

Gilded Cage



By Xine Fury

Gilded Cage

"And don't come out until you like boys!"

Lindy recoiled from the slamming door. She ran to her window and looked down at the driveway below. Her father was leading Ronnie to the car. The girl walked with the gait of a prisoner being led to the electric chair. Lindy's eyes filled with tears as she watched the car pull out of the driveway. Would she ever see her best friend again? Not if her parents could help it.

Her mom had taken her phone, but Lindy still had her laptop. She flipped it open, hoping to send Ronnie a message. "I'm sorry my parents are like this," she typed. "I promise we'll get through this. I love you." She paused for a few seconds, reconsidering the last three words. They hadn't actually said them yet, and she didn't want to scare Ronnie off. She backspaced it out, then retyped it, twice. *What have I got to lose?* she finally thought.

She clicked send, but a little red exclamation mark appeared next to the message. Lindy looked down at the taskbar, and saw that the wi-fi wasn't connected. She tried to reconnect, but it wouldn't take her password.

Already? she thought. She searched for other wi-fi connections, but the house was pretty isolated.

Lindy sat on her bed and put her face in her hands. It was all too much. Not half an hour ago, Lindy was on cloud nine. She could still taste Ronnie's vanilla lip gloss. If only they'd locked the door.

She'd always known her parents were homophobic, but her mom's reaction still shocked her. She'd nearly yanked Lindy's arm out of the socket pulling her away from Ronnie. She'd yelled so hard she'd gone hoarse, her religious tirade so impassioned it became gibberish. *How can she believe in a god that wouldn't want me to be happy?* Lindy wondered. *What kind of god would call love a sin?*

She vowed right then and there that she would never grow up to be her parents. She would never follow a religion that taught bigotry as a virtue. And if she ever had kids at all, she would encourage them to be whoever they wanted to be. Unless they wanted to be bigots. Then they'd be grounded for life.

Lindy stood up and looked around her room. As prisons went, it was luxurious. The room had once been the master bedroom, but her mom didn't like climbing all the stairs, so they'd given it to Lindy. The room was huge, with its own bathroom, and plenty of space for all her projects. She took after her father, who was an aerospace engineer. Remote control airplanes and drones, some only half-built, sat on every shelf.

The house had once been a small private airport, but that was decades ago. Her dad still used the runway out back for his vintage biplane. Lindy's room was in the control tower, which was three stories higher than the rest of the house. Huge windows surrounded her on all sides. The view had once made her feel free, like she was living in the clouds.

But today she felt more like a fairytale maiden, locked in a tower by a wicked witch. She tested the door. It really was locked from the outside. She knew there was a latch outside the door, but this was the first time she'd seen it used. *Seriously?* she thought. *This is child abuse.* Some of the windows opened, but not wide enough to climb out. She supposed she could break one, but then what? She didn't think her sheets were long enough to make a rope.

She looked out the window again. Her dad's car was long gone. Ronnie only lived fifteen minutes away. Any minute now she'd be facing her own sentence. And Lindy knew that Ronnie's parents were just as bigoted. *I hope she's okay,* Lindy thought.

She sat back down, cried a little, then screamed at the top of her lungs. Then she stood up, moved to her computer desk, and opened her laptop again. She wanted to write down her feelings while the anger was still fresh. But she couldn't figure out how to start, and just stared at the blank text document. She stood up again and paced around the room. She wanted to break something. She took a model airplane off the shelf and got ready to hurl it at the wall. Then she stopped, sighed, and put it back on the shelf.

She wasn't going to get out of this by throwing a temper tantrum. She was seventeen years old, and a senior in high school. Freedom wasn't that far off. If she played her parents' game until graduation, she could date whoever she wanted in college. But that seemed so far away...

Lindy threw herself face down onto the bed. It was the middle of the day, but she was emotionally exhausted. Soon the tears came again, and she cried herself to sleep.

She woke to the sound of her door closing, and fading footsteps thumping down the metal stairs. The sun had gone down. The lights were off, so she turned on her bedside lamp. Three bags were sitting by her door. Fighting off a headache, she rolled off the bed and stumbled across the room. She flipped on the overhead lights, tried the door again – still locked – then kneeled to examine the bags.

First was a sack from her favorite fast food restaurant. She could smell the aroma of greasy chicken from within. Most days she would have found the smell heavenly, but right now it made her a little nauseous. She pushed it aside and grabbed the second bag. There was a note taped to it, which read “We still love you.” Lindy crumpled up the note and tossed it over her shoulder, then opened the bag.

She gasped with indignation when she saw what was inside. It was a child’s cell phone. It had four buttons, which could only be programmed by the account holder. The first two were labeled Mom and Dad; the other two weren’t yet programmed. *So this is what it’s come to*, Lindy thought.

The third bag was a brown paper sack, stapled shut. Lindy picked it up, noting that it felt like it contained several items. She set it on her bed before opening it.

First, there was a package of condoms. Lindy was so incredulous, she almost laughed. “What am I supposed to do with these?” she asked out loud. Even if she liked boys, she wasn’t going to meet any locked in this tower. Next, there were four DVDs. As soon as Lindy realized what they were, she shrieked and tossed the whole stack across the room. The nude men on the covers stared back at her from the floor. *Those are going right in the trash*, she thought.

Next there was an unmarked rectangular box, inside a cardboard sheath. She slid off the outer sheath, and her eyes became saucers. *What. The. Fuck.* It was a sex toy, a hyperrealistic phallus with dozens of vibration modes. "Mom has lost her mind," Lindy said, setting the box down. She looked back into the sack. Finally, at the bottom of the bag, there was a bible.

This time she did laugh. She laughed so hard, she was afraid her parents would hear her, even though they lived in a house designed to drown out airplanes. When she no longer had the energy to laugh, she stared off into space, thinking of Ronnie.

"Your *girlfriend* has moved away," Lindy's mom said. She spat the second word, like she'd bitten into a rotten piece of fruit.

"What?" Lindy replied. They sat at a card table in Lindy's room. Her mother had brought her breakfast, and had refused to leave until they talked. Last night's chicken still sat untouched in its bag on the floor.

"After what we told them, they no longer felt California was the best place to raise her. She's going to live with her uncle in Tucson until they decide what to do."

"She hates her uncle," Lindy said. "He never showers and he calls her 'Ronnie-Leigh.' She's going to be miserable."

"She should have thought of that before..." she trailed off, then shook her head. "Lindy," she said, "I... well, your father and I... we want to make you a deal. We'll give you some of your freedom back, if you'll do a couple of things for us."

Lindy stared at her, but didn't say anything. She was still thinking about Ronnie.

"First, we want you to consider going to a local college, and living here."

"What?" Lindy asked, snapping out of her thoughts. "No! That's—"

"Lindy," her mother interrupted. "Go anywhere you like, but you'll have to find a way to pay for it. We'll only pay for your college if you go to one we approve of. Secondly, we want you to try dating some boys."

"Mom, that's—"

"I don't want to hear it. You're young, and today's woke culture has filled your head with silly ideas. No more internet for you, and no more female friends. You'll date who we tell you to date, or you'll stay in your room."

"It's my life!" Lindy shouted.

"And that's why I don't want you to mess it up. You only get one life. I don't want you to look back and realize you wasted your youth, brainwashed by the liberal media. I only want what's best for you."

"Get out of my room," Lindy growled.

Anger flashed in her mother's eyes, but she didn't raise her voice. "I'll let you take some time to think about it," she said, standing. Then she picked up the bag of spoiled chicken and walked out the door, locking the latch behind her.

A few weeks passed. Her mother drove her to and from school each day, but she spent the rest of her time locked in her room. While at school, Lindy noticed that the teachers seemed to be keeping an extra close eye on her, and

she could tell a few students were talking behind her back. The faculty also changed her class schedule so that she no longer went to gym class, and gave her study hall instead.

She wanted to tell her teachers that she was being kept prisoner, but she had the feeling her parents had already spoken to them. It was Lindy's word against theirs, and no one was going to believe her over her parents. Lindy didn't have a lot of friends, but whenever she tried to talk to other girls, the nearest teacher would separate them. "You're here to learn, not socialize," they might say, even if it was between classes.

"There's a boy I want you to go out with," Lindy's mom said. "His name is Sam. His mother thinks he needs to socialize more." They sat at the card table again, eating lunch.

"Mom, I'm really not interested in—"

"I'm not asking you to have sex with him," she said, making Lindy blush. "Just go out, let him buy you dinner and a movie. Even if you don't hit it off, it'll be nice to get out of the house for a change." She said it as if it was Lindy's fault she didn't get out more.

"I just don't—"

"If you do it, I'll let you have your internet back."

"Really?" Lindy perked up, sitting up straighter.

"With some restrictions, of course. I get a list of your passwords, and occasionally your father will go through your computer. You know, your browser history, your chats, make sure you don't have any girlie pictures, that kind of thing. Oh, don't give me that look."

A bit of half-chewed food tumbled out of Lindy's

open mouth, but she was still too shocked to close it.

"Parents, am I right?" Sam said, taking a sip of his cola. "I didn't want to come either. No offense, you seem grice. Nice, I mean. Or great. I just hate being forced into, you know, social situations."

They sat at a picnic table in the park, enjoying a meal of turkey sandwiches and chips. They had the table to themselves, but Lindy's mom sat at another table about thirty feet away, watching them. Presumably so that Lindy didn't run off and start kissing the next girl who walked by.

The thing was, Sam actually was decent company. They shared a few hobbies in common, and liked a lot of the same music. So far they'd been there for nearly an hour, and they hadn't run out of things to talk about. Lindy wasn't about to hop in bed with him, but he was fun to talk to. Or maybe Lindy was just starved for human contact.

Now and then, she'd glance at her mom and make a small "thumbs up" gesture. She hated to be so compliant, but she wanted her internet back. Her mom smiled smugly, as if to say, "See? You were just confused."

When they were done eating, they took turns flying a drone Lindy had brought. Sam had never flown one before, but this drone was designed for beginners, with intuitive controls. Still, he managed to crash it into the trees more than once. They had a great time. For Lindy, it was the happiest she'd been since her kiss with Ronnie.

As they were preparing to leave, Lindy whispered into Sam's ear. "I don't want to make it weird, but would you kiss me? It doesn't mean anything."

"I get it," Sam said, casting a sideways glance at

Lindy's mom. Making sure they'd be seen, Sam took Lindy into his arms and kissed her deeply. Then they said their goodbyes and Lindy returned to her mother.

"See, that wasn't so bad, was it?" her mother said, as they went back to the car.

"I could get used to it," Lindy said. And she meant it, too, just not in the way her mother hoped.

The internet was already working when Lindy got back to her room. She hadn't checked her social media sites in over a month, and she had hundreds of notifications. But the first thing she checked was her messages from Ronnie.

Lindy winced when she saw her last message. "I promise we'll get through this. I love you." She'd forgotten about that. She'd sent it right after the internet went out, so Ronnie wouldn't have received it until today. In retrospect, she shouldn't have said it. They'd only made out a couple of times, after all. Way too soon for the L word.

Apparently Ronnie agreed. "I'm sorry I can't do this," her message read. "I was just having fun. Maybe it's a good thing they sent me away. Sorry." Her message had just come across a few minutes earlier.

Lindy's fingers sped furiously over the keyboard. "I shouldn't have said it, I'm sorry. Please still be my friend." She hit Enter, but the message wouldn't send. Instead, she got a pop-up that said "You have been blocked from communicating with this user."

Her heart sank. The more she thought about it, the more she realized it hadn't actually been love, but rather the excitement of discovering a fellow lesbian-in-hiding.

She'd have felt the same way about any girl who shared her interests. But that didn't lessen the blow. She'd lost a friend.

She wasn't sure how long she stared at her screen, rereading Ronnie's last message. But eventually she received a chat request. It was Sam.

"I had a great time today," he wrote.

"Me too!" Lindy replied. "I can't wait to do it again. Want to see a movie next weekend?"

"Sounds great," Sam wrote. "Can I ask you something about that kiss?"

"Wait," Lindy typed. They couldn't talk here. She'd already given her mother a list of her passwords. For all Lindy knew, her mother might be logged in right now, monitoring this conversation on her tablet. Whatever Sam was wanting to ask, the question itself would probably reveal the kiss had been fake. They needed to take this conversation to a different chat program. Lindy would need to set up a new account, one her mother didn't know about.

"Take your time," Sam wrote.

"You're a really good kisser," Lindy typed. "I was just a little embarrassed that my mom was watching." Was that too subtle? She cringed in anticipation of Sam's reply.

"Say no more," Sam replied. "Next time we'll look for someplace with more privacy."

Lindy exhaled with relief. She wasn't sure if he'd gotten the message, but he did change the subject. They talked about their favorite movies, and after a while, Lindy forgot about her problems. It didn't matter that she'd lost her best friend, or that she no longer had any privacy. Sam was fun to talk to. He had a great sense of humor, and while he struggled to talk in person, he was really in his element with

text chat. Some of his clever comebacks made Lindy laugh out loud.

I wish you were a girl, Lindy thought. For a moment, she even considered typing it. But then she remembered her mom might be watching. Suddenly nervous, she scrolled back over the chat history to make sure she hadn't typed anything incriminating. *This is no way to live*, she thought angrily.

The following weekend they went to see an action movie. Lindy's mom once again chaperoned, but she sat three rows behind them. During the movie, Lindy handed Sam a folded piece of paper. She whispered in his ear, asking him not to look at it until he got home. At the end of the date, they kissed again, just for show.

Once Lindy got home, she opened up her laptop. She knew her mom wasn't a very technical person, so she probably didn't have to worry about any keylogger or screen sharing software. Nevertheless, she took a few precautions to make sure she wasn't being monitored. Once she felt reasonably safe, she logged into her secret chat account.

Sam had already set up an account, and Lindy friended him. "Good movie today," she typed.

"Loved it," Sam replied. "So can we talk? Really talk?"

"I think so. What was it you wanted to ask?"

"Why are we tricking your mom?"

Lindy thought a moment before typing. She was worried he wouldn't want to be her friend if they weren't dating. But were they really friends if they weren't honest

with each other? "She caught me kissing a girl."

"Wow," Sam replied, punctuating the sentence with a wide-eyed emoji.

"Sorry if I led you on," Lindy typed.

"No worries. I like hanging out with you. You're fun. But as long as we're being honest..."

A few seconds passed. "Well?" Lindy typed.

"You're sure this is private?"

"I've done everything I can," Lindy replied. "I don't think mom will find out about this account. She thinks she knows more about computers than she really does."

"Okay, here goes," Sam typed. "Don't hate me..."

"Just rip off the bandage," Lindy wrote. "I won't judge."

"On these private chats, can you start calling me Samantha?"

Whoa, Lindy thought. She was surprised, but not really surprised. She thought she'd picked up a feminine vibe earlier, but she'd ignored it. Now she analyzed every interaction they'd had together, looking for clues she'd missed.

"Still there?" Samantha asked.

"Sorry, yes. Samantha it is. Do your parents know?"

"Not yet. But I plan on telling them soon."

"How do you think they'll take it?" Lindy typed.

"They're usually pretty open-minded, but I don't know."

"Good luck, Samantha," Lindy typed.

"I'm not seeing a lot of activity in your chat

history,” Lindy’s mom said.

“I, uh, deleted the chat history when we were done talking,” Lindy said. She knew her mother wouldn’t like that explanation, but it was better than the truth.

Her mother glared at her. “You’re not allowed any privacy right now,” she said. “I can’t be a good mother if I can’t keep my eyes on you.”

“Sorry. We were talking about, uh, sex stuff,” Lindy lied. She tried to look embarrassed.

To Lindy’s horror, her mother actually looked pleased. “Oh. Are you two thinking of taking things to the next level?”

“Mom!” Lindy exclaimed. “I can’t talk about that with you!”

“Nonsense. You can talk to me about anything,” her mother replied. “I won’t judge.”

Bullshit, Lindy thought. “Besides, you keep me locked up all the time. When would I even—”

“I’ve been thinking about that,” her mother said. “You seem to be back on the right path. I was thinking about loosening the reigns a little.”

“Really?” Lindy asked.

“I think you’ve earned it,” her mother said. “I’m still watching you, though. I still want full access to your social media accounts and chats. But I’ll stop locking your door, and you can even drive yourself to school again. Just be home by dinner. And no female friends.”

That last demand was about to get more difficult.

“So what’s the range on this thing?” Samantha

asked, watching the drone grow smaller in the distance. She was still presenting as a boy, but whenever the adults were out of earshot, she was Samantha. The two of them stood in Lindy's backyard, out by the airstrip.

"About half a mile," Lindy answered. "But that's nothing. I've got one upstairs with a range of seven miles." It was her eighteenth birthday, and she couldn't think of a better way to spend it than flying drones with a friend. Of course, that night she'd have cake with her parents, but she wasn't looking forward to that at all.

"That's awesome," Samantha said. "When you're sick, you could send it to school to pick up your homework."

"Or I could just download my homework from the school's website," Lindy said.

"Yeah, but this is cooler," Samantha said. She was getting a lot better at controlling it, and she made it take a weaving path back to them.

Lindy suddenly felt like she was being watched. She turned and looked up at the tower. There was too much glare to see through the glass, but she thought she saw movement in her room. She sighed. "I think mom's tossing my room again."

"Is there anything for her to find?" Samantha asked. The drone was only about fifty feet away now.

"Not really," Lindy said. "I even planted a couple of things that'll make her happy. Don't ask. But it still feels gross to have her pawing through my stuff."

"Sucks," Samantha said. "What did you – Whoa!" The drone took a nosedive, and crashed to the ground about ten feet away. Plastic pieces flew off in all directions.

They both ran toward the crash site, and Lindy knelt next to the drone. "I'm so sorry," Samantha said.

"Don't sweat it," Lindy replied. "This is totally fixable. Bring me the bag." Lindy picked up drone pieces while Samantha retrieved the drone's carrying case. There was a little toolkit inside, and Lindy pulled out a tiny screw driver. "Six minutes," she said. "Time me."

"You really know what you're doing," Samantha said, watching her work. "You could fix drones for a living. Have you picked a college yet?"

"That's up in the air right now," Lindy said. "I want to go as far away as possible, out from under mom's thumb. But she's afraid if she can't watch me, that I'll start dating girls. And for once, she's right."

"Well, you're way too smart for the schools in this town," Samantha said. "I'd hate to see you waste your life here. You know, my uncle works in admissions at an engineering school upstate. Maybe we could—"

"Unless it's within a ten-mile radius, I doubt mom'd let me," Lindy said. Then she set the drone on the ground, and took a few steps back. "Try it now."

Samantha switched on the controls, and soon the drone was airborne once again. "You're a genius," she said. "By the way, I've set a date. I'm coming out to my parents on Friday night."

Lindy leaned forward and kissed her. This time, it wasn't for show.

Saturday morning, Lindy woke up and sat up in bed. She was about to head towards the bathroom when she saw movement out of the corner of her eye. Her mother was

sitting at the card table, watching her.

“What’s wrong?” Lindy asked.

“You’ve been lying to me again,” her mother said.

Lindy scrunched her face. Of course, she had been lying, but she couldn’t imagine which lie her mother had caught. She decided to play innocent. “What do you mean?”

“Have you checked your social media today?” It was a dumb question, since she’d just seen Lindy wake up. But it was more of an accusation than a question, anyway. She held up her phone and showed it to her daughter.

Lindy gasped. Samantha had come out online, telling the world her true name. Her new profile picture had her wearing a wig, makeup, and a dress. She looked beautiful. The comments were overwhelmingly supportive, including a couple from Samantha’s parents. *Good for her*, Lindy thought.

“You knew about this, didn’t you?” her mom asked.

Lindy nodded. It was pointless to lie.

“Obviously you can’t see him again,” her mother said.

“Mom—” Lindy started.

“I swear everyone in this state has gone crazy,” her mom said. “Kids thinking they know more about themselves than their parents. Your schools are like indoctrination factories. They’re supposed to teach you about heroes like Columbus and Edison. But instead they’re encouraging you to change your biology or to marry your cat.”

“Mom, that’s not—”

"Well, you can kiss college goodbye. You're staying here until you're married. To a man. A real man. I'll find you someone. Someone who isn't crazy."

"Mom, you can't just —"

Her mother stood up. "I've taken away your wi-fi privileges. The world is a bad influence on you. From now on, it's school and home. Maybe not even school, if I can arrange it." She headed out the door, and started to slam it closed.

"No!" Lindy shouted, and grabbed the handle. They both pulled for a moment, until Lindy won out.

Her mother stood in the doorway, her eyes full of rage. She stepped forward and slapped Lindy's face. "Don't you dare defy me ever again!" she roared at her daughter.

Lindy was so shocked, she just stood there as her mother stepped back out of the room, slammed the door, and latched the outer lock.

"And don't think Sam's ever going to want to talk to you again!" her mother shouted from the other side of the door.

What did she mean by that? Lindy wondered, as she heard her mother's steps descend the metal staircase. Then she had a horrible thought. She ran to her laptop and flipped it open.

Of course it wouldn't connect to the wi-fi, but she was still able to read her sent messages. Apparently she'd sent one to Samantha early this morning. Or rather, her mother had, posing as Lindy.

The message read: "Sam, I'm through with you. I never want to see your face again. How could I ever want to be with someone so mentally deranged? Boys can't be girls. Don't try to contact me again. P.S. – You make an ugly girl."

Lindy was stunned. *She'll never believe that was from me*, she thought. But she couldn't take that chance. Losing another friend was bad enough, but the breakup message was so cruel. If Samantha believed it, she'd be crushed. *I have to talk to her*, Lindy thought.

But how? She couldn't connect to wi-fi to send a message. She couldn't open her door. Her windows didn't open enough to climb out, and she'd kill herself getting down even if she did. Her cell phone could only call her parents. Samantha only lived six miles away, but it might as well have been six hundred.

She looked at her shelves. So many parts, so many tools. Maybe she could "engineer" her way out of the room somehow. Or maybe...

And then she got an idea.

Samantha sat on her bed, still in a daze. Showing the world who she really was had been one of the most euphoric things she'd ever done. For the most part, people had been supportive. A few of her classmates had made fun of her, but those guys made fun of everyone. The opinions of morons meant nothing to her.

Lindy's opinion, on the other hand, meant everything. Reading her message had felt like getting punched in the gut. It didn't even sound like something Lindy would say. *Maybe she was just trying to please her mom*, Samantha thought. It wouldn't be the first time. A few weeks earlier, Lindy's mom had complained that she couldn't read Lindy's chat history. Ever since then, they'd used one chat for safe topics like movies, and the private chat for real talk. Occasionally they'd flirt a little in the regular chat, just so

Lindy's mom wouldn't complain again. Could this have been another attempt to throw off her mother's scent?

But if so, why wasn't Lindy answering the private chat? She hadn't answered any of Samantha's messages since sending the breakup note. Apparently Lindy was just done with her. Samantha wasn't the most social person in the world. It took her a while to warm up to people. But she and Lindy had just clicked, and the thought of losing her was too much to bear.

There was a commotion outside, like a lawnmower trying to cut through a steel pipe. Samantha stood up and ran to her window. A drone was caught in the tree in her backyard. Samantha ran outside and climbed up the tree. She switched off the drone, disentangled it from the branches, and took it back to her room. *This has to be from Lindy*, she thought. *But why?* She turned the drone over a few times, looking for clues. She opened the battery compartment, removed the memory card, and inserted it into her computer.

The root directory included some system files and a folder for pictures. It also included a text file named "SAMANTHA README." It read: "Samantha, I hope this drone makes it to you. I programmed the GPS with your address, but anything could happen between here and there. I'm so sorry. That hurtful message wasn't from me. My mother wrote it, right before she took away my internet. Please, I need your help. I'm a prisoner in my own home. My parents go to bed around ten. Please show up at midnight. Just stand beneath my south window, I'll do the rest. But if you can't make it, just know this: You are valid, and I love you. With or without me, please live a great life, as the person you were meant to be."

At ten-til-midnight, Lindy sat by an open window, her suitcase by her side. It was too dark to see much below. She wanted to yell something out the window, but she was also afraid to make any noise. She wondered if Samantha was already here, or if she was coming at all. Did she even get the drone? Would she be able to sneak out of her house? Would she even care enough to come? Lindy had used the L word again in that message, and now she hoped it wasn't a mistake.

Five minutes before midnight, she heard an owl. Actually, it sounded almost nothing like an owl, but rather a teenager's voice shouting "Who! Who!" Lindy laughed. She dangled her keys out the window, letting them jingle for a few seconds, and dropped them to the ground. A few minutes later she heard footsteps coming up the metal stairs. She heard the outer latch slide aside, and the door opened.

Lindy and Samantha flew into each other's arms, hugging so tight they could barely breathe. "I love you too," Samantha said. Lindy grabbed her suitcase, and the two ran down the stairs, out the door, and into the night.

Samantha's mother was a lawyer, and she had no trouble drawing up the paperwork to keep Lindy out of her parents' hands. Lindy applied for several college grants, and ended up with multiple options for nearly-free tuition. She stayed with Samantha's family until graduation, then she and Samantha went off to college together.

Lindy and Samantha never actually became a couple, and by the time they graduated college, each had found the person they would eventually marry. But their

friendship remained strong, and the two couples became like family.

And when Lindy finally had children of her own, she made sure to listen to them, to respect them, and to let them explore their own identities.

Note

This is an excerpt from *Geek Cutes*, by Xine Fury. *Geek Cutes* is a collection of eight light-hearted short stories, spanning a variety of genres, with a focus on lesbians and trans women. Stories included in the full anthology:

Dungeon Therapy: Two women meet over an online tabletop RPG.

Gilded Cage: A young tech expert is locked in her room by her homophobic parents.

Mother's Day: A cop teams up with an occult expert to track down an otherworldly monster.

Fairy Dust: In a war between fairies and dragons, one pixie must embrace her destiny.

Hero Worship: A woman goes on a blind date with a superhero, but is it safer to stay single?

Think Tank: A team of scholars struggle to break a divine code, racing against the most serious of all deadlines.

Strangers in the Void: When the power goes out on a space station, two strangers work together to find the cause.

Vigilante: In a neighborhood riddled with violent crime, a masked hero protects women from the local gangs.