I smoothed the folds of my navy blue jacket and walked into Temple Bat-Or (Daughters of Light), headquarters for the Council. Tonight, I would stand up to Lilith once and for all.

I strolled past the lobby's open garden, an enclave of willow, bamboo and eucalyptus trees on my way to the Council Chambers. A small brook flowed down a series of stone steps reflecting upward past the glass domed ceiling. Inside the Chambers fellow council members Rachel and Maja sat on brocaded floor cushions drinking ginseng tea.

"Devorah, how are you?" They stood up and we kissed in the traditional way, once on each cheek and our foreheads. "With the Blessings of our Lord Mother, I'm good. How are you?"

"With Her Blessings, I'm fine," Rachel said. She wore a stunning purple silk knee-length jacket and matching leggings. "You know Rachel and Chaim returned from Banff-II last night," Maja interjected. "That's right...and?"

"Space is divine," Rachel said. "The shuttle ride went smooth. Totally non-invasive. Their director toured us around the entire space station. Everyone on the station is so proud."

"Why shouldn't they be?" I said. "It's the first all Canadian space station. What did they think of your ergonomic designs?"

"Loved them. They absolutely raved."

"Speaking of raves, where's Lilith?" Maja asked impatiently. "This is the third month in a row she's been late. I'm tired of waiting for her majesty all the time."

"Me too. But, tonight things will finally change."

"What do you mean?" Rachel asked her eyes wide with anxiety. "Lilith can't break the law no matter how famous she is. She's gone over the edge."

"Break the law? What do you mean?" Maja's voice squeaked nervously. "Lilith always makes hasty decisions and regrets them later. If she doesn't change her ways, we could all be implicated. Everyone on the Council could be liable if The Society found out."

"The Society, what...what do you mean, Devorah?" Rachel whined.
"You'll both see soon enough, but...wait, she's coming." We sat back on our cushions with a casual pretense.

Lilith strolled in with her customary grace. Her waist-length auburn hair sat as a striking contrast to her white jacket and pants. Delicate hands betrayed nothing of her skills. As a neurosurgeon, Lilith pioneered disc-replacement surgery. The procedure earned her many accolades.

"Hello. Nice to see everyone." We all embraced and eased back down onto our respective pillows.

"Nice suit, Lilith," I said, tongue in cheek.

"You mean what am I doing wearing the color of another religious group don't you, Devorah?" Lilith laughed.

"It's cheeky," Maja admitted. "You're not wearing the Star of David and we're in Council Chambers. It's outrageous." She crossed her arms and purposely looked away.

"I suppose I'll be chastised by Rabbi Miriam."

"Possibly." Rabbi Miriam Bat-Shifra said as she entered the room. Dressed in full council regalia, she wore a scarlet tunic and pants with a matching turban wrapped around her head. Small tufts of gray hair showed through the turban and gold sandals covered her feet.

"Lilith, what's the news on the Stephen Hawking Medal?" Rabbi Miriam settled onto a soft cushion nearby.

"Who cares? I never understood the concept of receiving prizes for medical research. I trained to heal the sick not receive meaningless accolades."

"You always have to be different." I said. "The medal isn't just about you, Lilith. When you receive an honor the whole community is honored."

"And we earn prestige," Maja added.

"How nice for you." Lilith responded not the least bit interested. "How does that help my patients?"

I sunk down in my seat. I didn't relish this fight with Lilith but one way or another, the issue would be resolved tonight.

"I call this meeting to order," Rabbi Miriam said. She poured sparkling juice into a silver chalice and offered a blessing in her native Umhuraq, the dialect of the first Jews out of Ethiopia. "Blessed art thou our holy foremothers who created the New Torah and inspired us with their wisdom. We bless this juice and all of the bounties from our precious earth. Amen."

After the blessing, the Rabbi opened the Holy Ark to reveal our New Holy Torah in all its glory. Slim parchment rolls stood on a simple wooden shelf inside the Ark wrapped in a hand-woven purple silk cover. We bowed our heads in reverence, even Lilith.

Rabbi Miriam walked to the viewscreen on the back wall and activated it. "This evening, Rabbi Tamara will join our discussion," she said quietly. As the head rabbi for Canada,
Rabbi Tamara Bat-Zion would only be contacted on matters of serious concern.

Rabbi Miriam used the control panel beside her to comm.link with the Canadian Council to bring the office and Rabbi Tamara into full view on the screen. Now in her eighties the rabbi started using a wheelchair five years ago yet she showed no signs of slowing down.

Rabbi Miriam faced us and began. "A member of this Council recently apprised me of a serious issue. One of the members of this council broke a very important law. Does anyone wish to step forward?"

We looked at one another. No one moved.

"Lilith?" I said gently. "Do you have anything to say?"

Lilith's eyes shot daggers. "Yes, fine. I'm not wearing the Star of David and I'm not in the color of our group. I'll be more vigilant next month."

Rachel wore a smug expression and nodded knowingly to Maja. "I'm speaking of more serious matters Lilith," Rabbi Miriam said.

"Such as?"

"Our dietary laws."

Lilith stood up. "Since when did the Council turn into a lynch mob? Fine. It's true. I stopped eating a strict vegetarian diet. I don't know how you found out but it's anyone's business but mine. I recognize this is a law but there has to be leeway for personal choice."

"That's sacrilegious," Rachel said with her usual dramatic tone.

"Blasphemy," Maja added holding Rachel's hand.

"Calm down you two, please." I embraced Rachel's left shoulder. "Lilith, Rachel and Maja are right. If you must know, I told Rabbi Miriam. It's illegal. The Society for the Preservation of Life outlawed killing animals for food sixty years ago. Judaism forbids it. I know the New Laws seem strict but our foremothers wrote them to protect all life. You know that. If not for the New Laws Judaism would not exist. We had to redefine ourselves. After Israel ceased to exist our people scattered and fought with each other over the various interpretations of the Torah. The New Torah changed all that. It gave us a sense of peace and harmony after decades of struggle. "Not only that, we have to abide by The Society's laws just as all communities do."

"Yes, the precious Society." Lilith sneered.

"Sure go ahead and make fun, Lilith but animal to human diseases killed millions before anyone could stop it. As a doctor, I think you of all people would know that." I sat a little taller on my pillow taking comfort that I finally mustered the courage to confront Lilith.
Lilith sat in her chair hands folded on the table. Green eyes fluttered quietly. "This is my decision, not yours. Just whom do you think you're speaking to? I'm well aware of how many people died during those years. I don't need a lecture from you, Devorah."

"You need a lecture from someone." I stood up and so did Lilith. "This isn't just about the laws it's about…"

"About what?"

"Don't interrupt me," I shouted.

"Devorah, Lilith, please. We're in council chambers." Maja pouted.

"We know where we are." Now, Lilith shouted. "Why must everything in our life be about government regulations? We all know the Rabbinical Council passed their laws because of pressure from The Society. And, need I remind you, Devorah, that only a few years ago you protested those laws—before you came onto the Council."

"Lilith, that's so mean!" Rachel started to stand up but I waved her down.

I shifted from side to side. "Everyone here knows my past, Lilith. You don't have to remind me, or them. Yes, I rebelled but I also knew when to admit I my mistake. Why can't you?"

"Not only did Devorah learn to accept the laws but where would you find animals?" Rachel's mouth soured with the word.

"None of your business," Lilith said.

"Lilith. Devorah. Sit down, please." Rabbi Miriam gestured to our pillows.

We followed her bidding albeit reluctantly.

"Lilith, where did you find animals?" Rabbi Miriam stared hard.

Lilith sighed heavily. "There's an underground farm on the outskirts of Toronto near a place called Tottenham. A family has been selling chickens for over a year."

"Family?" Rachel asked. "What family?" She raised one eyebrow suspiciously.

"None of your business," Lilith said.

"Lilith, this is most definitely our business. You could become an outlaw. Let us help you," I said.

"Yes," Maja agreed. "And later you can come with Rachel and I to the Psychic Healing Tanks on Queen Street. Thirty minutes under water with the amethyst vibrations will heal all your negative energy. You're probably working too hard and your chakras are blocked."

"I'm a surgeon. I don't believe in chakras," Lilith said with a distasteful smirk.

"I don't care whether you believe in chakras, healing stones or voodoo," Rabbi Tamara said finally breaking her silence.

"You're a brilliant surgeon, Lilith. This could hurt you, your
career and any children you might want to have."

Lilith's hands shook slightly in the presence of Rabbi Tamara's authority. "I don't understand why we can't have the choice to eat what we want. Even Miriam ate meat by the shores of The Red Sea. You've said so yourself."

"Yes, I have. But you know the New Talmudic interpretation, Lilith. The law prohibiting murder has been extended to animals."

"I have the right to make my own choices."

"No, you don't. If you do this simply to make a point, you'll hurt yourself. Neither myself or anyone on the Council will support you on this."

Lilith looked at each one of us. She knew Rabbi Tamara could and would her from the council and the community if she didn't back down. "There won't be a problem, Rabbi Tamara. I’ll go back to vegetarianism."

"Good. And one other issue Lilith. I also know that you and Michael have not joined in with community prayers on Spirit.Net for the past two lunar cycles. Is anything the matter?"

For the first time in my recollection Lilith looked nervous. "No, Rabbi Tamara. It's simply an oversight on our part."

Rachel and I looked at one another. "Is everything okay with you and Michael? I asked.

"Fine," Lilith said.

"I hope that's true. This Sabbath I expect to hear you've joined us in community prayer. It would be unfortunate if you broke another law."

"Yes, Rabbi Tamara."

"Good. I'm glad to see you've reconsidered an unfortunate decision."

Lilith nodded in quiet acquiescence. We all took several deep breaths together. Rabbi Miriam shut down the link. We spent the next half-hour in deep meditation. Then, Rabbi Miriam re-focused our energies to attend to the matters for our community. All the spiritual communities in our metro relied on their council to direct important matters. Each month we faced numerous important decisions. Lucky for Lilith she sat on the council or more than the five of us would have found out about her faux pas. Religious and civil transgressions always became a matter of public record. It served as a strong deterrent and prelude to any punishment.

After the meeting Rachel, Lilith, Maja and I walked with our bicycles to the nearby Garden of Zen for a celebratory dessert. Animal sounds recorded to orchestrated music filled the open area of the restaurant. Servers padded quietly dressed in their traditional orange robes. An orbiting host checked our i.d.'s and credits. It hovered then guided us to a nearby booth. The pungent aroma of catnip from our herbal cigarettes soon filled the air. We laughed about Lilith's occasional rebellious
behavior. She ordered organic apple pie to celebrate.

"I'm glad that's over with," Rachel said with a wide smile.
"Me too," Maja agreed.
"Devoirah, you were right," Lilith said. After all, I do have to think about my career."
"And Michael," Maja said. "This implicates him after all."
"Yes, of course," Lilith said. "In fact, I pushed him into it. But there's something else."
"What's that?" I asked.
"I'm going to have a child."

Rachel, Maja and I circled about Lilith singing praises to The Goddess, Miriam.
"Michael must be ecstatic," Rachel said innocently.
"In more ways than one." Lilith smiled.
"So? Have you decided?" I asked.
"Decided?" Lilith asked between munches of pie.
"Girl or boy? After all, we have our male/female quota to meet," Rachel added.
"We're not exactly doing it in the scientific way," Lilith answered.

"How exactly are you going to do it then?" Rachel asked, looking first at Maja then myself.
"We've decided to have a baby the traditional way."
"Oooh." Rachel fainted onto the floor. Maja wept again. I sat there, my herbal cigarette about to burn my fingertips. Lilith cooled Rachel's face with a wet cloth and she quickly came around.
"What do you mean?" I asked.
"We're going to have it the regular way," Lilith said, helping Rachel to her feet.
"Exactly what do you mean by the regular way?" I asked.
"I don't want to know," Maja cried.
"Intercourse." Lilith smiled.
"Ooohoh," Rachel cried, then fainted again.

Lilith picked Rachel up one more time and once again applied a wet cloth to her forehead. "I'm disappointed you feel this way but our minds are made up."
"Lord Mother," Maja said. "I can't believe you're going to have intercourse."
"You poor dear, we've been making love for months," Lilith said in a matter of fact way.
"Devoirah, talk some sense into her." Maja shook her head over and over.
"Well...I mean...maybe we're being too hard on Lilith."
"What?" Rachel's screech resounded through the restaurant. She and Maja looked at me as if I'd been transformed into a toad.
"It's not as if...you know...sex is illegal or anything. I mean it's a little unconventional but not inappropriate." I plunged
into my pie not wanting to see Rachel and Maja's faces.

"Well, well. I'll make a real rebel out of you yet." Lilith threw her arm around my shoulder. To Maja and Rachel she said, "I enjoy being with Michael. Once you've made love there's nothing like it."

"Do you and Michael actually take your clothes off?" Maja asked.

"Of course! How else would we do it?"

"You don't use the standard emotional stimulants?" Rachel whispered with the cloth still on her head.

"So, you do everything?" I asked.

"Yes - kissing, foreplay, everything. We love being naked together."

I looked wistfully into Lilith's face. "I think Aaron would like that."

"My Lord Mother," Rachel finally said. "You've gone off the deep end Lilith. First food, now sex. What's next? And Devorah, how could you?"

"No more," Maja said. "Personally I've heard enough blasphemous nonsense for one night." Rachel took the cloth off her head. But, Lilith offered no apologies. Instead she simply stood up, smoothed her jacket and began to walk away. After a few steps she turned around. She cupped my face in her hands and smiled. We shared a warm hug and she left.

"We can't ever see her again", Maja said. "I don't want Rabbi Tamara questioning my choices. Next thing you know The Society will be knocking on Lilith's door to sweep for animal by-products."

"What's wrong with us?" I asked.

Rachel and Maja looked at each other, then me. They shook their heads. "Us? There's nothing wrong with us, Devorah. Lilith is...well...strange. She's always been that way."

"Lord Mother she's having sex," Rachel moaned. "When I get home I'm wiping all mention of her out of my system. I won't let them trace her back to me."

"I bet she belongs to that group of outlaws refusing to pray on Spirit.Net," Maja said.

"That's what Rabbi Tamara meant," Rachel added.

"I heard they're going to build a synagogue," Maja said.

"A building?" Rachel looked ill.

"So what?" I asked.

Rachel and Maja set their bikes down and stared. "So what?"

"Maja, keep your voice down," I said.

"No, I won't. You started this whole thing. You chastised Lilith and now you're on her side? I don't get it."

I flopped down onto the sidewalk, covered my face and cried.

"I've made a mess of everything. The truth is, I admire Lilith."
She stands up for herself, for what she believes and she makes love to her partner. I envy her."

"Oh dear," Rachel whispered. She moved over and sat down beside me. "Devorah, you're obviously under a great strain. Tomorrow, I'll take you to my re-birthing counselor. We'll deal with everything."

"What?" I shook my head in disbelief. "You're still at it. Don't you understand? I want to be more like Lilith. I used to enjoy being a rebel. Now, I'm a meek little lamb terrified to question anything."

"What's there to question?" Maja asked innocently.

"Anything and everything," I said. "When we stop questioning, we stop living."