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(Part 1)

"Cock your ears this way, little one."

Kistna-Kit has pointed ears poked through her blond hair. Pulls a slouch hat out of her shoulder bag and jams it on her head to hide them. No construct she, not to be lured by hawkers offer her some shoddy price for the old alleyway bimbam. Slouch hat on her head good ear cover, but now the sounds of the city come muted. Under the purple sky. Always the sky-color here in this city, in Wheredau. Lavender with wisps of darker violet in the bright twilight-dawn, purple black with the pale lilac clouds reflecting groundlight at night.

Port city on purple world where the starships go up and out to where the energy of the stellar vortex fuels transport. Above, the sky is luminous, the aurora; faint ribbon ghosts at twilight-dawn, brilliant the rest of the time. Brighter still the huge faraway bluewhite sun with its tail wrapped around its invisible companion, the black hole.

Kistna-Kit's high heels go tap-tap-tap down the street to the club. To work. She clatters down steps, pokes her head in.

"Kit!" calls the man at the club-door, "what have you got on your head?"

"Hat," she snaps.

"And cover beautiful hair? Exquisite perky ears?"

She takes the hat off. Can feel ears droop because she doesn't want to take her hat off. Foolish ears. Face doesn't tell what she feels but ears, silly ears, always say. Play poker, always wear a hat, okay? Tap-tap-tap to the dressing room to change.

"TEST!" the doorman shouts.

Tap-tap-tap back, ears flat against her hair. She stands in front of him and extends her hand. He puts the clip on her finger, the contact glows blue.

"Okay," he says, "no modifications, no viruses."

What do they think, she would go out and add something without telling them? Get a tail? Cloven hoofs? Modify when she doesn't have to because she was born lucky, born with ears like this? Or that she would pick up some virus that would dismantle her cells? No alleyway girl, no sir--tap-tap-tap to the dressing room full of fancy cloths for dancising. She is breedtrue. Got a good job, pretty girl with breedtrue perky ears. Someone going to come in from transfer, buy a drink, see her dancising, offer to take her out of Wheredau. Get a contract on a big transport ship like that girl, Scherzo Livrey, breedtrue singer at Dneibruja, and all she had was fur. No interest. Fur is just like hair only more, not like Kit, born with ears. Pretty ears. Stand up ears.

Littleminds like the doorman pressed hierarchy, flexed their flab. Stupid doorman. All he has is job, so he wants his power. Testing her. So that club can say they have breedtrue girl, no modifications. Certification on file.

"Sweetlegs," Cardamon sang, "what has you all flat ears?"

"Just doorman." Throw the bag on the little chair.

"Just the doorman, kitten. Don't use slang."

Kit pouts.

"Practice. Smart thing like you needs to talk right, then when you get your lucky break you're ready." Cardamon, sweet ginger lady with pretty scales down her nose and across

