

“...May Be Worth Something.”

“Ten *thousand* books?” I breathed.

Professor Ramalay grinned, and lit another cheroot. I didn't blame her: First Republic dig sites have a particular stink. A millennium of decomposing subterranean polyurethane raises mighty reeks when they're finally released to the open sky. “Ten thousand, six hundred and twenty-three that have a ninety-five percent chance of reconstitution,” she told me. “Two thousand and fifty seven that we've got a fifty-fifty chance at. This will upend our entire understanding of First Republic genre romance.”

I gasped. No: I staggered. “*Romance*? Does... does that mean...?”

“Yes! We've found them. The Lost Harlequins.”

“...My God.”

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