Cold Chain
emma joy hill

DRAFT 4
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Characters:

Walker
older, runs the Cold Chain, wears a very large fur coat

Iris
younger, hardened, scrappy but soft

Johann
gruff, an electrician

Paige
younger, takes it all serious, nosy

Ruina
younger, a storyteller

Penny
youngest, light, all she wants is to grow a garden

Time:

20 years from now.
After the sun burns out.
And the world grows dark and cold.

Place:

The (killing) beds of a slaughterhouse
That isn't always used for slaughter
But more dangerous things

1.

Spotlight.
Iris suspended by her heels.
She wears pumps.
She's stripped and shivering.

Walker debones a slab of meat.

WALKER:
In the Old World, none of it seemed to matter. A man and a woman, or a man and a man, or was it two women? I don't remember exactly. There are many different versions of the same story. If you could even call it a story. I suppose it is though, wouldn't you say? The oldest story. The oldest story in the book.

Walker nudges her.
Iris sways and screams lightly.

WALKER:
Shh. Shh. Ten more minutes. Don't get hasty. Trying to make it a little easier on you. Why? Beats me.

Walker continues to debone.

WALKER:
Love is outlawed. Never thought I'd live to see the day, and yet here I am. We are. How rude of me. Sometimes I do forget you're there. But you are, aren't you? Always there. Even when I keep it dark. Even when I keep it cold. Freezing, aren't you? Think I'm -

IRIS:
No.

WALKER:
No?

IRIS:
No. I'm just
starting to
warm up.

WALKER:
That's wonderful. Shall I go on, or -

IRIS:
Oh. Yes. I love
your stories.

WALKER:
Mhm. Well, if you listened carefully, you might learn a thing or two.

IRIS:
Yes. Let's hear
it.

WALKER:
One of these days, I swear - I could, I really could. But I won't.
Anyway - in the old world, two folks went and fell for each other. Head over heels.
Look at that, like you.
World was still warm then. People knew how to start fires. Pellet stoves. Wood piles. Afghans. Parkas. Cuddled up before the sun shriveled up black. Love so hot it started a forest fire. Burnt it down to a crisp. Even they were destroyed by it.

IRIS:
He wanted to be held.
I was doing as
he asked.

Walker puts down the knife.
Speaks close to her face.

WALKER:
I saw you.
Try again.

IRIS:
He -

WALKER:
What? He what?

Iris starts to cough.
Walker moves to a control box.
Presses a button.
Iris falls.
Her feet still tethered.
She tries to catch her breath.

IRIS:
I told you already.

WALKER:
He was holding you.

IRIS:
He asked.

WALKER:
I could report it.

IRIS:
Go ahead.

WALKER:
I'm trying to make it easier for you.

IRIS:
Seems that way, huh?

Walker gets down close to her.

WALKER:
Did you learn anything from the story?

IRIS:
Same old shit, different day.

WALKER:
No. Try again.

IRIS:
They were destroyed by it.

WALKER:
Yes. They were destroyed by it.

Walker takes off her fur.
Puts it around Iris.

WALKER:
Quality and safety. That's all I can provide. Opportunity? I don't have to. But I do. You have it. Use it. Go.

IRIS:
I can't.

Walker unties her feet.

WALKER:
You think me cold. Wait until you see what's out there.

IRIS:
I have.

WALKER:
You haven't the faintest.

Iris starts to go. She stops. Turns back.

IRIS:
I knew it wasn't right. When he asked. But, what could I do? Tell me. What would you do?

WALKER:
I told you to go.
I mean it.

Iris leaves.

WALKER:
You too.

Paige shows herself.

She wears a robe and heels.
On all fours crouching behind the counter, hiding.

PAIGE:
I was only listening.

WALKER:
Mhm. Go.

Paige runs off.
Walker finishes her deboning.
Casts it aside.
Takes a moment.
Head in hands.
Hits the table.
Matter of fact.
Nods.
Shuts off the remaining lights.
Exits.
The lights flicker.
An array of strung-up animals, or what we believe to be animals.
Along with accessories of gold, silver, pinks, reds.
Pantyhose and Mary Janes.
Diamonds that shine.
Even in the dark.

2.

An assembly with all the Women and Walker.

PAIGE:
She was strung up high like -

RUINA:
Really high like?

PAIGE:
Yes, and Walker -

RUINA:
Walker what? Wait, Walker what?

PAIGE:
I'd tell you if you shut -

RUINA:
Oh -

PAIGE:
Sorry. I didn't mean.

RUINA:
No go ahead, go ahead.

PAIGE:
Gave her her fur.

RUINA:
What?

PAIGE:
Mhm.

RUINA:
From her own?

PAIGE:
Mhm.

WALKER:
Alright.

Everyone quiets.

WALKER:
Usual duties are assigned.
2 chilling
3 chilling
4 storage
And 1

Deboning.
With me.

PAIGE:
See?

RUINA:
Oh my.

WALKER:
Shh.
I'll wait.
Alright, well. It's been - it's come to my attention that some of the - patronage.

Penny raises her hand.

WALKER:
Yes?

PENNY:
What does Patronage mean?

WALKER:
Buyer. Customer. John. Jack. Tom. Bob. Harry. Whichever men decide they want to fuck you silly.

PENNY:
Ohhh. Is it a Greek word?

The Women laugh.

WALKER:
Alright. Shh. Some of them, I've come to realize have been asking quite a bit of you all.
And - well. It is your job to provide quality. It's what they come for. It's what they stay for. What they return for. That is your prerogative.

Penny raises her hand.

WALKER:
Yes?

PENNY:
Me? Oh. What does -

WALKER:
Authority.

IRIS:
It actually means privilege. If you can believe it.

WALKER:
Does anyone have anything else to add or shall I continue?
What I'm trying to get at is - if they do. Make requests that are - against policies.
Come to me. You can knock on my door. You can wake me up. At any hour.
I'm here to -

I'm here to provide quality, just like you are. But, I'm also here to provide safety. And well, it is my role, my prerogative, to ensure that you can be, I don't know -

RUINA:
Unless they want it up the ass, then you have to suck it up.

WALKER:
Sorry?

RUINA:
Nothing.

WALKER:
You know I - I remember the Old World. And I remember the start of the New. And I was, well I was - let's just say, we weren't too different. And boy, I gotta tell you. I wish. I prayed. For someone like me. You want to go to another chain? I can make a call. Down the road I hear they got one. Never any light beyond working zones. Sub-zero temperatures, right at the legal limit. Not a lot of choice. We have the best chain and we have the best market. We have the best market because we have the best meat. Because we have the best girls. People know that. Now I - you, come up here. Come on. Since you got a whole lot to say today.

Ruina goes up.

WALKER:
Sit down. Come on. Come on, we don't got all day.

She sits.

WALKER:
Now, answer honestly. Have I ever - ever - made you - forced you - coerced you into spreading those pretty legs?

Ruina shakes her head.

WALKER:
Come on, tell them.

RUINA:
No. But -

WALKER:
No, but. We can call it quits if you want. We can shut down the whole thing. Forget the extra capital. Cash in hand. No problem. No skin off my nose. Do you want that? Answer me, go on.

RUINA:
No.

WALKER:
No? Because it's nice isn't it? To have a little something that's your own. A little extra. For yourself.

Walker puts her hands on Ruina's shoulders.

WALKER:
I create opportunity for you. That's not my job. But, I do it anyway. Why? Beats me. I want to make it easier I guess. But, fuck me. Right? I'm cold. I string you up. String you along. Force shit up your ass. Right? That's what I do. Let them all take turns. Work all day, work all night. Hmm? That's what it is. Forget the fact I give you warmth. Give you clothes. Comfort even. Even when I'm not supposed to. But, you know what? I have the best girls. They do the best work. And if they want to, they can work more. They can make a pretty penny. Because they are, very pretty. Aren't you?

Ruina shakes her head.

WALKER:
Why are you shaking your head?

RUINA:
I want to go sit down now.

WALKER:
But, you are sitting. You don't want to sit up here with me.

Ruina shakes her head.
Walker laughs.
Taps her shoulders.
Kisses her head.

WALKER:
Go.

Ruina goes back to her seat.
Paige holds her hand

WALKER:
Forget what I said, let's just get back to work.

The Women dissipate.
Penny appears lost.
A-ha moment. Exits.
Paige and Ruina hold hands.
Walker gestures for them to separate.
They scurry off.
Walker stomps.
Almost as a temper tantrum.
Iris watches.

WALKER:
Go on.

IRIS:
I've never done this before.

WALKER:
You need a lesson?

IRIS:
Yes.

WALKER:
Are you asking?

IRIS:
I guess so.

WALKER:
You guess so. Move over.

Iris does so.

WALKER:
Slabs will come across here.
Sometimes they're more whole than you'd like.
Those we send back to the girls upstairs.

IRIS:
I didn't know there was girls up - other girls.

WALKER:
Were girls.

IRIS:
Were girls.

WALKER:
Not was.

IRIS:
I didn't know there were girls upstairs.

WALKER:
Of course, who do you think parses the bodies out.

IRIS:
I didn't think about that at all.

WALKER:
They're bigger and stronger. Past expiration date.
Anyway - you take the slab at the center.
Draw a large knife. The curved ones are for later.

IRIS:
Does every girl end up there?

WALKER:
Then you trace against the fat, see?
Tip of the blade in ever so slight, to start.
See?

IRIS:
Mhm.

WALKER:
Once you've made an indentation.
And you can see it, it's important that you can see it.
Then you can go in firmly. With the rest.
You try.

Iris holds the knife.
She looks at it.

WALKER:
Go on.

She keeps looking at the knife.

WALKER:
Yes, there are a lot of things you can do with it.
Go on. Choose this thing. Choose the easier thing.

Iris begins to trace the blade on the slab.

WALKER:
That's it.
Yes.
You can even go a little -
Deeper. Right.

Walker puts her hand on Iris' hand.

WALKER:
Even deeper.
Even more -

Johann enters.

JOHANN:
Knock, knock.

Both women let go of the knife.

WALKER:
Johann. Oh, thank you, Thank you for coming.

JOHANN:
You didn't call.

WALKER:
Oh, didn't I? About the fogginess. I mean the -

JOHANN:
Flickering.

WALKER:
Yes. The lights have been flickering.
And I use the protective trigger and all.