

Passage

by Tantra Bensko

The shrill, narrow passage squeezed the weekend explorers as they wedged their bodies into it farther than they should have done. The rough texture tore buttons off the purple blouse of the fat, New Age woman with no vices. The oversized ball-throwing man who sweated with the slightest exertion began howling, as he couldn't suck the raw pizza out of his teeth, and an electric toothbrush was obviously going to be unattainable for quite some time.

They missed the light of the meadow they had left earlier, where they had a momentous picnic with fierce passions discussed with daring repartee. They found being stuck in the passageway to be an unsatisfactory climax. As they were obviously going to be standing there into the night, he decided to relax and let the walls support them, and use her bust as a pillow, her blouse being a more comfortable pillowcase without buttons. He started to dream of melting, sweating, becoming famished and small, sliding slipperarily into all things unknown, out of their reach, and dangerous. She whispered into his ear that he was snoring. When he awoke, his neck had a crick in it, and she was peeing through her panties.

He made some progress toward escape by through becoming smaller by passing gas, though he wished for a shower afterward. She worried about the weight gain she might endure from the glut of hummus at their picnic. She was already heavy enough that she preferred to wear a sweatshirt with positive sayings written in glitter, to distract. In a narrow passageway, any gain in girth could be disastrous.

To make the hours pass more quickly, they thought about how they could sell their story about it to a magazine, and wondered if some

machine would be required to remove them. They hoped they would have time to detangle their hair with the brush she had in her purse before any photos were snapped of them at their rescue by the excited crowd. Their book group about *The Secret* would be surprised to hear of how well they came through their crisis, not necessarily clean, but still, forward thinking, delusionally optimistic. Perhaps they would win a ribbon for turning the challenge into an opportunity, especially a money making one.

Neither one had so much as camped before, much less been human bunk beds. She was growing sleepy herself, and wished she had become a lesbian as she'd considered recently. A nice heavy woman with fluffy breasts would come in much more handy for resting her head on than his slight rolls of skin on his chest. The only thing she could move enough to make a gesture of protest against his insufficient chest was her face. She did it up, and her short bob accentuated the witty upturn of her mouth.

She was wishing for kelp spaghetti noodles, a plate big enough to make her sick, to grunt with the expansion of her stomach, which was thankfully actually becoming instead smaller during the hours without food. She would have been able to fasten the top button on her turquoise skirt if she could have moved. That was a special occasion, two sparky pals in the darkness lit only by the moon rising, both of them growing slender, intimate, his knees against hers.

Perhaps it was a plot, as of *course*, everything happens for a reason, to create a comeback of lust, a slimmer figure she could use to get a raise from her boss, which would rock. She didn't want to let go of the crumpled tissue she had been holding all this time, as it is wrong to litter, but she finally did, and felt free. Released. Bad. Naughty. Almost orgasmic. She reached over to him to kiss him

square on the mouth, but he pulled back, excusing himself until after he had been able to pick the food out of his teeth.

She offered him a dollar for a kiss, payable upon the possible rescue, or the unrounding of their shapes. His black pants were loosening, which was progress. He had to pee through his pants too, and wished for an invention of a special, unnoticeable hole in pants for just such a situation. He thought maybe she was just squinting, but in case she had just winked her beady eye, he nodded in response. His chin had to submit to being tickled by the bow in her hair in order to move up and down, but it seemed worth it.

Something that worked similarly to a shoe horn might work to extricate them if someone were to come along with one. But he hoped, not til after church. He drove her there most Sundays, to hear about the divinity of abundance, and how people would rise out of the ground and float up to the sky, how it's all about the journey, how to release stuck emotions, how to move toward the light.

They both were experiencing some tremor from standing so long, even while supported by the walls of the passageway, and each other. It created the most scintillating electricity they'd experienced while spending time together. He was able to free his arm enough, sweaty and shrinking as it was, to grip her thigh, which was enticingly next to his hand. He could tell her support hose were adding to her own sweat-based weight loss progress.

Suddenly, annoying voices from behind them. At the same time, a net thrown over them, covering their ears with the sound for awhile. Pulling on them, exposing her pelvis by lifting up her skirt, dragging their heads toward it, lengthening their necks sideways. They saw

someone wave from the opening of the passageway, backlit from the moon beams.

He spied her beefsteak hipbones, and though if they were only oiled with more of his sweat, they might be able to be pulled out with the net, if that was indeed the strange goal of such a ridiculous method. He wished there were an invisible helpline to call on at any time without having to be able to reach a phone, and some woman with great, upturned tits would show up and fix everything.

She wished she had the flu, so could dehydrate faster and budge more quickly. Too bad she'd been using so much nutritional yeast lately for her immune system. They'd be senile by the time they ever got out if --- TUG! Whoever was yanking on the net meant business. They both did their best to see it all in the best light. If you can't have sunlight, moonlight will do.

Perhaps they'd be able to enlighten their savior, or tormentor, whoever was tugging. After sitting through the church services in order to meet women, for months, he could hardly tell the difference between a savior and a tormentor any more. The Savior was supposed to take everyone who believed on a journey into some heaven where people sang hymns a lot in English repetitively, but no Muslims allowed.

The net lifted her skirt higher, so it covered her face, and he was able to stare as long as he wanted at her navel. He'd assumed it was an innie. No, it was not.

Never assume anything. Life is one big treasure map of surprises for the pilgrim, or whoever is clotting up the flow of air through the passageway, as the case may be. Frankly, the way her belly button was sculpted outward made him wonder about their compatibility. It wasn't what he wanted to see at the end of the adventure. The net had shown him the map of where his courtship could lead, if he pretended to go along with the beliefs of the church long enough to get her in bed. *That* had proven to be a longer and more dangerous journey than he'd expected. He tried not to care.

Perhaps this intermediate stage of their intimacy progress was the purpose for all this. Perhaps it was important for him to reconsider the nature of their relationship before it went much farther.

"Hail from the Cult of the Passages!" Yelled the netters, the true intention of their voices hard to decipher. "You are the 8th and 9th people we have caught this year!"

"You musht be teasing," she said, the net pushing tightly against her cheek, making the folds of her jowl press upwards against her lip and obscure her words. He imagined the woman with the upturned tits at the end of the helpline, her body flawless, including an innie. Definitely an innie.

"You two must now bear us a child! You are hitherto and foremost ordered to bring in one of the Masters of the High Octave of the Passage into our midst. Do you promise to make love in the second level yard on the 3rd anniversary of your rescue — *if* we rescue you?

“We will let you have free range of the top level of our yard. The top level is only for those we have caught. You'll see. It has lovely little mounds on top of it, igloo-like mini clay houses. There are bird-gardens, and lillys. And a small fish-pond, the Yard Man's specialty. We added the wall around it ourselves. Now, *that* was a lot of work, let me tell you.” The nasal voice reverberated along the walls of the passageway and gave the couple a headache.

They watched a spider climb along the wall of the passage toward her knee, and he tried to reach it with his hand to brush it away. He couldn't quite reach and it continued upward, along the underside of her buttocks, along her back, as she squirmed silently, a trooper, really. He burped and was surprised the mushroom from the raw pizza they'd eaten so long ago could still carry a scent. The spider continued its journey, along her waist, her chest, her neck. She tried to scoop it off her neck with her chin, but the net prevented much movement. It crawled up her cheek and she attempted to scrape it off against the side of the passageway, couldn't reach, so scraped it instead off onto his cheek.

It continued along insouciantly, as though it hadn't been ousted at all.

“Are you ready to go for a spin? Check out your new digs? Your new abode of the uterine goddesses of the passage into light?”

They whispered about what to say to their rescuers/captors. The spider tentatively put its forearms into his nostril. He shook his head. It forged ahead inside.

“Cease your talking in there. We are the ones you talk to now. Put a lid on it.”

The spider cried a tiny tear when it became lodged in the nostril, and found it couldn't turn around. The tear streamed down his face, and against the passageway wall, lubricating him with the last little bit of moisture required to free himself. He turned around, blew hard, the spider finding itself plummeting through the air, and he pulled on the net suddenly.

The cult members were knocked off their feet, and lost their grip on the net. He loosened it from their bodies, and wriggled freer.

“I will NOT bear a child with this woman. I will NOT engage in carnal knowledge with her.”

“Why not?”

“She has an outie. You'll see for yourself if you come any closer.”

“Oh. Pardon us. Some things just can't be forced. We understand, totally. Ugh. I'm sorry to hear that, man.”

She stared at him, as she could turn to face him directly now that he had loosened the net. She had a new deep wrinkle in her face from where it had been folded over on itself.

“This has been an enlightening experience,” she concluded, patting her hair back into its do, covering up the alopecia along the right side. “Quite amusing. I’ll have to bring *this* up at church.”

