



The Other Women
Nicci Kadilak

Deleted Scene: Epiphany

“It’s going through,” Delia says as the apartment door closes behind her. After being in the bright hallway, her eyes take a moment to adjust to the unexpected dimness of her home. Her partner, Renée, sits up from her semi-reclined position on the sofa and turns off the wallscreen.

“It’s almost midnight,” Renée says as she stretches her long, slender arms above her head, her eyes at once groggy and full of concern.

“Oh, wow, is it?” says Delia. “Sorry. I just.” She pauses and releases a heavy sigh. “I didn’t realize how late it got, I guess.” She plops down on to the sofa next to Renée, who pulls her blanket across Delia’s lap, pulls her long dreadlocks over one shoulder, and leans into the larger woman, closing her eyes once more.

“What kept you?”

“Four-Fourteen.”

“It’s going to pass?” Renée asks. She could just as easily be asking after the day’s weather or the sports scores.

Delia sighs once again. “I don’t know what I thought talking to Mohamed would accomplish. I mean, I guess I thought if I could just make him see how wrong it is to legislate childbirth and fertility – how *unnatural* it is – he would see the light and pull back the proposal.”

“Could he do that?”

“I mean, no. Not exactly. But he was head of the committee who proposed it, so if anyone has sway over it, it’s him.”

“But I take it you didn’t convince him.”

Delia sniffs as her eyes begin to fill once more. Renée straightens up and turns toward her partner. “I feel like such a ... like such a *child*,” says Delia, batting at her eyes as if that will stop the tears from coming. “Forty-three years old, sitting here crying because, no matter what I do, this world just keeps being fucked up – decisions keep being made by the same assholes year after year, generation after generation – and I’m powerless to do anything about it. I have to play this ridiculous game, succumb to their wishes or get ostracized, and wait around for the assholes to get voted out or get too old to do the job, and by then new assholes will take their place, and it just seems so. fucking. hopeless.” Her veins threaten to open from the inside, and she has to grit her teeth to keep her voice from getting too loud for such close communication. She takes in a deep breath and closes her eyes. It’s several seconds before she exhales, and during that in-between time she can feel her partner’s eyes on her. “Say it,” she says as she releases the breath.

It’s the permission Renée’s been waiting for; still, she hesitates for a beat before speaking. When Delia’s eyes open, silently insistent, Renée sighs. “I think it’s time.” Before Delia can protest, Renée continues. “Honey, I know this is really important to you. It’s important to me too, and I know you wouldn’t trade the experience of carrying Malcolm for anything in the world. But if it’s a losing battle, I don’t see the point in fighting it, if you can shift your energy elsewhere. The law is only one way to get things done. There’s always another way. You’re resourceful. Maybe it’ll require some finesse and creativity, but you’ve got the connections, and the numbers are there, if we can find a way to put them to use.”

There is a long silence as both women wrack their brains for other ways to undermine the proposal, once it passes into law. She shakes her head. “I know there are Councilors who disagree privately, but they’ve either been brainwashed or blackmailed to vote with the majority.”

“Do you think any of them would join you in a backdoor effort?”

Delia thinks for a moment. “Probably,” she says, taking a mental tally of the women who have shared their concerns with her. “But what?”

“Something unexpected,” is Renée’s only reply, but somehow it’s enough to plant the seed of an idea in Delia’s mind.

Delia is off the sofa in an instant. In response to her partner’s curious look, she says, eyes clear with newfound focus, “I need to call Annette Gordon.”