

### *The Round Table*

Passing:

They all arrived later by the next meeting, though no one admitted whether their main motive in coming late was the inclement weather—the cold, the near snowy feel, the icy paths—or if they just wanted to put off the inevitable. Although they did not want to speak of it, if they had to continue to spill their secrets out among near strangers, no one was sure they wanted to be friends with the others in the room. There was far too much at stake. The leader of the group, a young woman who had introduced herself as Louise Baron, walked in just as the last of the focus group, Nisha, settled into her seat.

“I am sorry I am late,” she said aloud to no one in particular, and yet, to everyone. “Traffic was murder, I must say.”

They gave noncommittal grunts of acknowledgement while she settled all of her things around haphazardly. “I was trying to get here so much sooner. But things did not turn out that way. First an accident, then I forgot some of my materials in class, then...” she trailed off with a sigh and turned a bright smile onto the group. “But you don’t want to hear that.” She sat down with a puff of air, and leaned forward. “Are you ready to begin?”

Sin looked up at her. “We were just waiting for you.”

Louise blushed and gave a small, nervous laugh. “Right. Then I thought that today we would start off with talking about passing.”

The room was quiet as they all contemplated that strange subject. “Passing?” Alex ventured. “Passing what?”

“You mean like passing classes? Or something like that?”

“Maybe I mean passing gas.” Louise joked before producing a small, cushy ball. She waved it in the air, the colors catching everyone’s attention. “Passing. It is an activity about hearing what other people think, their views on life and any subject that comes to your mind, and sharing in their thoughts. It is not much. In fact, it was kind of a backwards plan, but I tend to like it when it comes to people. You get to hear what is going on inside their head. You get to... place yourself in someone else’s shoes.” She blushed as she tossed the ball up in the air, and Sin automatically reached out to catch it. “You are up, Sin.”

He flushed. “What should I talk about?”

Louise smiled. “Anything you like. That is the plan, at any rate.” She waved her hand vaguely at the table. “You have the floor.”

Sin stared down at the ball in his hands, squeezing it rhythmically. “I do not know what to say.”

“Who is important to you? Or, what is important to you?” Louise suggested, relaxing back in her chair.

“I can tell you.” Nix smiled and kicked at the side of Sin’s chair. “She is about my height, dark, Italian.... Or am I wrong?”

Sin chuckled the ball at Nix’s head and blushed bright red. “You are right.”

“Tell me,” Alex shifted his chair closer as well. “Or, rather, tell us. Who is she?”

Nix playfully tossed the ball back at him. “Your ball, Dough Boy.”

Sin grasped the ball in his hand, feeling the squish of air rush from it. “Her name is Aspasia. Pacie. She is...” he sighed, “fabulous.”