

Author's Notes: *Originally, this scene was right after Ian's graduation.*

Honestly I love this scene, but after the rewrite, this scene skewed the novel's time-line plus the book was too long. So though it pained me to do, it had to be cut. That being said, I do feel this scene was helpful to write (and rewrite) as it gave me an insight into Ian's character.

“WHAT’S YOUR NAME?” IAN ASKED.

The girl stuck out her fingers. Four. Then both hands. Ten. Then flashed both hands to twenty.

“I don’t understand what the numbers mean, what’s your name?”

She gave a look to a large man in the corner booth, threw up her hands, and walked away. “Wait!” Ian called across the bar.

She didn’t. Instead she leaned over a nearby table towards another man. The man shook his head. She didn’t seem upset; instead she spoke to a man and woman.

Ian watched this couple whisper something. The man slipped out a bill and gave it to her. Cash was not used for much, but she slid it into her blouse. The three wandered to the alley followed by the large man she signaled. He must be her pimp.

Ian shuddered. He didn’t want to be a curb crawler. He wanted to meet a girl. A nice girl from a nice family.

Looking into the amber bubbles, another thought flitted into his brain. She was pretty. Really pretty. From what he heard at Mum’s soup kitchen, most of the

tarts in Salisbury found themselves or their families in dire straits and turned to prostitution for survival. Maybe that's what happened to this girl. Maybe she approached him because she liked him...or she saw something in him she liked. He tried to not think of the images he occasionally looked up on the Cloud and was unaware he bounced from foot to foot. He would kiss her delicate neck, the soft pink flesh of her breasts, kissing her stomach, kissing lower. He switched to wine.

He decided he couldn't even imagine all the things she would do to him... would teach him. She would be experienced. Her past was no concern of his. He would treat her with the type of kindness she longed for, but never knew.

Feeling light-headed, he switched to espresso. Before he knew it, the clock above the bar read 3 AM and the waitress wanted to close.

Walking to his hotel, he looked down each alley, hoping to catch a glimpse of that girl. Peering back at him were the human homeless, their eyes shining with want. He had to be careful. He couldn't look weak. He held his head high and quickened his pace.

In the distance, a silvery thread climbed towards the stratosphere. The Tether. "How far is it to the SpaceTether?" He asked his YRUniverse.

"The SpaceTether is fifteen kilometers from the city center," it replied.

He passed his hotel. Within the maze of creamy white brick buildings embellished with black wrought iron, the main streets were empty, except for androids who pushed dirt and into the collection units. His YRUniverse told him: as in the British Isles, when the collection units were full, picknplacebots

exchanged the container and brought the garbage to the methane generation plant outside the city.

Dawn lit the sky with the palest of pinks. A reflection of the orange sun sparkled on the glass buildings. His stomach growled. He hadn't eaten anything since he arrived. He ignored the smell of ammonia, methane, and garbage and stopped at a bakery. With a quick *Bon jour*, he ordered a café lait, a Jambon-fromage, and a pan au chocolat. Then kept walking south.

A flash of tanned flesh momentarily distracted him as a girl with a split skirt passed him on a bicycle. Her brown hair flew behind her giving him a glimpse of a black long-sleeved sweater creeping up her back. Admiring her backside as she pedaled away, he finished his café lait.

Then he chided himself for not being a gentleman.

Outside the city center, Ian noticed the homeless population changed from mostly human to the broken androids huddling close to the neon and argon lights for warmth. Unlike in Salisbury, some of the unfortunate androids in Paris were still functional.

"Want a pump?" one slurred, its eyes filled with longing. In his father's clinic, Ian had seen too many men who visited their type to be interested. The diseases they carried were not pretty. He walked through neighborhood after neighborhood keeping his eye on his goal.

Finally, he stood at the fence surrounding a large construction site at the base of the Tether. He did not know what he expected to see. Workers and their machines moved around, but he had no idea what they were doing. The only clue was a painted sign: "Tallier Groupe, Défense d'entrer - Propriété privée"

Remorse created a slight lump in his throat and the bitter need to spit. Ships left seven years before. He missed the chance to see Eden. The Lunar Colony was basically a joke for the news service. He pressed his thumb into his eye.

I'm such a git to come here.

He received a face full of dust kicked up by a lorry. He listened to the sound of progress: clangs and beeps of excavators cutting out large swaths of Earth, careful to not hit the Tether's many undergrounds supports. Someone shouted something in French.

Ian wandered back the way he came. He made it to the city center late in the afternoon. He should be sight seeing or go back to the hotel, but felt like doing neither. He passed a garishly painted building with a red sign: Catacombs. Feeling morose, he paid the entry fee, descended the old iron staircase that groaned under his footsteps. He walked past thousands—perhaps millions—of the protected old skulls fashioned into grotesque monuments over a millennia before. Some of the bones were even centuries older. He considered slipping away into the old underground and going to sleep somewhere. Rats and bugs would eat his flesh. All that would be left was bone. The perfect place to die. He had the chance to go to a garden planet, instead he stayed on Earth because his dad was disappointed in him and his mum cried. He didn't even look up information on the Lunar Colony in front of his parents. He hadn't even told them he wanted to work in a hospital rather than Dad's Clinic. He was a coward.

Icy tendrils of moisture crept through his trousers and touched his skin. As he sat in the darkness, he listened to other visitor's giggling banter. Parents and

children. Lovers. People with someone. People with dreams. People who came in for a silly scare. They all walked past, not noticing him sitting in the shadows.

Finally, a bot on heavy rubber wheels with a bright white light came through ringing an alarm bell to signal closing time. Not wanting to be found lurking in a corner or locked in the stygian darkness, he stood.

The sun was low as he emerged on the other side of the catacombs. Ian thought about dinner, however looking at the beige mud encrusting his clothes, he decided to make his way back to the hotel.

Between the Tether and the Seine, it wasn't hard to find his way.

He ignored the front clerk who signaled him and hurried up the steps to his room. He undressed and put out his clothes for the laundress with instructions.

He remembered the girl from Le République. He thought of the other girl on the bicycle. There were lots of pretty girls in Paris. He could go to a bar and strike up a conversation. He wouldn't forget his rubbers this time.

His stomach rolled again.

"I'm hungry," he said to his reflection.

Instead of going to a pub, he grabbed his YRUniverse that had a message on the front page: *Ian, Please let us know you safely arrived, love Mum*

At the hotel's café, he ordered a bowl of hot soup and the house wine for his first course. He strummed his fingers upon the table then pulled out his YRUniverse and dictated a quick electronic letter.

Dear Mum,

I'm doing fine. The hotel is nice. I went out to a proper French café last night and had some lovely wine, and a nice conversation with a girl.

Today I went for a bit of a yomp touring the neighborhoods. On impulse, I toured the catacombs. Dad would find some of the skulls interesting. Missing teeth, bullet holes, that type of thing. I'm back at the hotel now, sitting down for dinner, but I plan to go out again tonight, so don't worry if you can't reach me.

Much Love, Ian

He hit send.

When he looked up, the waiter delivered an amuse-bouche—a tiny sandwich of cucumbers filled with chevre and sundried tomatoes—and poured him a glass of red wine out of the carafe. He took a bite and the waiter was back with onion soup.

The soup was hot, thick, and coated with cheese, filling his stomach, but Ian scanned the news. An article discussed the estimated expense for the new Tallier Earth Headquarters that would house the Public Liaison Offices for Lunar Colony Serenitatis.

He tapped on it. The attached photograph was of the hole filled with excavators, beside the Tether!

His mind spun. They were actually building the New Tallier Headquarters at the base of the Tether—so they could use it! Maybe the Lunar colony was not a joke... He needed confirmation.

“Is the soup alright?” the waiter asked in accented English.

Ian looked up in surprise. “Oh? Oui, Monsieur, do you know of the large building by the Tether?”

“Tether?”

Raising his hand upward, Ian kept speaking in English. “SpaceTether.” The waiter didn’t seem to understand. Annoyed with himself for not immediately switching to French when he was sitting in Paris, he said, “Le Ascenseur.”

“Le Tallier Groupe Headquarters,” Not missing a beat, the waiter asked, “What would you like for your meat course, Monsieur?”

“Le boeuf.”

With a quick incline of his head, the waiter walked away.

He sat back in his chair and stretched out his fingers. He poured another glass of the wine. He placed his YRUniverse next to his mouth and whispered “Lunar Colony Serenitatis.” Then appreciated no one was around who would care.

A dozen articles came up immediately. Most admonished the lunar colony due to the problems on Earth, but a few pro-colonization articles spoke of lessening Europe’s prison population. He clicked on another interview of Ivonne Tallier’s.

“We must look beyond ourselves, and even our children, if we wish to solve Earth’s problems. We know from our past, space exploration moves science and technology forward.” Ivonne Tallier said, “More importantly, today twenty percent of Europe’s population is behind bars. My proposal will get non-violent offenders out of the prisons and working. It will give these men and women a second chance for a real future.”

Ian took another gulp of wine and bite of soup as his excitement grew. Any colony—especially a prison colony—would need doctors. He might even do his foundation work there, if the attending doctor was willing to accept him.

He checked the communication delay. Less than three seconds! That would easily make for near-normal voice and video conversation. He could stay in contact with Mum and Dad. They could even visit him from time to time.

He noticed a quick electronic note, he tapped on it.

Your mother has gone to bed, but I will show her your note in the morning. She will be relieved to hear you arrived safely. Glad you're having fun, be careful too. If you're talking to girls, make sure you're using rubbers. –Dad

Glad nobody could see Dad's reply, Ian sighed. *What would Dad think if he knew I can't even make it with a prostitute.*

Glancing at his handheld, he realized it was a quarter past eight. He briefly wondered why Mum was in bed at 7:15 Salisbury time, but went back to making his plans.

The waiter brought him a plate of bloody beef with mushrooms. Ian devoured it, finding an appetite he did not know he possessed.

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