

TO SCAR HER LOVER

The wall section that holds me is a miracle of elastic steel: a membrane of such flexibility that I can actually step outward into the street and dance little steps, bending down to touch the stone streetfloor, straining against the wall's pull. It is also a prison so secure that in twelve thousand years I have been unable to tear free. Even my diamond-alloy nails, harder than anything but cryssteel itself, are blunted and flawed from ripping at the membrane.

Now, thanks to the leaping kick of a tiny streetmouse, the cryssteel shard bounced into my reach. I have withheld from myself an exquisite pleasure: to cradle this ultrasharp sliver of transparent metal in my fingers, plunge it into my membrane in just the right places, feel the pain of escape when I slice through and rip myself free.

The woman had worn the shard at her wrist, maybe to use as a defense, maybe just because she liked the sparkle and gleam of its irregular facets, maybe to scar her lover. Now it lies in the darkness just within my span. I exult for a while, thanking her and the little rodent for their assistance.

She is probably dead now, gone into the recycling vats with her short-lived andro genes, to be reborn out of elements into a new street woman for the wealthy to toy with. And the rodent, caught maybe by some predator itself now dead and recycled in the City's hungry engines, lives on in its elements, a part of the new woman.

The thought amuses me. I laugh. Andro servants have their own little heaven in their heads, a kind of biological cyberspace; they don't care what humans do to them. Andros can fantasize themselves out of the city to any planet or setting they can imagine.

I would have indeed enjoyed something like that to help me pass a few thousand years.