



Dr Siva? I need you to go over this with me.

What have you got?

These are Marsh's notes.



Oh, come on. Marsh is nuts.

Yeah, but not in the way you think. I just don't have the background for... please just look.



All right. For you. Not for him.

You don't like him?

He looks at everyone and thinks he knows what they're about, just because he's been here longest.




Okay, okay. I like him fine. It's just that he looks at me like I'm a story in his head. A doll that someone's moving around on his stage.

On his stage, nobody gets to have an interiority or history but him.








So you study the Trees. Tell me what you know.

Not a small question, then.


Very well. I know this:



People who could leave Tree landing sites did. As soon as they could.

Those left under the shadows of their Trees are there because they couldn't go, for the most part. It costs money.


Most cities under Trees have a greatly reduced population compared to ten years ago.



Police services reduced their numbers accordingly. Police cost money.

Many cities under Trees thereby become interzones of sorts. Shadow economies. Shadow politics.

Nothing good grows in the shadow of a Tree.



This is one reason why your friends in the Great Work took root here. It's almost a pity they're so stupid and poor.

Well. They've got some money. I told you. And Tito still looks after me.

Pays for my room. Buys food. Gives me a bit of spending money. There are worse things.



Passive revenue streams are better. Especially when secret. Tell me about Eligia Gatti some more.

Not a lot to tell. I have a father, somewhere. I have a mother, somewhere. A little sister. We don't all have great stories.

I lost my virginity at thirteen, which is what you really want to know.

I do not.

All men do.

He was a cop. Maybe twenty-five. Hard muscles. Lazy eye.



It was okay, actually. God knows I've heard of worse. Pretty much every other woman I've ever met has a horror story.

I can't live without money, Luca, and Tito's an idiot.



You have already begun to take charge. There is more inside you than you think.

Now we practise, while I tell you more about Trees. There is a very particular thing I want you to learn.



You may have to kill Tito the idiot yourself, after all.