

# MEGA-CITY REDUX

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*In Two Sections*

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“All women who have loved and do love and will love virtue and morality, as well as all who have died or who are now living or who are to come, rejoice and exult in our new City which, thanks to God, is already formed and almost finished and populated.”

– from *The Book of the City of Ladies*  
by Christine de Pizan, 1405

NYC

Black-clad man holds open velvet rope to a tick-chipped wooden door. *You gals look like you know how to party.* Indeed: sword, suit, stake, and pen—my talisman—flown from frigid North to this exact not-so-secret speakeasy.

Inside, the men wear sunglasses and the women wear normal glasses. The Chorus lurks above us in the rafters, humming a steady *No* that changes pitch to match the song piped over the speakers.

Buffy drinks a Sex on the Beach from a teacup. Xena holds her beer by its butcher-papered neck. Dana Scully, a half-empty bottle of water she bought at the Ted Stevens (Plane Crash Victim) Anchorage International Airport Gate A-9.

I scan the Friday night crowd, looking for the Anchor's vaguely famous face. This is her neighborhood. For one distinct moment I realize the pointless longing of this trip and recoil into my paper bag PBR.

Yes, I fell in love with a woman in a screen. An image of a woman: the Anchor. And how is this different from The Gaze? For it is so easy to replace her love's face with mine. Her lips pressed against my cheek. My words in her ear. Each night in my narrow bed, I dream of a series of simultaneous wives and I dream of the Anchor. The only thing that can wake me is morning.

For I have tried not to covet my neighbor's wife. Tried not to think between top of boot and black skirt's hem. Tried ironized yeast, the Little Fibber Bra, the Beauty Micrometer, and Lysol. My love-match was shipwrecked the day I showed my dishpan hands.

Until the time came, we agreed, to do something about it. Buffy bought the tickets, Dana wrote our prescriptions, Xena sulked and polished her long steel sword. Our motivations: Reason, Rectitude, Justice, and hopeless Love. And thus the plan: if I could make her real, I would no longer be so dismantled.

A free drink means something expected, something for buyer in return—we may be from out of town, but we can still speak the language of The Chorus, can hear—even now, over the din of all these overpaid 20-somethings—their murmur: *she wore she said she did she didn't she gave she asked she took she drank she kissed—*

Xena positions us between counter and claw foot fainting couch, a lookout position for spotting Anchor and others, like the crew of Columbia polos who stumble in and brush against again and again. One grabs my hand and locks eyes, slowly licking his cocktail cherry. He runs his tongue all around the shiny red bulb and winks.

Dana and I devised a code acronym for “All  
The Times Men Have Made Me Furious”:

ATTMHMMF

Other phrases fitting this acronym:

Anthem Him Manifest

Attention, Man-Hating Mega MILFs

At the Mouth of Her Mighty

Menstrual Flow

AT&T Monthly Hysteria

Money Management Fits

Atom Hymn(f)

## Atom Hymn

When I was 15 I loved a neightorgirl who loved a boy with heavy metal band patches stitched all over his knapsack—a boy who sat in front of me in English class. One day he fucked her in his car and when I found out, the entire universe shifted from the crown of freckles across her shoulders to his 10 chubby, ordinary fingers and the way they held his pencil, held a can of energy drink, drummed on his desk casually, easily, as though completely unaware of what they had been permitted to do. These same fingers later tied my shoelaces to the legs of his chair, too far for me to reach when the bell rang for lunch. Though I would like to blame him, I must admit I let it happen, knowing she'd be the one to slip out the knots and free me.

Ready to leave and good'n'drunk—no sign of the Anchor, but plenty, plenty of screens—when the wallpaper starts to shift. Stems of flowers go asymptotic, leaves split in half, and wall becomes hinged, unhinged, doored—an open black tunnel inside.

Xena: Speakeasy within a speakeasy?

Buffy: And just how easy do they speak?

Flashlight out and deep into the Unknown, Dana plunges in ahead, believing and believing despite us.