

Second City Slavers
By
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Marcy felt the bile in her stomach turn over. She didn't like the look or the feel of the Euro-Goth dance club known as the Chamber.

The flash of the pulsating strobe and neon lights bounced off the dark colored walls and covered the twenty-something's who meshed up against one another on the dance floor under the canopy of techno music.

The bartender, a short blonde with Chinese dragons tattooed down the length of her arms and a silver hoop dangling from the bridge of her nose moved from one end of the bar to the next like a busy ant.

After finding an open slot along the crowded bar, Marcy caught the bartender's attention and yelled over the *umstick-umstick-umstick* of the techno mix. "Grey Goose with pineapple and orange juice!"

While the bartender mixed the drink Marcy stared up at herself in the bar's mirror. She ran her hands through her straight, black hair. She had brown eyes, a circular face, and her cinnamon-colored skin sparkled under the bar's lights. She had worn a dark blue spring jacket, her favorite halter top, and her favorite pair of Apple Bottom jeans, which clung to her curvy ass and shaped out her body.

A few seconds later the bartender sat the drink down on the bar. Marcy slapped a ten down on the wood and then turned to scan the club. Under normal circumstances she wouldn't be caught dead in a place like this, but her best friend, Jocelyn, who frequented the Chamber and knew the security on a first name basis as well as the lay of the land, was now missing and this was the last known place she had visited. She had warned Jocelyn of places like this, not because of the actual environment, but because of the potential for evilness to breed. Having written two suspense thriller novels about killers, Marcy felt as though she had taken a glimpse into the criminal mind and now had an understanding of how it worked.

When she went to the cops about Jocelyn's disappearance, they told her that they couldn't do anything until forty-eight hours had passed; and even Jocelyn's job, the Chicago Sun-Times had stated that she was on assignment, working on a special cover story for the paper.

Marcy pulled back the cuff of her jacket to check the time. It was a half hour past eleven. She flipped open her cell phone and dialed Jocelyn's number one last time. The phone rang for a few seconds before going straight to voicemail. She flipped the phone close and returned it to her pocket, "Forty-eight hours my ass."

Taking a long sip of her drink, Marcy allowed the liquor to run its course. She needed a little jolt in order to get herself going. She closed her eyes, took a deep breath, and then pushed herself up off the bar. Maneuvering through the crowd she moved to the back of the club where the restrooms were located. As she approached the facilities, she noticed that at the very back wall stood two men in suits on either side of a dark red door.

One of the men eyed her and she quickly slipped into the nearby ladies room. Inside, two women, both brunettes, stared into a mirror while applying dark eyeliner to their eyes. They both looked as though they were made of paper Mache with their dark leather studded belts wrapped twice around their waists.

Marcy fell in line. Compared to these two, her full-figured, thirty-year-old body seemed out of place. She applied another layer of lipstick and told herself she could do this; it was just like doing research for a book, except now she was searching for her friend.

Once out of the restroom, Marcy proceeded towards the two bouncers that stood along the back wall near the door. To her they looked as if they had both just gotten out of the marines with their crew cuts and bulging muscles protruding from under their dark suit jackets. She was hoping that because she was a woman that they wouldn't search her or they'd find the handcuffs and pocket knife she had hidden away.

One of the bouncers moved from his position and held out his hand just inches from Marcy's breast. "Sorry, only VIPS past this point."

"I'm a special guest," Marcy said, recalling the conversation she had with Jocelyn a month ago about the Chamber's coded dialogue.

"And what type of guest would that be?" The bouncer arched his eyebrow.

Marcy slightly touched her cheek with her left hand, smiled and cocked her head to the side and said seductively, "A member of the inner chamber."

The bouncer dropped his hand and the other pulled back the dark door. Marcy hesitated for a second and then stepped forward into the darkness. The door closed behind her. Suddenly, the floor began to move and then she felt the small space of the room descend into the abyss. Her heartbeat started to quicken. What the hell was she getting herself into? Where was she going? She told herself that she needed to be calm. If Jocelyn did it, then so could she. Her palms were sweaty and she wiped them on her jeans while concentrating on slowing her breathing. Then she waxed her fingers over the small pocketknife inside her jacket; it gave her courage and an added sense of protection.

When the car finally made it to its destination the doors parted and a bright light filled the space. Marcy threw her hands up over her eyes as she stepped from the elevator. The doors automatically closed and she could hear the hydraulics of the crane returning the car to the topside.

"Welcome," she heard a voice call from the darkened corner of the room.

Stepping forward she found a blonde woman dressed in a short black one-piece miniskirt with matching web stockings. The woman had a distinctive mole on her upper left cheek.

"How may I assist you?" the Hostess asked.

Marcy bit down on her lip. She and Jocelyn had never discussed what actually went on in the inner sanctum of the Chamber; and now she wanted to hit herself for not listening to Jocelyn brag about her sordid sexual exploits while working on her latest article.

"I need a man," Marcy said, not sure if the confidence in her voice was enough to convince the hostess that she wasn't a rookie.

"Of course," replied the hostess. "Do you have a preference for the night?"

"Preference?" What was this place? Some overgrown human salad bar? "I just want a man," Marcy said.

"Very well. I will do my best in assisting you. Right this way," The hostess gestured with a sweep of her arm and Marcy followed.

The two women walked down an exposed brick corridor. At the end of this corridor was a set of wooden doors. The Hostess opened the doors and Marcy stepped

into a lavish foyer covered in Crimson fabric with a massive crystal chandelier hanging from the ceiling.

Marcy silently mouthed the words “WOW.” She hadn’t expected the place to be all did up. She had imagined that it would be more like a dungeon from an old black and white horror movie.

“Well, said the Hostess. “Are you into experimental sex?”

“Excuse me?”

“Experimental sex. Virtual sex, those type of things.”

“Oh no,” Marcy blushed. “Not me. I’m kind of an old fashioned girl.”

“Then I would assume that dominatrix, scat, couples and things of that nature are not to your liking either?”

“Yes, you are right. All I want is a man.”

“Does the mistress have a preference in the type of man she would like?”

Marcy bit down on her lip and smiled. Now she understood what Jocelyn liked about this place. “Something muscular and good on the eyes,” she responded.

“Very well, mistress, I may have just what you want.” The hostess turned and disappeared behind a crimson sequin curtain.

“I may have just what you want,” Marcy mimicked. What hell did that mean? Did she really have men back behind that curtain waiting for lonely women? If so, then what was she going to do when the hostess returned? She had thought they’d at least give her a room and then send the entertainment her way, but the showing of men on display had not been planned for.

The curtain was parted and three shirtless men, each a shade lighter than the next stepped into the parlor.

“This is Maximus,” the hostess introduced the ripped black, bald man, whose chest just would not stop jumping; and this is Antonio,” she continued, introducing the Latin man with sparkling gray eyes. “And this is Hugo,” she introduced the last man, who was white with a chiseled square chin.

After the hostess had finished her introductions, she turned to Marcy and asked, “Which one do you prefer?”

Marcy grinned while toying with her finger in her mouth. It was all a show so that the hostess would not think she was too eager. She imagined that Jocelyn on her very first visit must have done the same thing. “Hmmm...I’ll take Antonio”

“Very well,” said the hostess. “Now if you will follow me, I will get you situated for the night.”

The hostess along with Antonio and Marcy stepped behind the crimson curtain and down a long hallway with doors on either side of it. The scent of vanilla filled the hall and it was not too long before they came to a door in which the hostess opened it and said to the two, “enjoy the night.”

Marcy stepped into the room with Antonio close behind. The room was painted white with red diamonds covering the walls. There was a queen size bed covered with auburn sheets. A white ceiling fan hung from the ceiling and adjacent to the entrance was a door, which Marcy guessed was the bathroom.

“May I help you to the bed?” Antonio asked from behind her, laying his large warm hands on her shoulders.

Marcy shuttered a little. The thought of contracting an STD from this stranger ran rabid through her mind.

"Relax," Antonio whispered, massaging her shoulders. "I am here to please you and only you my mistress."

She felt the hairs on the back of her neck stand up with every word that Antonio whispered. His warm breath against the nape of her neck made her tense. She needed to change the tempo of the situation before it got out of hand.

"Put these on," she dangled the handcuffs in front of Antonio.

Antonio looked at the cuffs and then back to her.

"I said put these on," Marcy demanded. She was hoping he'd play along and assume the role of the bad boy.

Antonio smiled, "Ahhh, yes, mistress." Then he grabbed the cuffs ready to put them on.

"Wait," Marcy smiled sinisterly, continuing to play up the act. "I have a better idea. Lay down on the bed."

"Kinky, Kinky," Antonio said, moving to lie down.

"Shut up and do as I say."

"Yes, Mistress."

Marcy waited until Antonio was lying across the bed with his hands behind his head before she removed her jacket, allowing it to fall to the floor. She moved towards Antonio, keeping her eyes locked on him. Her breast bounced with every step she took.

"Put your hands up near the headboard. You've been a very bad boy and now it's time for a spanking."

Antonio quickly obliged as he scooted his body over the edge of the bed.

Licking her lips, Marcy gently bit down on them to give the impression that she wanted Antonio. She opened the cuffs and slapped one on to Antonio's right hand, looped the chain around the bedpost and then slapped the other cuff over his left hand.

"There," she said, still smiling. "Now I've got you all to myself." Then she dropped the smile and removed the pocketknife from her back pocket.

"What the fuck is this?" Antonio struggled to sit up. Marcy pushed his body down with her hand. "Stay still. Don't move."

Antonio pushed against Marcy's arm, "Get me the fuck out of these cuffs, bitch!"

Marcy smiled and then cut two long strips from the bed sheet. "Oh, I got yo bitch." After hog-tying Antonio, she stepped out in to the dim hall, looked up the way she had come and then decided to go the opposite way. On either side of the corridor were numerous doors and each time she passed one she would lean in close and try to listen to whomever was inside, but she could hear nothing.

Venturing down the corridor she came upon a pair of steel doors with a red sign that read: DO NOT ENTER. She looked back over her shoulder because somewhere within the murkiness of the dim hall she heard the hostess' heels clicking against the cold concrete. She stood in the darkened corridor not sure of what to do. What would happen if she was caught? She could hear the hostess stop in mid-stride, before continuing to walk back up the corridor. She dashed for the nearest room while praying that it was not occupied as she entered it. The lights were off, but she figured that all the rooms were probably made the same like an old vintage motel.

She pressed her ear to the door then remembered that the room was soundproof. She then knelt down to the bottom of the door and listened for the hostess' steps, which grew louder as she made her way down the corridor.

The hostess' shadow passed before the door and then Marcy heard the Steel doors squeak open and then close.

Rising from the floor, Marcy cracked open the room's door and listened for the sound of anyone moving. She counted by the thousands like she had done as a child playing football with her older brothers. One-one thousands, two-two thousand, three-three thousand- all the way to ten, and then she opened the door and stepped back out into the dim hallway.

Staring up at the sign over the large doors, Marcy felt that somewhere beyond this point she'd find Jocelyn. She slightly pushed open the doors and slid in between them and found herself inside a large warehouse. The place smelled like old newspapers and wet hay. There were wooden crates stamped with symbols that she suspected were Chinese. Braced up against the crates and moving along them, Marcy could hear the hostess shouting out orders to someone a few feet away. She stepped to the edge of the crates, peered from behind them and saw the hostess standing before two men in black suits that looked more like bouncers from the club. The hostess pointed off in a direction further in the back of the warehouse and commanded the men in a language which Marcy could only suspect was Russian of some sort.

Scurrying to another group of crates where the shadows could conceal her, Marcy watched as the two men disappeared into the darkness of the warehouse, and then the hostess turned and began to make her way back towards the entrance.

Marcy stayed in the shadowed crevice of the crates until all was silent. Her mind was telling her that she was venturing off into dangerous territory, but her heart urged her on, Jocelyn was here, she felt it, and she aimed to find her. Twenty-five yards past the entrance, she came upon a 20 x 30-foot cell filled with about thirty young women. Light from the overhead rafters revealed that the women, mostly Caucasian, wore filthy rags of clothing. Their hair was disheveled, tangled, and dirty. Their eyes: brown, blue, green, and the occasional grey were filled with dead space as they stared off into the darkness of the warehouse.

Marcy waited in the shadows, listening for any sound of the bouncers. When she had decided that it was safe, she crept from her hiding place, moving slowly towards the imprisoned women so as not to frighten them. She pulled her phone from her pocket and began taking pictures.

At first the women did not move nor did they say anything, but as Marcy drew closer, they began to part in to two separate groups as though they were welcoming her into their fold or introducing her to their leader.

The light from overhead fell in between the two halves of women and instantly Marcy was frozen in her steps as she threw her hand over her mouth to keep her self from screaming. Lying in the corner of the cell was Jocelyn; her nose was broken and her face was puffy with dark purple spots that discolored her brown skin.

Marcy ran to the cell and crouched down in front of it. She reached out her hand for Jocelyn, but she could not reach her. She pulled on the cell's entrance but it would not give way. She then withdrew her hand from the bars and began to dial 911, but the screen on her phone read 'out of service'. She flipped the phone close and looked around

herself as if looking for a solution. She began to twist locks of her hair around in her fingers as she paced back and forth in front of the cell. Then she turned with pocketknife in hand and jammed the head of the blade into the lock. She wrestled with the bolt before the blade broke off and fell to the concrete floor.

A pale woman with midnight black hair and ice blue eyes stepped forward from the crowd of women, recovered the broken blade and said, "I am Anna Karyukova from Russia."

Marcy stared at the woman and then asked, "How did you get here?"

Anna, whose face was thin with chapped lips, did her best to form words from her broken English. "Tricked, we were all. Believing we were brides to American men. But no husbands we find, only Serbian slavers."

"And her?" Marcy pointed to Jocelyn.

Suddenly there was the crackle of a walkie-talkie coming from the direction in which the bouncers had gone. Marcy turned and quickly ran back to her hiding place amongst the shadows of the crates.

The static of the radio filled the space of the room and the women inside the cell resumed their clustered positions.

From behind the crates, Marcy clutched her phone to her lips as though it were a rosary. Her mind and her heart were now in agreement: she needed to get out of there in order to save Jocelyn and the other women. Never had she thought that she'd be in a position where she would actually have to enter into that world where writers go to write about the darkness and evilness of the human spirit. Jocelyn had once called it the "literary darkness" because it was the only place that writers were not afraid to venture even when humanity was.

The static of the walkie-talkie broke Marcy's concentration and brought her back into the moment.

"This is Sven. All is clear in the holding cell area."

"Are you sure?" The Hostess's voice boomed from the walkie-talkie's mini-speaker. "She has got to be here, so find her."

The bouncers turned and headed back in the direction from which they had come.

After waiting for a few seconds Marcy jumped up from her hiding place and ran back to the cell. She ran behind it and reached her hands in between the bars so that she could rub Jocelyn's head. The other women watched with blank stares.

Unexpectedly, The doors to the warehouse burst open and in walked the hostess along with Antonio following behind her. Marcy was about to jump to her feet but it was too late; the hostess was already making her way into the main space of the holding cell.

The imprisoned women stood up, shielding Marcy and Jocelyn with their bodies, while Marcy continued kneeling down consoling her injured friend.

"How could you be so easily tricked, you imbecile?!" The Hostess asked, "All ready I've had to deal with your incompetence; you almost let that damn reporter, Jocelyn Jones, get away, and now this."

"I was just doing my job, Mistress Ronda. How was I supposed to know she was playing a role?" Antonio said.

"I don't care; all I want is this bitch found or *you'll* lose something this time around." The hostess gripped Antonio's scrotum. "Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes, Mistress Ronda."

“Good.” She released him and started for the warehouse entrance.

Antonio turned his attention to the imprisoned women. He looked past them as though they did not exist. “What are you looking at?”

“Ummm,” Jocelyn moaned under the touch of Marcy’s hand.

“Quite!” Antonio yelled.

Marcy did her best to quite her friend, while still rubbing her hand over her moist head. Jocelyn moaned even louder and this caused Antonio to move closer to the cell.

“Quiet,” I said. He hit the bars. The women jumped back from the impact and began to huddle, turning their faces away. “Maybe after I find this bitch I’ll return for one of you,” he pointed.

Holding Jocelyn tight, Marcy listened for Antonio’s departing steps. After he had gone, she gently laid Jocelyn’s head down on the blue tarmac of the cell and then she looked off towards the darkness and knew that she had to get help. She gathered up her resolve, looked back once at the imprisoned women and then stepped into the unknown.

Surrounded by darkness, Marcy extended her hands out in front of her and felt her way as she walked. The walls were cold as she patted them to try and gather her bearings. She was afraid to open her phone for fear that the light from the screen might give her away. She stopped and stood in the darkness, listening to the eerie sounds that filled the void. She swore she heard a train screeching over tracks and then the sound trailed off into the abyss. Alone now, she wanted to cry, to scream to the fucking world for a speck of light while at the same time praying to God that she survived the night.

At the end of the corridor, Marcy found a row of rusted tracks that lead down a round semi-lit tunnel. Further down the tunnel she saw the backs of the bouncers as they advanced into the darkness with flashlight beams leading the way. Overhead she heard the sound of a train rolling over tracks, this time she was sure of it. She recalled an article that Jocelyn had written about a man who had been caught right after 9/11 for storing lethal chemicals in Chicago’s abandoned subway tunnels, or as the homeless called it: the Second City. Now it all made sense to her. This was how they were smuggling the girls in and out of the city.

The scent of dry concrete, sewage, moss and dirt encompassed the air.

To the right of Marcy was a brown rust colored door. She crept slowly towards it. The sound of rats’ claws scratching against the dark concrete floor as they scattered over her feet echoed through out the tunnel. She shoved her phone into her right pocket and placed her hand over her mouth to keep herself from screaming. She didn’t want to make any sudden sounds that might alert her pursuers to her location. Keeping her eyes on the two men she stepped one foot in front of the other, advancing towards the exit. The screeching of mechanical train wheels over steel tracks reverberated overhead.

Finally nearing the door, she twisted the knob and pushed on it, but it was jammed. She pushed again, keeping her body as close as possible to the door’s inner frame, but still it wouldn’t budge. She gripped the doors knob and began counting. Having taken public transportation all of her life she knew the routine time for many of the train’s in-between stops; now she just hoped that the bouncers would continue down the abandoned tunnel as they had been doing.

The beams of light swept from left to right across the tunnel. She watched them knowing all she needed now was three more minutes. She could hear the two men

bitching and moaning; and then she heard the cackle of the walkie-talkie and one of the men say, "heading back your way."

The beams of light turned and began to shine back up the tunnel towards Marcy. She tapped her feet against the floor so as to keep the cadence of the time as huge rats shot out from hidden places and scurried into newfound crevices.

One more minute she thought, watching, as the beams of light grew closer to her position and then suddenly, they stopped.

Marcy closed her eyes and projected her hearing in the direction of the two men. She heard what sounded like a stream of water cascading against the rusted tracks and then one of the men exhaled an "ahhh" and the other said, "now that you're done taking a whiz, maybe we can get moving." She opened her eyes and realized that four minutes, instead of three, had already passed. The damn train was late. She stared back down at the rusted tracks and saw the gleam of the lights bounce off shards of broken glass. *Dammit!* They were coming and still there was no train.

The lights drew closer and closer and closer, then the screeching of the subway train overhead resounded throughout the abandoned tunnel.

Marcy quickly threw her shoulder twice into the door before it gave way into a lighted stairwell filled with graffiti and the scent of urine. She shot up the stairs, not sure if the two guards had seen or heard her enter the stairwell. She didn't give a damn, climbing flight after flight by three stairs at a time, until she came to a red door with the word EXIT written in white. She stood there before the door, crouched over, catching her breath, her heart felt as though it would burst. She opened the door and a brisk wind slapped her across the face, along with the scent of trash that had begun to accumulate on the subway tracks. Who knew the subway could smell so good.

Down the dim-lit tunnel, Marcy saw people standing on a platform some fifty yards away. There was also a maintenance worker in an orange vest and yellow construction hat walking on the tracks towards the platform. "Hey, hey mister, please, I need help," she screamed out. The workman stopped, turned around and waited for her.

"I need help," she said breathlessly as she approached the workman.

The workman lifted his head and pushed back the hard hat. To Marcy's astonishment it was Antonio.

"How about we turn around and go back down those stairs," he said with a point of his index finger and a mischievous smile across his face. He unclipped the radio from the side of his belt and whispered, "I've got her and I'm bringing her back."

"You don't have to do this," she said.

Coldness had begun to set in Antonio's grey eyes. Marcy knew those eyes all too well. Having written about killers like the man that stood before her; she knew that there could be only one result: kill or be killed.

She darted to her left and then to her right but Antonio countered her maneuvers.

"Don't make this harder than it has to be," he said, grabbing her by the wrist.

She did her best to struggle free of his grip, but he was stronger.

Antonio pulled her into a bear hug and lifted her up off her feet. The pressure of his muscles squeezed her abdomen.

Marcy screamed out in pain as she tried to wiggle free and then she slammed her forehead into Antonio's nose and his vise-like grip seized.

After dropping Marcy and then doubling over with his hands over his nose, Antonio yelled, "Bitch! You stupid fucking bitch! I think you broke my nose. Ahhh, fuck!"

Marcy coughed hard so that her lungs could take in air and then she crashed into Antonio knocking him over. Their bodies hit the wooden tracks hard as she screamed out in pain when her knee collided with the wood. She slowly stood and began to limp down the tunnel; then she felt a tug on her hair.

"You Bitch!" Antonio said; his face covered in blood. He turned her around and backhanded her across the face. Her bottom lip split instantly. He drove his right fist into her gut and she doubled over, coughing up food and bile. "Did you really think you were going to get away; using that lousy ass tackle on me? Stand up; I want to see those damn eyes of yours before I put you out of your misery." He grabbed Marcy by the hair and pulled her up to her feet.

Marcy reached her hand into the pocket of her pants and waited until she was facing Antonio before she jammed the antenna of her cell phone into his eye.

Antonio wailed out in horrific pain. He reeled back with blood gushing from his eye and nose. Then he rushed at Marcy with hands extended. He wrapped his pork link fingers around her throat and the two fell back on to the tracks.

Marcy felt her throat close up as if she were having an allergic reaction. She stared into Antonio's eyes and saw only the bloodlust in his pupils. Drops of blood dripped from his face on to hers. She reached out her hands, grasping for air, for a way out of this hellhole, but all she found was space. Her head began to feel light and her vision was beginning to wane. She told herself that she hadn't come this far to die. She could still hear Antonio breathing hard and could still feel the droplets of blood splattering against her cheeks. She opened her mouth for air, but minor wisps filled her lungs. Then she felt it. The hardhat. With the last of her strength, she grasped it and with all of her might she swung it up, hitting Antonio across the head.

Blood exploded in to the air.

Marcy swung the hardhat again and again, each time landing a fatal blow to Antonio's face and head.

Antonio fell back off of Marcy and then stood holding his hands up over his face as blood sired from his wounds. He stumbled back-and-forth before tripping on one of the wooden tracks and falling to the side, hitting the electrified third rail. His screams echoed throughout the tunnel.

The radio on Antonio's body cracked with static and then a voice came over saying, "This is Sven. Report back immediately. We have emergency. Mistress Ronda is dead. Killed with blade by captive."

Marcy smiled, dropped the bloodied hardhat and then turned to go down the tunnel towards the light. She had survived the night and now all she had to do was get help for Jocelyn and the other women, who were waiting for her, somewhere, below, in the second city.