

THE SWAPPING DEVICE



a trait swapping story
JohnManTD

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CHAPTER 16

The pre-dawn light of Wednesday painted the Los Angeles sky in bruised shades of purple and grey as I stood with Lila outside the imposing glass-and-steel façade of Finch Tower. The city was still mostly asleep, but inside me, a chaotic symphony of nerves, anticipation, and a strange, almost giddy excitement was reaching a crescendo. Today was the day. The culmination of weeks of increasingly insane artifact-fueled chaos. Today, we either toppled a generational conspiracy of aspiring gods, or we ended up as footnotes in Bill's creepy journal of controlled human assets. No pressure.

I was still Alex Miller, the Amazonian security guard. The towering height, the formidable muscle packed onto an undeniably female frame, the sheer physical presence of it – it was becoming less alien, more an extension of my own will. The tight, ridiculously provocative security uniform felt less like a costume and more like battle armor. My short-cropped blonde hair was tucked neatly, my face set in what I hoped was an expression of professional alertness, though inside, my heart hammered a frantic rhythm against Alex's powerful ribcage. Lila, beside me, was Cassie Bellweather, the ice-queen executive assistant. Her slender, angular frame, clad in an impeccably tailored charcoal pantsuit, radiated cool, untouchable competence. Cassie's sharp grey eyes, currently occupied by Lila's fiery consciousness, scanned the quiet street, missing nothing. The faint European accent that now laced her speech added another layer to her sophisticated disguise.

We'd spent Tuesday "working" our swapped jobs, learning the rhythms of Finch Tower, the faces, the protocols. I'd walked countless miles of plush corridors as Alex, nodded at executives, monitored silent security screens, and felt the subtle deference this powerful female form commanded. Lila, as Cassie, had navigated the labyrinthine world of executive scheduling, dictated memos in a flawless impersonation, and charmed her way into accessing floor plans and staff rosters under the guise of "meeting preparation." And yesterday afternoon, the crucial step: I'd used Lila's ring to implant the sleeper command into the

unsuspecting catering servers. They were primed, ready to become our unwitting puppets. Now, standing in the cool morning air, the weight of what we were about to attempt felt immense.



“Okay,” Lila said, her voice Cassie’s crisp alto, turning to face me. Her grey eyes, usually so sharp and cynical, held a flicker of something softer now – a mixture of determination and a shared, slightly terrified excitement. “One last time. The plan.”

I nodded, my own voice Alex’s deep contralto, feeling the reassuring weight of the Swapper in my tactical vest pocket. “We go in. Assume our roles. You, Cassie, at the meeting table, taking notes, observing. Me, Alex, internal security by the door, also observing. Meeting starts at seven PM. Mid-meeting, catering comes in. Six servers, one for each Council member, including Bill and Finch. As they deliver, I hit them. Swapper. Transfer the ring-command from each server to their assigned Council member.” I paused, taking a breath. “Once the servers leave, and all targets are... mentally suggestible... I give the command. Freeze. Silence.”

“And then we own them,” Lila finished, a predatory glint in Cassie’s cool eyes. “Interrogation. Confessions. And then... we decide their fate.” She let out a shaky breath. “God, just saying it out loud sounds insane.”

“It is insane,” I agreed. “But it’s the only shot we have.”

She reached out, her slender fingers, Cassie’s fingers, lacing through my large, muscular ones. “Good luck, James.”

“You too, Lila.”

She leaned in then, and Cassie Bellweather’s cool, sophisticated lips met mine in a kiss that was pure Lila – fierce, passionate, a silent promise of shared chaos and unwavering partnership. It was a strange, multi-layered intimacy – my mind, her mind, inhabiting these borrowed vessels, yet connecting on a level that transcended the physical shells. As she pulled back, her hand, still influenced by the lingering mental alterations and her own burgeoning confidence, gave one of my massive, vest-straining breasts a firm, appreciative squeeze.

“Damn, Alex,” she murmured, Cassie’s voice laced with Lila’s uninhibited smirk. “These things are a national treasure. Try not to get them shot off tonight, okay?”

I chuckled, Alex’s deep voice rumbling in my chest. “Wouldn’t dream of it.”

With one last shared look, a silent acknowledgment of the abyss we were about to leap into, we turned and walked through the gleaming glass doors of Finch Tower, ready to start our final, fateful shifts as Alex Miller and Cassie Bellweather.

The day crawled by with agonizing slowness, each tick of the clock a drumbeat counting down to the evening’s confrontation. As Alex Miller, my duties were straightforward: patrol the designated executive floors, monitor security feeds in the surprisingly plush security office, occasionally nod at passing executives who barely registered my presence beyond a flicker of acknowledgment for the uniform. The occupation swap made it effortless; Alex’s ingrained knowledge of procedures, access codes, and even the names of most of the regular 47th-floor occupants flowed through me seamlessly.

But inhabiting Alex’s body was a constant, potent reminder of the mission’s stakes, and of the strange journey my own identity was on. This form... it was intoxicating. The sheer physical power was unlike anything I’d ever experienced. Walking felt different, each step solid, grounded, radiating an unshakeable confidence. My muscles, even at rest, felt coiled, ready. The way people subtly deferred, the way men’s eyes would sometimes linger with a mixture of awe and intimidation before quickly looking away... it was a heady cocktail of dominance and female presence.

And the curves. God, the curves. Alex's breasts were magnificent, heavy and dense, spilling from the tactical vest with an almost contemptuous disregard for modesty. They weren't just large; they felt... powerful. Like shields. My hips were wide, my ass a formidable, muscular shelf that strained the seams of the tactical pants. Every time I caught my reflection – in a polished elevator door, a darkened monitor screen – I was struck by the sheer, almost overwhelming femininity of this Amazonian physique. It was a body built for battle, yet undeniably, breathtakingly female. And moving in it, feeling the sway of those hips, the weight of those breasts, the solid strength in those thighs... it felt... right. More than right. It felt like an upgrade. A version of female I hadn't known I craved until I was wearing it.

The day was punctuated by brief, furtive text exchanges with Lila, who, as Cassie, was navigating the equally mundane but far more high-pressure world of executive assistance.

Lila: Finch is a prick. Demanded his coffee be exactly 87.3 degrees Celsius. Had to use a fucking thermometer. This pantsuit is giving me a rash.

Me: Stay strong. At least you're not wearing a tactical vest that feels like it's trying to weaponize your cleavage.

Lila: Oh, please. You're loving the power tits. Don't even try to deny it. Just got the final guest list for tonight. All confirmed. Bill, Finch, and the five Horsemen of the Artifact Apocalypse. No surprises.

Me: Good. Servers are still primed. Clock's ticking.

Lila: Tell me about it. My borrowed clit is already doing a stress-tap-dance. See you at zero hour, Amazon. Don't start the world-saving without me.

The hours dragged. My anticipation built a tight coil in my stomach. I mentally rehearsed the plan, going over every step, every contingency. The Swapper felt heavy and potent in the reinforced pocket of my tactical vest. This was it.

Finally, 6:30 PM. My walkie-talkie crackled. "Miller, report to ground level, west entrance. VIP arrivals."

Showtime.

I strode towards the elevators, Alex's long legs eating up the distance. My heart hammered against my ribs, a frantic drumbeat against the backdrop of forced calm. Outside the west

entrance, a cool evening breeze rustled the ornamental trees. A small contingent of Finch Tower's elite security team was already assembled, looking sharp and alert. I took my place among them, towering over most of the male guards, trying to project an air of bored professionalism.

Then, the first black sedan purred silently up the driveway. Then another. And another. A procession of sleek, expensive vehicles, disgorging their precious cargo. The Council.

One by one, they emerged. All men, as Lila had predicted. Older, mostly, dressed in expensive, impeccably tailored suits that screamed old money and untouchable power. They moved with an air of quiet arrogance, accustomed to deference, their faces impassive, revealing nothing. I scanned them, trying to match faces to the sparse intel Lila had managed to gather.

Hawthorne, a portly man with a florid complexion and small, piggy eyes that darted around with greedy curiosity. Davies, tall and gaunt, with a predatory stillness about him, his thin lips permanently curved in a faint sneer. Sterling, impeccably dressed, silver-haired, exuding an aura of cold, corporate ruthlessness. And Clarkson, younger than the others, perhaps, with a restless energy and a hungry look in his eyes. Alistair Finch wasn't among them yet. Neither was Bill. They must already be upstairs.

My role, as Alex Miller, was to provide a visible security presence, to escort these "high value guests" to the express elevator that would whisk them to the 47th-floor Gamma Conference Room. I fell into step beside Hawthorne and Davies as they headed towards the entrance, my hand instinctively resting near the Swapper in my vest. Keep calm. Act natural. You're just a highly intimidating, incredibly endowed security guard doing her job.

Inside the elevator, the air grew thick with unspoken tension and expensive cologne. The four Council members stood silently, ignoring me and the other junior guard crammed in with them. Then, Hawthorne, the portly one with the piggy eyes, turned slightly, his gaze landing on my chest. A slimy, appreciative smirk spread across his face.

"Well, well, Alex," he said, his voice a low, oily rumble. "Good to see you again. Looking... exceptionally robust this evening." His eyes lingered on my breasts, which were practically at his eye level thanks to my height and the vest's aggressive uplift. Before I could react, his hand shot out, fat fingers closing around my right breast, giving it a hard, possessive squeeze.

Rage, white-hot and instantaneous, surged through me. This pig. This entitled, disgusting pig. My hand shot up, swatting his away with a force that made his fingers crack against each other. The sound echoed loudly in the confined space. "Don't touch me," I snarled, Alex's deep voice laced with pure, unadulterated venom.

Hawthorne recoiled, his eyes widening in genuine surprise, a flicker of fear replacing the lecherous smirk. He stared at my hand, then back at my face, utter confusion dawning. The other Council members froze, looking startled. Shit. Did I just blow it? Reacting like that? Alex Miller wouldn't have swatted his hand away. She would have endured. Smiled, maybe.

My heart pounded. I could take any one of these old fuckers in a physical fight, even all of them. Alex's body hummed with barely contained power. But they were wielders. This could escalate. Fast.

Then, Hawthorne did something unexpected. He laughed. A short, surprised bark of amusement. "Well, now!" he chortled, rubbing his stinging fingers. "Guess old Bill finally decided to tone down your programming a bit, eh, Alex? Give you a little more... spirit?" He looked almost pleased. "Good. I like a little fight. Makes the eventual surrender all the sweeter." He winked, a disgusting, knowing look.

Next, Davies, the gaunt one, spoke up, his voice a dry rasp. "Knock it off, Hawthorne. You're embarrassing yourself. And us." He glanced at me with cold disinterest.

Sterling, the silver-haired one, chuckled dryly. "Honestly, Hawthorne, that's why you're the only one here Bill has never actually let fuck Alex, isn't it? No respect for the merchandise."

My blood ran cold. The casual cruelty, the blatant objectification... So, it wasn't just Bill. They all knew. They all participated. Alex's body, this incredible, powerful female form I inhabited, had been passed around, used, violated by these entitled old men. The rage I felt earlier intensified, hardening into a cold, diamond-sharp fury. Poor Alex. Poor Amelie, Celeste, all of them. They weren't just staff; they were a shared harem, a collection of living fuck-dolls for the Council's pleasure. The thought made me physically sick. And it solidified my resolve. These men weren't just going to be controlled; they were going to pay.

The elevator dinged, arriving at the 47th floor. The doors slid open. The Council members filed out, Hawthorne shooting me one last lecherous, amused glance. I followed, my face a mask of professional indifference, but inside, a storm was raging.

We walked down the hushed, carpeted corridor towards the Gamma Conference Room. The doors were already open. And standing just inside, greeting the arriving members, were Bill Peterson and another man I didn't recognize – tall, impeccably dressed in a bespoke dark suit, with silver hair swept back from a high forehead, and cold, intelligent eyes that seemed to miss nothing. He exuded an aura of quiet, ruthless authority. This had to be Alistair Finch.

Bill spotted me, his usual bland smile firmly in place. "Ah, Alex. Excellent. The guests are arriving." He gestured for the Council members to enter. As the last one filed past, Bill turned to me. "You can wait by the door, Alex. Inside. But... no need for you to be privy to the discussions. Just... be deaf for the duration of the meeting, understand?" He tapped his temple significantly.

Deaf? Programmed deafness? So they could speak freely, without worrying about the hired help overhearing their nefarious plans. Lucky for us, I wasn't really Alex Miller. The command doesn't work on me. And my hearing was perfectly fine.

One of the Council members – Sterling, I think – paused. "Are you sure that's wise, Bill? Having her in the room at all?"

Bill waved a dismissive hand. "Perfectly safe, Sterling. Alex is programmed to respond only to my direct commands during these sessions. As far as your deliberations are concerned, she might as well be a statue. A very well-built statue, of course." He chuckled, and the other members joined in, their laughter echoing unpleasantly.

I forced myself to nod, maintaining Alex's impassive expression, and took up my position just inside the door, back against the wall. From here, I had a clear view of the entire room. The massive mahogany conference table, the plush leather chairs, the state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment. And, sitting discreetly at a small side table, stylus poised over a tablet, was Lila, in Cassie Bellweather's sharp, elegant form. She glanced up as I entered, her cool grey eyes meeting mine for a fraction of a second. A tiny, almost imperceptible wink. Game on.

The Council members took their seats around the table. Bill sat at one end, Alistair Finch at the other, assuming the clear positions of leadership. The atmosphere grew heavy, charged with anticipation. This was it. The inner sanctum.

The meeting began with the usual corporate pleasantries and, a brief review of the agenda. Then, Clarkson, the younger, restless-looking one, cleared his throat and launched into the

first major topic.

“Alright, gentlemen,” he began, his voice crisp and businesslike. “The First Artifact. As you all know, its potential rediscovery is the primary reason for this extraordinary session.” He paused, his gaze sweeping the table. “To reiterate for clarity: we are talking about an artifact of unprecedented power. One that, according to all historical data and legend, bypasses the inherent wielder protection. It can directly affect other artifact users, rewrite their realities, potentially even strip them of their own artifacts or alter their very beings. Its capabilities, frankly, are still largely unknown beyond that core, terrifying function.”

He clicked a remote, and a holographic display shimmered into existence above the center of the table, showing stylized, ancient-looking scrolls and cryptic symbols. “Our agreed-upon plan, should we successfully secure this artifact,” Clarkson continued, “remains as follows: Phase One, systematic neutralization of all known independent wielders. Using the First Artifact, we compel their submission, demand the surrender of their artifacts. Resistance will be... regrettable, but swiftly dealt with. Phase Two, with all competing artifact power consolidated under Council control, we begin the systematic infiltration and acquisition of global governmental structures. Financial institutions, military commands, political offices. One by one, using our combined, unopposed artifact arsenal, we establish a new world order. Our order.”

A murmur of grim satisfaction went around the table. These men were serious. This wasn't just idle talk; it was a meticulously planned coup d'état on a planetary scale.

Then Davies, the gaunt, sneering one, spoke up, his voice a dry rasp. “A minor addendum, if I may, to Phase One.” All eyes turned to him. “While compulsion is efficient, it is also... wasteful. Many of these independent wielders possess unique skills, deep knowledge of their particular artifacts. Rather than simply stripping them and casting them aside, or... eliminating them... perhaps we should offer a choice. Swear fealty to the Council, integrate their powers into our structure, serve the new order. Those who refuse, of course, face the original protocol. But why discard potentially valuable assets, experienced talent, if they can be... persuaded to see the wisdom of our cause?”

Bill scoffed. “Persuaded? Davies, these are anarchists, individualists. They value their petty freedoms above all else. Trusting them, even under duress, is foolish. They'll look for any opportunity to betray us.”

“Perhaps,” Davies conceded with a thin smile. “But the First Artifact would ensure their continued... cooperation, would it not? A little mental recalibration now and then? And the prospect of wielding their powers on a grander scale, as part of a truly dominant force, might appeal to some of their baser ambitions.”

Finch, who had been listening silently, his cold eyes missing nothing, finally spoke, his voice smooth, cultured, utterly devoid of emotion. “An interesting proposition, Davies. Efficiency has its merits. And talent, properly managed, is always an asset.” He looked around the table. “We will put it to a vote. All in favor of Davies’ addendum – offering a path to integration for cooperative wielders, under strict Council oversight and First Artifact enforcement?”

Hands went up. Davies, Sterling, Clarkson, even Hawthorne. Four in favor. Bill glowered but kept his hand down. Finch didn’t vote, maintaining his role as impartial chairman, it seemed.

“The motion passes,” Finch declared calmly. “Bill, your objections are noted. However, the Council will, of course, retain ultimate control and discretionary use of the First Artifact. Any... ‘integrated’ wielders will be closely monitored. Their loyalty will be... assured.” The unspoken threat hung heavy in the air. “Now,” Finch continued, steepling his fingers. “The question of who, precisely, will wield this First Artifact, once secured. It is a power too great for committee, too vital for divided control.”

He paused dramatically, his gaze sweeping each member of the Council. Then, he rose slowly to his feet, a tall, imposing figure despite his lack of overt physical power. “As the current head of this Council,” he announced, his voice resonating with quiet authority, “as the one who has dedicated his life to restoring the honor and ambition of my family line, and, perhaps most pertinently,” a flicker of something cold and bitter crossed his features, “as the only one among you currently without a personal artifact, thanks to the treachery that robbed my father of his Chronos Anchor... I believe the responsibility, the burden, and the right to wield the First Artifact falls to me.”

A stunned silence filled the room. Bill looked like he was about to protest, his face purpling slightly, but Finch cut him off with a sharp, dismissive gesture. “My leadership is not in question. My commitment is absolute. The First Artifact, in my hands, will be the instrument that finally achieves what my father, and his father before him, only dreamed of. A world sculpted to our design. Order restored. Our rightful place assured.” He sat back down, the declaration hanging in the air, absolute and unchallengeable.

Okay. So Finch planned to be the god-king. Good to know.

The meeting moved on. Bill took the floor next, his earlier agitation replaced by a forced, businesslike tone as he updated them on the search for the First Artifact. He mentioned the announcement he'd made at the artifact club party, designed to flush out any leads or nervous chatter. He recounted his "pointless" lunch meeting with Lila, dismissing her as a minor wielder with flimsy rumors. He detailed a few other leads he was pursuing – a black market artifact dealer in Macao who'd heard whispers of a device that could 'remix souls,' an old wielder in hiding in the Swiss Alps who supposedly collected 'forbidden' artifacts. It all sounded like dead ends and wild goose chases, designed to make him look busy and proactive. He was clearly playing his own game, trying to secure the artifact for himself before Finch could claim it. The internal power struggles within this Council were palpable.

"Overall," Bill concluded, forcing a confident smile, "the search is progressing smoothly. My network is activated. It is only a matter of time before the wielder and the artifact are identified and... secured."

"Excellent, Bill," Finch said coolly, though his eyes held a hint of skepticism. "See that it is. Time is a luxury we are rapidly running out of." He glanced at his expensive watch. "Alright. I believe this is a good juncture for a refreshment break before we move on to financial allocations and Project Nightingale updates. Ten minutes, gentlemen."

This was it. My cue. My heart hammered against Alex's ribs. The servers.

As if on cue, a discreet chime sounded, and a side door opened. One by one, the six catering servers I'd... 'prepared'... yesterday filed into the room. They were young, dressed in crisp black and white uniforms, faces carefully neutral as they moved towards the conference table, each carrying a silver tray laden with covered dishes and carafes. One server for each Council member, exactly as the staffing manifest had indicated. Perfect.

My hand, Alex's large, capable hand, slipped into the reinforced pocket of my tactical vest, fingers closing around the smooth, familiar shape of the Swapper. Lila (Cassie) caught my eye from across the room, her expression a mixture of nervous tension and fierce anticipation. She gave a tiny, almost imperceptible nod.

The servers began placing the food and drinks before each Council member. Hawthorne was already reaching greedily for a plate of miniature quiches. Davies waved away his server

with an impatient gesture. Sterling accepted a glass of sparkling water with a curt nod. Clarkson was eyeing a platter of shrimp cocktail. Bill was already pouring himself a large glass of iced tea.

This was my window. It was chaotic, people moving, talking softly. Perfect cover for discreet, targeted swaps.

I focused on the first server, a young woman with dark hair pulled back in a neat bun, currently placing a small bowl of olives in front of Hawthorne. My thumb found the button on the Swapper.

Target Dark-Haired Server. Target Hawthorne. Trait: "Ring-Implanted Mental Command State." Click. Zzzztfff.

A faint hum, lost in the room's ambient noise. The server didn't react. Hawthorne, mid-chew on an olive, paused for a fraction of a second, a flicker of confusion in his piggy eyes, then shrugged and reached for another. It worked. The command state transferred. One down.

Next, Davies. His server, a lanky young man, was carefully arranging a fruit platter. Target Lanky Server. Target Davies. Same trait. Click. Zzzztfff. Davies flinched almost imperceptibly, then resumed his disdainful glare at the fruit. Two down.

Sterling. Clarkson. Bill. One by one, as their servers approached, I made the swap. Each time, a tiny, almost invisible ripple, a fractional pause in their movements, quickly dismissed. Five down. All Council members except Finch now had the 'obey' command nestled deep in their subconscious, ready to be activated.

My gaze flicked to Alistair Finch, sitting at the head of the table. He hadn't ordered food. He wasn't being served. He was sipping water from a glass he'd poured himself earlier, looking preoccupied, his cold eyes distant, already focused on the next phase of the meeting, or perhaps on his grand plans for world domination. No server beside him. No target for the command transfer.

Shit. This wasn't part of the plan. How could I have missed this? Lila had noticed too. Her cool grey eyes met mine across the room, sharp with alarm. She pushed her chair back slightly, rising gracefully to her feet. "Mr. Finch?" she asked, her voice Cassie's crisp, professional tone. "It seems they've overlooked your refreshments. May I fetch you something

from the service cart?" She gestured towards the servers, who were now discreetly retreating towards the side door.

Finch looked up, his gaze distant, almost annoyed by the interruption. "No, thank you, Ms. Bellweather," he said dismissively. "I informed the chef prior to the meeting that I would not be partaking. I find hunger sharpens the intellect." He waved a hand, already turning back to his notes. "Carry on."

Lila shot me a frustrated, almost panicked glare over Finch's shoulder. He wasn't eating. No server, no swap. Our meticulously crafted plan had a gaping, Finch-sized hole in it.

She walked slowly back towards her seat, passing close to my position by the door. As she drew level, she whispered, her voice barely audible, "What do we do? He's the main target! Without him under control..."

"Wait and see," I whispered back, my mind racing. "He's not a wielder, remember? We can still use the ring on him directly if we have to. It's riskier, but... let's see how this plays out first."

Lila nodded curtly, her face tight with worry, and resumed her seat. The servers filed out, closing the side door behind them. The Council members began to pick at their food, the atmosphere slightly more relaxed now. All except Finch, who remained aloof, tapping his pen against a notepad, radiating impatient authority.

The ten-minute break stretched on. My heart pounded a frantic rhythm. Five out of six Council members were primed. But Finch, the leader, the one who planned to wield the First Artifact... he was still a wildcard.

After what felt like an eternity, Finch cleared his throat, rapping his knuckles sharply on the table. "Alright, gentlemen, back to business." The other Council members hastily put down their forks, wiping their mouths, attention snapping back to him.

As Finch began to outline the next agenda item – something about consolidating offshore financial assets – Sterling, the silver-haired one, leaned back in his chair, a smirk playing on his lips. "Alistair," he said, his tone laced with a teasing, almost goading quality, "forgive my impertinence, but a thought occurs. You speak of wielding the First Artifact, of wielding ultimate power. And yet... you yourself are, as you so frequently remind us, currently without a personal artifact. What's to stop any one of us," he gestured vaguely around the table, "from

simply... using our own gifts on you? Neutralizing you before you even lay hands on this mythical artifact? You're not a wielder, our artifacts will work on you. You'd be defenseless against a direct wielder assault."

The air in the room crackled. It was a direct challenge, thinly veiled in boardroom banter. Several other Council members shifted uncomfortably. Bill looked particularly nervous.

Alistair Finch went very still. His cold eyes fixed on Sterling, and a slow, dangerous smile spread across his lips. It was the smile of a predator that knew it had already won. He rose slowly from his chair, the movement deliberate, almost theatrical. He walked around the table, stopping directly behind Sterling, placing his hands lightly on the back of the man's chair. Sterling visibly tensed.

"An excellent question, Sterling," Finch said, his voice a low, silken purr that sent shivers down my spine, even from across the room. "A question many have pondered, I'm sure. About my... vulnerability." He leaned down, his lips close to Sterling's ear. "Allow me to clarify a small, long-held misconception."

He straightened up, his gaze sweeping the entire table now. "My father, Reginald Finch, as you all know, wielded the Chronos Anchor. A formidable artifact. What is perhaps less well known," his smile widened, becoming almost wolfish, "is that before his... unfortunate encounter with those meddling, short-sighted fools who saw fit to strip him of my birthright... he took certain precautions. He understood the nature of lineage, of legacy." Finch paused, letting the suspense build. "He passed the core essence of the Chronos Anchor, its wielder-bond, its inherent protections, to me. His heir. I am a wielder, gentlemen. I have always been a wielder. The artifact itself may be lost, neutralized, hidden away by cowards. But its power, its protection, its mark on my very being... that remains."

A collective gasp went around the table. Bill looked utterly stunned. Lila shot me a wide-eyed, panicked look. Finch was a wielder? This changed everything. Our primary leverage – his supposed non-wielder status – was gone.

"So, by all means, Sterling," Finch continued, his voice dripping with contemptuous amusement, gesturing towards the now-pale Council member. "Test your little freeze ray trinket on me. See what happens."

Sterling swallowed hard, his bravado clearly deserting him. He fumbled in his jacket pocket,

producing a small, metallic device that looked like a miniature laser pointer. Hawthorne's "freeze ray," presumably. He aimed it at Finch with a visibly trembling hand. "Now, Alistair, there's no need for theatrics..."

"Oh, I insist," Finch purred. "For science. And for the edification of our colleagues."

With a reluctant sigh, Sterling pressed the button on his device. A faint blue beam shot out, hitting Finch square in the chest. Finch didn't even flinch. He just stood there, smiling coolly, completely unaffected. The blue beam dissipated harmlessly against his expensive suit.

"Well, now," Sterling stammered, looking at his device in disbelief. "That's... that's impossible. It always works..."

Hawthorne, ever the opportunist, snorted. "Told you your toy was useless, Sterling."

Sterling flushed angrily. "It is not useless! It worked perfectly fine this morning on that annoying intern who kept stealing my parking spot!" To prove his point, he whirled, aiming the freeze ray randomly. His gaze landed on Lila, still sitting at the side table, diligently pretending to take notes. "See? It works on anyone who isn't a wielder!" He pressed the button again.

The blue beam lanced out, hitting Lila square in the shoulder. Bill grumbled, "Sterling, for God's sake, don't go freezing my damn assistant..."

But Lila didn't freeze. She looked up from her tablet, a flicker of surprise in Cassie's cool grey eyes, then... nothing. She just blinked, brushed her shoulder absently where the beam had hit, and looked around with mild confusion, as if wondering what the fuss was about.

The entire room stared. Sterling's jaw dropped. Bill looked bewildered. Even Finch seemed momentarily taken aback.

Lila, a wielder, hadn't frozen. Wielder protection had kicked in, as expected. But to everyone else in this room, Cassie Bellweather was just a normal, non-wielder executive assistant. Her immunity was inexplicable. Unless...

Alistair Finch's eyes narrowed, his gaze snapping towards Lila, sharp and piercing. The cool amusement vanished, replaced by a chilling, predatory stillness. "Well, now," he said softly, his voice dangerously low. "That is interesting." He took a slow, deliberate step towards Lila. "It seems Ms. Bellweather has some hidden talents." He stopped directly in front of her, looking down into her face. "Or perhaps... Ms. Bellweather isn't quite who she appears to be." His eyes

flicked towards me, then back to Lila, a flicker of dawning, horrifying realization in them.

“That’s not Cassie,” Finch declared, his voice ringing out in the sudden silence, sharp as a shard of ice. “That’s a wielder. In disguise!”

All hell broke loose.

The words hung in the air for a nanosecond, a death knell. Then, chaos erupted. Davies, the gaunt one, was the first to move, lunging across the small space separating him from Lila with surprising speed. His bony hand clamped over her mouth, stifling any cry, while his other arm snaked around her waist, pinning her slender arms to her sides, dragging her backwards off her chair. Lila thrashed, Cassie’s body surprisingly strong, but Davies was like a starving wolf, all sinew and desperate strength.

Sterling, Clarkson, and Hawthorne, momentarily stunned by Finch’s declaration, recovered quickly. Their faces, moments ago complacent or bored, were now masks of alarm, of aggression. They weren’t reaching for artifacts – too slow, too unpredictable, and didn’t work against a wielder. They were reaching inside their expensive suit jackets, pulling out sleek, deadly-looking semi-automatic pistols, the kind that spoke of serious, professional violence, not just wielder squabbles. Their movements were practiced, efficient. These men weren’t just boardroom bullies; they were prepared for wetwork. Guns snapped up, muzzles converging on Lila, still struggling in Davies’ grasp.

Alistair Finch didn’t move towards Lila. Instead, his cold blue eyes, blazing with a terrifying mixture of fury and triumph, locked onto mine. He raised his own pistol, a heavy, silver-plated revolver that looked like a museum piece but was clearly functional, aiming it directly at my chest – at Alex Miller’s magnificent, vest-strained chest. “And you, you didn’t spring to action against this imposter” he hissed, his voice a low, venomous snarl. “The Amazon. Another imposter. Another piece of filth defiling my Council. We’ve been infiltrated.” He was about to fire.

No time to think. No time for finesse. Pure, primal instinct took over.

“EVERYONE STOP!” I roared, Alex’s deep contralto voice booming through the room, amplified by adrenaline and sheer desperation. My hand, already gripping the Swapper inside my vest, pressed the activation button, sending out the pre-loaded command Lila’s ring had forged, the command I’d just swapped into five powerful, unsuspecting minds. “PIN DOWN

FINCH! THEN FREEZE IN PLACE! NOW!"

The effect was instantaneous. Cataclysmic.

Hawthorne, Davies, Sterling, and Clarkson – the four Council members I'd successfully 'primed' – froze mid-action. But not before their ring-compelled directive to "obey James or Lila" and "perform orders to the best of their ability" overrode their immediate intent to shoot Lila. Their guns, already aimed, wavered. Their focus shifted. The new command – "Pin down Finch!" – slammed into their brains.

Davies, still grappling with Lila, suddenly released her, shoving her roughly towards the wall as he lunged, not at her, but towards Alistair Finch, his gaunt face a mask of confused, programmed aggression. Sterling and Clarkson, guns still raised, pivoted awkwardly, their movements jerky and unnatural, as they too turned towards Finch, their original murderous intent now redirected by my command. Hawthorne, slower on the uptake, looked bewildered for a moment, then let out a confused grunt and lumbered towards Finch as well.

Bill Peterson, at the end of the table, who had also received the command swap, shot to his feet, his face a mask of utter terror and confusion, and joined the dogpile, flailing incompetently but with programmed determination towards his supposed leader.

Alistair Finch, however, was a wielder without the swap. My command had no direct hold on him. He reacted with lightning speed. As Davies lunged, Finch sidestepped with surprising agility, bringing the butt of his heavy silver revolver down in a vicious arc onto Davies' outstretched arm. A sickening crack echoed through the room. Davies screamed, clutching his arm limb, collapsing to the floor.

Finch's shot at Lila, which he'd been about to take, was thrown off target as Hawthorne, in his clumsy, compelled attempt to "pin him down," cannoned into Finch's side. The silver revolver discharged with a deafening roar, the bullet burying itself harmlessly in the expensive mahogany paneling of the far wall, inches from where Lila was scrambling to her feet, her face pale but her eyes blazing.

Finch snarled, shoving Hawthorne away with contemptuous ease. He saw what was happening. He saw the other Council members, their faces blank with programmed obedience, still trying to converge on him. He saw me, standing by the door, the Swapper still clutched in my hand, Alex's powerful form radiating an authority that was clearly not part of

her original programming.

His cold blue eyes, filled with a mixture of disbelief, murderous rage, and a dawning, horrifying understanding, locked onto mine. For a split second, the entire chaotic scene seemed to freeze, our gazes meeting across the suddenly silent room.

“You,” Alistair Finch hissed, his voice a low, venomous whisper that cut through the lingering echo of the gunshot. “The Swapper. The First Artifact. It’s you, isn’t it?”

Then, before Sterling or Clarkson or the flailing Bill could reach him, before I could even think to issue another command, Alistair Finch moved. He didn’t run towards the main door, where I stood. Instead, he spun on his heel, striking a small, almost invisible button on the ornate fireplace mantelpiece. A section of the stone wall beside the fireplace slid silently, smoothly inwards, revealing a dark, narrow opening. A hidden exit.

With one last look of pure, unadulterated hatred directed at me, Alistair Finch darted into the darkness. The stone panel slid silently back into place, leaving no trace of the escape route. He was gone.

Lila scrambled to her feet, rushing over to stand beside me, her breath coming in ragged gasps. “Holy shit, James,” she whispered, her borrowed European accent thick with shock. “He got away! Finch got away!”

“I know,” I said, Alex’s deep voice grim. My mind was still reeling from the sudden explosion of violence, the narrow escape. Finch was gone. But the rest of them... I looked at the remaining Council members. Sterling and Clarkson had frozen mid-lunge, their faces blank, guns still held awkwardly. Hawthorne was on his hands and knees, panting, looking confused. Davies was writhing on the floor, cradling his broken arm, moaning in pain. And Bill Peterson... Bill was standing frozen near the table, his face a mask of pure, abject terror, his eyes wide and staring.

We had lost Alistair Finch, the mastermind. But we had the Council. We had Bill. And for now, that had to be enough.

I took a deep, steadying breath, Alex’s powerful lungs filling with air. The adrenaline was still pounding through me, but a cold, hard clarity was beginning to assert itself. Time to take control. Properly.

“Lila, check Davies’ arm, see if it’s broken” I asked, Alex’s voice ringing with an authority that surprised even me. “The rest of you,” I addressed the frozen Council members, “unfreeze. Drop your weapons. Carefully.”

Sterling and Clarkson, their faces still blank with compulsion, slowly lowered their pistols, placing them carefully on the mahogany table. Hawthorne, still on his hands and knees, just looked bewildered. Bill remained frozen, his eyes darting frantically between me and Lila.

“Bill,” I said, my voice softer now but no less firm. “You can move and talk. But you will sit. In that chair.” I pointed to one of the plush leather chairs at the table. “Securely. And you will not try to leave, or use any artifacts, or do anything other than what I tell you to do. Understood?”

Bill, his face pale and sweaty, nodded jerkily, then stumbled towards the indicated chair, collapsing into it like a puppet with its strings cut. He stared at me, his mouth opening and closing silently for a moment.

“Who... who are you?” he finally managed, his voice a hoarse whisper. “What... what have you done?”

I walked slowly towards him, Alex’s formidable presence radiating an aura of quiet menace. Lila, having quickly ascertained that Davies’ arm was indeed broken but not life-threatening, was now efficiently collecting the discarded pistols from the table, her movements quick and precise in Cassie’s slender form.

“We,” I said, stopping in front of Bill, looking down at him from Alex’s towering height, “are the meddling wielders who lack vision, Bill. The ones who fail to grasp the potential, the necessity of order. Remember?” I quoted his own words back at him from the email I’d read in his office.

Bill’s eyes widened further, a flicker of dawning, horrified recognition in them. “The office... you were in my office? But... Amelie...”

“I took control of her body temporarily to infiltrate your council.” I said calmly. “Along with Alex Miller and Cassie Bellweather. Or rather, their bodies. Their minds are... elsewhere, temporarily.” I held up the Swapper, letting him get a good look at its sleek, unassuming form. “This,” I said, “is what you’ve been looking for, isn’t it, Bill? The First Artifact. The Swapper.”

Bill stared at the device, his face a mixture of terror, disbelief, and a strange, almost covetous awe. “No...” he whispered. “It can’t be... It’s just a legend... a myth...”

“Oh, it’s real, Bill,” Lila said, stepping up beside me, Cassie’s cool grey eyes glinting with grim satisfaction as she laid the collected pistols on the table, well out of reach. “And it belongs to James now. Or rather,” she smirked, “James belongs to it.”

“James? The new wielder? From the Party”. His eyes widened, then he turned to the swapper. “I don’t believe you,” Bill stammered, shaking his head.

“Want a demonstration, Bill?” I asked, Alex’s voice dangerously soft. Before he could answer, I focused on him, then on Lila. Target Bill. Target Lila. Trait: “Entire Body and Clothes.” Click. Zzzztttt.

The world did its sickening lurch. Bill screamed, a high-pitched, terrified sound, as his familiar, portly male form dissolved, replaced instantly by Cassie Bellweather’s slender, angular, high-fashion physique. He was still sitting in the chair, but now he was a woman, wearing a charcoal grey pantsuit that hung loosely on his new, narrower frame. Across the room, Lila let out a startled yelp as she suddenly found herself inhabiting Bill’s middle-aged, slightly soft male body, wearing his expensive but rumpled suit.

Bill stared down at his new, delicate hands, his small, flat chest, then reached down, fumbling between his legs with a look of utter horror. “What... what have you done to me?!” he shrieked, Cassie’s crisp European accent making his panic sound almost comical.

Lila looked equally disgusted, running a hand over Bill’s thinning hair, then patting his paunch with revulsion. “Ugh, James, really? You had to put me in this slob-monster? I feel... greasy.”

“Just proving a point,” I said calmly, though seeing Bill as Cassie was profoundly unsettling, and Lila as Bill was just... wrong. I quickly groped Bill’s new, small breast through the pantsuit jacket, then swapped them back.

They snapped back to their original (borrowed, in Lila’s case) forms. Bill was himself again, panting, looking like he was about to have a heart attack. Lila shuddered, smoothing down her pantsuit with a look of profound relief.

“Now do you believe me, Bill? You’re both wielders, and I used my artifact on you both.” I

asked.

He just stared at me, speechless, his face ashen.

“Good.” I wasn’t done. “Let’s explore some of the Swapper’s other... features.” Target Bill. Target me. Trait: “Voice.” Click. Zzzztttt.

“What are you—?” Bill began, but the voice that came out was Alex’s deep, authoritative contralto. He clapped a hand over his mouth, eyes wide with terror. My own voice, as I spoke, was now Bill’s slightly reedy, nervous tenor. “Impressive, isn’t it, Bill? How easily reality can be... rearranged.”

Target Bill. Target me. Trait: “Breasts.” Click. Zzzztttt. Bill screamed again, a strangled, terrified sound, as his tailored suit jacket suddenly strained, then ripped at the seams, his shirt buttons popping as Alex’s massive, muscular F-cup breasts erupted onto his chest. They looked utterly grotesque on his portly frame. My own chest, Alex’s chest, deflated instantly, leaving the tactical vest hanging loose, empty. The sensation of losing that weight, that power, was surprisingly disconcerting.

“And for the grand finale,” I said, my voice (Bill’s voice) dripping with mock solemnity. Target Bill. Target Lila. Trait: “Sexual Attraction Preference.” Click. Zzzztttt.

Bill’s eyes glazed over for a moment, then refocused, widening with a new, dawning horror as his internal landscape presumably did a violent, unwanted reshuffle. He looked at me – at Alex’s towering, powerful female form – and a strange, conflicted expression crossed his face. Disgust warring with... something else. Something disturbingly like... appreciation? He then glanced instinctively towards his own backside, a flicker of confused, programmed desire in his eyes.

Lila shuddered beside me. “Ugh, James, no!” She looked at Bill with profound revulsion. “The thought of that perv wanting to get bent over with my doggystyle fetish... I think I’m gonna be sick.” She then paused, a thoughtful, almost predatory look entering Cassie’s cool grey eyes. “Although... the other stuff you swapped into him... the being attracted to men part... that’s actually kind of interesting. Seeing him squirm, knowing his brain is screaming ‘Yes, please!’ to cock while his whole being is repulsed... there’s a certain poetic justice to it.” Her face then cringed as she thought about her own new sexual preferences thanks to bill “But the domination stuff, Bill’s fucked-up kinks, the need to control and degrade women... I

can feel that shit bubbling up in me now, James, and it's making my skin crawl! Get it out! Get it out now!"

I quickly swapped the complex web of attractions and fetishes back to their original owners, along with the breasts and voice. leaving Bill just with the unwelcome breasts and Alex's voice for a moment longer. "Alright, alright, relax," I said to Lila. "Point proven, I think." I swapped Bill's voice and breasts back to their originals, restoring him to his normal, if terrified, state.

Bill sat there, trembling, his face pale, his suit jacket still ripped. He looked utterly broken. Defeated. "Now, Bill," I said, Alex's deep voice returning to my own throat, resonating with quiet power. "Let's talk about Alistair Finch. Where is he? That secret exit... where does it lead?"

Bill shook his head, his eyes still wide with residual terror. "I... I don't know," he stammered. "Truly. Alistair... he's always been secretive. Paranoid. That tunnel... he had it installed years ago. Said it was for... contingencies. Nobody knows where it goes. Not even me. He only ever uses it himself. He attends these Council meetings four times a year, stays at Finch Tower for a few days, then... vanishes. We communicate through encrypted channels, intermediaries. His real base of operations... it's a complete mystery."

I focused my intent, leveraging the lingering power of the command I'd swapped into him. "Tell me the truth, Bill."

He flinched as if struck, but his answer remained the same. "I am telling the truth! I swear! I don't know where Finch is! He could be anywhere!"

I studied his face. He looked terrified, yes, but also... sincere? The ring-command, even diluted through the Swapper, seemed to compel honesty. Maybe he really didn't know.

"Is he a threat?" I pressed. "Without the Council, without his resources, without the First Artifact... can he still hurt us?"

Bill hesitated, then answered, the compulsion forcing the words out. "Honestly... I don't know. Maybe. Maybe not. He doesn't have a personal, tangible artifact anymore, true. And with the Council... neutralized... his financial power, his network... it's crippled. But he's still Alistair Finch. He's a wielder by lineage, as he so dramatically demonstrated. He's intelligent, ruthless, patient. And he knows about you now. About the Swapper. He might lay low for years, decades

even, biding his time, rebuilding, looking for an opportunity. Or he might just... disappear, accept defeat. He's unpredictable. But a Finch never truly forgives. Or forgets."

A shiver ran down my spine. An unkillable boogeyman, lurking in the shadows. That was an unnerving thought. But... a problem for another day. Right now, we had more immediate concerns.

"So, what now, James?" Bill asked, his voice barely a whisper, all bluster gone. "What do you... what do you want from us?"

I looked at him, at this broken, pathetic man who had lorded his power over so many, who had sculpted women into mindless sex dolls, who had dreamed of godhood. And I felt... nothing but cold contempt. "Your days of controlling those women are over, Bill," I said flatly.

Just then, Lila spoke up, a new, dangerous glint in her cool grey eyes. "Actually, James," she said, a slow, predatory smile spreading across Cassie's sharp features. "I have an idea. A rather fitting one, I think." She nodded towards the side door. "Remember those nice young women who served us refreshments?" She walked over, opened the door, and walked out. When she returned moments later, one by one the servers filed back into the room, their faces blank, expectant, awaiting orders. Lila must have used her ring to control them. They were all still in their crisp black and white uniforms.

Bill grunted in frustration and confusion as the six servers stood silently before us. Lila turned to me, her smile widening. "Give them a taste of their own medicine, James," she purred, gesturing towards the terrified, mind-controlled Council members. "Let's see how they like being on the receiving end of absolute, arbitrary power."

I understood instantly. My own smile matched hers, cold and sharp. Bill looked from the servers to me, then back to the Council, a dawning horror in his eyes. "What... what are you going to do?" he whispered.

I turned to him, Alex's deep voice laced with icy satisfaction. "I'm going to explain a few things about the Swapper, Bill. You see, while it doesn't permanently alter reality for wielders like yourselves... for non-wielders? For regular people like these fine young men here?" I gestured to the servers. "For them, reality rewrites itself. Seamlessly. They won't even notice a change. They'll just... accept it as how things have always been." I paused, letting the implication sink in. "But you, Bill? You and your Council buddies? You'll remember. You'll

experience every single shift. Every little tweak.”

I then issued a command to Bill. “Follow me. Silently. And do nothing to draw attention.” Bill, compelled, rose unsteadily and followed me out of the conference room, Lila bringing up the rear, the other Council members still frozen in the corner under my previous command.

We walked down the silent corridors of the 47th floor to the main reception area. A different receptionist was on duty now, a young woman idly scrolling through her phone.

“Watch this, Bill,” I said quietly. Target me. Target Receptionist. Trait: “Muscles.” Click. Zzzztttt.

Instantly, Alex’s formidable physique seemed to shrink, soften. My muscles deflated, strength ebbing away, leaving me feeling... smaller. Weaker. Still tall, still female, but undeniably less powerful. Across the reception area, the young woman suddenly sat bolt upright, her shoulders broadening, her arms thickening beneath her blouse. She flexed her hands, a look of mild surprise on her face, then shrugged and went back to her phone, completely oblivious to her sudden, significant muscle gain. Nobody else in the sparsely populated lobby even glanced up. Bill, however, stared, his jaw slack, his face ashen. The casual, invisible alteration of reality was clearly hitting him hard.

We returned to the conference room, Bill looking even more terrified than before. He stumbled back to his chair.

“The possibilities, Bill,” I said softly, Alex’s voice regaining some of its lost power as I swapped the muscles back from the receptionist. “You could shape the world, rewrite history, and nobody would ever know. World domination, handed to you on a silver platter. If you had this device.” I let the words hang, twisting the knife.

Bill started blabbering then, a desperate, incoherent stream of offers, of alliances. “We could work together! The Council, you, me... we could achieve Finch’s vision! True order! Unquestionable power! Think of it! We could be gods!”

“Shut up, Bill,” I commanded, and his jaw snapped shut, his eyes still wide with frantic, desperate hope.

“Now,” I continued, turning my attention to the servers and the five remaining Council members. “Let’s redecorate.”

One by one, I targeted each server, then their corresponding Council member. Trait: "Gender."

Click. Zzzzt. Hawthorne, portly and leering, suddenly shrieked as his body softened, curves erupting, his expensive suit morphing into a surprisingly well-fitting tweed skirt-suit, his face feminizing into a rather horsey-looking middle-aged woman.

Click. Zzzzt. Davies, gaunt and sneering, let out a choked gasp as his frame narrowed further, small breasts budding on his chest, his trousers becoming a severe, high-waisted pencil skirt. He looked like a starved governess.

Click. Zzzzt. Sterling, cool and reptilian, simply stared down in stunned silence as his silver hair seemed to lengthen slightly, his body slimming, his suit becoming a chic, impeccably tailored Chanel-esque ensemble. He actually looked... disturbingly elegant.

Click. Zzzzt. Clarkson, young and ambitious, yelped as his shoulders narrowed, his hips flared, his sharp suit transforming into a trendy, slightly too-short business dress. He looked like a very angry, very confused intern.

Click. Zzzzt. And finally, Bill Peterson. He closed his eyes, bracing himself. When he opened them, he was wearing a sensible, slightly frumpy floral dress, his thinning hair now a matronly brown bob. His new, modest breasts strained against the floral fabric. He looked like someone's disappointed aunt.

The six servers, meanwhile, now all distinctly male, stood patiently, completely oblivious to the fact that their gender had just been swapped with that of the five most powerful men (now women) in the room. Their uniforms remained unchanged, just fitting their new male frames slightly differently.

"There," I said, surveying my handiwork. "Much better."

"You can all move now," I told the newly feminized Council members. "But you cannot leave this building. And you cannot do anything that goes against my interests, or Lila's."

Chaos erupted. Female Hawthorne shrieked. Female Davies was trying to cover her new, unwelcome cleavage. Female Sterling was examining her reflection in a polished tabletop with horrified fascination. Female Clarkson was tugging at the hem of her too-short dress. And Female Bill... Female Bill was just staring at me, his face a mask of pure, impotent fury.

“Is that all, you freak?” Bill finally spat, his voice now a surprisingly passable, if rather shrill, feminine alto. “Just make us girls? Turn us into... into these... these ridiculous caricatures? What a pathetic waste of ultimate power!”

“Oh, it’s not all, Bill,” I said, Alex’s deep voice dangerously soft. “Not by a long shot.” I paused, letting the threat hang in the air. “You see, Bill, I can change your mind. I can make you enjoy this. I can make you want this.” I turned to Clarkson, who was still trying to yank his skirt down. “Watch this.”

I focused my intent. “Clarkson,” I commanded, leveraging the ring-compulsion still active in her mind. “You now absolutely love being a woman. You find your new body incredibly exciting. And you agree with James and Lila that the Council’s plans for world domination were misguided and dangerous. You believe we are your new leaders, and you are eager to serve us.”

Instantly, Clarkson’s expression shifted. The anger and confusion vanished, replaced by a look of beatific, almost ecstatic adoration. She smoothed down her dress, not with embarrassment, but with a newfound appreciation for its fit. She ran a hand over her new breasts, a delighted little giggle escaping her lips.

“Oh my goodness!” she gushed, her voice now a bright, bubbly soprano. “You’re absolutely right, James! And Lila! This is... this is amazing! I feel so... so liberated! So feminine! These titties are incredible!” She bounced them enthusiastically. “And the Council’s plans? So silly! So aggressive! Your vision... it’s so much clearer, so much more... compassionate! I can see it now! We should all listen to you! You’re our saviors!” She beamed at me, then at Lila, radiating pure, unadulterated, mind-controlled devotion.

Bill and the other newly female Council members stared at Clarkson in horrified disbelief. “Clarkson! What in God’s name are you saying?!” Hawthorne shrieked.

“Don’t you see?” Clarkson replied earnestly. “They’re right! Being a woman is wonderful! And their leadership... it’s what the world needs!”

Bill turned to me, his face pale with a new, deeper terror. “Don’t,” he whispered, his voice trembling. “Please... don’t change my mind. Don’t make me... like her.”

I let a slow, cold smile spread across Alex’s strong features. “Relax, Bill,” I said softly. “Where’s the fun in that? I think I prefer you exactly as you are. Aware. Resistant. And utterly,

hopelessly... female.”

Then, I delivered the final commands, the ones that would seal their fate, and hopefully, safeguard our future. I took Lila’s ring from her again.

First, the servers – the six young men now unknowingly at the precipice of immense power. “Alright, gentlemen,” I said, my voice Alex’s commanding contralto. “New company policy. As of this moment, you six are the new board of directors and primary shareholders of Finch Tower and all its associated holdings. This corporation is now a non-profit entity. Fifty percent of all future profits will be directed towards humanitarian causes of your choosing – education, healthcare, poverty relief, environmental protection, whatever you deem most critical. The other fifty percent,” I paused, a predatory glint in my eye, “will be deposited into a secure, untraceable trust fund known only as the ‘James and Lila Artifact Wielder Support Initiative.’ This fund will be used, at our sole discretion, to provide resources, protection, and aid to other artifact wielders who need it, and to counter any future threats from power-hungry megalomaniacs like your predecessors.” I let that sink in. “You will run this company ethically, transparently, and for the betterment of humanity. Is that understood?”

Six blank, ring-compelled nods. Six new CEOs, ready to save the world, and fund our operations.

Then, I turned to the five horrified, newly feminized, and utterly powerless Council members. “And as for you, ladies...” My smile was pure ice. “Your new roles. You are now the dedicated personal assistants to these six gentlemen. You will obey their every command, cater to their every need, without question or hesitation, for the rest of your natural lives. Furthermore,” I added, savoring the looks of abject despair on their faces, “you are hereby permanently incapable of intentionally harming any living being, physically, emotionally, or financially. You will also find yourselves utterly unable to act in any way that is not deemed traditionally feminine, ladylike, and demure. Your days of aggression, of domination, of masculine ambition... are over. You will be... proper ladies. Whether you like it or not.”

The effect was instantaneous and horrifyingly complete. Bill, who had been about to launch into another furious tirade, suddenly clasped her hands primly in her lap, her expression shifting from rage to a kind of bewildered, tearful distress. “Oh, my stars,” she whispered, her voice a delicate, trembling soprano. “This is... this is simply dreadful! How could you be so... ungentlemanly?” She dabbed at her eyes with an imaginary handkerchief.

Hawthorne let out a series of ladylike squeaks of outrage, clutching her new tweed-clad bosom. Female Davies was attempting a dignified snuffle, her posture suddenly ramrod straight despite her despair. Sterling was examining her perfectly manicured nails with a look of tragic resignation. And Clarkson, still beaming with mind-controlled adoration, was already fluttering around her new boss, the former shrimp-cocktail server, asking if he needed his schedule rearranged or his coffee freshened.

“You’ll pay for this!” Bill insisted, though her voice lacked any real conviction, sounding more like a petulant debutante than a fallen tyrant. “You haven’t heard the last of us!” But even as she spoke, she was instinctively smoothing her floral dress, adjusting her matronly brown bob with a delicate, feminine gesture.

The new company leaders, the six former servers, looked slightly bewildered but also intrigued by their sudden promotion and their equally sudden acquisition of five very well-dressed, if somewhat distressed, personal assistants. Bill’s new boss, a young man with bright, curious eyes, stepped forward, looking at the now-demure Female Bill with a speculative glint. “Okay, uh... Ms. Peterson?” he said, clearly enjoying his newfound authority. “First order of business... get horny.”

Bill gasped, her hand flying to her mouth, her cheeks flushing a delightful shade of crimson. But her eyes... her eyes glazed over with a reluctant, ring-compelled arousal, and a tiny, almost imperceptible whimper escaped her lips. “Oh, my... well, I... I never!” she stammered, even as her new breasts visibly strained against the floral fabric of her dress, her nipples hardening into prominent points.

The other new CEOs quickly followed suit, issuing similar, if less overtly sexual, commands to their new assistants – “Fetch me coffee, darling.” “Polish my shoes, sweetheart.” “Arrange these files, be a dear.” – and the formerly powerful Council members, now trapped in ladylike bodies and minds, fluttered to obey, their movements graceful, their voices soft, their protests silenced by an unbreakable compulsion.

Lila called Bill back as he was being led out by his new, grinning boss. “One last thing, Billie,” Lila purred, Cassie’s voice dripping with malicious sweetness. “Before you fully embrace your new life of subservient femininity... you will go home tonight. To your lovely mansion. And you will find every single one of your ‘Project Nightingale’ assets – Amelie, Celeste, Isabelle, Maria, Sofia, all of them. You will deactivate their programming. You will undo every modification

your disgusting book has made to their minds and bodies. You will return them to their original selves, erase their memories of servitude, and then you will set them free. With generous severance packages. Understood?"

Bill looked utterly horrified. "But... but if I return them to normal... they'll... they'll kill me!" she wailed, tears streaming down her newly powdered cheeks. "They'll remember everything!"

Lila and I exchanged a look. We both laughed, cold and hard. "Well, Billie," I said, Alex's deep voice utterly devoid of sympathy. "Better hope they don't recognize you in that rather fetching floral dress, hmm?"

She stumbled out, sobbing, forced by the ring's command and her own newly feminine sensibilities to obey.

When the room was finally empty, save for us and the lingering scent of fear and expensive perfume, Lila let out a whoop of pure, unadulterated triumph. She launched herself at me, wrapping Cassie's slender arms around Alex's thick neck, kissing me fiercely, possessively. "We did it, James!" she cried against my lips, her voice Cassie's cool alto, but filled with Lila's wild, uninhibited joy. "We actually fucking did it! We took down the Council! We own Finch Tower! We're rich! We're heroes! We're... holy shit, we need to celebrate!"

"Yeah," I agreed, returning her kiss, Alex's powerful body thrumming with residual adrenaline and a profound sense of victory. "Yeah, we did." We had faced the monsters, and for once, the monsters had lost. Alistair Finch was still out there, a loose end, a potential future threat. But for now... for now, we had won.

Later that night, back at Lila's apartment, the adrenaline finally fading, exhaustion began to set in. The sleeping bodies of Alex Miller and Cassie Bellweather lay peacefully in Lila's guest rooms, awaiting their return to normalcy, completely unaware of the roles their bodies had played in toppling a shadow government.

Lila and I, back in our own skins (well, my female skin), sat on her couch, nursing glasses of expensive scotch we'd "liberated" from Finch's private bar in the Gamma suite. "So," she said, swirling the amber liquid in her glass, her eyes dark and predatory as they roamed over my male form. "World saved. Bad guys punished. Evil lairs commandeered. What's a girl – or, you know, a guy who occasionally enjoys being a girl – supposed to do for an encore?"

I grinned, setting my glass down. "I think," I said, reaching for her, "I have a few ideas."

But as I leaned in to kiss her, she pulled back slightly, a playful pout on her lips. "Uh, hold on there, cowboy," she said, tapping my chest. "Minor detail. You're... a girl right now. And as much as I appreciate the recent, shall we say, expansion of my sexual horizons..." Her eyes flicked down to her own crotch, then back to mine with a meaningful look. "...my core programming, pre-artifact-shenanigans, still defaults to 'cock appreciation.' No offense to your current equipment, but it's just not pressing my buttons in the same way your male package did."

I blinked. Right. Her core preference was still for men. And while my female body was perfectly functional, it wasn't what she was currently craving. But I wanted to stay like this, at least for a while longer. I liked it. I realize that now.

"Okay," I said slowly, an idea already forming, fueled by the day's successes and a desire to keep this intoxicating, uninhibited Lila engaged. "We can fix that."

We headed outside, into the cool Los Angeles night. The street was quiet, mostly deserted at this late hour. Perfect for a little... preference recalibration.

I spotted our first potential donor a block away – a young guy stumbling slightly, clearly a bit drunk, heading home from a bar. "Okay," I said to Lila, pulling out the Swapper. "Let's see what kind of... 'button-pressing' preferences this gentleman possesses."

Target Lila. Target Drunk Guy. Trait: "Sexual Attraction Preference." Click. Zzzztttt.

Lila gasped, her eyes widening. She looked at me, then her gaze drifted down my body, lingering on my crotch, then snapping back up to my face, a confused frown creasing her brow. "Huh," she said, tilting her head. "Okay, that's... different." She paused, then a slow, wicked grin spread across her face. "I'm still into men for sure" she declared, her voice dropping to a husky purr. "But, in a different way... like I want to be fucked in the ass, or fuck someones ass?" She wagged her eyebrows suggestively. "And honestly? Your tits? Meh. Not really doing it for me."

I stared at her. "Lila... are you saying...?"

"Yep," she confirmed, nodding enthusiastically. "Pretty sure that dude was gay." She laughed. Okay. This was... unexpected. But I guess it's realistic. Not every guy is straight. "Let's

try again,” I said, already scanning the street for another target. A few minutes later, another guy walked past – older, more distinguished-looking, briefcase in hand, clearly a late-working professional. “Okay, him,” I said. “He looks... reassuringly straight.”

Target Lila. Target Briefcase Guy. Trait: “Sexual Attraction Preference.” Click. Zzzztttt.

Lila stared at me, her jaw dropping. The confusion, the disappointment, vanished from her face, replaced by raw, unadulterated, almost feral lust. Her eyes, my girlfriend’s eyes, raked over my female form – the magnificent breasts straining against my t-shirt, the impossibly small waist, the wide, flaring hips and perfect ass showcased by my jeans – with an intensity that made my skin burn, my nipples harden instantly, my pussy clench with a jolt of pure, Pavlovian anticipation.



“Oh. My. Fucking. God,” Lila breathed, her voice a hoarse whisper, her eyes dilated, pupils like black holes threatening to swallow me whole. She took a step towards me, then another, moving like a predator stalking its prey. “Yes,” she hissed, her voice trembling with barely contained need. “YES! This! This is what I was missing! Fuck, James! You as a girl... you are the hottest fucking thing I have ever seen in my entire goddamn life! Those tits! That ass! Those curves! I want to lick every inch of you. I want to fuck you until neither of us can walk. I want to own that gorgeous girl-pussy and make it scream my name until the whole goddamn city can hear it!”

She launched herself at me then, her mouth crashing onto mine, her hands grabbing, squeezing, exploring every newly reacquired curve of my female body with a desperate, possessive hunger that stole my breath, ignited every nerve ending, and promised a night of glorious, uninhibited, reality-bending debauchery.

And as I kissed her back, as her fingers found my already aching clit through my jeans, as her body pressed against mine, a wild, triumphant thought echoed through the chaos of my mind: Oh, yeah. This is definitely going to be fun.

The walk back to Lila’s apartment was a blur of groping hands, stolen kisses, and increasingly desperate promises of what was to come. Lila, fueled by her swapped attraction to women and her still-active lowered inhibitions, was practically vibrating with need, her eyes devouring every inch of my female form. My tits were a particular focus of her attention. She couldn’t seem to keep her hands off them, cupping them, squeezing them, running her thumbs over my already pebble-hard nipples through the thin fabric of my t-shirt, eliciting gasps and shivers from me with every touch.

“God, James,” she panted against my neck as we fumbled with the lock on her apartment door, her hands already sliding under my shirt, finding the bare skin of my back. “These boobs... they’re fucking magnificent. So big, so round... I just want to bury my face in them and never come up for air.”

We stumbled inside, kicking the door shut behind us, clothes already starting to fly. My t-shirt was ripped off, followed by hers. My jeans hit the floor, then hers. We were a tangle of limbs and desperate need, crashing onto her living room rug, the earlier pizza boxes and scotch glasses knocked aside with heedless abandon.

Lila was on top of me, straddling my hips, her eyes blazing with a possessive hunger that

made my pussy throb with an answering ache. She looked down at my breasts, spilling from my now-discarded bra, and a low groan rumbled in her throat. "Perfect," she breathed, lowering her head, her mouth closing over one nipple.

A scream ripped from my throat as her tongue swirled, her teeth grazed, her lips suckled with an intensity that sent shockwaves of pure, unadulterated pleasure through my entire body. She feasted on me, moving from one breast to the other, teasing, tormenting, drawing out moans and whimpers I didn't know I was capable of. My hips bucked beneath her, desperate for more, for friction, for filling.

"Patience, gorgeous," she purred against my skin, lifting her head, her lips slick, her eyes dark with lust. "We've got all night. And I want to explore every single inch of this incredible body you're rocking."

Her hands began to roam, tracing the curve of my waist, the flare of my hips, the powerful swell of my thighs. Every touch was electric, amplified by my heightened female sensitivity. She praised every part of me, her voice a husky litany of appreciation, her words a filthy, loving tribute to my temporary form. "Look at this ass, James... it's fucking perfect. So round, so firm... I could worship it for days." Her fingers dipped lower, finding the damp heat between my legs. "And this pussy... God, you're already soaked for me, aren't you, baby? Dripping. Just for me."

She spread my labia slowly, deliberately, her thumbs brushing against my throbbing clit, making me cry out. "So pretty," she murmured, lowering her head again. "So pink. So... edible."

Her tongue found my clit, and the world exploded. It wasn't the gentle teasing of before; this was focused, expert attention, relentless and all-consuming. She licked, she sucked, she teased, driving me higher and higher, my body arching off the floor, my fingers tangling in her hair, my voice a continuous stream of breathless moans and pleas.

"Lila... fuck... please..." I gasped, on the verge of shattering.

"Not yet, baby," she purred against my slick flesh, lifting her head for a moment, her eyes blazing with triumph. "I want to hear you beg for it."

And I did. I begged, I pleaded, I writhed beneath her, completely undone by the sensations she was coaxing from this incredible female body. She toyed with me, bringing me to the edge, then backing off, drawing out the torment, the pleasure, until I was a sobbing,

incoherent mess of pure need.

Finally, when I thought I couldn't take another second, she slid two fingers deep inside my wet, waiting pussy, her thumb returning to my clit with renewed, merciless intensity. "Come for me, James," she commanded, her voice a low, guttural growl. "Come for your girlfriend."

The orgasm ripped through me like a lightning strike, a full-body convulsion that left me screaming her name, my vision whiting out, every nerve ending singing with an unbearable, ecstatic pleasure. It went on and on, wave after wave, fueled by the sheer intensity of her touch, the power of this female form, and the mind-bending reality of who we were, what we were doing.

When it finally subsided, leaving me trembling, boneless, utterly wrecked on her living room rug, Lila collapsed beside me, pulling me into her arms, her own body shaking with residual arousal.

"Holy... shit," she breathed, kissing my sweaty temple. "Okay. That was... even better than I imagined." She ran a hand possessively over my still-sensitive breasts. "You taste amazing, James. Every part of you."

We lay there for a long time, tangled together, skin slick with sweat, the air thick with the scent of sex. The earlier tension, the fear, the weight of the Council and the impending mission... it had all been burned away in the crucible of shared, explosive pleasure. Replaced, for now, by a profound, almost overwhelming sense of connection.

Lila propped herself up on an elbow, looking down at me, her eyes soft now, filled with a tenderness that made my heart ache. "You know," she said quietly, brushing a strand of hair from my face, "this... us... it's completely insane. Swapped bodies, manipulated realities, saving the world from artifact-wielding megalomaniacs..." She shook her head, a small, wondering smile on her lips. "But... I wouldn't trade it. Not for anything."

"Me neither," I whispered, my voice hoarse, my body still thrumming with the aftershocks of her touch.

She leaned down, kissing me softly, lingeringly. "So," she murmured against my lips. "Now that we've established that female James is, in fact, ridiculously hot and incredibly fun to fuck... what do you say we take this party to the bedroom? I have a feeling we're just getting started."

My pussy gave another distinct, traitorous throb. And as Lila's hand drifted lower again, a slow, knowing smile spreading across her face, I knew she was right. The night was far from over. And the possibilities, in this strange, new, artifact-twisted reality we were building together, felt absolutely, intoxicatingly, endless.