

January 16, 1CR

As we walked towards my new home, a girl huddled in my brother's arms, it occurred to me that I had undertaken this journey with a surprisingly small amount of knowledge as to what this colony really was. I knew that it was safe, or mostly anyways, and that my brother had some amount of influence there, but Patton's meek acceptance of my brother's orders was something new. The guy had changed a lot, to be sure; he was now skinny, almost emaciated, and quiet. All that remained of his former personality was the name. Like my brother, who now used the name Marius, Patton had selected a new name for himself upon his entry into the colony, but the name suited him. Patton had always been impulsive; one for brash speech and later regret.

The guy next to him I vaguely recognized, though I wasn't about to bring it up; we had gone to high school together. The language was what really struck me though. The words sounded foreign to my ears, which was odd because I knew many languages. Yet both my brother and the other guy really seemed to understand what Patton was saying.

Finally we reached the outer edge of the colony. Like the roadblock we had seen earlier, the colony's walls were constructed of cars piled upon one another, though these had obvious ramps around them to get them to their lofty height, and they were only two high, though they were also two deep. Within the walls, the ground was higher up the bottom cars than on the outside, but the snow blocked my view of what I gathered to be fields created on the old parking lots. There was one single building in the middle of these snow covered plains, an old community college where my brother had been enrolled when the evacuation was sounded. On the roof, several men holding bows looked out over the land. I threw a glance over my shoulder

and noticed two miserable looking men on either side of the exit holding machetes and talking in low voices.

As we neared the familiar structure, a man wearing an expensive looking coat and a silver ring approached us from the entrance. My brother said something in the weird language, and Patton coughed, obviously trying not to laugh.

“Master Marius, it is good to see you returned to our lovely home.” The man said with a smirk, “I wish you had told me that you would be leaving us; I was feeling quite slighted that you were refusing to see me.”

“My comings and goings are none of your concern Lazarus; I will do as I will.” Marius frowned at him.

“But of course my Lord. However, as I am your apparent successor, would it not be prudent to make me aware of any potential dangers to your person?” This man, Lazarus, appeared fake to my eyes. His lack of real concern and desire for power were readily apparent, even having just met him. “It makes the men lose their confidence in me if you favor my subordinate so.”

“Patton? Patton has to know, he’s my hunting partner. Besides, he is in charge of choosing qualified officials to go and deliver our census information to the government. He was the one who decided that I should go in the first place.”

“Nevertheless sir, it is in bad form.”

“If I may interject here, is no one going to say anything about how he called me his subordinate?” Patton’s indignant words were ignored.

“Lazarus, I really am not in the mood for your whining right now. Lilia needs to get to bed, my sister needs to get living documents, and I need to not have a conniving little shit complaining to me about his ridiculous problems. The men don’t respect you because you are not worthy of their respect. I left Patton in charge during my absence on purpose, and if you will remember the council’s charter, that is his right by virtue of position. Now if you would, *master Lazarus*, I am trying to pass within.”

Marius was about as impatient as I had ever seen him, and Lazarus stepped aside quickly. The look he gave my brother when his back was turned made me shudder for all the venom it contained. His gaze turned on me and lingered a moment too long for my comfort, but he said nothing. As we stepped through the doors and into the old college, I found myself almost reeling from the wave of nostalgia I felt. I had gone here when I was younger as well, though it had been some time, and I had gone for college credit high school courses and not for college. The inside looked almost the same as I had remembered it, narrow hallways with rooms on either side, opening up to a lobby only a few yards ahead of me. My brother began moving swiftly through the familiar building, going from this lobby to the grand stairwell into another lobby and finally into a quiet, out of the way hallway. Along the way, I got the impression of heavy use. Many of the rooms’ doors were open, and I could see the classrooms within divided into sections by plain white curtains. There were small groups of people here and there, and, until we reached the last hallway, which I had not gone into much while a student here, there was an almost constant presence of people sitting here and there.

My brother stopped at the end of the hallway and opened the door to what appeared to have once been an office. I caught the brief scent of roses while my brother laid the girl on a bed

in the corner of the room. Returning to the hall where I was waiting, Marius closed the door behind himself.

“Well then, off to the hall of records. It’s a pain, but I think you will like the people there, at least.” Nodding at me, my brother gestured to the nearest stairwell. As I walked down the stairs, I realized that I still hadn’t decided on a new name. If that was required, I would have to do some fast thinking to come up with something suitable.

“What do you think I should name myself, Marius?”

“Anything you like. It is your name, after all. Why should I choose something so foundational to you?”

Marius led me into what had once been an office for adjunct professors in the nearest lobby. Within was a small, but pretty girl wearing yoga pants, a tank top, and a red and white polka dot bow. She looked up at our entry, and broke out in a grin.

“Well if it isn’t the head honcho himself. You’re looking bright and cheery today, mister frowny.”

I looked at my brother; nothing about his grim demeanor and black clothing suggested humor in the least. Almost immediately, Marius broke out in a grin. “I look much happier than you to be sure. Though I fear that too much joy will have me collapse in fatigue, for I am not used to such rich fare. Did your mail reach you yet?”

“Of course it did. Rain, Sleet, Snow, or Hail, or maybe even monsters and a damsel in distress for the umpteenth time. Why? Is the messenger boy expecting a tip? Or how about a kiss for being so prompt in delivery?”

“I was merely wondering how young Mickey is getting along without his beloved mouse. Though it would give much pains to a chivalrous knight to deny himself the kiss of the fair maiden.”

“Good thing you’re a villain then milord, for this fair maiden gives her kisses not for free.” The girl was smiling too, completely at ease with the situation. I was feeling rather uncomfortable, however, because my brother had never shown himself to be a flirt. In fact, he had always seemed uneasy around women in general, and it made me wonder how he had changed. Then the girl continued in a more serious tone, “Matthew says he’s been sick recently. I worry about him because of the lack of good medicines. Enough of such pleasantries, introduce me, Marius.”

Turning to me, my brother said, “This is Minnie, the keeper of records here at the colony. She works here every day and is a great help to me in spite of her young age. She is going to walk you through the process of becoming a member of the Colony. This is where you will come sometime in the next week to receive your job assignment and lodging information as well. If you have any questions about the colony, Minnie would be the one to ask. She’s more knowledgeable than most anybody else here. I’ll be at the temporary dorm in a couple hours to pick you up for dinner.”

So saying, my brother left me alone with Minnie. The moment he left, Minnie grabbed several forms and pens and began to lay them out in front of me. I grimaced at the sheer number of forms I had to fill out, this looked like more trouble than it really needed to be.

“Alrighty then, beautiful, let’s get this show on the road. First I need to know your real name, date of birth, country of origin, weight, height, and last documented occupation.”

Minnie spoke in a really fast voice, her quirky speech reminding me of many of the characters I used to see on TV shows. “Um, Teige Baumann, November 7, 1992, United States, and my license says...”

“I don’t care about your license, I need actual measurements. Remove your shoes and clothes. I’ll get the blinds for you so you don’t have to feel nervous at all.” Minnie pressed a button and the blinds on all the glass walls descended, followed by blackout curtains. I was still uncomfortable, Minnie was so tiny she reminded me of a pixie, but I quickly undressed and walked over to the scale behind her desk. After getting up and locking the door, Minnie came over to the scale and marked down my weight. Standing on a chair, she put her tape measure to the top of my head. “Alright, last document for this form, last documented occupation.”

“I was a nurse. I worked at an ER in the city.”

Minnie stared at me. “An ER nurse? Seems like you’ll be an essential member of the colony in no time. The last name seems familiar too.” Minnie grabbed the next sheet and clipped it to her board while I put my clothes back on. I nearly jumped right back out of them again when Minnie yelled out, “Wait, isn’t ‘Baumann’ Marius’s original last name? I thought you guys looked alike, though you’re not quite what I imagined, if you don’t mind me saying.”

“Thanks?”

“Just saying how I feel. Okey dokey, next form. Living relatives and location; I can fill that out for you. Preferred living arrangement: could be a two person apartment or barracks.”

“Two person seems less stressful to me.”

“It isn’t. Marius is a great example of that actually. His roommate is a disaster on legs. Marius doesn’t care though. He’s a real sweetie pie. Next form.”

As Minnie got her next form on the clip board, I decided that she reminded me less of a character from a show and more just strange. I didn’t hate that, though her mannerisms were a bit annoying. At least she seemed cheerful; it was a welcome change of pace.

“Alright, so last form is the public information sheet. I fill most of this out on my own, but I do need you to determine a few things. First up is your marital status. Uncomfortable as it may be, we are trying to establish a permanent community. That means that having kids is vital to our future, **but** we don’t want to pressure anyone to betray any marriage vows or be insensitive to widows. So it’s single, married, or widowed.”

“I’m single.”

“Gotcha. Last question, what do you want your name to be?”

I thought carefully for a minute about the various options I had considered. I liked a lot of them, but I really did think that a Latin name with the family name Marius seemed like it would