

CHAPTER TWO OF ARIES

IN WHICH

*Aries recruits Cancer
into
the Cellar Receptacle.*

A Ladies Deluxe Restroom is the perfect recruiting receptacle. It's the same Ladies Deluxe Restroom found in nearly every country club or estate; the décor popped line-for-line from an oriental fan.

With

Feng shui chair arrangements
Excessive flower schemes
A cool, paper waftiness
alleviating reality.

Any woman enters a Ladies Deluxe Restroom and smells the properly proportioned potpourri, sees the free tampons, feels the strangely velvet-paper towels—this woman immediately flushes with a feeling of majestic circumstance. So illustrious. There's nothing in the world that could bring this woman down.

It's perfect, for I, me, Aries. Perfect and piquant. Requiring just a pluck and this woman is in the game.

And of course,

I pluck at these women.

I pick at these women.

I pop their juices, if you will.

I recruit.

A woman enters from the veranda. She's frazzled, hmmm. Winded, hmmm. She stares at the humungous mirror without re-arranging her bangs.

"Are you ok?" I ask, "I don't want to freak you out or anything but you look stressed, huh? Sweaty, yah? Abstracted, if you don't mind me saying."

I smile to obscure my facial symmetry—ugliness is diplomacy in a Ladies Deluxe Restroom.

Tantamount.

She negotiates my sincerity with a touch of her lip. I look down and pretend to play with the free tampons. In any other situation, we would be strangers playing in a strange game. But this is the Ladies Deluxe Restroom. The soft music plays down between us and it's like we're sharing the same warm bath, hmmm. Frothy, hmmm. Dignified, hmmm. I feel

her trust building upon every cascading scale.

“Thank you for your concern,” she responds, patting her neck, “it’s just—this crazy witch—my woman child. I was on the veranda for Zod’s sakes. Oh, if only I’d had my shawl!”

I grab her hand and she doesn’t flinch: this sort of accelerated intimacy is only possible you know where.

We wait a beat.

She finally notices her bangs and rakes them with rigid fingers.

“A crazy witch?” I ask, “Did she witch slap you?”

“Worse than a slap. Just now. On the veranda.”

“Oh my Zod,” I say, “You poor thing. What happened?”

She tells her story. Her narration is ridiculous and I have no idea what she’s saying but it’s clear many possible recruitment opportunities are involved so I say:

“I know that Crazy Witch.”

“You do? Did you two come together?”

“Absolutely not. We met at the bar and she totally disrespected me too,” I lie.

“She did?”

“I ordered an orange juice and she yelled at me for being a Mormon pussy.”

“Are you serious? Are you really Mormon?”

“Not anymore,” I gesture toward my one-shot Comet, “I found Zod, if you can believe it.”

Her eyes widen in a way that makes me wonder if I’ve just said the wrong thing. But then she gasps—“Me too.”

And I cannot believe my luck.

“What is your name?” I ask.

“Cancer. And yours?”

“I, me am Aries.”

We stare at each other through the humungous mirror. The dame-and-goddess lighting flatters our complexions into a musky gold. We bask in ourselves the way only a Ladies Deluxe Restroom allows one to bask in oneself.

“Your bangs are better,” I whisper.

“Thank you,” she whispers back.

Her sweatiness is a problem. I hand her a paper towel for splotching. She accepts—and I have her. Recruited. The fight and its receptacle are waiting things.

Forthcoming, hmmm.

Around the bend-ish.

Oh, so imminent.

I let her splotch in peace a few minutes more.

“So where are you going to fight the Crazy Witch?” I ask, spinning a tampon.

“Excuse me?”

“You mean...you’re *not* going to fight the Crazy Witch?”

I give her a look that would sear a steak.

“Fight the Crazy Witch? No. I already told you. I’m a Cancer, not a fighter. You fight her.”

A thick cloud of nausea rises in my throat.

“No. No. No. I don’t fight.” I say, swallowing it, “That’s not me, Cancer. You are the one who has suffered a loss. You are the one who must gain redemption. I, me, Aries do not involve myself. No.”

She looks up from the towel. Her eyes linger on mine before turning inward.

I wait.

“All right,” she says, throwing the towel into a woven basket, “But you have to promise me we’ll find my woman child.”

“But of course,” I say, not knowing what that means.

“And where do you fight at a wedding? And what do I say? And why do people remove their outerwear?”

“Don’t you worry, Cancer. Don’t you worry about a thing.”

And then I say nothing.

Zero.

Zilch.

Zod.

It’s too perfect.

We take a moment to acknowledge the spectacular state of our refreshment. Cancer uses the moisturizer. I brush my teeth with complimentary supplies. We both steal tampons.

Then, we exit toward the Cellar holding hands.