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Cut Second Scene from Original Chapter 1

Note: Marian's name was originally Brandy (and her hamster, Soda), changed at the request of Luna. I picked Marian because it's a derivative of Mary, the perfect woman...and Jack's first name was Richard, but I have a good friend who is NOT a jerk named Richard who might read the book, so I changed it to something that sounded more like the hero's name Jaquar.

You'll be seeing a lot of different scenes that were cut from the front of the book...here's one with Jack Wilse, Marian's ex-lover, who's mentioned in Sorceress. I rewrote this scene a couple of times adding and subtracting magic...

Enjoy!

Mistake. Brady squinted at her monitor as the table of figures swam. At the end of this project she'd need glasses for sure. After four months as the Assistant to the Dean of Engineering at the University, she knew her lateral transfer had been the wrong thing to do. Not the worst blunder she'd made in the past few years, but definitely traipsing down a false path. She hated making mistakes. One of the reasons her thirst for knowledge was so great was because she didn't like correcting stupid errors.

She huffed out a breath and glanced at the scrawled paper beside her. Was that a 7 or a 2? She peered closer, "7." Right. To clear her mind, she pinched off a sprig of mint from the verdant plant on her desk and chewed the leaves.

Her little zen clock chimed soothingly and she looked at the digital readout. Noon. Her shoulders relaxed. The Engineering Department Office closed precisely from noon to one. She hadn't

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needed an alarm clock in the Theater Department. Looking back, the over-the-top emotions and dramatics of the students in Theater weren't as bad as she'd thought.

Brandy rose and locked the door, then returned to her desk and got her uninspired sack lunch and a book from her drawer. After the failure of her dawn meditation, she'd just grabbed food on hand for her lunch. She'd known she'd have to eat at her desk to get the report done on time.

She ate her lunch and studied the bagua chart in The Way of Feng Shui for You. She'd given up hiding her reading material after a month. Did the Chinese really have so many octagonal rooms? She hadn't thought so.

"You don't really believe in that junk!" Associate Professor Richard Wilse came from the conference room behind her, stopped and snorted.

Brandy looked up at the blond hunk. She admired his body and deplored his mind. It was inconceivable to her now that she'd had a brief affair with him. Mistake.

She folded her hands. "I have an open mind."

Wilse grunted.

"One of the tenets of Feng Shui is simplicity," she said. "Ridding your life of clutter." She looked pointedly through the open door of his office to the edge of his desk. A waterfall of

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paper toppled from the stacks on the edge to the floor.

"Bunch of crap," Wilse said, but a hint of color showed in his cheeks. His pale blue gaze lingered on Brandy's breasts, then went to the curve of her stomach.

He nodded approvingly at her apple. "I see you're taking my advice about nutrition." He flexed his muscles. "Exercise some more and you'll get rid of those extra pounds. You want another guest pass to my club?"

Mature women don't have flat stomachs, Brandy told herself, trying to believe it. The female body is constructed to carry weight in the abdomen, butt, and thighs. Mature women are curvy. She still ground her teeth.

"Thanks, Richard, but no. I'm fine." Better than her anorexic five-times-married mother, at least.

"Huh." He looked at her book again and shook his head. "You know, here in Boulder there are two sorts of people: real people and flakes."

"That's right," Brandy agreed. "Two sorts of people: academic folks and the real people."

"If you two are finished, I'd like to talk about work." The Dean's dry voice came from behind her. Brandy winced.

A stack of papers containing columns of figures and equations in small block handwriting plopped onto her dark blue

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blotter decorated with gold suns, moons and stars. "Those are the final statistics for our latest departmental paper on the structural integrity of the older campus buildings. My part of the report is now done." He tapped his finger on the document. Just like the rest of him, his finger was long and lean and nondescript. "With a day to spare."

He lifted his balding head and glanced at Richard. "Dr. Wilse, is your portion of the research ready to be in-putted?"

"Almost, sir. I'll have it for Brandy within the half-hour."

The Dean's bushy gray eyebrows, the only luxuriant thing about him, drew together. "See that you do." He nodded coolly to Brandy, then left.

Richard strode into his office. When he sat and pulled his chair up to his desk, more paper rustled to the floor. He ignored it and began tapping on his computer keyboard.

A few minutes later he made a sound of disgust and his chair squeaked as it rolled back. He marched to Brandy's desk and flipped a diskette atop the Dean's stats that she was already working on.

"That's the information. It's all there, but I can't get the table to format right." He glanced at his watch. "Time for my afternoon class, see you." Picking up an overfull briefcase,

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he hurried from the room, shoulders hunched -- not waiting for her reply. Not that she could get one past her gritted teeth. She glared at the diskette. It was bound to be a mess.

Overtime again today and with a stop at GoldenRaven's she wouldn't get home before dark. She glanced at the moon chart taped to the back of one of her shelves -- the moon was waxing, four days until full, so she'd have some light on her way home.

She eyed another apple and decided to run across the quad to the student union and get some buttered popcorn.