Holy. As she got angrier in her head, there was a sudden knock at the door, and immediately thereafter it was flung open. Sandy was torn back into reality as her father, Marcus Reid, barged in.

"I had to see it to believe it", he shouted, "my own daughter, a drug addict and a whore!"

Sandy sat absent mindedly up on the bed and looked at her father with hazy eyes.

"Daddy... what's going on?" She slurred, unable to focus clearly with the high of ADAM and other narcotics flowing through her.

"I don't believe it", her father went on, rummaging through her things. He'd found a stack of empty hypodermics and syringes. Then he turned to her and shook his head in despair. He was so upset that his mustache trembled and his hands shook with rage.

"A junkie and a whore", he shouted.

"Listen, daddy. Lemme just put on some clothes and we can -"

"Stand up! Stand up and look at yourself!" He grabbed her and pulled her to her feet.

"I know daddy", she said, flinching, but looking into his eyes, "I'm a whore now."

In anger, Marcus Reid raised his hand. It trembled.

"Yes daddy", Sandy pleaded, "hit me daddy." She didn't flinch now. She smiled. "Show me your love, daddy!"

Marcus Reid's eyes welled up with tears and his heavy breath was thick with anger. His hand was shaking and his daughter looked pleading at him. His child. Closing his eyes and searching the bottom of his soul for a way, he lowered his hand and let go his daughter. A lump, she fell back onto the bed. Then he, too, fell to his knees, and cried.

"It's all right, daddy", Sandy Reid said, "I was born this way. Only good for one thing." She laid back and searched her nightstand for a cigarette.

"I want you to move back in with your mother and I", her father said, almost in a whisper, "we can, we can make this go away." He was breathing heavily, trying to gather his thoughts.

"You can't just make it go away, daddy", Sandy said monotonously as she blew smoke towards the spider in the ceiling. She went on, "this is where I'll stay. Somewhere between agony and ecstasy."

Marcus Reid looked up at her. Half naked and smoking, apathetic. She'd given up. He saw how she put out the cigarette by pressing it against her throat, without even flinching. Like nothing could hurt anymore, if she couldn't even make her daddy show his love with the kiss of battery. He got to his feet and with an empty face, looked at her. He stayed for a long time, pleading to her to come home with him, but she wouldn't listen. It was like there was nothing left of Sandy Reid left in her shell. After an hour or so, he left her there to wallow in debauchery in the shadow land of her own existence.

Neptune's Bounty, 1958

Julia hurried away and made some distance from the Fighting McDonagh's. It took a while for her to notice the man pursuing her. But she was not one to do nothing and become a victim. Filled with the strength of the moment, she turned around to face him.

"Why are you following me?" She said. She told herself to act tough. A moment later he came up to her, looking mad. Only now did she notice he had those small bumps on his neck, and some of his hands. You got those from plasmids.

"I'm gonna get what you owe me", he barked. She looked around, hoping there would be someone there, but the wharf was empty. There were some dock workers some distance away, but they couldn't possibly see or hear it if anything happened.

"I don't owe you anything", she sounded less assured.

"Uh huh, you do, with all your winking and..." Suddenly, he reached for her and grabbed her arm. She pulled away.

The stalker with the stutters looked her right in the eyes. He was fully convinced that she owed him something for all her flirting. Some guys just can't take a no. And Julia, though her heart beat fast in her chest, stared right back, unflinching. The man's tone was cold as he spoke.

"Listen. You're going to give me what you owe me." He put his cold hand on her throat, but she immediately pushed it away.

"Get your hand away from me", she demanded, sounding as confident as she felt, "I don't owe you shit."

"I'll damn well put my hand where I want", he answered, raising his hand toward her again. This time, she pushed it away before he touched her. That made him real angry. He grabbed the strap on her camera and tried to take it from her - to at least get away with something - but she resisted, pulling back with her neck, which began to hurt from him tugging on the strap, and on his arm.

"You! Can't just!" He shouted, flustered, as he struggled to take the camera from her, "play with people! Like that!"

"Stop it!" Julia shouted, the strap hurting her neck more and more. Finally, the little piece of plastic that fastened the strap to the camera broke off, making the camera come loose. In the shift in resistance, the stuttering stalker staggered backwards, dropping the camera. It hit the ground and made a sound of crashing glass. While he wasn't fully on his game, Julia threw an angry punch, hitting him right in the cheek. He grunted, and when she threw the next punch, he caught her fist and turned her whole body around, twisting her arm around, and got a grip around her throat.

"Stop!" She yelled.

"Oh, I'm taking what you owe me, bitch", he stuttered.

"Hey!" Someone shouted, "the woman said stop!" Julia's heart took a leap of relief as the man came to her defense, and then another when she saw who it was.

"Hah!" The stuttering man said, "and who are you? Her big brother?"

"No", the timely rescuer said, stepping close, "I'm the goddamn writer."

And then the writer made a fist which he planted straight in the assailant's face. The man went down like a sack of yesterday's potatoes. He fell hard on the wooden planks of the wharf, his nose broken and bleeding. He was out cold. Julia hurried to put her arms around the writer, sniveling. It was awkward, but he kept thinking he could feel her breasts, pushed up by her provocative yet sexy and beautiful, dressing, pressing against him. Great thing to think about in that situation.

"Are you all right? Did he hurt you?" The writer asked.

"I'm fine. Thank you!"

"You're most welcome, miss Jensen."

She hugged him hard.

"I'm fine. Thanks to you, Mr. Perkins." She looked into his eyes and he could see the fright washing away from her. She smiled and kissed his cheek, leaving a red mark of her lipstick on it. Then she wiped her tears. The mascara that had run across her face was smudged out.

"I'll follow you home", he said.

He thought of holding her hand as they walked, but those thoughts remained thoughts. Until he felt her fingers just slightly touching against his hand. At first it was so little, then she did it again, touching him a little more. At last she gently placed her hand in his. He went with her, neither of them saying anything, on the train all the way to her apartment, to make sure she got home safely. People did look, what with her daring outfit and the fact that she'd been crying, but she didn't seem to mind. In her still quiet way, she seemed happy, even with the smudge of the

mascara on her cheeks. She didn't say a word before they reached her door, where she let go of his hand.

"Thank you again, Mr. Perkins. If you hadn't come along... it's good to know you're watching out for me." She smiled and touched his arm. Her big, blue eyes looked into his.

"Always, miss Jensen." He was sure, when he left her, that things would soon change for the better. For tomorrow he had a plan. But first he should find a med clinic. His hand hurt like hell.

The Rapture Tribune, 1958

The writer was nervous. Time he should have spent working on the column instead went on writing down a manuscript for what to say. He scrapped the papers, one by one. None of it was right. The words were too fancy, or they weren't fancy enough. The words were unnatural, or they were too obvious in trying to be natural. He had decided, though, and when the writer decided on something, he was going to get it done. Like a New Year's resolution or something he'd decided that he must talk to Julia Jensen. Ask her out at best, but at the very least, just talk to her. See how she was doing after last night. How was this so hard? He felt it growing inside him; the courage. Adrenaline, but it didn't really kick in. He watched her, sitting over by her typewriter. She was wearing a black blouse, with pink polka dots, and her red hair was put into a pony tail held up by a bow that matched her hair. She didn't seem busy though. Now was the best time to do it. Go!

Walking the ten feet from his desk over to hers that time, he really noticed the office in its entirety. Sucking in the details of the place. On one wall was the panoramic window with its spectacular view of central Rapture with its towering buildings and neon signs. In the distance was Fontaine Futuristics, owned, of course, by Ryan Industries now. Beyond that was Persephone, that was on the absolute edge of Rapture and a deep sea abyss. Closer to the building were neon signs of certain businesses. Eve's Garden, Fleet Hall. On the opposite wall was, in big black letters, the words Rapture Tribune. Below the words, the wall itself was carved to look like the Rapture skyline would look from a distance; the meaning being that the Tribune would look over the city of Rapture, being the city's leading newspaper and source of news and information. On that wall, over by the entrance from the elevators and stairs, was one of those air vents that were all over Rapture. And in between the walls were two rows of desks, where the journalists wrote their articles and pieces. There were ferns here and there, giving the large office complex a green, airy feel, though the walls went mostly in grey. The roof of the office complex was lower than usual, and the lamps gave out a warm yellow light, giving the office a cozy feel on days like this. It felt as if though he walked in slow motion, but before he could collect his thoughts, he was standing in front of Julia Jensen's desk.

"Um, miss- miss Jensen, I, uh..." The writer stood in front of the redhead girl that he had looked at from a distance for some time, and now all the words that sounded so good in his head came out all different. That is to say, not at all.

"My, oh, my", said Julia Jensen with a slight smile, "such trouble getting the words out. And from a wordsmith such as yourself. I never." There came that adrenaline rush he was hoping for! Maybe he should take one of those plasmids and make these things easier. Oh, for crying out loud! Just talk to her! His brain was all over the place. Right. Talk.

"Miss Jensen, I was hoping you would give me the honor of taking you for a cup of coffee." Julia gave him a big smile, despite his somewhat dramatic way of asking her out. Or maybe because of it.

"Nothing would delight me more", she said getting up from her seat, "and then perhaps a walk through Arcadia, and we can discuss your new book. Mind you, I haven't finished it yet and I do not wish to know the ending prematurely." The writer smiled, too. A rare sight. Well that was easy, he thought.

Somewhere in Rapture, 1958

He was a murmur among whispers. A shadow in the dark, unseen in the night. He was a thought in the back of the mind, drifting as you focus on it. With green and yellow eyes, this creature of the fading twilight stalked through an air duct listening in on the everyday talk of Rapture. The air duct ran by all the apartments in the entire building, and for such an agile creature, navigating the breezy blackness was easy. He walked by a gentleman arguing with his wife about how long the steak should be cooked.

"It's not a real steak Martha! It's genetically engineered!"

"That's what you used to say on the surface too, Horace!"

The creature cared not for earthly disputes. On footsteps silent as snowfall he treaded onward, braving the darkness of the duct. Suddenly, he stopped, senses sharpened. Not a muscle moved he, not a breath exhaled he. But he listened and smelled, and tasted the very air. His superior senses had picked up something. The faintest, tiniest squeak of a mouse.

The mouse, itself a marvel of creation, with its tiny body yet resilient defense and keen wits, sat a mere six or seven feet away, unaware of the lurking danger and impending doom. It had scrounged a piece of stale bread from one of the apartments and had snuck back into the dark to feast. When the beast was nearly upon it, the mouse felt the presence. It cast one horrified glance at the monster's glowing diamond eyes, and then darted into the unknown to save its life, squeaking in horror. The creature lunged after it in full pursuit. Run. That was all there was. The mouse ran headless around each bend, looking for a way out or somewhere to hide, but the vent bars were too thin, even for the smallest of mice - a safeguard on the humans' side, that now did its job all too well - and the mouse kept running, swallowing its fear.

The shadow creature stalked efficiently, getting the mouse exactly where it wanted. The creature had prowled these ducts many times and knew every nook and cranny. As long as the prey didn't move down to the basement, there was only one apartment with a hole in the vent large enough for the mouse to squeeze through. Everything else was his domain. Nothing more than a game.

The mouse was cowering in a corner, but its pursuer seemed to have lost the trail. It dared not move, but took a breath. From where it sat, the duct parted three ways; to the front, where the mouse came from; to the left, and to the right. Each path seemed darker than the one before it. But the monster was nowhere to be seen. But there! To the left, a grey shape was moving slowly. Searching for something. The mouse, moving not a single muscle, watched the predator. Suddenly, it was gone. The mouse's heart raced faster each second. The shape flashed across the forward path, and a few moments later, across the rightmost one. For a moment, their eyes met, and when the mouse stared into the predator's soul it realized: the beast was toying with it.

A split second later, the mouse took off like Hell on wheels, rushing off to the forward path, from where it came. And like the shadow of a lightning, the creature of fading twilight went in pursuit, mind set on only one thing.

Its energy nearly out, the mouse could but hope for salvation in that one broken vent, just a few seconds ahead. As fast as feet can carry a body, the mouse ran. Just a few more feet. It could see the faint light from in there. Behind it, the hunter closed in. Two more feet. The mouse was close to freedom, nearly fainting from terrified exhaustion. One more foot. The light of Heaven met the mouse as it swerved to run unto freedom's embrace. One glimpse. And just as the mouse thought it was free, the beast lunged. The monster jumped, and its razor jaws of death clenched around the mouse's neck and crushed it.

Utterly without pity or the faintest trace of mercy, the hunter devoured its prey to the last bone. Rapture's game is not for the faint of heart, or the weak. Licking its mouth and cleaning its paws after the meal, the victorious hunter was master of the game. It had beaten Babylon's tests and come out the other side stronger and better. Tyger the cat, leviathan to his prey.

The Shark Bite Diner, 1958

The writer took Julia to the Shark Bite Diner. His favorite. It was a quaint little diner that turned into a pub by the evenings, but was a café and restaurant by day. It was just a five minute walk from the Tribune, too. And you could get real blueberry pie. The berries were smuggled in, of course, but blueberry pie none the less. It didn't say surface blueberries on the menu, but at that price it couldn't be anything but. You could taste it, too. At the thought of real berries Julia got really excited and even though it certainly wasn't cheap, the writer got her one piece of blueberry pie. Lord knows when they could have real berries next time. Ryan's goons could burst in any time and shut the place down and have the owner vanish. Though, evidently, Frank Fontaine had invested in the pub and he was dead. Killed by Ryan's goons. So, they might be out of real blueberries. He rushed all those thoughts aside, deciding to live the now, then and there with Julia Jensen. They sat in a booth, across from one another. The waitress who took their order was a cute young woman who tried to act nice, but you could see she wasn't very fond of the job. She was a splicer, using teleport to give customers faster service. So the plasmids weren't just bad. The writer ordered himself a bit of blueberry pie as well. And coffee.

He was, again, shy and mostly unable to find the right words. It was mostly she who led the conversation. But he found that it got easier when it was just the two of them, and when he wasn't caught off guard. Also, he saw in her eyes that she was enjoying herself. Not knowing what to do with his hands he kept thumbing the tablecloth, a white and red checkered plastic cover. Exactly what you would expect. As they were waiting for their pie and coffee, the writer said:

"Are- are you okay? I mean, with what happened the other night."

She looked down on to the table cloth, reluctant to remember the ordeals. Then she nodded, looked up and smiled. "I'm fine. Nothing really happened. You came along at just the right time."

"Are you sure? He didn't hurt you?"

"Don't worry", she stretched back a bit, "I'm a big girl. It's nothing to worry about. As a matter of fact, I feel better now than in a long time."

"Really? That's good to hear." The waitress popped up, out of thin air, having teleported back with their pie. Looked like she was trying to act casual and try to fish for tips. The pie was delicious.

"You know", Julia said, just as she had finished her pie, "that is the best thing I've had since I came to Rapture."

"See, I told you. They know their pies."

"I think it's you, who know yours", she said, giving a glimpse of a smile and a quick look into his eyes. Just the kind of thing that made him unsure what to say. "I've not had real blueberry pie in ages", she went on, "I'm glad you finally decided to ask me out. I'm sure you've been meaning to for some time." Again, that smile and the look. She was trying to discern what he was thinking.

"I have", he said, thumbing the table cloth, "but I wasn't sure you would want to, miss, miss Jensen."

She smiled again, but not just a glimpse this time. "You can call me Julia, if you want."

"Sure, I, uh... sure, Julia."

"And I'm sure, Chrissstian-" she elongated the S "-that I may call you by your first name?"

"Of course. I prefer Chris though."

"You don't like your full name?"

"My father was Christian Perkins. I'm Chris Perkins. You know?"

She smiled again. "So... Chris... your new book... is it autobiographical? Do you long to go back to the surface?"

"Shush, miss Jensen. You can't talk about that. Never know who's listening."

"It's Julia, remember?" She winked.

"Julia. You shouldn't talk about such things."

"I shall contain myself", she said, sounding official, then returning to her normal intonation, she went on: "do you, though?"

It occurred to the writer that she might not really understand what it was to speak sedition (treason!) in Rapture. It wasn't entirely safe. Just look at what happened to Sofia Lamb, vanishing from the public eye. God knows how.

"I, no", he said, "right now, there's nowhere I would rather be." Julia blushed and looked down. Then she looked up again, straight into his eyes.

"Me neither", she said.

Arcadia, 1958

"So tell me, how does one become a writer?" Julia asked, as they walked along the beautiful garden of Arcadia. The place in Rapture where green grass and lush trees existed. The lack of sunlight meant nothing could grow naturally, but Julie Langford did a great job still, keeping the place going. There were bees here and there in Rapture, most of them in Arcadia. He'd also noted another insect was the butterflies that had sprung out as of late, the blue morpho that grew armor on the inside. There were no birds though. The writer had to think back to remember the sound of birds. He and Julia walked quite close, almost huddled together. The writer took that as a good sign, though it'd be hard to find bad signs between them anymore.

"I don't... it's not really something you become. There's something inside you all the time. A burning creation. To make stories. Anyone can write stories down, but a writer will always have a spark of creation in him. That's what being a writer is about to me, anyhow. Take this place, Rapture. All these workers built the city. They wrote the story down-" she looked puzzled a moment, and then realized he was using a metaphor "-but Andrew Ryan was the writer. They just don't call him a writer."

Julia stopped and stood in front of him. "You know", she said, "I, too, am a writer."

"You are?" He was amused. She blushed. Just a little. And she nodded slightly.

"Uh huh", she said, "I've made up a story too."

"What's it about?" He saw something in glimmering in her eyes just before she spoke. And she spoke almost in a whisper.

"You, me, and behind that bush over there", she said stepping closer to him.

"Miss Jensen!" She smiled and he saw the glimmer of innocence and femininity in her eyes again. She stepped even closer and he felt his shyness wash over him. But she didn't. A bee flew by between them, buzzing away on its business. She followed it with her eyes and then looked back into his. And again her eyes glimmered. That spark. Her eyes, blue as the depths, told the story.

"Kiss me", she said, but it was she who was leaning in closer. She closed her eyes. He felt her hands against his sides. And he put his hands on her waist and leaned in closer as well.

A throat was cleared, but not by him, or her. Her advances interrupted, they looked to the side. There stood two burly men, both wielding Thompson machine guns.

"Sorry to interrupt", one of them said with a thick Russian accent. The writer recognized him from some photos. A goon of Ryan's, name of Karlosky. He went on, turned to the writer: "you will have to come with us."

"What's going on?" The writer said, skeptic voice.

"Mr. Ryan wants word with you."

"What about?" The writer could feel Julia's hand wanting to hold his and cast a quick glance at her. She looked frightened, unsure what was going on.

"Don't know. You come or I carry you?"

"No, I'll come. I, uh..." The writer turned to Julia.

"Not to worry", Karlosky said, "will make sure young lady gets home safe." Karlosky sounded genuine and even nice when he said it, and the writer found that he trusted him to make sure Julia was safe. Karlosky went with him and the other man with Julia. Karlosky led him away. He hoped this made him seem important, but in the back of his head he remembered the rumors about what happened to people who disappeared. The rumors about Sofia Lamb and James Holloway. They better not be true.

The Shark Bite Diner, 1958

Billy, the teleporting splicer, hadn't had a taste of ADAM in days. All the EVE had run out of his system, and he had no use of his powers. In his hand he held the knife that took Sam's life. He'd licked the coagulated blood on it, but he felt no ADAM in it. He'd also tried to hack one of those vending machines to make it spit out a free prize, but it was fucking impossible. Kept getting shortcut and giving him a shock.

Now he was shaking. Couldn't think clearly. His head was aching from the ADAM withdrawal. He saw faces. Faces from when he was who he wanted to be, and from the times they weren't memories. They asked of him to come and join the other side... He sat in the corner booth of the Shark Bite Diner, up in central Rapture, looking at the checkered table cloth while carving the underside of the table with his knife. He'd noticed that redhead chick, he'd seen her sometime before. She'd left with some regular Tom when he came in. Billy was screaming on the inside. Just fucking typical of the waitress to come up to him.

"Look. You can't stay here if you don't order anything", she said, trying her best to keep a strong face even though all she wanted was to go home herself and have a plasmid. She was a saver. Had several tonics at home she had yet to try.

Billy looked up and saw her. She was mocking him! He got up and drew his knife, hand shaking and eyes wide open. His pupils were dilated making every light a thousand times brighter. And in his brain all he saw were the people mocking him. He put the knife against the waitresses throat, poking her skin with the point. The other guests in the diner were shocked, and they too started laughing and mocking him!

"Stop your stupid laughing! It makes you look like a whore!" He was shouting. "Someone just give me a fffucking EVE hypo or this bitch gets it! I swear it! I'll cut off her tits!" He screamed uncontrollably. Billy the splicer didn't at all notice that the waitress was crying and begging for her life, standing petrified out of shock. If she hadn't been in shock, she could have teleported away from the maniac.

"Stop laughing and give me a fffucking hypo!" No one around moved. They just kept laughing and mocking him. "Fuck! Fuck! Fffuck!"

He stuck the knife into the waitresses chest, instantly feeling the warmth of the blood squirting over him. He reveled in her death, screaming as he killed her. That's what he did to people who mocked him! He snuffed her fucking life out. Not once, not twice. He kept stabbing her until she became a bloody pulp, the blood spurting all over him.

He couldn't stand all the mocking! When there was nothing left of the bitch but blood and guts and the red remains of a human being he started going through her pockets for tip money. His hands were all slippery from her blood. Two fucking bucks? That's it? He took the rest from the cash register and hurried out and to the vending machine just outside. He could hear them still mocking him in there.

"Hurry up you stupid piece of shit!" Even the waitress mocked him. Stupid bitch. He showed her, though. "Fucking finally!" In no time he put the needle against his skin, thrust it in and the ADAM in his blood was activated. Suddenly everything was clear, the events of the last few minutes erased from his deranged mind, and with a smile he vanished in a cloud of entropic energy, into thin air.

Without ADAM, Billy was a plain old lunatic. Grade A crazy. With ADAM... he was a calculating psychopath. And this fucking city was his for the taking.

Daniel Wales' Office, 1958

The Pearl was yet one of the finest places to live in Rapture, even with Siren Alley's descent into the red light. Now even Daniel Wales, one of Rapture's own architects, was running girls. One of them was a young woman who'd lost her job and even though she had rich folks, she turned to whoring. But he'd gotten tips from some of the other girls that young miss Reid kept too large a percentage of the earnings for herself, so to speak. Now he had to show her who's boss. And all of that was tiresome. All the whores were fucking whiny. Gave him a headache on a regular basis. He stood in his office on the top floor of the Pearl, pouring himself a glass of whisky with which to murder the pain in his head. It was a small office, part of his own private apartment. The best one in the Pearl, of course. It had a lounge with a high end piano and a nice view of Rapture's architectural beauty - which he designed along with his brother, Simon.

Fucking Simon, he thought. The sap had been getting in with that bitch Sofia Lamb a couple years back, when the brothers started getting trouble finding contracts and started a worshipping service in Pumping Station 5, converting people into that crackpot religion of

Lamb's. Shaking his head, Daniel picked up an Audio Diary from his desk and hit record. Earlier in the day he'd received a present from Simon...

"Tonight, I had a pain in me head... so naturally I came up to me office to murder it with a drink. And there on me liquor rack... was a bottle of sacramental wine from me dear brother Simon." He looked over at the wine bottle. Fine wine. Not the watered down piss you could get from Worley Winery. Probably it was smuggle goods. He shook his head, "of course, the vintage date on the label is the code to enter his territory. Nineteen - nineteen. I should pass his bleedin' wine through me system and send it back warm."

He stopped recording and took a deep breath, trying not to think about where he was at. He was running girls, and Simon thought he was saving souls. Could you believe Daniel had ever shared a womb with such a sap?

Behind him, there was a knock on the door. He sighed, sweeping the whisky, and bade whoever it was on the other side enter.

"You wanteda see me, Mr. Wales?" A woman said, trying to pretty up her voice so as not to appear suspect. He turned around. It was Sandy Reid, sure enough. She was a tall woman, too tall for Wales' taste and she wore an ugly dress that pushed up her womanly delights, making them nice, big and plump. The low cut dress showed off her slender thighs. With it, a faceful of makeup, curled up bangs of dark brown hair and black pumps. All in all, thought Wales, not a pleasant looking woman. Then again, Siren Alley was the place to go to scratch an itch you were ashamed of, even in a town with no laws.

"Ah, miss Reid, innit?" He said with his thick Irish accent. "Sit down." He sat down himself, behind his desk, leaning his head back, almost knocking it against the hard safe in the wall behind it. He should really put up a painting there. He waited for her to sit her delicate ass down, too, then went on:

"Now, miss Reid-

"I know what this is about, Mr. Wales", Sandy Reid interrupted him, looking at him with big puppy dog eyes, "and I ain't stealing nothing." Wales poured himself another whisky, seemed like he'd get proper drunk and highly likely introspective if he kept it up.

"Now now, I'm not throwing accusations. But I heard a rumor-"

"Well it ain't true."

Daniel Wales swept his whisky. "Listen here young miss..." his voice was threatening yet calm. "I'm the feckin' boss here and you do best in shutting the hell up when I talk to ya. If I find out you're stealing me money I won't be a forgiving man. Understand?" The vein in his forehead threatened to pop his entire skull.

"Yes, Mr. Wales." Sandy Reid did shut up. She looked down in defeat.

"Now, answer me truthfully. Are you stealing me feckin' money?" The tension was palpable as he stared hard and cold into the whore's eyes. She shook her head, but didn't say a word. Good for her, he hated the whining of the whores.

"Good. Now get the fuck outta me office."

Sandy Reid hurried out of the room and left Daniel Wales with an even bigger headache. He sighed to himself.

"Feck it", he muttered.

Then he took his pump shotgun from under the desk, got up from his ass and went out of his office, walking calmly past the hall and the lounge and out the door. Miss Reid was standing just

outside, lighting a cigarette, her hands trembling, still nervous from the meeting, and correcting the wrinkles in her fuck ugly black dress.

"Hey, miss Reid", the Irishman said crookedly. She turned and looked at him with a surprised look on her face. She raised her eyebrows when she noticed the weapon in his hands.

"Pucker up ya daft bastard", he crowed. He pointed the shotgun at her belly, and fired. The woman was split in two. Muttering to himself, Wales went back into his office and poured another whisky. He swept it and poured one more. On the desk was the bottle of wine he'd received earlier with the code on it.

"Feckin' Simon. And feckin' whores." Now he had to have someone clean up outside, too. Murder that pain in the head with a drink.

Atlantic Express depot, 1968

Making its way up the elevator was a gloomy Mr. Bubbles. A rare thing to behold, the awakened soul of a Big Daddy. But this one was. And it was not a dream. With heavy heart the flesh inside tried to remember, 'who am I?' And still, the bond to the Little Sister at its feet was strong. Something made Mr. Bubbles wish nothing more than her safety. This Tenenbaum promised to help with both those goals, and so Mr. Bubbles played along. But... the drill was ready.

"Mr. Bubbles, can't it go any faster?" The Little Sister said, impatiently. And at that, the elevator came to a sudden stop between two floors.

"Mr. Bubbles?" The girl said, frightened, as the elevator started on its way back down. It creaked and hissed. They were trapped like rats, and the elevator slowly made its way back down. The glass doors made the surroundings visible. Each floor was empty and devoid of people, with the exception of a rotting corpse on one. There were broken train parts scattered, and over all, it was an evacuated, dark place. In the surrounding darkness, something was hunting them. Watching them.

"Herr Bubbles, you must hurry", Tenenbaum whispered, "there is something after the little one." She realized they were stuck, Mr. Bubbles hoped. The elevator ground slowly downward until it finally reached the ground floor, from which they'd come.

"Hurry", Tenenbaum called, "to the other elevator across the room." As the elevator doors opened, Mr. Bubbles picked the Little Sister up to let her ride on his shoulder and set across the darkened waiting area. He had to go around some debris to get to the next elevator. As he did, he noticed the shadows moving along the walls of the circular switching station they were in. Someone, or something, was creeping fast as the eye. All Mr. Bubbles could catch a glimpse of was the glimmer of armor and the shadow that the creature was. It was hiding in the darkness, but clearly showing itself; *I'm here and I'm watching you*. He hurried as fast as he could, and finally reached the other elevator. They started upward again.

Up, past the several levels of deserted train station. Darkness seemed all knowing, eternal. Memories flashed of a bustling city, filled with life. Now, all around, emptiness reigned. The girl waited impatiently, until at last the elevator stopped and the doors opened. They were in a small maintenance section. There were crates from Sinclair Solutions lying about.

"Just over at the ticket booth", Tenenbaum said. The lights worked, but buzzed and crackled. The next room was a waiting area, drenched in darkness. Only a vending machine gave some light, flickering in blue, the clown on the face of it smiling in the dark.

"I will turn on the lights", Tenenbaum said. "There."

The lights came on one by one, and as they did, Mr. Bubbles caught another glimpse of their stalker. It was in the room with them, having made it there long before they could. He caught only a glimpse of the shadow exiting the room on the other side. Other than that, all there was in the room was a few benches. Carrying the quiet Little Sister, Mr. Bubbles went through the Securis door on the other side of the room. No sign of life or anything that moved. The shadow was gone. Barred gates separated them from the train platform and a train that seemed to be functioning still. But the ticket booth and Tenenbaum was on their side of the gates. Mr. Bubbles walked up to the booth and pressed the button for service. The window shutters swung up and the room on the other side became visible through a pane of glass.

Tenenbaum was in there, standing right in front of the window, looking back at Mr. Bubbles with sad eyes.

"Here you are", she said, looking tired. In fact, she looked as if she hadn't slept in a week. Her eyes were dark, her hair dirty and quickly put out the way in a ponytail. Her clothes were torn and uneven. She was a complete mess.

"Can I trust you?" She went on, "will you help me?" The lumbering form didn't answer, its round glowing porthole sensors remaining a neutral yellow.

"Yes. I will trust you. For the little ones." Mr. Bubbles looked around the room. There were several Little Sisters there, but whereas the one on his shoulders had a sickly pale pallor and eyes that glowed yellow, these ones seemed lively and their eyes normal. Normal girls. They were cured. Tenenbaum in turn looked anxiously at his Little Sister. Then she looked back at Mr. Bubbles with pain in her eyes.

"I must ask one thing of you. You must go to Adonis Luxury Resort und drain the lower levels. The little ones, they tell me someone is... waiting, there. Do this, and I will ask this man Sinclair to help me find out who you are." She sighed. "I am sorry to ask so much of you, but I have no other options. I would go, but Sofia Lamb might find me, und the little ones, they won't be safe." She sighed, the weariness in her voice almost cracking. But she was strong.

She left the window, only to appear behind the barred gate a few moments later. She stretched her arm through the bars and touched Mr. Bubbles' metal skin, looking straight into his eyes, pleading to him.

"Leave the little one here, und I will cure her", she pleaded. And Mr. Bubbles saw the honesty, and the agony and the pain in her eyes. He put the Little Sister down in front of her, trusting her to give the girl back her humanity. To take her to safety. The girl started to scream when Tenenbaum grabbed her:

"No! No!" But right there, in front of Mr. Bubbles, Tenenbaum gave the girl something that returned color to her cheeks and turned her eyes to normal. She simply closed her glowing yellow eyes, and when she opened them, a pair of big brown eyes looked out. The girl calmed down, sighing in relief.

She was cured.

"This thing", Tenenbaum said, "it disintegrates the slug inside of her und cures her." The cured sister slid through the bars and followed Tenenbaum into the little room.

"You know what you must do", Tenenbaum said when in she was back in safety once more, "I will find out who you are. I promise you, Herr Bubbles." Mr. Bubbles let out a long murmured sigh and set off back from where he'd come. He looked around, but didn't see the shadow.

Andrew Ryan's office, 1958

The writer sat outside the office, waiting. He heard some arguing from the inside, but he couldn't make out the words. The secretary had stepped out and Karlosky was silent as a wall. Big as a wall, too, that Russian body guard of Ryan's. Frightening guy. The waiting made him nervous. After a good ten minutes the door to Andrew Ryan's office opened and a man came out. The writer recognized him immediately. Bill McDonagh. Andrew Ryan's right hand.

"Bill!" Karlosky said happily, "I'm thinking-" But McDonagh stopped him, looking stressed.

"Not now Ivan. I've got a million things to do. Elaine is home sick with Sophie and there's that leak in pumping station number five, I... who's this?" McDonagh turned to the writer. He stood up, but before he could introduce himself McDonagh went on: "Oh I know you. You're that writer. Missus really liked your book, the one 'bout the moon." Bill McDonagh took him by the hand and managed a smile through the stress.

"Right", the writer said, also smiling courteously.

"Best be off, mate. Leak ain't gonna fix itself. And you better not keep Mr. Ryan waiting." And with that Karlosky led the writer into the office.

"Ah, Mr. Perkins, is it?" Andrew Ryan sat behind his desk, emanating personality. A great man in many aspects. The founder, the creator - the writer - of Rapture. The writer came in and Karlosky behind him.

"Karlosky", Ryan said, "would you wait outside. This will not take long." The body guard left and Ryan turned to the writer. His hard lines and masculine visage, stern face and powerful eyes, threatening to the writer, many years Ryan's junior. The writer seemed almost to shrink in the presence of the great man.

"Mr. Perkins, please, have a seat", Ryan said. The writer sat down on a chair in front of Ryan's desk, without saying anything. First, he wanted to know why Ryan had taken him here. "Mr. Perkins, I have read your latest... book. And I... I'm having a hard time understanding how a man such as yourself could write something that is so clearly against all that Rapture stands for. The message is clear." Ryan looked down and shook his head, then looked up again and almost whispered, "leaving Rapture is not an option."

"Mr. Ryan, sir. I have to tell you, you're mistaken", the writer said. Ryan frowned. "It's not a message at all, Mr. Ryan. It's just a book. Pure fiction." Ryan seemed to try to read the writer's mind. Time seemed to be endless. Almost as if the writer was waiting for his verdict. His hands trembled, but his eyes looked into Ryan's. He *was* speaking the truth.

"I am not an unforgiving man. I'm willing to believe you, Mr. Perkins. This once. If you tell me it is only fiction and not a message of glorification of the surface... I will believe you. It is true, after all, that I built Rapture to be a city of free speech, but I will not tolerate this kind of propaganda again. I've read your previous book as well, and while your style of authoring is not to my taste I rather liked how you portrayed building Rapture. That is why I'm going to let you keep writing. One more chance, Mr. Perkins. One. Meanwhile, I will make sure this book, *Returning to the Source*, is no longer sold. You will understand."

The writer did understand. Clearly. Within him the seed was sprouting, Ryan feeding it exactly what it needed.

"Thank you, Mr. Ryan. I assure you, I never meant any such things. I hope you believe me, because I do not wish to back to the surface. I've taken a shine to Rapture and some of the people in it."

"Good", Ryan said, leaning back in his chair, the matter resolved. "Because you cannot leave Rapture." The writer nodded, glad Ryan saw sense. Then Ryan went on: "let me tell you why you are here, Mr. Perkins, in Rapture. Several years ago, I read your dissertation, Industrial Competition and the Way to the Future, and found in the author a man like myself. One who saw the evils of the socialist societies. And when I built this city I wanted people like that author. And I remembered you. I am glad that you did come, but you are much younger than I expected..." He noticed the troubled look on the writer's face.

"Sir, I... didn't write that dissertation. My father did." Maybe he shouldn't have said that. Ryan didn't answer immediately. He just contemplated his options. After a long silence he finally spoke:

"You are not Christian Perkins?"

"Yes, sir. Chris Perkins junior."

"Hm... this calls things into question. Let me ask you... do you share your father's views?"

The writer thought about his answer carefully. Ultimately, he figured honesty would be best, though he still left out all about what he'd come to feel about the working people and the poor - the people.

"Not fully, Mr Ryan. But for the most part I do."

Andrew Ryan frowned. "Go on", he said.

"I'm not a socialist, sir. But neither can I agree with everything that my father wrote." Ryan's frown persisted. The writer went on: "I hope you appreciate my honesty, even though it's not what you want to hear. My father taught me that much. Be honest. And I..." Disappearing people came into his mind again and he fell silent. He regretted not kissing Julia Jensen.

The thoughts raced in Andrew Ryan's head. This young man was in Rapture by mistake, and he was a capable writer who had already written what people might take as anti-Rapture propaganda. But he was also an honest man and Andrew Ryan admired that. Admired that in spite of what might happen, this young man said exactly what he thought. Besides, he had a far bigger problem in Atlas.

"I do appreciate your honesty, Mr. Perkins", he finally said, "I will be true to my word. You will have your second chance. I hope, for your sake, that you use it to show your loyalty to Rapture and to me. I did not build this city only to hand it over to parasites! But rest assured... I will watch, and I will *not* tolerate any more propaganda against my city."

"I... thank you, Mr. Ryan. I promise you won't regret it."

"We will see, Mr. Perkins." Ryan went on for a moment about how he'd rejected the answers of church and government, reiterating what the writer already knew and had already heard several times before, and how he would not accept dissension.

"Like what was once the American dream, the Rapture dream is something that we cannot take for granted. It is not for everyone; parasites will claw at society, as they have done on the surface. The Rapture dream will not allow it."

"Rapture was your dream, Mr. Ryan", the writer said gloomily, but back straight, "belonging was mine."

The great man chuckled.

"And who are you?" Andrew Ryan said, "small men dream small." He had a smirk on his face, like he felt he was better than the writer.

"That may be", the writer replied, "but big dreams crash harder when they fall."

"Is that a threat, Mr. Perkins?" Ryan's smirk disappeared in an instant and was replaced with ice cold scorn.

"How could a small man threaten a big dream?" The writer said; it sounded almost like he meant 'yes, yes it is'. Ryan frowned, and leaned back in his chair.

"Perhaps", he said, looking the writer deep in the eye, "you are not a small man at all. Perhaps you are a big man, who happens to dream small. There is something more powerful than each of us, Mr. Perkins. A combination of our efforts, a Great Chain of industry that unites us. But it is only when we struggle in our own interest that the chain pulls society in the right direction. That is why I built Rapture here, where the great will not be constrained by the small."

"It's the small dreams and the small deeds that make life."

"A man needs ambition, Mr. Perkins", Ryan began, his tone serious and his face stern, yet he sounded like he was about to give a lecture, "without ambition, he lives only on the ambitions of others, and makes nothing of his own life. He does not build, he does not create, but rather stands upon other men's buildings and creations."

The writer shook his head, and said:

"People do not dream big. People dream small, Mr. Ryan. A better job or a nicer house or kids." Ryan discarded that with a wave of the hand.

"History does not remember job hunters and child makers", he said.

"Maybe it should. Maybe history should remember the men who died in the rain and honor their lives, instead of men who drew lines on maps. These men are the great men of history, it seems, and not those who actually did the deed."

Ryan was silent for a while, saying nothing, but looking the writer in the eyes, like he was trying to read his mind. Or worse, maybe he was deciding his fate. Then he said:

"Rapture was my making, Mr. Perkins, my creation. It is my city; it exists because I made it so. And I do not take lightly, threats against it, its security or its secrecy. What dreams you have is up to you, that is the whole meaning of Rapture, so long as they do not threaten my city. I believe in second chances. This... propaganda that you have written, I can overlook it, so long as you give me your solemn word that you will not repeat it, and go against my city. Do not think that I could not have you... silenced for this. As it happens, there are larger schemes going on, as we are both aware. I do not think you are an agent of Atlas or a Communist organizer, and that is why I'm giving you *one* more chance to show your loyalty to Rapture." In his controlled authority, Ryan let his Russian ancestry slip in the 'could'.

The writer swallowed and nodded understandingly.

"I am loyal to Rapture, Mr. Ryan", he said, voice weak from Ryan's threats and the realization of how close he came to actually being executed. Ryan finished:

"Karlosky will show you out."

Ryan gave the writer a stern look, and then turned around his chair, turning blankly away. No further words needed to be spoken. The writer got up and went out the door.

Leaving Ryan Industries that night was a writer still in shock. However calm he'd tried to seem to Ryan, he was anything but. The way the great man had been talking confirmed to the writer that the rumors must be true. At least some. And if he didn't watch out he might find the rumors irrefutably true, only he wouldn't be able to tell anyone. It was getting all too clear to writer that there were no actual liberties in Rapture, and that no contender for the throne was in the right. He finally made up his mind. The seed was sprouted. But most devastating was what had come up last. He shouldn't even have been allowed to come to Rapture. The invite he'd received was meant for his father, who passed away just shortly before the letter of recruitment came. The writer was named after his father. He was Christian Perkins, Jr.

Did the invite say Jr.? He wasn't sure. And he didn't have it anymore. Well, he'd be home soon, where a couple of Old Harbinger were waiting for him. Feeling down, he soon remembered Julia. She would probably not want to see him again. He thought about going over to her place to see if she was okay, but decided she didn't want him to. Maybe he should buy a bottle of Lacan Scotch on the way home.

PART V

Medical Pavilion, 1958

Ah, so the old Jensen bitch was here again. One of his regulars, you could say. There was probably more of Steinman on her than herself by now. On her first visit, she'd told him exactly what she wanted and how she wanted it, a thinner nose, slimmer calves and a slight uplift of her bosoms. He remembered her exact words as she sketched outlines on a black and white photo of herself in the nude:

"This is what my mother used to look like before that, that drunk picked up a knife one day and had his way with her. I want you to make her pretty again. The knife should put her back together."

Those were the words. She'd even shed a tear. Steinman had no sentimentality for that. He'd performed her surgery and added a few more... personal touches. And she'd kept coming back after that. He liked what he'd accomplished with her so far considering what she started out as, but Aphrodite wasn't satisfied. Then again, she didn't have a very good face to begin with, so it was hard to bring out beauty from underneath it. All too plain, really. Now Jensen's daughter, she'd be one to work on. In due time, of course. Aphrodite would have it no other way. She lay on the operating table before him and he was speaking his thoughts into an audio diary.

"Do whatever you want, that's what she said. Just to make her beautiful... if I could take the fat from her cheek and insert it... nurse! How long?"

"Thirty seconds, doctor."

"I shouldn't have to wait for anesthesia to, there's a thought! Surgery with no anesthesia. Make a note of it."

"Doctor?"

"Yes... without anesthesia I could apply the ADAM directly at cellular level and see the progress in real time without the limp that anesthesia brings..."

He got excited at the thought.

Dr. Steinman took a scalpel from his coat pocket. It was still bloody from his last patient. That bitch had the nerve to die on him. He put the scalpel against Mrs. Jensen's cheek and sliced it open to have a look inside.

"Hmm... if I should just..." he cut and sliced Barbara Jensen's face. "Expose the cheekbone, a bit of cartilage from the nose..."

"Doctor!" The nurse began to yell. In a moment she turned from a helpful assistant into a damn obstacle. Steinman ignored her and kept working. The monitor that Mrs. Jensen was connected to was beeping at an alarming speed as her heart rate went up with the shock of Steinman's treatment. She yelled again.

"Shut up, nurse. Eyelids go-" For a few moments she did shut up. Then the beeping on the monitor rapidly began to drop in intervals.

"Doctor, her heart rate is dropping!"

"Shut- what?"

"We're losing her. Doctor. She's gone." Mrs. Jensen's heart rate turned into a steady beep on the monitor.

"Argh!" Steinman made a fist and struck Barbara Jensen right in the chest. "Amateurs!"

At that, the patient awakened. She opened her mostly lidless eyes and started screaming in absolute horror and shock. Her face was bloody, a pulp of Steinman's mess, ADAM, skin and flesh. When she screamed, she spewed blood.

"Doctor?" The nurse yelled, but Mrs. Jensen soon fell back into Death's dark embrace. There was blood all over her, because Dr. Steinman wouldn't stop stabbing her in the chest with his scalpel in disgust over her nerve to go and die on him like the other bitch.

In her last breaths, Julia Jensen's mother muttered something about being beautiful at last. Then she gurgled the blood in her throat and died. Aphrodite was not pleased. And neither was Dr. Steinman. As for Mrs. Jensen, she didn't care anymore. In his quest to unveil true beauty so many had died on him. It was just so rude! But he knew that if he could get his hand on this bitch's daughter, Julia her name was, he could create perfect beauty. She was good looking to begin with. Nothing compared to what she'd be when he and Aphrodite was done. Then Aphrodite would be pleased. Just had to get her in here.

"Oh well", he said and pressed record on a new audio diary. "Post mortem operations on the Jensen bitch begins."

Persephone, 1958

In her cell in Persephone sat Dr. Sofia Lamb with a blank stare on her face. Even though she was free to roam the facility as she wished, she was still a prisoner. She performed her psychology stunt on the other inmates and the warden, but indoctrinating them into the family was still tiring, and not very giving. Warden Nigel Weir was slowly coming to see how Ryan's visions would ultimately be the indomitable end of the people that he seemed to have forgotten. Simon Wales had just left. He was her biggest connection to the rest of Rapture. It seemed he'd opened up worship services in Siren Alley. He left all teary eyed after she ensured him that the people would rise in the body of the lamb. It was a distant ship, moving on the horizon.

In her thoughts she forgot to listen to Jimmy, the inmate whom she was counseling at the moment. She felt like a fever; his lips moved, but she couldn't hear what he was saying.

"Jimmy... you are only coming through in waves", she said, calm as the ocean, rubbing her temples to make the beginning head ache go away.

"Sorry, doc?" Jimmy said in a nervous voice. He didn't have a confident man's voice.

"It's all right. I just need some rest. Why don't you come back tomorrow, and we'll continue?"

"S-sure, doc." Jimmy got up from Lamb's bunk, a hunched figure, laden with the untimely death of his parents and then the burden of Ryan's Rapture. Jimmy had owned a business - made lamp feet of all things, out of coral - and when some competitor took to ugly tricks, Jimmy wanted new rules. He started a small protest group and handed out fliers. It didn't take long before they took him here. Now, the orphan boy would rot away with all the others who dared raise a voice against Ryan's great chain.

"Jimmy", Dr. Lamb said as he was leaving the cell.

"Yes, doc?" He turned around.

"You trust me, don't you?"

"Yes. Yes I do." Jimmy straightened up and his expression turned to confidence. Pride.

"Good. You see, with the Rapture Family no man is left behind. Rapture is a body, and we are the voice. Before long, Rapture will rise."

"W-what do you mean, doc?"

Dr. Lamb took a deep breath.

"You are not alone, Jimmy. Come back tomorrow."

"Sure thing, doc." He turned, and left her alone.

As Jimmy left, Dr. Lamb took a cigarette and lit it with her thin, bony fingers. She felt the head ache coming on. The inmates were mostly fragile men. Not nearly a hard bunch to convince. There was no challenge to it - and she wasn't even sure that was what she wanted. She remembered that writer, what was his name? Christopher Perkins? Stanley Poole had dropped his name once, called him an inspiration even. He was a columnist for the Rapture Tribune, as she recalled. Lamb had picked up his book, *The Moon*, and on the pages read his mind. Though colored by Andrew Ryan's beliefs, there was a rebellious boy within, looking up to his father but anxious for purpose; somewhere to belong.

That purpose, she believed, could be the Rapture Family. If only he'd slip up, Ryan would send him to Persephone. She'd asked 'Father' Wales to look up this writer, and see if he might be recruitment material. In any case, he was talented with words - a bit dramatic, perhaps - and that might always be of use. Sofia Lamb laid down for a moment, and thought of Eleanor. Was it really worth it, being locked in here, when it meant she couldn't see her own daughter? Yes. When she got out, Rapture would be a different place indeed. And Dr. Lamb would make it ready for Eleanor. With a sigh, she got up to go see the warden.

The writer's apartment, 1958

His head was throbbing so bad. When he opened his eyes everything was spinning, making him nauseous. Even more nauseous. What in God's name had he done last night? It took all the powers he could muster, but he sat up finding himself in his two seat couch. Everything around him was spinning even faster, and even though he couldn't focus he counted two scotch bottles. Both nearly empty. It felt as if he'd drunk an entire brewery. And the taste in his mouth kind of confirmed that. Notes were scattered all around the room, also spinning around like a Sander Cohen record. He, too, made the writer nauseous.

He managed himself up and hastily drank a glass of water. Two glasses. That should ease the hangover a little bit. Searching for anything edible however, he made a startling discovery. In the pantry lay two syringes. They both contained glowing liquids. One red, the other blue. ADAM and EVE. Had he spliced up last night? He didn't think so. Plasmids were supposed to make you feel special or something, and all he felt was nauseous.

Head still going around and throbbing like insane he sat down in front of his desk, placing the hypos in front of him, by the type writer. There was a mess around him, too, but the plasmids took all his attention. Both syringes seemed full, and his quick, albeit hung over, search yielded no other syringes in his apartment. Still, when he looked at them he wondered.

"Why shouldn't I?" His reflective whisper was a raspy remain of last night's drinking. Immediately after, he coughed. He shook his head, grabbed the red ADAM hypo and looked at it as it glimmered. The liquid in it, alive? It moved, shifted as though it wanted out. He held it in the light of the window, or rather, the luminescent flickering of the ocean and the glow of the neon. His heart pounded in his chest as he put it to his skin.

He hesitated. His hand trembled. And he didn't have any more time to think about it. He was already late for the meeting at the Tribune. He left the syringes at his desk and scrambled to clothe himself in something that did not smell like a rundown back alley, comb his frizzy hair

and brush the stink of brewery out of his teeth. One more glass of water, because he sorely needed it. Then he hurried out and toward the Atlantic Express. Run down though it had become as of late.

The Rapture Tribune, 1958

Julia Jensen was increasingly worried each minute that passed and the writer didn't show up. What in God's name had Ryan's men done to him? Her heart skipped a beat every time anyone entered the meeting room, revealing to her the feelings sunk and killed with her own descent and arrival in Rapture. She had left her fiancée on the surface. Even though she wasn't even twenty at the time, she thought it true love. It was her mother who'd been recruited for Rapture. And Julia had to come along, leaving her friends, education and Robert, her fiancée.

Maybe Robert was still looking for her. Maybe he missed her dearly. Or maybe he had forgotten her. Moved on and married someone else. Probably that nitpicky Petunia Broomsfield his parents liked so much. Then again, Julia had certainly forgotten about true love remarkably fast since coming to Rapture. But now those aching feelings and despair over wanting to see someone the back of your head told you that you would never see again bubbled right back up.

Not Robert. No, she didn't even think his name. Didn't remember his face. No. The writer. And it felt wrong that she let her want for companionship define her so much. She knew that her mother and father were right that she should focus on her career and make something of herself; become independent. But no one is truly independent. We all have moments of weakness when we need a confidant and Julia had none. She straightened her back as she sat down and corrected her papers in front of her. Tightening her ponytail she looked around and saw the journalists gathered. They usually started the meeting as soon as Mr. Reid showed up.

Ugh. There came Stanley Poole. She wasn't fond of him. Mainly because he was convinced that she was, and acted accordingly. All right. Put on a happy face. She was the secretary for the meeting after all, since the regular secretary had been fired after splicing up on the job one too many times and unleashed a swarm of bees in the office. Poole sat down and she got up to serve him a cup of coffee. And here she thought Rapture would mean the end of gender stereotypes, like it did for her mother.

"Thanks, doll", Poole said, winking.

"Good morning, Mr. Poole", she said, voice stable and with a slight cheer she didn't know how she could muster. It wavered a bit though, as she went on: "Say, Mr. Poole, you haven't seen Mr. Perkins lately, by any chance?"

"The writer? Nah, sorry. Ain't seen him all week. Why? He missin'?"

"Uh, no, I just-"

"Don't you worry doll. Ol' Stanley'll keep ya company." He winked again, just as the editor in chief, Mr. Reid, entered. Julia sat down by the typewriter. She was the secretary after all. Put on a happy face. But the writer didn't show up. And Mr. Reid seemed awfully tired, his eyes blank.

Julia served him a cup of coffee with a spoon of sugar. She added one extra spoon just for him; she knew he'd have wanted it anyway. Mr. Reid always took one spoon and one extra when he was stressed. He gave her a strained smile.

"Mr. Reid", she said, wondering if she should say anything at all.

"Miss Jensen?" He looked into her eyes and she saw concern. Something terrible must have happened to him and she still saw concern in his eyes. Concern for her.

"Sir", she said, "I have not seen Mr. Perkins yet. He is usually on time. I'm afraid something has happened."

There came a small smile across Mr. Reid's face.

"My girl", he said, taking her by the hand and looking reassuringly into her eyes, "I am sure it is nothing. A delay on the Express or some other nonsense. Don't you worry."

Julia nodded and thanked him. He was probably right. She took a deep breath and put on a happy face.

Sitting down in her place again after serving Mr. Reid's coffee, she picked up her pen to make sure she got everything down. She'd be faster with her typewriter, but the clacking of the keys would be too loud in the meeting room.

"Is everyone here?" Mr. Reid began in an almost broken voice. No one said anything as he looked around. His eyes were red as if he'd been crying. Julia thought of saying the writer's name, but didn't.

"Good", Mr. Reid continued, "I'm sure we are all aware that sales are going down and prices up? In the light of that knowledge I am at a loss. We are still doing well, recording profits, especially in the finer parts of the city, but I am certain at length that that will stop."

"That's not our fault is it, sir?" One of his journalists said, "it's them plasmids. People spend all their money on 'em."

Mr. Reid nodded.

"It's true, but not entirely. The increased segregation..."

Julia wrote down all they said as fast as she could, her pen scraping against the paper. She began to drift in her thoughts, yet her fingers still wrote the words. At length, the meeting became proper, leading into the day's chores. None of their jobs were safe.

Pauper's Drop, 1958

Julia didn't like this place. Those splicers were around, and there was garbage most everywhere. The whole place smelled like trash and rotten fish. All over, there were the rusty decay and corrosion on the walls and people; men, women and children, sitting along the walls in rows, huddled over. They all looked at her as she passed by. She definitely didn't fit in and she couldn't wait to leave. In a corner lay one of those Big Daddies, its life snuffed out. And it was just left there. Big Daddies were guardians they said. Protectors. But they were monsters, she thought. What on earth could bring one of those down? She walked around it and almost crashed into a beggar instead. The beggar, a woman, had splotches and thickened red skin on her face and wore ragged clothes, stained with what seemed like blood.

"Spare a dollar, miss?" She pleaded with a squeaky voice.

The word parasite sprung into Julia's mind, but she didn't utter it. It was all the propaganda. And her mother. When they keep reiterating their feverish thoughts, no matter how vile, their agenda, their vocabulary, their thoughts seep into the best of us. She pitied the poor woman. But she couldn't be caught partaking in altruism. So she shook her head.

"Please, miss", the woman cried, "me children are starving and I haven't seen a penny in a fortnight." Julia's heart went out to the woman and she tucked a twenty dollar bill into the palm of her hand. The woman cried and thanked her.

"You are a good one, miss. Me children will go to bed with full stomachs thanks to you." Julia smiled at her, a strained smile, and hurried away.

She wished she didn't have to go this way, but she was going to the writer's apartment and the Atlantic Express was locked down from here, for temporary repairs. And so she had to walk the rest of the way. A welcome sight in all the despair and destruction was the Fishbowl Diner. They were open and she went inside. It didn't seem like there was much business, what with all the residents being poor as church mice, but there were two other fellows in there. Both averted her eyes and stared almost angrily into their cups. It looked like the place hadn't been cleaned in a long time, dust collecting in the corners.

She ordered coffee and sat down in the farthest booth, to look out the window. In all her explorations she'd never seen a place in a state like this. There were advertisement posters all over the walls. Grace Holloway, a colored woman, was apparently putting on shows at the Limbo Room. She'd like to have seen one some time, but it said 'cancelled' in big red letters over some of the posters. Then there were the Atlas posters. They were adorned by a handsome, highly stylized, working man and the words 'WHO IS ATLAS?' She also noticed one poster advertising the writer's new book. 'The follow up to last year's best seller by Rapture's favorite writer! Returning to the Source, by Chris Perkins.' That's what it said. Half of the poster had been torn down, and an Atlas poster put on top of it. Leaving her coffee untouched she left the diner, dead set on finding the writer and returning to the source with him.

The cold air hit her on the cheek hard as she left the diner and the smell of decay filled her nose. She almost wished she'd stayed in the diner, but she had to keep going. Around the corner she saw the beggar woman again. She was standing by the Gatherer's Garden and indulging in a plasmid, glowing and pulsating a sickening red in its syringe. The feeling of despair as to the conditions of Pauper's Drop turned into anger. She wanted her money back, but more importantly, she wanted an explanation. Why would the woman lie like that? She knew the answer of course, but still. She wanted satisfaction. She walked up to the woman. To the filthy parasite. Getting close, she heard the woman arguing with another splicer.

"I don't like needles, but what are you gonna do?" The woman said.

"Y'know, there's them plasmids you drink, too", the other put in.

"Darling, those are tonics", the woman said in a condescending voice.

"Nah, y'damn degenerate, I mean like 'Old man winter' and such. You drink 'em!" Her not so friendly friend enlightened her.

"Drink? Why, that sounds -" Then the woman saw Julia coming and swiftly swung her arm up. Directly after, a small metal pipe followed. It flew through the air against Julia, tossed with great agility by the Telekinetic splicer. She swerved at the last second and the pipe flew by, clanking against a wall. Shocked, Julia looked for protection, thinking clearly in the chaos that erupted out of nothing. But she missed the next airborne projectile, which hit her on the arm. She fell down with a scream and held herself where the projectile had hit her. The splicer laughed, the cackling sound of an insane crone.

"Spare change miss!" The splicer yelled, "me children are hungry, they are!" Then she laughed again and lobbed a trash can against Julia using her telekinetic powers. Julia rolled over, and the trash can hit the ground with a metallic clank, and then rolled softly against her back. The splicer still laughed, but was soon interrupted by a man's loud voice:

"There! The telekinesis splicer!" The voice was followed by the sound of gunfire and the splicer going down with a yelp. The splicer fell right next to her and their eyes met. Julia's were wide open and terrified; the splicer's white, cold and empty.

"Just don't tell my children", the splicer muttered drearily as she died.

Julia was yanked to her feet and she could see the face of her rescuer. A mustachioed man that she recognized but couldn't quite place. As he spoke he had a thick British accent:

"You all right, miss? You're lucky we were here. We're not even supposed to take this, uh... you're hurt."

"It's nothing, sir. Just a scratch." But her grimace implied that it wasn't.

"Bollocks, it is. Hold on. Karlosky, a hand?" The other man came over and grabbed Julia's aching arm. "Got it?"

"Da."

"Right. And pull!"

Before Julia could understand what was happening the two men had relocated her arm. It hurt something terrible and she grimaced in pain. But under the circumstances she was rather just happy to be safe and sound.

"You're lucky it wasn't worse", the British man said. But it still hurt like hell. They'd helped her, just out of the blue. She seemed to have a knack for getting trouble lately. And men seemed to have a knack for coming to her aid. She should be more careful.

"I know this woman", said the Russian, Karlosky. And she recognized him, too. "She is writer's girlfriend", Karlosky said, "should get home. Drop is bad neighborhood."

"Wait", Julia said, looking intently at Karlosky, "I remember you. From last night. You were the one who brought Chris, uh, Mr. Perkins to see Andrew Ryan. You have to tell me what happened, what did you do to him?"

She looked at him with a pained expression. Karlosky looked back with a confused one, and the Brit, Bill McDonagh, seemed even more confused. And tired.

"We do nothing", Karlosky explained, "we bring him to see Mr. Ryan and then he leave."

"So... you didn't hurt him?" Julia asked. McDonagh looked with an almost pained expression at Karlosky. If Julia could read his mind, she'd be terrified. McDonagh was closer to Ryan than anyone and knew better than anyone what he was capable of. He could probably have had the writer hanged in Apollo Square for less offenses.

"No, he leave Mr. Ryan's office after half hour, I don't see him after that", said the Russian, shaking his head, revealing that he honestly didn't know. As for McDonagh, she wasn't so sure, but he said nothing. Rapture had been shaking a long time, and this probably wasn't the first time McDonagh had seen people parted in Rapture, by events out of their hands.

She walked on hurried steps as she continued, wishing she could have gone the same way as her timely rescuers. But an icy wind drew on her arms as she hurried on, down from the Fish Bowl Diner into a small square, where the King Pawn was located. It seemed to be doing business still, shelves full of anything and everything that could be hocked or sold. A red neon sign glimmered beside it, declaring Luxury Rooms available at hourly rates. She doubted she'd want to see the inside of one of those "luxury" rooms. At the other side of the square was a Fontaine Clinic, one of those small hospital clinics Fontaine had opened before he died and his plasmid business taken over by Ryan Industries. She took care to walk around it, since there was an inhabitant banging on the door and walking restlessly to and fro outside, muttering about "getting to those goods". Probably they kept enough drugs stashed in that place to splice up a rhinoceros. On the second floor of the houses there were walkways, making walking between the houses that much easier. There were sick and old people there, looking blankly at her. The entitled little lady, so far out of her element it basically oozed of her. The drop was a terrible place.

Above the next Securis door was a cardboard sign reading 'Skid row', a pretty little nickname for the next part of the drop. She'd checked a map. Had to come this way. But it wasn't too far to the bathysphere station. She was sure she could hail a taxi, of sorts, and hurried her steps. Skid row looked, if anything, worse than the rest of the drop. Big, open spaces where the metal walls were beginning to corrode and houses clad in corrugated metal and sheets of plywood. Graffiti most everywhere, 'The end of Ryan is the end of the self' and 'Ascension is near' were the most popular, along with 'Imago is coming'. She didn't know what any of it meant, and frankly, she didn't want to.

Just as she tried to hurry by one of those Circus of Values vending machines she felt a hard grasp grabbing her shoulders. She shrieked at the sudden yank.

"Look Freddie", said a harsh voice in a Russian accent, belonging to the man holding her by the shoulders. She was swung around by the strong man and found an assailant, mostly human in his visage and not so far gone into splicing; only the thick, red skin on his forehead and reddened eyeballs. "Found rich whore! Pretty, too!"

"Let go of me, you fiend!" Julia cried, looking around in panic. Several people saw them, but not a one lifted so much as a finger.

"Listen to this", the man said, "a fiend, am I?"

Julia wriggled lose from his grasp and he laughed mockingly. She turned to run, but behind her was Freddie, the Russian assailant's splicer friend. He had the look of a dimwit, like he'd been dropped one too many times as a child, to go with the splicer's welts and outgrowths. He struck her across the cheek and the Russian caught her from behind again.

He dragged her away, kicking and yelling, with some help from Freddie, into a dark maintenance tunnel. There were people in there, too, but none cared what happened to the rich girl trespassing in the drop, spying on the poor people. A bit in, there was a small alcove with a few storage crates and tools. One of those big rivet guns some of the Big Daddies carried was leaning against the wall, its muzzle bent and rendered unusable.

"Hey, Igor", said Freddie as he let go of her legs, "what we gonna do with 'er?"

"Hold her, I tell you", Igor replied. Freddie grabbed Julia, who again began to struggle. But the splicer was strong and she couldn't get loose. She saw the Russian grab his pants and loosen the belt. The pants fell quickly to his knees, revealing pale, scarred legs and the fact that he probably didn't believe in underwear.

"What- what are you going to do?" She cried in horror, watching him struggle his pants completely off and throw them to the dirty ground. The Russian stepped up to her and looked at her, his insane eyes screaming an agonizing song into hers.

"I tell you, rich whore", he said, blaring into her eyes with a deep hatred that seemed to emanate from within him, strong and hot and unyielding,

"I will rape you. I will have you all for myself while you beg for mercy, and trust me, no one will come for you", he looked hard into her eyes, an orgasmic shudder on his upper lip - he could almost taste her sweet blood already, "I will taint you... then, I will cut you here", he poked her with a finger, just below the stomach, and then drew it slowly up over her torso, even between her breasts, never averting his black eyes from hers but staring intently into hers without even so much as a blink, "and I will show you what inside of rich whore looks like. Just like inside of poor whore. Then... I will kill you."

The last few words he spoke almost in a British accent, revealing another part of him. His eye twitched and for a moment Julia was petrified. Then she remembered all the times she'd been saved from situations close to this, the last one just minutes ago.

"If I had spliced I'd let you see", she screamed, jerking again in Freddie's hard grip.

"Oh, is that so?" Igor asked, his accent turning Russian again, "tell me then, whore, who are you, that you are too rich and too good to fuck Igor Antanov? Tell me, who are you, that you are too rich and too good to even splice, like everyone in city of Rapture?"

Julia's eyes burned with anger. In an instant, she knocked backward with her shoulder, striking Freddie in the chest. He gasped for air, staggering backwards, and let go of the grip of her.

"I'm a god damn reporter", she scowled and made her hand into a fist. The next moment, she'd struck the Russian bastard square over the jaw, knocking him down with a cowardly yelp. While her attackers were knocked, she ran. She ran out through the maintenance tunnel and hurried as fast as she could over to the bathysphere station. She shook with adrenaline, rage and terror, all at once. But she did make it out. Not a second too soon. She would never set foot in Pauper's Drop again, after this. Never again.

Artemis Suites, 1958

The glass encased walkway directly outside the building was lit up nicely to showcase the natural colors of the ocean. Greens and blues and hues of black flirting with fluttering darkness and shade like sea creatures. Then on the building itself neon signs added the gloomy feeling of the modern day Atlantis. It was easy to forget the beautiful marvel that Rapture really was, with all that was happening in the city lately. There weren't many splicers around here, so Julia was completely alone in the tubular walkway leading up to the building where the writer lived. It was eerily silent, the only sound coming from the washing of the ocean and the dripping of a small leak by a girder in the walkway. And to enhance that creeping feeling a small school of fish of almost colorless appearance was following her, directly above her. The walkway was only about twelve meters in length from one building to the other, and there was a fork in it that led a bit to the right and to another entrance. This kind of walkway was supposed to give an airy feeling to Rapture, giving the makeshift appearance of walking outside. But the walkway seemed longer.

She neared the Securis door on the other side and finally heard noises. Thumping. The thumping of very heavy footsteps. And then from behind the Securis door she heard a girl giggling and telling a Mr. Bubbles to hurry up.

"Enough dilly dallying, Mr. Bubbles. Don't make me carry you", the girl said, her voice dampened by the door, but still hearable. The big, metal Securis door swung open before Julia Jensen could reach it. And on the other side he stood. Big Daddy. The machine man was colossal! Its big head was round and dotted with yellow glowing porthole sensors which were of course also the Big Daddy's eyes. It wielded a monstrous mining drill and guarded a small girl. The girl stood in front of her guardian, pale and sickly looking. Her hair was ragged and her little dress tattered. It was exactly what Julia remembered from her nightmare in Arcadia. She looked up at Julia with big eyes, gleaming with innocence.

"What's that, Mr. Bubbles?" She asked dreamily of her guardian. Julia didn't dare move, not wanting to anger the Bouncer. The Big Daddy, of course, didn't answer. What it did, was make a long, mourning noise as if in pain. A dreadful, haunting sound that echoed slightly in the glass walkway. Seeing them and hearing that awful, woeful wail, Julia was petrified in fear. She still had occasional nightmares about that encounter in the forest. She was sweating and breathing heavily, but did not move a muscle. She was completely paralyzed for a long while.

"It's not moving, Mr. Bubbles!"

It seemed that her presence began to anger the metal monster. Cold sweat ran down Julia's forehead and the Big Daddy made an angry grunt. And finally, Julia's feet worked again and she moved out of the way, pressing herself against the glass wall.

The Little Sister hurried past and the Big Daddy protector followed so slow that the girl again told it to hurry. Julia watched them, holding her breath out of fear and to avoid inhaling the terrible smell, until they passed through the Securis door on the other side of the walkway. Then she let out a sigh of relief. If she never saw a Big Daddy again she'd die a happy woman. And that smell! What could anyone have done to deserve being put in one of those things? Or did they volunteer? And the girl. What was wrong with her? Someone had done something to her, Julia was sure of it. Still breathing heavily she went into the building. What if the writer wasn't home? She started up the stairs of the almost disturbingly normal apartment complex. Could Ryan have made him into a Big Daddy? Three floors left. All the doors seemed the same, dull and brown, matching the wall, running in a dull beige but with some semblance of a decor. What if he was dead? One floor left. She was panting and her steps were hard against the floor. She wished there'd been an elevator. And then finally she reached a door that by all means was the same as all the others, but felt very much different. She stopped before it. She corrected her clothes, closed her eyes and tried not to think of any dark possibilities or of Big Daddies and Little Sisters. This was it. Apartment 313.

The writer's apartment, 1958

Julia knocked on the writer's door. Nothing. She knocked again, and again. Still nothing. She was just about to turn and walk away when she noticed the door wasn't locked. That could impossibly be a good sign. She hesitated for a moment. Was she in her right to just enter? Finally she decided that she was. He might be dead or dying in there, for Heaven's sake! The hinges creaked, just a little, as Julia slowly opened the door into the darkness beyond it.

"Hello? Mr. Perkins?" No answer, of course.

But what a mess! The tiny apartment was littered with papers, documents, manuscripts. The writer's work. But that wasn't what caught her attention. Over by the typewriter, on the desk, lay two syringes. God, was the writer splicing? No, the syringes weren't used. Besides, she told herself, he wasn't the kind who would do that. Most everyone were splicers in Rapture now, but... no, he couldn't be one of them. But where on Earth was he? She looked around for clues. Liquor bottles and papers, the syringes, the typewriter. There was a page in, and only one row of text: 'It always starts with a sentence'.

Didn't make much sense on its own though. She read it a couple of times, trying to get into the writer's way of thinking. But she couldn't make sense of it, but she felt one thing. And that was that she knew instinctively that he was alive. On her way out she tripped and almost fell over something hard, lying beneath some sheets of paper filled with what appeared to be columns that had never been published, lined with hand written notes to tie them into a story. She brushed them aside and found an audio diary. With a trembling finger she pressed play. The canned, drunken voice of Chris Perkins started speaking to her:

"So I was at a meetin' with Andy fuckin' Ryan today and... now Julia definitely hates me. I was too fuckin' scared to even talk to her. Now I'm almost outta booze... but I got an Electro Bolt. Don't know if I wannit. I been writin' the outlines to that story I was thinkin' 'bout. Gotta remember to write the rest. Notta problem with what this shitty city's turnin' into. I'll just put the papers here on this diary thingy..."

The recording ended. It was fresh. But why did he think she hated him? The anguish welled up in her again. Had that instinct feeling been wrong? Maybe he'd gone to... to do something from which there was no return. He also mentioned the notes she'd found the audio diary under. Julia gathered the pages and rushed out the door, slamming it behind her. In order to avoid Pauper's Drop she had to take the long way around to get home, where she would read the notes. Maybe they contained some clues to where he was. Though she felt bad for just taking them. At least she didn't come across another one of those Big Daddies.

Pauper's Drop, 1958

Grace Holloway's face was empty, devoid of emotion. She didn't say much. She only held her blue butterfly brooch, grasping it tight. She walked the streets all on her own, hardly even noticing the people around her. First James disappeared, shortly after the doctor told her she couldn't have babies. Then Ryan incarcerated her friend and guide, Dr. Lamb, cutting the believers. And now little Eleanor was gone. She turned for a minute and someone took her. For days Grace had been looking, but no one knew a thing. Not a soul had seen it. Walking past the closed pharmacy some beggar came up and asked her for some change. One of those plasmid addicts. Filthy creature. Grace was clean. She never used plasmids. Never would. But she didn't even notice the man. She just grasped the butterfly harder, and her brain blocked out the sound of the beggar's voice. Blocked out the outside world.

She was brought back to it by the heavy footsteps of one of those Big Daddies. They seemed synonymous with Rapture these days. She got out of its way, uneager to get too close to the foul smelling tin beast. Then it appeared around the corner, from where the Limbo Room was, its metallic form silhouetting clearly against the glow of the ocean outside the large window behind it. One of the Alpha series, or whatever they were called. The giant wielded an industrial sized drill, and on its hand was marked a triangle, the Greek letter Delta. And... that girl, by his side. The Little Sister.

"Eleanor!" Grace called out, clearly recognizing the girl she'd cared for as if she'd been her own. But she looked wrong. Her eyes glowed yellow and she was pale.

"What's that, daddy?" Eleanor asked, her voice feeling almost as pale as her skin. She was looking at Grace.

"Eleanor!" Grace ran up to her, kneeling down by her side, crying out of happiness that she'd found her. She grabbed Eleanor and tried to hold her. But her Big Daddy didn't like it at all. It attacked Grace. The monstrosity grabbed Grace and knocked her down. Hard and raw, emotionless. Grace hit the ground hard, taking the fall with her face. She could feel something cracking and an immense pain taking over. Seeing the woman as no further threat, the Big Daddy instead picked up his Little Sister.

Grace lay there on the cold ground, her jaw broken and hurting bad. It was all she could do to watch the baby snatcher walk away with the innocent little Eleanor Lamb. Before the two vanished out of sight she could hear Eleanor's sweet voice saying:

"More angels daddy. It's this way!"

The writer's apartment, 1958

The hunter had recently eaten. Chased down another life, another prey. But it was not satisfied. In today's Rapture, scraps were everywhere, if one's standards were not too high. Tyger

had made his way into the writer's apartment, dark and empty. With a cat's eyes the darkness was no problem, but emptiness was something else all together. The cat had sensed love from the human, when he dwelled here. More so than from any other inhabitant that hid behind a door. The essence of that sensation still lingered here, with the smell of the writer. Smells that only animals can perceive.

The writer had not been here for some time. A woman had. One with red hair. Her smell was still here too, but she'd only stayed briefly and her scent wasn't as strong as the one Tyger assigned meaning to. He meowed softly, gently, as if to be the cute, cuddly kitten he'd sometimes been around the writer, and made his way over the thrown around sheets of paper and into the kitchen. Over to the cupboard where Tyger knew that the writer used to keep tuna. Delicious Tuna from Fontaine fisheries. He parked himself in front of it, useless though it was, and waited for a minute.

He peered at the darkness. It felt almost stinging, depressing in nature. Like the darkness was more than absence of light. It was also the absence of love. Even the cat could feel that. He meowed musingly once again. But the writer didn't show up, just like yesterday. And the day before. Before he left, Tyger stroked himself against the cupboard, so that the writer could smell him if he showed up. Unlikely.

Julia's parent's apartment, 1958

"No, I'm telling you, I haven't seen her all week."

"But she wouldn't just run away, just disappear!" Julia was visiting her father, who was alone since Julia's mother disappeared. He'd sent a message in the Jet Postal telling her to come visit. But he didn't seem too broken up about it. "Well, when did you last see her?"

"She was going off to that, whatsisface... Dr. Steinface. His face, you know", Mr. Jensen said.

"What are you talking about, daddy? You're not making sense", Julia replied in despair.

"She was getting her fucking face lifted."

"By Dr. Steinman?"

"Yeah, that's the face!" Peder Jensen was walking back and forth, his hands shaking. Not by anger or rage, but by plasmid withdrawal.

She could guess his obsession with faces, because his did not look like normal. There were a couple of welts and most of his hair had fallen off. One of the plasmid welts had grown and made it almost look like the chin was connected directly to the chest. And one outgrowth had made what looked like a tear right through his face, starting in his mouth and moving up to the hairline, as if he'd been cut with a knife and the wound was healed all wrong. And he was bigger, too. Looked like he'd been living in a gym, but it was all the plasmid's doing. His arms had grown muscular and his torso was bigger than usual. Not to mention the face, which had sterner lines now. His voice, too, had changed. It was more harsh, as if he'd gotten a sudden boost in testosterone. She didn't mention any of it, but she realized he'd gone far too deep into splicing. It made her uncomfortable and she wanted to leave. But this was her daddy. She loved him and would no matter what. And she also wanted to find her mother.

She'd lost her mother, Sandy Reid and the writer. It was awful, a couple of days ago, when Mr. Reid came up to her, all pale and told her that Sandy had been killed by splicers.

"Daddy, you don't look good. Maybe you should go lie down?"

"Yeah, my head hurts a little, but I'm f-fine. Listen, pumpkin, about why I wanted you to come... you got a couple of bucks? I gotta-"

"No, daddy", she interrupted him, hearing her own voice, it was almost angry, "I don't. It's those plasmids, isn't it? You should really-"

"Bah! You sound just like your mother! I for one am glad the bitch is gone."

"Daddy!"

Peder stopped in front of Julia and stared into her eyes, mad as hell. He wasn't himself. He needed a fix. That so hard to understand? He curled his hands into fists and gnashed his teeth for a moment. But when he looked into the eyes of his daughter the real him came out for a moment. He felt his heart talking, and not the part of his brain that needed another plasmid.

"Pumpkin, you should g-go, I... I gotta do a thing."

"Okay, daddy. But if you hear anything from mother, you have to tell me."

"Yeah, yeah, I will, pumpkin." He was sweating. The very moment that Julia closed the door behind her, he hurried into the kitchen. He still had some syringes with a little leftovers in the trash. He dug them out quickly, not wanting to spend another moment without feeling the plasmid rush. He then squirted all of the ADAM into a bowl and drew the glowing concoction into one of the syringes.

"Ha!" He squealed as he looked at the half full syringe. Gleeful as a child, he injected it into his veins. The beast in him roared as the room twisted around him, walls vibrating before his vision, and the beast was drawn out, distorting his terrifying visage even further; his muscles grew in an instant, the stem cells of the ADAM replicating quickly within him. His shoulders bulked up and his torso grew monstrosly huge. Peder Jensen grew and distorted into a brute of a man, feverishly strong and hellishly formidable.

Julia was just down the hall when she heard screaming and animalistic roaring and crashing from her parent's apartment. As she turned around, the door was burst outwards, hitting the opposite wall. Following it was a huge brute of a splicer. It was coughing and laughing as it stood in the hallway of the fancy apartment complex. Julia looked at it with wide open eyes and a gaping stare. It just looked back. She looked the horrific remnants of her father in the eyes for a moment, and then he roared, crashed both his large hands into the wall, cracking it all the way up to the ceiling and making dust fall down upon him. Then her father rushed off the other way, thrashing all around and smashing in doors. After a couple of moments he was gone. Julia's only father. They were all vanishing. She just stared at the trail of destruction as the brute vanished down the hall. She could hear the destruction for a long while. And she couldn't even cry, she just stared blankly.

The writer's apartment, 1958

The writer opened the door, and with a sigh realized his home was still the mess he left it. In his coat pocket was a bottle of Chechnya Vodka. Strong stuff. He'd only had a couple of sips, but was already feeling it. He avoided stepping on his papers, heading for the typewriter. He had the story fresh in his mind. Though, how couldn't he when the city shoved it into his face. Still it seemed the residents of Rapture didn't read much anymore. Didn't matter. He had to get it out. If only he could remember where he put those notes and old columns the other day. The last couple of days were a little fussy. He couldn't see them anywhere, though it would be odd if could find anything in this mess. His head was everywhere at once. Find the notes. No, will have to do without. Write new ones! No time. Have to get started. Julia Jensen. On the page in the

typewriter the words flowed. Hours went by and evening became night. He did nothing but write. Word after word. Page after page. The world could be ending around him. The "story" started to take shape already, using what he had already written, and as always, it started with a sentence. To him all there was, was words on paper, the typewriter, Simon Wales' beard, and his inner image of Julia Jensen's eyes.

Such is the power of creation. It is a force which consumes. Creation comes when inspiration is fed by iron will and heart of steel. When inspiration tastes the red and becomes this creation, this force which consumes. And it continues to consume until its host is drained. As dawn approached, figuratively, that moment had come. The writer, a willing host, was drained. At least for the time being. He needed more, he realized. Needed to find out what went on behind the scenes for the book to work. It would be his masterpiece. If anyone ever read it. He left his desk, words still spinning around Julia's name, and fell asleep.

But the human mind, driven by emotions, is another force entirely. The inspiration to create does not stay as long as a willing host wishes. The human mind is ever changing, never holding onto inspiration overlong. It transforms like an energy, often into anger, one of the most basic of human chemicals. Frustration and temporary blindness, the disability to see or hear anything outside of the peripheral, comes when inspiration turns into anger. When inspiration and the force of creation disappears. And when the writer awoke it was gone. Replaced by anger and a burning desire to know what he'd done to deserve Julia Jensen's hatred. Once he had come to that conclusion the thought lingered. And now it had grown strong. He loved her and she, he was convinced, felt nothing but hate for him.

He thought of their walk in Arcadia. She'd been playing him, he was sure of it. How they'd almost... he was glad it never happened. Why did she hate him? What had he done? While kicking the audio diary on the floor he noticed the syringes on his desk. Why didn't he notice them when he was up all night, writing? He picked one up. Electro Bolt. Eyes wide open he rolled up his sleeve and put the needle against his skin. He grimaced as it entered his vein. In one last flash his heart and his soul burned with rage... Damn it, he needed to eat. Threw the Electro Bolt aside and grabbed a creme-filled cake he had lying about. Tasted awesome.

Unpublished column found among Mr. Perkins' belongings. Notes: Note ends abruptly mid sentence. Some words unreadable due to blood on the paper. Status: not publishable. Subject: Ryan & censorship. Word count: 188

Believe it or not, yours truly was recently called before Mr. Andrew Ryan himself. The subject being my latest book, *Returning to the Source*. It turns out, much of what Mr. Ryan claims, are outright lies. In my case, it is the matter of censorship. Ryan does not practice it, it is said. Nonetheless, Andrew Ryan courteously told me that my book will no longer be sold in Rapture's bookstores. Official censorship in Rapture's interest. This is indeed comparable to Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union. I shall gladly be the martyr messiah, if it means freedom for Rapture's people.

Still, there are other issues which haunt me. And for what I have done, I hear the river Styx call for me. But I cannot leave yet. There are others I must see before Andrew Ryan, or Atlas, or even Sofia Lamb, drowns this city. Others that must see the truth of Ryan's rule. He will never be inclined to reveal it himself. This is up to the watchdogs of a society. And where the Rapture Tribune has failed, I shall step in to take its place. If only I cou

PART VI

Lloyd Bonham's office, 1958

It had been a pretty slow day, relatively. That is, until the pretty, young redhead walked through the office door with a troubled look on her face. Quite a looker. Of course, Bonham didn't notice her until he got out of the bathroom. He was sweating when he came out. Since he'd first tried one, half a year ago, he'd been feeling a little addicted to those plasmids. He'd seen firsthand what could happen if you over indulged, but he knew he could stop at any moment. The last week he'd taken a BruteMore to work in his lunch bag every day. He'd felt really ashamed about it every day, too, until about ten minutes after lunch, when he injected the ADAM into his veins in the office bathroom.

He tried to keep a straight face, but knew he was sweating. The high made it easier to ignore, but he knew if anyone found out, he might lose his job. Well... who wasn't splicing these days. At least, he'd gone without for years before he even tried it once. Boss might see it another way.

"Good day, miss. M'name's Bonham. Lloyd Bonham. What can I do for you?" He took her by the hand, all professional. Couldn't tell if it was the ADAM talking, or if he'd always been like that, but he felt a sudden urge to bend the redhead over the desk and do unspeakable things to her.

"Hello, Mr. Bonham. I'm Julia Jensen."

"Please, please sit down", Bonham made a gesture towards a chair in front of his desk, and the redhead sat herself down. He had to force himself not to think about her perky little ass, bending down to sit as she did. "What can I do for you, miss Jensen?"

The lass looked down. Tears welled up in her eyes. Then she wiped a strand of scarlet hair from her face, looked up and said, "it's my parents, Mr. Bonham. My mother is gone, and my father has gone insane."

Bonham sat with an elbow on his desk, and leaning the fist on his chin, trying to listen carefully but unable to get the image of the young woman's behind out of his mind. He shrugged as she spoke.

"Would you care to explain, miss Jensen?"

"My mother, she's been going to -"

"Wait a moment", he interrupted, "let me write this down." He grabbed a pen and a writing pad from the top drawer in his desk and bade her continue.

"As I said", Julia Jensen went on, "my mother has been going to see Dr. Steinman a lot. The last time I heard from her, in fact, she was going. And then I've simply heard nothing."

"I see", Bonham said. He looked almost perversely into miss Jensen's eyes. "And what is her name?"

"Barbara Jensen."

"Bar-ba-ra..." Bonham mumbled as he wrote the name down.

"That's right."

"I will call Dr. Steinman's office and we'll clear this out, don't you worry. It's not really something we do, but I'll help ya out", Bonham said and winked at her, unsure himself of what he meant by winking at the sexy young woman.

"Thank you, Mr. Bonham", Julia said.

"Now, tell me about this insane father of yours." Bonham could tell the betty was blushing, even though she looked away.

"I... it's those plasmids. He's been taking too much of them -"

"Now, miss Jensen, if your father uses plasmids there's simply nothing I can do. He's free to use them as he pleases. That's the whole concept of Rapture, and to be frank, most everyone uses them plasmids", Bonham explained, taking her words almost as an insult toward himself, "I actually know people myself who -"

"You don't understand. He's - he's changed."

"What do you mean?" Bonham's face became all wrinkled, "changed how?"

"I believe he's been trying to make himself stronger, more physically adept, you see. But when I saw him last... it was grotesque. He was so large, just bulging with muscle. And he was out of his mind, thrashing walls and everything. I'm just lucky he didn't turn to me!"

"And where is he now?"

"I don't know. He ran away. This was just a few days ago."

"Wait. Was this over in Mercury Suites?" Bonham suddenly became more focused, his eyes now fixed professionally at Julia's.

"Yes. Mother and father live there. Why?"

"I've heard of the incident. We are looking for your father actually."

"Why?"

"Miss Jensen, from what I've heard, this splicer has been destroying Ryan Industries property. Simply put, we must find him and make him stop."

"You mean..." Julia was absolutely horrified, eyes wide open.

"No, no", he deflected with a smile, "what will happen to him will be decided when we find him. Now, miss Jensen, since this is an ongoing investigation I can't say any more about it, but I was hoping maybe you could give me a few more details."

"Like what?"

"You said he was using plasmids? Do you know which ones? Which ones made him grow so much, as you said?"

"I'm not really sure... Sports Boost and BruteMore and the like. I'm so sorry, I'm just not sure. He may have been mixing them."

"Mixing them?" That last part caught Bonham's attention. He took a few more details from the girl and then sent her on her way. When she left, she said thank you, and smiled. But what Bonham noticed more than her smile was her firm butt, as she walked out. God damn it, but he would like to fuck her pretty ass. He was sweating, his inner self trying to restrain the beast. Knew that was just the plasmid talking. The rest of his afternoon was a blur, consisting of thoughts of the redhead's backside and the things he'd like to do to her, and the idea of mixing gene tonics together to make one super human cocktail.

The Rapture Tribune, 1958

With all the splicers running around Rapture lately, there were hardly anyone around who was able to afford a newspaper anymore. And since Ryan Industries took over Fontaine Futuristics and Atlas popped up to get justice for the working man, tensions were rising all over the city. Still, it was the writer that haunted Julia Jensen's mind. She hadn't seen him since that night in Arcadia, and even more alarmingly, no one else had either. And that was more than a month ago. It was New Year's Eve and there were some optimism around. She felt none of it. She had a hard time doing her job. Those papers she found in the writer's apartment... Ryan's men had taken him away, she was getting more sure of it every day. And she was letting herself go, too. Losing another one, like she'd lost Robert, was devastating. And her parents were gone, too.

She hardly slept, and when she did, she'd wake up crying. And still, losing the writer was worse than losing Robert. The writer had as of late been what kept her alive in Rapture.

She forced herself to walk around those Gatherer's Garden machines, because with each passing day she felt she needed something to take the pain away. But she had to retain her humanity. She couldn't give in to plasmids. Every day she saw what they did to the people. At times, when she walked around the higher end parts of the city, she'd feel like there was hope for the city; there, people and businesses still thrived. But then she'd remember Pauper's Drop or see Apollo Square, where people had been hanged - hanged! In Rapture - and think to herself... what was there left to save?

Now she sat by her desk trying to write, but unable to get anything on paper except for a few words that were stuck in her brain. It always starts with a sentence. Sometimes she'd cast a glance at the writer's desk. It had been emptied two weeks ago.

"He's not coming back", she whispered.

"Who ain't comin' back, doll?" The voice behind her was Stanley Poole. Always Stanley Poole.

"You, I hope", she said, no longer managing a smile. Poole laughed it off, but she knew it got to him. He shrugged and scratched his hand, just a bit. He, too, looked like he'd indulged in plasmids overmuch, as well as other luxuries that befell the one who controlled that woman Lamb's bunko art house Dionysus Park. Luxuries like women, wine, drugs and more women. His eyes were hollow from staying up all night and he looked thin, making his already unpleasant visage even more disagreeable.

"Aw, you still hung up on that writer fella?" He said, "doll, he ain't comin' back and even if he was, he's all but forgotten about you. Them artsy types are like that. But lucky for you I'm here. And I'm perfectly willing to take ya to the New Year's-"

"Mr. Poole", she snapped, "need I remind you that you are almost twice my age and that it is perfectly inappropriate for you to behave in such a way around a woman! First of all, it is quite obvious that you are over indulgent in who knows what substances, which is not something a lady appreciates in a date. Furthermore, I have no interest whatsoever in going anywhere with you and I shall not tolerate your inappropriate behavior any further!"

"All right, doll", Poole said, shrugging, "you don't have to yell and get all teary eyed."

"And one last thing, Mr. Poole. My name isn't 'doll'. It is Julia Jensen and you would do best to remember as much. As the writer did. Does."

"Of... of course, miss Jensen... excuse me." And he went off, his head hanging low and he looked away not showing his rat like face in humiliation. Julia's face was red with anger. Telling Poole off felt good. She'd wanted to do it since forever.

"Julia", she turned around to see Mr. Reid, the editor in chief and Sandy's father. "Julia, I'd like to see you in my office." He seemed distraught, but why wouldn't he. He'd lost his only daughter not long ago.

"About Poole? That-"

"No, no. It's not about Poole. I suspect that was nothing but good for him. There is however something else. My office, please?" She nodded and went with him.

"Julia, my dear", he said as she sat down across the desk from him, "I care for you as my own. You are, in part, as much daughter to me as my dear Sandy was. And ever since she..." His eyes welled up with tears and his cheeks turned a flustered red. There looked like there was a thickened red welt on his cheek, but she didn't mention it. Mr. Reid went on:

"I have become afraid that you are treading a path... you don't look well, Julia. You seem to be feeling worse by the day. Have you been... you know?"

"Drinking?"

"Splicing."

"Mr. Reid! Never! I specifically avoid it."

"That's good, my dear. You just look tired is all." He fell silent for a moment, looking into her eyes. He, himself, looked tired. So tired. Finally he spoke:

"It's the writer, isn't it? I've noticed you two, don't think I have not. Even after your parents, uh... went missing. He's a fine young man, only..."

"He's gone."

Mr. Reid sighed. "Julia. I have something to share with you. But only if you can promise me you will not share it with anyone else."

"What is it?"

"You must promise me."

"I cannot, prematurely."

"Julia, please", she saw in his eyes that he really wanted to show her, "it is both for your safety, and mine."

"I promise, Mr. Reid. No one else will see it", she said, finally. He opened one of his drawers and produced a thick bundle of papers, and a letter.

"I believe you should read it", he said. Julia took the letter and unfolded it. It read:

Mr. Reid,

I shall be short. Firstly, I heard of Miss Sandy's passing and wish to convey my deepest condolences, insufficient though it may seem.

The reason you have not seen me in some time is in this still unprinted book. In it I describe, in detail, the reality of Rapture, as seen through my eyes. Mr. Reid, what's being done to people here is unspeakable. I will not shy away from saying that Andrew Ryan is in fact the greatest tyrant in human history, or among them. But you shall read of it in the book. You will, I hope, excuse me for writing it as a fictionalized novel and including the many personal passages. I am a writer, after all, and wished to leave nothing of my experiences out. Know that I trust you, Mr. Reid, to see to it that this information does right by the people of Rapture and that this book finds its way into the right hands.

This is my final farewell. I do not expect I have long left, before I am taken away.

Yours,

Chris Perkins Jr.

Julia stared at his name. He was alive! And he'd written the book, even though she had the notes for it.

"Mr. Reid. This- this is..."

"Hush. We can't speak of it. It isn't safe."

"But, Mr. Reid. He asks you to make sure the book makes it to the right hands!"

"I think you'll find, my dear, that I am."

Don's Gymnasium, 1958

Getting a job as a constable in Rapture - Andrew Ryan's personal little police force - had been pretty easy. Might have been because Bonham was pretty big. But still, these days was even

easier. Constables seemed to drop left and right, to rogue splicers and... other factions. Bonham had a knack for keeping himself alive though - and his job was mostly behind a desk - having gone through the entire war without a scratch. He sometimes had nightmares about the banzai charges. Well, now he was more than a soldier. He was a detective of sorts, working under Sullivan. And a good one at that. Bonham had worked the foundations of Rapture; he helped build the city. Then when it was built he couldn't leave. And he figured, he might as well get a job in a field he knew. So he joined the Rapture constabulary. Surely, his impressive stature and bull's shoulders had helped. Remarkable, really, how not a single Jap had the marksmanship to take down such a big target.

Well, now he was even larger, thanks to the plasmids he'd taken the last six or seven months. He had to admit, he liked that stuff. It had improved his physique a lot, and best of all, it let him take up boxing. He'd just sparred with Prangley - the last training of the year before 1959 would start - the student he'd once thought, who was almost thirty years his junior. They sat side by side on the warm up bench, watching two other kids sparring. The entire place smelled of sweat and had a burly, manly musk among the boxing paraphernalia. They were both panting, tired from a good, exhausting work out.

"Damn boss, you got some moves for an old soft guy", Prangley said, impressed at how good Bonham was, even nearing fifty as the man was.

"Soft? Speak for yourself, kid", Bonham joked, patting the kid on the back. Then he wiped some sweat off his face with a towel.

"You been taking lots of those tonics, boss?" Prangley asked carefully, like he'd been avoiding the subject before. Bonham looked at him and shrugged.

"Some. Why?"

"It's nothing, boss", Prangley shook his head, "it's nothing. Just noticed you, uh, been gettin' stronger each week. Like you been training as hard as I have."

"I won't lie, kid", Bonham said, "I wouldn't be able to do this without plasmids."

"Hm. I've been thinking of laying off 'em for a while, m'self", the kid said.

"Laying off? Prangley, you should probably be taking more of them", Bonham sounded like a plasmids spokesperson, "why I've heard you can even mix them together for an even better result. For an even better physique."

"Really?" Prangley looked intrigued at Bonham, "ain't that dangerous?"

"Why would it be more dangerous than they are now?"

"I dunno... you done it?"

Bonham looked at his feet. Looked at his muscular legs and thought of how unsatisfactorily thin and bony they were to him. They could be so much stronger. With ADAM, there was no excuse they shouldn't be. Then he said:

"Nah. But I've been thinking about it. And I sure as hell ain't quitting plasmids all together."

Prangley didn't answer. He just sat in silence for a while, before getting up.

"You leaving?" Bonham asked.

"Yeah, I gotta get to my night job. Can't be staying around here all night, y'know."

"How many jobs is that you're working now, Prangley? It has to be tiring you out."

"It's just two, now. Got laid off from the one at the Jet Postal. Still a server at the Kashmir though. Guess they wanted a colored guy to make it seem like they're all good and fine, to all the rich people. Weird, though, being up there among the rich quarters."

Bonham nodded, understanding. It was hard for a lot of people. He was lucky, himself. And Prangley was damn lucky, too.

"I'm going to stay a while, get some more sweat going. Just half time, for me."

"All right boss", Prangley said. He stretched out his hand. It took Bonham a moment, but then he shook it. "You be careful boss", Prangley went on, "if you decide to try what you were talking about. You be careful."

Bonham saw the concern in Prangley's eyes, and nodded. Prangley nodded, too, then gathered his gloves and his pack and went for a shower. Bonham got a look at him as he walked away. Talented kid, he thought. Smart. Kind. And damn clever, if a bit over eager. Would have had it a lot tougher on the surface, what with being black and all. Rapture sure was a better place than the surface. But the kid worried too much, Bonham thought. Worried about nothing. Now, Bonham had work to do; he'd heard rumors of someone big shaking things up down by Neptune's Bounty.

Adonis Luxury Resort, 1968

Moving through the ocean was slow and heavy. Though beautiful, the seabed was a treacherous place. Coral and anemones sparkled with color against grey rock and colorful fish danced the depths they fancied adeptly. But everything and anything could kill a man. Unless he was encased in metal. Mr. Bubbles thumped along heavily, hoping to find an airlock entrance into the facility and hoping it would be functioning. He passed through the belly of a whale. What was left of it. Only the bones. They lay unaware and forgotten by some colorful cliffs. The children used to love its singing and now the majestic beast was fallen. Did they ever see the tears? There was something morbid to it, emptiness and hollowness was all that was left of the majesty. As he looked up the undersea mountain he could see the tail of an airplane, debris from a crash. A story he never knew. The sea was taking it.

It took some time, but around the back he found the maintenance airlock. After stepping inside and draining it he was at last inside Adonis Luxury Resort. Like the rest of the city it was dark and forgotten. But there were others in here, too. His stalking shadow had no doubt gotten here before him. And yet, there was a ghost of a memory inside himself, too. Looking over his shoulder. There were splicers, too. Mr. Bubbles went upward, vigilantly, to find the pumping station for the lower levels.

Soon, he found himself on a balcony overlooking the banquet hall, fallen into ruin yet retaining its sadistic splendor in hues of black and grey and ocean blue. Morbidly insane splicers were looking for ADAM in the murky darkness and on the rotting panels of the walls. On one of the tables in the banquet hall, one of the splicers found a slimy sea slug - the carrier of the desirable drug called ADAM - and squealed gleefully. Moments later, one of the splicer's buddies raised a gun and said:

"Give it here! It's mine!" But too late. The first splicer had already shoved the slug into his mouth and chomped it down. "You fucker!" The second splicer screamed, and then he fired his gun. But before the first splicer went face down in the ankle deep water, he hurried to shoot a ball of Incinerate at his attacker. Panicking, set aflame, the burning splicer threw himself into the water, whereupon the fire was extinguished in a gust of white smoke. As he got up, it seemed he was fine, except for some burns, and smoking clothes. All the years of ADAM usage had made the citizens of Rapture able to withstand great amounts of damage.

"Hey! Quit your stupid pissin' contest and come help me with this here table!" A female splicer said, angrily and waving her fist in the air.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm comin'. Typical broad. Need a real man to lift a little furniture."

"A real man? But I asked you, didn't I?"

"Shut it!"

They continued to argue whilst lifting the table and scrounging for ADAM as Mr. Bubbles watched them, unmoving and silent. This was what Rapture had turned into. The best and brightest turned to crazy, homicidal maniacs who cared for nothing save their next fix of ADAM. After the war and Ryan's death, the city had definitely fallen into ruin, under Sofia Lamb's totalitarian, collectivist rule. Lamb - Ryan's complete opposite - had made the entire city into one big Rapture Family.

Mr. Bubbles stood in the shadows, overlooking the entire banquet hall in its ornate yet silent splendor. The ornate statues which gracefully held the window, which covered an entire wall, called out in silence. Sea water dripped from the ceiling, and from outside, the neon glowing told tale of Rapture's once so stunning heydays. Mr. Bubbles watched the splicers argue and bicker over what they found. The woman wanted a watch they found on one of the tables, but the pistol wielding splicer kept saying it didn't work, then put it in his own pocket. Why fight for anything, if that was how you turned out? A husk of a man, with nothing to live for. Just as he himself was now. Still, there was something. Those flashes of red; sudden sparks of memory. A desire to know, *who am I?* And now he had to get past the splicers, if he wanted the answer.

"Herr Bubbles. You must go this way", Tenenbaum said, "but those splicers are too many for you to fight. Now, here is what I propose -" There was a crackle, and Tenenbaum vanished. She was replaced by an eerie silence, which lasted for a few seconds. Suddenly, he heard Sofia Lamb's cold, calculated voice:

"There you are. I know the face behind your mask. But amnesia, it seems, is tearing you apart. Ask yourself, now that you're standing at the crossroads waiting for a sign; is it not better to reject the self and the past that you seek to remember, and instead embrace the family and serve a purpose. Your silence says it all."

Red.

Mr. Bubbles raised his hand, and with a slight twist, shot an electric bolt straight into the pool of water below. In an instant, all the splicers down there lit up blue and white and they died as the water electrified and fried them. Lamb fell silent for a moment, then he heard her breathe and she said, as calm as always:

"And so it is. Do as you please, build your ruins of ego if you please. But I tell you this now; the name you seek, the past that you wish to recover is not your own. It is Andrew Ryan; it is only your ego. Rapture is deliverance, and it will endure with or without you and your search to glorify the self. Unless you listen to these words, there is no place for you in paradise."

As another act of defiance, Mr. Bubbles took a dexterous leap into the electrified water, crackling with blue-white lightning. He grunted as he felt the sting of the shock burst through him and his vision became white for a moment. At the same time, the radio crackled again.

"-bles? Herr Bubbles, are you- ah, there you are. I thought you were gone."

Mr. Bubbles felt electrocuted. He was tired. He could just return to Lamb and get his purpose. It was heavy, but he stood up on his own two legs.

"Great men sometimes ask, Herr Bubbles; why do we fall? Und they say we must learn to rise. Perhaps it is so. But a better question is, why do we rise, Herr Bubbles?" Tenenbaum fell silent for a moment. Mr. Bubbles sighed and looked around at the splicers lying face down in their watery graves. Then Tenebaum went on:

"Sofia Lamb is creating new little ones, continuing my work. Und I have returned to rescue them. That is why I rise." To be redeemed. Maybe that wouldn't be so bad, he thought. Red. And a pair of eyes like the stars. To return to the source and be redeemed.

Leaving the banquet hall and getting closer to his destination, he heard commotion, over by the bathysphere station. Approaching as silently as he could, he saw a pair of rogue splicers attacking a Rosie Big Daddy. Someone like him! And the Rosie was protecting one of the Little Sisters.

"There!" Tenenbaum called over the radio, "you must help her, und... und she will help you. But to do so, you must kill her guardian. Please, Herr Bubbles."

Mr. Bubbles stood in the doorway, atop some stairs. He revved up his drill which started spinning furiously, making a great deal of noise. That got the splicers' attention.

"Hey, Martha! He's got backup! Let's scam!" The male splicer yelped and they both ran for it. The Rosie saw Mr. Bubbles as no threat and instead aimed for the fleeing splicers with its giant rivet gun.

Mr. Bubbles took the chance and rushed the Rosie, swinging his drill. The Little Sister screamed and the Rosie was swiftly back in action, now aiming the rivet gun at Mr. Bubbles. It fired, and several burning hot construction rivets got stuck in Mr. Bubbles' metal skin. But Mr. Bubbles also wielded the power of plasmids! The Rosie froze for a moment as it was hit by the electric shock. Mr. Bubbles struck. The drill made a large dent in the Rosie's armor, bringing it out of paralysis and knocking it back. Mr. Bubbles noticed how it wanted distance. It could aim better from afar. And he used this. He rushed again, hitting the Rosie hard, with the power of a charged up Bouncer. The Rosie backed into the door at the other end of the room, from where Mr. Bubbles had come. When it opened Mr. Bubbles fired again. A shock from the Electro Bolt followed by a powerful drill dash and the Rosie fell against the wall and tumbled down. It went down beside the statue of an angel, lumping as a colossal sack of bricks. The angel statue, in contrast, rose its wide open arms to the sky, opening itself to the salvation that Rapture was to be. Not much of a salvation for the Rosie, which, mournfully murmuring, sighed as its red glowing porthole turned a dull grey.

It had dropped its rivet gun, which fell under the door, stopping it from going all the way down. And beside the corpse of the Big Daddy stood the Little Sister, crying. As Mr. Bubbles came close she cowered, whimpering in fear. He slowly stretched out his hand, reaching out to the little girl, this fragile little being who wouldn't last seconds without his protection.

"There", Tenenbaum said, relief in her voice, "now, the little ones tell me, you must bring her to the Gatherer's Garden und she will set up a welcome. It is just a little bit further, by the baths."

Mr. Bubbles carried the Little Sister along the darkened hallways, following the haunting shadow which led them past running water and big pools.

"The shadow, it is a Big Sister. She watches you, Herr Bubbles." They went into the swimming pool area. A great hall with a giant, empty pool at the center. Just some murky water that remained at the bottom. Around it stood large carved statues of more angels stretching out their open arms, magnifying the awesome view; somber in the darkness, yet mournfully grand.

"Ooh, let's go swimming, Mr. Bubbles!" The Little Sister said gleefully. Atop one of the statues perched a thin creature, watching them. He wouldn't even have noticed it, if it weren't for its glowing red porthole eye. It wore armor, like a Big Daddy, but thin, suited for a teenage girl. A

Little Sister, grown up. It watched them, menacingly. Mr. Bubbles only looked away for a split second, and then she was gone, the statue upon which she had perched speaking only silence.

They passed through the hall and into the Plasmid Therapies area. From there the Little Sister led the way. She ran off, saying:

"This way, Mr. Bubbles!" He followed her through the dank, dark waiting room. It seemed almost reclaimed by nature, but it was human planted foliage that covered walls. Another murky wall was covered with a large photo poster of Sofia Lamb. She was a woman of full control; her posture straight and eyes fixed into the viewers eyes, her hair perfectly made up and her matronly eyes circled by elegant horn rimmed glasses. Below the poster, some unlucky splicer had made a home, using an old, foul smelling mattress and lit candles. On the opposite wall was a large neon sign of a hand throwing lightning bolts, glowing and flickering in light blue and purple. It pointed the way to the Gatherer's Garden. The entire scene felt familiar to him, like he'd seen it before, but the depressing darkness that drenched Rapture encased the entire scene in an unfamiliar, haunting melancholy.

Mr. Bubbles continued beyond the poster and the neon sign and found the Little Sister over at a Gatherer's Garden machine, drawing on the floor and the wall, using colorful chalk. 'From Eleanor', she wrote.

"Just a minute", she chirped, sounding almost independent and free from the ADAM spell. Like someone else was inside her at that moment. When she was done, she tinkered with the Gatherer's Garden machine until a plasmid bottle fell out. She stood on her toes to place it neatly in the slot of the machine, like a gift for someone to find.

"No touchies, Mr. Bubbles. This isn't for you." Then she turned to him and gave him a big smile. "All done!" She stretched out her arms and Mr. Bubbles grabbed her gently and picked her up to ride on his shoulders.

"Now, Herr Bubbles. I have good news." It was Tenenbaum, "this man Sinclair, he says he knows you und he is trying to find your name. This is good. Now outside the area you are in and to the left just by the swimming pool, there is the generator. You must turn it on und head back where you came in, to maintenance. There you will pump out the lower levels. The little ones will do the rest. But first, you must cure your little one. She cannot go out to the ocean with you."

Bubbles went out to the dark swimming pool area and up to the generator, spitting blue white sparks from broken wires. It said high voltage, but it was dead. It'd start right up with a direct spark. He raised his hand. It pulsed with electric energy for a moment, and then it shot a bolt of electricity at the generator, which kick started. One by one the lights overhead sputtered to life. And the entire hall lit up. In the light it really showed all its former glory and splendor, gone now with the decay of the city. Walls corroding by the sea water were adorned with salty seaweed, hanging from over ledges, having found its way in with the trickling seawater over the past decade. A canned version of Daddy, Won't You Please Come Home, sung by Anette Hanshaw played on loudspeakers. Though it was supposed to give a soft, cozy feeling, now it crackled and buzzed from the old technology. A wonder it still functioned. The entire pool, emptied but with a small pool of murky, stagnant water at the bottom, was surrounded by the magnificent statues of marble angels, dirty, torn and brittle over the years, but the shadow was nowhere to be seen.

"To the maintenance area, Herr Bubbles", Tenenbaum said, and the lumbering Big Daddy followed orders and started back the other way. Back through the halls with all their leaks. The sound of running water and creaking metal. The place looked all different when they walked in the other direction. Blacks lit up blue; spots of rust that colored the walls a dismal brown.

Over by the resting area, a large ankle deep make shift pond in the center and with a stone bridge crossing it, stretching from one side of the room to the other, a few splicers were searching for ADAM. One was digging in a pot where plants no longer grew and another was walking back and forth muttering to himself on the bridge over the pond. The other two were scampering in the water, bickering back and forth, a man and a woman. As the door swung open and the big, lumbering shape of Mr. Bubbles appeared in the opening, the splicer on the bridge noticed him and looked up, immediately raising his pistol. He fired a shot, just as the splicer by the pot rushed over, wrench in hand, and struck Mr. Bubbles across the helmet. There was a loud crack, one of the Bouncer's glowing porthole eyes cracked all over. Mr. Bubbles revved his drill fast and shoved it into the thug splicer's chest, mixing all his insides with a gurgling roar as he shouted. The leadhead on the bridge fired his gun again.

"Mr. Bubbles is mad and you'll be sorry!" Cried the Little Sister, holding on for dear life, sitting in her place on the Big Daddy's protective shoulder.

"Help me out with this guy!" He yelled, his mostly toothless mouth gawping wide at the sight of his comrade. But the splicers in the water scampered and ran away in fear, screaming:

"Let's scam!" And the leadhead kept shouting and firing his six shooter. The angered Big Daddy yanked his drill away and the thuggish splicer dropped dead on the slippery floor, insides dangling outside. Bubbles charged up another of his powerful plasmids, Telekinesis, just as another shot hit him in the mask, making a fissure. The next shot pierced entirely. Mr. Bubbles groaned in pain as air seeped out of the whole in the big, metal mask, and raised his hand against the splicer lying dead in front of him. As if moved by an invisible force, the body writhed and flew up into the air. Mr. Bubbles held it in place, hovering in front of him as a shield. The body took the next shot, and the leadhead started to reload, muttering angrily.

"Catch!" Yelled the Little Sister in a high pitched voice. The next moment, Mr. Bubbles released the body, which was flung hard through the air, striking right at the splicer on the bridge, making him fall down into the water, yelling loudly. The Big Daddy again activated his Electro Bolt plasmid, blue and white lightning beginning to sparkle around his left hand and wobbling unstably in big arcs. He stretched out his hand, just as the leadhead got up, dizzy and muttering, wet all over.

"Oh no", the splicer said, realizing in the very last moment that he was about to die. Mr. Bubbles zapped him, the water enhancing the electrifying shock tenfold. He convulsed and danced as the electricity fried his inside, turned his skin into a blackened crisp and cooked his eyes. Then he fell backward into the water. Mr. Bubbles sighed heavily, feeling the pain from the gunshot wounds. But he carried on.

The odd couple trudged slowly through Adonis Luxury Resort, the Little Sister hurrying her protector on impatiently. His heavy metal boots lumped hard on the moist floor, but they met no further resistance. At length, they reached the maintenance area, a dark, damp room with a control board that seemed a bit too silent. A lamp on it glowed a dull red.

"See, Herr Bubbles. Over by the control board. But first, the little one. Bring her to the air vent, and do with her as I did. This will save her."

On one of the walls, next to a couple of filing cabinets, was one of the Little Sister vents, adorned with its stylized leaves and flowers and with its silent, black hole sun for the Little Sister to crawl into. A trickle of water ran from a leak in the ceiling right in front of it, creating a small pool and spreading to the closest filing cabinet, making the wood on it rotten and slimy and covered in algae. Mr. Bubbles did as Tenenbaum asked and brought the little over to the vent, only to hear her say:

"Sleepy time is near..." Then she yawned. With a silent, murmuring sigh, Mr. Bubbles held her in front of him. She smiled, and looked at him with her big, glowing, yellow eyes.

"The little ones I rescued before are all grown up und think of me no more ", Tenenbaum said, sounding sad, like all her melancholy shone through the words she now spoke, "after what I once did to them it was a joy to be forgotten. But now, all around the world, children vanish by the sea. Kidnapped. Und so I return, in fear of what I already know. Someone is continuing my work... Sofia Lamb. I know that I have no right to ask anymore of you, Herr Bubbles, but I beg of you to please make that girl human again. What is in her, it is an abomination, und it is my fault. All of this you see, it is because of me, my sins."

The Big Daddy looked long into the little girls eyes. They were as the stars, even contaminated by the ADAM curse. It was Brigid Tenenbaum who had found the slug that produced ADAM, all those years ago and it was she who had come up with the idea to host the slugs in little girls, turning them into this. Basically, living ADAM factories. The innocence of eyes that did not choose Rapture, but had it forced upon them through someone else's sins. It felt like release when he put his hand on her forehead to rescue her from her fate as a slave of Rapture's unforgiving queen.

He was overcome with a bright blinding light as humanity returned to the girl. When it was over, her eyes were normal; human. Blue and shining with the immense power of innocence and laughter. And the Little Sister gave him a big, heartwarming smile. Mr. Bubbles put her down on the cold and wet metal floor, but it didn't bother her. Instead, she took his hand and looked up at him one last time, into his soul.

"Thank you", she said, smiling yet again. The sweet face of innocence that Mr. Bubbles had seen before, in another life. The giant metal creature said nothing, but in its flesh heart it woke more and more. Another flash of red and of words, and the girl vanished into the vent to find Tenenbaum. With a metallic sigh, Mr. Bubbles turned around to finish his quest, knowing that memory was not far away.

"Thank you, Herr Bubbles", Tenenbaum said, "now I will give you what I promised. Sinclair, he has looked through the archives to find all the Big Daddies, he knows your name." She was interrupted by a shrill, shrieking sound that echoed through all Adonis. It was an unnatural sound that could have torn through flesh. The very air grew thick and hostile.

"Watch out", Tenenbaum shouted in his ears, "it is the Big Sister!"

Julia Jensen's apartment, 1958

He was alive. She could scarcely believe it. But where was he? In hiding, no doubt. If Ryan got a hold of this book the writer would not be long for this world. She burned the letter and shoved the bundle of papers that made the book in her purse. Crude, but it'd have to do. She wanted to find him, but where would she start looking? His apartment hadn't yielded anything in the last month. All that was different was the missing plasmid hypos, but she'd attributed that to splicers or thieves, finding their way through the unlocked door. He could be anywhere!

Back in her own shack of an apartment the place seemed big and hollow. In her bedroom, on the bookshelf, stood a couple of black and white photos in nice frames. Her parents' wedding photo; another photo of her parents, from a later time - a happy time; one of herself as a child and one of... Robert. She looked at it and couldn't even recall his name at first. Then she took the photo and held it into the light, looking at it. Nothing. She put it back, face down. There were no photos of the writer. But she did have his books, *The Moon* and *Returning To The Source*. She

even had a couple of magazines which had published his short stories. They stood there silently, next to her parent's picture, and told her nothing. Julia took the bundle of papers out of her purse and sat down in her bed, far in the corner. It was silent all around, and she'd never felt lonelier. She turned to the first page to start reading.

'It always starts with a sentence', by Chris Perkins. It wasn't a very long book, and she read it from cover to cover, by candle light. It seemed he'd been all over Rapture. Caught everything, seen everything. What was going on in Rapture, what with Atlas and Ryan and everything, told of oncoming change, but there was no real documentation of Ryan's rule. Until now. And it was the story of the writer's life in Rapture, written so as to appear like a fictional novel. She realized why he'd sent it to Tribune. All the peoples of the world should know what went on in Rapture. But if Ryan's people found out about it, they would surely burn every copy. That's why he was in hiding. And it was also his final farewell to her. His heart burnt on paper. His legacy, in a rhyme. Not if she found him. But where would she start looking?

Andrew Ryan's office, 1958

Being Andrew Ryan wasn't easy, Sullivan knew that much. Sullivan, Ryan's chief of security, was holding a bundle of papers that he'd come by through a crazed splicer who handed them out in Apollo Square. It was the manuscript entitled 'It always starts with a sentence'. Clearly written as an intended piece of literature, drenched in some bunko love story. But it also contained well documented reports on events that went on in Rapture. Among them were the takeover of Fontaine Futuristics, Sofia Lamb's disappearance from the public eye after that public debate between her and Ryan, exposures of how Ryan dealt with socialists and union organizers in Rapture. There was even some stuff on Persephone. And, evidently, copies of the manuscript were being handed out for free around town. Now it was chief Sullivan's job to tell the Great Man about it. He felt like he need a drink first, but - he sighed - it'd have to wait. Because he knew what would happen once he told Ryan about it all.

He was standing just outside Ryan's office door. It was New Year's Eve and he was still drenched in work. Ryan's secretary had left for the day and there was an almost eerie silence beckoning him. He felt so tired lately. Clenching the manuscript of the book under his arm, Sullivan knocked glumly at the door and heard Ryan's voice from inside, telling him to enter. Sullivan cleared his throat and opened the door to step inside.

The Great Man's office felt as sullen as always, dark and not exactly conveying a sense of forgiveness. Andrew Ryan sat behind his desk, a martini in his hand.

"What is it, Sullivan?"

"Sir. Come across something you might want to know about. Man in Apollo Square was handing out copies of a book, that... that's not going easy on your administration."

He handed over the manuscript to Ryan and looked nervously at him. Ryan eyed the front page in silence. There came a redness to his eyes and his jaw clenched.

"Have you read it?" He asked finally, voice tense.

"Yes, sir. Had to know what it was all about before I told you about it. It's very damning stuff. Stuff he shouldn't know about." Sullivan closed his eyes and thought about it all. He'd been a damn good cop topside and after he got framed and fired, he'd served Ryan and Rapture loyally, but so much of what had been going on the last couple of years, rounding people in Apollo

Square, hanging people who smuggled in contraband, it didn't hold right with Sullivan. And the book pointed a finger right at that. Things were brewing in Rapture.

"Written by someone on my side?" The thought made Andrew Ryan shake with anger. Sullivan noticed the slight quiver of the Great Man's upper lip and pencil thin mustache.

"No sir", Sullivan handed Ryan the manuscript, "Chris Perkins. Best I know, he wrote columns for the Tribune, before he stopped showing up. Wrote a few books, too."

"I know him", Ryan said, remembering the brief meeting he'd had with the writer, "the Tribune, you say? Could Poole be in on it?"

"Don't think so, Sir. He don't seem to hold Poole in high esteem."

"Do you know where he is?"

"No, sir, no one's seen him in a month. I went to his place. It's empty, much as I can tell. Found a few old columns is all. Seems like he left in a hurry."

"And the man who gave you this?"

"Went back to Apollo Square, but I couldn't find him. I've got constables on the lookout for him and others that may be handing copies out."

"Good. Sullivan?"

"Yes, sir?"

"Bring me this writer. He's about to see what happens when you betray my trust. We *will* have a good New Year's celebration tonight and 1959 *will* be our best year yet. The parasites will *not* take any more from me." He was bubbling with anger inside but he kept his veneer of calm.

"Yes, sir." Sullivan saw the rage in the Great Man's eyes. His hand shook as he took the manuscript and threw it angrily into the bin. Turning around, the Great Man pondered; reminiscing an age gone by. Sullivan left the office. For all this writer knew about Persephone, he'd see it real close, real soon. Just the small matter of finding him. Among all the others that needed finding and rooting out.

Leaving Ryan's office, Sullivan sighed and ran his hand through his hair. Yeah, things were getting out of hand. Before he started working for Ryan, back in the forties, he'd had a gambling problem and his wife had run out on him. He'd almost ended himself with a bullet, several times. Those feelings had started to come back to him. But he pulled himself together, putting his trust in Andrew Ryan. He walked glumly over to the elevator, ready to put his best constables on finding the writer. And there was the matter of Atlas. He sighed. First, though, chief Sullivan needed that drink.

Market Street, 1958

There was celebration and joy on Market Street. Sander Cohen, one Rapture's best and brightest as well as master weirdo, was hosting a closed off New Year's party and there were people enjoying themselves and celebrating life and Rapture and the new year. Couldn't they all see what was happening? The city crumbling. Or may that was just Julia Jensen's city. There were lots of people there, and judging by the newsstands, there'd be a while before the Tribune went out of business, despite the losses it'd taken. Rapture was still alive, much of the crumbling had yet to spread to the richer parts of the city. But it was beginning to show. The poor had been having it rough for years. What with Atlas and everything going on in Pauper's Drop not everyone could be smiling, right? It was undeniable, but all of these people lived in denial, sure that Andrew Ryan would see Rapture through the hard times. Maybe that was true. Maybe Rapture held a new life, if she left this one behind like she left the surface. All it took was

accepting that the writer was not coming back. Perhaps the people wore pretend faces under those masks, pretend faces with pretend smiles. Or maybe they had the optimism she didn't.

She was standing by the main window on Market Street, overlooking the city outside in all its darkened splendor. Schools of brightly colored fish scampered by, uncaring of her or Rapture, and in the distance, dimmed by the murky water, she saw a giant squid thrust through the water as it was air, "flying" adeptly through the narrow passages of the city. It was lit in gold and blue and purple from the neon signs. Worley Winery shone bright, close to her, in a deep purple, as well as the more modest Fighting McDonagh sign, shining in pale gold and white. She was taken by surprise as a Bouncer Big Daddy leapt through the ocean water outside the window, and onto a ledge where it revved up its great drill to start drilling in the rock. A grand thing to behold, the working Big Daddy, when you not know the manner of beast trapped within.

Sighing, Julia moved on. There were too many people here, too much noise, to think clearly. Something felt so false about Market Street. And the entire place looked too nice, like it was all a facade; fixing a crack by painting over it with gold paint. The ornate golden linings of the streamlined art deco facades, olive and marble walls and the polished ivory white flooring contrasted by the most beautiful polished wood you would find in Rapture was so delicate, so minutely precise that it felt like you would just flow with it if you let yourself. The sophisticated Satyr Lounge and Maison Vosges, where the rich indulged in the latest high fashion, were here, as well as other still thriving businesses. And not far away was the Kashmir restaurant - the finest in Rapture! This was the finest, most luxurious part of Rapture and it still showed, on New Year's Eve 1958. She walked, almost numbly, only fleetingly aware of all around her. She had a headache from drinking too little, and she was hungry.

There was going to be a Masquerade Ball in the Kashmir later in the evening, to ring in 1959. All over the city there were adverts for it; a bunny mask with a pair of inquisitive eyes peering out, among a rain of confetti against a deep sea blue backdrop. In fact, she saw several people about wearing those same bunny masks, and other masks. They were all laughing, thriving. A thought in her mind said to join them, but she couldn't. She felt as though she was miles out of place among these people, but she would have looked very much in her element, if it weren't for her sad expression. She wore one of her finest dresses, the black one with pink polka dots, rather low cut for such a young woman, but it lifted and showed off her young bosom quite seductively, turning more than a head or two. With it, she wore black pumps and a silver bracelet. Her scarlet red hair she'd put into a ponytail held by a black bow. Suddenly, she heard a whistle and felt a glance directed at her. She looked up and saw a young man nodding at her, obviously struck by her as she'd walked past. Even with everything that was happening, she couldn't repress a smile and a blush. She knew he looked as she kept walking and so she sort of swaggered off, the smile erasing from her face as soon as it'd come. Pain is just a state of mind, but once there, it is not so easily broken. She watched an odd looking couple running about, back and forth. It was that private investigator who had an office nearby and a woman she didn't know. Maybe she could hire him to find the writer. But they went on their way, and she went on hers. Somewhere quieter, where she could think. Arcadia?

Neptune's Bounty, 1958

There had been some rustling of late, down at the wharf. Rustling and whispering about someone raiding fisheries of their fish. Someone large. That was cryptic at best. Not to mention

unusual. These days, most theft would just be passed by the constabulary as irrelevant in the long scheme, especially when what was taken was loads of fish, as long as there were deeper murmurs of discontent and tensions and threats of violence. But Bonham was there nonetheless. He stood in the dark just getting a lay of the land. He had a feeling what was going on down here was just dirty tricks between business rivals - that's what it had been written off as, at least - but ever since his meeting with the redhead he'd wanted to get a look at whatever it was her father had turned into, and when he overheard a dockworker say the words "biggest guy I ever seen", he just knew. That's why he was standing alone in the dark in Neptune's Bounty on New Year's Eve. He'd been there a while already, and was getting tired of standing around. He was cold and needed to take a piss. Felt his shoulders ache a bit, as they do when you've been waiting tensely for something for some time only to be met with more waiting. The rush, if you will, of going to the docks to meet whatever it was had waned.

From where he was he could see a bunch of shipping containers filled with fish, knee high water, and darkness. But there were also a lot of places for someone to hide. The entire underground docks looked like it was built into a cavern, giving an outdoors-y feel to the place. There were even boats - boats! - clucking around, moored in the undersea harbor. Fishing was usually done by special submarines dragging fishing nets behind them, a technique introduced by Frank Fontaine when he was head of Fontaine Fisheries, before he got involved in the whole plasmid business with those kooky scientists Yi Suchong and that crazy Eastern European Brigid Tenenbaum. Seemed like a simpler time, because then of course it happened that Ryan Industries took over Fontaine Futuristics and the whole plasmid business. Bonham shifted his foot and took a deep breath.

He looked at his wrist watch and saw that it was late. Too late to go sneaking around the docks on New Year's. He was just about to go home; visit his neighbor's New Year's party and have a drink, then go to his place and have a gene tonic. But just as he sighed and took a step forward, he saw the shadow. The shadow of something huge. Looked like a man, but he was too big. Bonham snuck closer, boards creaking under his feet. The shadow of the form of a brutish looking splicer walked up to the crates of fish standing by one of the pylons for unloading first thing in the morning, and looked them over. It was just outside the light, so Bonham couldn't get a good look. As Bonham came closer he saw that it was indeed a man. His heart raced. Should he draw his gun? Could a gunshot even pierce that skin? The man that he presumed must be Peder Jensen was thick skinned, his muscular arms bruised but incredibly strong.

Bonham held his breath as he snuck closer yet, trying his damndest not to make a sound or draw attention to himself. Then he saw the brute's face; hardened jaw line, extended chin, widened shoulders. Just the spitting image of a strongman, Bonham thought. There were some welts on the thick skin on the face, but rather than giving Bonham a sense of distaste, he found they added character. Afraid of drawing attention, Bonham looked around and found a crevice between two buildings, just big enough for a man to fit into. He snuck in there to hide and to watch the creature, who began to lift crates of rotten fish for discard - those crates with the black handprint on them - and carry them away, one by one.

Bonham sat cowered in the corner, watching the overgrown man haul the crates for a few minutes. He made out one thing; the brute was stealing fish. For what purpose? That baffled him. For... for Atlas, maybe, to give to the needy in Pauper's Drop. Or for himself, think of what a person that size has to eat each day. Those crates were heavy, no doubt about that, but the brute

carried them like they were just empty boxes, whistling while he worked. He didn't carry them far, either, just inside an empty building down the wharf. It had been empty some time, since the owner had to close down for lack of business. Bonham remembered hearing the poor guy hanged himself short after. After a while, the brute seemed to be finished. He didn't come out of the building once he'd carried something around ten or twelve crates in there.

Intrigued, but still alarmed and on his guard, Bonham got up and sneaked closer to the so called abandoned building. Maybe he could sneak a peek in the window. As he came closer he could definitely hear the brute still in there, now muttering to itself instead of whistling. Bonham was quiet as a mouse as he drew closer. He reached the building, but the windows were too high. He'd need something to stand on, in order to see inside. He looked around and found a stack of old wooden pallets. As quietly as he could, he stacked two of them and got up to look inside. The window was dusty gray on the inside, but that's not what made Bonham fall down and shriek. It was the brute; it had heard him moving the pallets and stood in the window looking out, big angry lookers peering out at the intruder. Their eyes met, and Bonham fell down, yelping.

As quick as he could, Bonham got up and took a few steps back, just as the brute came out through the door to say hello to the mystery man sneaking outside. The brute was laughing to himself as he walked, hunched forward, toward his new friend.

"S-stay back", Bonham warned, "I'm with the Rapture constabulary."

"Hah! You sound like a cunt", bellowed the brute, "sneaking about in the darkness like a coward, spying on honest hard working people. Like a right cunt."

Bonham took a few trembling steps back. He looked quickly around. He could probably make it back to the little alcove where he sat minutes ago, watching the brute work, if he was fast enough. But before he could strike into action, the brute did.

The brute splicer knocked him off his feet and roared, a deafening noise that tore through his eardrums. Terrified, he fumbled at his coat pocked for his gun, but he couldn't get it - his hands were shaking, and he felt his legs getting warm and wet. Bonham, a grown man, was pissing himself, as the terrific, terrifying splicer that was once Peder Jensen stood looming above him, covering out all light with his immense figure. Then the splicer leaned closer to get a good look.

"And you look like a cunt, too", he said, eloquent as you please. Bonham felt every inch of his being trembling. Even his mustache. And he felt the sweaty odor of the splicer; like someone who had been carrying weights at the gym for half a day then not showered. The face was greasy and blotched, with a big, stretched mouth and an overgrown chin. Slowly a grin started to emerge on the face. It was broken, as the entire moment was, by some New Year's celebrators who couldn't wait for the midnight strike to get drunk. They were cheering in the distance, and drew the splicer's attention with a loud splash.

"Huh? Wassat?" The splicer said, looking up and in the direction of the noise, taking his eyes of Bonham. That same moment, Bonham sprung to his feet and ran. He didn't look back, didn't want to be in that ogre's grasp again. He didn't watch where he was going. The planks were slick, and he slipped and fell. He hit his head right on a pole, and blacked out, concussion ringing in his head during his last moments of consciousness on New Year's Eve 1958.

Arcadia, 1958

The garden was all quiet where she walked. Everyone was busy celebrating the new year, which was just hours away. There were some people around of course, mostly drunks and

splicers enjoying the celebrations in their own way. In fact, there were surprisingly few people in Arcadia. Most who were in Arcadia were probably around the picnic area and the Tea Garden, closer to the Rolling Hills. But Arcadia was in fact much larger than that, there was a whole forest there. Needed to be, to provide oxygen for the entire city. It was the only real park in Rapture, and it was New Year's Eve. Julia came across one or two couples out for a stroll, and a few high looking splicers where she walked among the greenery, in a less frequently visited glen in the green, not far from a part of a natural cave system, corroded by sea water ages before people began to inhabit the ocean and made this particular part of it into a park.

Then there was the odd passer-through, but for a night like this it was curiously empty. Julia was following in the footsteps of the date they'd been on in what seemed like another life. She stopped exactly where they'd stopped and looked into the air where his eyes should have been. A bee flew by, buzzing busily just by her nose. It didn't care a bit about writers or celebrations. She followed it with her eyes and looked around the garden. The silence of the trees beckoned her. She noticed the still of the wind, a bush - *you, me and behind that bush* - and a shadow. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Got to keep it together. You had to pay for the air, huh? Didn't seem very Rapture like. And there was supposed to be some kind of cult located here. The Saturnines, or whatever they were called. Religious cults? Also not very Rapture like. She checked her purse to make sure she had the gun with her. She'd checked twice already. Sighing, feeling the weight of defeat upon realizing she'd never find the writer, she turned to go sit down by the neat little picnic area arranged for by Ryan Industries, who took a fee for every visitor, and collect her thoughts. Her heart was heavy as she sat. He could be anywhere, and if Ryan's men were unable to find him, what chance did she have? Or he could already be dead.

No. She felt that he was alive. And she knew she was overlooking something.

Billy, the teleporting splicer, was creeping not far away from the pretty red haired lady. Wondering what the hell she was up to, just walking about. He looked through his shabby pack and grabbed the EVE hypo he'd been saving. Oh, he had plans for the redhead. Months since he'd gotten laid. Plus, there was no one around. He kind of recognized her, too. He'd seen the bitch before, somewhere. She'd been following him around, hadn't she? Knew he was the best lay in Rapture. He injected himself with the EVE and felt the whites of his eyes start glowing. It was rushing through him, filling him with ecstasy and the thrill of being alive. Pure energy oozed within him and poured out of his pores, and he teleported away.

When he arrived over at the bench where the redhead should be, she was gone. He went into the splicer's rage when he heard her scream for help. She was being dragged away by one of those painted nut jobs. A Saturnine, painted blue.

"Hey!" He yelled, getting their attention, "let her go, you weirdo! She's mine!" He'd allow no one to take his bride. He was the god damn hellfire! The Saturnine looked back at Billy, crazy written all over his face, then let the redhead go. The Saturnine drew a knife, much bigger than Billy's. But Billy had more than the teleporting trick up his sleeve. It's what he started with, though. He disappeared and turned up a moment later behind the Saturnine. He gave the bastard a kick in the back and laughed. The cultist fell, but got up quickly, swinging his sharp blade. Then he started charging up, and it was only Billy's quick thinking that saved him from becoming a meat popsicle. The Saturnine shot ice crystals, using the Winter's Grasp plasmid, but Billy teleported to safety. Some ten feet away he retaliated using incinerating fire at the crazy bastard. The Saturnine caught fire and met his doom as Billy finished him off with another ball of hellish

inferno. The victorious splicer looked around for his prize, but found that the pretty redhead was crawling away.

"Hey!" He shouted and teleported once again to intercept her.

Julia was crawling away from the fight, tears running down her cheeks. She could see one of the men going up in flames and suddenly remembered she'd brought a gun. She grabbed her purse and took out the revolver. She'd never even fired a gun in her life. For all the things she'd been through, all her experiences with men thinking of her as some frail girl to do with as he pleased, she'd never really realized the danger. Not before she saw a man being set on fire by a lunatic. Her hand shook, but she steadied it as best she could. The screams of the burning man was dying out and she dared to glance behind her, just as the other splicer yelled after her. But he wasn't there. And then she noticed the shadow towering in front of her. It was the splicer. How in the world could he move so fast? What was in those damn plasmids? But she remained clear headed and quickly swung around to aim the gun at her attacker. The moment she fired he was gone. Just vanished. He appeared just a few feet ahead as she got up to her feet.

"Now is that any way to thank the handsome devil who just saved your ass?" He cackled. It took Julia just a quick glance to see that the man was anything but handsome, the weight of the plasmid usage taking its toll on his visage, distorting him from a human into something decidedly monstrous, skin connecting where it shouldn't, pieces of warts and welts over his disturbing visage.

Her hands shook as she raised the gun again.

"Don't even think about it, bitch", he yelled and teleported away again. Julia noticed him appear to her left and aimed quickly. Two shots she fired. Both hit, but he was still standing! Then she heard him laugh behind her. A decoy! But she was quick to swing around; Julia grabbed Billy by the collar and pulled with all her strength, grunting as she threw him to the ground. He yelped as he fell. She refused to just lay down and be a victim, then she drew the gun at him, but before she could pull the trigger he teleported away again.

"Fight like a man!" Julia demanded of him, adrenaline and fear mixing inside her to make something terrible but awesome. Yet again, he appeared behind her. The coward. Before she could swing around the splicer grabbed her. He covered her mouth to stop her from screaming and grabbed her pistol wielding right hand and held tight. She could hardly move, but she smelled his breath. As if something had died in there. The splicer whispered:

"All I want me is some pussy. That ain't too much to ask, is it?" Julia started thrashing and jerking her head to get loose. Doing so, she accidentally fired the gun, the gunshot echoing through the trees in the underwater park. It startled the crazy splicer, who let her go, only to give her a head butt right in the face. Julia lost consciousness from the hard bang and fell to the ground with a deep sigh, dropping the gun.

A few moments later she came to, feeling the weight of the splicer upon her. She was groggy and her head ached. Her face was warm - she could feel blood running down along the bridge of her nose, as well as from one of her nostrils. And she saw Billy, the teleporting splicer's face, just inches from hers. It was deformed into something unknowable by the cancerous growths. He missed most of his teeth and the upper lip seemed to have grown into the nose in some way. Most of his hair had fallen off, what was left was only a few small patches around his skull. He panted and kissed her cheek with his swollen lips. She was still groggy from the blow to her head, but as soon as she came to, she began to resist. He moaned lightly into her ear. The

repulsive call of the love sick splicer. Soon, he began struggling with his libido. Julia on her part was struggling to get loose, making him angry.

"Stay still, bitch!" He commanded, trying to hold her in place with his legs and his sheer weight. In response, Julia spat in his face, making him yell out in surprise.

"Fuck you!" She shouted. Billy wiped the spit off his spliced up face with an angry muttering.

"You bitch!" He growled and struck her hard across the cheek, giving her another nosebleed, perhaps even breaking her nose, and making her dizzy. He struck her again across the other cheek, making her hover around unconsciousness. Then he returned to his pants. Julia, knocked almost unconscious, couldn't do anything but let what happened happen. Billy sure was brave.

In the corner of her eye, Julia saw a shadow moving. Her mind still hazy, she was convinced it was the angel of death, come for her. Then she drifted off into unconsciousness again, the defiled world around fading to black. The shadow, her angel of death, was a man of flesh and blood. He moved slowly, making sure the splicer not notice him before he could grab the gun. Once he held it in his hand, the splicer's fate was sealed. With a few steps he was up by their side.

"Hey, can't you see I'm busy? Wait your turn! Plenty of whore to go around!" The splicer yelled. The shadow didn't care. He grabbed Billy's shirt and drew him up to his feet, much to the splicer's confusion. Before another word could be spoken, the shadow put the gun to Billy's head and blew it clean off. In his last second, the would-be rapist wished he'd died with Sam, back in Siren Alley.

Tossing the splicer's mostly headless corpse aside, and himself covered with the grey brain matter from inside the now nonexistent head, the shadow turned to Julia Jensen on the ground. Her eyes were flickering. It looked like she was coming to. The shadow grabbed her and gently helped her to her feet. She could hardly stand, and only stood up because she leaned against him.

"How are you feeling? Can you walk?" The shadow asked, holding her up.

"Who are? What..." Julia mumbled, unable to think clearly. She saw the remains of the splicer on the ground and the blood and brains that had squirted all over the shadow, covering him with squishy brain substance and smelly blood. But she couldn't make that connection.

"Let's get you somewhere safe", her rescuing shadow said and started walking. She could do nothing but follow, her legs moving automatically because his did. Still, she knew by heart that she was safe. And she smiled, even with all that happened, because she knew she'd found him. And she went with her savior, the angel of death.

The writer's apartment, 1958

Of course he'd save her. She'd planted herself in him along with that fateful seed. Only now he realized which was truly worth nurturing. She breathed, but she was out cold on his bed, her face bloodied and a cut on her forehead. The place wasn't exactly safe, but then again, nowhere in Rapture was safe anymore *for a traitor*. Especially not tonight. If his information was correct, New Year's Eve 1958 would be a night for the history books. The apartment was a complete mess. Everything of any value was stolen. Typewriter, radio and coffee table were all gone. The padding had been torn from the couch and it smelled of stale blood. There was no mattress in the bed, just a wooden frame that he put some overlooked and relatively clean sheets in, so that Julia would be more comfortable. The wallpapers were ripped and there were sheets of paper - his old notes and work - lying about. There was no light; all the bulbs were broken. Thus the apartment was dark, lit up only by the eerie blue green ocean outside the window. It glimmered

ominously as he stood staring out. He watched the ocean, *the stars*, though his mind was elsewhere.

The writer hadn't been here in quite a while. He used to come here some times while writing the new book, but he stopped when he noticed others came there too. He'd left the door unlocked one too many times. But he also knew that Ryan's people would come looking here eventually. He looked out through the window with tired eyes. Not much sleep when you run around Rapture trying to find dirt on the people in charge. Even went so far as to try to infiltrate Atlas' place, but he had to bug out when they got on to him. Never met the man himself. Irish bastard. The writer had a growing stubble and his clothes were torn and dirty. He kept his few things in a backpack he'd stolen. A few Rapture dollars; a creme-filled cake; the gun he took back in Arcadia; and the still unused Electro Bolt plasmid with the accompanying EVE hypo. Still hadn't worked up the guts to use it. It just lay there, glowing red in the backpack, which he'd put on the desk.

With a sigh he sat down on the floor to wait for Julia to wake up. She was snoring a bit. All around Rapture the citizens were enjoying themselves with the New Year's masquerade ball. In a way, he'd stolen that from Julia. A chance at a normal life. But normal life in Rapture was about to abruptly end for all its people. To pass the time he grabbed a blank paper from the mess on the floor and the pen he kept in his pocket. And he started to write.

'My shadow fades and lays to waste'. Words that returned. He scrapped the paper. Meant nothing, he thought. Inside, maybe it did. It was nearing midnight. He made a ball of the paper, tossed it aside and sighed. Alone in the dark, fumbling for understanding. What. Had. He. Done. There was a moment of calm before the storm, but it seemed a lot less calm when he thought of what the storm would really bring. He'd spread anti-Rapture propaganda. Men had given their lives for a lot less. Dwelling on the thought made fear rise in his throat, and he began to hyperventilate. Leaning back against the wall he tried his hardest to focus on something else. It was a low purr and a soft stroke against his leg that brought that something else.

"Tyger?" He said, looking up and smiling. By his side, looking back up at him was indeed the tabby he called Tyger. The writer picked the cat up and put it in his lap, and began stroking its fur affectionately. Tyger, in turn, immediately began to purr.

"Where'd you come from?" The cat didn't answer him but stroked himself against the writer, who looked around. Door was closed. Couldn't have been in here the whole time... there, the vent into the air duct. It was missing; just a black hole in the wall.

"Where have you been?" The writer asked as he kept petting his friend, "I've missed you." For a long while Tyger just lay in the writer's lap and they both finally did feel the calm. Tyger purred and clawed affectionately at the writer's pants. It was a moment of blissful serenity, the cat's calmness transferring over to the writer, like a ray of light in an otherwise impenetrable darkness.

It felt somewhat similar to Tyger. The cat knew, as the writer knew, that they soon must be parting. Though they found in each other something of worth to hold on to, they were nothing alike. Tyger had perfectly adapted to the harsh world of Rapture, whereas the writer could not alienate himself more if he tried, and was bound to struggle against the cult of personality. It felt as if the entire night had passed when Tyger finally got to his feet and stretched his nimble and agile body. In reality, it couldn't have been more than an hour, if that. Tyger getting up woke the writer from slumber. Tyger meowed softly and walked, tail high, into the kitchen. The writer got

to his feet, almost slipped on a sheet of paper, and followed his cat and friend over to the cupboard. Tyger sat neatly down in front of the cabinet, looking at the writer with big eyes.

"Let's see", the writer said, opening the pantry. He sighed; "darkness there, and nothing more." But then he remembered, on the top shelf. He usually put tuna tins there. Standing on his toes to get a good look, he found the sole last one. Tyger got up, standing cutely on his hind legs and leaning against the writer's leg when he saw the tin.

"Let's hope it hasn't gone bad", the writer said. Opening the can, they both felt the distinct smell of tuna fill the room. Tyger was excited. The writer was not. But the tuna was good to eat.

"You can thank Ryan Industries preservatives for that", the writer said and put the tin on the floor. Tyger immediately began munching the smelly fish down. Within short, he'd eaten it all, leaving not a single scrap.

"You really were hungry, huh?" The writer picked the cat up and scratched his head. Tyger licked around his mouth, still tasting the - to him - delicious tuna. He looked content. Looking at his on and off again companion, the writer sighed.

"I just wish you could come with me. Wherever it is I'm going." Then, over from the bed, they both heard Julia stirring. The writer put Tyger down and went over to see if she was waking up. He didn't think of it then, but that was the last time he ever saw Tyger the cat.

Over at the bed, Julia was stirring. Seeing her wake up made the writer feel nervous. What if she still hated him. Her eyes were flickering and as soon as he turned, she awoke.

"Ugh..." She moaned, her voice shaky. She was still groggy. She put her hand on her forehead, grimacing in pain. The writer turned to her.

"Good morning." He said. She sat up on the bed. "And happy new year I guess", he continued.

"Is it... where..." She wobbled a bit, then steadied herself, "are you the angel of death?" The writer smiled his rare smile.

"No", he said, "it's just me. The god damn writer. But I might use angel of death the next time, that has a nice ring to it." Julia leaned back down again.

"I knew I'd find you", she said, looking up at him.

"I think, I found you."

"Nuh uh", she smiled, though she was obviously in pain and felt bad. The writer sat down beside her.

"We have to get you out of here", he said.

"Why? What's going on?" She sat up once again, and looked into his eyes.

"It's not safe here. You read the book I assume?" She nodded. "So has Andrew Ryan, I expect. He'll have people looking for me." He looked at her. It was as if her beauty glowed in the darkness. "I've put you in too much danger."

"What do you mean?"

"There's going to be a war. Atlas will start a revolution. Tonight. He has the biggest collection of ADAM in the city and with it he controls most of the splicers. I don't know if it's possible, but you have to get out of the city, maybe get one of those private bathyspheres and just go, preferably while Ryan and Atlas are going at it, hot and heavy. Because they will."

"What about you?"

"There's no time for me. Even with the war, Ryan won't tolerate his so called parasites. He'll be looking for me. I... you should go. Go to your family, your friends-" Her eyes turned hollow when he mentioned them. "-Then try and find a way out of Rapture. Just... don't be around me when they find me. It will not end well." Julia was silent for a while.

"No", she said at last, standing up, "there's nowhere I'd rather be."

"But... you have to get out. Rapture is burning!"

"I will if you come with me." She sounded like a child who always got what she wanted.

"You don't know what you're saying..." He looked at the floor.

"I do. I'm a grown woman. And if Rapture is lost, then how, exactly, are you protecting me by throwing me out?" She grimaced in pain again, and touched her forehead. The writer sighed.

"Okay." He resigned and stood up, knowing full well she was right. It is better to live one day as an eagle, than a lifetime as a fly.

"We'll find a way", she said and took his hand. They looked into each other's eyes. The writer had dreamt of it. To think that it would happen now, at a time like this. Fate, no matter if they shaped it themselves or not, sure had a sense of humor. They were already at the source.

Julia's stomach was completely empty. It felt kind of as if her throat had been cut off, she hadn't eaten in so long.

"I'm starving", she said, "is there anything to eat?"

"No. Wait, yes", the writer said and grabbed his pack. From it, he took the creme-filled cake and handed it to Julia. Her hand was dirty. "It's not much of a New Year's dinner", he said, "but it's all I've got."

"Want to split it?" Julia asked as she took the cake out its plastic cover.

"Sure", the writer said, giving her his rare smile. Julia split the cake in two and quickly put her half in her mouth and ate it. The writer ate his half, too, and it was the best thing he'd had since...

"Not exactly blueberry pie, but I like it", Julia said, her mouth full. The writer looked at her as she munched on her piece of the cake. A curious thing, how that which is dear to someone will appear a hundred, or even a thousand times prettier to that person. Julia was wearing a black dress with pink polka dots. It was a little torn in a few places and there was mud from Arcadia and dirt from all around the city on it. But she rocked that rapturous dress. And her hair, burning as red as ever, was let out and flowed light as air over her shoulders. A little tattered, and it needed a wash, but still as beautiful as ever. She was the first dream he knew. Every other one would be a charade of her. He watched her take one of the sheets from the bed to wipe dry blood from her face with. When she was done, her pretty young face was mostly clean, but there was still some blood left. And a little dirt. Then she looked back at him with her big blue eyes that told secrets of the stars, holding the bloodied and dirty sheet in her hands.

"What?" She said, smiling at his dreamy expression. The writer blushed and looked down, embarrassed. She smiled even more at that.

"It's nothing", he said, looking shyly away.

"It's not nothing", she said, dropping the sheet back onto the bed. She walked up to him, standing close to him. "Tell me."

"It's... you. You're beautiful, is all I was... thinking." Julia giggled, but she blushed, too. She knew that's what it was. Girls always know these things. Outside the door, they heard the public address system going on, and Andrew Ryan beginning to speak, his voice muffled by the walls.

"Good evening, my friends. I hope you are enjoying your New Year's Eve celebration; it has been a year of trials for us all. Tonight I wish to remind each of you that Rapture is your city. It was your strength of will that brought you here, and with that strength you shall rebuild. And so, Andrew Ryan offers you a toast. To Rapture, 1959. May it be our finest year."

They listened intently. He spoke with such resolution, such passion for a man whose dream was crumbling. He would not stagger. Hard to imagine to the writer, how the two of them could be of any significance to a man who'd built an entire city. How two lonely specks of dust in cosmic sand could matter to the man who followed his dreams and did the impossible. Now, the

dream was true, and it was ending, the last petal about to fall. At least for the specks of dust. And then it was 1959. With that the fall of Rapture must have begun. For them, a new age was moving in. The chronicles of a frozen era was a thing of the past. The writer took Julia's hand and pulled her close to him. She'd saved him from the abyss.

"Fair maiden mine, forever we shall love."

PART VII

The writer's apartment, 1959

A crackle was heard outside the door to the apartment. The public address system came alive again and a female began to speak, just as someone ran past on heavy feet along the hallway.

"This is an emergency message from Ryan Industries. There has been an incident at the Kashmir restaurant. Please return to the safety of your homes until further notice. Thank you." In a way, she sounded happy. That was probably so that people wouldn't be alarmed. The "incident" was bigger than anyone in Rapture could possibly imagine. But the specks of dust didn't care. The writer lay on the hard planks of the bed, only a few sheets under him for padding. Julia had gotten up and was looking at her dirty dress, which she'd so passionately just thrown on the floor a while ago. She turned to him and saw his look.

"Oh you", she said, her face red as she blushed.

"Sorry", he said, covering his eyes with his hand, but still peeking through between the fingers. She noticed that, too, and gave him a stern look that still told him how pleased she was that he was looking. Then he did look away.

"Tell me", she said as she tried her best to clean the dress with some fresh water from a glass jar they'd found at the back of the pantry, "how does one become a writer?"

He looked at the ceiling. There were some cracks there, and the indigo sea cast an eerie light over the ceiling canvas. "It's not something that you become."

"How is that an answer?"

"It isn't."

"Tell me then", she said, impatience in her voice. As if the girl would pout if she didn't get her wish. She looked at him, but he stared musingly at the ceiling, watching the dancing of the blues and greens and the hues of darkness. He thought about it for a moment. Then he said:

"It is everything. And it is nothing. It is reality. Because reality isn't as good as imagination." He looked back at her. She had her back towards him. "Well, until now", he added, half joke, half Lord's truth. He got up, and stood behind her. He ran his warm fingers against her bare side, feeling her skin in his palm. She let out a slow breath, closing her eyes, and he ran his hand through her hair, sniffing it and then came closer, kissing her neck, tasting her shuddering skin. The writer took Julia by the waist to turn her around and looked deep in her eyes, then he pulled her back into the bed.

He held her by the wrist as he fumblingly sat down on the bed, one of the boards creaking just slightly beneath him. Julia followed instantly, putting her legs on his sides, sitting astride. She looked deep into his eyes as they came so close, skin on skin. She threw her scarlet hair back, through the air and the writer leaned close to kiss her neck, caressing gently over her collar bone. Putting her arms around his back, Julia rose, just enough to let him get in place, and then slowly sank down, feeling him enter. Their breathing turned more flustered, cheeks turned red. Heat emanated, passion springing eternal. Julia's grip of his back became harder, nails scraping skin; his hands tense and pulsing with the motion, caressing her, feeling, touching, squeezing. His lips tasting, teeth nibbling. Sweaty hair dripping, breath turning into soft moans. Julia pushed the writer down, but soft, and he lay down on the bed, holding her by the backside as she continued, moving rhythmically.

The writer's entire body became tense and loosened time and again and he held both hands and fingers by Julia's sex, caressing soft at first, but faster and more uncontrolled as they went

on. He grunted, trying to keep the voice in, but to no avail, and they soon became one in voice, louder for each time. Julia went faster, harder atop him and he in return went further in at each thrust, grabbing her with his hands and stroking her sex gently, yet firmly, making her blush and moan and throw her hair in lust. Getting closer, both at the same time, Julia leaned down atop him, not stopping her rhythmical ride. Her soft breasts pressed against him and she kissed him, bit his lip all passionate. The writer put his hands on her buttocks, firm, soft, and he squeezed, held firmly. He was as far into the affectionate sin as she. They were both sweating, going further. As his breathing increased, moans turned deeper. Both were nearing zenith. Julia went on, closing her eyes and nesting her head against the writer's shoulder. She ceased, almost freezing in place as her body became rigid for one moment, then shuddered with a lustful moan. The indigo sea danced with the hues of dark on the ceiling.

"Hey. What's that?" Julia Jensen asked a couple of hours later, as they were again dressed. She was lying in the bed, still red cheeked and her breath still heavy, leaning on one of her arms. She nodded at his backpack. From inside it came a red glow that almost seemed alive.

"Oh, that", said the writer, sitting on his desk, in that moment just feeling his own existence. Life. Reality. Imagination. He picked up the source of the glow from the pack. "It's a plasmid. Never used it." In his hand he held a syringe filled with refined ADAM, ready to kick start a man. The very same syringe that he bought that fateful drunken night. He looked at it, then at Julia. Then, without warning, he stuck the needle into his skin and injected himself with pain.

It felt like the whole world was sucked into him. His back arched and his arms, hands and fingers went tense. Jolts of blue white lightning began to strike out from his fingers, zapping to the nearest point of contact and arcing from his fingers to his head, but not harming him. He groaned, feeling his cells realign within him.

He could feel his fingernails growing. He could feel his teeth itching. His legs shook and he wobbled onto his knees. He could feel his body changing. He could feel his very blood electrifying. Every sensation became stronger and the colors in front him contrasted sharply. Power! Unlimited power! Then he opened his eyes and everything looked like normal, only he felt ecstatic. Happy. Julia was looking at him, looking worried. He got up and looked at the syringe. Then he stretched his hand out, giving it to her.

"Try it", he said, his voice interchanging in his ears. He felt everything with greater clarity. All his emotions were a thousand times stronger. Looking at Julia Jensen was euphoria. Pure want.

Julia reached for the syringe slowly. The writer, her last loved one, gave her a smile and she remembered how glad she'd been to see him in Neptune's Bounty that time, and how they almost kissed in Arcadia. He was here with her now. Forever. She remembered her parents, and Sandy Reid. And for all the sorrow she felt that they lay in unmarked, shallow graves, she was happy. She, too, put the needle against her skin. Then she felt Chris' hand against her own. He leaned forward to give her a kiss as she injected the Electro Bolt into her veins. Her eyes lit up and she felt lightning flowing through her veins, just as the writer had. It electrified her, filled her with something closer to reality than reality itself; imagination. She looked at him with the same euphoric expression.

"You may now kiss the bride", she said and giggled. And then he kissed her again, sealing their electric wedding.

Just then, the loud bang of a gunshot was heard and the door of the apartment was bust open. A splicer looking man appeared in the doorway. He wore a constable's badge strapped to his chest and a Tommy gun in his hands. There was another one behind him.

"There they are!" The first one said, raising his weapon at them. But the plasmid rush gave the writer and Julia quick reflexes. Julia cast the first stone and the constable began to shake with electric convulsion. Just as the other constable raised his weapon, a pump action shotgun, the writer rushed them, knocking the first constable onto the other. The other fired his shotgun at that moment, and as he was knocked back the shot hit the ceiling, making dust and debris fall down on top of them. The first one was knocked to the floor and dropped his Tommy gun.

"I'll teach you!" He yelled as he got up. And then he fired a cone of cold from his finger tips using the Winter Blast plasmid, the icicles freezing the writer's skin. The writer froze in place, encased in a thin sheet of ice. He was completely aware the entire time, screaming in his head for heat. Luckily, it wasn't even skin deep. Only a thin, quickly melting crust. It was cold none the less, and he longed for Julia's warmth.

While he was inanimate, Julia attacked that first constable, putting her hand on his head, and then she fired the Electro Bolt again, making his head cook and his eyeballs melt. He screamed in agony, convulsing and contorting as he began to claw against his own head. But the second constable had time to raise his shotgun at her.

"Now, missy", he said, clearly uneasy to see the young woman fight back so agilely and kill a constable in cold blood, "you comin' with me. You both are!" And then the writer hit him. Straight over the jaw. They all heard it crack. The man fell down, and stayed down.

"Hate to be so repetitive", the defrosted writer said, still freezing. His teeth chattered.

"It's okay", Julia said, "let's go, before he comes to." The writer agreed. He grabbed his backpack and the Tommy gun. Julia searched through the dead constable's pockets and found another magazine for the Tommy gun. Then they hurried off. As for a plan, well, they had to come up with one, he guessed.

Neptune's Bounty, 1959

Bonham woke up to an announcement on the public address system. Something going on down in the rich quarters. His head was spinning, and Christ, it hurt! He was lying on his back down in the wharf. As he regained consciousness the musty smell of sea water filled his nose. Slowly he began to realize what had happened. He'd been knocked out somehow, trying to escape from the brute. And the brute was nowhere in sight. He sat up slowly, wincing and grimacing in pain and looked around him. He was lying on a wooden dock, only inches from falling into the waist deep sea water if he had been extra unlucky. As he regained his senses he noticed that he was exactly where he left off, close to the old warehouse where the brute had been carrying the crates of rotting fish.

Now that he'd seen that man Jensen, Bonham's eyes had been opened for what was possible with ADAM. The sheer strength of the man! And even for such a big man to have such speed. That was what Bonham wanted. And that was all that ran through his head as he worked himself to his feet and over to the warehouse. He checked his pocket for the gun, which he had dropped, and his other pocket for the syringe of ADAM. As luck would have it, it was made of sturdy glass and was still whole. It contained the mix of Sports Boost, BruteMore, Armored Shell and Brain Boost, and glowed in a sickly greenish color. He'd probably need that Brain Boost, too, to outsmart the brute. All that remained was to find the brute, and splice up. His heart raced faster

as he reached the warehouse. Looking inside, he found that some of the crates were still there, but the brute was not. He entered the warehouse to look around.

"Hey!" He shouted, no longer afraid, "are you still in here?"

There was a loud metallic creak up above, some loud clanks and finally the brute's voice, "heh, heh, heh, should've known that little fall wouldn't kill ya, ya piss ant."

Bonham looked up, to see the brute sitting on top of an overhead crane, creaking under his weight. It was a huge creature, the brute splicer, imperviously strong and big, yet nimble as a cat when it leapt. And the brute took a leap down, landing in front of Bonham, dust whirling into the air from the impact.

Bonham steeled his nerves and looked sternly into Peder Jensen's eyes.

"Well now you die, little ant", the brute said. Before Bonham could say or do anything, the brute leapt into the air, and only Bonham's quick reflexes saved him from being crushed. The brute struck down with mighty force, cracking the concrete floor where Bonham stood half a second ago.

"Quick thinking, piss ant", the brute snickered as it stood up again and looked for Bonham. And Bonham was just standing there, no more than thirty feet away. In his hand he held a syringe. The brute saw it, and instantaneously was filled with desire to use it himself. "Give it here, piss ant!"

But it was too late. Bonham had struck the needle into his arm and spliced up. In that instant he began to transform, just as Jensen once had.

For Bonham, the world turned upside down. His entire being contorted, grew, bulked up. He felt himself screaming but what he heard was a deafening roar. His shoulders grew wide as an ox and his muscles grew in pulsing spasms as the ADAM made them what they were meant to be. He was no longer himself. He was so much more. He was grown with muscles and force. For him, the strong man was a goal to strive for. He who hits strongest hits last. He'd bulked muscle mass with BruteMore and spliced heavily with Sports Boost for a while now, but now... Bonham was something else entirely. Transforming in front of the brute's eyes, Bonham loved the process. The adrenaline high that shot through his cells. Growing old had always seemed like an obstacle, but now it was truly no more than a number. He could easily beat any strong man in Rapture now; Bonham was the apex of humanity.

Jensen growled and snarled, watching Bonham evolve right in front of him. Now it wouldn't be so easy. A few moments later, there they were; two brutish splicers about to clash. The top of the food chain. Jensen hadn't expected this, and so roared loudly at his adversary. But the piss ant didn't seem to care. Instead, Bonham just stretched out his back to show off his incredible body, and roared back. The next moment, there was chaos. The two brutes crashed and thrashed around the warehouse. They crashed through the crates of fish, easily breaking them with their arduous backs, spilling fish and carefully packaged and sealed smuggle goods - topside wares like bibles, liquor, even food - all over the floor, and getting splattered with fish guts themselves.

Bonham got a great punch to Jensen's hard belly, knocking him back. He grabbed an unbroken crate and lobbed it at him like it was a small rock, but Jensen jumped out of the way, bounced against a wall and screaming came crashing down on top of Bonham, beating on him with his incredible fists of iron. Shaking his enemy off with a roar, Bonham head butted Jensen across the face, crushing his nose. It made a fountain of blood in the process, squirting over Bonham, before it became a slow trickle.

"Aw, you fucking piss ant!" Jensen shouted. Bonham was too into the fight to even think about anything else. It was as though even he'd used Brain Boost, the other tonics overshadowed it and all he could think of was the moment. No planning ahead, no thinking about how to use his surroundings to overcome his enemy. He didn't even notice how his splicing had failed - he was no smarter than Jensen. They were both just brute strength and nothing more.

With a loud battle cry Jensen charged into Bonham, who held his ground and they both wrestled while trying to stand up on the floor, slick with fish guts. Bonham was first down, and Jensen was quick to leap upon him and landing punch after punch on Bonham's strengthened body. Bonham, weakened, threw off his opponent and got up. For a moment they stood, panting, looking into each other's eyes. There was nothing left of either man inside now. All there was, was the fight. It was no longer possible to tell who was Bonham and who was Jensen. They probably didn't know themselves.

One of the brutes, bleeding heavily from his brow and his entire body aching, growled and punched the concrete floor; the meaning being, 'come get me!' The other, face bruised and bloodied, growled back and charged. It took no more than a second to cross the distance of thirty feet, but when the brute was over there, the first one jumped aside, making the one charging crash down onto the floor. Before it could get up, the first brute grabbed the chain of the overhead crane and quickly swung it around its adversary's throat. Then, before anything else could transpire, the first brute, bleeding from its brow, jumped up to grab the other end of the chain and pull it down, thereby pulling the second brute up into the air, suspended at its throat.

The chain proved to hold, as the suspended brute thrashed around it in the air. The first brute held on to the chain with all its might and all its strength, dragged it like a tug of war, all the while muttering and roaring bestially. It took a while, but the second brute began to grasp for the chain as its air supply ran short. Howling brutishly, the first brute jerked hard at the chain, trying to snap its foe's neck. After a few jerks, the second brute started flopping, rather than trying to get away. The death throes of the hanged brute splicer echoed through the chain and the warehouse until it finally just stopped. The first splicer panted heavily, and let go of the chain, making the dead brute fall aimlessly down to the concrete floor, where its face was crushed. Wiping the blood off its face, the first brute examined its dead enemy to make sure it stayed dead. Then it hurried out of the warehouse, sprinting quickly on its muscular legs. No telling which one had survived the clash of the titans.

Artemis Suites, 1959

It had been a few days since Tyger had been to the writer's place. Mostly, the cat felt as if this was his life; fighting to eat, surviving in shadows. Lately, the cat had learned to live without dependence, as the city itself strived to. Tyger walked complacently down the corridor. He knew this place well. On the next floor up was the writer's dwelling, and around here he had nothing to fear. He walked past the door of Martha and Horace Johnson, who used to feed him sometimes. That had stopped about six months back, and Tyger hadn't seen either of them since. He walked close to the wall, and just rounded a corner when he realized he'd been too complacent. Careless even.

In front of Tyger stood the most terrifying creature on two legs that the cat had ever seen, and Tyger stood in its shadow. Looking up, Tyger's eyes met a pair of dilated pupils, revealing a deranged soul inside. The creature's eyes were wide open and it stared at the cat, grinning. But

to Tyger, the way he looked was nothing compared to the way he felt; the sensations he gave by leering at Tyger. *This was not a good person.* The steps he took, small and uncalculated, his hands trembling, just slightly, with anticipation, and his breath was foul as the abyss. It opened its maw, revealing a set of yellow teeth in a state of decay, and said: "kitty cat..."

The very next moment he lunged, trying to catch Tyger. The cat was swift, though, and darted past him between his legs. Tyger didn't look back, but he heard his attacker get up. A ball of flame struck the wall just by the cat. The assailant had used the Incinerate plasmid, and missed by a hair. Quick as lightning, Tyger hurried up the stairs leading to the next floor, his pursuer close behind him, and very quick for a human.

"Come back, kitty", he bellowed in a Russian accent, gaining on the cat by blocking Tyger's way time and again with a flame ball. Heart racing and his fur cinched by the fires, Tyger could only hope that the writer's home would offer sanctuary.

Close behind his prey, the splicer raised his hand to shoot fire, but changed his mind; when the cat dodged the fire it thought would come, the splicer leapt. A moment later, Tyger felt himself in the grasp of the splicer, and he began to scream and howl. He thrashed around, trying to free himself, striking with claws and teeth against the man's arms. The splicer thought he had him, and letting his guard down for half a moment, Tyger struck. The cat's fury and power manifested as a vicious blow to the splicer's already repugnant face. With sharp claws, Tyger freed himself and ran off like Hell on wheels, not looking back to see his attacker shrieking and bleeding. No, Tyger fled. He rushed forward, round the corner and there! He reached the writer's apartment, finding the door slightly open. A streak of light, probably from a flashlight, was moving around inside. Tyger hurried into the room, and to rescue. But he was met by a stranger, rummaging through the room. When Tyger came in, the stranger looked up.

"What!" The stranger yelled. He looked a bit like the splicer who attacked Tyger outside. Confused and distraught, Tyger was overwhelmed, as the first splicer came in through the door behind him, and grabbed him by the skin of his neck. Tyger began to throw around, trying to get free yet again, but he was being held in an iron grip.

"What's going on?" The splicer said, who'd been intruding into the writer's home.

"Kitty cat here did not wish to come along", the Russian splicer replied, "I had to really persuade him that this the best course of action."

"But what happened to your face, man?" His friend asked, referring to the bloody claw marks that stretched from over the Russian's eyes and down over the nose and cheek. They were deep, and must be hurting real bad, pulsing with crimson, ADAM tainted blood. It's only luck on his part that the eye was left untouched.

"Kitty cat was really persistent", the Russian said, grinning, "but there is no point standing around. Let's get back to Pauper's Drop. We have what we came for."

The second splicer nodded, then asked: "what?"

In response, the Russian splicer held the immobilized Tyger close to his foul face and looked into the cat's shining golden green eyes.

"Dinner", he said.

The Limbo Room, 1959

The writer and Julia danced closely. The Limbo Room was closed, just recently. And for the time being it was deserted. Except the two souls who'd spent the night. The Limbo was as safe as it could be, after they barricaded the door. No music was playing, *no winds were blowing*, and yet they danced. The curtain of smoke was drawn away and finally they had each other. Though his

mind searched desperately for a way, he tried living the now. Though he feared for her, her heartbeat calmed him. She'd suggested going to someone for help, but that would put them in danger, too. But he agreed; they couldn't do it alone. But who? Her friends and family were all gone and he didn't know anyone. Mr. Reid, the editor in chief of the Tribune, who'd already helped Julia, was killed during the New Year's riots. But... he did know someone else from the Tribune. Stanley Poole. Would he help them? The writer wanted to think they were friends, even though he used to hope they weren't. He'd thought about it for some time, and it seemed Stanley Poole was the only one they could go to. And maybe - just maybe - he knew of some way out. Or at least some way to get Julia out of Rapture.

For now the writer was content just holding her close and moving with her as they danced to silence. She hummed a quiet melody, was all. And so they danced. He moved his feet clumsily, but she moved swiftly and he mostly just moved like she did. It wasn't really much of a fast number anyway. She put her head on his shoulder and closed her eyes. The world was no bigger than the stage of the Limbo Room, and the spotlight casting a warm light on them made them its center. It was serenity. The last serenity before the thunder that headed their way. He'd never danced in his life but he led in their silent waltz.

But it was getting colder. They couldn't just dance the night away. Safety is an illusion and though the writer and his muse weren't the targets, others sought the comfort that a barred Limbo Room could give. The first one they heard was banging hard at the door. Then they could hear whoever it was, cursing the idiot who'd barred the doors in a harsh, angry voice.

"Constables?" Julia said and tugged at the writer's arm.

"Doesn't sound like one", he answered, taking her hand and holding reassuringly.

"What should we do?" She asked, anxiously.

"If it's just splicers we could try running for it. Save the ammo", he suggested. They could sure need it. Not much money left, just a few bucks.

"Or it could be Ryan's people. Or Atlas."

"Yeah."

"He sounds angry."

"Agreed. Lay low. I'll have a gander." Julia nodded and rushed off the stage and hid behind the piano. She peeked, her curiosity getting the better of her. The writer, in turn, grabbed the Tommy gun he'd taken from the constable back at the apartment. He tipped over a table and knelt down behind it. Over at the door the angry visitor busted through, making a great deal of noise, meanwhile cursing to himself. They heard him crashing around in the entrance and Julia hid altogether, getting scared. The sound of glass breaking and something heavy tipping over.

"Stupid machine", the angry guest said in a deep, burly voice. A few moments later he appeared, in the doorway.

The writer was breath taken when he caught a glimpse of the splicer. What a brute! It - because it must be more ADAM than man now - was at the very least two meters tall, only it was hunched over, leaning its burly upper body on its muscular arms. The face was bearded and clotted with the cancerous blobs that followed heavy plasmid use, and the clothes, once fancy, were torn and tattered and dirty. An ugly tie hung around its neck and dangled as it walked. Julia may have recognized this monstrosity, but she didn't look up from behind the piano.

"Knock, knock", the splicer blurted out. To give away the position or not, the writer thought. A regular splicer he could take, but this one?

"What's all the fuss?" Another splicer joined them. Then it shrieked in horror as the big one turned on it. Without warning, the brute punched the other splicer right over the jaw with its humongous fist.

"This here's my place", the brute said.

"Hey!" A third one yelled from over at the very entrance to the Limbo Room.

"More of them", muttered the brute as he was joined by the one at the door and two of his friends, "now it's a fight." He bellowed this with a grin and grabbed a table, while the splicers spread out around him. There was no way the writer and Julia could make it past them. One of the splicers struck the brute with the butt of a shotgun, making the brute miss his table toss. Instead of a splicer, it hit the wall and broke into a million wooden splinters. Another of the splicers wielded a wrench and he, too, struck at the brute, grinning wildly. It's easy to act big when you're three against one. The last of the splicers wielded a double barreled shotgun. This he aimed at the brute, who was taking beatings seemingly without caring. Then the shotgun fired and the brute shrieked in pain. The next shot missed, and the pellets instead hit the table behind which the writer was hiding. It hit just inches from his face and he jumped away instinctively, getting flushed out of cover.

"Hey! Who's that guy?" The splicer who'd done the shooting asked, as he was reloading his weapon, taking a great deal of time in doing so, fumbling with stubby fingers that had the same cancerous ADAM growths as his face. The other one to wield a shotgun fired his weapon in the writer's direction, but missed. He reloaded with a pumping action, and fired at the brute this time. He said:

"You worry about the big one, Vinnie! Then we worry about the little one." But Vinnie didn't have time to worry about either, as the brute grabbed him by the head and swung him through the air. Howling loudly, both out of pain and of anger, it then smashed Vinnie's head to the floor with tremendous force, crushing his skull and splattering brains and blood all over the room.

"I'll kill all you cunts!" The brute laughed. The writer had knelt down again, but it was for nothing. They knew he was there, so he got up again, pointing the Tommy gun.

"New plaything, tee hee, hee..." The brute said. Then it burst straight at the writer, smashing the table. He jumped away at the last moment. At that moment the shotgun wielding splicer opened fire. He'd switched to phosphorous bucks.

"Here's for Vinnie!" He shouted. A moment later the glowing buck got stuck on the brute's clothes and skin. He started screaming in agony as they exploded and he caught fire. The writer took the opportunity to strike with the Electro Bolt, electrocuting the big bastard while he burned. Then he, too, opened fire, almost emptying the entire magazine into the brute's colossal body. It finally died, more monster than man, making a slow, gurgling sound as life slipped away. It tipped over across a table, smashing it under its tremendous weight. The smell of burnt flesh from the corpse, still in embers, filled the Limbo Room.

Only the leadhead and the thuggish one with the wrench left. And they looked at the writer as if they didn't know if he was friend or foe. He breathed heavily, whereas they didn't seem to care about what just happened.

"Come on guys", the writer said, hoping diplomacy might work.

"Hey, Dan", the wrench wielding one said, "know who I think it is?"

"Nah. Tell me, ya ugly fuck."

"It's that damn writer. We'll get a good price for him if we bring over to Ryan."

"Yeah? And what if I say we bring him to Atlas?" The crazed men looked at him and he tried desperately to come up with something. There weren't enough bullets for both left in the gun. And Julia had the backpack with the other magazine behind the piano.

"Nah. It's Ryan that put out the bounty on this guy. Says he's a parasite."

"Looks like a prick to me. All right. Let's bring the fucker in. Alive." Just then, Dan was hit with a bolt of lightning and started to shake uncontrollably. It was Julia. She stood behind the piano and fired lightning from her right hand, looking grim in her eyes. First she fired at Dan, then the other. Then she hit them both again.

"Get 'em, honey!" She yelled. The writer nodded and raised the Tommy gun. He parted Dan's face from itself with a few bullets. The other only got a single bullet to the chest, then the magazine was empty. But he went down. The writer hurried over and stomped his head to the ground. A cold blooded killer now. A warrior poet. His heartbeat raced as he took Julia's hand and they got out from the Limbo Room.

"Thank you", he said.

"You're welcome", she said, smiling. It was an indecisive smile. Like she was happy to be alive and still had time to think about something funny even with the dance they'd danced with death just a minute ago. She shook from the adrenaline, and continued: "what was your plan? Talk them to death?"

"Very funny. They were two against one."

"Come on guys", she said, imitating him. Then she giggled. He shut her up with a kiss. Then they left the room with the several corpses, one still smoking and one with his head all crushed, behind. All the blood and gore, and they only cared about being alive. They were alive! Out in the entrance they found what the brute had crashed when it first came in. A Gatherer's Garden vending machine. The glass was broken and all the contents were free for the taking. They stuffed all that could fit into the writer's backpack, and sneaked out, taking great care to avoid setting off the security camera outside.

"Do you have a plan?" Julia asked and grabbed his hand.

"Yeah. But it's a long shot."

Adonis Luxury Resort, 1968

Outside the maintenance area, Mr. Bubbles heard running footsteps. The Big Sister appeared in the dank room with weapons drawn and an imposing stance. Seeing Mr. Bubbles she arched her back and shrieked; the shrill sound that could tear through flesh. Tenenbaum was screaming in Mr. Bubbles' ears.

"She comes for you! Quick, turn on the pumps!" Mr. Bubbles hurried over to the control board. And there it was. The lever that said Pump Control Vita-Chamber. He pulled it and all through Adonis, the creaking could be heard. The lower levels would soon be free of water.

The Big Sister was fast as lightning and elusive as a shadow, jumping the wall and within a moment she was on top of Mr. Bubbles, pinning him to the ground and staring at him through a red glowing porthole. She let him go with another shriek, and he got to his feet. He jabbed after her with his drill, but she just took an agile leap backwards and wasn't even scratched. The Big Sister summoned fire out of thin air, made it into a ball of flame and hurled it at him. The fire heated the suit and started cooking him. She threw another ball of fire and then rushed him again and struck him with her wrist mounted needle. She pierced his metal case and drew ADAM infested blood from the veins deep inside.

Mr. Bubbles felt weak, but he managed to put his hand at the Big Sister and push her off. Then he revved up his drill and rushed her, inflicting some damage as the huge drill started on her armor. But she didn't even seem to mind; she just gave him a kick to gain some distance and then struck him again with the needle. Mr. Bubbles shot a bolt of lightning at her, but with her great physique, a direct result of all her years of drinking ADAM infested blood, she did a back flip away and dodged the lightning bolt. With her great telekinetic powers she summoned objects lying around the room and spun them above her head to give them momentum; then she hurled them with great force at Mr. Bubbles who staggered backwards. Revving his drill, Mr. Bubbles lunged forward in retaliation, striking hard at the Big Sister's metal coating. She in turn hit him hard with her abnormal strength.

He lunged fast and zapped her with Electro Bolt, and then hit her with his great industrial drill with all his power and might, making her take incredible damage. The Big Sister, in retaliation, would hit him with an incinerating fire ball and lunge at him with her razor sharp needles. The fight was getting heavy; Mr. Bubbles couldn't possibly stand her attacks much longer. He was getting tired and just standing was beginning to take a lot of effort. As she jumped at him, he smashed her with the side of his giant drill, sending her flying across the room, and hitting a pipe, which burst and began gushing water into the control room. As she stood in the water, Mr. Bubbles fired another paralyzing bolt of lightning at her. The water carried the current through her entire body, and as she shook, Mr. Bubbles struck with the drill again and again, beating her to the floor.

He just about had her, and was just about to drill right through her, just as the control board signaled that pumping was complete, with a beeping noise. The Big Sister took the moment to use her telekinesis plasmid again, to send a pressurized gas tube flying across the room. Mr. Bubbles turned around just in time to see it coming, and didn't have time to get out of the way. It hit him and exploded, creating a loud blast and cloud of smoke and fire, and made his suit burn red hot. As he was staggered and in pain, the Big Sister made short work of the control board, using her needle. She buried it deep in the machinery, and in doing so, shorted out power in the facility again. While the generator upstairs slowly went to sleep again, the lights sputtered and went out, one by one. While the Big Sister concerned herself with the electrical work, Mr. Bubbles went in for the kill. But the Big Sister was stronger and faster, and her reflexes were quicker. She saw him coming and kicked him hard, making him stagger backwards into the airlock. He saw his chance; the Big Sister rushed after him, but he grabbed the lever to fill the airlock with water, and pulled it. The metal door swung up just in time to keep her out. While the water level rose in the airlock, Mr. Bubbles heard her shrieking and banging and scratching against the door. Soon he was totally submerged and the sounds snuffed out. His day was over and his part played.

Down in the dark, in the drained lower level of Adonis Luxury Resort was the Vita-Chamber. Once grand beyond measure with spectacular statuary for decorations and art deco facades. Adorned on the inner wall, visible when you entered the hall from the pool area, a stylized mural of the city of Rapture and a symbolizing sun. Now the place was eaten by darkness, barnacles covering the walls and big leaks slowly refilling the room with icy sea water. It was already inch deep on the floor. Two small feet treaded the cold floor and a pair of yellow eyes looked warily

around. A Little Sister braved the haunting hall of the Vita-Chamber. She wore a purple dress, torn and ragged, and her dirty hair was put into a pony tail by a pretty bow.

Looking up, the girl saw through the glass dome. Tall buildings waved in the endless blue, brightly colored sea plants danced with the currents. As she looked around the room there were pink glowing anemones beckoning all around. Beckoning in the dark. She giggled childishly as she touched one. Slowly she approached the Vita-Chamber itself, standing in an alcove directly beneath the main staircase and the entrance. She touched it and her lips formed a smile. In her left hand she held a makeshift doll, made to look like a Big Daddy. Its helmet was made of a baseball, with a watch as the porthole. A corkscrew was the drill. Using the genetic signature inside the doll, she tinkered with the Vita-Chamber and activated it. Light blue rays of light and twirling lightning started rolling the machine and she turned to go back. Noticing the mural on the wall opposite the Vita-Chamber she was startled. She gasped, and then went:

"Ooooh..."

All over the mural was written with fluorescent paint, in big letters, the words 'FALLEN, FALLEN IS BABYLON'. She gazed at it in awe and then whispered to the watch face doll:

"What do you think, daddy?" The doll was silent, uncaring about the fall of Babylon the Great. Then the girl hurried along, up the stairs and to the air vent she came in through. It took a bit of effort, but she managed to get up and into the air shaft, into an even blacker darkness, where her bright yellow eyes cut the night. In the house of upside down laughing cries and smiles frown.

Atlantic Express, 1959

Riding the Atlantic Express wasn't safe with the war. The trains still left on time, at least some of the times, but you never knew where Atlas might strike. Everyone was on edge. And in the back corner of the last train car sat two people, trying to look inconspicuous. But Julia Jensen's bright red hair was a giveaway. The writer's face was serious, looking out the window into the blue green depths and the passing scrapers of the city at war. The end of innocence had struck hard and maturity was coming fast. Not just for him, but for all of Rapture. Remained to see if either would survive. It was no longer just a wild fever dream; Rapture was tearing itself apart, and he had got the girl. All that was left was to get out, but he just didn't see how. He sighed. Julia grabbed his hand and clasped it tight. Outside they could hear the train breaking the current, burrowing steadily through the water. The train rocked gently as it rushed forward. It went by Ryan Amusements, which was closed off, without stopping.

He looked at the facade of the building. He could see a private bathysphere docked on the side of it, probably belonging to Carlson Fiddle, who'd built Ryan Amusements at the behest of the city's owner. If they could get to a bathysphere... the feeling of gloom was heavy, and the writer could think of only one thing to say to break the heavy feeling.

"This fiancée of yours..." He said, glancing at Julia in the corner of his eye.

"Robert."

"What's he like?"

Julia closed her eyes, remembering the time before Rapture. Then she said:

"He's tall. Very handsome. He likes to ski. That's where we met. On a ski trip to Vermont, I went there with my parents back in... '48, it must have been. I was fifteen then, so he wasn't really my fiancée, but we talked about it sometimes. My mother was invited to Rapture in 1950." She opened her eyes and looked into the distance. "The moment I saw him I thought, 'I'm going to marry him'."

"Forget I asked", the writer pouted. It was his own fault for asking.

"But he could be so childish", Julia went on, "this one time, he would refuse to pay for our taxi. The fair was broken, so he said 'it shouldn't count'" - she made an impression of his voice, sounding ridiculous - "and ultimately, I had to pay. I was sixteen! I remember how ashamed I was, telling mother what I had done with the money she found missing from her purse."

"Sounds like a pleasant fellow", the writer said.

"Yes, well. I used to miss him terribly when I came to Rapture", she explained.

"Do you still?"

Julia shrugged. "A little."

"Will you want to go see him when we get out of here?" The writer sounded almost accusing, continuing the interrogation. Julia just ignored his tone.

"Yes", she said, nodding.

"Perhaps you can still marry him?" The writer asked, jealousy shining through his very eyes and through every word.

"Stop it", Julia said, looking at him.

"Maybe you'll want to when you see him", he said, grouchy, crossing his arms.

"Do you know how I know that I won't?" She asked, putting her hand on the writer's arm, "Robert would have said 'if'. If we get out."

"Do you not believe that we will?"

Julia didn't answer. She only looked down.

"We will", the writer assured her. Julia said nothing for a while, hanging her head in sadness, but she didn't cry. Then she took a deep breath and shrugged it off, finding strength. It's a matter of never giving up, and trying even harder when you're at your lowest. Making sure that surrender isn't an option, even when you're defying the Devil forever. To rise from the fall.

"What about you?" She asked, looking into the writer's eyes, "you don't expect me to believe you had no one prior to coming to Rapture?"

"No. There was never anyone", he said truthfully.

"Truly?" She asked, skeptically.

"Truly."

"What of your friends?" She smiled in the corner of her mouth, feeling special, but she kept the tone serious. She didn't want to mock him. The writer knew it, and still hurt. He'd felt mocked for many years of his grown up life, even with the unsaid words. But Julia's silence made the hurt go away. Friends, though, he thought about it for a moment or two.

"There was one, yes. Johnny. Remember that guy who found the city in a diving bell? Johnny Topside? Maybe that was him", he chuckled, deflecting his emotions with humor.

"Was he a good friend of yours?" Julia asked.

"Very. And I never realized until I came here. I left without saying good bye. I... I am the one who left, you know", he answered. Heavy thoughts. Julia held his hand tighter.

"We'll go see him as well, *when* we make it out." She looked at him, as he again turned to stare bleakly out the window.

"You know", she said, "I was so worried when you were gone." He gave her a glance and smiled, only with the corner of his mouth, then went back to the window.

"What did you do when you were away?" She asked.

"I wrote the book", he answered, "the one exposing Ryan and Atlas and everything. There's not really much I can say that you didn't already read."

"Don't tell me it's not an adventure worthy of telling?"

The writer fell silent for a moment, rocking in synchronicity with the train. A fast swimming orca flew by alongside the train car, looking in at them, then turning away. He sighed and said:

"I have seen inequity galore, been worth a detour and some more; the snake in the backyard of Heaven."

"What's that? I don't recognize it."

"It's Sammet", he answered, then changed his tone, "anyway, I'm not about to look back at past adventures, not when we have a great adventure before us." He looked troubled, but gave her a reassuring smile. They'd make it through if their resolve was strong enough.

"But there is something", he said, trying not to sound so moody, "something not in the book."

"What?" She smiled.

"A story that doesn't have closure yet. Hopefully it will, before we leave."

"For the surface?"

The writer nodded, hopeful, then went on: "While you were knocked out I was just sitting there in the dark, almost fell asleep myself for a while. Then suddenly, out of nowhere I feel a stroke on my leg and I hear a cat meowing."

"A cat?"

"Yes, now -"

"I didn't see a cat there, where did he come from?"

"You'll never know if you insist on interrupting me, will you? There I was, in that almost completely dark room and he'd come to see me. Sure enough, it was little Tyger."

"Well, where did he come from?"

"I was wondering that too. There was a vent into the air duct, where the cover had come off. I'm guessing he came from there. Probably been chasing mice in there."

"Eek, you had mice there?"

"Did you just say 'eek'?"

Julia nodded.

"Well, no mice", the writer explained, "but I did see a spider once actually. Didn't know there were any in Rapture. I remember Tyger chasing it all over the room, knocking down a lamp. Spilled coffee all over an early draft of *Returning to the Source*, meowing loudly as he went about. It was the middle of the night, too, so the neighbors started banging on the walls and I had to give Tyger tuna to calm him down."

There was a sting in Julia's heart. There were lots and lots of spiders on the surface. They were everywhere up there; nowhere was safe!

"Do we really have to leave?" She asked, a ball in her throat. He knew how deathly afraid she was of spiders.

"Afraid so. Anyway. That cat and I, we used to spend a lot of time together before... all of this. He was basically my best friend for a long time. It was great to see him again. I fed him some tuna, just like the old days, looked like he hadn't eaten in weeks, he was so thin. It just makes me sad that I couldn't bring him when we left there."

"I thought you said you didn't have any food back there?" She burst out.

"I didn't", he answered innocently.

"You had tuna!"

"What kind of twisted person likes tuna?"

Julia gave him the evil eye and said: "I like tuna."

"Well you couldn't have any, because Tyger ate it all", he wouldn't let her win this one. Tuna was for cats only. You couldn't eat anything that smelled like that. Then Julia sighed, and changed the subject.

"Well, where is the cat now? I never saw him when I was there. When did he leave?" She sounded genuinely anxious.

"Some time after you woke up, I expect", the writer said. He couldn't remember.

"But I didn't see him", Julia said.

"You obviously know nothing about cats. If a cat doesn't want you to see it, you won't. Not until it's already too late."

"Do you mean to tell me he was in there when we... Mr. Perkins, you are positively indecent!"

"He could have left between the second and the third time", the writer tried to convince her, but he didn't sound very sincere about it. It was more of a joke to him. The train stopped at Pauper's Drop to let passengers on and off, but no one new joined their train car.

"It's disgusting", thought Julia.

"I don't recall you thinking so back then", the writer reminded her, "in fact, I seem to recall you begging for more. Repeatedly. And with very inappropriate language for a woman of your age. Calling me indecent, I never." He was making fun of her, but she blushed and smiled just quickly, then quickly wiped the smile off her face.

"And I might have again, had you not gone on to tell me this story." She saw him smile at her, adding even further insult, and she said: "you think this is funny?"

"Kind of", he answered, then he leaned over to kiss her on the cheek, "besides, you'll be begging again, soon enough."

Julia blushed at that, and smiled. She knew that she would.

"Oh you", she said, then became serious again, "but what about Tyger then?"

The writer sighed and shook his head, and said: "I honestly do not know. And that tears me up. If it's possible, I would like to see if we can find him, before we leave. Maybe bring him with us to the surface."

"Of course. I'd very much like to meet Tyger, as long as he stays in the next room while we..." she said, then she noticed the writer's face had grown serious. More so than when he talked about the sins of his past. He'd seen something.

Someone had indeed got on the train at Pauper's Drop. Constables, probably three or four, standing in the next car, weapons drawn.

"Company", the writer said, nodding towards them, but avoiding to look directly at them. Julia cast a glance over her shoulder, then looked quickly back.

"We can take them", she said, holding his hand tight.

"Uh huh", the writer's heart was beating fast. At their feet, out of the constables' line of sight, lay the writer's pack. Julia tried not to be seen as she opened it, taking their firearms out.

"Here they come", the writer said, "lots of them." The door to the next car opened, and the constables poured through, all carrying pump action shotguns. The one in front sported a thick mustache, but a bald head, to go with his long, beige coat with the shining constable's badge pinned neatly on the lapel.

"You there", he barked in a coarse voice whilst raising his weapon. The writer nodded to Julia. One moment later he felt the machine gun in his hand.

"Drop it!" The constable ordered. The writer simply stood up and pointed the gun back at them, taking aim. That the constable didn't shoot, meant that they must want them alive, for some reason or another. Adrenaline started to shoot through his veins. He waited for the train to complete a slight curve, then held his breath.

"Last chance", the constable barked, "drop -" He was interrupted by a spray of bullets tearing through his chest. The others had time to shout, but no more, as an electrifying jolt shot out of

Julia's fingers to shock them. One quickly jumped behind a seat for cover, but the two still standing were killed where they stood. More constables came through the train car door, and the writer had to take cover. They were shouting for them to come out; that they wouldn't be killed if they obeyed. The writer and Julia chose to ignore them. They answered with gunfire.

Bullets sprayed around them both. As he got out of cover, a constable was waiting, pistol at the ready. The following gunshot took the writer's left ring finger clean off, and the next pierced his arm. The next few, however, came from the writer's gun, and they pierced the offending officer's throat. He quickly ducked into cover again, hurt and bleeding.

"Here!" Julia shouted and threw him a first aid kit. In turn, he lobbed the machine gun over to her, and she grabbed it hard, though her hands trembled.

"We know you're hurt!" A constable ordered, from his cover, "Come out, so we can see you!" The constables had stopped firing. Julia held the gun hard and got up slowly, holding it above her head, so it would seem like she was giving up.

"You too, Perkins!" One of the constables demanded. After those words, there was an eerie silence and then a buzzing. The constables seemed confounded, looking around them for what made the buzzing sound, which increased in scale. The writer, a little delirious from blood loss and pain killers, looked at Julia. Her face was rigid and stern, cold as ice. One of her hands, raised above her head and holding the Tommy gun. It had morphed into something resembling a beehive. Bees were crawling on it and at her command they buzzed on their tiny wings to terrorize her enemies, namely the constables. Within seconds, they were screaming and flailing about, as they were stung by a hundred bees, over and over. One knocked himself unconscious, banging his head into the wall. The others tasted lead as Julia's machine gun plowed through them. Then all the constables lay there, littering the train car with blood and shells. The writer got to his wobbly feet, and Julia rushed to keep him steady. He'd tied his belt around his left arm to stop the blood flow.

"Those guys couldn't hit the business end of Ryan's big, bloated behind if they used a Ryan seeking rocket launcher", he complained in his delirium, "what kind of sorry idiots do they hire for constables these days?"

"Anyone who's stupid enough", Julia answered, "and they did hit you." She was eyeing his left hand. The ring finger was gone. Just gone.

"I meant for that to happen", he proclaimed, nodding.

"Next stop Dionysus Park. Next stop Dionysus Park", was announced on the train's loudspeakers. The writer was giddy and a little high.

"That's our stop!" He said. Adrenaline and painkillers made him jumpy.

"Take it easy", said Julia, grabbing the pack. They hurried over the dead constables. High mortality rate for those guys. Any plasmid addict willing to work for a tiny bit of ADAM was welcome among Ryan's ranks now, unless they were already working for Atlas.

Dionysus Park, 1959

The writer was high from the morphine and adrenaline, but he kept it together as best he could as he joined Julia at the platform at the train station in Dionysus Park.

"I'm perfectly calm, baby", he said as he followed her out to the platform.

"Clearly."

"Calmer than you are."

The train station in Dionysus Park was different from those in other places around Rapture. Beautiful art and statues and decor adorned it and it bathed in a soothing deep blue light,

whereas other could be described only as train stations, functional yet nothing out of the ordinary, except for the architecture which painted all of Rapture. Julia rolled her eyes at the writer and dragged him over to the ticket booth. There was an elderly man there, the conductor of this station. Julia rewarded his warm, welcoming smile with a machine gun in the face. She ordered him on to the train - they'd need some privacy - and kept the gun pointed at him until he got on and the train left.

She helped the writer bandage the wound on his arm. They'd have to leave the bullet in there for the time being. It didn't seem to have struck any vitals, and he'd have some control of the arm, although it would be impaired. Getting the bullet out might make it a whole lot messy. Then she showed him the hand missing a finger. It was still bleeding and the hand was all red. It'd been torn off just above the knuckle. There was just a bloody little stump left.

"You'll have to cauterize it", she said, worried.

"What? Me?" He thought she was joking. She nodded, looking into his eyes, and he realized she was serious. "Incinerate my own finger, are you crazy?"

"I'm with you, aren't I?" She reminded him.

"Uncalled for - ow!" The finger - or lack thereof - was beginning to hurt as the adrenaline began to wear off and the painkillers set.

"Will you do it for a kiss?"

"I'd do anything for that."

She gave him a quick kiss, just a little nothing, and said: "You'll get a real one after."

"No fair", he moped. With a stern look on her pretty face, Julia grabbed his wrist and held it as hard as she could. The writer took a deep breath and put his index finger to the bloody stump. Seeing Julia's eyes glitter like the stars, he let the fire burn. The stench of burnt flesh was immediate, as was his agonizing pain. He clenched his teeth, almost crushed his skull, and arched his back, making cracking noises. Julia was afraid he'd snap his spine. But he did not wince and he did not cry. When the flame waned, the job was done, his wound cauterized. He panted, sweating and shaking. Julia, too, was trembling, but when it was done, she leaned over again to give him the kiss she promised. And he kissed her back, not wanting to ever let go. Then it was time to go find Stan Poole, hiding somewhere in Sofia Lamb's artist's retreat.

They'd managed to avoid detection - mostly - and those infernal security bots. And finally they were here. The writer just hoped that Poole was, too. At least there were people there. Some more or less insane looking, some looked like regular nut jobs, and others were just party guests. Everyone wore party hats. That is, everyone who could keep one on their head without dropping it. Celebrating New Years still? A party that had gone on for days, damn the riots. Still, they weren't many enough to blend in with, so they had to try and stay incognito. They came in by train and immediately they were almost busted by a pair of partiers doing nasty things in the ticket booth. They snuck to evade them, and made their way through tubular walkways, where they luckily met no one, past a Piano bar where a man was playing songs and people were dancing. No one noticed them there. They moved past, scanning for Poole, but didn't find him, on to a big room at the center of which was an actual carousel.

It wasn't much to the writer, who tried looking away so no one would see his face. But Julia stopped and stared at the carousel. She simply stared, awestruck. She hadn't ridden a carousel since she was a girl. If only she'd realized where in Rapture there was one, and how much she yearned for the simple pleasures, she'd have come here all the time. Come to think of it, she'd heard something of the sort in her work, but never thought much of it. The fool she'd been!

"It's beautiful. Isn't it beautiful?" She said, childish joy in her big, blue eyes.

"Sure is."

"I wanna ride the horsey!" She said, jumping at the spot for a moment, looking at him. Then she realized why they were there. She looked back at the carousel with tears of dreams in her eyes. There were some drunk party people sitting on some of the seats. One on a lion was puking over the side.

"When we go up I'll take you to the fair and you can ride all the carousels you want. But we have to move." They were getting a few looks from people who didn't recognize them as regular visitors. Dionysus Park was Sofia Lamb's oddball recluse for alternative and subconscious art, some kind of experiment in social unity, from what the writer had understood. No wonder she'd disappeared. Ryan must have even hated the name, and it must have felt an even bigger insult that his own lackey Sander Cohen have one of his Cohen's Collection exhibitions in Lamb's private recluse.

"But the horsey..." Julia whined. He took her by the wrist and pulled her back with him. She looked sadly back at the carousel and the horse. She wished she'd never come to Rapture. Freedom was now the only choice. Then she hurried with the writer.

How would they even find Stanley Poole? The place was like a maze. They passed partygoers and a couple of Circle of Values machines, down some stairs and... somehow they'd gone in a circle and come back to the carousel. Julia refused to look at it. But more people started to look at them. Hard to tell if they recognized them.

"What is the plan, exactly?" Julia asked as the writer walked up a staircase to another area.

"I want to find Poole..." He said, looking around. It was the piano bar. They'd been here. Twice.

"Stanley? Why on God's green Earth would you do that?" She didn't have fond memories of her last encounter with Stanley Poole. Or any encounter, for that matter.

"Because I don't know anyone else", he stopped to look her in the eyes. He truly saw no other way, other than to lean on someone. And Poole was in with both Ryan and Lamb. He must have inside information on both of them. He might just know of something, some way, to get at least Julia out of Rapture.

"Okay", she said, "but do you actually think he knows of a way out?"

"No idea. But we won't know if we don't ask him."

"Sounds farfetched."

"And not just a little, either."

"Okay. I trust you. We'll split up and look for him."

"Are you insane?" He forced himself to lower his voice, "what if they recognize you?"

"Honey, it's you they're after." She put her hand on his cheek. She was with him nonetheless. "And I'm not so sure any of these people are in the condition to recognize most anything."

He nodded. It was likely the best way. She kissed him real quick and went the other way. He looked at her as she looked musingly around. Dionysus Park had big, open spaces lined with the unconscious art it was known for, great stone and marble sculptures of women reaching for the Heavens, and big, streamlined windows spanning from the floor to the roof, letting in the artificial light of the neon signs blended with the trance like ocean's glimmering.

He went down the stairs, past the carousel. A sign said Triton Theater and pointed the way. He hadn't been there. Quickly hurrying, feeling paranoid that everyone was watching him, he made for the movie theater. It was just like a movie theater or stage theater he'd find anywhere else in Rapture, only they didn't show the popular flicks, like 'Patrick & Moira'. First a ticket

booth - empty - and then a small concession stand. A neatly dressed gentleman smiled as the writer passed through and into the theater. The writer, of course, tried to avoid eye contact. But then his jaw dropped when he saw the screen. It wasn't that it was so big - which it was - or that the movie was in color - another one of the many scientific steps forward made in Rapture. It was the movie itself. He just stood in the doorway while the many visitors sat in their seats, watching the so called art film.

In the film, two people, a man and a woman, were making decadent "love" by neon light, right by a large window, outside which a Ryan Industries building stood. It was those words that shone on them in bright yellow and white neon. The film was definitely explicit, switching from close-ups to wide angle views and set to a rather odd fitting classical piano number. And they couldn't even make babies that way. These weirdo artists they had in Rapture. Was there any boundaries they wouldn't try to erase? On the surface, this kind of film would have been shut down before it had even been made. And here, he was perfectly content just writing the occasional book and *he* was the one pursued by Andrew Ryan? He backed out of the movie theater to head back to Julia, having had enough of this so called art. Seemed more like wicked pornography to him. Maybe they were one and the same. He'd rather not know. He'd stick to books and listening to radio serials, thank you.

Over at the Piano bar, Julia listened to the man playing the piano. He'd just played a slow, hauntingly beautiful piece that seemed like it stalked the air, going along with a machine making low, humming noises somewhere in the back. He'd played, eyes closed, and at times sighed empathically. It even seemed like the sighs were part of the music itself. At least, before finishing and taking to the wine bottle instead. Some of the people around began to disperse as his tragic, passionate love affair with the flowing music had ceased.

"Oh for the love of..." She said to herself. She rushed over to him, to talk to him before he drank himself to a stupor. "Excuse me, sir. I'm looking for Stanley Poole."

"Ah, Stanley, my good old friend!" The pianist said in a fake, British accent. He was drunk. Probably on more than just Arcadia merlot and cocaine from Le Marquis D'Epoque. Still, he'd played the piece just moments before all right, hitting every note and remaining passionate in his playing. "What's the old rascal up to now, might I ask?"

"I don't know, sir, but I'm trying to find him. You don't happen to know where he's at?"

"Most certainly! I saw him heading for the movie theater not a minute ago!" He was wobbling and his eyes weren't focused.

"Thank you -"

"No, wait, that must have been Milford Greene..." he went on, thinking hard. His nose wrinkled as he tried to remember, and he wobbled rather much in his seat. "Oh yes, Stanley Poole, was it? Yes I saw him just moments ago. Going to the basement of all places. Downstairs, or so he said."

"Are you sure, sir?"

"Of course, lass! I'm always sure! I'm Milford Greene, after all!"

"Right, thanks..." Julia turned to go look for the writer. Or for Poole. Or at least away from the pianist who might or might not be Milford Greene. Whoever Milford Greene was.

"Wait, lass!" Milford Greene said, his accent turning Scottish all of a sudden, "will ye not dance and play the war away with me?"

"Not right now, Mr. Greene. I need to find Stanley Poole. Perhaps later", Julia answered, worried that he might try to make her stay.

"Ah, Stanley, my good old friend! What's the old bugger up to?" Milford Greene said. Then, before Julia could say or do anything, he took a big sip of wine from a bottle next to him. He then fell over sleeping on the piano, hitting as many keys as possible, making a loud noise. Evidently, Milford Greene was a loud snorer, and also a sleep talker. He started telling a Milford Greene to pass an imaginary mustard for his genitals. Julia hurried away, back out to the carousel, where she crashed into the writer.

"Thank God it's you", he said, finally breathing easy. Probably wasn't the right decision to leave a girl alone around here, what with all the pervert artists around. "D'you find anything?"

"Maybe", she said, rubbing her forehead where she'd been hit when they collided. "One of the, uh, artists says Stanley's in the basement."

"Well, it's better than the movie theater. Let's go." He took her hand and off they went, looking at the signs to find basement storage.

"Why? What's in the movie theater?" She asked as they walked.

"Well, uh... I'll show you when we get up, 'kay?"

"Oh... all right. Hey, why do you think Stanley can, or even wants to help us?"

"I don't know if he can", the writer said, kind of glad they'd changed the subject. And kind of sad at the same time. He looked at the directional signs. Basement storage was past Cohen's Collection. That prick was everywhere with his so called art.

"It's this way", she said and led him.

"But I kinda hope he wants to." The writer sighed. It was not a great plan. "Sometimes you got to have faith, and trust people. Stop!" He yelled. Julia froze instantly, not daring another step.

"What is it?" They were reaching a turn, and from behind the corner came a humming and a glow. The unmistakable red glow that was cast on the wall opposite them came from a security camera. It was around the corner, and thus couldn't see them.

"I'll shock it, and then we run. Okay?" He suggested.

"Okay." She nodded. The writer snuck a peek around the corner. True enough, there it was, scanning for evil doers and parasites. He waited until it looked the other way. Then he stuck his hand out. It turned his way. He felt lightning. The camera saw him, its light turned white and it started ringing. Security bots would be summoned within seconds. But it was too late for that. The writer felt the sting of electricity leave his finger tips, and the ecstatic jolt that travelled up his arm and his blood, and to his heart. Electric sparks crackled and zapped all over the machinery of the camera. The security camera was disabled, the light going out.

"Hurry!" The writer said. He took Julia's hand and they ran by. A couple of moments after they were out of its line of sight, the camera regained current and again started scanning the area. Its light was red and they were safe out of its sight. The writer was a bit flattered that the camera reacted at the sight of him. He was a wanted criminal. A killer of constables and a few other, not as notable, citizens of Rapture. Finally they were in the basement.

The place seemed to be empty though. Not any people here. It was just the storage place for exhibits and art that wasn't on display in the main park. They walked close to each other, past some shelves filled with all kinds of artistic crap and stuff he didn't understand. What was wrong with a simple book? The entire lower level was dark and had a pressing atmosphere. But there was someone in the main room at the very bottom level. Someone muttering and talking to himself. They snuck closer to listen. As it turned out, the drunken Milford Greene was trustworthy. It was indeed Stanley Poole, looking worried and walking in circles.

"So. Lamb broke out, and she's coming back. Wow. Okay. Didn't see that coming, but okay. That is gonna be..." He was distraught, walking back and forth.

"Hey! Poole!" The writer said, relieved to see a familiar and friendly face in Dionysus Park. He hurried up to his old colleague. Julia followed. Poole was brought out of his tantrum with a shock, looking at them with big eyes.

"Oh jeez! What? What are you two doing here? Damn, you can't... can't just walk up on, wait... ain't you supposed to be locked up or something?"

"I'm trying to avoid that", the writer said, "listen, we need your help."

"My help?" Poole was still not there entirely. His mind was off elsewhere. "Whaddaya need my help for?" He was nervous, almost panicky. It seemed like even though he was talking to them, he didn't fully realize they were there.

"We... we want to get out of Rapture." The writer said it almost in a whisper, as if afraid that someone would listen. Which was very much a possibility.

"Outta Rapture! Don't you think if I knew how, I'd go myself? I'm between a rock and a hard place, here..."

"Please, Stanley", Julia said, looking into Poole's eyes, trying to find some humanity, "isn't there anything you've heard, or know?" Poole sighed resignedly.

"Well... don't go tellin' anyone I said so..." He didn't want to say anything more, but when he saw the look of loss and despair in Julia's eyes, he went on: "there's a bathysphere over in Neptune's Bounty. Owner's no longer with us. Only problem is, you gotta jerry rig it somehow. I don't know how." There was a light in the writer's eyes, and Julia smiled brightly.

"You sure?" The writer said. His heart took a giant leap.

"No. Not at all. But it's what I heard. But listen, you're not gonna be able to just go! Ryan'll stop you. You know that, Perkins." Poole was skeptical and the anxiety was clear in his voice.

"But you won't tell anyone, right?" Julia said, thumbing at the writer's hand. Poole looked at her for a moment, deciding their fate.

"Nah, doll", he said, sounding confident all of a sudden, "of course not. It's good to see you two love birds finally got together. Been waitin' for that to happen since day one."

"Thank you." The writer looked into Poole's eyes. And saw a friend. *Not in the cards.*

"What are pals for?" There was still worry in those tired eyes. But he kept it together. Managed a smile. "But you should be on your way, I got problems of my own I need to... I hope ya make it. I really do. But I don't think you will."

As soon as he thought they were out of ear shot, he turned to muttering anxiously again. They could still hear him. They were actually standing just outside and listened to him. The writer needed to know if he muttered anything about them. This could be the way Ryan found out. But his fears were ungrounded.

"What am I gonna do? I... I've heard some of these, a lot of these people down here, talking. Some of them I know saw the thing with Eleanor, and who knows who knows what. You can't just stop, you know, a whole... cult... from talking. Can you?" He became suddenly different in his tone. "Maybe you can. Yeah. Maybe you can..."

The writer and Julia hurried away. They had to go for Neptune's Bounty as soon as possible. He didn't want to remain in Rapture a minute longer than necessary. Poole faded away from them. The writer found himself wondering what would happen to Poole. He'd seen the guy at the Le Marquis D'Epoque recreational drug bar in Fort Frolic once or twice and he'd doubted the man's sanity on several occasions over their brief sojourns to the Fighting McDonagh's and talks over at the Tribune, but he never, ever thought that he'd be the guy to help him out of Rapture.

And he wondered what the hell Poole had gotten himself into, working undercover for Ryan, giving him an eye on Lamb, but still maintaining the park in Lamb's absence. Leaving the thoughts behind him, the writer went with Julia, holding her hand tight, path set to the surface. They could make it.

Pauper's Drop, 1959

With the war, Pauper's Drop was not the place to be. Atlas' gangs ran here and had secret bases all around, and there were constant skirmishes with Ryan's constables. One side brought the most destructive powers of plasmids and thus the human minds wielding them, and the other brought technologic engineering in the form of advanced weapons with destructive upgrades. But this night, it was relatively peaceful in a certain corner of what was once a market district but had definitely shut down with the outbreak of the war that now tore the city of Rapture. A slow fire burned in an otherwise dark corner. Some people, mostly homeless moved apathetically around, not paying attention to the crackling fire that two young men had built. The people there, who'd seen the definite bottom of Rapture's ideology for years now, long before Atlas had taken it to the rich quarters, were still happy to be alive. Plasmid users, most of them, though some were still clean. And none could afford the EVE required to activate and use the plasmids. They were harmless.

The same could not be said for the two young men in the corner. They were native to Pauper's Drop. They'd come to the city as children and grown up in Rapture to become poor, unemployed, homeless and desperate. That they survived this long was a marvel in itself. So many had fallen along the way. But they had ADAM now, and the EVE to activate it, and that gave them some semblance of power. Power that they used to get more ADAM and EVE. If they had joined causes with Atlas they might have it better; a clean bed to sleep in, a bit of food each day, and - most importantly - all the ADAM they could use. It was what Atlas paid his army with, plasmid addicts and far gone splicers, all of them. Or they might be dead; lying face down in cold, rising water, being eaten by scavenging creeps and, on occasion, starved splicers. That's a lot to bet on what might be.

They were chatting quietly by their fire, shoulders hanging in fatigue. Next to one of them - one with infected scars of claw marks on his face - sat a small, makeshift cage, and locked in the cage was a depressed tabby cat that had accepted its fate. For three days they had kept it in that cage. Tyger did not now why. As he lay in his prison he tried to sleep, but he couldn't. He was ever on his guard. His meowing had silenced by the end of the second day in the cage. The light of the fire flickered before him, and he heard the young splicers talk quietly to each other. One wanted to join Atlas, and the other one - the one who caught Tyger - did not. And he seemed to be the leader of the two.

"We've been over this Freddie", the leader said in his thick Russian accent, "the only one who wins war is survivor, who lives when others die. Father spoke of it often, how the people can win revolution only if they do not die. If you are dead, American boy, you cannot be free."

Freddie nodded, "Right, right. I know that Igor, I know. But I was thinking. Maybe we just fight a little bit. They say Atlas is going to win the war, man. You know." Freddie was probably as stupid as he looked. Igor cursed in Russian, declaring the conversation over. Swear words were the only Russian words he knew; he only put on the accent to distinguish himself.

Igor Antanov's father had served the tsar, back in the mother country, as a palace guard, before the tsar's capture and had then served in the Red Army for years, finally succumbing in Stalingrad. The young plasmid addict remembered Stalingrad, the siege between the proud Red Army and the Nazis. He'd been a young boy then, when the Nazis entered the city in 1942. His father and brother had looked Igor in the eyes and told him to guard the home; his mother and little sister. That's the last time he saw his father. The Nazis eventually came, taking the women as they pleased, or so he remembered it.

"These men, they come, while I sleep at night", he reminisced, looking into the slow fire, "I hear the screams of my sister. My mother, they already killed. And I... leave. I sneak out, leaving my sister to those, those dogs." He had froth around his mouth. For a while he was silent, taking a sip of the expensive bottle of Tate Merlot he'd stolen. He didn't share it with Freddie. Then he continued:

"Stalingrad is lovely city, much better than this pile of junk. In the night that I leave, there is debris everywhere, snow falling and bodies, corpses. Both proud Russians and filthy Nazi German dogs. I was just a boy, I can sneak out of city. When I look back, I see the statue, Children's Round Dance and it is destroyed by German bombs. I used to play around that statue when I was a boy, with Yana. She is my neighbor's daughter. I remember her beautiful, black locks and her bright, grey eyes, like Russian taiga in winter time.

"Later I came across German soldiers, fleeing. Deserters. They are going by foot, their friends are dying in the cold. But they take me with them. One by one, these cowards succumb to cold and hunger until only one remain, Ludwig. Ludwig and I, we reach another city and there, I don't see him anymore. He leaves me, like I leave my sister to raped and murdered. I don't remember city's name, but I come from there when fighting stops and I go to west."

At least, that's the story Igor told Freddie. Sometimes, he let his Cockney accent slip, but his dimwitted friend was too unaware to notice it. He'd told the story before, always with the same look on his face, like he tried to get over the trauma that he hadn't had the chance to process.

There was a short silence, which was filled by the crackling of the fire, the dull creaking of a bulkhead above, and a slow dripping sound.

"What about the box then?" Freddie went on, changing subjects, "you gonna carry that cat around everywhere?" Igor looked crookedly at his companion. Then he looked at the cage and the animal trapped within. As he looked, his breathing became heavier.

"First time I eat cat", Igor explained, "I was only twelve years old. A starving boy in big city. Where was I to find food. I have no money, my parents are recently dead, I am alone. One day, I find cat, looking for rats in gutter. It was easy kill. Stomp to the head, then nothing." He talked as if it was the most normal thing in the world, "flay skin, grill meat. To me, cat is best meat in whole Rapture." He looked at Tyger with desire in his eyes. The look of a truly deranged person. He scratched the itching tissue at the edges of the scars on his face and shrugged of the pain. The claw marks, they hurt like hell and they were infected, yellow with puss and deep red and black with dried blood.

"Yes", he went on, wincing in pain, his accent turning into his real, British one, "it's time."

Igor stretched out his hand and reached for the cage. He put his hand on the lock mechanism, but stayed it to dole out a last minute order.

"You. Go get stick", he barked at his companion.

"Uh, stick? What stick?" Asked the dimwitted Freddie.

"Stick, stupid! For to stick through cat's ass. For grilling!" Igor ordered. He shook his head and sighed at his friend's stupidity, and Freddie hurried to his feet to go find a stick, grumbling while

doing so. The Russian waited until Freddie was gone before he opened the cage. He grabbed the cat tenderly by the skin of its neck and picked it up. It made no resistance.

Tyger made no resistance. He was weak, after three days without food and only drops of water for drinking. The madman had brought Tyger with him in the cage and deliberately made him suffer. Sometimes, he'd submerged the entire cage, cat and all, in ice cold water, laughing grimly while he did. Now, when his time was finally come, Tyger was indifferent, tired, beaten. He had his eyes closed and his paws hung lifelessly. The madman held him close, and said:

"Fast death, or slow, kitty cat?"

When he felt the foul smell, Tyger opened his eyes, pupils dilated. He saw the scars that he'd caused three days earlier, yellow and red with puss and blood, oozing with bubbling ADAM, sizzling around the edges, slowly but visibly healing the wounds in a poor fashion, like building a structure with a blueprint that's off by a few inches. He'd been driven by pure instinct then; fight and flee, and he had almost made it.

The man who was about to eat Tyger looked pityingly into the cat's eyes, mimicking sadness, then laughed with a grim smile. He kicked the little cage aside and let go of his hold around the cat's neck and just held him under the front legs so that he could pick up his knife. The cat's eyes that stared back when the madman looked up was not a beaten cat's eyes. Fast as a lightning storm, Tyger attacked. The Russian howled in pain as Tyger crushed his nose with his powerful jaws and razor sharp teeth. Blood spurted everywhere, coloring everything red. Igor dropped his knife in panic and began tearing at the cat with his fingers in pure panic, but to no avail. Tyger would not let go. He mauled at the cat eater with his claws, tearing at his throat and slashing the jugular, screaming like a hellcat.

"Hey! What's going - caaat!" It was Freddie, the dimwitted splicer, who'd noticed the commotion and run to check. With a hard kick, he dislodged Tyger from his friend, staggering the cat. It took a moment for Freddie to decide; try and help Igor, or retaliate. Just as the cat put his tail between his legs, Freddie fired his Incinerate plasmid. The fire scorched at Tyger's fur, several times, then the cat vanished out of Freddie's sight. Freddie knelt down to watch Igor's final, bloody moments and the death rattle of a deranged cat eater. Soon, the body stopped shaking, leaving only the rusty smell of blood and urine in the air.

As for Tyger, he'd darted out of sight and kept on running. As fast as his tired legs could carry him. It took all the power in him, but he made some distance from the men who would eat him, and in his exhaustion, he stumbled and fell over, right at two feet.

"What is this?" The owner of those feet said, noticing the exhausted cat that smelled burnt and looked like it'd been dragged under a bus. The human bent over and picked Tyger up with careful hands, looking him over. "Better get you to a, a veterinarian, or something... I couldn't just leave -"

"Is the kitty all right?" A second voice said. It was a little girl.

"I don't know. He's hurt. We'd have to heal him first", answered the big human, slowly shaking its head, unsure of the cat's chances of survival.

"Can we bring him with us?" The girl asked. The big human looked worriedly at the small one for a few moments, deciding Tyger's fate.

"Will you help me take care of him, then?" She said. The girl nodded, joy in her eyes and a big smile on her face. She had her hands crossed, fingers interwoven in plea. There were several other girls like her, hoping the cat would come with them. The big human sighed and looked at the cat. "Then he will come with us. What will we call him?"

As the humans talked about him, Tyger fell sound asleep in the big human's lap.

"Will we bring him when we go to the surface as well?" One of the girls asked.

The big human smiled at all the little girls, then she said: "Yes. I don't think he has ever been to the surface. Und we wouldn't want to leave him behind, would we?"

Tyger the cat purred.

Neptune's Bounty, 1959

Getting out of Rapture was an impossibility. Trying, of course, was not. The outcome, though, was always fatal, when Ryan's warning systems got a look at you. The writer and Julia had been in hiding for about a week, having spent a day or so watching the activity around Neptune's Bounty and the bathysphere chamber. Judging by that, now was as good a time as any to try and make it. He worried though, about what it'd be like once they made it out on the bathysphere. What were the conditions out at sea? Were the currents strong? Was there huge blocks of ice on the surface? It was January after all. Maybe the entire ocean surface was coated in thick ice. Still, the last week was the best in the writer's life, on the run with Julia Jensen. He'd used one of the plasmids they found back in the Limbo Room; Incinerate. Julia stuck with Electro Bolt and Insect Swarm, upgrading her electric plasmid to be able to give their enemies, splicers and constables alike, a chain lightning effect, shocking several of them at once. And on top of that, the writer had the Tommy gun with the one magazine.

With the rest of the plasmids they'd found, they were bribing a plasmid addict for help. A guy who'd lived in the same building as the writer. He'd worked as an electric before the war. He didn't seem too far gone into the plasmids, and was now hard at work rewiring the bathysphere for them, so it would work with their genetic signature and hopefully so it would be able to slip by security systems unnoticed. Plasmid addicts were of course unreliable, but he'd proven himself already, hacking a security camera outside with a nifty little tool that just shot a dart at the camera and tuned in to its frequency, and he could subvert it to their side, instead recognizing constables as enemies. Neat. It now worked in their favor and would summon security bots for them if anyone got too near.

The electrician was cursing and swearing, and progress seemed to be slow. He'd been at it for a half hour already and the writer was getting nervous. But it would be their only chance. Julia was optimistic about it, just as the writer tried to be. But he wasn't so sure. They were standing on bended knee behind cover - just a few sheets of corrugated iron - protecting their hacking friend. Watching for constables, or Atlas' guys, or even security bots.

"God damn it", the electrician blurted out, shaking his head. He'd been zapped by a shock, but didn't seem any worse for wear. "Red wire to red wire? What idiot dreamed that up?"

The writer wished he'd be a little quieter. He cast a glance at Julia. She was entirely concentrated on the surroundings and didn't notice the bangs of scarlet hair that hung across one of her cheeks.

"Hey! You pricks! What's the deal! This fucking thing is busted!" They both looked over as their hacker friend yelled, and in his chest, the writer's heart began to beat incredibly fast. The bathysphere didn't work? The god damn bathysphere didn't work!

The very next moment, they heard the sound of a security camera going off as it detected someone heading their way. Just a moment after that, the Securis door to the bathysphere chamber opened and two constables stood in the door, arriving from the wharf area of

Neptune's Bounty. They seemed to have backup, too. Before anyone could say or do anything, the constables both raised their Tommy guns and fired in their direction, somewhat randomly. The hacker splicer was hit, hard, and went down yelling that he still wanted 'the stuff'. He needed 'the damn stuff'!

Julia took cover, but the writer stuck his head up and aimed the Tommy gun. He didn't shoot, but he did take aim and fired the Incinerate plasmid. One of the constables aimed straight at him, but was then hit by the fireball and started to burn instantly. He began screaming, dropped his gun and ran off, threw himself in the water. The other one was picked off by the security bots that worked in the writer and Julia's favor. There were two of them and they had mounted machine guns, buzzing about the room. The other constable thought they were on his side, and went down with a spray of bullets breaking his spine and spilling his blood all over the ground.

"Come on!" The writer hurried over to Julia, grabbed her to her feet and they went towards the door, guarded by the security bots. "Don't hesitate. Shock the bastards first chance you get."

"Okay", Julia replied. She still seemed calm, but scared nonetheless. She had a rigid expression on her face. They couldn't get out!

"We'll run, hide and come up with a new plan, okay?"

"Kay." Julia's hands began to tremble with blue and white lightning as she charged the plasmid up, ready to fire it at any moment. They got up to the door and peeked through. Instantly, the security bots buzzed outside to begin shooting at the constables waiting in cover outside. Maybe the busted bathysphere was a trick, all along. Sure did seem like they'd been waiting for them. But the writer didn't think Poole was behind it. It just didn't seem like he was going to rat on them.

Julia got sight of a constable and let go of the electric discharge she carried. It flew as a jolt through the air and struck the man, who began to wobble with the shock. One of his friends came too close, and was hit by the electricity built up within the first one, the zap buzzing between them like a chain effect. The writer raised the Tommy gun, aimed it first at one of the constables, then fired, and then did the same for the other. Bullets began flying around them and he pushed Julia down behind some debris, while he took shelter beside her. He yelped in pain as a bullet hit his right arm, the feeling more intense than any pain he'd felt, but quickly retaliated by casting a ball of incinerating fire at the culprit. He gave all he had, throwing fire at the constables who seemed in disarray at the fierce resistance. One of the security bots was hit by an electric buck from a shotgun and exploded.

There were several constables still hiding behind some sandbags, sheets of corrugated iron, boxes of fish and corners. In a way, it was training to the writer. He got one in his sights and the bullet hit right between his eyes. Julia huddled down, the fear of the rain of bullets, getting to her. He bent down, dodging a bullet.

"You have to be strong", he said, feeling the cliché on his tongue. Her eyes were closed, then she opened them, showing not fear, not agony. But determination. She nodded, stood up - devil may care - and got sight of a constable whom in the following second got hit with several bolts of lightning, making his whole insides cook whilst he screamed in agony. The writer heard Julia grunt. She'd taken a bullet. She went down behind the debris again, looking pale. She grabbed her side and he sat down again.

"I'm 'kay", she said, strained, "we'll get 'em." With his left hand, the writer fired the Incinerate plasmid, feeling the fire build up in him and then leave him through his fingers. He fired blindly, but he must have hit someone because the smell of toasted human flesh suddenly became

prevalent. Then he forced himself up, he grimaced over the pain in his arm, and fired the Tommy gun at random. A few bullets here, a few bullets there. There weren't even many constables left anymore. Perhaps he'd made a mountain out of a molehill. Then he went down again, another stray bullet from a constable Tommy gun crushing his shoulder. He dropped the Tommy gun and gasped for air, laying on the ground. Julia crawled up to him.

"We'll get 'em", she said again. She took the Tommy gun and retaliated for him. A constable was hit by six or seven bullets. As she got the next one in her sights and pulled the trigger, the Tommy gun clicked. They were out of ammo. The constable was arguing with their security bot, however, which was on fire by now. The writer forced himself up and helped Julia up, too.

"Use your Electro Bolt on any remaining fuckers, and I'll toast 'em while they dance", he said to her. She nodded, and he kissed her real quick. Then he covered her with his body as best he could, feeling the great pain in his arm, and they ran.

There weren't many of the constables left. One was hiding behind a tipped over vending machine, reloading his Tommy gun. Julia caught him off guard and shocked him. While he shook in white and blue lightning, the writer set him on fire. Then from behind a corner came the next. He had a shotgun, which he swerved at them. He fired prematurely, and most of the pellets went by them. Julia shouted in pain though. She was hit by one in the side. And she was already bleeding profusely. The constable reloaded the shotgun in a pumping motion, but they were up to him by then and the writer hit him over the jaw with his left hand. His right was numb and mostly unusable, because the gunshot to his shoulder had crushed the bones. He was bleeding heavily. He would have laid down and died, but his eyes burned for her. And he kept going, trying to shield Julia with his own body. He fired several balls of burning flames at the constable, who began to flail about as his skin was grilled and his melted in their sockets.

They ran. The last constable was finished with his feud with the security bot and fired after them with his gun. But they just ran, leaving some charred corpses and their last chance out of Rapture behind. Where could he take her? With the war going on, nowhere was safe. He didn't stop. He just took her hand and led her away, as fast as he could, to the only place he could think of. She was looking pale and scared and she wheezed painfully when she breathed. She wanted to stop, but he hurried her on. The pain in his right arm was unbearable. He'd likely bleed out before tomorrow. He tried giving her a reassuring smile.

Julia was bleeding as they rushed forth through one of the glass encased walkways that connected Rapture's buildings. She whimpered but kept a brave face when the writer stopped at a fork in the road, trying to remember the shortest way.

"Hold it right there!" A constable yelled, coming up behind them with a pistol aimed at them and his left hand ready to shoot lightning. The writer was holding Julia up and couldn't move. The constable approached slowly, keeping his eyes and gun at them the whole time.

"Don't move you two", he barked. For a split second he looked away, to grab his short wave radio. He put it to his mouth and began: "This is Adams. I have Perkins and the redhead, detain-"

That moment - because it took no more than a moment - Julia Jensen defied the pain and struck the constable with furious thunder. Immediately he lit up blue, electric current rushing through him, and began to shake as lightning poured with the blood through his brain. The radio short circuited with a cracking sound and he dropped his gun. The writer struck forth with his forehead against the constable's nose, and down he went, knocked out cold, but not dead. More constables came their way, and they appeared from where the writer and Julia had come. His head was spinning from the head butt, but as the machine gun bullets began raining, the writer

grabbed the pistol from the floor and fired back. He seemed almost untouchable. The bullets grazed him and the adrenaline made him impervious to the pain. Eyes wide open he fired the gun six times; each bullet taking a constable with it to Hell. More kept coming, but he blocked the way by setting one of the bodies on fire with Incinerate. Then he helped Julia, who by now was delirious from the pain and blood loss, to her feet, and they rushed off, leaving a trail of blood behind them.

The writer's apartment, 1959

His arm hurt badly and he was losing blood fast. Hope may be out for him, but if they could regroup he might be able to get Julia to safety and she could at least ride out the war. It was him they wanted. They'd made it to his apartment, where to go from there? The constables would come in any moment. Back to Poole. No, Dionysus Park had been flooded. Grace Holloway? No, she was too close to Lamb. That wouldn't end well.

"Attention! The parasite Chris Perkins has been spotted in Artemis Suites. Do not believe his lies. If you see him, do not approach him, but contact constables and wait for them to arrive. He is armed and very dangerous." It was the public address system. The apartment was still dark and empty. He kicked the door in and then shut it behind them. The corpse of the constable they'd killed on New Year's, still lying right outside the door, smelled bad and drew flies. His possessions had been stolen. Even most of his clothes.

More of them were coming. All was lost. But the writer would not let them take her without a fight. He grabbed the gun from Arcadia, still one bullet left, out of his pack and stood by the door, ready to strike. His arm hurt bad and he saw in Julia's face that she was hurting, too. She held her hand to her stomach, taking quick, painful breaths. There was blood on her lips and her eyes were turning hazy and unfocused.

"We'll make it", he said, his will iron and his heart steel. She didn't answer, just gave him a twisted smile, where she stood in the middle of the writer's apartment, wobbling dizzily. "We'll make it", he said again, and turned to the door.

"Chris..." Julia was pale. She fell to her knees in the middle of the room, among all the writer's old notes. She was bleeding heavily from her stomach and her breaths became shorter, more strained. Putting her hand on the wound turned the hand all red.

"What is it?" The writer heard footsteps coming down the hall.

"Chris..." She said, almost whispered. He looked at her. The constables came closer.

"Oh no." Suddenly everything else faded. Julia sank backwards and lay on her back. She was sucking for air, and she had blood on her lips. He rushed over to her and knelt by her side, holding her with his good arm and bleeding on her from his numb, right arm.

He could feel her breathing. It was ending. He leaned closer, looking in her eyes. Her blood soaked him. Heavy trampling. Loud bangs. What is this pain? Red turning black. Julia's eyes turned to glass. There were no last words. No last declaration of love. Just a blank stare turning hollow. And then the cold embrace of death and the final ferry ride with Charon. He kissed her dead lips one last time and took a deep breath, breathing in her last. Her soul.

How much hate can one man build when his kingdom is crumbling? The scarlet rose was dead, crushed until the last petal fell. The writer looked up at the constables by the door.

"Ryan wants 'im alive!" One seemed to yell.

"Well grab him then, ya paddy bastard!" Scowled another. The writer's eyes were fire. He raised his left hand and fired the gun, straight into the eye of the constable on the left. He tossed the gun aside and stood up beside his dead love. The second constable raised his gun to fire, but too late. The writer started spewing fire from his hand, like a fountain of flames. Several constables caught fire by his rage. He scorched the walls, the flames licked the roof. He burned men and Rapture alike. His teeth clenched and eyes wide open in frustrated anger. They had crossed the line. And so several of the constables caught fire, as the inferno spread down the hall in both directions as it left the dark apartment. His final stand. No turning back. Like a priest of hellfire he released them one and all for their inbred hatred.

But he was already running on fumes and soon, the ADAM in his veins needed to be refreshed. He was out of EVE. Out of power. As the flames stopped swallowing men, his fate, too was sealed. A shot from the dark tore into his shoulder and he went down, sputtering and gasping for air, next to his lost love. In his last days, he was alive. The pain in his flesh was nothing compared to the chemical he'd given all the meaning in the world. Two strong hands yanked him to his feet. As he bled, the constables dragged him away. The writer and his love, parted by Rapture. A fate that only a man can shape.

Andrew Ryan's office, 1959

He stood outside the Great Man's office, Karlosky holding him up. They'd actually forced one of those health kits into him to keep him alive, morphine relieving the pain. Made him a bit lucid, because of all the blood he'd lost.

"Mr. Ryan waits for us", said Karlosky to the guard sitting outside. A burly man, not a sign of plasmid usage on him, who was tasked with protecting Andrew Ryan with his own life. He knew Karlosky of course.

"I see that", he said, not stopping them. Karlosky shoved the writer into Ryan's office, where the man himself sat behind his desk in his perfectly pressed tailored suit and a drink in front of him. He was speaking into an audio diary.

"I am told that Lamb has been seen in the streets... one of the Alpha Series was killed in the incident, and his bonded Sister stolen. But the Council has no time for a manhunt; Atlas swells the ranks of his marauders by the -" He looked up as they entered, pressing the sop button on the audio diary.

"Mr. Ryan", said Karlosky, worried that he had in fact interrupted, "I'm sorry, I..."

Ryan himself held up a hand, interested not in excuses, but only in the mess of a man, bleeding all over his floor.

Karlosky pulled the writer's hair back to show his face and Ryan slowly got up from his seat, giving a hint of a smirk. He walked around the desk, his shoes clacking against the polished floorboards, almost echoing in the writer's ears.

"Ah, Mr. Perkins, is it..." Ryan said. The writer said nothing. The look in his eyes was hollow. There was nothing left now. Say nothing, he thought, and they'll take me to Apollo Square and shoot me. That was... what he wanted now. If one believes - and when face to face with death's tranquil stare, that moment comes in a man - one hopes for another life, another chance. He'd always believed that. He'd paid his dues now.

"Just... kill me and get it over with", he muttered, barely hearing the words himself. In the afterlife he'd be given peace. Andrew Ryan chuckled.

"No. I think", he stopped a bit, for dramatic effect or for thinking his choice through, the writer knew not, "A man chooses, Mr. Perkins. I gave you a second chance. And you threw it in my face." Ryan stepped up to writer, leaning in rather close, feeling his authority. "I gave you everything, a new beginning in Rapture. Even when times were dark, you stood before me swearing your loyalty and I gave you another chance only for you to betray my trust. Yes, I read your so called book, let me assure you, no one else will read the mockery of Rapture you've tried to spread among my people. And now, Mr. Perkins, I will show you what happens to the parasite when he steps into my city..."

"Just do it..."

"Karlosky", Ryan said, standing up straight, "take him to Point Prometheus."

Karlosky nodded harshly. He knew.

"Any last words, Mr. Perkins?" Ryan looked smugly at the writer, who looked at the floor. The husk of a beaten man. Then he looked up, into Ryan's eyes. A last glaring gaze, a final act of defiance. His lip quivered, but Ryan stood resolute, strong and unwavering.

"Thy kingdom come", said the writer. After that, Karlosky guided him out of the office and they were joined by another constable, who led the writer away. Away, to Point Prometheus.

Torn asunder. A sinner crucified. Trapped forever in Limbo's glow.

The Atlantic Ocean, 1968

There was a sparkle in the radio, a crackle and Tenenbaum's distraught voice trying to pinpoint the right frequency.

"Hello, can you hear me? Your signal is breaking up", she said, but she wasn't speaking to Mr. Bubbles. He could barely hear her. When the Big Sister overloaded the control board, the electrical impulses must have interfered with the frequencies, disrupting communications. Restarting the generator back in Adonis would probably make it right. But he was locked out, and inside the Big Sister was waiting for him. This was where Mr. Bubbles part in the grand scheme came to an end. Tenenbaum still owed him his name, but he couldn't hear her right now.

Mr. Bubbles walked the bottom of the ocean, his body safe from pressure and harm in the Big Daddy suit. Adonis was located in the outskirts of Rapture, and off in the distance he could see the towering shells of the city, no longer the same. Most of the city was dark and dead, but there were lights here and there. All life in Rapture had not yet been snuffed out. And maybe there was another story taking shape there. Perhaps there were still lives there, worth saving. He followed the walls of Adonis Luxury Resort, unsure where to go. Its grey facade was as quiet as Tenenbaum's voice. Looking in the other direction, away from Rapture, he saw the open ocean, its wide hollow blackness taunting him. Who knows what horror lay out there. What fate wait out there for the lonely ghost who dared step into its gaping maw.

Yet in his mind the words twisted. Words that he once formed. Words and loves that he once formed and loved. His memory was burning.

"Herr Bubbles?" It was Tenenbaum at last. Her voice was crackling. "Are you there?" He couldn't answer, instead letting out the slow, piercing howl by which he'd awakened. Overhead, a whale swam by, its massive form blocking the glimmer of light from the surface, making a shadow frolic on the seabed. In answer to Mr. Bubbles' agonizing cry, it sang. The sound soared through the ocean, piercing Mr. Bubbles' metal skin and heart of steel. The whale was majesty. The whale was beauty. Imagination. It watched the lonely Big Daddy moving among the sea

plants and coral. It saw his inner struggle. And Mr. Bubbles watched the whale. It swam in slow circles around him, from time to time singing its song.

To Mr. Bubbles left was the dark ocean, marked by a gigantic ship's propeller lying rusted on the seabed, and the dancing plants and sea grass around it. They danced in fluorescent golden hues and soothing dark. Just a bit forward was an Oxy Fill station for Big Daddies and deep sea divers to fill up their oxygen tanks. A school of fluorescent, light blue jellyfish wafted peacefully just above him, almost as if hovering in the air, their tentacles waving breezily in the slow current. To his right was Adonis Luxury Resort. He should be right outside the pool area. The choice was Heaven or Hell, but which was which? And were they really that different? Above him, the whale gave a murmuring call and swam to the left. Out to sea. Words flashed in Mr. Bubbles' vision. Words, the color red and a warm smile. And eyes like a sea of stars. He felt lightning inside, but it wasn't of the Electro Bolt. It was of the euphoria.

"Herr Bubbles?" Tenenbaum called again, her voice now clear and strong, "Herr Bubbles, are you there?" To his right the walls of Adonis fell. It was the window shutters. They were being dropped automatically. Power must have been restored, because light came from inside. In one of the windows, a dark, hulking shape appeared. That of an Alpha Series. It watched Mr. Bubbles as he walked off. He could hear Tenenbaum, but she wasn't talking to him. She was talking to the shape in the window. The link to the camera in his helmet was broken and Tenenbaum would leave him know, Mr. Bubbles knew as much. But it didn't matter. He remembered.

He could see her face as clearly as if she stood in front of him. Impossibly red hair held in a pony tail by a pink bow, big eyes looking into his. The stars. And she smiled at him, and in his memory he kissed her. Her pale cheeks blushed and she whispered something. Inside his mask of self deceit, Mr. Bubbles' face of death and fear... smiled. A rare sight. His hallowed saint was coming home. And he followed the whale and its singing out into the great unknown.

It was release. Remembering was release. Salvation. A purpose. *Imagination*. Mr. Bubbles realized, Brigid Tenenbaum was the greatest sinner ever to walk the Earth. But it was also she who brought atonement. He, too, was a sinner. And after years in Purgatory, the writer saw freedom again, in remembering Julia Jensen's eyes, and the empty void.