

THE ALEXANDER GORDON
JAHAN'S READER
AN ANTHOLOGY



ASSEMBLED BY *TBC*
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JAHAN'S

Adventurers of the Nothingness Part 1 Down The Rabbit Hole

Down The Rabbit Hole

A Scifi Pulp Serial by Alex Jahans

“The chances of anything coming from Mars were a million to one they said but if you go down to the woods today you'll be sure of a big surprise!” cried Ross as he leapt out from behind a tree and started to laugh.

Michael grinned and hugged Ross. Ross was tall and rippling with muscle that his checked shirt barely hid from view.

Ross gave Michael a bare hug and whispered “You weren't followed?”

“No” groaned Michael before coughing and pulling back “I mean I check the coast was clear.”

Ross chuckled lightly as Michael blushed and led him to a secluded area nearby where he had strung up a tarpaulin roof, set up mosquito nets and a camped big enough for two.

Michael blushed and he let out an involuntary cry of joy “This is amazing!”

“And...” said Ross as he untied a rope, causing a cake to lower down from above the tarpaulin.

Michael hugged Ross “This is all so fantastic but there is something I have to tell you and it isn't easy but...”

Michael stepped away and took a deep breath, closing his eyes for just a moment to hold back tears.

When he opened his eyes he saw that he was falling into a vast blue ocean. “Fuck!”

He hit the water and was paralysed from the shock and pain of impact.

He tried to swim but his clothes dragged him down.

As he wrestled with his shoe laces he saw something coming out of the darkness of the water. A familiar beat of two filled his ears. There was no escape. Michael was 5 foot 8, obese and fond of wearing fancy suits. A long coat may look badass but in the water it is a vast anchor dragging you down, and yeah good luck getting it off when you are in shock, half drowned and panicking because a shark is approaching.

Fortunately for Michael he blacked out before the shark reached him.

Michael woke up naked on a beach. He didn't know much about geography or flora and fauna but this looked like your standard Mediterranean beach with palm trees and golden sands to him. He cried out “Hey”

No response.

He cried louder “Hey! Thanks for rescuing me but where the fuck am I?”

He saw... things... raise their heads to see what the commotion was then a 6 foot 5 slender blonde woman with fair skin strode across the sand to see him. She wore an emerald green bikini and bright blue flip flops but foremost in Michael's mind was the strange gun she held in her hand.

“Hey now what's the point in saving my life if you are just going to kill me!?”

The woman ignored him and knelt down beside him, she placed the gun into his hand pointed the gun at her own head and made him pull the trigger, literally forced his index finger against the trigger.

The shot rang out and the woman shrugged, took back the gun, pointed it at him and fired.

“Do you understand me now?” she said.

“No but I can comprehend what you are saying” he said.

The woman laughed and extended a hand by way of greeting “I'm Sally”

“Michael” he said as he extended his hand to shake hers. “Now first thing's first, why did you point that gun at me?”

A rich deep male voice explained calmly “The Memory Gun transfers memories. If you happen to have a creature capable of understanding any language, such as that fine sylph you are talking to then they can use the memory gun to get an understanding of your basic thought process and language then transfer their own understanding of languages to you in a form you will be familiar with.”

As the voice spoke Michael saw who it was coming from stride into view. He was 8 feet tall, green scaled and had a crest of horns surrounding his head. He wore something like combat trousers, great black baggy things with numerous pockets. He didn't wear a shirt but something like a long coat without the sleeves was worn and secured by belt buckles. He had a metre long prehensile green tail. “I am K'rizz N'tjango. Feel free to mispronounce my name, everybody else always does.”

“Only because you insist on a spelling that makes the great gods' seem rational” said a light almost welsh voice. “Now Mr Mik Hail I see you like my darling Sally, I could arrange for you and she to spend a lot of time together...?” and that's when Michael saw that the sing song almost welsh voice belonged to a 7 foot tall ginger cat person who wore baggy shorts and an array of bags and pockets that were all belted together about his torso and arms. His metre and a half long feather duster of a tail swayed like the American flag on the moon.

Michael swallowed “No, I am gay thanks and anyway it's kinda weird. Like she's an independent person and you're pimping her out.”

Sally laughed “I understand your confusion but I'm not human and I haven't been for a long time.”

The cat person reached out and secured a well worn collar around Sally's neck as if in evidence.

Michael stared.

Sally said "It's like how on your world you kept a cat as a pet? Well I'm his pet and he's Ronnikin by the way, Ronnikin Skyweasel."

Michael swallowed "Right..."

Then a 12 foot tall Great White Shark with cybernetic arms and legs threw Michael's clothes at him. "These have finally finished drying. Put them on. We don't want Sally to get in heat again."

As Michael dressed the cyborg shark said "I'm Bertha by the way. That isn't my real name but as you might imagine Charichthian language isn't exactly something anyone can communicate in unless they too are a Charichthy."

Then a five foot 2 white rabbit wearing a waistcoat walked into view and checked his pocket watch "Now that won't do, we're going to be late. Ron put the flesh rakes away, we need to make progress fast."

Ronnikin saluted and pulled a ball about the size of a tennis ball from a strap about torso and threw it at the ground before Sally and Michael then everything went dark.

Adventurers of the Multiverse Part 2 Origin of the Sylphs

Part 2: Origin of the Sylphs

Michael and Sally appeared sitting in Elizabethan armchairs in the middle of what appeared to be an Edwardian living room, squawks and squeaks abound a draft brings with it hot air and the smell of chesnut and oak.

Sally watches Michael, a barely perceptible smile on her face.

Michael stares and gawks and fleetingly wonders “Is this what it feels like to be a pokemon?”

Then a tall man in a tuxedo walks up to them carrying a tray upon which sits two Firefly mugs.
“Your tea madam?”

Sally takes the tea, draws a deep breath and sighs at the pleasurable smells.

The tall man coughs “Your tea, Sir.”

Michael stares at the man “I don't drink tea”

“Try it” says Sally

Michael shrugs and takes the tea, expecting it to be scalding hot even through the mug. It's not. Curious. He tries the tea, a great warmth spreads through him as ginger mint and a kick of something alcoholic goes down his throat. He loses control of his mouth and vocal chords for a moment, so overwhelmed by the perfectness of the tea is he but then he regains his sense and says “Evolution has taught me that all forms of life are possible given the right circumstances. The internet has taught me that there are all sorts of people who will enjoy all sorts of weird and wonderful things but science tells me that suddenly serving the perfect tea at the perfect drinking temperature is impossible so tell me how is this possible?”

Sally sips her own tea and asks wryly “What would you say if I told you reality is an illusion?”

Michael sipped his tea thoughtfully and says “I'd assume you'd watched too many pretentious blockbusters.”

Sally chuckles then leans forward “Everything you see hear, smell and feel is all ultimately electrical impulses in the brain. That tea you are drinking, the tea I am drinking, it's just water.”

Michael leans back and marvels at his tea.

Sally leans back and gestures to the room around them “This place is very real, achieved by convincing reality physics works the way that's convenient but at the little places where altering the laws of physics can't work it alters our perception of reality.”

“Why?”

“You mean besides keeping me happy?” says Sally raising an eyebrow.

“I mean this isn't real, why do it? Why enjoy a world of lies when you can enjoy a world of reality?” asks Michael

Sally nods “Good question.”

“I thought so”

“I could tell you, could explain that I am useful to Ronnikin, that my usefulness depends upon my being happy and relaxed but I think it's better to show you why I am useful. Jeeves, activate protocol 17”

The tall man nods and pulls out a gun, firing at Michael.

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Michael wakes up sitting in a metal chair in a minimalist boardroom. A starscape can be seen moving outside a window. “Why does this keep happening to me?”

Then Michael sees that the busty blonde officer in the funny looking uniform opposite him is actually Sally. She raises her index finger to her lips then points Michael's attention to her right and the head of the table.

A projector clicks off and the man standing before the projector screen hunches over the meeting table. He is old, grey and serious looking. “As you can see, we are fucked.”

A man off to Michael's right speaks up “Can't we send off an ark ship or at least seed our children throughout the multiverse?”

The old grey man at the head of the table shakes his head sadly “I've done projections of the various outcomes, I've had entire planets dedicated to computing this task. We can't outrun this, we can't hide from it and we sure as shit can't fight it. Gentleman I think we need to accept that our species is doomed.”

A man to Sally's right says “But we can't just give up, there would be chaos. We need something to fight for or we'll just descend to savagery.”

“Not necessarily” says the old grey man “I believe our endeavours are best served ensuring that as many people as possible die happy and painlessly. We mercy kill those we cannot afford to support then give the remaining population the best most comfortable existence before the end.”

A silence hangs over the meeting until somebody asks “But sir, you can't be serious? Just rolling down the blinds, turning out the lights and calling good night on the survival of the species?”

The old grey man flashes with anger and thumps the table so hard it cracks “Dammit! What would you have us do!? Wage a pointless war to make all the upperclasses feel good!? There is NOTHING we can do!!!”

“Not necessarily!” cries a voice from the hallway.

Michael turns to look but the figure is shrouded in darkness “Have you considered the third way?”

The old grey man looks up from his despair, calculations running in his head.

Another person nervously raises a hand and asks “What is the third way sir?”

The old man answers cautiously “It's a legend, a theoretical alternative to the first two ways of life: Domination-”

A Dalek watching over robomen slaves in a desecrated London flashes in Michael's mind.

“And Democracy”

A man with a wide toothy grin wearing a suit and tie declares before TV “Our three main goals are: Education, education, education” flash forward a few years later “There are weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and that is why I believe we must commit our troops to this endeavour” Michael shudders.

The old grey man says “The third way was always the excuse behind why farming animals is acceptable.”

Michael pictured himself standing in a field before Bessie, a great cow.

“Well you see, they'd say, the cows depend on us eating them for their survival.”

Michael suddenly remembered eating a beef burger at a fair and felt sick.

“We feed them, they'd say.”

Michael saw a farmer pouring slop into a trough that Bessie eagerly guzzled up.

“We clean up after them”

Michael saw a farm hand using a shovel to scoop up cow dung from a field and load it into a wheel barrow.

“We help them reproduce”

Michael saw a farmer pull on latex gloves then reach under a cow, flash forward a month and a vet is reaching his hind up Bessie to pull out her calf.

“Indeed if modern day cows were allowed out into the wild they'd be dead within a week, we keep cattle surviving as a species and the price of their survival is our blood tax”

Michael saw Bessie being led out of a van and into a stark metal stall, her friends went first then it was Bessie's turn, she was led down a narrow metal walkway until a great pair of metal prongs was lowered over her head and she was zapped. As she twitched and started to collapse unseen hands secured her

rear up to a gantry crane and she was raised up into the air, her head hanging down. She swung helplessly as she was carried over to a grate where a man in clean overalls with an absurdly sharp blade slit her throat in one clean movement and blood poured into the grate.

Michael watched in his mind's eye as Bessie's corpse was butchered and preserved then packaged and cooked and served up as a burger in McDonalds.

The old grey man said "That third way is not a pleasant way to live but it might just offer us a chance and one that does not involve needless suffering. The Farmer will have more care for his cattle than this thing will for us and the third way does not just extend to cattle, it extends to any that make themselves subservient and disposable for a higher people. Pets, slaves, soldiers, servants. It may be a way."

Another man spoke up "But how do we do this? We can't just start living lives as cattle."

"No" said the old grey man thoughtfully "But we could design a biological machine capable of producing drugs that would rewrite our genetic code and make us the perfect travellers of the third way..."

The woman at the other end of the table stands up and says "Syrus when our only other options are needless suffering or special suicide, I think the third way is our third option. It'll give us something to do at the very least."

The old grey man nods "Thank you, my Lady, hope it is."

The vision of the board room vanishes and Michael and Sally are sat where they were a moment ago in the Elizabethan chairs.

"Okay" says Michael "So that's why Sylphs are... Sylphs, but why are you a sylph? I mean you're human aren't you?"

Sally laughs "I knew you'd ask that question"

Reality distorts around Michael and Sally as a grand court forms around them. Baroque and neoclassical with gothic arches. Architecture that speaks of power and decadence.

Seven men sit in seven thrones each dressed in distinctive styles of garish wealth displaying styles.

A man with a fauxhawk, gylliner and a stylishly ripped pinstriped suit is brought before the seven thrones in chains, 4 burly guards holding onto his chains. "To what do I owe the pleasure of this meeting my lords?"

The man in the centre throne opposite the prisoner speaks up "Farsh-nuke you stand accused of 7,777,777 counts of kidnapping, 7,777,777 counts of murder and 7,777,777 counts of eating the flesh of thinking peoples."

The Farsh-nuke grins.

The Farsh-nuke's apparent judge then asks "How do you plead?"

The Farsh-nuke laughs “Well it would be rather satisfying to round all those sevens up to tens”

The judge glares at the Farsh-nuke then adds “Farsh-nuke you began life as a sentient universe, correct?”

The Farsh-nuke nods.

“You thus have great power over reality, being able to control and rewrite logic instinctually?”

The Farsh-nuke chuckles as he nods again.

“And is it not then true that were it not for our own discoveries regarding logic and your choosing to trade off some of your power in favour of corporeality and the passions thereby available that you would be killing us all in the most gruesome ways as we very speak?”

The Farsh-nuke grins “It is a great kindness that I do not let you know just what I would do, your honour.”

“Then I hereby sentence you to death. Goodbye Farsh-nuke and good riddance!”

The Farsh-nuke is dragged off laughing.

Michael says “I don't get it, a mad god was sentenced to death, what does that have to do with you?”

Sally laughs “Spoilers!”

Reality warps around them and they find a 15 year old boy in a tattered suit dancing around the interior of a strange ship. “Haha, you fuckers, my plan worked! Your killing me only made me stronger, I am the Great Farsh-nuke! The first to realise his potential! The first to exploit his knowledge for the greater good. A million Farsh-nukes will come after me but I shall be the Farsh-nuke that founds the empire of the Logicios, an army loyal to us!”

Reality warps again and they find three men eating food in a gastropub, one is short, the other has a beard and the third wears glasses.

The short guy asks “So how are we going to find these Farsh-nukes then? I mean the great Farsh-nuke wants an army of his selves from other universes.”

The guy with the beard says “It certainly is a pickle isn't it? I mean we don't just need to find the Farsh-nukes but contain them.”

The guy with the glasses says “Well apparently Professor Logicity, the guy that saved the Farsh-nuke's soul and helped him pull off this plan, apparently he left a back door in the Farsh-nuke's soul, a kind of morality subroutine that will kick in if the Farsh-nukes remember who they are instead of merely deducing it like the Great Farsh-nuke did. If we can somehow make them remember they are the Farsh-nuke then suddenly the chaotic elder god of lust and greed can be controlled like any superhero, through their morality chain.”

The guy with the beard says “If we could find a way to do that then I know the perfect morality chain.

Gallalucia, Empress of the first world like universe, she died and her soul ended up in the multiverse because it was kind of glitchy back then. Anyway the Farsh-nuke mercy killed her and that began his decent into humanity, she's been haunting him ever since. I bet we can extract a record her soul from him and seed it throughout any universe we suspect contains a Farsh-nuke. The Farsh-nuke won't want to see her die again.”

The short guy says “Well if that's the way we're going then I know the perfect way to remind him of his past and make his morality pet more easily manipulatable. Sylph pills.”

The beardy guy says “Yes we seed the world with sylphs”

The guy with spectacles finishes “And let him decide what to do with the situation.”

Reality shifts again to show a version of Sally leaving a club, sweaty, bedraggled and very drunk.

There's a sound like a stammering “Sh!” and Sally goes rigid “We need to go down this ally”

Iris, a dark skinned woman dressed in jeans, a tanktop and leather jacket, groans “Sally the tardis does not exist, it's probably just some slut fucking a pervert”

Jessica, slathered in fake tan, wearing clothes meant for supermodels despite her average build, perks up “Fucking? Lets go watch some fucking?”

Nathaniel, tall, skinny wearing trackies and a tshirt with curly hair and glasses, says “Really, you want to run off down a dark ally when you're drunk as a skunk? Have you not watched horror movies?”

Sally shakes her head “Go if you like but I am heading down there.”

Iris groans “Sally, this is stupid.”

Jessica says “There's 4 of us, if it is a rapist we can tackle him.”

Nathaniel groans “We really can't let you go alone.”

Iris stares at Nathaniel “Mate, she's already gone”

“Fuck” says Nathaniel as he takes after her at a run.

Sally is running down the ally when she sees a familiar rickety wooden shed, a tall muscley man in a miss matched suit opens the door. “Well Sally you wanted to know who I am and what I do? My name is William Dickson Wright, I am 35 and I come from Woking but my name is also the Farsh-nuke I am trillions of times older than this universe and I travel about the universe helping people but I have one vice, one addiction I cannot quit.”

“What is it?” asks Sally

“Love” answers the Farsh-nuke.

Sally blushes.

“So what do you say? Fancy a gap year travelling the multiverse?”

Sally runs forwards and hugs him.

Nathaniel sprints into view and cries “I’m coming too!” before sliding on a used condom and collapsing.

Iris runs up and starts seeing to Nathaniel “Christ mate, what have you done?”

“If you’re taking her, then you’re taking me too” says Jessica

Iris stands up, reassured that Nathaniel is okay and glares at the Farsh-nuke “Answer me this honestly, if I were to try and knock you out would I stand a chance?”

The Farsh-nuke laughs “Sorry I have eaten Hitler, arrested Jack the Ripper, survived being eaten whole and thwarted an invasion of weresharks.”

“Then I guess I volunteer as well” says Iris

“Perfect” says the Farsh-nuke

Michael turns to the Sally sitting beside him, showing him this and baulks “You joined him, you and your friends joined a man who terrorized the multiverse.”

Sally nodded “I mean he did reform a lot and is genuinely a hero but he turned me and my friends into sylphs without our consent. Here’s how I got out...”

Reality shifts and a version of Ronnikin sits before the version of the Farsh-nuke that kidnapped Sally and her friends. They are playing Blackjack in a casino. The Farsh-nuke has a flass of white port. Ronnikin has a scotch.

“So Mr Farsh-nuke to what do I owe the pleasure? I want your genuine answer this time please?” says Ronnikin

The Farsh-nuke looks at his cards, an ace and a 7, he asks for one more card and sticks “There are... rumours. Rumours that the Septagonoids are working with the Roboliquefiers.”

Ronnikin looks at his hand: the ace of spades and the jack of hearts. A flicker of a smile spreads across his face “I have heard these rumours.”

The Farsh-nuke nods “I thought you might.”

Ronnikin smiles as the concierge asks them to show their cards.

The concierge declares “Well done Monsieur Skyweasel, will you remain in the game?”

Ronnikin smiles at the Farsh-nuke “The fun is only just beginning, why would I leave when it is only beginning?”

“And you Monsieur Dickson Wright?”

“Oh I play to win and I clearly haven't done that.” says the Farsh-nuke with a toothy grin.

“Alright Monsieurs, new round.” says the concierge as cards are collected back in.

The Farsh-nuke checks his hand, a ten and a five.

Ronnikin asks “Tell me Mr Farsh-nuke what are you prepared to risk losing in order to win?”

“Anything” says the Farsh-nuke and he gets a new card, the ace of spades.

Ronnikin nods “I have heard the tales but I thought you had mellowed, that there were things even you would not risk.”

The Farsh-nuke gets a 2 of hearts. “That's not true, I still have some tricks up my sleeve to let me be sure of my risks.” He gets another card, the two of clubs.

Ronnikin smiles, sure of his hand “Then would you grant me your lady sylph in return for the information?”

The Farsh-nuke takes a gulp of port and looks to where Sally is playing poker with the head of Microsoft, Apple and Valve, then he stares off into space and reality distorts to show what he's thinking about. Iris and Nathaniel researching possible leads with the ships computer. Jessica interrogating a Roboliquefier.

“If she goes willingly” says the Farsh-nuke sticking.

Ronnikin nods “It's been a pleasure doing business with you.”

The concierge has them show their cards “Monsieur Dickson Wright has twenty but Monsieur Skyweasel has Blackjack again.”

“Thank you” says Ronnikin “It's been a good game but I best leave before I upset anyone. Mr Farsh-nuke thank you for your kind offer, I know nothing. I am a merchant and a smuggler, I do not work with anybody who wants to end the multiverse, except... perhaps, you?”

Ronnikin goes over to talk to Sally.

The Farsh-nuke downs his port and stalks after Ronnikin, he taps him on the shoulder and whispers “You cheated me, what makes you think I won't kill you where you stand.”

Ronnikin turns “You are the fool who played to win. I just wanted fun and maybe a little reward for putting up with you being such an asshole. It is true that you could kill me right now but then I would be dead and free from pain and your darling lady friend would see what a monster you truly are and the most powerful individuals in the multiverse would know you are a madman who is not to be trusted. Aren't games fun? Now if you'll excuse me I am going to claim my prize.”

Ronnikin turns to Sally “My Lady, I am an anthropomorphic cat. I know what it is like to be patronised and mistreated because of your race. I will be frank, cultural courtesy means that if you agree to go with me I am technically purchasing you from your owner but I need a sylph to aid me in my endeavours and if you help me I will help you. I will get you whatever you want and treat you however you want, hell I'll give you the cure after a certain amount of service if you wish and you will be paid for your work, what do you say?”

Reality shifts back to Michael and Sally sitting in Elizabethan chairs.

“And you said yes?”

“I said yes”

“So what about him? What made him the man capable of outwitting the Farsh-nuke?”

The Taming of Me
By
Alexander Gordon Jahans

Kicking the double doors open, slupon sneakers precede lounge trousers, a Doctor Who tshirt and a weathered corduroy jacket. I feel on fire.

I stride into the room that can't have been much more than 300 metres in one direction and hundred in another and drink in the surroundings. The panel is going to be awesome. We finally have a female Doctor and now Nine Worlds Geek Fest gets to celebrate.

I spot a man in an excellent Tenth Doctor cosplay, he even has the coat. I can't help striding over as he talks to a group around him. I cough by way of introduction and when he pauses to look in my direction I reach out my hand and say "Excellent costume! Not my favourite Doctor but I appreciate how hard it is to get it done right."

He chuckles and nods appreciatively "Yes, it certainly was a hard costume to get and as for the Doctor well I figured what's wrong with dashing, charismatic, romantic and brilliant?"

"The writing" I riposte.

He laughs at that "Yes perhaps flying crucifix style to forgive his enemies thanks to the entirety of the earth praying for him was a touch on the nose but you can't judge a Doctor by the writing alone or Colin Baker would get no love and we can't have that."

I laugh "No. No, I suppose not."

He looks at me, this tall skinny man I have only just met and says "You're a seventh Doctor fan right?"

I shrug amazed, like he's just pulled off a magic trick and then he gestures to my chest. "Oh right. The shirt? Yes. Yes the seventh Doctor always appealed to me. Proactive, smart, subtle and utterly skilled at manipulation. Plus his stories, this is a Doctor who is not afraid to do horrible things for the greater good. And I loved the books."

He smiles at me, wistful "Yes the Scottish guy with the question mark umbrella. I can see why you like him. The man who would just turn up and decide to topple an empire because he didn't like it. A man like that would be very useful."

I nod "Yes, fuck the neoliberal oligarchy."

He nods and adds "What do you reckon the solution is?"

I shrug "Revolution, internally or externally. We need a government that recognizes that we are in a transition to a post scarcity society."

He nods thinking then hands me his business card "I run a youtube channel, just vlogs you know but I talk about this a lot I think you might find it interesting."

I take the card gladly and smirk as I pull out my own business card and give it to him “Well since we’re exchanging business cards”

He takes the card and I spot one of my friends walking past “Look, sorry I’ve got to go but you have my card and I’m sure I’ll see you around”

He nods as I head off.

It’s a good panel and a great con but I don’t see him again and I think nothing of it after all he was just a Doctor Who cosplayer at a con.

Months later I find his business card in my jacket and decide to look him up on youtube.

He’s wearing a lab coat, face mask, safety goggles and plastic gloves in the video as he tours a lab growing organs and explains that the lab produces organs for transplants all over the world and that the same technology can be used to produce meat without the murder. It’s an interesting video and I subscribe but I don’t think anything of it. I watch his videos as they crop up and his voice becomes part of the landscape of my life.

Then I watch a video in which he’s touring the Doctor Who set and he says “The tardis in this series has a multiverse panel, to control flight in the multiverse and that is a whole other thing that we don’t have time to get into now but if you are curious about how a multiverse might work I recommend you watch a video by one Alexander Gordon Jahans as he’s a scifi writer I’ve started following recently on youtube and oh my god he visualizes the multiverse so well. Seriously, subscribe to him.”

It’s just one small throw away recommendation in a video but a 3 minute video that gets 4 thousand views and now my channel is getting surged by supporters. I message the guy to say thanks and let him know what happened and then he asks if I would mind if he makes a video recommending me. I of course say that he can and he thanks me.

I did not expect what happened next. The man hasn’t just recommended me or done a video on me, he makes a miniseries commenting on what he sees as distinct eras in my videos and how my ideas have evolved over time and similarly how the quality has increased and all the while he’s touching on the themes of social justice and technological progress that crop up throughout my videos. My rants are being analysed like some grand auteurist masterpiece and yet this isn’t some massive ego stroke, everything he says is factually accurate I just don’t feel like I deserve it.

And now my youtube goes mad. It’s almost a good thing that I am once again between jobs as I am struggling to keep up with this as it is. And all the while I am sharing my humble brags on my facebook as part of my policy of shameless honesty and that’s when my facebook goes mad too. There’s an unofficial facebook fan page that someone has set up and because they don’t have to rule with an iron fist they are absurdly popular with the right wing and they are sharing my videos like mad and getting me more and more legitimate viewers.

Then I head to the shops for a snack and the world goes weird.

She’s about a foot shorter than me, she’s chubby but cute and she’s ginger. I smile at her as I pass and she cries out “Tits man!”

I pause and grimace as I roll my eyes. Still? I turn to her “I’m sorry, I think you have me confused with someone else”

“Gordon” she says “Alexander Gordon Jahans. The guy whose always going on about post scarcity?”

“Oh” I say, face brightening “So you’ve watched my videos?”

She laughs “I run the fan page.”

I am shocked.

“Come on” she says “You must come back to mine for tea. Gotta grab an interview with the Gordon.”

I stare at her, at the joy in her face and shrug “Alright but just one cup”

She laughs and leads the way into a council estate and her dingy flat.

As I sit on a small plastic Ikea chair she makes tea in Doctor Who mugs and talks enthusiastically about my videos and then says “You should promote your patreon more, I bet people might be inclined to support you now. You might even be able to live on it”

One cup becomes 2 then 3 and by the time I leave her flat the shops have shut and I have a patreon campaign basically hashed out. It doesn’t take long to make it official and that’s when my humble little channel becomes my life line. I make videos for fun and I write for fun to but patreon keeps me alive.

A few weeks later she turns up at my door and says “We need to buy tickets for Nine Worlds Geek Fest.”

I swallow “Umm, I, er, I don’t actually have any money to spare.”

She smiles “Good thing I do then isn’t it? Now are you going to invite me in or what?”

I shrug and let her in.

I follow her to my computer and she laughs “Worse than it looks in the videos”

I grumble “Yes, well, I like it this way.”

She cackles and then she says “Anyway what matters is that we book you tickets and somewhere to stay.”

I raise my eyebrows in disbelief “You’re really going to pay for me?”

“Of course” she says “I have a job and you don’t. I can afford it and I want my favorite vlogger at Nine Worlds Geek Fest. Well second favorite, I know Jon Jefferson will be there, dude can afford it.”

“Right” I say, somewhat nonplussed and flummoxed “Cheers but you don’t have to do this”

She glares at me “Honey, I found you, I came to you and I’m paying for you, don’t act like you have a

choice in this.”

I nod silently and resolve to not argue with the woman when she’s helping me.

*

The months pass relatively uneventfully as my patreon money keeps me going and my fans start to police themselves. Then Christmas arrives.

I am spending Christmas alone with a precooked roast turkey, roast chicken roast goose, 2 racks of pork ribs, 4 packs of bacon 5 sticks of black pudding, a lot of stuffing and gravy and a metric fuck ton of easy cook roast potatoes. I figure if its your first Christmas alone, go fucking large with the meal.

There’s a knock on the door and the door bell rings.

I answer it and find two women on my doorstep. Carol, the leader of my fan club smiles politely from behind a tall blonde exquisitely beautiful and fair young woman. She eagerly carries a parcel in her hands and is dressed like River Song.

“We found this on the doorstep” she says cheerily “Merry Christmas.

I stare at her my brain trying to decide if the more likely explanation was that I was having carbon monoxide poisoning and hallucinating this as the cooking gas killed me.

Carol said “It’s alright she’s 22 and you’re no dreaming. Let us in lad.”

I stand back and the 22 year old runs inside as she giddily asks “Where do you want me to put the parcel?”

“In the living room is good” I say absently as I gesture.

The 22 year old bounds off cheerily, I can’t help watching her go with sad confusion.

Carol is holding a massive crate of strongbow “I bought the booze”

“So I see” I say, waiting for Carol to enter and head off into the living room before I shut the door.

I head into the living room and sit down in my armchair. I am dressed in my pyjamas and dressing gown, I was not expecting company.

The 22 year old is studying the paintings and photos scattered about the house and talking at a mile a minute “I love your videos you know, you’re very passionate and you are so right about the need to transfer to a post scarcity society.”

I nod, silently accepting a strongbow from Carol. “So what are you doing here then? I mean I’m thrilled to have company but why turn up on Christmas day?”

Carol chuckled darkly as she sat down on the sofa “Because she would not shut up about you”

The 22 year old glared at Carol “That is not true! I’m not obsessed or anything. I just think he’s really awesome”

I laughed bitterly “So nice to hear complements like that, may I know who they’re coming from?”

She runs over and sits in my lap so she can shake my hand “Sally Donovan pleased to meet you, Merry Christmas.”

I smile “Merry Christmas Sally”

She kisses me on the cheek “Thank you for letting us gate crash your Christmas.”

Then she seems to remember something and runs off to fetch the parcel “Open your present”

I shrug and accept the parcel.

Sally backs onto the sofa in anticipation of the grand unveiling.

I am genuinely taken aback as I reveal the contents “It’s an Oculus Rift and there’s a card that goes with it: Dear Alex, hope you’re well. Sorry we haven’t been in touch more, consider this a small token of my appreciations and Merry Christmas.”

Sally and Carol stare at me staring at the card then Sally asks to see the card and I unpack the Oculus Rift.

We take turns trying out the Oculus Rift as the beer flows and food fills our bellies.

As the night goes on me and Sally flirt until I point out, somewhat half cut, just what it looks like to have such a beautiful woman turn up on my doorstep at Christmas.

“Well then” says Sally suggestively “If I’m your Christmas present, unwrap me”

I’m overcome with lust at that and stride forward out of my chair slurring slightly “I thought you’d never ask.”

Sally grins and kisses me on the lips before pulling back to ask “Where’s your bed?”

“Upstairs” I say as my hands caress her back.

She laughs “I hope you know where you keep your condoms” and she heads upstairs.

Carol silently thrusts her hand out towards me, in it is a load of wrapped condoms in various sizes.

I mouth “Thank you” and run after Sally

Sally stands with her back to my double bed and her shoes off. “Merry Christmas Mister Jahans.”

I stride towards her and pull her close so my hard cock grinds against the inside of her leg. As my hands feel her pert buttocks, I ask her point black “Do you want to have sex with me.”

She cries enthusiastically “Yes” and pulls my head towards her so she can snog me.

We strip each other as we kiss and Sally pulls me onto the bed. I slip on the condom and Sally guides me into her and tells me what to do as I am lost to the drunken ecstasy of lust. Sally’s moan of delight precedes my own and we lay panting on the bed as exhaustion finally takes us.

*

The next day Sally and Carol leave and I am a much more confident person.

I use the Oculus Rift every day and it spawns a new load of videos as my youtube channel grows yet further.

Then Nine Worlds Geek Fest approaches and I am all in a mad panic to pack when there is a knock on the door. I answer it and Sally stands before me.

I am stunned. Remembering that night in vivid technicolour despite the alcohol.

“I am coming with you” says Sally simply and she pushes past me.

“Pardon” I say, shutting the door.

Sally heads up to my room and lounges on my bed.

When I enter the room Sally says “You have a double bed. I can work with that.”

I frown “Look I have to pack”

“Yes and that’s why I’m here now, to tell you to pack twice as much because I have decided that I want to fuck you when you’re happy from the con.” says Sally casually.

I continue packing pointedly “So you just want me for my body and anyway where were you? I knew you had to leave but you didn’t need to disappear for months.”

“Yeah I do, and yeah I did” said Sally easily “I needed to give you time to cool off after I took your virginity, should be over that now though and that means some sweet fucking.”

I glare at her.

Sally laughs “Man, don’t deny you want to jump me right now.”

I laugh “My dear I am a nerd, I have been fighting my sexual impulses for a long time. I am not just some fuck toy.”

Now Sally glared at me “Says the man who thought I was a Christmas present?”

I grimace “Point taken, help me pack then yeah?”

The packing goes quicker than I expected as with each tired breather I find myself looking at Sally and remembering the sweet caress of her lips, the strength with which her slender hands pulled at my arse and the waves of sheer undiluted pleasure. Then I remember myself and feeling suddenly energized get back to packing with urgent efficiency. Just being in the same room as Sally makes me feel bolder and more in control. I slouch less, and everything comes just a little bit easier.

I had planned to leave tomorrow but I am now aware that that means spending the night with Sally again and the thought terrifies me.

Sally must be able to see how on edge I am, nervously listening to *Dissecting Worlds* and playing solitaire with a new crapness, as she says “Lets go to the pub”

Oh thank god. Alcohol, food.

“I’m paying” she clarifies, presumably mistaking my gasp of relief for one of awkward terror.

“Lay on Macduff” I say, gesturing to the door.

In that moment of acting out the great bard’s line with a new purpose to distract me I finally notice what Sally is wearing. A three piece suit with belt, braces and navy blue great coat. Somewhere at the back of my mind cog moves a tick and the great machine of my mind starts whirring with a quiet intensity.

I hurriedly put on my shoes and spray deodorant under my armpits, then I grab my utility corduroy and follow Sally out of the house.

*

It’s quite the walk but when we arrive it’s worth it.

The Broken Screwdriver is a retro pub with Victorian stylings, a smoking area for marijuana, vaporized alcohol and the latest attempt to make tobacco seem cool and healthy, outside there’s a healthy lawn dogs and children cheerfully running amok and tipsy parents pretending that they totally got this. I’ve played D&D here more than once, it’s got a good atmosphere cheap but nice food and plenty of ginger beer.

Sally leads the way into the bar and orders a vodka and coke and a portion of chips. I get the locally brewed variant ginger beer and order southern fried chicken and chips in a basket.

Sally leads us to a table as I follow with the drinks. When we’ve settled Sally says pointedly, staring into my eyes “I’ve read your stuff.”

“Oh good” I say, happy to have a topic I know to talk about “Which ones?”

“All of them” says Sally “All your deviantart. Farsh-nuke in a Master’s Year, A Catch in Continuity, the original script the Farsh-nuke comes from, the three novels that can be found on there. I’ve read all your blog so I know about the Venus Trap and the Curious Tale of Jessica Mitrovich. I even watched through your youtube back catalogue.”

My jaw drops in horror and surprise. Trolls on youtube and the internet in general are so keen to dox facts you've said openly on social media but if they ever read my bad fanfiction as Sally has said she'd done then they could slander me more effectively than anything else.

Sally smiles "This is why I am surprised that you fucked me. Don't get me wrong it wasn't a bad fuck but I thought you were all about power and control."

"I am not the Farsh-nuke" I say simply with just a hint of steel behind those words.

Sally brushed her long blonde hair aside to reveal her next and she watched me breathe deeply as something primitive stirred at the show of flesh.

"No" said Sally "But he is inside you. Alexander Gordon Jahans is a moral loser trying to be normal but you are the writer of the Farsh-nuke and the sylphs. I've been watching you and waiting for the signs of the champion of sylphs but do you know what I see instead?"

I find myself glaring at Sally. I'm being mindfucked and I do not like being mindfucked. "No"

Sally reaches out a hand and grabs mine. "You are the sylph. You're Lucy Dance."

I smile curtly "Because I've got tits right? Very funny."

Sally withdrew her hand and shook her head, her hair covering her neck again "Because if you were the Farsh-nuke I would be collared by now. You obeyed my suggestions willingly and without question because you are attracted to me and you trust me. I said we would go to the pub, I said I would pay, I picked where we sat. It never even entered your head to disagree or think of something else."

I swallow and try to appear calm and confident despite how hard I feel right now "That's old news, I did a video on it."

"So why are you blushing?" asks Sally

I stare at her, my mind racing, endorphins firing, fight or flight. I want to say no, I want to laugh, I want to storm out but I don't because part of me hopes she's right. My life is fucking awful and this woman is the very picture of my fantasies and she is talking about keeping me as a pet...

The food arrives. Hunger trumps lust and I tear into my chicken with bare hands. The act of eating, of losing myself to animalistic consumption restores my sanity and self control.

When I finish eating Sally is looking at me with pity.

"What?" I ask

Sally looks into my eyes, into my soul and says "I don't want to be your Farsh-nuke or your Lucy, Alex, I just want to be your mate and occasional lover. I hope that's okay."

I shrug "The sylph pill is a fiction Sally, you couldn't be either if you wanted to."

We walk home chatting casually about the convention and the moment of tension is forgotten. Once

we're home there is an awkward moment when Sally jokily suggests a fuck but I see Many A True Nerd has a new letsplay episode out and the tension is diffused as we laugh at the moral Brit being witty.

The night passes uneventfully and we head to London in the morning. A second person means a second suitcase for hauls from the dealers room and someone to help orientate and navigate the public transport.

We get to the Premier Inn and unpack before heading out to the Raddison Blu, the hotel where Nine Worlds Geek Fest is usually held.

The walk takes a while and being with Sally makes it pass quicker.

We enter the reception of the Raddison Blu and there, talking to Carol, dressed in lounge trousers and a Make Videos Not War Tshirt is John Jefferson. The guy with the awesome tenth Doctor costume from last time.

Sally strides forth and hugs John crying his name as she does so.

He returns the hug and asks how the trip was.

I interject "So you know each other then?"

"You could say that" says Sally, breaking off the hug.

"Oh we've known each other for years" says John as he turns to the sound of my voice, he looks me up and down and extends his right hand "Alexander Gordon Jahans as I live and breathe"

I take his hand to shake it and he pulls me into a hug.

"I love your videos" says John as he pats my back then he pulls back and asks "How was your year? I hope my videos helped you out."

"Yeah" I say "Yeah they did actually"

It's as if we've been friends for years and as we wait for registration to open we talk about each others videos and the politics of the day like old friends. I don't question it, I just assume that conventions are that awesome.

We register and head to the nearby McDonalds for dinner before enjoying the night's festivities.

The night is long and fun and when its over I and Sally walk back to the Premier Inn exhilarated and happy but with a sense that the night is not yet over.

As I look at Sally, sharing jokes with her, I find myself remembering that magical insane night and remembering why she said she was coming along and it's like a part of my brain lets go. I stop being so uptight and so careful, my language becomes saucier and Freudian slips are common place. I notice her doing the same and I feel electric.

When we reach sight of the Premier Inn Sally says “Race you” and runs off.

I do not race.

I walk calmly inside the hotel and spot a condom machine and decide what the fuck it’s only a few quid and you’re better safe than sorry but I don’t seriously expect anything to happen.

I take the lift up to the second floor, stick the key card in the door and push it open.

Sally is lying on the double bed, naked save for some sexy lingerie.

“I hope you don’t think me too forward” says Sally “I mean we can just lay here listening to Dissecting Worlds if you prefer?”

I hold up the condoms panting ever so slightly “Miss Donovan, would you kindly let me fuck you?”

Sally thinks for a second “Yes, if I can fuck you”

I beam “Yes, yes I should like that very much” and I let the door swing shut.

*

The convention passes in a blur of panels and soft drinks and chats with friends and fucks. John Jefferson is my new best friend and Sally is the lust of my life.

On the last day I’m waiting in the lobby and John approaches. He’s clearly about to jet off because his bags are packed and Carol is wheeling a suitcase for him.

John asks “Can I have a word, in private?”

I shrug “Sure” and we leave Sally and Carol to mind the bags as we head off to find a quiet room.

When we find one John says “Look I’m not sure you’re going to believe this or even understand what I’m saying and truth be told I didn’t want to have to say this to you now, not yet but I just got news that certain plans have been moved ahead so if this thing...” he gestured with his index finger to us “is going to work at all then you need to know now.”

“Right” I say, expecting some horrible and outlandish betrayal.

“I am an alien from a different universe” says John “I am an Architect of Chaos, like from your writing, and when I read your blogs and watched your youtube videos I decided I had to help you. I knew I couldn’t do it openly. You’ve been burned too many times and you’re fucking autistic, besides which there are certain rules on interfering with lesser races. I was at a loss, anything I did had to be accepted and understandable by you and that’s when I remembered that you are a fan of the seventh Doctor. How is it you described him? Proactive, smart, subtle and utterly skilled at manipulation? Not afraid to do horrible things for the greater good. Alex, I have manipulated you, I’m sorry.”

I blue screened but a lingering instinct asked “Just how have you manipulated me?”

“It is ridiculously easy to find women who will do whatever you ask, especially with the tech I’ve got and with the women from this time period.” said John “I convinced Carol to help you grow your fanbase and get enough patreon money to live on. I chose Sally to be the woman in the right place at the right time to make you lose your virginity. I needed, I still need, you to know that you are loved for the person and body you have now. She was entirely willing but I put her up to it. I thought she would disappear the morning after but clearly she has stuck around and I’m sorry, if she gives you any grief I can make her go away.”

And that last comment was something I did understand and it made it all so simple.

I stared at John, angry now, “You want to get between me and Sally? Is that what this is about?”

I stood up straight, towering over him and I poked him in the chest “I don’t know what mind games you are playing at but I know that Sally is the best thing that has ever happened to me. So much if you are smart and you are clever, if you have any illusions about seeing tomorrow you will do the smart thing. Leave my friend alone.”

John seems to shrink before me in embarrassment and he swallows down fear before saying “Point, taken.”

Then John looks me in the eyes and says “Remember remember the 5th of November, I hear the sound of empires toppling”

I blink and he’s out of the room.

*

I tell Sally and Carol what John said to me and that as far as I’m concerned John was just mindfucking me but that I still consider them good mates if they want to continue to know me and then I head home.

I can see Sally is conflicted but she decides to catch a different bus back to clear the air. The silence and solitude is eye opening but welcoming, like returning home after years away, so familiar but a reminder of how much you’ve changed.

I log on to my computer and chill out to some Dissecting Worlds but his parting words resonate with me: “Remember, remember, the 5th of November. I hear the sound of empires toppling.”

I mean in its purest terms it means nothing, hell I’ve written articles on revolution and the ethics of it. I have even used those two quotes separately to reference what I see as the impending downfall of the neoliberal corporatist agenda but together they seemed like a warning. And the last bit was a line said by the seventh Doctor in The Happiness Patrol and if what he said about manipulating me in the style of the seventh Doctor was true then it could be legit but it was impossible.

“Except” A wretched voice inside my head reminded me “you are a fat, genetically screwed up, hormonally weird, autistic flesh golem of a man and Sally is a goddess. You couldn’t pull her in a million years. Unless of course she was chosen to fit with you by a manipulative wielder of the fabric of reality.”

So here was my self loathing telling me that the impossible was the only answer because a pretty

woman wanting to fuck me was the more unlikely possibility.

I tried not to think about that.

Then there came a knock at my door.

Sally was standing in the rain.

“I’m sorry” she said

Ladies and gentleman I realized something in that moment, it is much much easier to obsess about existential doubt when a good friend isn’t standing on your doorstep.

“I don’t care” I said “I want to live in the reality where you and me are a thing, whatever that reality is.”

Sally smiled and flung her arms around me, she whispered “I love you too” and then she headed past me into the kitchen.

I joined her.

“Two realities” she said getting wine glasses out of a cupboard and raiding the fridge for wine “In one John is a lying mindfuck of an asshole and you live a boring difficult life but I fucked you by sheer chance and your drunken animal magnetism.” she pours out a glass of wine and hands it to me. “In the other, John is right but still a lying manipulative asshole and I was lets say chosen by a complex computer algorithm to be both the woman of your dreams and the woman who would consider you the man of my dreams but I decided to go off script because I know what John has planned for you and I care about you too much to let you go into that good night alone.” Sally pours herself a drink “In either reality I love you and I want to be with you through thick and thin because you are just adorable and John is an asshole.”

I hold up my glass “To our love, whichever reality it inhabits”

Sally holds hers up “To my best friend”

We down our drinks.

Sally burps and asks “Can we listen to the Dissecting Worlds episode on vampires and sexuality?”

I grin “You are fucking awesome you know”

She laughs “I know, aren’t I just?”

And then everything was awesome.

*

As November approached I found myself preparing for it like it was the apocalypse. It started innocently at first. Storing clothes in suitcases to be organized but messy, finally backing up my

computer on a new 16 terabyte ssd, getting excess toothpaste shampoo and deodorant just in case but then I found myself stock piling tinned curry when I was at the supermarket, buying gallons of squash and dehydrated milk, getting camping bed and a trailer to carry everything.

I started mapping out the area, identifying fortified areas to hold out and good places to raid for supplies. I started listening to podcasts on the second world war, I relistened to World War Z and found myself watching letsplays of zombie survival crafters as I played minecraft with a religious intensity. I even started experimenting with new fucking positions with Sally by way of exercise.

Remember, remember, the 5th of November, I hear the sound of empires toppling.

Then the day came.

I never said anything to Sally but she's a smart woman and she decided to take a day off work and watch the news with me. She watched me like I was a terrified dog hiding from fireworks and deliberately tried to act like everything was normal.

She'd make tea and play Fall Out on the PS5 as I watched the news, expecting another 9/11. Occasionally she'd check her smartphone and inform me of the latest bit of gaming or genre fiction news and I would smile and nod but we both knew that no amount of distraction would keep my mind off what felt like the impending apocalypse.

Then at 7 pm it happened.

"Hello Great Britain!" boomed a smiley faced man on the TV suddenly "My name is John Jefferson and this is something you probably won't know!"

The camera pulls back to reveal John in his tshirt and trackies, standing in the House of Commons, MPs around him make to stand up and speak. John is walking forwards, towards the camera, between the left and right benches, towards the level of the Prime Minister and leader of the opposition.

Sally squeezes my hand.

"I am an alien, my race evolved on Mars and I come from another universe but more than that I belong to rogue sect of utopian idealists known as the Architects of Chaos" says John as security enter the room now "The Architects of Chaos were founded but the Goddess Pacifus Subis to be the best of people and free others from the tyranny of oppression."

Security try to grab John but he walks up to the Prime Minister of Great Britain and looks him in the eyes, visibly angry "Did you think that you could steal from the sick, the disabled and the desperate and call it prosperity and nobody would notice!?"

The Prime Minister is furious "I don't have to listen to this!"

Security moves to restrain John.

John waves his hand idly and security is knocked back flying.

"Oh sorry" says John "Did I forget to mention the part about us being trained to be weapons of justice,

able to rewrite the laws of physics to our advantage? Prime Minister you have killed many people by your selfish and stupid actions. By law of the Architects of Chaos I sentence you to death. The people who rule are servants of the people, when you forget that fact you become a tyrant that deserves to be opposed with deadly force.”

John pulls a sword out of his pocket and stabs the Prime Minister in the chest.

Then John turns back to the camera “The Architects of Chaos are landing as we speak to distribute aid and food to all who need it. The barbarism of the neoliberal agenda ends now. We will not stop you from having free and fair elections but we will stick around as stabilizers supporting the poor until you have the good sense and decency to rule humanely.”

Then John’s camera feed blinks off and the news crew hurry to react to just what happened.

Sally’s phone rings, she answers it and says “It’s for you”

I take the phone

“If you believe me now, head into your back garden.” says John

I put down the phone, stunned, then I run into the back garden.

Sally follows nervously.

Out in the garden John Jefferson stands before a rickety wooden shed, holding a bloody sword.

Sally takes my hand, I squeeze hers in return.

I say “You killed a man.”

John nods “And I incited revolution, instituted martial law and manipulated you to be standing before me now. I am not a nice man Alexander Gordon Jahans. I lie I cheat, I steal and topple empires for kicks.”

I listen to this and wonder “Then why am I standing here?”

John laughs “Because you don’t like nice men, you like moral, interesting men and because you’re a scifi writer and you know what this shed is. Hell you could probably give this speech better than me. We could go drinking with the great bard, have lunch with Douglas Adams, recover the missing Doctor Who episodes, kick Jesus in the balls and have a date with Lucy Danse, heroine of the multiverse. All reality is waiting inside those doors. You just have to give me an enthusiastic yes.”

I swallow and turn to Sally “So I guess this means goodbye.”

Sally shook her head “Alex I love you but you really are an idiot” she kissed me on the lips and hugged me then she took my hands and said “I am with you through thick and thin regardless of how this started.”

I nod and whisper “Thank you” then I turn to John and say “Yes! Yes, I will travel with you.”

John smiled like a cheshire cat “Excellent! Right this way, Sir!” “And madam” he added after a moments hesitation “And don’t worry, I will take everything from your home and recreate it in your room.”

*

Stratford Upon Avon, 1607

“So I says to the fucker: You turn up late, you’ve barely done a rewrite and you want me to change my name, abandon progress on the series and give up all the progress I made building my name? Fuck off. Bastard never worked with me again” I said downing my pint of ale.

The great bard nods sagely, slipping off his bar stool “Aye, the money men can be such utter arses! I mean so what if I want to show that the king is a mad villainous murderer? They all are!”

“Yes, yes, exactly!” I say

Shakespeare fall off the bar stool and climbs to his feet, raising his flagon high “I’m fine, I’m fine!”

*

London, 1985

“I’m telling you man, The Hitchhiker’s Guide To The Galaxy is real and it’s called wikipedia. Everyone is going to have tablet pcs and virtual reality headsets and internet. There’s going to be quantum computers and quantum teleportation and tractor beams and nuclear fusion and nerds will be fucking cool!” I say over a half eaten roast chicken rack of pork ribs and chips.

Douglas Adams looks at me and says “Yeah I get all that but tell me more about how the Doctor’s going to be a woman”

*

Gallifrey One 2023 LA Marriot

Matt Smith has the microphone and says “Now I have a very special guest to announce. You may know him as the man who showed his tits that one time or the man who thought the Phantom Menace was the best Star Wars film or you may even have read his Doctor Who fanfiction but either way it’s the great prophet of our time, the man who predicted the Architects of Chaos. Ladies and Gentlemen, please give a very warm welcome to Alexander Gordon Jahans!”

Matt Smith walks off to the side of the stage and canons blast confetti and sparks as doors shunk open to reveal me. I stride out like a rockstar with my own microphone and say “Hello Gallifrey One!”

The crowd goes wild.

I wait for it to calm down before continuing “Ladies and Gentleman, I am a man with friends in high places and I am here today to announce that I and my team have not only recovered every single

missing episode of Doctor Who” I pause for the inevitable cheering “We have also recorded comprehensive interviews with everyone involved in every single story”

The crowd goes mad with excitement.

*

The day of Jesus’s crucifixion.

Jesus is carrying his own cross up to where he will be crucified.

I run up with a baseball bat and start smacking him about the head “And this is for the crusades! And this is for the holocaust! And this is for 9/11! And this is for everyone who has ever been persecuted because you made christianity popular!”

*

A surprisingly small office of the UCMS Paragon Reborn, a battle cruiser touring the various fronts of the great Septagonoid war. I enter flanked by John and Sally.

In the center of the room, wearing a smart business suit, is Lucy Danse. She is sitting on an expensive office chair before a minimalistic desk and stylish computer.

I am quaking as I see her. My legs are shaking, my hands are jelly and I’m certain I’m flushed red.

Lucy sees us.

I am terrified.

Sally whispers in my ear “Go on.”

“Mr Jahans?” asks Lucy “Or shall I call you Gordon Jones?”

Shit.

I stride forward “Alex is fine, really.”

“We’ve talked a lot you and I, on one plane of reality or another” says Lucy

I’m stuttering “I-I thought they were just dreams, fantasies”

“Maybe to you” said Lucy “But you forget you’re the key stream, what’s fiction to you is real to us, at least it was until Johnny boy here crossed the great divide. We’ve talked a lot, why are you so scared?”

I look at her, at the woman who had for so much of my life represented perfection and all at once I shrug off the shame and embarrassment “Because you are my first love, my ideal pet and my favourite character to write.”

I stride towards her once more, confident now, my head held high “I know every inch of you, every

thought you've ever had, every love, every hope and every lost memory. I have caused you immense pain and I have stalked you with words."

Lucy laughs "Is that all?"

She gets up from behind my desk and greets me "I have sent clones of myself off by the trillions as gifts for ambassadors of different cultures, as squadron commanders and soldiers. Every moment of every day I am complicit in untold suffering and destruction. You are not the only one in this room with blood on your hands and you have kept me alive through thick and thin. You were my luck, my guardian angel. As far as I'm concerned we're old friends."

I swallow, calming down, her words like a cold shower, then she takes my hand guides it to the collar around her neck.

"I'm yours Alex" says Lucy "You have kept me alive when everything else said I should be dead. That makes me your sylph as much as Kate's. I'm not going to lie to you I am very very busy but if you ever want to see me again, the war hero or the pet, you have but to ask. I will ensure that I am delivered to you wherever and whenever you are in whatever state you wish me. It is the least I can do for the man who has ensured victory so many times."

I am overcome with emotion and hug Lucy "Thank you, I am only sorry, I can't help you more."

"Oh but you can" says Lucy patting my back "Just keep writing about our lot winning the war."

We break off the hug and I say "I'll see you at lunch yeah"

Lucy nods

I hurry out the room to cry in the toilets.

*

The next bit comes from security footage I found later:

Sally looked about to run after me but then she pauses and approaches Lucy.

"Look I feel weird asking this" says Sally "But I was basically chosen to be with Alex because of you, so you really are probably the best person to ask. I don't want to age and I don't think he would want me to age. Not that he ever says so. How hard is it being a sylph?"

Lucy gives a sad smile and studies Sally "Yes, I can see it now. No wonder Alex was so awkward, the misses and the fantasy in the same room."

Lucy takes Sally's hands in hers and says "If you want to be a Sylph I can't imagine much better people to take care of you than the Keystream and an Architect of Chaos but you could be so much more. You could become a wereshark or a Logicio or an Architect of Chaos, maybe even a vampire? Do you reckon he would mind the occasional love bite?"

Sally chuckles "He might get off on it"

Lucy smirks “Well think about it, think about all the options that are available to you, pick the one that’s best for you and then remember that Alex loves you for your heart and soul, not just how you look. If you want to age, you can age. Just be happy, okay.”

Sally nods “I see why he thinks so highly of you.”

Lucy laughs and lets Sally go.

Sally runs out of the room.

“Good kids” says Lucy with a smile when she and John are alone.

“Yes” says John carefully “Do you know what I intend to do?”

Lucy looked to John and bit her lip “Yes, I know. I had hoped that we wouldn’t be having this conversation, that you really did just think he was a fun guy to be with, but I know. Alex Jahans is young, crazy and just a little submissive and you want to collar him.”

John sighed “I want to look after him. You haven’t seen his blogs, watched his youtube videos, there’s a heartbreaking sadness about him. I can offer him home and show him the stars.”

Lucy glared at John “You don’t have to collar him to give him that.”

“Alright” said John, holding up his palms in a sign of surrender “So I want a pet, so sue me. He’s cute and funny and just think how much better he’ll be when he takes the pill.”

Lucy crossed her arms, clearly not impressed “I see you gave him a girlfriend, did you want her included in the package, fancy a breeding pair?”

John shook his head “No. No. Nothing like that. I just wanted to make sure he chose to be a pet of his own free will and not because he was lonely and desperate. I made sure he had enough money to live on. I give him friends nearby, gave him a girlfriend, freed his world from neoliberal tyranny, I did everything to ensure he didn’t have to come with me.”

Lucy arched an eyebrow and sighed “But now he is here you want to seal the deal and you want my help?”

John grimaced “Yes”

Lucy tapped her foot impatiently “Well?”

John swallowed and looked away “I figured that when I asked him and he was still deciding it might be nice to bring him along to a tame off with you and Kate.”

Lucy’s mouth dropped open and she stared at John “You want to take an anti-authoritarian revolutionary and tame him before he’s even taken the pill. Are you nuts? The man has the mind of the Farsh-nuke inside him.”

John nodded “And he also has your mind inside of him. The Farsh-nuke’s weakness is you and your weakness is a strong trustworthy figure who stands apart from authority, which would in Alex’s case be me and if it works you’ll have helped put a leash on the man with the mind of the Farsh-nuke and a complete understanding of all your weaknesses.”

Lucy grimaced “Fine, but you bloody behave and do a good job of looking after him or I swear I’ll take him off you and give him to someone I trust.”

John grinned “I knew you’d see sense in the end.”

Lucy snorted.

John left the room.

*

Weeks passed during which we saw the fall of the Roman Republic, the storming of the Bastille and the execution of King Charles.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you might be wondering how you keep track of time in a spaceship that travels the multiverse and visits various periods of prehistory. I mean even in the 21st century we have encountered the problem of numerous time zones and leap seconds and temporal relativity. Well I used the clock on my mobile phone.

You can travel as far and fast as you like through as many different time zones and realities but your own personal time keeps ticking. The clock in San Dimas is always counting down to the day of your death. Which is a problem, particularly when your own personal sense of time is not just important for birthdays and Christmas and aging but also for regular injections of testosterone every three months because your genetics are fucked up.

“Guys” I said, as we ran away from a dragon “I’ve got a problem”

“Yeah, I know” said John as he shot back covering fire with his quantum oscillator.

“No” I said with a heavy heart “I have to go home.”

“I think we all want to go home” said Sally, running past me as a fireball whizzed past her head.

“No, I mean the clock in San Dimas is striking twelve” I said

Now John understood, he shouted “Sally, get Alex to the SEGhat! Close the doors, it will understand! I will buy you time!”

So saying John pulled a sword from his pocket and charged forward towards the dragon.

I ran forward following Sally. She did the navigating so I didn’t have to think. I was lost in the moment, blood pounding in my ears, every muscle in my body aching, powered by the will to survive and the testosterone that now seemed such a finite commodity.

Sally slammed against the rickety wooden door then pulled it open.

I charged in and Sally slammed the door shut behind her.

The podium in the center of the console started moving.

“We’re in flight” said Sally in astonishment “Why are we in flight?”

John materialised in the center of the room “Because this ship of mine is a clever girl”

When he had fully materialised John set about the controls. Once he was certain he was safe he looked to me and said “Now what was that you were saying about San Dimas time?”

I grimaced “I’ve got fucked up genetics, I don’t produce enough testosterone on my own, I have to get an injection every 3 months. My phone just alerted me, I’ve got a week before I need to have my next injection.”

“Shit” said John bitterly.

Sally was confused “But we can just nip back can’t we?”

“Oh sure” said John, unable to hide the irritation in his voice “We’ll just book an appointment with his GP. I mean we pay no taxes and exist outside of the universe, never mind the catchment area, and we’ll do that every 3 months until the day he dies. I topple empires for a living I can’t always pop back to earth to give him his jabs.”

“Well there’s no need to be mean” said Sally

John sighed “I know I’m sorry, I just, it’s just hard to hear is all.”

I muttered “Give him his jabs” and it all clicked into place. The setting me up with Sally, the insistence that I know I was loved for the person and body I have now, implying that he expected me to change, turning up at my door with a SEGHAT, taking me to see Lucy. This was a man who openly admitted to manipulating me and I saw now what he wanted and just how it would solve this problem.

“There is one possibility” I said.

Sally asked “What is it?”

John looked at me curiously from the console and approached “What is it? Has our mad prophet forgotten some ancient piece of lore?”

“You could say that?” I said, looking at him now John looked exactly my type. Lean but muscular, nerdy with just a dash of charismatic dream boat. “Long ago, at Nine Worlds Geek Fest, you said you needed, and still need, me to know I am loved for the person and body I have now. What did you mean by that?”

John blushed “I’m sure you’re mistaken”

I stared at him.

John held up his hands in a sign of surrender and sighed “Alright! I didn’t want to tell you like this, I didn’t want to tell you for another year or so but I want you, I mean I decided after we met at the con that first time and I watched your videos. I want to collar you, keep you as my pet Sylph.”

He waited a moment and groaned “You hate me, don’t you?”

“No” I said “I was just thinking that being a sylph would rewrite my genetic code and cure my little problem. Think you can accelerate your plans?”

John stared at me “You’re not mad?”

“Johnny boy, I’m god” I said “I am the keystream, I am the Farsh-nuke, I am Lucy and I know every little detail about your world. If you make me into a sylph I become a superhero and oh yeah my lovely lady friend here has already gone against your manipulations to be there for me. I’m in control mate and fair play to you, you played a good game and almost had me wrapped up in a nice neat bow without me realizing what you were doing but I’ll walk the rest of the way if you don’t mind.”

John blinked, presumably lost by the mixed metaphors before understanding “I can work with that. Can you-? Sally keep him busy, I have to pop out.”

And with that John left the door of the SEGHAT.

Sally hugged me.

“What was that for?” I asked

“Because my boy’s going to be a puppy” she said

I laughed at that.

“I could join you know? I’ve been thinking about it. I could be his sylph alongside you” she said

I shook my head “No, Darling, I love you and you’re free to make whatever choices you like but I want you able to look out for me.”

Sally thought for a second then said “I suppose that makes sense, perhaps I could be a vampire? Would you mind being my cattle.”

I snorted “Being a sylph for him is subby enough for me, thanks. How about becoming an Architect of Chaos, that way you could watch him for any funny business?”

Sally shrugged “It could work, I’ll look into it.”

John returned looking quite tired “Right that’s Bessie taken care of, I’ve talked with Lucy and I’ve booked us an appointment to get you tamed, which means we can head there now because time machine.”

Sally glared at him.

“Uhh, am I interrupting something?” said John, a bit miffed.

Sally nodded “A word in your shell like pal”

John swallowed.

Sally stormed over to him and pushed him out the door. She caught my worried glance and said sweetly “We’re just going to have a quiet word, Alex, nothing to worry about”

Sally left.

A moment later John entered nursing a black eye “Okay, fine, I get it. He’s your boy first. Enjoy your fuck. I’m going to get this treated.”

Sally laughed “And don’t you bloody forget it!”

She pulled the door shut behind her and approached me.

I felt a little like a deer in the headlights until her posture softened. She took me in her arms and said “Alex I swear to you I will always look out for you but I have a very important question to ask, are you sure about this? Is this really what you want?”

At this I floundered “I’m really not sure. It’s always been a path I could go down, a possibility, to be the Farsh-nuke or Lucy. And Lucy is pretty freaking badass. Part of me wants this but part of me is - I’m just so aware of the meta narrative and the long view. John’s been taming me for a long time. I think from the moment I met him I’ve been heading for a collar. Christ you’ve watched my videos. You know I’m subby, you know I’m tired. Tired of being shouted at. Tired of hating myself. Tired of wondering whether I should just kill myself. The sylph pill is the great macguffin and I am the macguffin man. It will solve everything. It will give me a family, give me a home, give me a body I like and let me feel happiness and joy in a way that I can’t at the moment. Maybe this is a trick or a trap but I’m not sure I care anymore.”

Sally squeezed me and when she pulled back she said “Well alright we’ll get cats and Lucy will come to visit and you will collar a sylph of your own and we’ll keep going to Nine Worlds Geek Fest. I just want you to be happy okay.”

I laughed “It’s not like I’m going anywhere”

Sally nodded but I could see she was choking back tears.

I hugged Sally and said “Honey I’m not going anywhere. I’ll still be me, I’ll just be happy and hot”

Sally burst out crying.

I held her until the tears went away.

Then John entered with an icepack “Well if you’ve fucked, we have a schedule to keep.”

I took issue with the flippancy of that remark and stormed over to him, I hissed in his ear “Mate, not cool”

John turned to me, worried “You’re angry” he said “What’s up?”

“What’s up” I said “Is that you used that poor woman to get to me and now she’s fallen in love with me and you want to take me away from her?”

John looked confused “You can say no, you know?”

I smiled mockingly “Oh can I? Nice that. What though happens to the poor woman you uprooted?”

“I don’t know” John said “She’s your girlfriend”

I stared at him, daring him to keep following that train of logic.

“Alright” said John “Lucy’s got this friend, she knew her before the change, she might be able to help Sally. I’ll see what I can do.”

I smiled graciously “Thank you”

Then I ran over to be with Sally.

*

Thirty minutes later I, Sally and John were standing before an airlock as it opened.

An 8 foot tall female Great White Shark with huge robotic arms and legs greeted us.

“You would be Greta” I said, having Jaws flashbacks

“Indeed” said the cyborg shark “And you would be the smartass about to become the lawful property of this man.”

John waved.

“Yes, that’s me” I said.

“Which means that this small one is the one I am supposed to babysit” said Greta.

“Honey” I said “I did my dissertation on sharkploitation films. Treat my girlfriend with respect or I will gladly film an episode of mytbusters with you as my test subject.”

Greta laughed. You haven’t lived until you’ve seen a cyborg shark laugh, they quake with the hilarity and all their pistons have a field day. It’s amazing.

Sally had a red nose and carried a box of tissues. She looked sideways at me. “I really have to go with that?”

“Don’t be Charicthist” I said “It will be awesome. You’ll get some drinks, swap some stories about how sylphs are stupid and laugh at some strippers. Just don’t fuck anyone.”

Greta laughed again.

Sally sighed “Fine but I want to fuck you the moment you’re back you understand.”

I nod “Understood, Maam”

“Come on” said Greta “I know this place with the most amazing waiters”

Sally followed behind the cyborg shark.

When they were gone John took the lead.

“Are you sure about this?” he asked

“Yes” I said.

“But are you really sure?” asked John

“Yes” I repeated.

“But I thought it would take me years to tame you” said John

“Well maybe” I said “The fact that I keep writing stories about heroic moral utilitarians seducing people into being their pets should have tipped you off as to otherwise”

“Oh god is this what it’s going to be like every day?” asked John

“Yes” I said “Having second thoughts?”

John looked over his shoulder at me a great smile on his face to say “No”

I laughed

*

We entered the room to find Lucy and Kate waiting for us. Lucy was dressed in a short summer skirt and crop top. Kate was dressed in Jeans and a cardigan.

The room was sparsely furnished but attempts had been made to make it homely with pillows and throws. A picnic blanket was laid out on the floor, plates of various assorted snacks were laid upon it and a couple of thermos flasks made for tea and coffee. I noticed a hamster cage tucked away behind some pillows. Clearly someone was prepared for all eventualities of this evening.

Lucy approached and John decided to chat with Kate.

“Nice dress” I said.

Lucy grimaced “I would have preferred to wear a three piece trouser suit but that’s hardly conducive to competitive taming. Especially when you’re the one being tamed.”

I chuckled at that.

Lucy looked me over, worried “How are you anyway, I heard part of the rush is medical”

“It’s nothing” I said “I just need a testosterone injection in a week”

Lucy grabbed my elbow and whispered in my ear “There’s a spot at the finest Logicio Academy, you can leave now and never be a sylph.”

I shrugged “I want this”

Lucy was taken aback “Really?”

“Really” I said

I made as if to speak but Lucy shook her head “No, it’s okay, I know what you’re going to say and you’re right, I do understand. Now just remember you can shout stop at any time.”

I nodded “It’s fine”

Kate approached “If you two love birds are done hashing out escape plans I thought I might start us off.”

I swallowed.

Kate laughed “Excellent. Lucy, John’s waiting for you, try and go easy on him, it’s his first time.”

Lucy nodded

Kate turned her gaze on me “Alex, if at any moment it gets too much just say okay. You are not a sylph so this stuff isn’t going to work unless you’re into it.”

I nod and follow her.

“Right” says Kate sitting down on a chair “The first thing you want to do is establish dominance. Obviously we all know whose in charge but we’re speaking to the muscle here. Have the sylph sit on your lap.”

Kate pats her lap and I sit down on it, wondering how much damage me weight will do.

“Next you want to begin gently massaging their shoulders and necks” says Kate, as she does so.

Warm soft hands moving over my skin, it’s kinda pleasant.

“Then you want to begin exploring further down their back. Do it in waves, get them used to the pressure.”

Yes, that’s good. Skin that is rarely touched, lit up with warmth.

“And you want to begin stroking their arms. You’re in control.”

I find myself watching John as he tames Lucy and my brain gets confused. Here is my muse being tamed for the billionth time but this time I’m feeling exactly what she’s feeling and the waves of pleasure from a feeling of submission and domination combine.

“Then you want to gently begin stroking their legs, encouraging them to go prone across your lap”

And now it gets weird in a really good way. I watch as John’s caresses send Lucy prone and feel a hit of pleasure that combines and becomes exquisite when Kate’s strokes send me prone. I am losing focus now. Lost in wave after wave of pleasure.

“And strip...”

I watch John strip Lucy as a cool breeze hits me and I’m gone.

*

I wake up on foam strips. I am in a small plastic hut. I am naked.

“Okay, wasn’t expecting that” I say to no one in particular.

I hear stirring and move towards it.

Lucy is lying naked in the foam.

“Crap”

Lucy opens her eyes.

I hurriedly lift up a foam chip to protect myself.

Lucy spots me and chuckles quietly to herself.

I am seriously freaked “Please say we did not have sex?”

Lucy chuckle turns to full on laughter and she reaches her left hand down to her nether regions and it comes back with an egg “No, but congratulations you are now the proud owner of a clone of me.”

I take the egg nervously and Lucy gets to her feet.

“What are you looking so embarrassed about?” says Lucy.

I grimace “I don’t know if you’ve noticed but we’re both naked.”

“We’re pets, normal rules don’t apply to us” said Lucy “And besides you already know what I look like naked. You wrote me remember and don’t pretend you haven’t masturbated to the thought of me.”

I groaned “Not. Helping.”

Lucy laughed “Well follow at a distance then and I’ll get us some clothes”

Lucy strides out of the hut, bold as brass, into the central arena of the hamster cage. She rattles the bars of the cage and cries “Oi! Love Birds! Some of us would like clothes!”

Lucy returns a moment later with my tshirt, lounge trousers and boxer shorts.

“Did they not get you anything?” I ask.

Lucy holds up an emerald green bikini and grins “I’m off the clock”

“Right” I say “So who goes first?”

Lucy laughs and slips on her bikini

I hand her the egg and say “Turn your back”

“Oh definitely” says Lucy

I turn my back and drop the foam, slipping on the boxer shorts, trousers and tshirt.

I turn to see Lucy still very much looking in my direction. “You didn’t turn your back did you?”

“No” says Lucy as she breaks out laughing.

I take back the egg and march outside.

The cage door is opened and I am levitated out by tractor beam.

John and Kate are looking sheepishly at each other and look like they have dressed in a hurry.

Lucy joins me a moment later, sniggering.

I cough for attention and say “Well that was a success, who’s got a memory gun?”

John pulls a memory gun out of his pocket “What do you want it for?”

I shrug “If you’re going to become a sylph, be the best sylph that you can be. Besides it’s only excruciating torture if you can remember it.”

Kate stares at me “You’re not having what she had are you?”

Lucy is staring at me “You’re not are you?”

I give John the egg “A hatchling from Lucy.”

“Understood” says John and he hands me the gun. “Press the red button to record and it will record everything into a single memory gun round.”

“Be ready with the pill and a glass of water” I say

John nods and starts doing things in preparation.

Lucy pokes me “You’re not taking the full strength pill are you?”

I look Lucy in the eyes and say “My dear you underestimate just how much I hate myself” and so saying I press record.

*

The following comes from security recordings:

I handed the gun back to John and he retrieved the memory gun round containing my life’s memories.

“Can you make a back up of that?” I asked, slightly concerned that I might become an amnesiac because of clumsiness.

“Already on it” said John, plugging the round into a special smart phone adaptor.

Lucy stared at me “You’ll burn alive!”

I shrugged “I know. I wrote it remember? I will shrink via burning and genetic and cellular rewriting. By the time I’m done my higher functions will have burned away leaving nothing but the hippocampus and that will be rewritten to function like a hamster’s brain. This is not news.”

Lucy was furious “How dare you willingly undergo what was forced upon me!?”

“By me” I added

Lucy slapped me and snarled “How dare you?”

“I don’t remember this” I said “The last thing I remember is pressing record on the memory gun.” I laugh “I am caught in a catch in continuity, paused between one frame of my memory and the next. The man I am now, every new memory I have since pressing record, it’s gone. Dead. Doomed. There is nothing that can scare me now.”

Lucy backs away seeing something in my eyes “No, it can’t be, you’re the Farsh-nuke!”

“I wrote him babe” I say “His madness, his suicidal disregard for his life, his hatred, his anger, his rage. It’s all in here.” I tap my forehead “I am the Green Eyed Nothing, I am the macguffin man and I am the great Farsh-nuke. I have been hating myself and wanting to suffer and die for so long Lucy and now, now, I get to have my cake and eat it. Death and rebirth, sugar, and this time I know what the afterlife will be like.”

Kate puts a comforting hand on Lucy's shoulder, calming her in an instant and says "Don't be fooled my dear, that's no Farsh-nuke. That's an autistic person who has had to learn to function in a society of instinctual social skills through conscious learning. He is an actor and a writer and he knows every inch of who you are. You crowded him, you threatened his agency so he used what he knows about you to make you back off."

Lucy shuddered "But he's so like him."

Kate tutted staring into my soul "No, darling, I'm a goddess remember? If he was a Farsh-nuke I'd be able to see the aura of green illogicity. That man is more mortal and mundane than you. He just knows the buttons to push."

John approached with a bucket off water and a hamster cage.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" he asked "If you're not sure this is torture. Rape would genuinely be less traumatic."

"Except I won't remember this" I said

"And that's why I'm going along with it" he said producing a sealed sylph pill and a can of diet coke. "Any last words?"

I laughed "Mate, you've seen my videos. You know how much I shout and swear when I'm even slightly worked up about a subject. You are about to witness the most intense session of swearing in the history of the world."

John smirked "Point taken. As you are then?"

I turn to Lucy and say "I'm sorry, sorry for all I have ever done to you and the multiverse in the history of my life and writing. Just remember, schadenfreude."

I look Kate in the eye and say "I know I don't need to say this but get her out of her the moment it gets too much for her yeah."

I break the seal on the pill and swallow it, I pull the ring pull on the can and chug the coke. I start singing a song from the film that was the first memory I ever had "Fairwell and adieu to you fair spanish ladies. Farewell and Adieu to you ladies of Spain!"

The process takes hours. It begins slowly at first as the sylph pill percolates through my system but it increases in intensity and ferocity. Starting with a warm glow, moving to mildly flustered, caught in a heatwave, running a fever and then the fun begins. Brain damage starts to be felt as the heat reaches a higher and higher intensity as more and more of the body is rebuilt and the excess burned away.

It starts with a few blimeys, moves onto a Zarquon and feck, then a frell and a frack and zark. Then fuck, shit, crap and a whole screed of cunts. As more of the brain is burned away and the heat increases problematic insults start being used until finally the speech center of the brain is too badly damaged and I'm left gibbering and screaming unintelligibly, this is about the time I am herded into the bucket and the shrinking process burns itself out.

From a 6foot tall moderately intelligent human being to a 12 inches tall sylph with the mind of a hamster in 6 hours.

To be fair to Lucy she didn't duck out and she didn't freak out. She watched the whole thing in silence knowing that this is what the Great Farsh-nuke did to her, knowing that this is what I, with my writing, did to her.

Then John plucked me out of the bucket and headed off to the docking bay and the SEGHAT. He left and returned a moment and 3 months later.

*

The next thing I knew was John was standing over me with a gun pressed against my forehead.

"So, I'm guessing it went okay then?" I said

John laughed and stowed his memory gun "How do you feel?"

"Just now?" I said "No different"

"Well I'll be in the control room when you're ready" he said before striding out of the room.

I was still adjusting to being in a different place, it was like I had teleported.

I looked at my hands, they were bigger, more rugged, kinda hairy.

I reached instinctively for my glasses but I wasn't wearing any. That was weird, my eyes had been fixed. I felt my nose, it seemed similar. My teeth might have been improved. Was my chin bigger?

I sat up. Now that was different, that was easy. I pulled back the blanket and stared in a mix of admiration and horror at a new, much larger penis. Right. This was... interesting.

I found a mirror and stared at myself. I looked like I had been drawn by Rob Liefeld.

"I am now beefcake" I whispered to myself in awe of my new appearance.

I flexed my muscles and my jaw dropped.

I wondered aloud "How will my clothes fit?"

John must have heard me because he cried back "I got you a suit! Check the closet!"

I did as I was bid and changed into pinstriped trousers, a pale green shirt with septagons on the collars, a yellow waistcoat with a red question mark pattern and a brown paisley frock coat with flowing tails. I checked for shoes and sure enough brown leather slipon brogues that fit perfectly.

I strode out into the console room, now towering over John.

“Suits you Sir!” he said appreciatively “And uh one last addition. I wanted to give it to you personally.”

John pulled a small box not much bigger than a sonic screwdriver out of his pocket and gave it to me.

The box seemed absurdly tiny in my new hands and I carefully undid the bow on the box and lifted the lid aside to reveal an emerald green collar with my name on it.

I grinned and pulled the collar out of the box “Thank you” I said and I fastened the collar round my neck.

John beamed with pride and said “Right we have an appointment to keep or at least, you do.”

*

I entered the bar to find Sally and Greta downing whiskys.

“And they are so stupid!” said Sally

“I know” said Greta “No matter how many times there’s danger at the end of the corridor, they always run towards the sound of screaming.”

I coughed.

Sally glanced in my direction and looked away again.

I coughed again.

Same deal.

I approached the table.

Sally stood up and glared at me “Listen bucko I don’t want a collar and I don’t want a date. I am waiting for my boyfriend”

Greta started laughing.

I smiled “Christmas day, I was drunk and John had chosen you to be perfect for me. I was autistic and depressed and just terrified of women but I was drunk and you were hot and flirting. You could have gone away and never spoken to me ever again but you came back. This is me returning the favour.”

Sally was stunned and she looked at me face. Really looked at it.

She flung her arms around my neck and kissed me.

And that was the moment I realised the Sylph pill had done more than I expected, I smelled her perfume for the first time in my life and it was sweet.

“You, me, bedroom, now” she said.

I gladly obeyed.

*

When we returned to the SEGHAT John was pouring over the console.

“Something up?” I asked.

John shook his head “Just planning our honeymoon. By the way you might want to check the hamster cage. Seems our hatchling is on the brink of sapience.”

Sally looked at me curiously “Hatchling?”

“Lucy laid an egg” I said “It’s complicated”

I strode into my room and found a hamster cage on a shelf.

“Geronimo” I said and activated the tractor beam to pull us inside.

“We’re in a giant hamster cage” said Sally

I shrugged “Not my first time either.”

I turned to Sally and said “Honey, she’s a sylph who hatched from an egg, there is a chance she might be naked, don’t freak out yeah?”

Sally glared at me then her expression softened “Alright I’ll trust you”

I led the way into the hutch and sure enough sleeping on the foam, naked as the midday sun, was a copy of Lucy.

I knelt down beside her and stroked her forehead gently.

She awoke “Alex, why are you different? And why is she here?”

“Well what’s the last thing you remember?” I asked.

She thought for a second “John taming me, his strong hands sending waves of pleasure through my body as you were tamed by Kate., Then I woke up here.”

“Right” I said “Because I and Lucy were tamed by John and Kate and we did wake up naked in a cage and she gave me an egg that she’d laid. An egg that if I remember correctly contains an asexually produced clone of her with all her memories up to the moment of conception. I took the pill as you can see and it seems that in that time you hatched and developed to the point of remembering your genetic memories.”

“Right” said the hatchling “I’d like confirmation from the real Lucy to ensure the whole over seeing and winning the Septagonoid war thing happens without a hitch but I am willing to believe you. What do you want to call me?”

Sally was understandably confused “Sorry you’ve lost me? So Lucy laid an egg that contained a clone of herself and now she wants us to give her a name.”

“Yes” said the hatchling “I am your pet I take it, Lucy did give me to you willingly didn’t she and anyway Lucy herself said that she considers you her owner. I don’t see what the problem is.”

Sally stared at me “Your writing is really fucking weird you know?”

“Oh I know” I said with a smile “But you wanted to get Sylphs?”

Sally stared at me starting to understand “So this is like adopting a cat?”

“Yes” I said, painfully aware of how much of an oversimplification that was “Can we keep her?”

Sally shrugged “You’re the Sylph, you tell me.”

I smiled and said “How about Sammy?”

“Sammy’s good, I can work with Sammy” said the hatching

I grinned and stroked her forehead just a little more before deciding “Right we need to get her some clothes and some toys and book her in with the vets. Come to think of it I need to be booked in at the vets. Come on Sally we’ve got work to do.”

*

Epilogue

You would not believe how much paperwork is involved with legally keeping a sapient being as a pet in civilised society. And I had to go through it twice, once as the pet and once as the owner. The paperwork for asexual clones produced by sylphs is even more complicated as everything has to be precisely noted and tracked to prevent any legal issue arising from one clone claiming to be the original.

There isn’t just a collar for pet sylphs either, there is also a barcode tattoo, a microchip implant and a special logic stain upon the soul so Logicians, Architects of chaos and any passing gods and goddesses know not to try it on with property that isn’t theirs to claim. And of course there are a vast array of services that exist to protect and support sylphs so they each need paperwork signed but eventually after several years everything was legal and my new family set off to travel the multiverse, righting wrongs, doing deeds and having a really really wild time.

I did make one detour before we left though. Women aren’t the only sylphs that can lay eggs that hatch into asexual clones. Don’t ask how. I left one with Lucy so that he could take up the spot in the Logicio academy.

Sally decided to become an Architect of Chaos and graduated with a first in proportionate interference which meant that each of us, John, Sally, me and Sammy were practically immortal. Which is very useful when the clock in San Dimas is always running.

Laura Queen of Earth
Quasi-Canonical Podquisition Fanfic
By
Alexander Gordon Jahans

Dedicated to the hosts of the Podquisition
Laura Queen of Mirth
Jim Fucking Sterling Son
Gavin Miracle of Sound Dunne

Nine Worlds Geek Fest 2016 in London.

Jim Sterling and Laura K Buzz, Queen of Butts, are having a private conversation in an empty room.

Gavin enters, long flowing brown hair, devil horn hands as he enters “Oh man! That was so awesome! I mean honestly Charlie McDonnell, what an amazing singer? Regenerate me! Come on, it was awesome and I think they like me so much they want me in their band, I’m going to be in a Doctor Who band, how cool is that?”

Laura hurriedly wipes her eyes.

Jim says genially “That’s really awesome Gavin.”

Gavin pauses, studying the scene “Wait am I interrupting something?”

Jim tries to placate Gavin “No, honestly, mate, it’s fine. Lets grab a drink shall we?”

“Shit” declares Laura, checking her phone.

Jim turns “What?”

Laura starts showing off footage from her phone “Aliens, or Russians or something are vaporising the Houses of Parliament. In fact not just the Houses of Parliament. The White House, the center of the EU in Brussels, every national or international governing body on the entirety of planet Earth are being vaporised, right now, as we speak.”

Jim and Gavin are horrified but unbelieving “It’s not possible. It’s just not possible!”

“Then explain to me who has the money and the power to bribe all the world’s press into believing this is actually possible” says Laura “I mean just look at this”

Jim and Gavin watch a youtube video play on Laura’s phone:

A young white man in a red tshirt is speaking into his phone camera as he walks through London “Hello, My name is Tom Scott and yes, this is really happening. The Houses of Parliament, and indeed every other national and international government body, are being vaporised but vaporised by what and how?”

Well information is sketchy as I hope you'll appreciate because this technology is well in advance of our own but there are some things we can be certain of. These are being vaporised from orbit. All the evidence makes that obvious but so far there are no ufos or spy satellites to be found but if they have this technology then it is not inconceivable to believe that they have some way to fool our technology. I mean we can already fake most things pretty well given the right software and time so it's not hard to imagine a world that has software that can effectively photoshop on the fly before we on the ground get the data.

So what are they doing? What is the vaporising? Well scientists don't know but some rudimentary experiments have been done and it seems that individual atomic particles are just vanishing, literally ceasing to exist and this is happening slowly. There are still people in the Houses of Parliament and elsewhere and they are dying. Make no mistake they are. It could take hours, it could take days but they are being whittled away piece by piece randomly. Scientists think that when the beams are shut off, if they ever are, there won't even be dust or air particles left.

I mean yes obviously our atmosphere will fill the vacuum created but the point is that this beam, these beams, will leave literally nothing left.

And people have tried to escape. An MP for Merseyside tried to leave and he was vaporised in a matter of minutes. It wasn't a pleasant way to go. At this point there are serious discussions about just mercy killing everyone inside because well there can't be much worse things to suffer than very slow atomic disintegration and annihilation.

So why are they doing this? Well we don't know. Nobody knows but it's not hard to imagine why. Think about what this is: vaporising all the Earth's national and international governing bodies over an agonisingly slow amount of time so as to decapitate the Earth's political structure overnight and display your might and power in a way that will scare off any attempts at rebellion."

The man points the phone camera at the Houses of Parliament and the vast green disintegration beam shooting up into the sky. "It's the end of the world but the good news is we've been preparing for this moment for a long time. Grab your zombie survival bag and get ready to fucking move. It's judgement day and god is fucking pissed."

The video finishes.

They stand in silence for a few moments contemplating what was said.

Jim is first to speak "Shit"

Gavin shakes his head "I bet it's fake. I bet this is just mass hysteria and everything is fine. You know what a circle jerk the news is and besides he's just a youtuber?"

Jim and Laura stare at him.

"You are aware that we're all youtubers right?" says Jim

"Well yeah" says Gavin "And that's how I know it's horseshit. I know how unreliable we are. It'll probably be fine."

Jim says “Actually you know what Gavin probably has a point. We don’t want to cause a panic.”

Laura nods “Yeah, I mean we’re in London, we really don’t want a panic.”

Laura tweets “Don’t worry about the news, there’s too much invested in keeping shit running and even if there isn’t I’ll be Queen and you can all be my loyal subjects”

The trio decide to get blisteringly drunk.

*

They meet in the lobby the next afternoon.

Jim says irritably “I can’t help but notice that the apocalypse has not yet been cancelled.”

“Ah yeah” says Gavin sheepishly “My mum called me last night, the Irish governing body was vaporised too. This shit is legit.”

Laura is studying her phone “Guys I think we might have another problem. I appear to have become a revolutionary leader over night. How the fuck am I going to fight off whatever this is?”

Then the screaming starts.

Jim runs towards the screaming.

Laura and Gavin follow reluctantly in his wake.

“Mate what the fuck are you gonna do?” asks Gavin nervously.

“I know how to fight” says Jim “And besides somebody’s gotta fucking do something.”

The trio break through the crowd to find a tall man in strange clothes injecting women with some kind of needle gun before throwing them into some kind of impossible sack that never gets full.

Jim charges into the guy, knocking him off balance. He pushes the man and tries to trip him, for the moment he’s too stunned to fight back. Jim throws a right hook and drops the guy.

“Well Queen, what do you suggest we do now?” asks Jim.

Laura is freaking the fuck out. She is turning this way and that as demons wrestle inside her mind until finally she declares “I want this man stripped, restrained and monitored. I want to see what we can make of his tech and if we can use it. We’re at a convention. We should be able to do something.”

In the land of the blind the one eyed man is king, in the political apocalypse the woman who keeps her head is Queen.

“Now move!” cries Gavin “Come on, people! You heard your Queen, move!”

And that’s how it begins. A sarcastic tweet, a crowning moment of heroism and a cool head in a crisis.

From there command was easier. Just a matter of answering questions and preventing fuckups. Within weeks there was a command chain set up and rough approximations of the kind of forces that all successful countries need. There were fuckups and mistakes naturally but they kept the people at the convention alive and calm and regularly captured the strange invaders.

*

Laura was sat in her chosen throne room. The managers office on the hotel. She was sat in an executive office chair behind a big desk, reading news reports on her iphone. Behind her a huge window looked out onto a massive road and the landing strips of Heathrow Airport.

Jim Sterling was sat on a stool and using a scrounged pad of paper and pencil to try and write the script for the latest and possibly last Jimquisition.

There's a knock at the door and the guard says "There's a woman here to see you Maam. She says she has knowledge of the enemy and wants to help."

Jim looks up from his work to Laura expectantly.

Laura puts down her phone and shrugs "Let her in"

Jim gets up from his chair and stands protectively before Laura.

In walks a 6foot tall, fair skinned, svelte woman with long blonde hair. She wears practical trainers, jogging bottoms, a tshirt, hoodie and backpack.

The woman studies Laura for a moment then says "So you're Queen huh? I like the hair, blue is very you. Let's talk."

Laura glares at the woman "Who are you?"

The woman looks bored as she says "My name is Lucy Danse. I was bought up fighting robots in a convoy across deep space but laterly an eldritch abomination who was reincarnated as a person then recreated as a robot duplicate has sent me off to act as the great wandering prophet inspiring revolution and ensuring that every single one of the 100 million universes that have suffered what you have stand a good chance to fight back."

"Say that a lot do you?" asks Laura, noting the boredom in Lucy's voice.

"Yes" says Lucy icily "Every universe it's the same fucking deal. Shall we skip to the part where I help you lead the revolution?"

Laura stares at her in amazement "Where are you hiding the brass balls you seem to be packing? You wander into my domain and think you can start ruling my empire."

Lucy smiles sadistically.

Jim says "My Queen has a point. How do we know we can trust you?"

Lucy studies Jim. A big guy with a penchant for leather, scruffy hair and the signs of having been in more than a few scrapes. “And you? You’re her bodyguard are you?”

Jim frowns “I guess you could say that. I consider myself more a concerned friend ready to do what she can’t.”

“A weapon then?” says Lucy with a smile.

Jim stiffens at that “I suppose you could say that?”

“Hit me then” says Lucy “If I am a trick or a trap or even just some mad womsan desperate for control, hit me as hard as you can. If you’re right the survival of your Queen and her people is far more important than one dead woman. Beat me, kick me, break my bones and crush my heart in your hands. Bite me bitch.”

Jim looks to Laura.

Laura nods.

Jim throws a punch.

Lucy dodges the punch, trips Jim up and puts him into an armlock and whispers “If I wanted your Queen dead, there would be nothing you could do to stop me.”

Lucy abandons Jim and approaches Laura. She goes down on one knee and bows her head respectfully “My Queen, I understand your reservations, I will accept all your precautions. I am your humble servant and I only wish to help you.”

Laura thinks about this for a moment then says “Lets see your butt then?”

Lucy nods respectfully and turns around to show Laura her posterior.

“That is a fine butt” says Laura appreciatively “If I may see that butt more often I will gladly accept your council.”

Lucy smiles “Well yours isn’t too bad either and I must say that I can think of worse ways to save a world then being the royal butt person.”

“Are you flirting with me?” asks Laura

Lucy laughs “Do you want me to?”

Laura smiles mischievously then says “No, I have a girlfriend.”

Lucy says innocently “Well there’s nothing wrong with looking is there? And anyway I’m game if you want to involve her”

Laura frowns “No, I must not exploit my power. On your feet, champion.”

Lucy stands up and turns “My liege?”

“I will have a room set up for you and then we will meet officially” says Laura

Jim groans “Is no-one going to help me?”

Lucy laughs and easily pulls Jim to his feet “Sorry old chap. Time’s a wasting.”

And then she was gone.

*

When Lucy entered again, a number of people were sat in around a big table.

Laura stood up as Lucy entered “Our guest of honour arrives, I trust you found your sleep pleasant?”

Lucy shrugged “I’ve slept in worse places, shall we begin?”

Laura said “Yes but before we do, I think it would be wise to introduce people. This fetching blonde woman to my left is my girlfriend, you may call her Eve. She is here because well you’re a six foot tall blond woman with a fantastic butt. To her left is Gavin Dunne, he makes music based on video games. He keeps people sane. Then we have Max, he is our technology expert. Then we have Ivana, our martial arts expert. Opposite her is James, our resident Doctor. To his left is Hilary, our supplies expert. And well you know Jim.”

Lucy smiles “Pleased to meet you all.”

“So...” says Laura “Tell us what you know.”

“My pleasure” says Lucy and she starts to circle the table, with her hands held behind her back “Our enemy are the Logicios. They are nerds. Individuals chosen for their adaptability and ability to learn and improvise. They travel the multiverse stealing technology, learning what they can from it and integrating it into their own. They are genre savvy, superpowered by technology and utterly misogynistic.”

“How can you be sure?” asks Gavin

“They exploit a creature known as the Albino Sylph Squirrel. It is an artificially created creature whose combined excretions can be blended to make different types and strengths of sylph pills. A sylph pill can do anything from pausing the ageing process and making someone more obedient and submissive to shrinking them and allowing them to reproduce asexually. The Logicios are unique not because they run their empire on sylphs or slavery but because only human women who have become sylphs are kept as slaves and pets by their empire. Oh and they are almost always caucasian, white. Clearly these idiots think it isn’t slavery if it isn’t happening to black folk.” says Lucy.

She pauses behind Laura’s chair.

Laura asks “What chance do we have?”

“Good question” says Lucy as she starts to circle the table again “The Logicios have not yet been deposed because they are too useful to the multiverse. They patrol it, keeping any threats to the multiverse at bay and recently they have been involved in a forever war with the Septagonoids. The Septagonoids are the ultimate pedants, rules lawyers incarnate. They are beings made of pure logic inside great robotic exteriors and they absolutely believe that the multiverse is a mistake that shouldn’t exist. Technically they are right of course but nobody but them actually cares. Their sole purpose in life is to find a way to create the final solution that will render the multiverse one great big logical void. They only have to succeed once and everyone dies.”

Laura is aghast “How does that help us get rid of the Logicios!?”

“We are a side show, a distraction, an attempt to gather reinforcements while they still have time. If we can fight back hard and fast they’ll surrender because they can’t risk losing troops to hold the land.” says Lucy.

Jim says “So to win the revolution we have to bloody the nose of the guys preventing us from all going Phoom!? I have to wonder what the point is? If they’ve got a plan and they need us, fucking let them win!”

Lucy nods “I can understand that perspective. So you’re okay dying at the front lines of a war that can only be conclusively won by the bad guys and oh by the way every woman in this room, every woman in this world and the other hundred million worlds will be drugged, stripped of their clothes and rights, treated as pets if they’re lucky, eaten if they’re not and condemned to an eternity of pointless slavery if they really have it rough?”

Jim swallows “No”

“The Farsh-nuke - that’s the guy who sent me on the mission by the way - the Farsh-nuke told me that I have an opportunity here to not just fight for the individual freedoms of myself and my people but for the ability to offer an alternative to the Logicios” says Lucy “You see you are just fighting for survival. I am fighting for victory. 100 million universes may be a drop in the bucket compared to the multiverse but it is one hell of a headstart in forming an alternative force capable of one day deposing the Logicios without threat to the multiverse.”

“So what are you proposing?” asks Laura “Supposing we do win? What happens then?”

“The United Civilisations of the Multiverse” says Lucy with pride “We only ask a small tithe of soldiers, engineers, money and equipment and we fight the good fight alongside the Logicios in return for certain diplomatic protections and technology sharing and then we grow a multiversal empire.”

Lucy turns and stares at Laura across the table “You are Queen of this rock, I am Queen of the multiverse.”

Laura was blown away, here was someone who knew what they were doing. “How do you treat your lesser Queens?”

Lucy says suggestively “How do you want to be treated?”

Eve glares at Laura.

Laura coughs “People fill her in.”

Jim Sterling begins “We have apprehended half a dozen of the enemy, stripped them, restrained them and contained them under guard. Attempts at interrogation have typically not gone well so we are keeping them under guard for now.”

Gavin says “In terms of morale people are feeling reasonably chill but there is a very definite sense that things are going to get a whole lot worse. I mean I dread to think what will happen when we run out of booze.”

Max says “We’ve tried analysing the tech we’ve recovered and honestly we’ve not got a clue. We’ve had better luck setting up a radio station to let people know that they can come here for help.”

Ivana says “Attempts to train up an army are going better than expected but we are a long way from putting down a riot, never mind the enemy.”

James says “So far we aren’t having any serious issues to deal with and attempts to train up nurses are going well. If something happens we will at least be able to make a fair attempt at keeping people alive.”

Hilary says “The raiding parties are keeping us topped up for now but we really need to start farming. I have no idea what we’ll do when we run out of loo roll.”

“Well you’re doing better than I expected” says Lucy “And I do think I can help you but it is going to get rough. Jim, Laura, can I have a word in private?”

Jim stands up and Laura declares “End of meeting, bugger off!”

As people leave Lucy approaches Jim and Laura.

Eve glares at Lucy.

“Okay” says Lucy, clicking her tongue apprehensively “Lets do this”

Lucy strides over to Eve, towering over her. “You got a problem with me?”

Eve snarles “Stay away from my girl.”

Lucy smiles radiantly “Eve, if that is your name, I don’t care about you. I don’t care about Laura. I care about the hundred million universes that will suffer if I screw this up. If I have to fuck her and kill you to do my duty I will without hesitation. I don’t want to but I will if I have to. Trust me and you can enjoy me and command me. Stand in my way and die. One way or another. I mean maybe you get lucky and you do kill me. Congratulations, you have just condemned yourself and Laura to slavery and death.”

Laura asks “Is there a problem?”

“Nah” says Lucy breezily “I was just explaining that I am as much Eve’s servant as I am yours.”

“Aww, that’s so cute” says Laura “I mean you have to admit that she has a great bum.”

“Oh yeah” says Eve confidently “What a great arse”

Lucy smiles radiantly “Thank you. I hope that one day you’ll both get to enjoy it”

“Yes” says Eve “I think I should enjoy ramming you in the arse”

And with that Eve leaves the room.

Laura is amazed “Wow, you are good”

“I try” says Lucy.

When they are alone Jim asks “So what did you want to talk about?”

“The prisoners you seized” says Lucy “I think I know what they were and if I am right then I can drastically improve your chances of survival but while we examine those I need you Laura to assemble a team of people you don’t mind seeing naked every day and who don’t mind dying for you and the greater good.”

Laura stares at Lucy “What are you talking about? I’m a good Queen.”

“And sometimes people have to die for the greater good.” says Lucy “You need to assemble some lambs because if I’m right there is going to be a slaughter.”

Laura is stunned by the remark.

Jim says “Well, alright, do you want to see these prisoners or what?”

“Lead the way, good Sir” says Lucy.

*

Jim led the way into an empty room where a prisoner lay with his hands cable tied behind his back in a room guarded by two men.

Lucy entered and strode over to the prisoner.

“Well, well, to what do I owe this honour?” asked the prisoner.

“Who are you?” asked Lucy

“Why should I tell you?” snarled the prisoner

Jim snarled “Do you want me to give you a hint?”

Lucy shook her head “There’s no need for that Jim”

She hunkered down on her haunches before the prisoner so she was looking up at him. “You’ll tell me what I want to know because you think you can play with my head and who knows maybe you can? Maybe you learned well from the Farsh-nuke, well enough to make me want to obey you? But I doubt that. I mean if you could manipulate me into being your humble servant with just your voice you wouldn’t have got caught would you?”

The prisoner studied Lucy “Okay. Okay I’ll talk. What do you want to know?”

Lucy smiled “Thank you, who are you?”

The prisoner sighed “Reginald Humphries, I’m a snatcher. I am the advance guard of the harvest. My job is to go down, drug women and throw them in a bag ready for processing. I’m just supposed to clear the streets. I’m not important.”

“And what did you do before being a snatcher?” asked Lucy

“I just graduated, okay” said the Prisoner “They said: Before we give you a SEGHAT, you need to go down there and clear space for the harvesters.”

Lucy nodded “Thank you”

Lucy stood up and said to Jim “It’s as I thought, this man is a Logicio. I want to see his belongings but for now one thing I can recommend is that he is a ready supply of renewable meat. His regenerative abilities defy physics and you don’t need to feed him.”

“Oh so you’re going to starve me and carve me up for food every time I heal, how the fuck is that moral?” jeered the prisoner.

“It isn’t” said Lucy “It’s survival. You will live and your suffering will allow others to live.”

Jim stared at her “You can’t be serious?”

Lucy stared into Jim’s soul “I have been fighting plastic clones since I was a child. War is hell. It makes you do terrible things to survive. Suck it up and keep your people alive or die a noble valiant pointless death and contribute to the food supply. Those are your options”

Lucy left the room.

The prisoner laughed at Jim’s existential angst.

That focused his mind and he followed after her.

*

Jim led Lucy to where the prisoners’ belongings were kept.

“We captured seven of them” explained Jim.

“So there ought to be seven sets of equipment” concluded Lucy.

Jim found a gun and said “This is what the fucker was using on the women”

“Right” said Lucy “We’ll have to test that out when Laura has the lambs picked out”

Jim frowned “You’re seriously going to try that out?”

“Sylphs are useful” said Lucy “And they can be kept and exploited humanely. Then again this could equally be a mind control drug, liquid death or even liquid plastic to turn them into toys. Logicios can be sick fuckers.”

“How is any of that an argument for using this?” asked Jim

“The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few” said Lucy “If we can’t keep the empire viable, it doesn’t matter if we kill someone or not.”

Jim shook his head in disbelief.

Lucy found a gun she recognised and laughed “Brilliant”

“What?” asked Jim

“This is a memory gun” said Lucy “And you have seven of them. Not to mention enough Logicios that one of them might be willing to pass on his knowledge for a cushier position. Again a Logicio could easily use this to torture someone but this is why you have lambs. You no longer need to send someone to college and university, you simply record the memories of someone who knows, point and click. I’m taking one of these.”

Jim stared at Lucy, amazed.

Lucy lit up at the sight of the jackets. “Oh yes! Jackpot!”

“It’s a jacket, Lucy” said Jim, flabbergasted by her enthusiasm.

Lucy laughed and reached her hand into the jacket pockets “I told you Jim, the Logicios are addicted to Sylphs, they turn ‘em like others smoke cigarettes and that means...”

Lucy pulled out in quick succession: A large jar of white pills, a large multipack of bikinis and a large multipack of collars and leashes. “This is a farm ready to go, just add volunteers.”

Jim frowned “How did all that fit in those pockets?”

“Logic is a living force, it can be reprogrammed.” said Lucy and then she turned her attention to the sacks. “Okay we’ve got what we need. Lets go.”

*

Lucy strides into Laura's office to find 30 women between the ages of 20 and 30 standing to attention.

"Good" says Lucy "You've got me some lambs"

"Er yes" says Laura as she tries to make introductions "This is -"

Lucy snaps "Don't tell me their names!"

Laura is stunned into silence.

"Sorry" says Lucy "That was harsh but I have to be able to kill and dissect every one of these lambs. I do not want to know their names."

Jim answers Laura's accusatory stare "Yeah, she's like that. Miss Cold Pragmatism 2016."

"Now" says Lucy commandingly "I need 4 lambs to follow me outside and they may not return. You can volunteer or I can pick you."

A short skinny woman in hipster jeans, with blue highlights steps forward.

Lucy nods "Exit the room and wait. Try to run and I'll flay you."

The volunteer nods her understanding and calmly strolls out of the room.

Laura is amazed "This is horrible."

"Yup" says Jim "And this is command."

Lucy picks a tall woman with brown hair.

She swallows and strides out of the door.

An overweight woman steps forward and Lucy nods her to exit.

Finally a ginger woman steps forward.

"That's it" says Lucy "I leave you to the care of your Queen. Jim, if you would?"

Jim nods and strides off with Lucy out the door.

They find all 4 of the lambs waiting obediently.

Lucy smiles warmly "Sorry about the theatrics. I have to be cold with them so I don't build up an attachment to them. Any last requests?"

The woman in the hipster jeans says "I appreciate your position and I accept whatever fate awaits me but could I have a kiss?"

Lucy is taken aback by this "That's your last request? Really? Well alright."

Lucy leans in and kisses the woman on the lips “Now, take this pill.”

Lucy hands the woman a small white pill.

“Do you have any water?” asks the woman.

“Crunch it” says Lucy

So the woman sticks the pill in her mouth and starts crunching it.

“Jim, take her away” says Lucy and she readies a new pill.

The tall woman is given the new pill, likewise told to crunch it and led off by Jim.

The plump woman is jabbed with a needle and sent off.

Then the ginger woman is jabbed with the needle.

Immediately the ginger woman starts tearing at her clothes “Wow it’s hot.”

“Do you think so?” asks Lucy

Jim hurries over “Lucy, um-”

“Later” says Lucy with a wave of her hand before turning her attention back to the ginger woman before her “Would you like me to strip you?”

The ginger woman cries “Yes!”

Lucy obliges “Tell me when to stop yeah?”

The woman nods.

Jim watches as Lucy strips the ginger woman completely naked, layer by layer.

Finally the ginger woman drops onto her hands and knees and says “What would you have me do, mistress?”

Lucy pulls out a collar and leash from her pocket, attaches the collar round the ginger woman’s neck and clips the leash onto the collar. “Honey, be a good obedient little girl and follow but don’t speak okay, I’ll give you lots of hugs later.”

Jim stares.

Lucy turns her attention back to Jim, with a great big grin plastered across her face “We’ll have to try milking her later. Now, what was it you wanted to say?”

Jim blinks and shakes his head “One of them’s shrinking.”

“Fantastic” says Lucy “Those ones are the best.”

“Right” says Jim and he leads Lucy to where he stashed the volunteers.

*

It was a small store cupboard.

The plump woman looked utterly terrified as she watched the tall woman burn where she stood.

The tall woman was standing silently to attention despite the obvious pain she was enduring.

The woman in the hipster jeans was curled up in a corner, utterly chilled out.

The tall woman sees Lucy and says “Whatever you gave me? It’s burning me up inside. It’s so hot. Every part of my body is on fire. Is there anything you can do to at least put me out of my misery?”

“No” says Lucy “I can save your memories but that will include the pain you are currently suffering. If I don’t save your memories the person you are now effectively dies. Your body will live on. It will grow again and it will be a valuable asset to the cause. You’ll be like a superhero but also, to put it bluntly, the fastest growing cattle. We may even be able to milk you and take regular harvests of blood. Do you want to see that day?”

The tall woman stares at Lucy “I can’t make that choice.”

“Then I’m making it for you” says Lucy

And she hands a primed memory gun to the tall woman “Hold the handle and press record”

The tall woman nods and screams.

“What the fuck is happening to her!?” demands Jim

“She is burning up” says Lucy “Her body is being rewritten to exist as a humanoid the size of a hamster and that means all the excess mass has to go somewhere. The memory gun is doing a deep scan of her brain, like being swallowed up by the abyss as you get pins and needles.”

“Is there anything we can do?” asks Jim.

“Leave her in the cupboard and try to ignore the screaming” says Lucy.

Jim stares at her “How can you be so cold?”

“I have to be” says Lucy.

The woman in the hipster jeans sticks up her hand.

Lucy asks testily “What?”

“Well two types of thing were tried. Me and the tall one each crunched pills and she’s burning up while I’m not. Fatty over there got injected and I’m guessing so did Miss Ginger because I can’t help but notice that she’s naked on the end of the leash. Me and Fatty were the controls weren’t we?” says the woman in the hipster jeans.

Lucy says “Don’t call her Fatty. She’s beautiful. You are right though, what’s your point?”

“Well what happens to us?” asks the woman in the hipster jeans “Are we humanely put down or - ?”

“Do you have a better idea?” asks Lucy

“Well I was thinking? These Logicians, they like to take us right? Well use me as a bargaining chip to get one on side and when I’m done...?” The woman in the hipster jeans looks hopefully at Lucy.

“I really shouldn’t have kissed you should I?” says Lucy and she pulls out a collar and hands it to her “Behave okay? And I’m still considering you disposable.”

The woman in the hipster jeans gladly secures the collar round her neck.

“Okay” says Jim “So you and Miss Hipster are cool but what about the other control?”

“She can keep the tall woman company as she burns” says Lucy and she leaves the tall woman and the plump woman alone in the darkened cupboard.

*

Jim follows Lucy and her collared women into the kitchen, in utter shock.

Lucy turns to the woman in the hipster jeans and says “Right, you be silent, do as I say and stick close to Jim. This could get messy.”

The woman in the hipster jeans nods and goes to stand beside the blue screened Jim.

Lucy bends down to look the ginger woman in the eyes “Honey, I’m going to do somethings to you now. There might be some discomfort and pain but trust me, okay?”

The ginger woman nods.

Lucy pats her back “Good girl”

Then Lucy starts rummaging through cupboards until she finds a pint glass.

Lucy takes the glass and holds it beneath the left tit of the ginger woman and then, starting gently and getting harder, Lucy proceeds to massage and squeeze said tit with her right hand until a white creamy substance comes shootinmg forth into the glass.

The woman with the hipster jeans gags.

Jim is watching the whole thing impassively as his whole life flashes before his eyes and he wonders just how he came to be watching a woman milk another.

Lucy holds the pint of milk up and says “Well come on disposable woman, check its safe to drink.”

The woman with the hipster jeans frowns, looks Lucy in the eyes and says “My name is Sally.”

Lucy glares at her “Would you prefer to drink it straight from the teet?”

Sally sighs and accepts the pint glass. She takes a large gulp and hands the glass back. She savours the mouthful of milk and swallows it down.

“How are you feeling?” asks Lucy “Do I need to get a disposable woman mark 2?”

Sally shrugs “It’s milk, slightly sweet but it’s milk”

“And you definitely don’t feel poorly? No fever, itching or aching anywhere” confirms Lucy

“No” says Sally “I feel fine”

Lucy nods “Well okay then” and she tries the milk “Good stuff” she downs the rest of the milk.

Lucy rinses out the glass and rests it on the counter then she lifts the ginger woman to her feet and positions her wrist over the glass.

“You are not doing what I think you are” asks Sally

“Get a cloth” says Lucy “If I’m right she’ll clot swiftly but I’m wrong you’ll save her life.”

Sally hurriedly searches cupboards and draws until she’s found a cloth.

“No need” says Lucy indicating the glass half filled with blood and the ginger woman’s seemingly unmarked wrist.

Lucy ponders “Would it be cannibalism for you to drink sylph’s blood since you identify as a sylph?”

Sally picks the option that means she doesn’t have to drink blood “Yes, yes it would. I’m your sylph, alright.”

Lucy gives Sally a wry smile “Okay but you do realise that means you have to wear a bikini?”

“Fine by me” says Sally with a wink.

Lucy laughs and kisses Sally on the forehead “Sally you’ve won okay, I officially declare that I give a shit about you.” Then she downs the blood “Yep that’s good blood.”

Lucy stares at the ginger woman’s bare arse for a moment.

Sally is nervous by the possible implications of that stare.

Finally Lucy declares “I can’t do it. I don’t need to do it. I’ve proven that she can be milked and bled without consequences. I don’t need to butcher her too.”

Jim cries out elatedly “Oh thank god, you’ve got a line!”

“Pardon?” says Lucy

“I mean the lambs and the Logicio prisoners and then the shrinking and the burning and the walking on a leash and then with the milking and the bleeding... Thank God you’ve stopped short of butchering the poor woman!” cries Jim.

Lucy tutts.

Sally buries her face in Lucy’s shoulder in embarrassment.

Lucy takes a frying pan out of a cupboard, places it on a hob, squirts some more milk into a glass and pours it into the pan to act like oil or butter. Then she finds a large clean knife and a rolling pin. She sticks the rolling pin in the ginger woman’s mouth and instructs “Bite down when you feel pain, honey.”

Then Lucy slices off a piece of the ginger woman’s arse and fries it in the sylph milk. Once it is cooked Lucy plates up the hot piece of ass and presents it to Jim Sterling. “Bon Appetite, mon capitain.”

Jim stares into Lucy’s eyes, into her soul, and he lifts up the fried butlet, sticks it into his mouth, bites, chews and swallows “Lovely”

Then he thinks for a second and says “Actually that is really good. Holy shit!”

“The intoxicating power of the sylph” says Lucy “They are amazing at everything, including being eaten.”

The taste reminds Jim of something and as he stares at the ginger woman he remembers that this person became surprisingly tasty because of the needle gun sported by the logicios who- “Oh my god! I’ve just remembered the Logicios would put the people they inject into their bigger on the inside bags.”

Lucy’s eyes lit up “Seven bags, that is quite the herd of sylphs”

“Never mind that” said Jim “Those poor women have been stuck in those bags for weeks.”

*

The 4 of them head into the confiscated items area and Lucy lifts up a bag.

Sally immediately starts climbing inside the bag.

Jim asks “Do you think there’s any possibility that they are still alive?”

Lucy shrugs “As I understand the technology, the inside of the bag morphs to the logic you bring with

you. Your sense of time should continue inside and thus they're - well they're probably not in good shape - but if they're sylphs they could still be alive."

Sally disappears inside.

Ten seconds pass.

Lucy asks "Sally?"

Five seconds pass "Sally!?"

Thirty seconds pass "Right Jim, hold the bag."

Jim jerks to attention "Yes, Maam"

Jim takes the bag from Lucy and holds it open as Lucy reaches her hands into the bag.

Lucy is flailing around, trying to find purchase. She feels denim, finds one trousered leg and then another then pulls.

Sally slides out of the bag and jerks into motion "Okay! That was weird!"

Lucy hugs Sally and kisses her on the forehead. "Oh my god I am so glad you're okay. I thought I'd lost you."

Sally stares at her "I thought I was your disposable woman?"

Lucy avoids the question "Did you see anything there?"

"Well yeah" says Sally "Whole bunch of women, frozen in time and then I pulled my feet in..."

Lucy and Sally say at once "Those girls are still alive."

Jim says "So that means what exactly?"

"That means we need to see the Queen" says Lucy "Because I have a delivery of butts to give her."

*

Lucy kicks open the door to the throne room and strides in followed by Sally, the Sylph and Jim.

Laura stares in utter shock "Oh holy fuck! She's naked on a leash!"

"Yeah" says Jim "And that's not even the half of it. I have seen things you would not believe."

Laura recoils "But that's not possible? You know what I do, did, for a living."

Jim nods "Oh I know and I stand by my statement."

Lucy explains “The lamb on all fours is a sylph. She is utterly obedient, sweet as can be, she can be milked at will, her blood can be drained frequently and she has a fast enough regenerative ability that her arse can be sliced off and pan fried almost indefinitely. I present the solution to your food shortage situation.”

Laura studies the sylph “Can she remember anything about her old life? Can her situation be reversed.”

“I don’t know and I don’t care.” says Lucy “This is food.”

Laura stares at Lucy “Well okay, even supposing I could be so callous, she’s one fucking woman. How the fuck am I supposed to keep my people fed and watered with one woman?”

Sally throws the sacks at Laura’s feet.

“Seven sacks from seven Logicios” explains Lucy “Each keeps whatever is inside in a state of temporal stasis and each was used to store women who had just been injected with the same stuff that lamb was given. And that’s just to start with, you still have seven guns capable of doing this to more people and I am certain that the substance is replicatable.”

Laura lifts up a sack “So you’re telling me that if I stick my hand inside here I can pull out a woman who will immediately strip and allow me to milk her?”

“More or less” says Lucy

Laura looks to Jim “A little help?”

Jim rushes over and holds up a sack.

Laura reaches her hand inside the sack and finds a leg, she pulls and the temporal stasis allows the woman to slide out. She is tall and blonde.

“What the fuck happened?” she asks “Where am I?”

“It’s alright” says Laura helping her to her feet “You’re safe, we rescued you. My name is Laura, I’m sort of Queen around here. How are you?”

“Weird” she says “I’m Ruby by the way. Is there something wrong with the central heating, I feel - I feel very...”

“It’s okay.” says Laura “We’ll look after you.”

“Thanks.” says Ruby and she adopts this really goofy grin “You know you’re really pretty. I think I love you.”

“Right, thanks.” says Laura awkwardly, watching Ruby nervously.

“Do you mind if I strip?” asks Ruby

“No” says Laura “You go ahead. It’s alright. Just be comfortable, okay?”

“Yeah” says Ruby as she starts shedding clothes.

Everyone watches her strip in an awkward silence until at last the shoes and socks are removed and Ruby crawls on her hands and knees to nuzzle Laura.

“Oh, oh it’s all right, there-there’s a good girl.” says Laura, profoundly embarrassed.

Lucy tosses Laura a collar and leash.

“Bugger, okay.” says Laura as she catches the leash and secures the collar round Ruby’s neck.

Laura stares at Lucy “There had really fucking better be a cure.”

“You’re Queen.” says Lucy “See that one is found. For now though, enjoy your windfall of butts.”

Laura smiles sarcastically “Oh it’s a wonderful gift, being responsible for exploiting people who have been so profoundly damaged.”

Then Laura notices that Sally is wearing a collar and asks “Why is she wearing a collar and still clothed?”

“She’s clever” says Lucy “And she’s useful. Also she’s really quite cute. I mean she volunteered to be my sylph. I’m keeping her out of trouble for the moment and then I might get her tamed to get a Logicio on side. Anyway this isn’t our only revelation.”

“No?” asks Laura nervously “What else is there?”

Lucy frowns “Have you ever had a pet a hamster? I ask because one of the lambs reacted to the sylph pills by shrinking and that basically means you’ll have to look after her like she’s a pet hamster for a few weeks until she passes through the guinea pig, kitten and dog stages to be her old size again and then the fun begins.”

“So you’ll be sticking around to help out?” asks Laura.

Lucy frowns and shakes her head “If I can get a logicio on board I need to travel the world spreading to word that Laura Queen of Butts is coming to liberate them and protect them from the Logicios.”

Laura stares at her “But I’m not a Queen and I’m not a politician. I can’t fight and I’m crap at economics. I can’t run an empire. I just talk about how games about flying butts are funny because they are games about flying butts.”

Lucy nods “I know. If you were a real Queen I’d be your precious little sylph by now or failing that locked up in a dungeon. The thing is though that nobody actually cares about the qualifications of their rulers to rule. They care that they keep the food available and squash their enemies. There’s still more I can do to help you but you are going to have to do this, yourself. You have food and drink now. Be a Queen, rule!”

The ginger woman’s leash is tossed to the ground and Lucy whispers in her ear, presumably convincing

her to stay with Laura as Lucy and Sally then stride off out the room.

Laura stares after Lucy as she leaves.

Jim asks “What do we do now?”

“Get Hilary” says Laura “Tell him he needs to set up a farm for the sylphs”

Jim nods “One that will see they are regularly bled, milked and carved?”

“Exactly” says Laura “Meanwhile I am going to grow the flock.”

*

Lucy was in the kitchen once again, going through the cupboards for glasses.

Sally asked “What are you doing?”

“I have a hunch.” said Lucy “And if I’m right we’ve got a long night ahead of us.”

Satisfied that she had enough glasses set aside, Lucy pulled out a big mixing bowl and placed the needle gun into it.

Sally felt nervous now “Is this where you turn me into a sylph?”

“Oh heavens no” said Lucy “You’re perfect just the way you are. This is if I’m wrong.”

Sally breathed a sigh of relief and asked “Is there anything I can do?”

“Yeah” said Lucy as she began to use a butter knife to pry the back off the needle gun “You can get me a pad of paper, a pencil and a rubber. Just in case my hunch is right.”

Sally nodded and left the room.

As Lucy worked to try and dismantle the needle gun, she reflected that Sally really could run off this time but Lucy didn’t care. She had fulfilled her purpose as a control and the people would have food now. There was also the ever so slightly small fact that Lucy actually cared about Sally now and didn’t want her staying on pain of death anyway.

At last, the back came off the needle gun and out squirmed a small white albino squirrel.

Lucy’s face lit up with excitement and joy.

“Any luck?” asked Sally, as she arrived with the promised items.

“Oh yes” said Lucy, as she removed the parts of the gun and stood back. “This, my dear, is where it all began... The Albino Sylph Squirrel. A biological machine whose excretions combine in different ways to make different kinds of Sylph Pills.”

Sally stared at the small fury creature in the mixing bowl and looked faintly disappointed “That’s it?”

Lucy nodded and explained like a proud parent “The Albino Sylph Squirrel lives off the energy generated by breathing in oxygen and water and reacting them together. It can also reproduce asexually and that means we now have an infinite amount of sylph pills. I just need to find the right mix.”

Sally said with a wry smile “So you need lambs, right?”

Lucy pulled Sally close and hugged her “Yes, my dear I do need lambs. Men too and see if you can’t scavenge one of them empty infinite bags while you’re at it. Somewhere convenient to put the ones who’ve been used.”

Sally smiled “You know I like it when you hug me.”

Lucy laughed and kissed Sally on the forehead then said “Go, my little minion, find me some lambs.”

Sally saluted and left.

Lucy stared at the Albino Sylph Squirrel “Right, little buddy, this is not going to be big on dignity for either of us but duty calls, I’m afraid”

Then she proceeded to extract the different excretions into the glasses and label them.

*

Laura was standing in a room full of naked women as she pulled a frozen woman out of a sack that reanimated when Sally entered.

Sally coughs to politely attract attention.

Laura notices and says cheerily “Oh hello, come to join the farm? Just take your clothes off and get on your hands and knees. I’ll have you harnessed up momentarily.”

Sally laughs “Actually I’m here because Lucy wants me to fetch an empty sack and some lambs.”

“Oh” says Laura, realizing her misunderstanding “Then come in, come in. Mind the butts.”

Sally smiles at that as she proceeds to navigate her way through all the naked women.

Laura pulls out another frozen woman.

Sally arrives beside Laura and Laura asks “So what’s your deal anyway? I know Lucy said you were being used for something but how do you feel about this?”

Sally shrugs “You know what the job market’s like? Or was before the aliens turned up and made you Queen. I figure being someone’s pet cat isn’t a bad life and well I mean you’ve seen her, so tall and commanding. I just like doing what she says.”

Laura laughs “Ah, I get you. Just know that I am Queen and I can seize you from her and set you free if

she ever gets too much for you. Now I have an infinite bag for you, if you'll help be with this last woman?"

Sally nods "Yes, Maam"

Together they remove the last woman and Sally takes the empty sack.

"What are you doing anyway?" asks Laura.

Sally thinks for a second then says "Ever watch Doctor Who and the Silurians?"

Laura frowns "Only watched some of the new series unfortunately."

"Well never mind" says Sally with a wave of her hand "Suffice to say there is quite a bit of experimentation going on."

*

Sally arrived back in the kitchen with the empty sack and a conga line of lambs.

"Excellent, you're back." said Lucy "I was ever so slightly worried you had left my service."

"Never." said Sally with utter sincerity "And anyway what would you do without me? Look, I've bought you your sack and your lambs."

"Thank you." said Lucy "When we're done, I am giving you a fry up and the biggest cuddle ever."

Sally beamed.

Lucy coughed and gestured to the glasses "Cum, piss, shit, tears, spit, blood, vomit. The seven base ingredients. What we need to do is find what the various different combinations mean. If all else fails I'll get one of the cattle in here to act as refreshments but hopefully we should make cattle before then."

Sally stared at the glasses and felt queasy "Rather them than me."

"Right" said Lucy "First Lamb please!"

A woman steps up.

Lucy injects her with 7 centiliters of shit.

"Any reaction?" asks Lucy

"I guess I find you hot." says the woman.

Lucy makes a note "Next."

Sally holds up the sack "If you could just climb inside please?"

*

5 centiliters of cum, 1 centiliter of vomit, 1 centiliter of blood.

A short pretty woman steps up.

Lucy injects her.

Lucy watches as the woman grows a foot taller as her muscles thicken and her arms and legs become hairier as her chest tightens up and she develops abs.

“Okay.” says Lucy “I think I know what’s happened here but I need to check something. May I please look inside your pants?”

The woman shrugs “I came in here half expecting to be killed and dissected, of course you can look.”

“Thank you.” says Lucy and she pulls down the woman’s trousers. “Interesting. Next.”

Sally holds up the sack and the woman climbs in.

*

5 centiliters of shit, 1 centiliter of blood, 1 centiliter of spit.

A tall woman steps up.

Lucy injects her.

The woman grows taller and her arms lengthen, the palm thickening and fingers shortening as fingernails toughen and extend. Her neck grows by three feet and the woman finds herself standing on 4 hoofed feet.

Lucy smiles and writes down the result “Sally, take her for a canter.”

The woman asks “Canter?”

Sally puts an arm around the woman’s neck and leads her out of the kitchen.

*

3 centiliters of vomit, 2 centiliters of blood, 2 centiliters of shit

A short man steps up.

Lucy injects him.

The man’s arms grow ludicrously long and great flaps of skin develop between his arms and legs. Horns grow from his head and a tail extends from his arse.

Lucy notes down the results and says “Sally, take him outside, see if he can fly.”

Sally proceeds to lead the bird man waddling out of the kitchen.

*

5 centiliters of cum, 1 centiliter of tears, 1 centiliter of blood

A tall beefy guy steps up.

Lucy injects him.

The man shrinks by a foot and his muscles shrivel as hair burns up and his chest flattens while his pectorals inflate and his nipples extend outward to facilitate new pockets of fat. His voice is noticeably more high pitched.

“Sir, may I ask to see inside your pants?” asks Lucy

He winks “Not a problem.”

Lucy takes a peak and confirms her suspicions then writes down the results.

She prepares 5 centiliters of cum, 1 centiliter of vomit and 1 centiliter of blood.

When she injects the man his body returns to its prior state.

“Sally if you could dig out the woman we-?” asks Lucy

“Already on it” says Sally as she pulls out the woman who looks the spitting image of the man.

Lucy injects the woman with 5 centiliters of cum, 1 centiliter of tears and 1 centiliter of blood and she returns to her prior state.

Sally then holds open the sack and gestures.

The man and the woman each shrug and climb in.

*

5 centiliters of blood, 1 centiliter of tears, 1 centiliter of piss.

A brunette steps up.

Lucy injects her.

Skin flaps grow between the brunette’s fingers and toes. A dorsal fin sprouts from her back, her trousers burst as her legs merge to become one powerful tail. Her shoes explode as her feet join to become one powerful flipper. Gills sprout along her neck and she gasps for breath.

Sally drops the sack over the brunette, freezing her in a snapshot of time.

Lucy makes some notes.

Sally says “I know, I know, take her for a swim and report back.”

*

6 centiliters of cum, 1 centiliter of blood.

A young man strides up.

Lucy injects him.

The man smiles.

Lucy frowns “See I would have expected something from that. Do you mind if I hold you in reserve. I want to see if you... grow tentacles or something?”

The man nods “That’s fine, where do you want me to sit?”

Lucy ponders then says “Outside, on all 4s, like a guard dog.”

The man nods and strides outside

Lucy makes a note then asks “Sally, strip him, slowly, say one item of clothing per lamb tested. Let me know if he raises so much as an eyebrow.”

Sally nods.

“Oh and never tell him why.” says Lucy.

Sally grins.

*

4 centiliters of blood, 1 centiliter of cum, 1 centiliter of tears, 1 centiliter of spit,

A middle aged man steps up.

Lucy injects him.

Lucy watches as he strips naked and crawls onto his hands and knees.

Lucy makes some notes then pulls out a collar, secures it round his neck, attaches a leash and hands the leash to Sally.

Sally sighs “I’ll see that this lamb joins Laura’s flock”

*

1 centiliter of cum, 1 centiliter of piss, 1 centiliter of shit, 1 centiliter of tears, 1 centiliter of spit, 1 centiliter of blood, 1 centiliter of vomit.

A tall man steps up.

Lucy injects him.

The man starts to burn.

Lucy says “Sally, hold the fort”

Then Lucy proceeds to lead the burning man to the store cupboard.

The plump woman holds the shrunken woman in her hands and asks “Can I get out now?”

Lucy picks up the memory gun, takes the charged round out of the chamber and pockets it then loads a new blank round and hands the memory gun to the tall man. “Press the button and keep holding the gun. I’ll be back for you later, you’ll be fine.”

Lucy picks up the shrunken woman and leaves the plump woman in the darkened cupboard with the burning man.

Lucy returns to the kitchen, hands the shrunken woman to Sally, makes some notes, attaches a note to the charged memory gun clip indicating who and what it’s for then she hands the clip to Sally and says “Take these to Laura and tell her the memory gun clip is to be kept safe for when she grows full size.”

*

Lucy pulled herself out of her chair at 8am. It had taken a while but she and Sally had successfully tested all 49 basic combinations of the Albino Sylph Squirrel excretions.

Sally asked “Can we sleep now?”

“Yes honey, we can sleep.” said Lucy then she cried to the conga line coming to the kitchen “All you remaining lambs, fuck off! Get some rest.”

Lucy picked up the Albino Sylph Squirrel and the syringe and needle pack.

Sally asked “What are you going to do with it?”

Lucy shrugged “I think my room has a safe.”

Sally nodded “Should be safe in there.”

They strode out the kitchen and Sally paused beside the naked man “What about him?”

Lucy frowned and pulled out a collar and leash “I’m only doing this because I care about you okay? I am not in the business of collaring strange men.”

Lucy secures the collar round his neck and they walk to her room.

*

Lucy wakes to a knock at the door.

A svelte woman with blue hair answers the door.

“Ooh! Room service.” says the sleepy Lucy and she pulls the woman inside.

“Have a strip over there, I just need to check my notes.” Lucy flings the woman at the bed and proceeds to try and unlock her safe.

The woman coughs “Lucy, it’s me, your Queen. I was calling to ask you for breakfast?”

Lucy turns and sees that yes the woman on the bed is indeed Laura K Buzz, Queen of Butts. She blushes “I very nearly turned you into cattle so I could milk and eat you, sorry about that.”

“It’s fine” said Laura “Really. No harm, no foul. I am curious why your pet is naked on the floor and why there is a young man in the bathroom?”

“Sylphs like to be naked” said Lucy as if it explained everything.

“Right” said Laura “So I’m going to go now. Get dressed and join us, yeah?”

Lucy nodded “Will do.”

Laura hurriedly left the room.

Sally stared at Lucy and parroted mockingly “Sylphs like to be naked?”

Lucy shrugged “Well I could hardly explain that to thank you for being so loyal and obedient I decided to help you achieve orgasm, she wouldn’t understand.”

“No” said Sally “I’m not sure I understand.”

*

Jim Sterling and Gavin Dunne sat either side of Her Majesty at a round table in the hotel dining hall.

Lucy approached with Sally and the man.

Jim stared as she took a seat beside Gavin “She’s got a man now, how can she have a man?”

“I told you, Jim” said Laura “The naked man in the bathroom.”

“But I thought you meant she was having a threesome, not that he was her new pet.” said Jim.

Laura shrugged “She’s good. Weird and kind of scary, but good.”

Gavin waved “Hello.” and shook Lucy’s hand “I am the bard. Nice to meet you and your pets. Excuse my friends, they insult video games for a living, judgemental is what they do.”

“Excuse me” said Jim “I only insult video games because they keep needing to be insulted.”

“And I’m Queen” said Laura “So fuck you very much.”

Gavin laughed “Well you get my point though.”

Lucy sighed “I figured out how to turn someone into a horse, a bird, a fish person, a cow and how to switch body genders easily” then she got up to get food.

Laura stared “What?”

“It’s true” said Sally “We discovered it by accident last night. There’s one to get the body of a man and one to get the body of a woman. Best part is it’s incredibly cheap since it’s produced naturally by the Albino Sylph Squirrel and there’s no upkeep. I like the horse myself.”

The three of them sat open mouthed as they considered this. Finally Gavin said “So does that mean you could ride your girlfriend in more ways than one?”

Lucy sat down, her plate piled high with food. She said “Honey, go get your breakfast.” and Sally set off.

Gavin asked “So does she only eat when you let her?”

Lucy shrugged “She’s a sylph, it’s what they do.” then she began shoveling food into her face.

Laura looked concerned at the naked man with no food and said “You there, boy. I am the Queen and here-by order you to go get breakfast and eat it.”

The man nodded and strode off to get food.

Laura said “You know, Lucy, you really should get that man some clothes.”

Lucy shrugged “Fine.”

Sally and the man arrived back with food.

“So how did the farm go?” asked Sally as she ate.

“Oh, well.” said Laura “That’s what this is actually. Hilary, even found that if you ask nicely and give them a cuddle and a chance to rest and relax they’ll let you take internal organs. That’s how we got the intestines for the sausages and black puddings.”

Jim and Gavin started to retch.

Sally smirked.

“These sausages use internal organs from Sylphs, by which you mean drugged women?” said Jim “I just want to make sure I’m getting that entirely right?”

“Oh they’re fine.” said Laura “The girls love it. Slice ‘em open, cut the organ free, whip it out, they heal in moments and say they like it because they feel all tingly inside.”

Laura casually bit into a sausage.

Gavin said “Well I suppose so long as it’s consensual and they’re fine, it’s okay. Better than normal sausages actually.”

“Yeah but Gavin this isn’t consensual” said Jim “This is being drugged by a strange man in a street and then finding the idea of being dissected fun.”

Gavin shrugged “More consensual than farming.”

Laura pondered “Maybe we could make an entirely consensual sylph meat farm? Just be completely open with the fact that we’re going to drug them so they become obedient little lambs then milk, bleed and dissect them every day to provide food for the population and they would absolutely love it.”

“Well that would be better.” said Gavin

Laura looked to Sally “What about you, dear? I know you and Lucy are committed to each other but if I were to ask you to join the farm, would you be okay with it?”

Sally shrugged “Well I already volunteered to be a lamb, difference is this time I’d know I would live and have a great time.”

“And there you go.” said Laura “This meat is the best, most guilt free, meat there is.”

“And it tastes good.” said Gavin.

“I think I’m going to vomit.” said Jim

“So what is on the agenda for today?” asked Laura

“Well I am going to see if there is some way we can make alcohol.” said Gavin.

“I am going to drill my men to patrol the streets.” said Jim

“I am going to explain what I learned from my experiments last night.” said Lucy “And I am getting this pretty one tamed because we need a Logicio on side.”

Sally blushed.

“Are you sure?” said Laura “There are lots of other pretty women who could be used to bribe the Logicio. You don’t have to part with Sally.”

Lucy shook her head “A hundred million universes remember? I’ve got a long road ahead of me, I can’t afford to be distracted. A Logicio will know how to look after her and it is why I put myself through this.”

Laura frowned “I could look after her?”

Now Lucy stared at Laura “Somehow I doubt that is true considering your girlfriend gets antsy at a little flirting saying “Hey, here’s a woman who is going to be our pet.” probably won’t fly.”

*

Laura followed Lucy and Sally out of the Hotel and towards a makeshift stable.

Sally led the way in and patted her horse proudly “I call her Princess.”

Lucy glared at Sally “What did I say about names?”

Sally stuck her tongue out at Lucy.

Laura was silent in fascinated horror as she circled the horse with the head and chest of a human but the strong legs and hoofs of a race horse. “What do you call this? The type of Sylph I mean?”

“Thorough-bred.” said Lucy “You’ll want to get a breeding programme going so you can get some proper work animals.”

Laura stared into the Thorough-bred’s eyes “But she’s so human?” said Laura “She’s not a work animal.”

“Oh she is.” said Sally “She’s still a person, she still has hopes and dreams and fears but she is absolutely a work animal. Isn’t that right, Princess?”

“Yes.” said the Thorough-bred.

Laura gasped in shock.

“Oh please don’t be scared, my Queen.” said the Thorough-bred “I became a lamb knowing that I could be killed or dissected. I won’t lie to you, this was a shock but I think I can get used to this. This body has new hormones and new chemical rewards. I’m still adjusting and I’d like it if I could listen to the radio but I assure you that I can do this. I can be your work horse.”

Laura frowned and threw her arms around the Thorough-bred’s neck, hugging her, then she kissed her on the cheek and said “I will get a radio out here for you. Thank you.”

“Princess?” asked Sally “Would you like to give your Queen a ride to the river? You know the way don’t you?”

The Thorough-bred smiled “Oh yes, my Queen, could I?”

Laura looked instinctively to Lucy for verification then she climbed up on the back of the Thorough-bred. “Self driving horses, this is new.”

The Thorough-bred laughed as she strolled out of the stable with Laura on her back then started building up to a canter.

Laura clung to the Thorough-bred's neck for dear life but it was a thrill to feel the wind in her hair and experience the utter elation of her ride as she got to experience the fun part of being a Thorough-bred Sylph.

"Princess?" Laura asked "How would you like to be my personal mount?"

Princess squeed "Oh my god that would be so awesome! I mean you're Queen, that means cavalry charges! Imagine us charging into enemy infantry, trampling all under foot!? We would be unstoppable!"

Laura laughed at the image and then the laughter turned into a silent scream as she realised "Oh yes, I am Queen, I will have to butcher people on the field of battle. I am going to be a murderer."

*

Laura and Princess arrived at the river bank to find Lucy and Sally patiently waiting for them.

Laura asked "How did you beat us?"

"I'm fast." said Lucy

Laura studied Lucy, tall, powerful, she could believe it and that begged a question "Well maybe I should make you into a Thorough-bred Sylph? Improve the breeding stock."

Lucy grinned "I'm not sure your girlfriend would like it if I was naked, on all 4s and you were riding me?"

Laura burst out laughing at that and got off Princess.

Sally frowned and said "Actually we beat you because Princess isn't used to being a horse yet, much less being ridden and she doesn't have a saddle so what meagre speed she does have will be limited to give you a comfortable ride."

"It's alright." said Laura "I'm not going to ride your mistress Sally."

"More's the pity." muttered Lucy

Laura couldn't help smiling at that.

"Anyway." said Sally loudly "Allow me to introduce our Mermaid. Say hello Ariel."

Laura watched as a tall, lithe, woman with a strong powerful tail where her legs should be and flippers for hands, launched out of the water, breaching like a shark.

Sally went to the water's edge and Laura followed.

Sally patted the edge of the river and Ariel poked her head out.

“My Queen.” said Ariel “How good it is to see you.”

Laura reached out to wipe Ariel’s hair away from her face “Oh my poor dear, what’s happened to you?”

Ariel shrugged “I’m a mermaid now, mermaids are cool.”

Then she gestured to her neck “I’ve got these rad gills you see? Means I can stay underwater indefinitely. But I still have a nose and mouth so I can speak and breathe air.”

Laura nodded “I can see that and that’s really cool but I have one question to ask and I know it isn’t yours to answer but I need to if you don’t mind: Why? What’s the point of this?”

Ariel thought for a moment then said “Well I suppose I am a fish and that means you can have a renewable supply of consenting sushi?”

Laura stared at the mermaid in astonishment.

Lucy sighed “Laura you are supposed to be the fucking Queen of the world. Mermaids aren’t just cool, they’re useful. The British Empire was founded on the strength of its navy. As much as I commend Ariel for her willingness to reside on your dinner plate you could do so much more with her. The Americans tried to use dolphins to plant mines in World War 2 for example. You could have an underwater army of mermaids whose sole job is to damage the hulls of ships, cause them to sink and loot the wreckage. Not to mention the fact that Ariel is by her nature a fantastic swimmer and could conceivably tow a raft of survivors or even stick them all in an infinite bag and swim back to shore. She is a valuable resource.”

“And she’s pretty.” said Sally.

Lucy sighed.

Laura chuckled.

Ariel grinned “Well there you go. I’m very useful my Queen.”

“Yes.” said Laura “I think you are but let me know if ever your position irks you. I’ll do everything I can to help you. Including, if necessary, taking up your offer of sushi.”

“Thank you.” said Ariel.

Laura smiled then turned to Lucy “So where next?”

Lucy shrugged “Sally?”

Sally laughed and strode off along the river bank.

“I might take Princess.” said Laura

“Quite right too.” said Lucy “Break the old girl in.”

Laura pulled herself on top of Princess and asked “Can you possibly follow Lucy and Sally, please?”

“At once, my Queen.” said Princess as she started following the pair.

“She wants you, you know?” said Sally

Lucy shook her head “Nah, she’s got a girlfriend.”

Sally tutted “How can you be so dumn to this? You’re my mistress, you’re supposed to be an expert on sylphs yet you really don’t see it?”

“See what?” said Lucy with a laugh “We flirt but that’s all it is. Just two strangers, who think each other attractive, having a flirt.”

“She likes it when you’re in control” said Sally “You make the hard decisions, you turn people into horses and mermaids and you solve the food situation. You get things done. She likes that, how could she not?”

Lucy sighed “But that’s not a relationship, that’s a professional dynamic.”

“And you think she knows that?” asked Sally “You turn up out of nowhere, start flirting with her, take charge, seduce women to be yours at the drop of a hat and you seriously think she hasn’t assumed that she’s as much your sylph as I am?”

Lucy laughed “She doesn’t want me to be her owner.”

“Maybe not but there is some definite unresolved taming tension there and she wants you to stay. My advice is be ready and be careful. I know you have to go. I understand your mission but she doesn’t want the responsibility of making the hard decisions. She wants to be the critic admiring all the butts.” said Sally

Lucy snorted.

Laura enjoyed the view and the ride.

Princess was explaining how she worked as a cashier at Tesco.

*

They arrived as a clearing where a small figure sat.

“Welcome-” Sally boomed “-to Jurassic Budgie!”

Laura laughed.

Princess snorted.

Lucy rolled her eyes.

“I would dismount if I were you.” said Lucy “Don’t wanna spook him.”

Princess slowed to a stop so Laura could get off.

“Now he’s quite shy.” said Sally “He’s not used to being looked at so give him his personal space.”

Laura nodded “Actually I’m surprised anyone is handling the transformation well.”

Lucy sighed “Men are used to ruling the world, to be a curiosity others want to touch is not normal for them.”

Laura nodded silently.

They approached the figure and Laura could see now that it was like an old man in an anorak holding two ski poles but there were horns extending from his head.

Sally strode on ahead and announced “Charie, Charie, there’s some people to see you.”

The teradactyl turned to Sally’s voice and saw Laura and Lucy approach. “Sally?” he wheezed “I thought you’d never return. Who are these?”

Sally said “The blonde one is my owner. I’m sort of her pet, it’s a long story. The one with the blue hair is your Queen, Laura.”

“Oh?” said the teradactyl and he bowed his head as the Queen approached “I had no idea royalty would be visiting. Apologies for my appearance.”

“It’s quite alright.” said Laura “After all you became this because of me.”

The teradactyl laughed “My dear Queen, this is no sentence. I can fly. I have been granted a great gift. Come, you must let me show you?”

“I’m not entirely sure it’s safe.” said Laura

“I understand.” said the teradactyl “We cannot risk hurting royalty but you do deserve a demonstration.”

Sally grinned and started to walk round to the teradactyl’s back.

Lucy balked “Actually, Laura, I think it’s perfectly safe, why don’t you ride?”

Sally glared at Lucy.

Laura looked between the two of them and said “Actually, Lucy, has a point. If it’s safe enough for Sally, it’s safe enough for me.”

Sally trudged back towards Lucy.

Laura approached the teradactyl, climbed on to his back, gripped onto his horns and said “Okay,

Charie, lets do a nice gentle take off and landing shall we?"

"Trust me, my Queen." said the teradactyl and he started flapping his wings.

Lucy picked Sally up and carried her as she sprinted towards Princess.

The teradactyl hopped, skipped and jumped. His wings were supporting him now as he sprinted towards the ground, increasing the airflow over his wings, meaning he was encumbered less and could run faster and fly higher until... take off!

Laura gasped as they left terra firm and he banked in the air, rising ever higher as he followed the course of the river.

"Wow." said Laura

"Yup." agreed the teradactyl "And that is why I will only ever be thankful for the change I have undergone, I mean I am a man who can fly without a machine."

Laura nodded, it was truly breath-taking "Thank you, Charie, you are a valuable asset to the empire."

Charie laughed "I know. Can you just imagine a squadron of us? Perhaps with gunners on board to drop bombs or spy on enemy settlements? Highness, you have a Royal Air Force and without a single fossil fuel."

And there it was, a reminder that being Queen didn't just mean a fancy crown, servants and riches, it also meant leading people into bloody battles. It meant war. It meant death. It meant an endless river of blood on her conscience.

"Yeah." she said half heartedly "That's amazing."

Charie sighed "The weight of command getting to you, Maam?"

"No." said Laura "Just sinking in. Take us down if you please?"

"Yes, Maam!" cried Charie and he began to bank to the left, heading back along the river as he descended.

Laura watched their reflection in the water and she wondered how she'd look after she defeated the Logicios, because she would have to defeat the Logicios. Afterwards, when the United Civilisations were formed, then Laura could step back and allow democracy to return but until the Logicios were defeated she could not allow dissent and in-fighting, she had to be Queen of the World.

Charie landed by gliding into land and running along until the momentum wore off.

Laura got off, thanked him and swore she would post a garrison to look after him and grow his squadron. then she approached Lucy and stared right in her eyes. "There is just one last thing I need to see. You said you had found a way to change the gender of someone's body?"

Lucy stared right back at Laura, she seemed different, tougher, more resolute. "Yeah, I know the

mixtures. Why do you want to know?"

Laura smiled a predatory smile "Because if I say Queen Laura has the cure for body dysphoria and it doesn't change your gender identity, it changes your body to suit your identity then I will have a lot more willing soldiers."

Lucy nodded "Well I don't exactly have my equipment here but I'll mix up a couple of batches and we can test them out at dinner."

Laura raised an eyebrow "Dinner? Are you sure your pet will be okay with that?"

"Oh I'm going to trade her in for a Logicio the moment we get back actually." said Lucy "So dinner at 8? Unless your girlfriend has an issue?"

Laura shrugged "Well you know I am Queen, I think she could stomach dinner."

Lucy smiles "Excellent, I look forward to it."

"Likewise." said Laura laconically.

"Enjoy the ride back, won't you?" said Lucy

"And you, the quiet romantic stroll with your pet." said Laura.

Laura strode past and pulled herself on top of Princess, then she rode off into the distance.

"What was that about?" asked Sally?

"I don't know" said Lucy "But it's exciting, isn't it? Now come on lets get you properly tamed."

"Okay." said Sally as she started walking with Lucy back to the hotel "But I want lots of toys you understand and you better get me kibble."

Lucy laughed "Okay, you can have kibble."

*

Lucy entered the Prisoner's cell with a tall ginger woman.

"Is that the man?" asked the ginger woman.

"Yes" said Lucy "That is the man who can bend reality to his will."

"Oh." said the ginger woman and then she smiled "He's quite cute actually."

The ginger woman kissed Lucy

Lucy held her back "Amy, are you sure you want to do this?"

“Yes.” said Amy enthusiastically “Lets have a really wild time.”

The Prisoner was paying attention now.

Lucy kissed Amy on the lips.

Amy kissed Lucy back.

They started snogging, their tongues exploring the other’s teeth as their hands undressed each other.

Lucy was being very deliberate in her actions, exposing Amy’s rear.

Amy was lost to the lust and her attempts to pull Lucy’s shirt off failed.

Lucy pulled away as she pulled Amy’s shirt and bra off her body before continuing to snog her.

Amy pulled away and turned to remove her shoes as Lucy sucked at her neck and explored the contours of her body.

As Amy kicked her shoes and socks away Lucy began stimulating her where it counts.

Amy rolled back onto her front and mounted Lucy.

Lucy’s deft fingers worked miracles as she kissed and sucked at the beautiful naked woman breathing heavily on top of her.

At last Amy climaxed in blissful ecstasy.

Lucy’s left hand jabbed a needle into her right butt cheek and injected 4 centiliters of blood, 1 centiliter of cum, 1 centiliter of tears and 1 centiliter of spit.

Amy cried “Thank you!”

Lucy tossed the spent syringe away and continued kissing Amy as she turned.

After 10 seconds Lucy sucked at Amy’s neck and bit down on her jugular, tearing it open. Lucy drank greedily and plunged a knife into Amy’s chest. Lucy carved a circle out of Amy’s chest then pulled out Amy’s still beating heart and cut each of the veins and arteries carefully before eating it bite by bite and swallowing it down.

Lucy whispered “On the floor, there’s a good girl.”

Amy climbed off the bench and stood on all 4s between the prisoner and Lucy.

Sally ran up with a gas powered stove, a couple of plates, a spatula, a frying pan and a rather large knife. She positioned the stove behind Amy and left the plates, frying pain and spatula there as she went to cut the Prisoner free.

“Nice show.” said the Logicio “I assume it was all arranged beforehand?”

“Entirely.” said Lucy with a smile as she proceeded to milk Amy to get some fat for the pan “Slice of arse or are you more of a breast man?”

“Arse is good.” said the Logicio.

“Excellent.” said Lucy as she carved Amy’s arse and fried the slices in her milk “I do like a bit of arse myself. I’ve been thinking of writing a book, the big book of Arses.”

“I imagine it would sell well.” said the Logicio as she watched Lucy fry Amy’s arse.

“The question is-” said Lucy as she plated up the fried arse cheeks “- will you be in that book?”

The Logicio smirked “No carrot without a stick, right?”

“Exactly.” said Lucy before biting into Amy’s arse.

The Logicio chewed Amy’s arse silently, sizing up Lucy and Sally “The question is how much carrot are you willing to give me? We both know this was just the appetiser.”

“You’re good.” said Lucy “Which is exactly why I made a deal. You see I promised these people I would help them in any way I can. Now I can trust you about half as far as I can throw you but I need your knowledge and I need your seghat. We could play good cop, bad cop or you could be my chauffeur as I inspire rebellion and loyalty to Laura, Queen of Butts. It could take months...”

The Logicio cackled “Months of you depending on me and me with my freedom and Seghat. You’d be putty in my hands.”

Lucy stared into the Logicio’s eyes “I will be entirely at your mercy.”

The Logicio sat back smiling “I want the girl.”

“What girl?” asked Lucy

“The little dyke who was waiting patiently for you to finish fucking dinner,” said the Logicio.

“She isn’t on offer.” said Lucy, tranquil fury in her voice.

“I want her to burn.” said the Logicio “And I want her to be my sylph to do with as I wish.”

Lucy shook her head “What’s the matter? Do you not like blondes? I can dye my hair.”

“I want her and I want you.” said the Logicio “And I want a girl in every port.”

Lucy spat “Viscous cunt!”

The Logicio sat back, content and smug “What was it you wanted to know?”

“How to use a quantum oscillator?” said Lucy reluctantly.

“I assume you have a memory gun?” said the Logicio.

Lucy nodded and handed over the gun.

The Logicio grinned and loaded a cartridge with the requisite knowledge.

The Logicio pointed the gun right between Lucy’s eyes.

Lucy shut her eyes.

The gun fired.

The Logicio cackled.

Lucy opened her eyes.

The Logicio handed Lucy her memory gun back. “Go get your girl’s memories, all of them. The moment you go, I burn her.”

Lucy was shaking as she staggered over to Sally.

Sally took the primed memory gun and charged up a memory gun round with an entire life’s worth of memories.

There were tears running down Lucy’s face as she kissed Sally goodbye.

The Logicio reached a finger into his arse and pulled out an infinite bag. In it he found a spare suit including memory gun, quantum oscillator, sylph pills, collars and bikinis.

Sally watched as the Logicio changed into his spare suit, pulled out a sylph pill and held it before her so he could gloat “I am going to flay the skin from your precious lover and she is going to love it.”

Sally opened her palm and accepted the sylph pill. She crunched it and swallowed. Then she started to feel just a little warm...

*

Lucy entered the restaurant in a glamorous little black dress.

Laura wore her usual casual wear and Eve looked as if she hadn’t bothered at all.

“You’re dressed very smartly.” said Laura, admiring Lucy’s figure in the dress.

“Thanks.” said Lucy “I spotted someone who would make the perfect Thorough-bred and they so very kindly let me have this dress. Where are we sitting?”

“Follow me.” said Eve.

The trio headed to a secluded table for 4 and Lucy let Laura decide where to sit before sitting opposite, with her back to the restaurant as it turned out.

The waiter arrived and they ordered drinks.

As they waited Laura asked “How did your meeting with the Logicio go?”

“Oh, he was putty in my hands.” said Lucy “I played him like a violin, I did and Sally is getting tamed as we speak.”

“Good.” said Laura honestly and she smiled warmly at Lucy.

The drinks arrived “And a pint of fresh blood for the lady in the little black dress.” said the waiter.

Laura stared “You ordered blood?”

Eve scowled “You’re just showing off now aren’t you?”

Lucy shook her head “Actually blood is now a more renewable resource than water and Sylph blood tastes fantastic, plus it’s the blood of an immortal, it’s good for you.”

“Well drink it then?” said Eve

“Bottoms up.” said Lucy and she downed a quarter of it. The blood forming a red moustache on her upper lip.

“Wow.” said Eve

Laura stared at the pint of blood.

Eve caught Laura’s gaze and said “No. You are not drinking blood.”

“But it’s a weird thing?” said Laura “I can’t not try the weird thing.”

Eve said “You can’t, it’s blood from people.”

“It’s alright.” said Lucy “It’s not going to turn you into a vampire or anything.”

“I’m trying the weird thing” said Laura and she reached forward, lifted up Lucy’s pint glass and took a large gulp. “It’s nice. Quite viscous, like cough syrup, but nice.”

A moment later she said “Quite the kick too.”

“Well the sylph’s blood contains all kinds of stimulants to make them feel good about being eaten and drunk, when you drink their blood, you experience a tiny fraction of their pleasure.” said Lucy

Laura had another gulp “Yeah, I can tell. This is good shit.”

Lucy chuckled at that.

Eve took the glass “Well okay then I’m gonna have to try it now.”

Eve took a tiny sip “It’s heaven, sheer liquid heaven.”

Now Laura laughed.

The waiter arrived “What would you like to eat?”

“I’ll have the breasts and ribs combo with sausages and bacon.” said Lucy.

“I’ll have the lasagna.” said Laura.

“Salad for me, thanks.” said Eve.

“Oh and a pint of blood please?” said Laura.

“Actually, a half pint for me?” said Eve.

“And you, naked or as good as, after you’ve let them know our orders, perhaps when you’re delivering the blood?” asked Lucy.

Laura and Eve stared at Lucy.

The waiter swallowed and said “I’m kind of needed in the restaurant and well I, umm, I quite like living and not being a farm animal.”

“It’s okay.” said Lucy “I promise I will have you back in one piece to continue your shift.”

The waiter frowned then said “Okay but please be gentle.”

Lucy nodded “I promise.”

The waiter left to deliver the order.

“You’re getting a reputation.” said Laura

Lucy laughed.

The waiter arrived with the drinks and he wore nothing but his boxer shorts.

“I do like a place with quick table service.” said Eve.

The waiter smiled awkwardly and handed Laura and Eve their drinks then he sat down beside Lucy “So umm what do you want to do with me?” he asked.

“Be still and shut up.” said Lucy “You are a prop.”

Laura clicked her fingers as the penny dropped “This is the demonstration isn’t it?”

“Yes.” said Lucy with a smile.

“Demonstration of what?” asked Eve

“This.” said Lucy as she injected 5 centiliters of cum, 1 centiliter of tears and 1 centiliter of blood into the waiter.

Laura and Eve watched as the tall skinny waiter became a slightly shorter and skinnier waitress.

“You’ve gone and fucking done it.” said Laura “The op in a syringe.”

“Oh this is better than the op.” said Lucy “Complete genetic rewrite with all the same memories. Thanks to my handy dandy formula, this man could now be a mother if he wanted to.”

The waiter’s face contorted in fear.

“And of course.” said Lucy “It is completely reversable by way of the counterpart solution.” She hit him with 5 centiliters of cum, 1 centiliter of vomit and 1 centiliter of blood.

His body returned to the way he had it before.

Eve asked “What happens if you go through the change when you’re pregnant?”

Lucy shot a curious look at Laura “My advice would be don’t risk finding out.”

Eve sighed “Probably quite a good answer that.”

“Anyway...” said Lucy “I think I better escort this kind gentleman to his clothes. I’ll just leave these spare M to F syringes lying around, make sure nobody takes them.”

“Of course.” said Laura

“Brownies Honour” said Eve

Lucy and the waiter left the table.

*

Lucy returned to find a syringe missing and quite deliberately didn’t mention it as she packed away the remaining syringe.

“So what did you think of the demonstration?” asked Lucy casually.

“Oh fantastic.” said Laura.

“That thing’s going to improve a lot of people’s lives.” said Eve.

Lucy nodded “Quite remarkable really. I was actually looking for a way to make, well the one Sally’s

getting done. Actually that reminds me, that poor woman has been stuck in that cupboard for 2 days now.”

“I’ll have her picked up in the morning.” said Laura “She can choose whether she wants to be a mermaid, a horse or a teradactyl.”

Lucy smirked “You know you’re getting better at this Queen lark.”

“You really think so?” asked Laura.

“We wouldn’t be having dinner now if you weren’t.” said Lucy.

“Actually we’re having dinner now because I love my Laura and I know that she would be distraught if she did not get a chance to properly see your butt before you go. So just to let you know, when we’re finished here Laura is going to strip you naked and I am going to walk you to our room on a leash.” said Eve.

“Well that’s a pleasant surprise.” said Lucy.

“I trust you can actually take orders and not just give them.” said Eve pointedly.

“Oh I think I can take orders from a Queen.” said Lucy with a wry smile.

Laura blushed.

The waiter, dressed again, arrived with the food.

Lucy dug in to her food with gusto and Laura and Eve decided to leave the conversation until after food had been shovelled into people’s mouths.

*

The waiter arrived to take away their plates and asked “Will you be having any sweets?”

“Yes please.” said Laura “2 vanilla ice creams and a latte.”

The waiter nodded and left with the plates.

“Now.” said Laura “The fun begins.”

Lucy swallowed nervously.

Laura scooted past Eve to sit beside Lucy.

Lucy asked “So this is really happening?”

Eve nodded “I made a promise to Laura, I intend to stick to it. Of course you can say no...”

Lucy smiled “So what’s the game plan here, Laura?”

“You eat your ice cream.” said Laura “I have my fun.”

“Okay.” said Lucy “I can work with that.”

The waiter arrived with the ice cream and deserts. “Er, why have you changed places?”

“There’s going to be a show.” said Laura “You’re free to watch.”

The waiter practically ran away from the table.

“And begin.” said Eve

Lucy picked up her spoon, dug into her ice cream and pulled a sliver free. She studied the icecream for a moment then ate it.

Laura pulled down the zip of Lucy’s little black dress.

Lucy take another spoonful of ice cream.

Laura pulled Lucy’s dress free of her arse.

Lucy took another spoonful of ice cream.

Laura pulled Lucy’s dress up over her head and tossed it to Eve.

Lucy took another spoonful of ice cream.

Laura unfastened the clip on Lucy’s bra and lifted it up over her head before once again tossing it to Eve.

Lucy asked “Are you going to eat your ice cream?”

“Yes.” said Laura “But I want to strip you first.”

Lucy sighed “It’ll melt, I won’t.”

Eve sipped her coffee and enjoyed the show.

Laura said “Bit early to be saying that?”

Lucy had another scoop of ice cream.

Laura pulled Lucy’s knickers down to her knees.

Lucy enjoyed another scoop of ice cream.

Laura got off her chair and crawled under the table.

Lucy sighed as she ate another scoop of ice cream.

Laura pulled Lucy's shoes off her feet.

Lucy stared at Laura's uneaten, slowly melting icecream and sighed.

Laura pulled Lucy's stockings off her feet.

Lucy said "I'm eating your ice cream."

"No!" cried Laura and she got back in her seat and started furiously eating her ice cream.

Lucy snorted.

"This is my ice cream." said Laura petulantly before a wave of cold hit her brain "Ow! Brain freeze."

Lucy said "I have faced robots and gods. I have stared down Logicios and been shot. I have liberated women from concentration camps and men from reeducation centres. I have stormed fortresses and liberated prisoners and now I am getting a dressing down by a Queen who has yet to grasp that cold things need to be enjoyed with care."

Laura said "Yeah, well, your knickers are nearly off."

Eve snorted with laughter.

Lucy looked at Laura "One kiss?"

"No." said Laura "You are my Sylph. It wouldn't be right."

Then Laura crawled back under the table and pulled Lucy's knickers off.

When Laura emerged, it was with a triumphant smile on her face.

Eve pulled a collar and leash out of her purse.

Now Lucy's blood started racing.

Eve secured the collar round Lucy's neck and the leash to the collar.

"Finish your ice cream, there's a good girl." said Eve.

When the waiter arrived for the bill, Laura said "I'm Queen so I'm not paying."

The waiter noticed that the woman who had casually changed his gender for demonstration purposes was now naked on the end of a leash and decided he would not fight this one.

Laura and Eve led Lucy to their bedroom.

*

The next morning Lucy stood, posing, as Laura filmed her with her smartphone “Oh yeah. That is some great butt action.”

Lucy laughed “You know Laura you are delightfully absurd, you’re like the Mighty Boosh meets Men Behaving Badly meets Boudicca and Jesus Christ”

“Which is saying something considering you’ve met actual gods.” said Laura with more than a note of suspicion in her voice.

Lucy turned around and spread her legs wide “I meant you’re moral. You’re insane, dirty, commanding and far more moral than a guy who decides to turn up in the last act to bring about the apocalypse.”

Laura laughs “I’ll have to put that on the propaganda. The Prophet of the Lord says: More moral than Jesus.”

Lucy smirks.

The door slams shut.

Eve coughs.

“And now for the close up.” says Laura as she gets up off the bed and starts moving towards Lucy.

Eve silently reveals a leather jacket, jeans and sturdy walking boots.

Lucy grins and gives her a thumbs up.

“I wish you could stay.” said Laura finally as her camera leered at Lucy’s breasts.

“So do I.” said Lucy “I always do. Unfortunately the world is a big place and I need to help you by spreading the message of Laura, Queen of Butts, elsewhere, plus you know a hundred million universes need my help.”

Laura said “Well come and visit yeah? When peace has been made?”

Lucy nodded “Oh I am definitely coming back. Apart from anything else, I need to tell your kids about the time Mummy flew.”

Laura said curiously “Kids?”

“Well...” said Lucy “Nothing to stop you becoming a male for conception and reverting to female afterwards. Just a thought.”

Eve looked at Laura in a new light.

“I better go.” said Lucy “I have one more miracle to perform.”

Gavin was rocking out on stage with one of his favourite songs. He reached the crescendo and the crowd cheered. He bowed and left the stage.

He went to his dressing room and found Lucy reclining in a chair with his girlfriend waiting on her lap.

“I got bored.” explained Lucy “Don’t worry she’s not drugged or anything. I’m just that good.”

Gavin stared “Okay this has to be a wind up.”

“Told you he wouldn’t fall for it.” said Gavin’s girlfriend.

Lucy sighed “Fine, get dressed. Or not. I don’t know what you do after your... gigs is it?”

Gavin’s girlfriend sheepishly retreated to a corner to get dressed.

Gavin was furious “You realise I want to punch you now?”

Lucy laughed “I really wouldn’t recommend it. Anyway I came here to give you a gift.”

“The gift of rage?” asked Gavin.

Lucy held up a Quantum Oscillator and let the steel in her voice glimmer “Someone I care about a great deal had to burn so I could get this knowledge to you. I had to copy their entire life’s memories then shoot myself with the copy so I could extract the knowledge from them.”

Gavin was mollified, it made sense now. Lucy had spooked him so he would understand what she felt. “Well what is it then?”

Lucy shrugged “In simple terms it vibrates the strings of logic that decide reality in universes. What this means though is that you are a wizard, Gavin.”

Gavin took the small metal wand as Lucy explained “With this wand you can move things at a distance, rewrite people’s minds, create wormholes and time tunnels. You could create life from dust and render planets unto ash in seconds. With this wand and the knowledge to wield it you become as powerful as a god.”

“Then why give it to me?” asked Gavin “Jim’s in charge of security and Laura’s Queen. They deserve it more than me. I’m just the morale officer.”

“And that is exactly why you should take it.” said Lucy “With a weapon this powerful even Laura might break reality for the greater good but you? You have an important but pacifistic job, you stop rebellion and revolution by making the people happy. You can learn to use this as a tool for good and if the time comes when Laura needs a magical nuke on her side then her faithful bard will have the training and experience to remain calm and not do more than is absolutely necessary.”

“So what happens then?” asked Gavin

Lucy smiled and shot Gavin right in the eyes.

Gavin blinked “Well that was weird.”

“By the way - ” said Lucy “- it also has a vibrate setting.” With that Lucy left the room.

Gavin held the small metallic wand and looked at his naked girlfriend with interest and curiosity as an idea occurred to him.

*

Lucy found Jim enjoying a pint of blood with ribs, breast, rump steak and bacon.

“Oh, you’re here.” said Jim “Come to turn me into a toad or something?”

“Actually I’m here to say goodbye.” said Lucy.

Jim felt like a dick now “Oh well, sorry about that. I know we haven’t exactly got on because you are fucking terrifying but you have helped the Queendom no end. I just wish we had more carbohydrates in our diet.”

Lucy said “Yeah I was thinking about that, you’ve got sylphs right? And you can obviously harvest organs and bones from them?”

“Yeah.” said Jim “Hence my lunch.”

“And Heathrow Airport is standing disused just nearby” said Lucy “Equip work parties with basic bone tools and starts chipping away at it. Until you make headway you can grow basic crops in the shit the sylphs produce.”

“Yeah” said Jim chewing on a bit of steak “Shit is fertiliser after all isn’t it?”

“Exactly my good man.” said Lucy.

“Well cheers for that, I’ll get working on it right away.” said Jim “But I’m guessing you didn’t just come here to say that?”

“No.” said Lucy “I came here to warn you that every universe has a Farsh-nuke. What with all the Logicios and sylphs running around, the Farsh-nuke of this universe is bound to be active and you have to be ready.”

“How?” asked Jim

“The Farsh-nuke is a weapon.” said Lucy “If you keep him well fed and satisfy his addiction to taming women he can be aimed to do your bidding and prove a valuable asset but you must always be able to kill him and whatever you do do not let him talk to Laura. Laura’s a strong woman but that only attracts the Farsh-nuke more. He will worm his way under her skin and tame her. You have to prevent that.”

Jim nodded “Scout’s Honour.”

“Swear to the gods Jim. This needs to be written into your soul so the Farsh-nuke will see it and concentrate on you” said Lucy

Jim raised the four fingers of his right hand to his head and said “I, Jim Fucking Sterling Son, do hereby decree that I will do anything to prevent Laura, Queen of Butts, being tamed by the Farsh-nuke and if I should fail may I be rendered unto shit by the great gods of reality.”

“Thank you.” said Lucy and she kissed Jim on the cheek before leaving.

Jim stared as the feeling of Lucy’s lips lingered on his cheek, wondering if he had missed a golden opportunity, and then he shrugged and ate some breast.

*

Lucy entered the Logicio’s prison cell to find a mahogany door standing in the middle of the room.

The Logicio opened the door and Lucy saw a large art deco room beyond with a mushroom shaped center console.

“Come into my Seghat.” said the Logicio.

“Said the spider to the fly.” said Lucy

The Logicio laughed and held up a hamster cage.

Lucy saw the small naked figure of Sally contained within, she entered the seghat.

The mahogany door closed and with a great stammering Sh! it faded from existence.

*

Six weeks passed and during that time a proper sylph shit plant farm was set up. The RAF grew to 30 teradactyls. The Cavalry force grew by 60. The Mermaid Navy grew to 20. The special sylphs who had burned as they shrunk were now nearly up to size again. Jim’s security forces were now kitted out with syringes so that any difficult customers were added to the farm stock. Ivana’s military were now using bone swords and clubs. Gavin had become quite good at using the Quantum Oscillator for cheap tricks. Eve was now pregnant and Laura had succeeded in taking over London. The workforces trying to break through the tarmac at Heathrow Airport were not having much luck though.

“That’s going to be the death of us.” said Jim “We can’t break through concrete. We are fucked if our enemy takes any kind of defensive measure that isn’t using people as shields.”

Laura was more positive “I don’t know, I mean we’re offering free food to everyone, we’ve got the pill to allow people to change genitalia whenever they like and Gavin is just fucking awesome. I don’t think we’re going to need advanced weaponry.”

“Yeah but we are supposed to fight the Logicios.” said Gavin “And sooner or later the power is going to go out and then we are fucked. Right back to the stone age.”

“The internet is going to die.” said Jim “That is fucking terrifying.”

“Well we own London right?” said Laura “Lot of smart people in London, lot of waste and metal too, not to mention a lot of solar panels and wind turbines. We tell them, our royal smart people, to take whatever they can scavenge and turn it to generating more electricity. We’re talking wind turbines, incinerators, get the sylphs getting their daily exercise on bikes to provide electricity, heck while we’re at it lets start up some carbon fuel power stations too. Climate change doesn’t mean shit if we know there’s a multiverse that will come to save us when we beat off the Logicios. Simple, job done. Good bit of queenyness.”

“Yeah but everything is so connected nowadays.” said Gavin “Nowhere just makes anything, everywhere is dependent on everywhere else and that entire infrastructure is just dead or dying.”

“Then our Royal Smart People will get on it.” said Laura “It’ll be fine just chill alright. I’m Queen, I’ve got this.”

*

Jim was out patrolling when he heard a voice cry out “Jim!”

Jim looked around himself nervously, figuring out places to run and hide.

“Jim Sterling!”

Jim figured it was coming from behind him and turned to look in that direction. A small figure was running towards him “Jim! Fucking!! Sterling!!! Son!!!!”

Jim could see what the man looked like now, he wore a bedraggled 3 piece suit and a fedora. And he was running at Jim.

“Yes! Hello!” cried Jim, readying his bone club.

The man stopped within a hundred metres and held his hands up “Sorry, if I spooked you.”

“How did you see me?” asked Jim, not ready to put away the club yet.

“It’s a long story.” said the strange man “I feel I should introduce myself.”

“Well that is how my meetings with fans normally go.” said Jim.

“And believe me I am a fan. Fistshark marketing, oh it does crack me up and Conrad Zimmerman? That man has such a sexy voice and such a cool name.” said the man.

“Your name?” said Jim, more sternly now.

“The Farsh-nuke!” cried the man and he charged at Jim, knocking him flat.

Jim braced for the hard slap and crack of a bad fall onto tarmac but no such sensation came. He opened

his eyes, all he saw was green. An infinite endless canvas of green. It was like the ocean or space but green.

The Farsh-nuke pulled Jim to his feet and Jim screamed when he realised nothing was supporting him.

“Where the fuck are we!?” asked Jim desperately.

“Welcome to the Nothingness, Mr Sterling.” said the Farsh-nuke grandly “This is the space between the universes. This is what lies outside of your thin bubble of reality.”

“But Laura needs me?” said Jim “Gavin needs me. I’ve got a bloody Jimquisition to make.”

“I’ll take you back, don’t worry.” said the Farsh-nuke “I just wanted to show you I was legit.”

“So how is this happening?” asked Jim “Or will knowing send me mad?”

The Farsh-nuke chuckled “Logic, Jim, that’s how this works. Every thinking being exudes logic that I can see like an aura. Your logic tells you that down is ground and that since you didn’t fall, it must still be ground.”

“And that’s how you found me?” said Jim “You saw my aura?”

“Yes and no.” said the Farsh-nuke “I saw her aura, that of the Great Prophetess. Lucy Dance’s aura is writ large throughout the multiverse, especially our tiny pocket of it and there are BIG plans for her. She made you swear an oath of allegiance that I wouldn’t tame Laura, Queen of Mirth, but she didn’t count on 2 things 1. I am technically speaking a non-gendered sapient universe soul bonded with a gay man called Frederick Hanson in this incarnation so there is no way in the entire Great Green Nothingness that I would ever fuck with someone who has stared into the long dark tea time of gender identity and 2. A man who swears to do anything to protect another to the Great Prophetess is lit up like a christmas tree. You are a mighty champion Jim Sterling, I cannot help but recognise that and seek you out so I might offer my services.”

Jim blinked and they were back in London.

“I still don’t trust you.” said Jim

“I should hope not, you swore before the Great Prophetess.” said the Farsh-nuke with a wry smile “But nonetheless how may I help you?”

Jim asked “What do you know about explosives?”

“You do realise nuke is literally my name?” said the Farsh-nuke with a chuckle.

“Okay.” said Jim “You can come but if you so much as flirt with the Queen I am beating you until you scream.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded “That seems like a very sensible idea.”

The Farsh-nuke walked with Jim back to the hotel and admired the teradactyls, mermaids and Thorough-breds as he passed them.

As they entered the hotel a short brunette passed by and the Farsh-nuke raised his fedora to her.

She paused and turned to look at him “Do you seriously have a fedora on your head? You know they are like the international symbol of a misogynistic douchebag?”

“Why thank you.” said the Farsh-nuke “Believe me I chose it very deliberately. Lets my prey have a sporting chance to run before I collar them.”

“Creepy.” said the woman and she strode on.

Jim stared at him “Did you mean that?”

The Farsh-nuke shrugged and entered the building.

Jim knocked on the door of the throne room then entered.

The Farsh-nuke followed.

Laura was sitting in her office chair as two women made love to each other on the table before her.

“Bad time?” asked Jim.

“Oh no.” said Laura “I just got chatting to this couple and they expressed their wish to have sex in front of me and I thought fuck it, it kills half an hour. Who is this?”

The Farsh-nuke removed his fedora and went down on bended knee before Laura “I am the Farsh-nuke, oh Queen of Mirth.”

Laura stared “THE Farsh-nuke?”

“A Farsh-nuke” said the Farsh-nuke.

“And why are you here?” asked Laura.

“I think I can help. I wish to serve you.” said the Farsh-nuke.

“Okay.” said Laura and she removed a collar from her pocket “Then I dub you legally my property.”

Laura secured the collar around the Farsh-nuke’s neck and said “Now, go make us some explosives.”

“At once your majesty.” said the Farsh-nuke and so saying he turned and walked out of the room.

Jim raised an eyebrow “You keep collars in your pockets now?”

“I’m Queen” said Laura “I have maids, I get hungry.”

Jim stared at Laura then sighed and walked out of the room.

When they were outside the Farsh-nuke said “I need to see your farm.”

Jim said “You, in a room full of naked, hopelessly submissive and obedient women? Yeah, not going to happen.”

*

The Farsh-nuke strode into the farm and was overwhelmed by the aromas and auras. A fuckton of sylphs stood on their hands and knees as men and women walked through them slicing them, milking them, bleeding them and removing their bones, even their shit was shovelled up and carried away.

“Oh yeah.” said the Farsh-nuke “Smell that?”

Jim held a hanky over his nose and mouth as he said “I’m trying not to, mate.”

“That is explosives.” said the Farsh-nuke “Methane and other noxious gasses, we just need to get that and distill it down.”

“We need the shit for the farm.” said Jim “And besides it’s fucking dangerous.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “We’ll have to start smaller.”

“How?” asked Jim.

“I need an Albino Sylph Squirrel and Lucy’s notes.” said the Farsh-nuke.

*

The Farsh-nuke and Jim each had a pint of blood to drink as they looked over Lucy’s notes in a set aside laboratory.

The Farsh-nuke wondered aloud “Why would they include the gender transistions?”

Jim glared at the Farsh-nuke “Are you seriously asking why someone would want to help people with dysphoria?”

“No.” said the Farsh-nuke, rising out of his chair and starting to pace the room “I’m saying that the Albino Sylph Squirrel was designed by a dying race to be their key to survival by letting them achieve a state of perfect exploitability. The people with this level of technology would no doubt already have the ability to transcend the gender binary. This is their last message to creation, their last desperate hope of survival. So why would they include the gender transistion potions?”

“Because they’re nice and they wanted to fling a light into the future?” suggested Jim.

“Good idea but wrong trajectory. I need to do some tests.” said the Farsh-nuke.

The Farsh-nuke mixed up about thirty potions and left the room.

When he returned he said “I think I might have it.”

“Well go on then?” said Jim.

“The potions don’t just force a complete genetic rewrite. They leave the soul, the literal logical signifier and all your memories in tact. You change utterly and yet the person you are remains exactly the same.” said the Farsh-nuke.

“Yes, we know that.” said Jim.

“So why include it if you weren’t planning to make use of that ability.” said the Farsh-nuke “I think this is a cure.”

Jim stared at him “You are kidding?”

“It’s only a hypothesis.” said the Farsh-nuke “But give me half an hour.”

Jim stared as he left.

The Farsh-nuke returned with a beautiful brunette on his arm. “This is Anna. Jim, say hello.”

Jim waved “Hi.”

“This is really exciting.” said Anna “An actual god?”

“I know.” said Jim “It’s unbelievable isn’t it?”

“And check out that arse?” said Anna

Jim nodded “Hmm...”

“Anna is going to be our little test subject.” said the Farsh-nuke “I am going to turn her into one of the cattle...”

Anna giggled remembering the next part “And then I’m going to strip naked and be all submissive and obedient...”

The Farsh-nuke smiled and stroked Anna’s cheek with fondness “Then I am going to remove and destroy Anna’s brain.”

“At that point, if he’s wrong, I die.” said Anna casually “But lets face it the Logicios are coming so that’s no biggie.”

“And if I’m right-” said the Farsh-nuke with a smile “-I will dose you with the transition to female pill and you will be back to normal.”

“And I will be free to go about my life.” said Anna.

“Or accept a collar and become my pet?” said the Farsh-nuke hopefully.

“Or I could do that?” said Anna and she giggled “You want to pet me.”

The Farsh-nuke blushed.

“Go on, just a stroke.” said Anna.

The Farsh-nuke tentatively stroked Anna’s head and grinned childishly.

Jim stared at the Farsh-nuke “What I don’t get is why you have to destroy her brain?”

Anna shrugged and whipered “Keep stroking.”

The Farsh-nuke explained “You are your body. If I gave you female sex organs and dumped female sex hormones into your body you would come to feel and act like a woman but you would still know, in your soul, that you weren’t what you should be. Equally I could perform surgery on a sylph to return them to human basic and over time they would come to feel and act like a person but inside they would still be a sylph.

Now we already know that Sylphs break the laws of reality so what I want to know is will the cure restore the soul to the way it should be. Anna probably wouldn’t actually die if I was wrong but there would be no way any latent biology could reassert itself after the genetic reset and so give a false positive. meaning that when Anna was restored to human basic she would still have the mind of a sylph.”

“Effectively brain dead.” said Anna.

“And you’re okay with this?” said Jim “Really? I can call him off if you want?”

Anna shrugged “I’ve got a degree in performing arts and we are now apparently a Queendom looking to take over the world. What the fuck else am I going to do with your life?”

Jim sighed “Fine. You do you.”

Anna smiled “Ready?”

The Farsh-nuke looked into her face and said “Yeah, are you? Don’t want any last words? A last supper? A last orgasm?”

“Nah.” said Anna “Good luck. I mean if this goes wrong you’re the poor bugger who has to stick around and deal with the consequences.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded “I’ll be fine.” then he handed her a glass of disgusting looking and smelling liquid.

“Bottoms up.” said Anna and she chugged it.

“Can I have something to wash it down and clear out my mouth?” asked Anna.

The Farsh-nuke handed her his pint of blood.

She glugged it down greedily then licked her lips. She handed the glass back and sighed “Feel a bit awkward now. Just sort of standing here, waiting to turn into a sylph and have my brains bashed out. Anybody here play video games?”

Jim grinned “Yeah, yeah you could say that. I only fucking review them for a living. Jim Fucking Sterling Son, pleased to meet you.”

“Anna Guinevere Johnson, pleased to meet you.” said Anna.

They shook hands.

The Farsh-nuke watched Anna and silently counted in his head.

Anna began “See I really liked Metal Gear Solid right but...”

“But Konami can eat a box of dicks because they treat their staff like shit and they fuck up beloved franchises because all they care about are pachinko machines.” finished Jim Sterling.

“Exactly.” said Anna “I mean they keep bringing Hideo Kojima back, only to piss him off again. Just let the series die.”

“Well exactly.” said Jim “Do you play any other games?”

“I’m partial to CSGO, Battlefield... Oh and Mass Effect is awesome, except the ending and fuck their dlc practices.” said Anna.

Jim stared “Oh she is awesome. Keep her.”

The Farsh-nuke finished counting and studied Anna.

“Sorry gents.” said Anna “I think this is goodbye. It’s been a pleasure.” then a goofy grin slid across her face and she turned to the Farsh-nuke “I feel hot, Master.”

“I can help you with that.” said the Farsh-nuke and he began to undress Anna.

Jim turned to stare at the wall and hummed his theme tune to himself so he didn’t overhear what was going on.

When Anna was completely naked and standing on all 4s before him the Farsh-nuke sliced off a bit of her arse and watched. When he saw Anna’s arse heal he knew she had properly turned. “Jim, you might want to leave the room. Grab some fresh air, go for a walk, have a drink.”

Jim nodded “I think you might just possibly be right.”

Jim Sterling got up and left the room.

The Farsh-nuke picked up his tools and set to work. He used a hammer and chisel to crack the skull in a circle, then he used a knife to cut through anything, aside from the bone itself, that might hold the top of the skull in place. Then he cantilevered the top of the skull off Anna's head, exposing her brain.

She nuzzled him and the Farsh-nuke remembered that he needed to be quick lest her body heal and set him back in his progress. He ran the long thin flexible knife around the inside of her skull and felt sick. Then he stabbed at her brain with his chisel and pulled. It was caught of course so the Farsh-nuke cut away at anything that might be holding Anna's brain inside her skull until at last he pulled it free. He swiftly placed the top of Anna's skull back on her head. Now he wanted her to heal.

A stupid part of the Farsh-nuke considered taking a selfie with the brain to show Anna later but no, there was a job to be done. He had to destroy the brain. He had a mincer with him, for making sausages. He didn't think twice. The brain was minced but that wasn't enough. Sylphs could heal beyond the capacity ascribed by physics.

The Farsh-nuke took the minced brain into the kitchen and charred it under the stove, then he smashed the blackened detritus with a rolling pin until only ash and dust remained of Anna's brain.

The Farsh-nuke returned to his laboratory and saw that Anna's skull had indeed healed. Now he had a quandary, when would he know Anna's body had grown a new brain?

He stroked her face and asked her "Hey girl, how do you feel?"

Anna shrugged "Alright, Master, did you get what you wanted out of my head?"

"Yes." said the Farsh-nuke "But I can't do what I want with you until I know everything's okay in there."

"Then have another look." said Anna "I don't mind."

The Farsh-nuke smiled sadly "No, you really don't do you?"

"Something wrong?" asked Anna.

The Farsh-nuke shrugged "Just conscience. It's fine."

The Farsh-nuke went to the bar and ordered a tumbler of whisky.

A man next to the Farsh-nuke at the bar said "Nice Fedora."

"Thank you." said the Farsh-nuke "Apparently because dicks are associated with it I am not allowed to wear it."

The man said "That is so mean. Come, you must drink with us, it's Erik's birthday."

The Farsh-nuke sighed "Fine but I should warn you I can get a little impulsive when I drink."

"Oh come on, it'll be fine." said the man.

*

The Farsh-nuke entered his laboratory with the man. They were snogging each other and tearing at each other's clothes.

The man asked "Where is there a naked woman in your room?"

"I'm gay but I keep women as pets." said the Farsh-nuke.

"Fair enough." said the man as he turned his rear on the Farsh-nuke and started grinding.

*

Jim Sterling returned to find the Farsh-nuke and the man passed out half naked on the floor.

Jim coughed "Been busy I see."

"I'll find you." said the Farsh-nuke as the man gathered up his clothes and ran off.

Jim stared at the Farsh-nuke.

"It's hard okay?" said the Farsh-nuke "You try destroying the brain of someone you consider a beloved pet? It is not easy."

"Whatever." said Jim "Just finish the job and put some fucking pants on."

The Farsh-nuke sighed and got dressed then he mixed a fresh female genetic reset and held it before Anna "Anna, honeybean, drink this. It'll make you feel better."

Anna drank the potion.

The Farsh-nuke silently counted down in his head as he stroked Anna's head. When the count reached zero he announced "This is it. Time's up. The potion should have taken affect by now. This is when we find out if I have just murdered a very cute woman I should have liked to look after."

Anna blinked, she stretched and felt a horrible taste in her mouth "Can I have some blood please? I can still taste the potion."

Jim handed Anna his drink.

"Thank you" said Anna and she sat on her arse to drink.

The Farsh-nuke started to cry.

Anna handed the drink back to Jim and stood up so she could hug the Farsh-nuke "Hey what's wrong, buddy?"

"I thought I killed you." said the Farsh-nuke.

“Well you didn’t.” said Anna “You found the cure. Now dry your eyes and collar me.”

The Farsh-nuke pulled a hanky from his pocket and blew his nose, then with a different hanky he wiped away the tears. He pulled out a collar and secured it round her neck.

“See now, that’s better.” said Anna “You get a new pet, I don’t have to work again and Jim has someone to talk video games with. Everyone’s a winner.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded “Thank you, I won’t let you down.” then he turned to Jim, a great big smile on his face “We now have a way to temporarily procure sylph shit for making explosives.”

Jim smirked “All this so you could get some shit?”

The Farsh-nuke shrugged “I’m a linux user, going the long way around to make things simpler in future is what we do.”

*

Jim Sterling entered the throne room.

Laura was standing by the window, staring out into space, with her hands clasped firmly behind her back. “Jim, how is my latest acquisition getting along?”

“Good, good” said Jim “He has just discovered the cure.”

“To cancer?” asked Laura.

“No, to the sylph pill.” said Jim “Turns out that’s what the genetic treatment stuff is supposed to be. It resets the body back to basic human.”

“Shit.” said Laura.

“What?” said Jim “This is awesome!”

Laura turned, furious “Jim, my dear dear friend, do you realise just what a cure means for our Queendom!? It means people starve! Unless you really think that all those women the Logicios kidnapped off the street will be happy to go back to being drugged up cattle who get carved and bled and milked every day!? For fuck’s sake we can’t even impose this as a punishment because this shit is biblical! Prometheus only had his liver pecked out by crows everyday and we lock those people in a room, never feed them, take their intestines, their ribs, their leg and arm bones, their blood and their milk!!! How the fuck are we supposed to keep this shit together and not look like complete arses!?”

Jim frowned then said “Well the Farsh-nuke did find this out by promising to turn someone into cattle so he could remove and destroy her brain. I mean it was part of the test but the point is that he convinced a perfectly normal woman to let him destroy her brain and possibly kill her and now she’s his pet. I think that it’s just possible that he could convince a good deal of the women to remain as cattle and then drive more people to sign up as cattle so we can let them go.”

Laura roared with rage impotently then groaned “I do not like this Jim. I do not like being in these

moments. I don't want to make the hard decisions but fuck it if the Farsh-nuke can solve our little political problem here then he can have as many pets as he likes."

*

The Farsh-nuke, in his three piece suit, and Anna, naked save for a collar, were crouched on the floor watching shit dry on a plate.

Anna was baffled "You bought me back for this? To watch my own shit dry?"

"Well I like talking to you." said the Farsh-nuke "And you deserve as much free will and agency as possible."

"But we're watching shit dry." said Anna "Is this like a thing for you? Was 2 girls 1 cup a turn on for you?"

"Never seen it." said the Farsh-nuke "I just need to extract the explosive elements from the shit and I can't do that until its dry."

"And we have to watch it why?" asked Anna.

"Because it's explosive." said the Farsh-nuke.

Anna sighed "Fine. So this is us, watching shit dry."

After a moment the Farsh-nuke said "Is it bad that I kind of want to eat it?"

Anna cried "Yes!!!" and burst out laughing.

"Well it looks like a cookie or a curry." said the Farsh-nuke.

Anna was in hysterics "But it's shit!?"

The Farsh-nuke sat up "Actually? Speaking of eating shit, I haven't said hello to Gavin."

Anna stared at the Farsh-nuke "You know someone who eats shit?"

"Oh he doesn't but people who say he hates Ubisoft do." said the Farsh-nuke "Apparently they have big parties where they get together, watch his videos, chant "You hate Ubisoft! You hate Ubisoft!" and then they eat each other's shit with a splash of Mountain Dew."

The Farsh-nuke got to his feet and stroked Anna's back. "Come on I'm going to see Gavin, you're free to get dressed and come with me or invite someone round to pleasure you."

Anna thought for a moment then said "Would a bikini be considered dressed?"

*

Gavin was rocking out on stage, teleporting around to create an interesting acoustic effect and crowd surf over everyone.

The Farsh-nuke watched in silent awe. This was music a tone deaf nerd could enjoy.

Anna was head banging with glee, after all she knew she could regrow her brain if any damage was done.

Gavin ended the show and bellowed into the mic “Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen and all those who do not fit into a simple binary view of gender! I have been Gavin Dunne and you have been fucking awesome! Rock on!”

The Farsh-nuke clapped and Anna whooped.

Anna rushed forwards as the crowd left. She found her way to the stage and asked “Please can you sign my arse?”

Gavin frowned “Well I’m not sure my girlfriend would be so happy...”

“My back then?” said Anna.

Gavin sighed “Fine.”

Anna turned around and lifted up the shirt she’d agreed to wear as a compromise.

Gavin signed Anna’s back with a marker pen and noticed the collar round her neck “You’re a sylph huh? Who looks after you?”

“The man in the fedora and the suit.” said Anna “He wants to speak to you.”

“You better come backstage then.” said Gavin and he gestured to his crew that the man in the suit and fedora should be shown in.

*

The Farsh-nuke entered into Gavin’s dressing room to find Anna with Gavin and nodded approvingly.

Gavin looked the Farsh-nuke in the eyes and said as bluntly as possible “So you keep women as pets do you?”

“Yeah.” said the Farsh-nuke “It’s kind of my thing, also kind of a long story. What I am interested in and why I came to see you is that I am the Farsh-nuke and I am currently trying to make explosives from shit and I was staring at the shit resisting a primordial urge to do the stupid and dangerous thing when I remembered that you are besties with Ubisoft despite them releasing broken Fee to Pay games with day one dlc and exploitative embargos.”

And now Gavin was on high alert, scanning the room, weighing the Farsh-nuke up, doing silent calculations on what he could do with his Quantum Oscillator and generally expecting things to kick off.

“You see I know the Great Prophetess Lucy Dance was here before me and I know she helped you guys

out and yet Jim doesn't have a Quantum Oscillator and Laura doesn't have a Quantum Oscillator but Lucy's a clever girl. BIG plans for that one. She wouldn't leave the revolution without a Jedi." said the Fatsh-nuke "Luke, I am your Father, give it to me!"

The Farsh-nuke held out his right hand, palm up.

Gavin chuckled "That's funny, that's really really funny because you are exactly why she gave me the Quantum Oscillator."

"Anna, run." said the Farsh-nuke in a low whisper.

That was an order you did not disobey unless you were really really stupid and Anna was smart.

The Farsh-nuke and Gavin were left alone in the dressing room, staring at each other.

The Farsh-nuke smiled, showing off his teeth "This is going to be fun."

Gavin said "I'm giving you one last warning. Guy with the magical nuke, back off!"

The Farsh-nuke laughed "I was born in the nothingness, shaped by it, I couldn't blink for a hundred universe lifespans. I have fought eldergods and demigods and power mad conspirators, I am the Farsh-nuke!"

The Farsh-nuke steps forward "Back down and give me the Quantum Oscillator."

Gavin quips "Yeah but I'm the good guy so that means I win."

He opens up a portal on the wall behind the Farsh-nuke and a portal beside him and steps through.

The Farsh-nuke turns, laughing "But I have the gift of medium awareness, I can see between the keystreams and I think I just might have the advantage given that our little story is hosted at Farsh-nuke.blogspot.co.uk."

Gavin laughs and blasts the Farsh-nuke with a beam of energy.

The Farsh-nuke exudes a green aura of energy to absorb it.

"Your weapon is logic and I am the anti-logic. Give up." says the Farsh-nuke

Gavin raises his wand "I may not be able to affect you directly but I can make the world affect you! Lets see how you handle a building falling on your head!"

Jim cries out "Gavin!"

Gavin turns to see Jim and his police officers rattling their bone clubs.

"You were given that on the understanding that you wouldn't do these things." said Jim.

"But he keeps women as pets." said Gavin.

“And I like someone to truss me up like a Christmass turkey and slap me with a wet fish while they call me Betty of a Friday night.” said Jim “What matters is consent and Anna is most definitely consenting. She agrees that Konami is fucking awful. She is awesome. Oh and also the man you are currently about to go Godzilla on just discovered the cure to the sylph pill so he actually made it possible for more people to consent to be sylphs.”

“But he made a joke about me being besties with Ubisoft.” said Gavin.

“And there is a plate of shit in his laboratory waiting to be eaten by him as we speak.” said Jim “Calm the fuck down!”

Gavin sighed and stowed his Quantum Oscillator “If I see you within 5 feet of my girlfriend I am dissecting you atom by atom you understand?”

“Fair enough.” said the Farsh-nuke.

Jim said “Oh by the way Farshy my boy, the high Queen has given you a decree.”

“What is it?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

Jim whispered Laura’s instructions to the Farsh-nuke.

The Farsh-nuke said “Look after Anna.” and then he strode off with purpose in his step.

*

The Farsh-nuke kicked open the doors of the throne room bellowing “Laura, Queen of Arseholes, a word in your shell like!?”

He crossed the room in seconds and touched Laura’s shoulder.

Laura blinked.

They were standing in the green of the nothingness beyond the universe.

“Okay.” said Laura, adjusting quickly “You’re pissed, why?”

The Farsh-nuke glared at her “Could you just possibly convince all our cattle to choose to continue being cattle so we can pretend we have consent?”

“Oh God!” said Laura “Look, what choice do I have? If I give them an honest choice and they say no then people starve to death. If I don’t give them a choice then we have a revolt on our hands and not only do people die but the Logicios win. We are fucked either way.”

The Farsh-nuke snapped “You are supposed to be better than that!”

Laura stood up angrily and realised that there had been no chair for her to sit on “No, this was you!”

she said “You created the Logicio! You sent Lucy on her mission! Do not blame the woman who had to try and clear up your shit for making unsavory compromises to achieve the greatest good for the greatest majority!”

The Farsh-nuke stared at Laura “This wasn’t me! This was absolutely nothing to do with me!”

“Farscape!” cried Laura “You heard me? I’m going nerd-fu on your arse. Do you or do you not love Farscape?”

“Yes.” said the Farsh-nuke, irritated.

“Do you or do you not ship Aeryn Sun and John Crichton?” said Laura.

The Farsh-nuke raked his hands over his face in frustration then admitted “To my dying breath.”

Laura smiled sadistically “The Farsh-nuke founded the Logicios in his image. The Farsh-nuke sent Lucy on her journey. The Farsh-nuke created the clusterfuck I am dealing with now. Hell for all I know there’s some eldritch stained idiot chronicling this right now and he probably has the Farsh-nuke as his fucking internet brand. The Farsh-nuke caused this, every last line of its disastrousness. Are you or are you not the Farsh-nuke!?”

The Farsh-nuke turned away in shame then screamed with rage.

Laura sighed “I’ve never claimed to be perfect. I’m human. I make mistakes. I fuck up and I offend people and I make compromises. No wonder you’re obsessed with sylphs, you’re obsessed with perfection.”

The Farsh-nuke sighed, the anger draining out of him at the truth of Laura’s words. He paced for a bit.

“What is this place anyway?” asked Laura.

The Farsh-nuke chuckled sadly to himself as he explained “Every star that ever was, every world, every religion, every gender and every story.” He stopped and spread his arms out wide “This is the multiverse, where all reality is kept.”

His arms flopped to his side as he chuckled “This is where you will find the world where I am not a stupid obnoxious asshole, sorry.”

Then he strode to a place and pointed to what looked like fireworks in the distance “And that there is the frontline of the forever war between the Septagonoids and the Logicios. The reason you have to make those compromises.”

“And if they ever lose...” said Laura, watching the fireworks.

“Nothing.” said the Farsh-nuke bitterly “Ever.”

Laura sighed “What the fuck do we matter before those stakes?”

“We don’t.” said the Farsh-nuke “Not individually. Not as a minority. But a hundred million universes

crying in condemnation and defiance? That matters.”

“Which is why you’ve got such big plans for Lucy.” said Laura “The man who loves his fellow man like a beloved pet can’t just stand by when his creations enact oppression so he creates agents to justify acting in their defense.”

“Maybe.” said the Farsh-nuke “But as I say I am a thoroughly different person to the Farsh-nuke who did this.”

“I know.” said Laura “He would be the one holding my leash wouldn’t he?”

The Farsh-nuke spat “Git. So arrogant, so powerful.”

Then Laura asked “Can I trust you?”

The Farsh-nuke sighed “Honestly? Probably not. I am a hot headed idiotic manipulator. The question you have to ask yourself is, am I worth the risk of keeping me alive to do your bidding?”

Laura came up behind him and placed her hands around his neck.

The Farsh-nuke closed his eyes and returned him and Laura to Laura’s throne room. He sang to himself as we waited for the death blow to come. “Farewell and adieu to you fair Spanish Ladies, farewell and adieu to you ladies of Spain...”

Gavin entered the throne room, had a quick word with Laura then shot the Farsh-nuke six times in the back of his head with the Quantum Oscillator.

*

Lucy and the Logicio staggered into the Seghat laughing.

Sally looked up from the controls “How did it go?”

Lucy beamed “We did it. We actually fucking did it. That is every major country in the world helped to support its citizenry and ready to accept diplomatic relations with Queen Laura. We’ve won.”

The Logicio smiled a small smile of satisfaction. “I’m glad you’re happy, my dear.”

“Oh yes, my faithful chauffeur.” said Lucy as she put her arms around the Logicio’s neck and stared into his piercing blue eyes “How many times have you saved my life now?”

The Logicio chuckled.

Lucy kissed him on the cheek “Come to dinner with me.”

The Logicio frowned “I can’t, I promised I would never try and tame you.”

Lucy laughed “It’s okay. You’ve earned my trust. If I end the night at the end of your leash, well I figure you’ve earned me.”

The Logicio laughed “Okay, a meal out but I want you to stay frosty. Don’t go soft on me now.”

“Never.” said Lucy with mock seriousness.

The Logicio gave Lucy a peck on the cheek “I love you, you know you beautiful blonde goddess.”

Lucy laughed “Sally, you might have to bunk up tonight. We’re going out and I don’t know in what state I will return.”

Sally smiled “Lucy, I just want you to be happy.”

“And I am darling, I am” said Lucy before taking the Logicio by the hand and leading him out the Seghat.

*

They ate at a small local place and each ate a small local dish.

The Logicio asked “Did you really mean it? What you said about me having earned you?”

Lucy tried to look innocent. “Well I just figured you’re a Logicio, I’m - not getting any younger, you helped me end Laura’s war for world domination before it even began? I mean...”

Lucy gave up and stared at the Logicio. “I am so tired. Tired of making friends and enemies and hard choices. Tired of having to start over every single universe. I figure we’ve got a seghat and we’ve got a family, I don’t have to do this alone anymore. I know you want me. I’ve known since we ran away in the seghat what must be a year ago now.”

“Well six weeks.” said the Logicio “Every country we’d go back 6 weeks remember?”

“Yeah.” said Lucy, remembering every fresh start that felt better for the sense of continuity “I know you want me and I - as far as I am concerned - you’ve got me. Collar me, marry me, turn me into a mermaid and keep me in your fish tank, I don’t care. I’m yours.”

The Logicio nodded “Thank you Lucy. I appreciate it. I will look after Sally well for you. You will like your new home. Somewhere truly worthy of your beauty and kindness.”

Lucy blushed and said “Do it. Whatever it is. Do it.”

The Logicio smiled and he moved to a seat beside Lucy and started to strip her.

Lucy smiled and quietly started undoing her shoe laces, remembering how they had proved the most awkward part of her last night with Laura.

She kicked off her shoes and pulled off her socks.

The Logicio unfastened her bra and in a moment Lucy’s breasts were on show for everyone to see. His deft fingers swiftly unfastened the zip, button and buckle holding her trousers on.

Lucy stared at him as he pulled her trousers down, to leave her naked in the restaurant, and idly wondered what her new life would be. It was exciting, giving up control, trusting this man to decide her future.

Then the cable ties bonding her hands and feet. For a blissful moment Lucy was okay with this. Maybe this was some ultra bdsm thing?

Then he stabbed a steak knife through her chest and she swore words too coarse for even this publication to transmit.

The Logicio dropped her into a black plastic bag and carried her into the kitchen where he stuffed her into the fridge before striding back into the Seghat.

*

Lucy sighed, so Sally was now in the possession of a murdering asshole, well that was a pity but at least Laura would be able to lead the fight back against the Logicios. She stepped into the next universe, a gift from the Farsh-nuke.

“Hello.” said a handsome young man “My name is Jon, this is Claire, we’re youtubers and... umm... well... we’re sort of leading the revolution against the Logicios. Do you need any help?”

Lucy stared at the handle of the steak knife in her chest and felt the restricting nature of the cable ties binding her hands and feet “You could say that, yeah?”

Claire rushed forwards with a knife and first aid kit.

“What is your youtube channel anyway?” asked Lucy.

“Umm I’m Many A True Nerd, I do a small series called You Only Live Once, you might have heard of it?” said Jon.

Lucy laughed “I’ve sort of been busy but it sounds interesting.”

Claire cut her hands and feet free, pulled out the steak knife and applied pressure to the wound.

“I’m Lucy by the way.” said Lucy “Lucy Danse. I was sent here by the Farsh-nuke to aid and incite Revolution.”

“Oh cool.” said Jon “Well you’re very welcome to join us once you’ve healed from your stab wound and found some clothes.”

Lucy smiled “Thanks.”

*

The Logicio entered the Seghat, whistling.

“No Lucy?” asked Sally.

The Logicio smiled “Oh she’s fine. I tried my best to kill her but she’s probably fine. Bastard Farsh-nuke has plans for her. The best I could do was move her onto the next universe before she was ready but no she’s fine.”

Sally smiled and idly played with the console “Why are you telling me this?”

“Because you’re smart.” said the Logicio “You figured this out the moment I entered. Lucy let me tame her because she yearns for an owner but that bitch has your heart and so you have always resented and watched me.”

“How right you are?” said Sally “But I have a backup plan. A plan I enacted since before I saw you.”

“And what is that little girl?” asked the Logicio “You think some console sub routine will save you?”

“Nah.” said Sally.

The Logicio hovered in mid air “What the fuck is this?”

“Allow me to introduce myself.” said a young man in a three piece suit “I am Geoff Pottershark. I’m what you might call a fair weather sylph. Not as hard core as the egg layers but not weak either. You told her how to use a Quantum Oscillator remember? Well she smuggled me in in an infinite bag so I could practice and be here to stop you should you ever think of doing anything rash.”

“Check-” said Sally then she danced around the console and pulled a lever, which opened the doors to reveal a blackhole “-Mate.”

“You won’t die.” said Geoff “Not for a long while at least, but you might go through a few genetic rewrites. I wonder how long it will be before you become a woman?”

The Logicio stared “Have mercy.”

Sally and Geoff laughed as Geoff used the Quantum Oscillator to carry the Logicio out the doors and forcefield of the Seghat and into the singularity of the black hole.

*

The Farsh-nuke opened his eyes in surprise “I’m not dead.”

“Why would you be dead?” asked Gavin.

“Because I teleported the Queen of England and Earth to the Nothingness.” said the Farsh-nuke, turning around “I did gather that was frowned upon.”

“Your heart was in the right place.” said Laura “You were just an idiot and if I killed people for being idiots Gavin would be dead seven times over.”

“Hey.” said Gavin.

“So... er... what now?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

“I just told you how to use the Quantum Oscillator.” said Gavin “I believe you wanted it?”

“Oh yes.” said the Farsh-nuke “Bombs.”

Laura stared at the Farsh-nuke as he took the Quantum Oscillator and ran off “You know, Gavin, I have a feeling I might end up regretting not killing him.”

Gavin shrugged “You’re Queen and you legally own him, no one would stop you.”

*

The Farsh-nuke ran up to Jim and Anna “Gavin gave me the Quantum Oscillator. Tally ho! Pip! Pip! Bombs away!”

Anna grinned “Awesome! Lets go blow shit up!”

Jim said “I think I better follow to ensure you don’t blow up the world.”

The Farsh-nuke led them to the laboratory where he picked up the plate of shit, the Albino Sylph Squirrel and his equipment and then he started leading them out of the hotel.

“Where are we going?” asked Anna.

“To the bombsite.” said the Farsh-nuke.

Jim said “And what the fuck are we gonna do? I know the Doctor once joked about tripplicating the flammability of some alcohol with his sonic screwdriver but we need bombs plural and you have one sylph.”

The Farsh-nuke grinned “Just watch.”

*

They reached the bombsite, the runway just by the hotel and the Farsh-nuke spoke into his Quantum Oscillator like it was a microphone “Hello Stonehenge! Sorry little Doctor Who joke, I loved that episode. I am communicating to you now because my Quantum Oscillator is finding any speaker within the boundaries of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and using it to relay my message.

I am the Farsh-nuke! I know it sounds like a sneeze but I work for Laura, Queen of Mirth! I’m sort of her pet eldritch abomination, literally in fact, I have a collar and everything. The point is that I need you, Laura needs you, your country needs you! To come to Heathrow Airport! Queue up before the two men and the naked woman in the collar so you may be drugged, turned into a sylph and made to defecate on the runway! I need sylph shit and I need lots of it! I have one sylph and I will do what I can with her but please we need you to come!

I have the cure to being a sylph and everyone will be cured once I have the shit I need! I know it’s a long shot but if you come Laura will welcome you into her empire and you will have food and drink! Also if you’re trans, or even gender fluid, turns out the cure is literally the biological answer to that too

and in the good way not the bad cure for gayness way!

Seriously come! There will be hot chicks and hot dicks! Farsh-nuke Signing out! Oh and this message will repeat every 3 hours until I have the shit I need! Sorry!”

Jim stared at him “And not in the bad cure for gayness way?”

The Farsh-nuke frowned “I’m not good at words.”

Jim shook his head in disbelief.

Anna dead panned “Actually I liked the speech, I mean I’ve got my hot dicks. Trouble is you need one more hot chick.”

There came a sound like a stammering Sh! and a mahogany door materialised before the trio.

Sally opened the door “Jim!”

“Sally!” cried Jim in return.

Sally exited the door and sized up Anna. “So who are you supposed to be?”

“I’m his pet.” said Anna “I know the clothes are atrocious but he insisted I wear some.”

Sally laughed “So Mr Fedora you’re in the business of owning women?”

The Farsh-nuke grouched “Oh for fuck’s sake! The internet ruins everything doesn’t it?”

Sally smiled “I was asking if you wanted another one?”

“Oh.” said the Farsh-nuke.

Geoff exited the Seghat.

“Hey it’s the naked guy from breakfast?” said Jim.

Geoff smiled nervously “It’s Geoff and I love your videos.”

Jim laughed “No problem pal, where’s Lucy?”

Geoff frowned.

Sally finished explaining “And then Geoff lifted him out of the forcefield and here we are.”

“Well you are certainly worthy.” said the Farsh-nuke “However I fear your Lucy would not have wanted you to go with me. I am the Farsh-nuke and-”

Sally stared at him “You’re the Farsh-nuke!?”

“Well I’m an incarnation...” explained the Farsh-nuke

Jim asked Sally “Where’s Lucy?”

“Missing in action.” said Sally.

The Farsh-nuke shook his head “She’s alive, in another universe probably but she’s alive, the Great Farsh-nuke wouldn’t let her die, not yet.”

Sally took his hands “Thank you, that’s nice to know.”

The Farsh-nuke smiled then said “Honeybean, do you feel like having a strip?”

Anna laughed “He means he wants me conveniently out of the way so he can flirt with you, and so I can produce poop for his bombs.”

Sally laughed “That’s very astute of you? Is that a problem? I mean if me and he...?”

Anna stroked Sally’s cheek “You know you’re very cute? I think you’re make a good pet. May the odds be ever in your favour.”

The Farsh-nuke produced the requisite potion.

“And as an added bonus.” said Anna, once she’d downed the potion “I provide refreshments should you get hungry or thirsty while you flirt.”

Sally laughed.

Anna said “Actually, strip me.”

Sally looked her in the eyes “Really?”

Anna grinned “I like to be stripped, you may do the honours?”

Sally shrugged “I thank you for the honour.”

Sally stripped Anna of her shirt, short skirt, bikini and flip flops.

Anna grinned goofily and went down onto her hands and knees.

Sally stared at Anna and remembered “Amy! The Logicio used to keep her in his private pantry. Geoff?”

“On it.” said Geoff, entering the Seghat.

The Farsh-nuke asked “Your Logicio had a private pantry?”

“Oh yeah, girl in every port and we visited a lot of ports.” explained Sally “But they all came willingly.”

“I bet they did.” said the Farsh-nuke, disgusted.

Geoff led out 57 naked good looking young women “I figured it didn’t make sense to leave the rest of them in there.”

The Farsh-nuke stared misty eyed at the naked women “Shit machines. You must remind me to cure them all afterwards before offering them to sign up as cattle for the good of the Queendom.”

*

Hours passed as Jim, Geoff, Sally and the Farsh-nuke talked. During that time cars would pull up and people would get out. Some would ask where to go to join Laura’s empire but most would cheerfully drink the potion, strip naked and join the growing crowd of naked beautiful women whose sole job was to shit on the runway.

The first night was so successful that they decided to continue it through the night, then the next day and finally the rest of the week.

Finally Laura sent a special envoy over to speak with the Farsh-nuke and encourage him to do something besides stand guard over beautiful women already. The Envoy was gladly received as the Farsh-nuke enjoyed his one night stand and enjoyed taming the women so they might join the flock but regretfully decided to stand vigil over his flock.

*

There was a knock on the mahogany door.

“Come in.” said the Farsh-nuke.

Laura entered the Seghat.

Sally was curled up in a corner of the room and Jim and Geoff were playing a complex japanese card game.

The Farsh-nuke farted with fright.

“Farsh-nuke, I appreciate that I asked you to make explosives and you set about getting the raw materials, I appreciate that I asked you to find me more cattle and you found me more cattle.” said Laura “You’re doing a good job, a very good job but I think you can afford to... oh I don’t know... actually make the bombs now.”

The Farsh-nuke frowned “But I like my job here. People turn up, I tame them, it’s fun.”

“And I’m glad you have found job satisfaction.” said Laura “I like butts, I am the Queen of Butts, that’s how this mess started but you are an eldritch abomination with a Quantum Oscillator and the ability to manipulate people. You can be more! I am your Queen and your legal owner, I will garrison this position and see that your sylph harvest continues but you need to make the fucking bombs!”

The Farsh-nuke asked “Can I return afterwards? Just to watch?”

“Yes, you can watch in your spare time” said Laura “Just make the fucking bombs!”

The Farsh-nuke sighed and strode out of the door of the Seghat.

Laura followed.

The Farsh-nuke raised his Quantum Oscillator and said “There! You happy!”

Laura wondered what he was talking about but then she saw that the entirety of the tarmac beneath the Sylphs had been blown up. I mean okay so had their arms and legs and some of their faces but they could heal, that was the point.

Laura marvelled at him “The shit is the bomb?”

The Farsh-nuke shrugged “With the correct source of ignition, yes.”

“Okay.” said Laura “Since I’ve finally got you doing stuff, can you sort out our power issues?”

The Farsh-nuke whistled into the Seghat.

Sally blearily raised her head “Yes?”

“Huge coil of wire and gigantic magnet?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

“On it” said Sally.

Laura glared at him “You woke Sally.”

The Farsh-nuke shrugged “She likes to help.”

Laura asked “What happened to Lucy?”

“Bastard Logicio betrayed her but she’s fine in another universe most likely.” said the Farsh-nuke.

“And you’ve adopted Sally?” said Laura.

The Farsh-nuke tried to find the right words then gave up and said “I don’t know. I think I’m just her caretaker, a safe pair of hands until Lucy returns but I like her. She’s a good girl.”

Sally arrived, pulling a trolley on which sat a massive spool of wire and a massive magnet, the door widened to let them pass.

Laura asked “Are you okay?”

Sally caught Laura’s gaze and said “No.” with real emotion.

“Well we can talk about it whenever you like.” said Laura.

“Thanks.” said Sally “I’d like that.”

The Farsh-nuke was muttering to himself “... compensate for the spin of the Earth and galactic orbit...” and then he opened two portals. He bonded one end of the wire to the top portal and the other end to the bottom portal then spun it so the wire hung down in a great coil, leaving a hollow cylinder of space in which - Poof! - the magnet would now fall indefinitely as it entered the bottom portal only to fall from the top.

“There you go.” said the Farsh-nuke “Free infinite electricity. I can set these up anywhere, even round the moons of Gallilee.”

Laura stared at him “If I could actually get you to do what I wanted you could probably take on the Logicians by yourself.”

The Farsh-nuke laughed “I got the idea from Tom Scott, brilliant youtuber.”

Sally asked “Since you’ve solved climate change do you want to find Anna?”

“Oh, yes, good idea.” said the Farsh-nuke and he went to retrieve her.

Jim Sterling emerged “Everything alright?”

“Yeah.” said Laura “Keep him busy.”

“Got it.” said Jim then he ran over to the Farsh-nuke and said “You know we’ve got horses, mermaids and teradactyls?”

Anna regained her senses “Oh yeah. They’re bloody brilliant.”

“Do you reckon you could build armor and weapons for them?” asked Jim.

“Show me.” said the Farsh-nuke.

*

From there the empire of Laura, Queen of Mirth, grew and grew. There was free food for everyone, infinite bags provided homes for everyone and made travelling the world easier and cheaper. Doctors and nurses and scientists became more common thanks to memory guns. The sylph pills offered new ways to live and new ways to love. The society became more liberal as the shame that held it back and repressed it was exorcised. Trans and genderfluid people ceased to have any discrimination or dysphoria because the cure to the sylph pill was the answer to their problems. Conventional cattle farms were abandoned as a new consent culture demanded sustainably sourced Sylph meat. The pace of climate change was slowed to a crawl and gradually the damage started to be undone as free green electricity and sustainable sylph farming turned back the carbon clock.

Laura herself was a just and fair ruler. She encouraged grass roots democracy to flourish and let most countries within her empire have a relatively free reign so long as they practiced feeding and housing the poor for free and sent what men and women they could spare off to join the great global navy, cavalry, infantry and air forces. This they largely did gladly as it was so easy and because those who

didn't face the Farsh-nuke turning up in his Seghat.

Always the great ships of the Logicios loomed over head, a warning of the stakes of failure should any mishap show weakness and Logicios would regularly try to assassinate Laura, the Farsh-nuke or Jim but never Gavin because seriously who looks at a long haired rockstar and thinks "You are training to be a master with the Quantum Oscillator and are a massive danger if left unchecked."

Then the Farsh-nuke came to Laura with a mad idea...

*

"Dragons?" said Laura, incredulous "You seriously expect me to believe you can turn people into dragons?"

The Farsh-nuke looked Laura right in the eyes and said "Yes, dragons."

"How?" asked Laura "How is that all possible?"

"Ah the complicated part." said the Farsh-nuke and he starts pacing the room "So I googled myself and I found something really interesting. There's a keystream in this universe, that is someone who writes fiction that coincides with reality? Well he's written stories about my life, about you? And he's met you in fact. Alexander Gordon Jahans is his name."

"And?" said Laura, the name drawing a blank.

"And he wrote a story, well a script, following a different Farsh-nuke whose name is William Dickson Wright." said the Farsh-nuke "It was an interesting read and one thing that struck me was that there is an episode where the Farsh-nuke's future female self the Unleasher reunites with the Farsh-nuke's old dragon from before his and well my fall and then this dragon blasts a sylph, called Goldfish because this William fellow has a nasty sense of humour, and she becomes a dragon."

"So what you're telling me?" said Laura skeptically "Is that you read a piece of fiction where a dragon turns a sylph into another dragon and you think that means you can make dragons?"

The Farsh-nuke laughs "Laura he wrote this very conversation. This is some serious keystream shit going on here. He's legit. Though you do have a fair point, we don't have a dragon to make a dragon but we do have a Seghat."

Laura raised an eyebrow "Go on..."

"The Logicios hate artificial intelligence" said the Farsh-nuke as he paced "These are supernerds remember? They've seen how many times that goes wrong so they don't build SEGHATs. That is Septagonally systemic Green nothingness HAbitational Transcenders. They grow them."

The Farsh-nuke glanced at Laura to make sure she was still paying attention then continued "They take the smartest of the sylphs and they make them smarter. They have these devices called Logic Lances and they're a bit like memory guns. They fire concentrated logic right at the brain allowing for superfast learning."

The Farsh-nuke paused to clear his throat then continued “Except the thing about people is we are beings of logic that have grown up inside bubbles of logic and we can think logically. That’s a problem because the smarter you get, the more logical you become, the easier it becomes to see how logic connects everything and knowledge is power, right?”

The Farsh-nuke pauses and looks Laura right in the eyes as says “They start to control the fabric of reality with their minds.”

The Farsh-nuke starts pacing again, excited now “The Logicios love this and they encourage this. Soon these flesh and blood Sylphs are like I was in the Nothingness, like the Septagonoids are inside their metal machines, they become beings of pure logic and energy. They grow the SEGHAT around them and accept pilots because despite being powerful superbeings they are still sylphs and they like to be submissive and take orders. And then anyone who gets a bit feisty and doesn’t run away to join the Architects of Chaos gets effectively lobotomised and slaved to another SEGHAT heart to run the virtual reality decks say.”

The Farsh-nuke finishes and pants excitedly “If a Logic Lance can turn a sylph into me then with the right programming it can turn them into a dragon.”

Laura thought for a second then asked “Could we make SEGHATs?”

“Well I suppose so.” said the Farsh-nuke “But I’d rather make the dragons.”

“Then make both.” said Laura “And get Gavin to help.”

The Farsh-nuke whined “But Gavin’s a rockstar, he’s cool.”

“And what do you have against cool people?” asked Laura.

“School.” said the Farsh-nuke “You try being an all powerful deity trapped inside the body of a nerd as the cool kids beat the crap out of him, it is not fun.”

“Gavin makes music based on video games and he’s nice.” said Laura “Work with him.”

“Fine.” said the Farsh-nuke “But if I end up atomising him out of fear, it’s on your head.”

*

And lo a SEGHAT production line was started up and a dragon corp was created. The Farsh-nuke and Gavin not only avoided atomising each other but became an effective team.

Now the great ships overhead were scared. They sent wave after wave of monstrosity to try and weaken or destroy the empire but each wave failed.

Finally as the new SEGHAT and dragon corps reached war levels Laura decided it was time to go on the attack.

*

“People of the World, this is your Queen, Laura. I have decided that enough is enough. We are now at

war. We will take on the Logicios and we will win. Now is coming, the month of hell. We will be at total war and I want everyone working their hardest to destroy the Logicio menace once and for all. I say this to you, one way or another, in victory or in defeat, there will be butts!!! So fight well, my subjects, for this month we dine in hell!”

Every missile left that could be fired with reasonable accuracy was aimed at the Logicio ships. Teradactyl squadrons went on bombing runs. The Seghat corps materialised infantry and cavalry fleets inside the ships. Mermaids carried supplies back and forth between the different countries in the empire. The dragon corps did fly by flaming. Jim Sterling led his security services on a raid into the Logicio warships to liberate Sylphs so they might join in the fight back. The Farsh-nuke, Sally, Geoff and Anna were a roving shock force taking out the weapons systems and stopping the Logicios from flying away or calling for backup.

Laura and Eve sat alone in the throne room, watching the carnage unfold out the window.

“This is it.” said Laura “This is why I’m Queen, to be the neck this axe falls upon.”

A female Logicio in combat gear with rich black hair materialises behind Laura “Check and Mate. Knight takes Queen.”

“How right you are?” says Gavin, decloaking “Allow me to introduce myself, my name is Gavin Dunne and I am the miracle of sound.”

The female Logicio starts screaming and is sent writhing to the floor in pain.

Laura turns, staring at Gavin “What are you doing to her?”

“Localised sound field.” says Gavin “She can now hear her every slightest bodily vibration at a volume that-” The female Logicio stops writhing and screaming, motionless “-no sapient creature can tolerate without going unconscious.”

Gavin scoops the body of the unconscious female Logicio into an infinite bag “The Farsh-nuke will have fun with this one.”

Laura continues to stare at Gavin “Remind me never to piss you off.”

Gavin laughs.

*

The war is over within a month and Laura’s empire holds together as countries are restored to greatness. Gradually her power becomes more ceremonial than dictatorial and capitalism returns. Sylphs are sold as pets, including the Thorough-breds, teradactyls and mermaids.

Then comes the day when the United Civilisations of the Multiverse is formed.

“Hello” says the 8 foot tall Great White Shark with robotic arms and legs “You may call me Nikola, I am an ambassador from the Charicthy I am told that you are the Queen?”

“Well yes” says Laura, shaking the hand of the cyborg shark “I am Laura, Queen of Butts and Mirth and Earth, pleased to meet you.”

Nikola thought for a second then said “I believe we will get on well, I too like the tail.”

*

Years pass and the Queendom of Laura is an integrated part of the United Civilisations as the forever war goes on with fresh savagery as the Logicios are now emboldened by their allies. Lucy Danse has gone on to be a figure head for the United Civilisations having been turned into a Sylph by the Great Farsh-nuke so she might lead every front in the war personally and her owner is none other than the Goddess of Light Gfaxxy Quluwmcy or Kate to her friends.

A visitor arrives for Laura as she sits in her now much more ornate throne room to record the Podquision with Jim Sterling and Gavin Dunne.

Laura falls silent as the visitor enters.

She is tall, blonde, beautiful and dressed in a gorgeous three piece suit. She says to Laura “Lucy Dance sends her regards.”

Laura stares “But you’re her aren’t you? You look just like her?”

“I’m a hatchling.” said the visitor “Lucy can’t make it because well she’s busy saving the multiverse and fighting for Sylph Equality and you know all that good stuff but she never forgot you, never forgot that night and she never forgot Sally either. I know because I have her memories. In many ways I am her or more accurately as I am a sylph... yours. If you want me that is?”

Laura stood up “You’re serious?”

The visitor, laughed, blushing “Yeah.”

The End

Pretty and the Brain A Distraction Fic

By

Alexander Gordon Jahans

The following takes place after the podquisition fanfic *Laura Queen of the Earth* and includes original characters and concepts from that story.

The Farsh-nuke sat in an armchair in the Gothic Library of the SEGHAT. He was just catching up on some Asimov when Anna ran in. She was wearing a short skirt and a Nine Worlds Geek Fest Tshirt.

The Farsh-nuke looked up from his book and grinned at the sight of his faithful Sylph "What is it old girl?"

Anna was anxious but the sound of that confident commanding voice put her at ease. "I've just been to the Doctors with Lucy. I've got cancer."

The Farsh-nuke stared at her, clearly concerned but trying to appear calm for her sake "My gods that's horrible but the Doctor's can help you can't they?"

Anna shook her head "It's in the brain and right in the center. They can't operate without causing brain damage."

"Shit" said the Farsh-nuke,

Anna forced a smile "But you removed my brain once before remember? You can do it again. We know it won't kill me."

The Farsh-nuke stroked Anna's cheek and frowned "But I thought you liked being human?"

"I do" said Anna "It'll just be for the operation and recovery, then you can turn me back. It's worth a shot isn't it?"

The Farsh-nuke smiled, she had a plan and it gave hope "Okay, lets do this."

*

They went to the laboratory and Anna stripped down.

The Farsh-nuke whipped up a potion based on Lucy's old notes and handed it to Anna.

Anna swallowed the potion and handed it back. As she was about to ask for something to wash it down she noticed the Farsh-nuke had left a can of ginger beer on the desk as he went to get his supplies. She greedily drank the ginger beer.

The Farsh-nuke returned and hugged Anna "I hope this works out old friend."

Anna nodded, then she said "If this doesn't, I want you to have Lucy. I know she doesn't want to now but if I can't be yours, she has to be okay, she has to be.."

The Farsh-nuke nodded and kissed Anna on the forehead, then she turned, hunkering down on all 4s.

The Farsh-nuke sliced off a piece of her arse to check she was regenerating effectively.

Then he cracked open Anna's skull with some power tools and removed her brain with calm focus before placing Anna's skull pack in place.

He cracked open a bottle of Crabbies Alcoholic Ginger Beer and drank as Anna's skull healed. Then he led Anna by the leash to the library.

He rested his feet on Anna's back as he read to remind himself always that his old girl was safe with him.

After 24 hours he gave Anna the genetic reset to human basic female.

Anna gagged on the potion and the Farsh-nuke let her drink some Crabbies to take away the taste.

Anna lay with the Farsh-nuke for a time before even getting dressed, she knew how much removing her brain affected him. Then when she felt he was okay she went to get dressed and get checked out by the Doctor again.

Anna returned in a skirt and tshirt again but this time she bought good news "They don't know how but the cancer is gone, all of it."

The Farsh-nuke beamed and hugged his old pet. He said "You swore yourself to me and I swore myself to you. Go, you have just cheated death, live a little. I will be waiting here for you when you get back."

Anna grinned then said "Okay but when I get back I am spending the entire next week naked at the end your leash you understand and you just give the word and you can have any of my friends, I mean it, I'll square it with their families."

The Farsh-nuke laughed "Go Anna, it's alright. You don't need to thank me."

"Still gonna" said Anna as she left.

The Farsh-nuke went back to reading his book

*

The Farsh-nuke finished his book and remembered "Oh, that's right, the brain? I should probably get rid of that."

So the Farsh-nuke went into the laboratory and found Anna curled up naked on the counter and crucially without a collar.

He stroked her and she woke up "Master, where have you been, I waited patiently for you?"

The Farsh-nuke said "Sorry Girl, I've been busy, why don't you hop on to the floor and I'll see about

returning you to normal yeah?"

Anna nodded and lept off the counter.

She nuzzled him as he prepared the genetic reset and he fetched a ginger beer.

Anna drank the potion, came to her senses, gagged and drank the ginger beer.

She noticed the Farsh-nuke was staring at her and she asked "What's wrong? Did something go wrong with the operation?"

"No" said the Farsh-nuke genuinely "It was a sterling success, I did however forget to destroy the brain.

Anna looked at him quizzically

An american voice rang out "So where is he then? This Farsh-nuke?"

Anna's voice rang out "Oh he'll be here somewhere. Just hang around yeah, I'll go find him."

Anna glared at the Farsh-nuke and hissed "What is going on?"

The Farsh-nuke placed his finger to his lips and whispered "Just be quiet and stay here. I'll sort it."

Anna nodded.

The Farsh-nuke left the laboratory and entered the library to greet Anna and her friend with the American voice

*

Anna smiled when the Farsh-nuke entered and he clocked the collar she usually wore, still around her neck.

"This is Lisa." said Anna "She's Californian but don't hold that against her."

The Farsh-nuke smiled "Before I begin I would like to clarify a few things..."

Lisa laughed "It's alright Anna told me you're an eldritch abomination with a thing for taming women. I can't say I've ever exactly considered being a pet as a career option but as I understand it that isn't the problem so much as going in knowing I will end up a pet is."

The Farsh-nuke nodded "Clever girl."

"So I guess if we want to be clear, I, Lisa, being of sound mind and body hereby enthusiastically consent to being tamed to be whatever the hell kind of sylph plaything you want me to be." said Lisa.

The Farsh-nuke grinned, showing off his teeth

Anna kissed him on the cheek "Thank you."

The Farsh-nuke said "Lisa, would you mind possibly if I and Anna had a private word."

Lisa shrugged "I'm your present, unwrap me whenever you like."

"Cheers" said the Farsh-nuke.

The Farsh-nuke and Anna left the library and Anna asked "Something wrong?"

The Farsh-nuke frowned "I see it as an opportunity but something has happened, yes. I forgot to dispose of your brain."

"And?" asked Anna

The Farsh-nuke stared at his feet "It healed into a clone of you. She's standing in the laboratory now."

Anna stared at him "You aren't serious?"

The Farsh-nuke said "Check the laboratory if you don't believe me."

Anna said "Well what do we do?"

"I want to keep her" said the Farsh-nuke "I mean if you're fine with Lisa why wouldn't you be fine with another you?"

Anna sighed "Okay, fair point, you're my owner, if you can look after her I guess that's fine but you can't let her live my life."

The Farsh-nuke glared at her "Anna, you know as well as I do that I could easily convince you to abandon your life if I wished."

Anna frowned "Okay, I'll trust you. What do you want me to do?"

"If she's the brain I removed then it is likely she still has cancer, I need you to let her see the doctor" said the Farsh-nuke. "I mean you did say you'd spend a week at the end of my leash?"

Anna looked the Farsh-nuke in the eyes "Fine, I'll stick to my word."

"Good" said the Farsh-nuke and he stroked her cheek. "I'll be right back."

Anna nodded and watched him go.

*

The Farsh-nuke entered the laboratory to find the Anna without a collar.

Anna said "That was her wasn't it? The Anna who had her brain removed. The real Anna."

The Farsh-nuke sighed "You always were a clever girl,"

"So what happens now?" asked Anna "Am I humanely disposed of?"

"No" said the Farsh-nuke "I'm keeping you both."

Anna said "But I only have one life."

The Farsh-nuke stroked "You're mine remember? I swore an oath to you and I am not about to break it if need be I will convince one of you to go pet full time but for now that is not my priority."

"Then what is?" asked Anna

"You are the brain with cancer remember?" said the Farsh-nuke

Anna slumped "I forgot about that."

"Look Anna, the one who successfully got rid of her cancer, she's promised to be at the end of my leash for a week and that means you can go get checked out again" said the Farsh-nuke "Once we know what's going on then I can decide what to do."

"Okay" said Anna "So what happens now?"

The Farsh-nuke removed a pen from his jacket pocket and drew an E on her chest "You are now Anna with an E. You follow me, meet up with vanilla Anna and swap everything except the collar. Then you live okay?"

Anne nodded "Okay"

The Farsh-nuke led Anne outside to meet Anna, oversaw the swap then led Anna into the library.

*

Lisa laughed as Anna and the Farsh-nuke entered "I see why you took your time now?"

Anna grinned "Well my Master does like to enjoy me in private."

"Oh" said Lisa "So are there any special preparations I need to make?"

"No" said the Farsh-nuke "Taming is better when done publicly."

Lisa grinned "Well I'm ready when you are big guy."

The Farsh-nuke grinned.

*

The next morning the Farsh-nuke lay sprawled out in his pyjamas on his king size bed while Lisa and Anna each lay naked on special sylph beds scattered about the floor of his room.

Anne stroked the Farsh-nuke's face and backed off, using a quantum oscillator to silence his instinctual shrieks of alarm.

The Farsh-nuke got out of bed and followed Anne into the bathroom.

"Sorry to wake you like that" said Anne

"No" said the Farsh-nuke "You were right to. We don't want Lisa to know until well we know... how did it go?"

"I've still got it" said Anne

The Farsh-nuke nodded "I thought as much."

"What do we do?" asked Anne

"Well as I see it we have three options" said the Farsh-nuke "Option 1, I do the procedure again but this time I remember to mince and car your brain. Option 2, they perform the operation despite the risk of brain damage. Option 3. You find out where the cancer is and I only remove and destroy that part."

Anne said "I like option 3. I feel like Option 1 is basically saying that I shouldn't exist."

The Farsh-nuke hugged Anne "Honey, I don't, I literally contradict the laws of physics. You are lovely whether or not you should exist."

Anne blushed "Thanks."

The Farsh-nuke pulled back "Get scans done of where the cancer is. I'll get it out."

Anne nodded "I will, enjoy your sylphs."

*

When the Farsh-nuke reentered his bedroom Lisa was stretching.

The Farsh-nuke smiled "So how did you enjoy your first night as my plaything?"

Lisa grinned as she sat up "You are good."

The Farsh-nuke said "No regrets? I don't need to call you a cab?"

Lisa shook her head and rolled onto her belly so she could crawl over to the Farsh-nuke "I will let you know if I ever have a problem."

"Good" said the Farsh-nuke stroking her cheek "I rather like you. Now get dressed. We've got to get you micro chipped and officially collared."

Lisa looked up at him "Officially collared? What does that mean?"

"It means legally my pet sylph, with all the protections that brings" said the Farsh-nuke "What pill were you looking at anyway?"

Lisa shrugged "Like I say, I never considered this as a career option."

"Well we'll pick up some leaflets while we're out." said the Farsh-nuke "You've got a few years before you need to decide anyway."

Anna yawned, admiring the view "Best thing about you taming Lisa? I get to admire that arse."

Lisa laughed "Oh is that why you picked me?"

Anna shrugged "I won't lie it formed part of the decision."

Lisa stuck her tongue out at Anna.

Anna laughed "I gather I also have to wear clothes or will a bikini be alright? I'm never sure what the dress codes for sylphs are."

The Farsh-nuke frowned "Nor am I, I'd say pick both. If the dress code allows bikinis you can strip."

Anna nods.

*

When they return home Lisa is sporting a scarlet collar and flicking through the leaflet on sylph pills.

"I could be a horse" she said "Or a mermaid?"

The Farsh-nuke rolled his eyes "Yes, even a Seghat or dragon."

Lisa turned to him "I can be a dragon?"

The Farsh-nuke frowned.

Anna said "Lisa, I know you're excited by all the possibilities but he's only just got you. Let him get bored before discarding that body."

"Fine" said Lisa "So my options are burn and be a superhero, become a common or garden sylph or get super regenerative powers but abandon higher brain fictions and become utterly obedient."

The Farsh-nuke said "I wouldn't pick the last one, there's nothing fun about you being completely and utterly obedient if its chemically induced."

"So common or garden sylph then" said Lisa "At least until I work up the courage to burn."

"Right, I'll go make you up a batch then" said the Farsh-nuke heading off into the depths of the Seghat.

Lisa stared after him "But I thought we had to by them?"

"Oh he makes his own" said Anna "We used to play with turning me into cattle and even with my being a mermaid but he always likes us just the way we are, only with a little less ageing"

Lisa tilted her head as she examined Anna "You were a mermaid?"

Anna grinned "Lets head to the library and I'll tell you all about it."

*

The Farsh-nuke entered the laboratory to find Anne sitting on a chair with a folder in her lap.

The Farsh-nuke stared at Anne "Back so soon?"

"Lucy gave me a lift" said Anne "How was your day?"

The Farsh-nuke grinned "I love new sylphs"

"Good" said Anne with a genuine smile "I'm glad you've had a good day and have something good to look forward to." she gestured to the counter "2 cans of ginger beer for me, a 4 pack of crabbies for you. A stove and cooking utencils, should you wish to take advantage of me while in my cattle form," then she patted her lap "And the details of where the cancer is."

The Farsh-nuke said "Okay, lets do this. And remember if this doesn't work it's not the end."

"I know" said Anne

The Farsh-nuke mixed up the cattle potion as Anne stripped.

Anne downed the potion then chugged the first can of ginger beer.

The Farsh-nuke milked Anne for some fat for the stove then sliced off part of her arse so he could fry it on the stove. When he finished cooking the arse and plated it up Anne's arse had healed.

He flicked idly through to brain scans and doctor's notes then cracked open Anne's head, it was almost becoming routine now. He drilled into Anne's brain until he found the tumor, then he cut around the tumor, a centimeter into healthy tissue and pulled it out. Then he dropped the tumor into a blender and set it to puree as he put the top of Anne's skull back on her head to heal. He chewed on the fried arse as the tumor pureed then he made up the potion to turn Lisa into a common or garden sylph as the pureed tumor charred under the stove. Finally he ground the charred tumor puree into ash.

The Farsh-nuke opened a bottle of crabbies and exited the laboratory carrying the crabbies and the potion.

*

Lisa stared at Anna "You... And he... With a shark...?"

"A Charicthy" said Anna "And his name was Sven."

Lisa stared.

The Farsh-nuke said "Sorry I was a while, little bugger was hard to wank off but I got the potion made at last."

Lisa stared at the potion "What's it made from?"

"The blood and cum of an Albino Sylph Squirrel" said the Farsh-nuke "Not a problem is it?"

Lisa retched.

"Yeah, there's a reason shops sell sylph pills" said Anna "Getting it dried and mixed with sugar and fruit juices makes it much more palatable."

Lisa looked at the Farsh-nuke nervously "Can I get a pill? I don't particularly want to down a pint of blood and cum"

"Of course you can" said the Farsh-nuke "You don't have to do anything you don't want to do. That's how this works. Besides it's kind of sweet. I mean Anna's chugged tons of these."

Lisa muttered "Shit"

"What?" asked the Farsh-nuke.

Lisa looked the Farsh-nuke in the eye "Anna is my best friend. I can't let her have one over on me. Give me the potion."

The Farsh-nuke handed Lisa the potion.

Lisa said "I am yours, you understand? Never forget that. I may not be as hardcore as Anna but I am yours" then she downed the potion.

The Farsh-nuke handed her his crabbies.

Lisa drank it gladly then sat in shock "That was not pleasant."

"How do you feel?" asked the Farsh-nuke.

Lisa shrugged.

Anna said "I think the effects don't show unless you go too long without your Master or unless your Master treats you like a pet. I don't know. I'm between pills at the moment."

Lisa looked at the Farsh-nuke "Well, you are my you know? Shall we see if this manifests when you enjoy me?"

The Farsh-nuke smiled "I think I can do that."

*

The Farsh-nuke woke up Lisa naked on his bed, the collar standing out on her neck. Clearly she'd got lonely in the night and climbed onto his bed to be with him. He stroked her cheek and marveled at the sleeping beauty for a moment before sliding carefully out from under the covers and tiptoeing out the door.

He entered the laboratory and mixed up the genetic reset for Anne then he paused, his stomach rumbling and fried up some arse for breakfast.

Anne drank the potion, came to her sense and drank the ginger beer to wash down the taste.

"Well I'm alive" said Anne "That's a good sign."

"Yeah, I think you'll be fine now." said the Farsh-nuke.

Anne observed the meat on his plate and the grease around his lips and said "Have breakfast did you?"

The Farsh-nuke smiled.

Anne returned the smile "Maybe when I get the all clear I'll take the burn so I can provide some eggs for your breakfast?"

The Farsh-nuke snorted "Get dressed and find out if you have the all clear, then we can talk about what you'll do with your life."

Anne laughed as she started to get dressed "Okay but I am still your pet. I expect big things when I return"

"Oh I can promise you that" said the Farsh-nuke

Anne got dressed as the Farsh-nuke finished his breakfast. They hugged and went their separate ways.

*

The Farsh-nuke was sat on a sofa in the library, reading the next Asimov book with Lisa curled up beside him and Anna reading some really hot Sherlock Holmes and John Watson slash fiction beside him.

Anne entered, squeeing.

Anna and the Farsh-nuke each set down their respective books, Lisa stirred in her sleep.

"Anne" said the Farsh-nuke in shock "What are you doing here?"

Anna stared.

Anne said "I got the all clear."

The Farsh-nuke and Anna grinned.

"That's fantastic news" said the Farsh-nuke.

Anna said "Bloody heck! You've got two of us now."

Anne said "It's alright. As far as I am concerned you are the real Anna. I am Anne with an E. And I have decided I want to take the burn."

The Farsh-nuke stared at her "Really?"

Anna said "You realise that means I never have to do it now?"

"Yeah" said Anne "I'm the pet, you're the person"

"And I'm the toy" said Lisa

The Farsh-nuke stroked her back.

Anne said "Aww. I remember when we used to insult each other. Well done Farsh-nuke. Kind of sad I missed her taming."

"Well maybe I'll let you know when I restore your memories" said the Farsh-nuke.

Anne smirked "Deal."

Lisa said "So you got two of Anne? Could you get two of me?"

Anna and Anne looked at him.

The Farsh-nuke sighed "Yes, Lisa I could duplicate you."

"Do it" said Lisa "That way one of me can continue trying to have a career and the other well.."

Lisa grinned.

The Farsh-nuke stroked Lisa and looked to Anna and Anne for guidance.

"I want her as a hamster" said Anna

"And her as a toy to play dress up with" said Anne

"Ooh and as a dragon?" said Anna

"And as a mermaid" said Anne

The Farsh-nuke sighed and led Lisa into the laboratory.

The End

The Fall of the Patriarchy

By

Alexander Gordon Jahans

The President of the United States of America, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the King of 4chan, the clown prince of Reddit and the world's greatest fanboy sat in a bunker as a war was fought in the world above.

"The Sky is falling" said the President as he watched plaster fall from the ceiling as an explosion rocked the building their bunker was under.

The Prime Minister agreed, lamenting "It is the end of the Era"

The King was angry and sharpening a shiv he was wittling from the bone of a transgender woman "The fuckers want to take away our free speech"

The Prince laughed "They're hypocrites I tell you! Hypocrites. I mean It's okay when they fight back against us but we're not allowed to murder and rape them in the streets? Ha! Hypocrites!"

The fanboy was masturbating desperately to his idol "They are so biased and corrupt, talking to people, being nice to them. How dare they! I have never corrupted my honour by being friends with anybody. They're biased harlots."

The door was knocked at and a female voice called "This is the Queen of the Earth! Open up! We've come to liberate you from prejudice and ignorance!"

The King said "Liars! You want to incarcerate us!"

The President said "You're a fucking communist!"

The Prime Minister sighed "You won't win you know"

The Prince laughed "Well how about we liberate you of your lives and flesh!"

The Fanboy said "Get your own heroes!"

The Queen said "Remember that I asked nicely"

Then there was silence.

The King broke it "I say we kill them"

The President nodded "The Founding Fathers gave us that right.

The Prime Minister rolled his eyes "They won't win."

The Fanboy stared at his idol, his fat face stained with tears "We should kill ourselves. We can't let

them corrupt us with their friendliness,"

The Prince laughed "Well I suppose we could split the difference and go for a murder suicide."

The Prime Minister balked "Look how about we just wait, I'm sure it'll be fine."

The President shook his head and picked up his assault rifle "What are you? A pussy? The Prince is right. Tonight we done in hell."

The King raised his shiv "Yeah! Fuck feminism!"

"Fuck the SJWs" said the Fanboy, getting to his feet.

The Prince laughed "Lets murder the bitches."

The Prime Minister squirmed "Dunkirk, the Gunpowder Plot, Tony Blair. Failure can be an advantage."

The President stared at him "You dare not to stand with us."

The Prime Minister shrugged "Our political system isn't like yours. It's not all or nothing. Even traitorous warmongers can retire with a healthy pension if they're canny."

The President was shocked "I thought we were friends"

The Prince laughed "Don't you see, the PM used you for his own ends."

The King said "The Feminists hate him so he's a friend of mine, President stand down."

The Fanboy said "Actually he put pressure on my favourite show. He is a traitor."

"Well of course." said the Prime Minister with a chuckle "You didn't think I was actually, racist, sexist and transphobic did you? I just pretended to be to get into power but I can see where the wind is blowing."

The President stared at him in disbelief "I promised to nuke your enemies"

An explosion blew the door off its hinges and feminist insurgents stormed in.

The Prime Minister punched the President in the face and took his assault rifle.

The Queen of the Earth strode in.

The Prime Minister dropped to one knee before her and held the gun aloft.

The Queen said "You won't die. You will stand trial for your crimes but you won't die, I can promise you that. Your culture is not being cleansed. Your views are just no longer mainstream. You are the minority now and lets face it you're a minority that doesn't need protecting because that is your whole schtick, that you are super best. Believe it or not this is not now the age of woman, it is the age of humanity because men who have been pressured by patriarchy to reach unattainable standards of

beauty and behaviour are now free to be whoever and whatever they want to be."

The Prime Minister said "And what of me?"

"A mascot" said the Queen "A relic of the age of empire and nation states. Devolution, local governance and global society is the order of the day now. Like me you are a symbol of power, nothing more."

The Fanboy said "But a Symbol has more power than any man."

"No a symbol is art" said the Queen "In the Age of Humanity people have power and art is merely an expression of that power."

The King said "So what happens to my kingdom."

"It will live on" said the Queen "But the Minority that dislikes the age of humanity will find that the good can fight just as dirty as they can and that because they outnumber you they will always win. Your kingdom will become a place for lively discussion about how to make the age of humanity even better,"

The Clown Prince laughed "And what of me your majesty?"

The Queen smiled "An echochamber of bile. How terribly useful for keeping warriors ready to fight your minority. You work for me now."

The President said "Well that's all well and good for them but what about me?"

"You will be tried and if sentenced when you return you will find there is no United States of America. Instead there are several small countries with local governance on the continent of America. Oh and no guns."

The Fanboy stared at the Queen in wonder "Do you think they'll write stories about you?"

The Queen shrugged "We do love to romanticize endings don't we? I should think there will be some stories yes, why do you ask?"

"No reason" said the Fanboy, marveling at the woman who had seized control.

The Queen said "Take them away!"

The insurgents dragged the men out into the sunlight as a new day dawned.

The Queen stepped out into the new dawn, the sun framed behind her head like a halo, she looked out at the dawning of the age of humanity and she thought it good.

The Ludicrous Logic Lady

By
Alexander Gordon Jahans

Tuesday the 21st February 2016 CE, a 42 year old man with slicked back black hair, a stubbly chin and three piece suit is texting his 35 year old wife of ten years while at a conference to solve climate change.

“Professor Stone, if you would please distract yourself from your iphone, we would like to hear your contribution to the great conundrum of the modern age? Indeed perhaps you might like to enlighten us as to why a microbiologist thinks he has anything to say at this conference?” says a dusty old white man with a meagre halo of white hair on his head.

Professor Stone stands up “Please, call me James. Sorry about the distraction, that was my wife, she’s making cookies the Blumenthal way, wanted advice about yeast.” He laughs then sighs “You’re right though? What purpose do I serve here? I mean I’m not even a micro biologist, I’m a xenogeneticist with interest in particle theory and nano technology. Except there’s the rub ladies and gentlemen and netherpeeps, there is the rub.”

He spreads his arms wide and activates a holographic projector in his pocket. An image of a thick fog over a city appears in the center of the meeting chamber. “Our problem is CO₂. Now we know plants can suck it out of the air and use it for growth but plants are stuck and the CO₂ isn’t exactly within easy reach, which is where I come in.”

The image zooms in and expands to show a single molecule of CO₂ and then alongside it a large single celled organism.

“An amoeba designed to consume CO₂ and use it to fuel subdivision. A biological contagion to scrub the atmosphere clean and when it is I’ll have virus designed to target only my amoebas and die off once they’ve all been wiped out.” James looks about the room. “I can end pollution single handedly.”

Then the room exploded.

*

Jessica Stone was watching the news feed at home and felt her world explode as well.

*

Professor James Stone wakes up naked and chained to the ceiling by his hands as a large white man in combat fatigues paces before him.

“What do you want with me?” asks James “Who are you? Isis? Gamers Gate? The Republican party of America?”

The large man chuckles and speaks with a vaguely russian accent “No, Mr Stone, you are a white man remember? I am no terrorist and no fanatic. I am just a businessman looking to secure an asset.”

James stares at him “What asset?”

The large man smirks “Your plan to end climate change? It is good. I like it. But I like it better as a delivery system for a certain chemical.”

“What chemical?” asks James.

The large man shakes his head, laughing “You do not want to know. Simply tell us where to find a sample of your amoeba or your work leading up to it and we will let you go to save your planet.”

James grimaces and glares at the man “Well I’m sorry son but I’m an American. I believe in truth, justice and freedom. I am not about to tell my kidnapper, a man who exploded a bomb in a room full of people, anything.”

The large man nods “I was hoping you would say that.”

He turns to James and looks him in the eyes as he says with a smile “Come in, Gladys!”

James watches as an old woman who is nothing but skin and bones enters the room carrying a meter long dildo.

James stares in horror.

“Look on the bright side...” says the large man cheerily “Once you’ve been violated you’ll be empowered to become a superhero.”

James swallows.

*

Jessica Stone is eating a tub of ice cream with her friends while watching the Iron Man film and sobbing over her husband when her phone rings.

A Russian answers the phone “First, let me reassure you, your husband is alive.”

The sound of James screaming comes from the speakers of her phone. Then the Russian continues “See? Totally alive.”

Jessica freezes then she fakes a smile and leaves for the bathroom so she can lock the door and get some privacy. “I don’t know who you are, I don’t know what you want but I will find you and I will hurt you.”

“Excellent!” exclaims the Russian cheerily “You will try to rescue your husband of course and indeed get your revenge which is just fine by me. I like it rough. It may however interest you to know that I am calling you for the sake of your husband. See he’s a bit of a hero, refuses to give me what I want. I am hoping you will. I will call you at 3pm tomorrow, have the authorities trace my call, we can talk about the specifics them.”

*

At 3pm the next day Jessica Stone is sitting in a police station surrounded by armed police and two FBI agents as a tech geek gets ready to record the phone call and track its location. Her phone rings, she answers.

“Who is this?” asks Jessica.

“My name is Alexander Kerenski. I am 572 years old, I like long walks on the beach, back massages and watching people suffer. I am a smuggler by trade but I tend to keep the Logicios stocked up on Sylphs. I want you to deliver me all of your husband’s work on carbon eating amoebas.” says the Russian at the end of the phone.

“Why do you want me?” asks Jessica.

“For the sake of your husband. He’s been physically violated 52 times -” The sound of a man screaming explodes of the speakers “Make that 53 times. He’s going to need your support.”

Jessica shakes her head “That’s not the only reason you want me.”

“No” says Kerenski “I also want a backup plan in case you decide to try and swindle me. If you don’t deliver goods, maybe you will provide sufficient motivation for him to.”

One of the agents shakes their heads and the other nods then looks meaningfully at Jessica.

“Just don’t kill him.” pleads Jessica.

“I am trying not to.” says Kerenski then he hangs up.

“You didn’t get a trace?” asks Jessica.

The agent who shook their head sighs “We got it all right but I wish we hadn’t. We are not letting you hand yourself over to a madman.”

The other agent nods “And we don’t negotiate with terrorists. Dude, blew up a conference on fighting climate change, that’s terrorism.”

*

Jessica stays up all night at home researching various mercenary groups and how to go about hiring them when there’s a knock on her window.

She looks at the window and sees spray painted on the other side of the glass a yellow A.

“What the fuck?” she asks.

A tall slender woman in trainers and lightweight body armour, with a yellow A branded on her chest armour like a target, strides into the room. “You know me, you know what I do. Well I’ll find this Alexander Kerenski for \$3000 and I’ll catch him and kill him for \$30,000. For that you get my help, my protection and Kerenski on a mortuary slab. What do you say?”

“I’m coming with you.” says Jessica defiantly.

“I can make that work.” says the vigilante crime fighter, known as Anonymous Justice

*

A week later Jessica is wearing her own fitted combat armour and sparring with Anonymous Justice on a rooftop when she receives a phone call.

“Jessica, darling, I hear the FBI turned you down.” says Alexander Kerenski over the phone.

Jessica listens intently as Anonymous Justice watches cautiously. “Yes, they didn’t like the trade.”

“Well as I understand it, Mistress Stone, you are not without resources. The trade can still go ahead peacefully but in case you need a little bit of encouragement I suggest you look inside your spare room today.” says Alexander Kerenski.

The phone clicks off.

“Right, I’m going to go get that analysed. See if I can track down his location. Will you be alright?” asks Anonymous Justice.

Jessica nods then hands Anonymous Justice her phone. “Thank you. Truly. I’ll be fine. Just find the son of a bitch.”

Anonymous Justice nods then backflips off the rooftop.

Jessica stares into distance and thinks about all she’s risking for the sake of one man.

*

Entering the spare room of her house she finds the window forced open and a shoebox placed on the bed. She opens it to reveal a shrivelled up piece of dead skin and James’s smart phone. There is a shortcut to a new video on the home screen. Jessica watches in horror as Alexander Kerenski films an old woman circumcising James.

“Now Jessie, get me what I want or I will chop off more of your boy’s dick.” says Alexander Kerenski.

James is screaming “No! No! No! Honey! No! I am not worth... Stay safe! Please, stay safe!”

“Gladys, I think the good Professor needs a reminder as to who is in charge.” says Alexander Kerenski.

The old woman lifts up a meter long dildo and moves out of shot as Alexander Kerenski lifts the phone up to capture his expression as he is penetrated for the 64th time.

The video ends.

There is a note in the box:

From Syria, with love.

*

In an abandoned Cathedral on the outskirts of town Jessica finds Anonymous Justice, a man in some kind of armored suit and a dark skinned woman with a bow on her back.

She chuckles “This is your elite force? An Iron Man wannabe and Katniss Everdeen? What else you got? A Batmobile? Maybe a Fortress of Solitude? Or, ooh, how about a tardis? You’re insane, all of you.”

Anonymous Justice nods “I’ve got anger management issues, he’s at the deeper end of the autistic spectrum and she likes pain but you want your husband back and he is a technical genius while she is a finely honed weapon of destruction and infiltration. May I introduce you to the Robo-Man and Lady Slit-Neck.”

The man in the armored suit waves shyly.

The woman strides over to shake Jessica’s hand “AJ’s told us you are prepared to sacrifice yourself for the one you love. I just gotta say that is so romantic and so hot. God forbid it comes to it I bet your screams will be like Angels singing.”

“Thanks...” said Jessica, shaking her hand “I guess.” Jessica looks questioningly at Anonymous Justice.

Anonymous Justice laughs “We used to be enemies didn’t we Lady Slit-Neck?”

Lady Slit-Neck, nods eyeing Jessica up and down with a calculating almost lustful gaze “Until you pointed out that I would get to see and hear you suffer more if I fought alongside you.”

Anonymous Justice grins and patts Lady Slit-Neck’s back “She’s a pussy cat really. She knows now that saving lives allows the suffering to continue for longer.”

“Right...” says Jessica.

“Anyway...” says Anonymous Justice, hurriedly changing the subject “I know where your husband is. All we need now is for you to get us a flight out to Syria.”

Jessica nods “Okay, I can do that but once we get there, what do we do?”

“Well I do have a few ideas” says Anonymous Justice.

*

The private jet lands in Syria and the Robo-Man, Lady Slit-Neck, Anonymous Justice and Jessica depart.

The Robo-Man leads the way into the caves, taking out all in his way with rail guns built into his suit.

Then he froze and sound carried through the caves Alexander Kerenski's voice "Nice toys you've got there but I'm afraid they will be useless now I've activated an EMP charge. Don't worry the pulse won't have made it to the surface but I have interest in fighting and I rather thought you needed the encouragement to try peace."

Jessica screamed "If he dies there will be no mercy!"

Then a bullet exploded out of the darkness ahead and pinged harmlessly off the Robo-Man's visor then he started tipping backwards until...

Crash!!!

Blood oozed from the broken mess of metal, the guy didn't even scream.

Jessica retched.

"Aww" said Lady Slit-Neck with real sadness in her voice "It was over so quick he couldn't have suffered."

"Come on." said Anonymous Justice "We've got a job to do."

*

James was ragged, hair burned off his body, covered in bruises, bones broken and Gladys's still thrusting her large dildo into his arse.

Alexander Kerenski sat watching with mild disinterest as he sipped a vodka.

Lady Slit-Neck burst into the room and launched herself at Gladys then Anonymous Justice and Jessica entered.

Anonymous Justice went for James's bonds.

Jessica regarded Alexander Kerenski coolly. "He lives or you die."

Alexander Kerenski nodded.

Gladys's fingers tore into the gaps between Lady Slit-Neck's armor and forcibly stripped her to expose vulnerable flesh as they fought until she tore enough Flesh from her body that Lady Slit-Neck stopped moving.

"She was not included in the bargain." said Alexander Kerenski.

Jessica nodded.

Anonymous Justice put some of Lady Slit-Neck's clothes around James.

James cried "What are you doing?"

“Saving your life.” said Jessica. “Anonymous Justice can get you home.”

“And what about you?” asked James.

“She takes your place until you give me what I want.” said Alexander Kerenski.

“Jessica, I can’t...” said James desperately.

“And that’s a risk I’m willing to take.” said Jessica.

“No, you don’t understand.” said James. “I’m a fraud. There is no amoeba carbon eater. I’m just a con artist. I’m sorry, I’m so dreadfully sorry.”

“I don’t care.” said Jessica “I love you. Live well.” And she kissed him tenderly on the lips.

Then Jessica turned to Alexander Kerenski “He’s bluffing. He’ll have the amoebas to you in a couple of days.”

“Come on.” said Anonymous Justice, leading the frail James out of the caves to the waiting jet.

James stared after Jessica as he was led out and could feel the greatest torture of all begin.

“Gladys, why don’t you rest up after that fight?” said Alexander Kerenski with a malicious grin on his face.

The old woman nodded and left the room, smirking.

Alexander Kerenski and Jessica Stone looked each other in the eyes.

“So this is the part where you try to fight back right?” said Alexander Kerenski “You know prove you’re not a complete weakling and hey you’d feel stupid if you didn’t at least try to overpower me.”

“No.” said Jessica “This is me saving the one I love and I’m not foolish enough to give you an excuse to hurt him.”

“Excellent.” said Alexander Kerenski “Just strip off and wait for me here while I go to fetch fresh chains.”

Jessica nodded and watched Alexander Kerenski go.

This was it. She was dead. James hadn’t been bluffing, she’d known that. She’d always known he was a fraud but she hadn’t cared because what did it matter when he was championing the cause of a very real issue. He had made caring about climate change profitable and if that wasn’t laudable then she wasn’t American. So now she was dead. Doomed to suffer until this Mister Kerenski got bored of her and put her out of her misery.

She supposed she could end it now. Try to escape. It would be a trap, a trick, an excuse to kill her and kill James but it would be quick. Only she hadn’t come all this way just to let James die out of fear of the pain he had endured.

So she stripped. Folded her clothes and body armour up.

She offered her hands up to be bound and stood passive as he welded the iron bands tightly about her wrists then hung her from the ceiling, then she watched him reach for that meter long dildo and found herself suddenly in a green void.

A voice in her head said “You would have let him do it wouldn’t you? Let him rape you.”

Jessica shrugged “By the time he was done with me, James would be safe. That’s all I want. Who are you and where am I?”

“I am Gfaxxy Quluwmcy.” said the voice inside her head “And this is the void between the worlds. The Great Green Nothingness. It is my home and it makes me powerful.”

“Why am I here?” asked Jessica.

“I saved you.” said Gfaxxy “Like my brothers the Farsh-nuke and the Bam-Kursh I had my soul sent down into the world of man to revive a still born baby but unlike them I didn’t want to survive an execution. I wanted to go down into the world to help you mortals defend yourselves against them and to that end my soul will only be released by those who show themselves worthy.”

Jessica laughed bitterly “My actions led to the deaths of at least two people. I’m not worthy of anything.”

“Oh but you are.” said Gfaxxy “You brought the right tools to save your love but you refused to become a tool for violence yourself when others would have quite justifiably inflicted massive pain. You are worthy of the powers and knowledge I can give you.”

“Such as?” asked Jessica.

“Flight, generating a forcefield to deflect bullets, in time even time and multiverse travel but all in good time my dear. For now we must get you out of your predicament and neutralize Senior Kerenski. Just relax and let me do what needs to be done when your will alone is not enough.” said Gfaxxy.

Jessica nodded “Okay, but like what will you actually do?”

Gfaxxy chuckled “Pretend you can fire fireballs from your hands and lets go from there.”

“Alright.” said Jessica “Lets do that.”

“It’s just a hop to the left-” began Gfaxxy.

Then Jessica stepped to the right and appeared in the cave, free of her bindings. Her eyes were glowing green.

Alexander Kerenski stared at her “Shit, you are not a lamb to the slaughter are you?”

“I am the lamb of god.” said Jessica, placing the palm of her right hand over his chest “Sleep well.”

Phoom!

Alexander Kerenski fell back dead with a smoking hole in his chest.

Jessica shuddered and got dressed hurriedly then she took off flying through the cavern's.

*

Anonymous Justice and James got into the aircraft and James was silent with a haunted look in his eyes.

Suddenly Jessica was standing between them in her combat gear. "Did you miss me?"

James flung his arms about her.

Anonymous Justice asked "What about Kerenski?"

"Dead." said Jessica simply "And I am going to make sure nothing bad ever happens to my James ever again."

James said nothing. He just held her close.

*

Four years later...

"I thought it was a con." said Anonymous Justice as the first batch of amoebas took off for the atmosphere.

"It was" said James as he sipped his martini from the deck of his boat. "But rather conveniently it turns out anything fictional is real somewhere else. We borrowed a sample from a me who wasn't a massive fraud."

"Neat" said Anonymous Justice "But I don't think I was invited just to watch you save planet Earth from climate change."

James snorted.

Jessica stepped out of the bowels of the ship with a dark skinned woman and a shy overweight man with glasses.

"Lady Slit-Neck! Robo-Man!" cried Anonymous Justice jubilantly "How?"

"I saved them when I stopped by to pick up the Amoebas" said Jessica "Technically they're quantum clones because I couldn't deprive them of their Lady Slit-Neck and Robo-Man but they are as real as ours."

Anonymous Justice hugged the friends she hadn't seen in years.

James said “You should probably tell them, hun.”

“Tell us, what?” asked Anonymous Justice.

“There are a lot of bad things and people out in the multiverse.” said Jessica “The Farsh-nuke’s got the Logicios. The Bam-Kursh is exploiting the United Civilisations of the Multiverse and then there are the Septagonoids and Weresharks and Contravoxai and Grafilods. I think it’s about time I proposed a counter organisation. A force for liberation from oppression and impractically large democracies. Peace and trade is lovely but if your democracy covers a population so large you are more likely to win the lottery than have your vote count then that’s just a corporsate oligarchy using advertising to control the government.”

James said “We’re thinking of calling ourselves the Architects of Chaos.”

“You’re terrorists.” said Anonymous Justice.

“No, we can be negotiated with.” said Jessica.

“So how long before we hit America?” asked Anonymous Justice.

James pulled a remote control from his pocket and flat screen tv revealed itself from a hiding place to diplay live news.

The newsreader said “And reports are coming in that a woman calling herself Gfaxxy Quluwmcy has vaporised every single gun in the NRA headquarters and presented this chilling decree.”

Shakey smart phone footage displays Jessica in combat gear, flying in the air as she says “America you have grown fat and corrupt and deaf to the suffering about you so as of today this is a warning and a promise the Architects of Chaos will be watching and ensuring true liberation from corporate oppression.”

James pressed mute on the remote and said “The papers are calling her the Ludicrous Logic Lady.”

Anonymous Justice whistled.

Jessica laughed “I rather like the nickname actually. Of course we are going to have to think of a nickname for you, darling.”

James chuckled darkly “I’m not a hero. I admire you for doing what you do but I just- I can’t.”

Jessica took his hand and squeezed it tight “Well remember I am never going to let anything bad happen to you ever again.”

James stared into space for a second then nodded and sipped his martini. “My hero.”

“So this is it?” said Robo-Man “We really are heroes?”

“Looks like it” said Lady Slit-Neck “I wonder if we’ll get any groupies?”

Robo-Man sudded.

Anonymous Justice stared out into at the Co2 being scrubbed from the air and muttered “Brave New World.”

The Valkyrie

A Distraction Fic

By

Alexander Gordon Jahans

The myth of the Valkyrie is of the Norse woman who flies down and carries fallen warriors to Valhalla. I don't know which came first the myth or the institution and I'm not sure anybody knows, in fact even sure that the multiverse works like that. Maybe the chicken and the egg both came first but in different universes, I'm not a physicist and I'm not even sure a physicist would understand this. One thing I do know though is Valkyries are real and they saved my life. they gave me hope again.

There is a war going on. a great big one that any moment, if lost, could spell the end of everything. All of reality gone in a moment. The multiverse carries on blissfully ignorant and we all hiss and spit at Apple for their crummy updates or send angry tweets to the creators of our favourite things when we dislike something about what they do. As if any of this stupid petty bullshit matters. Trillions of brave people die every single millisecond to keep us safe.

They aren't all saints, don't misunderstand me.

The Logicios are jerks and that is one hell of a massive understatement. They were founded by a Farsh-nuke, think James Bond crossed with Doctor Who and a great old one from the works of HP Lovecraft. The Logicios are upper class British gentlemen or ladies who steal technology from other universes and upgrade it with what they know. They are scavengers, thieves and scoundrels who receive hundreds of years worth of training, have technology that can rewrite reality and they run their empire on the slavery of women for ideological reasons that I cannot be faggot to even try and understand, let alone explain. They've been fighting the war the longest and still by far outnumber the other parties so they're tolerated, though that leads to conspiracy theories that maybe they're prolonging the war to avoid making the changes that would prevent all other parties from trying to neutralize the threat they pose. There is actually a terrorist sect called the Sylph Liberation Front that is trying to undermine the Logicios and secure freedom and better conditions for the women who are enslaved by them but it's sort of like Isis taking on America, a lot of talk and not a lot of progress just scare tactics to try and make the Logicios stop being such jerks.

The United Civilisations of the Multiverse probably best represent morality and decency but they're only doing so well because their champion, Lucy Danse, the so-called 'Paragon Of Virtue' ruthlessly

mass produces copies of herself to lead armies and gifts them to ambassadors to secure trade deals. Oh and they are expanding their forces fast enough to fight the war because they're letting a monster called the Bam-Kursh, think the Master/Missy meets the Joker and Lord Vetinari, make a bid for future empress by securing new universes into the United Civilisations, something that is only possible because said monster legally sells copies of people as toys.

Then there are the Architects of Chaos, a loose large collective of empowered individuals who largely patrol the multiverse as journeying heroes but also do their bit to fight in the war when they can. Think the Avengers or the Justice League. they don't really have a collective personality, powerset or motive, they just want to help and are in a position to do so.

Finally there are the Elder Gods like the Farsh-nukes and the Bam-Kurshes entities who were once insane and unknowably powerful but over years of dabbling in the universes of mortals became mortal enough to be tried and killed so they now habitually reincarnate in host bodies and, after a certain stint of evil post-identity emergence, find themselves drawn to protecting the multiverse and thus doing their bit to help in the war effort.

Things are bleak. Things are fucked up. Our heroes are not the chiseled chivalric messiahs of popular fiction. In many ways a lot of them are more monstrous than the very things they are defending us against. The Septagonoids, as they are known, are beings of pure sentient logic inside mental war machines and they are just extremely pedantic. According to them the multiverse shouldn't exist because the nothingness it sits within is founded in faulty logic and it seems they're technically right. It's just that it doesn't matter if all reality is built on a flawed premise when so many lives are at stake but they're beings of logic they can't not want to fix faulty logic. Sort of tragic really, the great enemy are right but too mentally ill to see the arguments against it.

Never the less these people are fighting and dying on a scale I can't even imagine for the good of all of us, whether we know it or not. And the Valkyries save the fallen when they can and restore them to health. Apparently this act of charity is a pragmatic one. you can't let experienced soldiers go to waste they say. So the Valkyries save them and they heal them, give them a home, give them a ship, give them a job and give them a companion. However the survivors need to get by and recover from the psychological trauma, the Valkyries will see that they have everything they need to begin healing.

It is at this point that I should make clear that I am not a soldier. I've never been up against the Septagonoids thank god, not yet at least. I am not a Logicio or an Architect of Chaos or a soldier in the

United Civilisations of the Multiverse Space Service, nor am I an Elder god or the host to an Elder God. I'm not anyone important. My story isn't unique it's not especially exciting.

Things were bad in my life, real bad. I'm not going to go into it because it honestly doesn't matter now but suffice to say I had nothing and no one. I was a broken man, my health was shitty and my country was shitty and the world was shitty and I felt so very shitty. That twinge of irritation you feel at the boringness of repeating the world shitty, I felt that all the time.

Men commit suicide all the time and feminists blame us for it. I mean yes, suicide is literally taking your own life, unless you're in America and very right wing, then I hear suicide by cop is popular but still... I get that suicide is literally our fault but they turn it into another fucking reason to hate the patriarchy. You can practically hear them saying "If only you didn't oppress women so much you wouldn't be killing yourselves." I am in touch with my emotions, I am willing and able to express myself if I feel like crap but it just gets so fucking boring. Like yes my life is shitty and I want to die I get it can we please move on? Except I don't move on because when your life is crap no amount of positive thinking will change the fact that you feel shitty a lot.

I fought against my shittyness for so long, I fought against my self loathing and depression and focused on fun. the trouble is that time takes its toll sooner or later you get tired and you get bored and nothing is fun anymore and you just want out. Apparently there are pills for that and help for that but oh yay the conservative party is cutting funding to the NHS and mental health services and as a man there are two entire cultures built on making you feel like shit just for existing. On the Left we have Feminism and the SJW movement that just expects men to excuse themselves from any attacks targetted at all men if they don't fit into these categories. And on the Right we have the Men's Rights's Activists and the general bigoted male crowd specifically attacking you personally if you don't behave enough like them. Welcome to the age of "cuck" as a swear word to describe any male who doesn't fit the scum's exact definition of manliness and masculinty.

So one day I gave up. I just gave up. I had had enough. No more. It was time to die. So I walked into town and I found a building I'd scoped out earlier. If you've been depressed or suicidal for a while you'll find yourself doing this almost subconsciously. A lot of people get these kinds of thoughts. They're the crazy moments your brain is warning you to be careful of danger but it feels like a sudden urge to do something ridiculously stupid and dangerous. Difference is that where a sane person might see a low wall on a tall car park and think "I could just vault over that to my death" then scold themselves and move on, a depressed person will stroke their chin and go "Yeah, I'll have to remember

that.”

So I was standing on on the top floor of this car park and I was about to do it. Ofcourse there'sv a moment of hesitation and trepidation the animal intincts wanting to recoil from danger. I decided to count to ten. I knew I should. I knew all the reasons I should live so I counted and paced then I got to ten and I stared at the wall and suddenly that animal revulsion to danger had become excitement. Freedom. Freedom from this wretched broken body, freedom from this life. Yes, yes, yes, dear god yes. I walked calmly to the edge and placed one hand on the wall, I was just about tov swing my lefoot onto theedge when I froze.

I literally could not move a muscle. My brain was working, my nerves were responding, my heart was pumping and I was still breathing but I could n't even turn my head. 10 seconds passed and then I heard her voice.”You're dead. You died. You threw yourself off that ledge and your life ended. Splat! I am here to offer you a second chance.”

‘How?’ I wondered.

“I am a Valkyrie.” she said “You can call me Emma. I can take you aay from here. I can give you a new life, a new purpose, a new hope. I can fix up your body and make you loved.”

‘Is this heaven?’ I wondered.

“No.” she said. “This is a new beginning. This is mercy. This is the way of the Valkyrie. We can see into your soul and ensure that everything is to your liking. You are not alone anymore, you do not have to carry the burden of survival by yourself. Speak now and if you consent I will take you to your new destiny.”

My body went limp and I had to stop myself from falling. “Yes!” I cried “Yes, I consent to whatever it is you wish of me.”

I had been given another chance, I didn't care if I had actually finally snapped, if the voice was just a delusion, it was better than my life and better than death, it was a reason stay alive. Then I saw her.

The media is very shitty at giving women good roles so this was a surprise. She looking older than me by quite some way and was probably even older but she was utterly beautiful there was an otherworldly

glow about her, as if her very soul was a beacon of hope. As I approached her the light began to suffuse me, she placed her left hand on my right shoulder and looked into my eyes. She said “You are saved.” And I felt it.

All the negativity, the self loathing, despair, annoyance, irritation and bitterness was purged from me and I was suffused with warmth, love, happiness and peace. The technical explanation I learned later was that Valkyrie are trained in the arts of soul magic (actually a kind of complex science to do with hacking into how the logic of the multiverse catalogues different thinking entities) , as such that Emma was doing was temporarily overwriting the parts of my soul that made me feel suicidal with the positivity that made her Valkyrie material.

She stroked the back of my head with her right hand and smiled “You will obey me, won’t you? There will be no issues if you choose not to but things will be simpler if you choose to obey.”

I nodded. I would have followed this woman into hell for the peace she had brought me.

“Good.” she said warmly then she kissed me on the forehead and commanded “Sleep.”

My eyes closed immediately and fell into a warm darkness.

*

When I woke I was naked under white sheets in a warm room that made me feel safe and comfortable. It was as though they had pulled all my happy memories from my head and built a room from pockets of nostalgia and serenity to make me feel at ease.

I sat up and looked down at myself. Abs and a six pack that was new. In fact everything seemed to be. I scanned the room and found a place where my brain said a mirror should be if this were built to make me feel at ease and there it was. I examined myself in the mirror and was blown away. I was still me, I still looked and felt and sounded like me but I was fit, and cut like a steak. There were some other improvements that I was very pleased about, if slightly disconcerted about what the changes implied.

I found where my clothes were kept and there were two options. My old clothes resized to fit my new body or a suit that had been tailored to perfection. I put it on and felt fantastic, it was like a second skin.

I approached the door and opened it.

Outside was like a hospital waiting room, bile green and depressing. Emma was there waiting for me, reading World War Z by Max Brooks. I coughed. She grinned when she saw me and put a book mark in the page she was on then stowed the book in her bag. “Yes, they really have worked a treat on you. Come on, I’ll show you to your new owner.”

I stared at her. “Owner?”

Emma giggled and put an arm round my shoulders as she started leading me down a corridor. “Oh you’ll love her, she’s a veteran of darkness like you and she will know just how to save you from yourself, just trust her okay.”

I glared at her now and said more harshly. “What do you mean she’ll be my owner?”

Emma sighed and squeezed me then explained “I said I would give you a new life and you have one but I didn’t do this for you. I did this for her. her name is Jessica and she’s a Gfaxxy Quluwmcy. She fought for the United Civilisations of the Multiverse against the Septagonoids. She was the lone survivor of an attack run. She needs a companion, she needs something to protect and care for, reason not to give up like you did.”

I was walking with Emma but this all sounded like gibberish “You realize I understand none of that, right?”

Emma laughed warm and said “I know, I’m sorry, this is all moving a bit fast for you isn’t it but things will be better once you’re with her. I know you won’t understand a word of this but she will. You are going to become a sylph, you will cease to be human and become a pet animal. She’ll look after you and you’ll love it, I promise.”

I know my actions won’t seem logical unless you’ve been there and I wouldn’t wish that on anyone but I had reached my lowest point and this Valkyrie had brought me back from the brink. Of course I trusted her, I of course I had faith in her, if she had wanted to grind me up and make homeopathic remedies out of me I probably would have consented.

Then I saw Jessica. I wanted to look behind me and see the kitten she was looking at with such

ecitement at and glee. then I realized and swallowed. She was older than me but apparently not by much. She had strawberry blonde hair tied back in a pony tail and wore a leatherjacket, jeans and doc martins.

“Hi.” she said “I’m Jessica, pleased to meet you. Are you good to go?”

I shrugged “Actually I haven’t really had much explained to me.”

Jessica grinned and pulled me close “Well I’m sorry to hear that but don’t worry I am not turning you until I know you understand everything, okay?”

I nodded and as I looked at her face I found myself thinking that there were worse places to be than at thi woman’s side. “Thanks.”

“Listem, I’ve had sylphs before, I think I’ve learned somer tricks that might help you feel better, would you be willing to let me try?” asked Jessica.

I shrugged “Sure.”

Then Jessica started massaging me and I found myself moaning. “Oh... Yes...”

Jessica laughed.

I let waves of euphoria and bliss roll over me.

I overheard Emma ask Jessica “How do you feel?”

“Good...” said Jessica earnestly “Real good. Thank you.”

Emma beamed “Always a pleasure to help a Gfaxxy, you know it was one of you that founded us?”

“No kidding.” said Jessica “Thought I liked the decor.”

Emma smirked then said “300 years is a long time spend on the frontlines. You’re a hero.”

Jessica shook her head “I was one snowflake in a blizzard and I watched a lot of good people die.”

“I know...” said Emma and after a moment she said “I am thankful though. you survived and you take that knowledge with you.”

Jessica nodded “I know. That’s why you saved me right? Preserve the intel? Preserve the experience? Well, what if I want to forget? What if I want to move on and settle down?”

“Then you can.” said Emma compassionately. “You don’t ever have to fight again. Just live Jessica. Live a good life. Live it for all those who can’t.”

Jessica swallowed.

I could see her tearing up, I hugged her.

She smiled and squeezed me tight then said “How about we find a nice restaurant where we can eat some good food, drink some expensive intoxicants and get to know each other?”

I grinned and said “I hope you have money.”

She laughed. “Of course. Don’t worry, you never need to worry about money ever again.”

She said it so casually but so earnestly that i actually believed her.

Then Jessica stood back and said “Time to say goodbye to the angel.”

As I looked at Emma I saw that Jessica was right. I approached her and said “Thank you. I can never repay you properly. You gave me exactly what you promised and it is more than I have ever deserved.”

Emma hugged me and said “Be happy, yeah?”

“Yeah.” I said “Yeah, I think I will be now. Keep being awesome.”

Emma nodded then waved as Jessica took my hand and led me away.

*

The Restaurant At The End Of The Multiverse had a hopefully ironic name as it overlooked the edge of the vast distance the actual multiverse covered in the infinite eternity of the great green nothingness that so offended the Septagonoids with its impossibility in logical reality. It also displayed drone footage of various battles going on in the frontlines of the great war.

It was a strange restaurant, great sharks swam in pools or sat at tables with other humanoids thanks to cybernetic limbs. Spiders the size of cars, talking anthropomorphic cats, great prehistoric lizards, squid people and birds were among the diners. Robots jacked into hacking terminals and chattered in bursts of data as illicit code cracked through the digital right's management software, disabled safeguards, installed porn and pirated memories. Great columns of tentacles with more eyes than I could count at a glance would squeal exuberantly as live naked young looking people were presented before them in various dishes.

Jessica explained all that I have explained to you about the multiverse as I ate a roast chicken and a rack of ribs with salad and chips and drank a pint of Mountain Dew. She had a pasta with a name I couldn't pronounce that was apparently made from the meat of a virgin slaughtered on a full moon. Apparently this was okay because the virgins were actually submissive masochists who could heal. I decided not to criticise her choice of meal since I had long ago decided that meat farming was murder but liked bacon too much to quit.

As we got to desert Jessica reached the point where she would explain just where the heck I fitted into all this madness. If you're curious I had a lemon meringue sundae made with sorbet instead of icecream and Jessica had a desert with a name in an alien language I couldn't identify, let alone understand. It seemed to consist of about 30 different foot tall naked people playing in a sweet sauce that Jessica would casually eat alive with a spoon. It did rather colour the conversation in a strange light.

"So there was this great dying race..." Began Jessica as she delved her spoon into the sauce, applied some pressure and came up with a pair of feet that she then spooned into her mouth. "They were running from something. They were scared. They needed to survive and so they genetically engineered a biological machine called an Albino Sylph Squirrel whose combined excretions would allow them to travel along the third way."

“What’s the third way?” I asked. spooning a small bit of meringue into my mouth/

“Well the first way is domination, rape, enslaving and ruthless rule by terror and the second way is us: Diplomatic, communicative, resourceful, creative and capable dominating and being dominated. Then there’s third way...” Jessica had set down her spoon to gesticulate as she explained but as she looked back she found a female had taken up a sitting position on the spoon. Jessica laughed and took a photo on a fancy kind of smart phone then held the spoon up to me, pointing “Like this little girl. Specially engineered by six different Farsh-nukes and Bam-Kurshes, these breed rapidly, like pain, cheerily go to their deaths and come in different flavors.” Jessica swallowed the girl whole and chewed carefull before licking her lips and announcing with satisfaction “Strawberries and cream.”

I stared at her, my own spoon dropping into the remains of my sundae.

Jessica laughed “It’s okay, this is the wthird way, survival through exploitability. It’s like the biological equivalent of those people who make money off the internet by being hated. Yes, nasty stuff is happenning to the individuals but the upshot is positive.”

I grimaced as a boy climbed onto her spoom.

“That’s the spirit.” said Jessica with a smile.

“What happened to this race?” I asked.

Jessica chewed on the boy thoughtfully then declared “Chocolate. love a bit of chocolate.”

I glared at her.

Jessica shrugged “They died out. When their great ark ship docked the traders discarded the apparently transformed race and took the Sylph Squirrely and started experimenting on different races. Humanity turns out to be the most popular variation of the Sylph super species.”

“Oh...” I said beginning to understand.

Jessica grinned “Don’t worry, I’m not going to eat you.”

I smirked.

“Though we can talk about getting you infected by a wereshark if that’s ever something you’d want to try.” said Jessica. “I mean the point of this is that you are as happy as possible in your submission to me so I can feel all the better for knowing you. If you ever want to explore masochism I’m more than willing to help you.”

I smiled awkwardly but said “Thanks for the offer, however I think I’m done feeling bad.”

Jessica looked me in the eyes, seemingly looking into my very soul then she nodded “You and me both, kid.”

She placed a hand on my shoulder and said seriously “You’re not alone anymore. This isn’t one way street, by taking you on as my pet I am agreeing to the responsibility of seeing that you are okay. That’s not a contract, not for you anyway. If you ever want to leave, whether it’s for a week or a lifetime I’ll understand but I am not going to stop caring about you and I’m an Elder God, I can get shit done.”

And that’s when I cried. And I am so fucking ugly when I cry because oh god the snot just goes everywhere.

Jessica understood though. She waited years until I was comfortable enough to tell her the full story, of all the reasons I cried at that restaurant but I think Jessica knew, I’d think she’d been told some of it by Ema and could read the rest on my face and soul.

I was safe with her, truly safe. Which is really fucked up considering what we were talking about that she was literally eating people alive as we talked but that’s how bad things had been. Jessica made all the shouting and the screaming, the perpetual gale of self hatred, disappear. She absolved me of it.

*

She didn’t turn me that night. Something about honour and consent and it not being right but it felt pretty darn right. From that moment I was hers, one way or another. She took me on a whirlwind tour of the sights of the multiverse. I lived more in that one month than than I had done in the twenty five years previously

Then she asked me what my dream job was and helped me start to make it happen, not because I'd need the money but because according to her it was important that I reached the full possibilities of what I was capable of to feel well again.

She waited five years, by that point I had gone through university again and spent two years doing my dream job. She stood by my side the entire time, offering friendship, support, and guidance and only when I was ready to begin life again did she pop the question.

*

It was Valentine's day. We were at The Restaurant At The End Of The Multiverse again. Apparently the dish of the day was a newly wedded masochistic submissive couple who could heal that you could order any way you liked, even specifying the genders and sexualities. I just ordered a pepperoni pizza. Jessica was clearly interested in the dish of the day but resolved instead to have a chicken salad with chips.

"So what's this about?" I asked as I dug into my pizza.

Jessica smirked "You know you've come a long way in such a short time. I guess I wanted to reward you."

I stared at her, pizza held before my mouth. "You paid for everything, you supported me the entire way, I wouldn't be here if not for you and I'm not just talking about your ship."

Jessica smiled and said "Still I'm proud of you. You've shown that you could climb out of that hole and considering how we met that's quite the feat."

I blushed and ate my pizza. "That's very nice of you to say."

The subject changed and we finished the main course.

The waitress arrived to ask for desert. I ordered a tiramisu. Jessica ordered something alien.

The waitress came back with a great pot on a trolley and my tiramisu.

The pot was lifted off the trolley and the waitress left. Jessica lifted the pot lid off and Emma's head poked out of it. "Sorry, I think I'm a little underdone, you might want to send me back."

I stared at her.

Emma laughed and lept out of the pot dressed in her Valkyrie uniform. She handed Jessica a profiterole mountain then she turned to me and said "I see you've done good for yourself, my lad?"

I nodded then asked "What are you doing here?"

"Seeing my job through to its conclusion." said Emma and she presented a small plush velvet box to me and a selection of papers to Jessica.

I looked apprehensively at the box then opened it. Inside I found a small white pill. I looked up at Jessica.

Jessica beamed and took my hand in hers. "You have been a terrific friend, you have shown me light and love where I saw dark and now I know you don't need me to be happy I feel I can justify asking the most selfish thing I ever could. Will you be my pet sylph?"

I stared at her and smiled. "Jessica, I've been yours for the last five years and I don't plan on stopping."

I plopped the pill into my mouth and swallowed.

"Keep your eyes fixed on me." said Jessica. "As the pill starts rewriting the logic that governs your body you will imprint on me."

I grinned toothily and stared at Jessica as it worked. Bits of me were stretching out and thinning, parts of my mind were being fluffed up and cleaned, my focus and look at the world shifted. I felt myself imprint on Jessica, felt her become the only thing that truly mattered to me.

Jessica smiled took my head in her hands "Yes... Yes, it's done. You are now a sylph and mine to command. Go on, eat your desert."

I nodded. My body was still being changed, was a delightfully strange experience.

As I ate I was dimly aware of contracts being signed.

Emma smiled and shook my hand by way of goodbye but promised to check up in a few years.

The waitress arrived with two expensive looking bottles, “Congratulations from the manager, Maam, on your new sylph. She wants you to have these on the house, a bottle of the most expensive champagne in the multiverse that is actually champagne and a bottle of her finestv sylphs blood to drink at your leisure.”

Jessica smiled “Thank you and can we have the bill, please?”

The waitress checked her tablet computet. “According to this someone called Emma has paid it for you with a note saying to make full use of your new acquisition.”

“Oh...” said Jessica grinning. “That will be all then thank you.”

I finished the tiramisù and found myself staring at Jessica..

She smiled and idly stroked me as she ate her profiterole mountain then she removed a jewelery case from her jacket pocket. “There is just one last thing remains to be done.” She opened the jewellery case, inside was a collar with my name on it.

I smirked “So this is legit then?”

“This is indeed legit/” said Jessica and she smirked secured the collar round my neck. “You know if you ever meet someone you’re going to have to think of a way to explain to them why you wear this collar?”

I shrugged and laughed. Because that would never happen right?

The End

Wednesday, 16 September 2015

The Toy Maker NSFW

The Toy Maker
A Distraction Fic

By

Alexander Gordon Jahans

She stepped of the shadows, tall and elegant in a victorian ball gown. Her craggy features surveyed the university campus. This was her hunting grounds. She wanted one very specific kind of woman.

No, too short. Too ugly. Eh, race not ideal. Wrong hair colour. Come on. Come on. There...

She was average height, skinny, pale and blonde. And utterly absorbed in her phone as she walked, perfect.

The huntress struck. She hustled past on an intercept route and sure enough the prey walked into the huntress, dropped her phone and tripped over her.

The huntress caught the phone and swiftly downloaded the contents to her quantum oscillator.

The prey got to her feet and apologised "I'm sorry, I wasn't looking where I was going."

"Oh it's quite alright, dear" said the huntress as she approached on her prey. It would be so easy to take her now, to bend her to her whim but no. Toys were best when given freely. She smiled "I saved your phone."

"Oh thank god!" said her prey, receiving the phone.

The huntress smiled politely "It's no bother, just look after yourself."

The prey nodded then said "That's a actually a really fancy get up you've got on. Nice look."

The huntress grinned "Oh I've travelled a bit."

“Well safe travels, I’ve got classes. See ya” and with that the prey turned and walked off.

The huntress watched her go and admired the prey’s butt in her tight jeans. One day she would be hers.

The huntress returned to the shadows.

*

The copy of the prey’s phone yielded her name Lisa Watkins. She was studying to be an architect and her parents were poor but loving. This was her big break. Poor girl didn’t have a proper understanding of just how thoroughly fucked this England’s economy was.

Another thing that was learned about her prey by cracking into her social media accounts were the type of guys she liked. The Huntress used this information to set up some chance encounters until sure enough... Lisa was dating.

The Huntress travelled forward by two months and checked Lisa’s history a brief fling that had started to become serious until he lost interest and started cheating. The Huntress picked her moment and planned her next attack.

*

Lisa sat crying outside the night club. A friend of hers with purple highlights stood having a smoke “He’s a bastard.”

Lisa honked as a snot bubble burst on her face “Bastard, fucking vile bastard. How could he do this to me.”

“I told you, he’s a bastard, they all are.”

The huntress stepped out of the shadows laughing then she turned at the sound of crying and asked “What’s the matter?”

“Her ex is a bastard” said the smoker with the purple hair.

“He really is” said Lisa “I thought we were - Bastard! - I thought we were a proper couple you know?”

The huntress nodded solemnly “Hang on, don’t I know you?”

Lisa said “I don’t know.”

The huntress stepped closer, the the light of a streetlamp illuminating her more fully “Yeah, I caught your phone.”

“Oh yeah” said Lisa “You’re the woman with the fancy dress.”

“You could say that” said the huntress with a smile “Look I can’t bare to see someone so young upset so here’s an idea, tomorrow you and me go travelling?”

“I couldn’t” said Lisa, honestly.

“Oh it’s okay I won’t be leaving till six in the evening, just think about it okay” said the huntress “I’ll be waiting by the gates of campus until then. I know some sights and I will buy you dinner.”

Lisa smiled incredulously “Are you coming on to me?”

The huntress made a show of looking conflicted before saying “No, I just know what it means to have a broken heart.”

Lisa chuckled “I’ll think about it.”

The huntress pulled out a few notes “Buy yourselves a couple of kebabs and some vodka. Purge that bastard from your life.”

Lisa stood and took the money from the huntress “Thank you.” then she paused, looking at the huntress and how this older woman was clearly concerned for her “And it’s Lisa, what’s your name?”

“I am the Bam-Kursh” said the huntress as she looked into Lisa’s eyes “I look forward to seeing you

there tomorrow.”

“Alright” said Lisa “Alright I will come. I’m curious now.”

The huntress grinned “Be careful. You know what happened to Schrodinger’s cat?”

Lisa laughed.

Her friend with the purple hair said irritably “It wasn’t that funny”

The huntress doffed her hat and strode off into the shadows.

*

The huntress waited from 5pm outside the gates of the university campus.

Lisa turned up at a quarter to 6.

“So you made it then?” said the huntress as her prey approached in comfortable but stylish clothes.

Lisa said “Well I feel like shit, thank you for the idea to get a kebab and vodka by the way. My room smells just amazing at the moment. But I said I would come and I am curious.”

“Where’s your friend?” asked the huntress with curiosity.

“She couldn’t make it” lied Lisa “So what’s the plan?”

“Well I thought I might catch a lift to a view and then I might check out a museum before heading to this restaurant I’ve heard about. How does that sound?” said the huntress.

Lisa shrugged “Sounds good to me.”

The huntress managed to keep the conversation focused on Lisa and letting her talk about her life as the cab arrived and took them to the outskirts of town.

The huntress got out of the cab first and spoke to the driver.

Lisa got out and was blown away by the view. They were by an old aqueduct that span a gorge and across the gorge there was a village that screamed twee.

“Wow” said Lisa.

The huntress nodded appreciatively “It is a good view isn’t it?”

“Yeah...” said Lisa the majesty of the sight blowing her away “But I gather you usually travel further afield.”

“Oh definitely” said the huntress “But I could hardly bring you along as hand luggage could I?”

Lisa snorted “You are definitely flirting with me”

The huntress smirked, admiring her prey “Would it bother you if I was?”

“No” said Lisa with a wry smile “I mean I’m not gay and I don’t think I’m bi but I’m willing to be convinced.”

The huntress laughed “Well don’t worry I’m not trying to convince you of anything.”

Lisa asked “Then why am I out here and why are you buying me dinner?”

The huntress sighed “Because I like you and I want you to be happy.”

Lisa turned to look at the huntress, intrigued by her words “We met once?”

“Yes” said the huntress “But I was your age once. You’ve got your whole future ahead of you and you’re just about to step out into the world. It’s a frightening time and you can barely see to put one foot in front of the other. So tonight I want you to be happy.”

Lisa frowned.

A bell chimed and the huntress said “Come on, we have an appointment to make at a museum.”

Lisa nodded “Okay.”

*

The Museum was a children’s toy museum and now Lisa understood. This was not the sort of place you took a date to. It was creepy and kind of boring but Lisa read the plaques and watched the videos as the Bam-Kursh looked about the place with fascination.

After a while an old lady with white curly hair informed them that a special showing was ready.

Lisa followed the Bam-Kursh and the old lady into a side room where an old balding man stood with a bunch of old Barbie dolls and proceeded to explain the origins and history of the Barbie doll.

The Bam-Kursh was fascinated but she also glanced at Lisa now and again and seemed to be checking that she was paying attention so Lisa would feign interest..

At last the talk ended and the Bam-Kursh led Lisa out of the shop and into the car.

*

The huntress exited the cab with her prey and approached the restaurant. Lisa had paid attention to the exhibits and the talks, she would be ready, she could understand. This wasn’t about convincing her. This was about explaining exactly what the huntress wanted with Lisa so that she would be able to come willingly when the huntress asked her to.

The waiter showed them to their reserved table and the huntress waited until their drinks had arrived and they had ordered food to begin explaining.

The huntress took a sip of wine and said “I want to tell you a story Lisa. It might seem weird and nonsensical but it’s important that you listen to what I have to say.”

Lisa smiled “Okay, I’ve been waiting for this. Go on, I’m listening.”

“So in the beginning shit was bad. It was chaos, anarchy. There was no order, but there was the idea of order, of logic. It emerged as echoes of an earlier anomaly and formed long grotesque chains. Some of these chains became knotted and matted until things started to grow on it over time. A few of these knotted chains developed sentience, after all there was no order to say that was impossible.” said the huntress “Two of these knots of sentient logic became friends and they were both mad. But something happened. I mean they were both mad and wild and free and powerful and then this woman died and her soul incarnated in the nothingness. One of the knots decided to take pity on the woman and ate her soul. The knot saw the logic of the woman and realised it loved this thing and wanted to be like her, it wanted that form, it wanted to take care of things like that. It also saw that it was not of the gender of the woman and so became in his soul a he.”

The huntress paused to take a sip of wine and studied Lisa, she was fascinated.

“The he knot met with the other knot and introduced the knot to the idea of humanity and gender and sex and the knot that had no gender shrugged and said “You are my friend, if you are a man and you see yourself as different from women then I must also be a man” and so the two men ravished the fledgling multiverse, growing more and more human with each soul they ate but as they played they realised that they each approached humanity differently. The knot that had become a man first had met humanity at its best and most humble so he wanted to protect it, to look after it. The other knot saw humanity as so inferior as to not worth caring about. He approached humanity as a means to have fun with his old friend and came to understand in the language of humanity that that made them his toys. Except the more he learned and matured the more he came to understand that humans were as sentient as he and his old friend. They were not toys but he could still play with them, he could make them his toys. He was the toy maker.”

The huntress finished telling her story.

Lisa was utterly engrossed “I think I see now why you wanted to see that museum and listen to that talk.”

The huntress grinned “I’m glad you understand.”

Lisa said enthusiastically “It’s an interesting story. Good luck with it.”

The huntress stared at Lisa in confusion but Lisa didn’t notice as the waiter arrived with their meals.

They ate in silence.

When they’d each cleared their plates the huntress said “Lisa, I didn’t just bring you here so I could tell you my story.”

“No?” asked Lisa wondering what else the night entailed then.

The huntress removed her business card from her purse and slid it across the table.

Lisa examined it “Bam-Kursh, toy maker and adventurer.”

She looked up at the huntress “What are you trying to say?”

“The Toy Maker and his friend were caught and tried and executed. Naturally both survived by virtue of being manipulative as heck but there was a complication. Their souls were taken by champions and implanted in the bodies of still born children to give them another chance.” said the huntress “My friend had further complications but I developed alongside my host and I realised I was never really a man. I was just playing at being one to be with my mate and we, that is me and my host, grew as one, unified under my true name. Lisa, I am the Bam-Kursh and I am the toy maker.”

Lisa laughed nervously “Why are you telling me this?”

“Because I want you” said the Bam-Kursh “I want to play with you. I want to make you into my little toy and I needed to know you understood what that meant.”

The colour drained from Lisa’s face “Are you going to kill me?”

“No” said the Bam-Kursh honestly “And today was not about convincing you of anything. I could make you mine without you ever having a chance to say no but consent is kind of a big deal. This is me giving you your first chance to walk away. If I see you again I will start to remake you. I will ask you three more times after tonight if you really want to do this but I warn you it will be harder to say no

each time. Of course you can say no at any point, well almost any point but I'm good so don't count on it. If you have any doubts, act on them. Say no and walk away. I won't be offended."

Lisa stared at the Bam-Kursh and mentally parsed the day's events: The flirting, the toy museum the lecture on barbie dolls and the way the Bam-Kursh had kept looking at her...

"Ah" said Lisa as realisation dawned.

She was skinny and blonde and sitting across from a toy maker who wanted to turn her into a toy and had watched her carefully when she'd listened to the lecture on the origins and history of a toy that was a blonde skinny woman.

Lisa swallowed "Oh okay. So you want to make me into a doll?"

The Bam-Kursh shook her head "I want to bend your will and body to my commands. You will think when I let you, do as I say and if I hurt you you will let me. You will love every single moment of your life as my toy but you will be a commodity, a play thing and unable to complain. I will drug you, I will alter your biology, I will brain wash you. Understand that I am not like my friend the Farsh-nuke, I have no love for my toys, I do not want to care for you. I respect you right now Lisa because you are not yet my toy, the moment you are you will cease to have any rights. You should leave and say no. You should run out of the door."

Lisa nodded in agreement "I should. I really should."

The waiter arrived and the Bam-Kursh asked for the bill.

Lisa said "So if I am okay with this, okay with being your toy, I phone this number."

"Yes" said the Bam-Kursh "I will find you and I will remake you."

"And I will have three more prompts to go?" clarified Lisa.

"Yes" said the Bam-Kursh. "But if you ask for me it's probably already too late for you."

"Okay" said Lisa and she put the business card in her purse took a cab home with the Bam-Kursh.

*

Lisa never saw the Bam-Kursh from that point onwards. University gave her hope and deadlines and friends. It kept her distracted, gave her a life to live. So Lisa lived, she worked hard, played hard and graduated with a 2:2. Then reality hit. 'Just get a job!' was the mantra. Well Lisa just couldn't get a job and her family needed the money.

So Lisa lay awake at night thinking about the offer the Bam-Kursh had given her. Lisa was a fly that had been asked to land in a spider's web. Of course she'd said no at the time, she wasn't stupid but curiosity works its way quietly and there was an incentive to say yes. The Bam-Kursh had money and she would offer Lisa three chances to turn back. The danger of course was the knowledge that once the Bam-Kursh started having her way with Lisa it would be harder to say no.

This was asking the devil for a favour. No, this was worse. The devil paid for his goods. To the Bam-Kursh Lisa was a tree being asked to willingly enter a lumber yard and there would be no payment because why pay the product. And yet three chances?

That worked away in Lisa's subconscious as benefits became the way to live and then they were stopped. A Benefit Sanction because an email hadn't arrived and Lisa hadn't known she needed to be somewhere. She pulled out the business card and dialed the number.

*

The Bam-Kursh stepped out of the shadows, regal as ever.

It was 4am and Lisa was in a nightie.

Lisa's mouth dropped open in shock "What are you doing here? How can you be here?"

The Bam-Kursh smiled "My dear I can do many things that will surprise you and as we have established, I do not care for your rights. I am not a nice person, Lisa Watkins."

Lisa studied the Bam-Kursh "This is you being kind isn't it? Warning me away, well I have no choice."

"I know" said the Bam-Kursh, surveying Lisa's room. All the shelves with dolls and computery things. "Lets be honest. I'm good at what I do, I do not offer my toys a chance to walk away if I'm not certain they will walk into my arms willingly later. This is a calculated ballet to make my job easier."

Lisa swallowed "Do I have any free will or choice over what happens?"

"Yes" said the Bam-Kursh simply "And that's why you will be worth so much when I'm done with you."

Lisa shuddered.

The Bam-Kursh nodded at Lisa's understanding of the situation "So let me guess you graduated university and found that a recession caused by neoliberal politics is not a fun place to be when your family is poor and the benefits system is a death trap?"

"Pretty much" said Lisa with a shrug.

"And you think that I offer you a chance?" said the Bam-Kursh "You do realise the dangerous game you are playing?"

Lisa nodded solemnly "I am walking willingly into your parlor."

“Indeed” said the Bam-Kursh “I will help you and your family out though. Enough money will be transferred into your bank accounts for everyone to live comfortably.”

Then the Bam-Kursh pulled a typed up note from a pocket and handed it to Lisa “Find me there tomorrow and we can begin to remake you. You don’t have to come of course but you will. You’ve still got your three chances and you’re curious”

Lisa accepted the note and read it when she looked back the Bam-Kursh had gone.

*

The next morning Lisa walked into town and checked out her bank account at an ATM then she caught a train into London.

The Bam-Kursh’s apartment looked innocuous enough so Lisa rang the doorbell.

The Bam-Kursh answered immediately.

“You came?” she said, surprised.

Lisa shrugged “For that much money? Yeah, I came.”

“Well come in, come in” said the Bam-Kursh and she led the way inside.

There was a short corridor lined with gold clubs, umbrellas and cricket bats and then there was a large empty room with a large storage chest against one side of the room. An elegant and ornate double bed further up, several free standing clothes racks filled with outfits and a large white table covered in plastic sheeting.

On the other side of the room was a kitchen, a laboratory lined with beakers and complex equipment and then a mushroom shaped seven sided console.

“Interesting place you’ve got here” said Lisa

“You live here now” said the Bam-Kursh “So I’m glad you like it. The left side of the room is your side, the right side is my side.”

Lisa studied the left side of the room with fresh interest as the Bam-Kursh explained “The bed and wardrobe is obvious but the chest is your destiny. If I have done my job correctly there will be a day when you walk in that door, I beat you until I get tired and throw you into that chest and you will gladly lay where I throw you.”

Lisa swallowed.

The Bam-Kursh indicated the table and said “That is for when I want to pull you apart. You won’t die of course and you’ll like what I do but it is imperative that you understand the kind of woman I am and the kind of life you will lead.”

Lisa nodded “Well thank you for the honesty.”

“Now before I get down to the meat of today I think I need to show you something.” said the Bam-Kursh.

Lisa shrugged, she doubted anything could surprise her now.

The Bam-Kursh headed over to the console. “This apartment, Lisa, is a ship, it can travel time, space and the multiverse and now we are going to make you fall in love with the man who broke your heart and left you vulnerable to my invitation of dinner.”

Lisa was stunned “You can’t be serious.”

“I need to demonstrate my power to you and what better way to ensure he falls for you than have you declare your undying love and loyalty to him.” said the Bam-Kursh.

Lisa stared at her “I can’t.”

The Bam-Kursh shrugged “For now you have agency you can say no.”

There was a loud Bong! and the Bam-Kursh pulled a lever, making the apartment door swing open.

Lisa heard dubstep and approached the open door, it was dark and loud and everyone was drinking or coming on to people.

Lisa entered the club, how could she not? It was a miracle.

Lisa walked through the club in a daze until she saw her ex, still so young.

She found herself staring.

He caught her eye and started to make his way towards her.

Lisa froze she didn't know what to do. She hated this man. He had broke her heart. Except if the Bam-Kursh was to be believed he hadn't yet. He was still the man Lisa had fallen in love with.

He found her and took her hands "Do I know you?"

"No" said Lisa "I-I'm not supposed to be here. We haven't met but-" Lisa stared at his face, at those lips and sighed. Fuck it. "This is crazy and I probably won't remember this but I have such a massive crush on you and if you remember this come find me and ask me out."

And then she kissed him on the lips.

"Oh" he said "Well I think we can do better than that"

He gently pulled Lisa close and they embraced each other as they started snogging.

Then Lisa broke off "Probably better stop there. Alcohol you know?"

"Good point" said her ex.

Lisa strode off back to the Bam-Kursh, knowing that he would be watching her arse as she walked away.

Lisa entered and shut the door behind her.

“Strip” said the Bam-Kursh experimentally.

Lisa shrugged off her jacket then started undoing the buckle on her belt before she caught herself and asked “Why?”

“Just testing” said the Bam-Kursh with a smile “I didn’t seriously expect you to obey me but it pleases me that you did.

Lisa bent down to pick up her jacket then frown and left it. The Bam-Kursh didn’t care.

Lisa said “Okay, so you can travel in time. What next?”

“I want to run some tests, take measurements, collect samples, that kind of thing” said the Bam-Kursh.

“Okay” said Lisa “I can do that but no messing me about yeah? No injecting me with shit?”

“Not today” said the Bam-Kursh “I need to collect data first before I can make any of that.”

Lisa nodded “Okay, I get that. I’m cool with that.”

The Bam-Kursh headed over to her laboratory as she said “You know you can stop saying okay, right? There are other words.”

“Okay” said Lisa and she followed the Bam-Kursh over to the laboratory.

The Bam-Kursh opened a clear plastic bag and slipped some of Lisa’s hair inside before cutting it and sealing the bag.

Lisa asked “So what are you going to do with this stuff?”

The Bam-Kursh held up a swab with her right hand and grabbed Lisa’s face with her left hand “Say Ah”

Lisa opened her mouth.

The Bam-Kursh proceeded wipe the cotton swab around the inside of her mouth “I’m going to sequence your dna so I can target drugs to rewrite it as I see fit and of course if I am happy with the finished toy I may want to mass produce you. I’m getting skin, hair and muscle samples so I can grow it in the lab and experiment on it.”

The Bam-Kursh dropped the swab into a special test tube filled with liquid then followed the same process with another 6 swabs. “The measurements are so I know what size you clothes should be and the rough dimensions of the packaging if I do mass produce you.”

Lisa let the Bam-Kursh finish swabbing then she asked “Do I get any say?”

“Of course” said the Bam-Kursh as she took Lisa’s blood pressure “But if I’ve done my job right you will agree with everything I say. There is always an outside chance that you’ll say no and walk away and I factor that into my calculations and you should always be very enthusiastic with whatever I plan.”

Lisa couldn’t get her head around the concept “So I will love everything you’re going to do but that’s a problem because you’re ensuring that I love everything you’re going to do?”

The Bam-Kursh noted down Lisa’s blood pressure then readied a herself to take Lisa’s blood “Everything I am doing is calculated to make you utterly willing. I have studied you, spied on you and I am using you. I seem nice and convivial because that’s what people do and that’s how I get you to be so willing but please do not mistake me for some grand philanthopist. Now I’m going to take your blood so you might want to look away.”

The Bam-Kursh inserted a needle into a vein in Lisa’s left arm. Some plasters were attached to hold the needle in place and the Bam-Kursh filled up 6 test tubes with Lisa’s blood.

Lisa watched silently then asked “Does it really matter why or how you’re doing this if I’m going to enjoy this? I mean the alternative is dying a lonely death of starvation and poverty.”

The Bam-Kursh stopped and stood up straight so she could look Lisa in the eye “If that is why you are doing this then things need to change. I want you to really want to do this, not to do it because the government scares you more than me.”

Lisa said “I thought you didn’t care what I thought?”

“I don’t” said the Bam-Kursh as she fetched a scalpel, a plaster and a couple of petri dishes “I care about the product and the product is best if you are earnestly willing. We’re going to have to get you a job.”

The Bam-Kursh grabbed hold of Lisa’s right arm, carefully removed a small section of skin and placed it in one petri dish then she sliced off a part of the muscle in her arm and put it in the other petri dish, then she applied a plaster to the wound on Lisa’s arm and set about storing the skin and muscle cell samples to be grown later.

Lisa said “You’re going to get me a job? How?”

“I’m turning you into a toy, getting you a job is infinitely easier and besides it won’t be for long. What’s your dream job?” said the Bam-Kursh as she emerged with measuring tape and proceeded to take down Lisa’s height, bust size and so on.

“Well if you must know, city planner. I want to design the city off the future.” said Lisa.

The Bam-Kursh sighed as she took notes of the measurements “That is really quite a smart profession to want to go into. I’m almost envious. Might have to keep note of that. You could be very handy if I ever decide to take over the world.”

Lisa snorted in astonishment “That’s not seriously something you do is it?”

The Bam-Kursh shrugged as she measured Lisa’s neck size “I’ve thought about it and I bet I’d be quite a good empress. So many worlds are crying out for a strong state to regulate capitalism and care for the poor. I could do that..”

Lisa frowned “I was nearly on board with being your toy for a moment there but now I know you want to take over the world...?”

“Good.” said the Bam-Kursh, packing away the tape “Consider this your first warning. Go away. You’ve got money now. You’ll have a job. Live your life Lisa and forget about me. Forget about the

strange woman who wants to turn you into a toy.”

Lisa nodded “Okay. I think you’re right. If I don’t call you or visit, don’t be upset.”

“GO!!!” bellowed the Bam-Kursh.

Lisa ran out the apartment, pausing only to pick up her discarded jacket on the way out.

*

Lisa returned home and lived off the money in her bank account for a week and then she received a phone call offering her an interview for a job as architect of a new council estate. Lisa threw herself into her work and saw the project to fruition but when she did she realised something.

It was 4am and she was staggering through town with her mates to celebrate after a night of drinking, they passed a kebab joint and Lisa’s belly grumbled so they got kebabs and stayed drinking until they passed out at Lisa’s mate’s.

Lisa woke up the next day feeling like shit and stared at the kebab wrapper and realised this was her future, late nights and shitty kebabs at 4am until some nice man marries her and she decides to settle down in the country and have kids and then a pension and retirement cruises and it all sounded so boring.

She wanted it, or at least she had been told by society that this was what people wanted, but it didn’t excite her, it didn’t thrill her. It was good work that she enjoyed and it wasn’t a bad life but as she stared at that kebab wrapper she remembered the Bam-Kursh.

How this strange looking woman had stepped out of the shadows when she’d been crying, invited her to dinner and gave her money for kebabs. How the Bam-Kursh had used her to make her ex ask her out just so the Bam-Kursh could sweep along and be her enigmatic saviour.

That confidence, that swagger, that edge of danger. In the Bam-Kursh’s mind Lisa was already her toy. She offered Lisa choices and respected her free will and feelings but it felt like a nerd coaxing a computer to load, worm and emotion hiding cold knowledge.

The hair stood up on the back of Lisa's neck as she thought about the Bam-Kursh, that power and intense belief that Lisa would in time be absolutely willing to do anything the Bam-Kursh wanted. What was it she'd said? That one day Lisa would be happy to walk through the door be beaten up stripped and thrown? That the Bam-Kursh would dissect Lisa for fun and Lisa would enjoy it. This was so sick and so fucked up but the Bam-Kursh was so confident. It scared her and thrilled her. That this person could have so much power over her. She would return to work and everything would be okay, she could settle down and have kids.

*

The Bam-Kursh answered the door "What kept you?"

Lisa laughed "May I come in?"

"Of course" said the Bam-Kursh as she led Lisa inside.

Lisa studied the weapons as she walked down the hallway and knew that she was heading down the path that would see them used against her and it thrilled her.

"So I was thinking this is a multiverse ship right? You've already travelled in time so I believe you and means there will always be a universe where I continue my job as a city planner and get 2.4 children and a house in the country and there will always be a universe where I become your toy." said Lisa

The Bam-Kursh nodded "Tea or coffee?"

"Coffee" said Lisa "Black"

The Bam-Kursh headed to the kitchen and started making coffee.

Lisa followed and said "I figure I want to live my dream of being a city planner and I will and I know what that's like but I don't know what it's like to become your toy and I'd like to because goddamnit you make me feel alive and so fucking what if I'm not living a normal life. I want to know how I become your toy and if I'm going to be happy what's the problem?"

The Bam-Kursh handed Lisa a mug of coffee with a smug smile on her face.

Lisa grinned “So what happens? How do I become yours?”

The Bam-Kursh took her tea over to the bed.

Lisa followed.

They sat down on on the bed and Lisa sipped her coffee

The Bam-Kursh said “We need to establish trust and control. You will come in time to instinctively obey me without question but first you need to give me control.”

Lisa nodded “Like how?”

“Like I will ask you a series of questions and you will consent without question.” said the Bam-Kursh
“It’s okay to say no if you are uncomfortable but the important thing is that we establish a record of obedience.”

Lisa frowned “I thought you’d - I don’t know - seduce me into obedience.”

The Bam-Kursh laughed “My friend is very fond of that method and it is because of it that he frequently ends up a moralist. I need you to calmly decide that obeying me is what you want to do first.”

Lisa downed her coffee and said “Okay, what shall I do first?”

The Bam-Kursh pulled a tennis ball out of her pocket and threw it at the chest “Fetch”

Lisa snorted “At once, Mistress” and returned with the ball.

The Bam-Kursh was standing now, her drained cup on the bedside table, she accepted the tennis ball and pocketed it.

“Remove your shoes and socks.” said the Bam-Kursh.

Lisa raised her eyebrows but she sat on the bed, undid her shoelaces, pulled off her shoes and her socks then she stood before the Bam-Kursh “What now?”

The Bam-Kursh smiled “I would like to strip you naked.”

Lisa smiled knowingly “I am yours to unwrap.”

The Bam-Kursh snorted and removed Lisa’s jacket.

Lisa’s shirt was pulled off next then her bra was removed.

The Bam-Kursh’s hands unbuckled Lisa’s belt and unbuttoned her jeans. Her finger and thumb paused on the zip.

Lisa looked the Bam-Kursh in the eyes and nodded her on.

The hairs were standing up on the back of Lisa’s and she felt butterflies of excitement and fear.

The Bam-Kursh smiled and pulled the zip down. She slid the jeans down Lisa’s arse and they fell to the floor. She grabbed Lisa’s underwear.

Lisa was quavering with excitement now.

The Bam-Kursh pull Lisa’s knickers down her arse and let them drop on the floor.

Lisa kicked the trousers and knickers away from her feet “Do you like what you see?”

The Bam-Kursh nodded “I chose you very deliberately, Lisa. I am pleased to see that my judgement was sound. Now stay here, I have to get something.”

Lisa nodded.

The Bam-Kursh returned with a cricket bat and a golf club.

Lisa stared at the sports implements and swallowed.

The Bam-Kursh said “I want to hit you. Once in the face. Once in the arse. You’re perfectly safe, I’m not about to let you die when I’ve not even made you into a toy but it will hurt, a lot. Are you okay with this?”

Lisa swallowed “I trust you.”

The Bam-Kursh smiled “Thank you.”

The Bam-Kursh raised the golf club before Lisa and pulled back.

She swung with ferocity and Lisa blinked.

The club stopped an inch before Lisa’s face then lightly booped her nose.

Lisa breathed a sigh of relief then swore as the cricket bat smacked into her arse and launched her into the footboard of the double bed.

Lisa panted and swore.

The Bam-Kursh stroked Lisa’s back “Well done, I’m proud of you.”

Lisa stood up “Don’t do again that until you’ve messed with my capacity to feel pain okay?”

The Bam-Kursh nodded “That was very brave and don’t worry I think I should be able to start messing with your body tomorrow. For now I have one last request?”

Lisa looked the Bam-Kursh in the eye, she was still in pain and there had been a sense of escalation to the requests. If the Bam-Kursh had anything else planned Lisa wanted her to have to look Lisa in the eye to ask for it. “Go ahead.”

“I want you to climb into the toy box and stay there until I let you out.” said the Bam-Kursh “There won’t be a lock on it but I want you to pack yourself away and wait for my return.”

Lisa laughed “That’s all?”

“That’s all” said the Bam-Kursh

Lisa grinned as she opened the box and climbed inside.

She lay down inside the box and the Bam-Kursh said “Sweet dreams, Lisa. I’ll be back in a bit.”

The lid closed and now Lisa understood that this was indeed escalation. Lying awake in something not much bigger than a coffin with no light and nothing to do.

*

Lisa felt pressure on her left cheek, stroking, and a voice said softly “Hey sleepy head, time to come out of the toy box.”

Lisa opened her eyes and looked up at the Bam-Kursh.

Lisa smiled “Hey, you’re back”

The Bam-Kursh nodded “And you have been a good little toy haven’t you my dear but come on, I’m buying you lunch.”

Lisa nodded and tried to move but her body ached and felt sluggish.

The Bam-Kursh understood and pulled Lisa up into a sitting position.

Lisa blinked and shook her head and arms to clear the grogginess.

Lisa climbed to her feet and said “So do I go like this? Or...?”

The Bam-Kursh chuckled and handed her a bag. “Put those on”

Lisa said “So are you going to watch me? Or?”

The Bam-Kursh was still chuckling as she strode off and explained “You aren’t the only toy I came here to get.”

Lisa got dressed in the emerald green bikini, pink skirt, crop top and flip flops, then she climbed out of the toy box and headed off after the Bam-Kursh.

Lisa found the Bam-Kursh with her head in the cupboard “Umm what’s this?”

The Bam-Kursh backed out of the cupboard and turned to see Lisa holding a collar. “Oh, oh that’s right. You don’t know do you?”

Lisa stared at her “Know what?”

“Well my friend, he uh, he’s sort of powerful. Like his followers are protecting the multiverse and now there’s this thing called the United Civilisations of the Multiverse-” said the Bam-Kursh.

“Your friend being the knot that wanted to look after people?” said Lisa

“Well yes but he does that by keeping them as pets.” said the Bam-Kursh “They’re actually recognised as a different species. They’re called sylphs and they get all these rights.”

“Ah” said Lisa, frowning.

The Bam-Kursh nodded and stroked Lisa’s cheek “What I’m doing to you is sort off against interuniversal law.”

Lisa said “But I’m a consenting adult.”

The Bam-Kursh chuckled and kissed Lisa’s forehead “You’re wonderful but you’re mine and that is very much illegal. That collar is so they’ll think you’re my sylph.”

Lisa frowned “Being your toy is illegal?”

“Yes, at least the way I want you to be is.” said the Bam-Kursh and then she secured the collar round Lisa’s neck.

Lisa was silent after that. The knowledge that this woman’s behaviour was illegal in the multiverse that some would see her as a victim was troubling.

The Bam-Kursh found was she needed and said “Stick close to me and obey only me understand. I know you’re feeling very malleable and that’s good. I was to remake uyou but you are mine and mine alone to remake.”

With that Lisa followed the Bam-Kursh out of the door.

*

The restaurant was posh and seemingly candlelit but far too bright for that. Lisa saw cyborg sharks and cat people and Spielberg type dinosaurs in dinner jackets, spiders the size of cars, Octopus men and a lot of women wearing collars.

The human waiter asked for their drinks. The Bam-Kursh ordered champagne.

Lisa asked “What are all these things?”

The Bam-Kursh glared at her “You are a thing, these are people.”

Lisa frowned “Okay, I’m sorry, who are these people?”

The Bam-Kursh sighed “The sharks are Charicthy, they owe their ability to walk on land and communicate to the Ooblopnick, the Octopus men. The Cat People are Felis Sapiens, don’t think about how they came about. The dinosaurs are Humana Lacertae and they have a very complex class based society, you’d fit in well there. The spiders are Arachnoforms and yes they are every bit as terrifying as they look and the women wearing collars are Sylphs.”

The waiter brought over the menu.

The Bam-Kursh said “She’ll have the chicken salad and jacket potato. I’ll have the steak.”

The waiter nodded then looked to Lisa.

Lisa shrugged “She’s the boss.”

The waiter nodded and left.

The Bam-Kursh grinned and poured the champagne into the provided glasses. “A toast to you, my dear.”

Lisa accepted the glass of champagne and asked “What for?”

“No one has accepted my command so readily. No one has ever stayed in the toybox. You’re ready.” said the Bam-Kursh.

Lisa grinned “So I’m your toy now?”

“Not yet but your mind is” said the Bam-Kursh and then she pulled out a strange looking gun “To that end, I want a back up of it. Just grab the handle and press record.”

Lisa naturally did as the Bam-Kursh said and asked “So what will you do once you’re done with me?”

The Bam-Kursh thought for a second then said “I think I want to build up a product line then bring it to market.”

“I thought you said this was illegal?” said Lisa

The Bam-Kursh nodded “But I have my eyes on a prize that will let me get away with this and that’s actually why we’re here. You are my proof of concept.”

The gun binged.

“You’re backed up.” said the Bam-Kursh with a smile.

Lisa smiled “I’m glad you’re happy.”

The Bam-Kursh stroked Lisa’s face “I really think I am going to have to keep you, you know.”

Lisa frowned “Well what else were you going to do with me?”

The Bam-Kursh shrugged “Sell you.”

Lisa glared at her.

The Bam-Kursh laughed “You’re a toy. I make you but you were always going to be sold to someone else.”

Lisa fell silent, sulking.

The Bam-Kursh sighed and sipped her champagne.

The waiter arrived with the food.

The Bam-Kursh had a massive plate of steak, chips, side salad and sauces.

Lisa’s plate was more modest and she finished swiftly.

She sat looking at the Bam-Kursh as she ate and wondered idly if toys did eat. Did toys even live or what the Bam-Kursh going to stuff her?

A tall blond woman in a three piece suit and a cyborg shark walked past.

“Lucy Danse!” called the Bam-Kursh amid her eating.

The tall woman stopped at the table “Yes”

The Bam-Kursh wiped her mouth clean with a serviette “My name is the Bam-Kursh and I am here to offer you a deal.”

The tall woman stared at the mad woman in victorian dress.

The cyborg shark gave the girl in easy to remove clothing a worried look and advised “Lucy, I don’t like this, his pet is like you.”

Lucy looked at the girl too now and said “It’s okay, Greta. The Bam-Kursh won’t try anything. I’m too important.” Then Lucy looked to the Bam-Kursh again “So what’s this deal?”

“Take a seat” said the Bam-Kursh.

Lucy nodded and pulled up a chair beside Lisa.

Greta pulled up a chair beside the Bam-Kursh.

The Bam-Kursh gestured to Lisa “I have product I want to sell and I want more product.”

Lucy studied Lisa and stroked her back “Yes, I thought she didn’t look like a typical sylph. She’s too stiff and the collar doesn’t look right on her.”

“That’s because she isn’t a sylph” said the Bam-Kursh “For now she is one hundred percent human but her mind is mine. Tomorrow I make the biological alterations but you can see that she is entirely consenting. This is what I do Lucy. I make people into toys.”

“And what are you offering in return?” asked Lucy.

“Me” said the Bam-Kursh “The Farsh-nuke is a fearsome weapon but his morality and libido holds him back. He is fueled by lust and rage. I am cold. I understand from a logical point of view that people are living and sentient, that they deserve to be treated with respect and looked after but I have no morality. I have no rage, well no I do but it’s reserved for him.”

“So what are you suggesting?” asked Lucy “That I throw you on the frontlines?”

“No” said the Bam-Kursh “The Septagonoids could corrupt me far easier than they could corrupt the Farsh-nuke. I’m saying let me grow the United Civilisations of the Multiverse. Let me be your Napoleon.”

Lucy stared at him “I know my Earth history Bam-Kursh, I’m not letting you be Emperor.”

The Bam-Kursh grinned “But I could be so useful to you don’t you think? Empires rise and fall, Emperors get assassinated. What matters is that you win the war then have enough strength give the Logicios enough of a kicking that they stop being arseholes. I can help you do that and as I say I just want to be able to sell my goods. Try her out if you don’t believe me.”

Lucy grinned “Okay, if she’s as willing as you say then we might turn a blind eye.”

The hairs stood up on the back of Lisa’s neck.

“Be gentle with her” said the Bam-Kursh with a note of warning in her voice “She’s almost ready to hit the market. Don’t break her.”

Greta laughed “You should be careful that we don’t break you.”

The Bam-Kursh chuckled and went back to eating her steak.

Lisa rose from her seat and walked away from Lucy and Greta.

Lucy and Greta found a table for two out of the way but still in sight of the Bam-Kursh.

Lucy whispered in Lisa’s ear “We can talk freely but this needs to look legit. Sit on the table and trust me.”

Lisa backed onto the table and said “What do you want to talk about?”

Lucy lifted up Lisa’s left arm and made a show of examining it as she explained “I’m a sylph, I am no stranger to the elder gods. That thing sitting at the table is not human. It has no sense of internal morality. The Farsh-nuke hates the Bam-Kursh for its immorality. It is not good.”

Lisa said “And your point is? I’m her toy. I know its strange but that’s why I’m doing this. Live a life less ordinary you know.”

Greta hissed “The Bam-Kursh may well be treating you with respect now but that is because you are still human, you break easily. The moment you are fully converted the Bam-Kursh will see no value in you.”

“I know” said Lisa “She’s going to beat me up and throw me around like a ragdoll and pull me apart for fun. And I am going to love it.”

Lucy said “I’m going to turn you over now okay?”

Lisa said “You don’t have to ask me for permission you know?”

Lucy rolled her eyes and lay Lisa flat on her back then rolled her over. She made a show of lifting up her clothes to take a better look at Lisa “The Bam-Kursh is going to mass produce and sell you. You will cease to be a person and will be legally property. You won’t have any rights.”

Lisa said “Give me rights then. I’m her proof of concept to convince you to let her bring me to market. You can be my advocate, make sure I am protected as you would like me to be.”

Lucy said “I have 2 wars to coordinate. I don’t have time to legislate on toy rights.”

Lisa said “Then approve the deal, let the Bam-Kursh do what she wants with me.”

Lucy rolled Lisa back onto her belly and said “You arguing to deny your own agency.”

Lisa said “I’m hers. If she wants to deny me agency, I trust her.”

Lucy glared at Greta “Well I think you have certainly provided proof of concept Lisa. Now before we deliver you to your mistress I would like a picture with you.”

Lisa grinned “I would be happy to.”

Lucy laughed “Come on, off the table.”

Lisa pulled herself off the table and Lisa got up to stand beside her.

Greta pulled out her phone and snapped off a couple of flashes.

“Get the drinks in” said Lucy and she walked back to the Bam-Kursh with Lisa.

The Bam-Kursh ate the last of her steak as they approached.

“You’ve certainly done an impressive job with Lisa here and she is very beautiful, she’ll make an excellent collector’s item.” said Lucy.

Lisa grinned.

The Bam-Kursh wiped her mouth clean and said “I’m glad you approve.”

“I am afraid however that I cannot let you work without oversight.” said Lucy “You may finish your work with this one but you cannot mass produce her until I have sent someone to meet with you regarding the finer legal details”

The Bam-Kursh nodded “That is fair. You know I had all sorts of backup plans laid out in case you decided to try and stop me.”

“I know” said Lucy and she put an arm around Lisa protectively “This one thinks she has free will but if she ever tried to do anything you disapprove of you would make her change her mind.”

The Bam-Kursh grinned “How very astute of you? The mind binds us more thoroughly than any prison, Lisa wants to obey and thus no bindings could alter that. I wonder if someday you and I might...?”

Lucy laughed “Take your toy and go. I am technically the Unleasher you know?”

The Bam-Kursh chuckled and rose from her seat “Settle the bill for me won’t you?”

With that the Bam-Kursh walked off and Lisa followed.

When they were back in the apartment the Bam-Kursh turned to Lisa and said “Now honey, you have been very good to me and I want dearly for us to continue our work on you.”

The Bam-Kursh squeezed Lisa's hands compassionately "You are so beautiful and so sweet and so very obedient but it is time for us to say goodbye. When I next see you I will drug you. This is your second chance to turn away. I suggest you take it because the next chance I give you will be almost too late. Say goodbye Lisa. One way or another the human will be gone when we next meet."

Lisa nodded "I understand, I will say goodbye Bam-Kursh. Until we meet again."

The Bam-Kursh nodded "Until we meet again."

The Bam-Kursh went to the console and after a few moments the apartment door swung open to real busy London.

Lisa stood framed in the door way and felt nervous about returning to the outside world again.

The Bam-Kursh placed Lisa's jacket about her shoulders "Remember, you obey only me and you are only my toy, let others think you are still a person."

Lisa felt stronger at those words.

The Bam-Kursh handed Lisa her shoes and socks. "Now go."

Lisa nodded and strode out the door into London.

*

Lisa felt weird as she walked through London. She didn't feel human anymore. She felt like at any moment she could be carried away and taken away from her life. That she was weak and vulnerable. This was naturally true but London was a place where it didn't matter how you looked or felt, people would leave you alone at least so long as you stuck to the crowds.

Lisa made it to Waterloo Station alright and managed to catch a train home, except it didn't feel like home, not anymore. The Bam-Kursh had said goodbye to her and Lisa could certainly go back to her old life. She was still human, she still had money and a good job and she knew now that what the Bam-

Kursh was doing to her was very definitely illegal but they both knew that Lisa wasn't being sent back home to say goodbye to the Bam-Kursh.

She was committed now, whatever the future held, however dark it got, Lisa had picked her path. She was going to be a toy and while she was still human, while she could still think for herself and act independently of supervision she would say goodbye to her family and friends.

She decided suicide made the most sense as a way to bring closure to her family and friends so she wrote letters for everyone and made sure to spend one last happy day with everyone whilst also seeding the signs that would be backed up by her suicide note and letters. They had to be able to grieve and move on with their lives, however much it hurt.

There was one friend Lisa decided to tell the truth to though...

*

Lisa turned up at her work, she was working at a pub. She wasn't smoking anymore and the highlights were gone from her hair but she was just as tall and weather beaten as Lisa remembered, only she was happier.

Lisa said "I'll have a vodka and coke please."

She turned to address Lisa and gasped "I haven't seen you since university?"

"It's been a while, Nicky" said Lisa "And I've got quite the story to tell you."

Nicky nodded and slid the vodka and coke to Lisa "It's on the house, well on me actually but I am not turning you away. My shift end in half an hour, think you can wait?"

Lisa laughed, remembering the hours in the dark of the Bam-Kursh's toybox "I think I can manage."

Nicky smiled "Well I'm glad to see you again."

Lisa nodded and smiled then she found a seat and watched the punters go by. This was the last loose

end of Lisa's life to tie up, assuming of course that the Bam-Kursh finished the job and didn't chicken out at the last minute. It was nice to see where her old friend worked, to see her in action, she seemed happy. Lisa liked that.

Nicky stopped by with a plate of chips "You look thin as a rake, eat."

Lisa laughed picked up a chip and stared up at Nicky "You're amazing you know that?" and then she ate the chip.

Nicky smirked and went back to the job.

Lisa demolished the plate of chips and it was empty by the time Nicky finished her shift.

"Do you have any plans?" asked Lisa

"None that can't be moved for you" said Nicky.

Lisa grinned and led the way out of the pub "I've got somewhere I want to go, fill me in on what I've missed."

Nicky shrugged and followed Lisa as she started talking.

*

Lisa heard about how Nicky had scraped through with a third in graphic design, done some tefl and failed to get her art off the ground but then she met this artist who worked in a pub and they had a brief fling that ended when the artist got fired for doing weed. That had been what gave Nicky the impetus to get clean and she'd been working at the pub for months now and felt like she'd found a decent way to get by.

"It's a hard life, but a good one" said Nicky as they approached a kebab shop.

"This is on me" said Lisa.

Nicky laughed and they left with a kebab and chips each.

“I don’t know why I let you talk me into this” said Nicky as she picked at her kebab with a plastic fork
“I am not drunk enough for a kebab.”

Lisa smirked then said “I got us kebabs to remind you of one night and it is very important because since I last saw you I have been through some hard times only to land a windfall and get my dream job and tomorrow I will be missing presumed dead and I need someone to find the suicide note and letters I have left for everyone.”

Nicky stopped in her tracks and glared at Lisa “What did you just say!?”

Lisa sighed and turned back to Nicky “I’m not actually going to die but what is going to happen to me is so mad that noone will believe it and I have to let them know that I am not coming back.”

Nicky stared into Lisa’s soul as she demanded “EXPLAIN! NOW!”

Lisa glared at Nicky “Well of course”

Nicky was cowed “I just care about you is all”

Lisa nodded, understanding “It’s okay but keep walking.”

Nicky nodded “Okay but start talking”

Nicky started walking again.

Lisa explained “I met this woman, you were there when I did. She’s called the Bam-Kursh and she is on a whole other level. This is some chariots of the gods shit. Like she and her best friend are humanish now but they used to be these god like entities that defy physics. She has a ship that can travel in time and through the multiverse. And she makes toys, that’s her hobby and she also likes to take over worlds but the important bit is that she makes toys. She finds people and manipulates them into being her willing playthings and then she does things to them and she sells them.”

Nicky shook her head in disbelief “So is this woman someone you met online that you’re only just

meeting in person tomorrow or...?”

“I travelled in time and snogged Steve so he would fall in love with me and thereby cause me to be heartbroken and vulnerable ready for the Bam-Kursh to come along and sweep me off my feet.” said Lisa

Lisa stopped walking and Nicky did the same, she remembered the club and that streetlamp but why?

Lisa continued “She took me round a toy expedition and made me endure a lecture on the history of barbie dolls and that’s when she explained who she is and that she wants to turn me into a toy. Naturally I avoided her after that but times got tough and I knew I had three big chances to go so I phoned her up and turned up for well I didn’t know what and that’s when I travelled in time I got the big windfall and landed the dream job. She wanted me keen, not desperate.”

“And what changed?” asked Nicky “What makes you say “Yeah I’m going to be that strange woman’s toy”?”

Lisa shrugged “Boredom and curiosity. I had to know and now...”

Nicky stared at her “So now what? You’re going to run away and become a toy?”

Lisa sighed “I already am, in here” she tapped the side of her head with the index finger of her right hand “I’m just waiting for the Bam-Kursh to make the biological changes.”

“Biological changes?” asked Nicky

Lisa shrugged “I don’t know. I suppose I don’t need to but for what I can gather I’ll need a good bit of resilience and healing because I am really going to be a toy and the Bam-Kursh has made it very clear that once I am fully transformed she will treat me as we treat our toys.”

Nicky laughed “I used to decapitate my sister’s barbies”

Lisa nodded.

Nicky stared at her “And you’re going with this woman?”

Lisa grinned “It’s going to be fun.”

The penny dropped and Nicky turned to look at the street lamp and backed up against the wall as she remembered seeing the Bam-Kursh that night “She asked you out for dinner didn’t she?”

Lisa nodded “It was good food.”

Nicky laughed “I was so jealous.”

Lisa stared at her “I knew it.”

Nicky blushed and fumbled a recovery “Umm I mean I um was jealous of seeing the sights...”

“With a woman who turns people into toys?” said Lisa with a smirk “I could always let her know if you’re interested? We could be sold as a pair.”

Nicky swallowed “Oh god Lisa if this is my last chance to say it I’ve got to.”

Lisa nodded “I know, it’s okay.”

Nicky looked Lisa in the eyes and said “Lisa Watkins, I have fancied you from the moment I set eyes upon you and you are the kindest, sweetest most endearing woman I have ever had the good fortune to know.”

Lisa kissed Nicky on the cheek.

Nicky stared at her, relishing the sensation of Lisa’s lips upon her cheek.

Lisa said “I am a toy now, Nicky, I am very obedient and I have realised that I liked the thrill of transgression. I want you to enjoy me, to show me what I have been missing. We will never see each other after tonight so there is nothing to lose.”

Lisa kissed Nicky on the lips and pulled her close.

Nicky grinned “Lisa, you show me that you are okay you understand? I know you’re a toy but you show me that you’re alright because I swear to god if you actually kill yourself after this...”

Lisa nodded “I understand, I’ll have the Bam-Kursh show off the merchandise.”

Nicky smiled and could hold back no longer. She kissed Lisa.

Lisa kissed back.

*

Lisa woke up naked in Nicky’s single bed. The room was small and cluttered with dvds and cds, an old laptop lay on a work area to one side. She smelled cooking and went to investigate.

Nicky was busy frying sausages, eggs and bacon.

Lisa said “That smells good.”

“Thanks” said Nicky “I am making you a Full English Breakfast, go have shower, you clothes are in there.”

Lisa nodded “Yes, Maam”

The shower was one of those old fashioned affairs that oscillated between scolding hot and freezing cold but after a moment Lisa found the sweet spot and drenched herself in the hot rain. It felt like she was being reborn. She was sloughing off the skin of Lisa Watkins, architect in training, and becoming something newer, more vital and more alive.

She stepped out of the shower and dried herself off on a towel then she dressed in the clothes. It was what the Bam-Kursh had given her. Flip flops, an emerald green bikini, a pink skirt and a crop top.

She entered the kitchen and Nicky was busy playing up breakfast.

“What’s this for?” asked Lisa.

Nicky said “A last supper for my old friend.”

Lisa didn’t know what to say after that so she just accepted the plate of food and dug in.

Nicky did the washing up while Lisa ate. There was naturally a practical purpose to this but it was also so Lisa didn’t feel awkward about Nicky not affording a similar breakfast for herself.

When she had washed and dried all the cooking utensils and pans Nicky made herself a mug of tea and Lisa a black coffee. She sat opposite Lisa and watched. It was surreal. She kept thinking “You are going to be reported dead. You are going to become a toy for some intergalactic cowboy. I am sitting here watching my best friend, greatest crush and most amazing fuck wolf down food before becoming a dead toy.”

Lisa noticed Nicky looking at her and asked “What are you thinking?”

Nicky frowned, she had to keep this light, she searched her mind and remembered a thought she had last night “You are an excellent choice to be a toy.”

Lisa blushed and cleaned her plate then she asked sheepishly “You really think so?”

Nicky nodded “You are so beautiful, you are the platonic ideal of the female.”

Lisa giggled “I’m glad you approve.”

Nicky smiled sadly “Why do you think I never had the courage to ask you out?”

Lisa grinned “Oh I don’t know maybe because I’m straight?”

Nicky looked Lisa in the eyes “Really?”

Lisa blushed and looked away “Well I’m sorry it took so long...”

“So am I” said Nicky and then she added “And now you’re going to be a toy? Any idea what that’s

going to be like?”

Lisa leaned in close to Nicky and whispered conspiratorially “Complete submission and obedience. I love it. God help me, Nicky, I love pleasing her. I love the way she looks at me. It’s like she wants me with every fibre of her being but she’s holding herself back. I just want to obey.”

Nicky looked into Lisa’s eyes and she found a great hunger there, deep desire. Nicky puckered her lips and kissed Lisa tentatively.

Lisa kissed back.

Nicky pulled Lisa close and snogged her.

Lisa climbed onto the table and her hands reached to undo Nick’s belt buckle.

Nicky pulled Lisa’s skirt and bikini bottoms free then lifted off her top so Lisa was lying stretched out naked on the table and that’s when Nicky saw it- just for a split second as she stared hungrily at Lisa’s naked body- she saw the proportions of a doll, saw the toy that Lisa was becoming. Where last night it had been almost an aphrodisiac here it struck a chord. Lisa didn’t want to obey Nicky, she didn’t want to have sex with Nicky. She was the Bam-Kursh’s toy, mentally, and that is who she wanted to obey.

Nicky backed away in shock and confusion. This felt wrong.

Lisa put her arms down by her sides and asked “What’s wrong?”

Nicky stammered “Th-This”

Lisa frowned and stared at the ceiling.

Nicky approached the table, approached Lisa, nervously. She stared down at the beautiful woman before her and said simply “You’re not mine to fuck. I see that now.”

Lisa sat up and looked Nicky in the eye “Why do you say that?”

“You belong to the Bam-Kursh” said Nicky and stroked the back of Lisa’s head “You’re her toy and

you need to go with her. You're not meant for this world any more."

Lisa swallowed "But you're the only person who knows my secret?"

There were tears welling up in Nicky's eyes now "And I expect you to come see me when the Bam-Kursh has worked the last of her magic with you. I will hold you to that."

Lisa grinned and hugged Nicky "You never know, I might be able to convince the Bam-Kursh to give you one of me. Would you like that?"

Nicky pulled away and looked Lisa in the eyes "I don't want a toy. I want to know that you are safe and happy. Now go on get dressed. I'll report you missing tomorrow lunch time."

Lisa nodded and slid off the table so she could get dressed.

When she pulled the crop top over her head, Nicky coughed.

"I found the collar in your jacket pocket" said Nicky.

Lisa turned and accepted the collar.

"I took the liberty of having it engraved, I hope you don't mind." said Nicky.

Lisa examined the collar, a dog tag hung from it and engraved on it were the words:

Lisa Watkins

Loving Friend

Amazing Toy

"There's space on the back for the Bam-Kursh to put her contact details" said Nicky "I mean we don't

know what you're going to be like as a toy, you might need this."

Lisa said "It's beautiful. Thank you." then she hugged Nicky.

"Here, let me help you." said Nicky and she secured the collar round Lisa's neck and brushed her hair
"There, you look beautiful."

Lisa grinned "Look after yourself, yeah?"

Nicky grinned as she handed Lisa her jacket "Oh, I'll be fine. Enjoy yourself, Lisa. May you be the best and most popular toy."

They shook hands and Lisa left Nicky's house.

*

Lisa rang the doorbell of the Bam-Kursh's apartment.

The Bam-Kursh answered the door and smiled upon seeing Lisa.

Lisa smiled at the Bam-Kursh.

The Bam-Kursh cleared Lisa's hair from her face and stroked her cheek "You said Goodbye?"

Lisa nodded.

The Bam-Kursh slid her hand down to the small of Lisa's back and stood aside let Lisa pass inside.

The Bam-Kursh shut the apartment door and turned to address Lisa "I wasn't sure you'd actually come."

Lisa chuckled "I lay naked and alone in the dark for you. I'm yours."

The Bam-Kursh nodded and approached Lisa "Yes, you really are aren't you? And so beautiful."

Lisa blushed.

The Bam-Kursh ran her left hand through Lisa's hair and grinned "Who is your secret keeper?"

Lisa giggled "Remember outside the club?"

The Bam-Kursh nodded and headed towards the laboratory "How could I forget? It was when I got to swoop in and rescue the damsel in distress."

Lisa followed and said "Yeah, then. There was a woman with me, she had purple hair then and smoked."

The Bam-Kursh started rummaging through her laboratory supplies and cupboards "I remember her being quite jealous of me. How did she take the news?"

Lisa grinned "We spent the night together. I think I'm bi now. Anyway I've promised her that when you're done with me you'll pay her a visit. Show her I'm okay."

The Bam-Kursh and retrieved what she wanted and turned to look at Lisa "I think I can do that. Be quite nice to show off my handiwork to someone who can spot the difference."

Lisa asked "Can I get an explanation or is it bad form to tell your product how she's made?"

The Bam-Kursh chuckled "You really are quite endearing you know?"

Lisa grinned.

The Bam-Kursh coughed and held up a syringe "This will help you heal faster. It will also speed up your metabolism so we don't have to wait so long for the others to take effect."

The Bam-Kursh grabbed Lisa's left arm and held it steady as she injected the solution.

The Bam-Kursh said "Get comfy on the bed, we've got quite a few to get through."

Lisa nodded and approached the bed, she slipped off her flip flops lay down on the bed.

The Bam-Kursh approached with a medical bag. She sat on the other side of the bed and stroked Lisa idly, the way one might stroke a cat.

Lisa asked “What’s the next one then?”

“It’ll make your bones stronger and your teeth whiter and healthier.” said the Bam-Kursh and she injected Lisa with the indicated solution.

“Neat” said Lisa “So what about the head stuff? I mean I know you wanted me keen - and I am-”

The Bam-Kursh interrupted “No one is doubting that you’re keen and want this”

Lisa grinned “Thank you. I just mean well it isn’t usual for toys to be as smart as me is it? I mean what happens with that?”

The Bam-Kursh laughed “I have in here 3 solutions that deal with your mind. The first allows me or any other owner to effectively turn off your mind. You’ll still live, you’ll remain standing or doing whatever it was you were doing but the bit of your brain that is you will be sent into a dreamless sleep.”

Lisa chuckled “Okay I can see the appeal of that.”

The Bam-Kursh said “The second is a carefully designed virus that will shut off the parts of your mind and memory that it would be inconvenient for the product to have.”

Lisa thought for a second “Now that sounds interesting, like what parts?”

The Bam-Kursh frowned “Do you really want to know?”

“I’m interested” said Lisa “I became your toy because I wanted to know what it meant, so start talking.”

The Bam-Kursh chuckled and stroke Lisa’s cheek “Do I detect a hint of self preservation?”

Lisa blushed “I’m sorry”

The Bam-Kursh laughed “It’s alright, I’m joking with you. The solution will render all your knowledge of history, general knowledge and popular culture a distant haze. You won’t remember your family or your friends. All you will remember is that one day you were at university, you ran into me and I convinced you to come with me and now you are a happy little toy. If your owner takes the time to try and teach you, your old memories can come back into focus and in time you can remember who you are but that’s where we get to formula number 3.”

Lisa gave out a long exhale “I can see why it’s needed but I can also see now why this is very much illegal.”

“Have second thoughts?” asked the Bam-Kursh.

Lisa shook her head “I just worry about Nicky, my secret keeper.”

The Bam-Kursh nodded “Well don’t forget you will have one last chance to leave me.”

Lisa sighed “Not a chance. Tell me about formula number 3.”

The Bam-Kursh said “Formula number 3 is why I can confidently sell you as a product. You will have complete loyalty and obedience to the first person you set eyes on, no matter what they do.”

Lisa swallowed “I take you aren’t giving me that before you give me my last chance?”

The Bam-Kursh shook her head “You will have those syringes to take home and inject yourself with before you ring the doorbell tomorrow.”

Lisa nodded. “Maybe go back to the ones I’m getting injected with now.”

The Bam-Kursh stroked Lisa’s cheek “It’ll be okay honey, you’ll love it.”

Then the Bam-Kursh reached into her bag and pulled out a syringe “This will still let you identify pain but it will be felt as a deeper richer bitter pleasure.”

Lisa smiled “Oh am so glad I have that”

The Bam-Kursh grinned and injected Lisa with the solution.

“This- ” she said pulling out a different syringe “-will make it that, aside from your hair any part of your body that is cut and removed from the rest will continue to function as if it were connected. I’ve tied in a safety feature to trigger your mind switch off if you spend more than half an hour in a paralysed state.”

Lisa said “Thank you for adding that last bit. That er doesn’t particularly sound fun for me but I guess, it’s necessary if I am to be a toy.”

The Bam-Kursh said “It’s my favourite feature.”

Lisa said “You weren’t the kind of girl who played dress up with your dolls were you?”

The Bam-Kursh shook her head slowly “No, I was someone who saw toys as a way of relieving stress.”

Lisa frowned “But you’re so sweet to me?”

The Bam-Kursh said “I’m good at what I do, doesn’t mean I won’t relish beating you up and pulling you apart.”

Lisa sighed “Fine, inject me.”

The Bam-Kursh injected Lisa.

Lisa asked “So what about needing to breathe, eating, shitting and periods? Can I sweat?”

The Bam-Kursh pulled out a syringe “This will make all those things entirely optional. Periods will effectively stop because you’ll only create a lining for eggs and indeed release eggs if you want to.”

Lisa said “See now that makes me think that I can live happily as your chew toy. Hang on you’re saying toys can have kids but isn’t that like... well... rapey? I mean someone buys me from a shop I am instantly obsessed with them and they can have kids with me? Gosh, if I’m completely obedient! What

if - I mean I'm toy right? - and I'm bought for these kids and this skeevy child going through puberty--"

The Bam-Kursh rolled her eyes "Lisa give me some fucking credit yeah? I may be an eldritch abomination possessing the body of a woman and turning you into a toy so I can conquer the multiverse but I draw the line at rape and especially THAT. When it comes to sex you will have agency enough to say no and to consent."

Lisa breathed a sigh of relief "Well thank god but why can I have children if I'm a toy?"

The Bam-Kursh laughed "Because I am not blind to the reality that you are a young woman who swings both ways and may well want to settle down and raise a kid in future. The fact that you are legally property and have very few rights does not mean you can't fall in love. Sylphs can get married and sylphs can have pet sylphs so toys can as well."

Lisa said "I think I love you, you know? I assumed well that I'd be scooped out and replaced with a robot or something?"

The Bam-Kursh shook her head "I'm a have my cake and eat it kind of woman."

Lisa said "Well between pulling my head off and beating me up do you reckon you might find time to let me be human, you know take me for walks and shit?"

The Bam-Kursh kissed Lisa's forehead and injected Lisa then she pulled out a final syringe "This will make your skin exceedingly durable. You will be able to withstand a head on nuclear blast, the hottest of fires, deep space, the highest water pressures and even treading on lego bricks. Needless to say your mind will turn off after half an hour in any environment when you can't do anything to help your situation. You will however be endangered by stars, blackholes and logic bombs."

Lisa whistled "Impressive. So how can you-?"

The Bam-Kursh grinned "Context sensitive. You are a durable toy, not a soldier, if a person uses their hands or a simple tool you will be slightly easier to take apart than you are now."

Lisa nodded "You've sold me on this."

The Bam-Kursh injected Lisa with the final syringe.

Lisa asked “What now?”

The Bam-Kursh got off the bed and packed away the medical bag then she asked “Would you like to see the factory?”

Lisa sat up “Alright, yeah.”

The Bam-Kursh headed over the control console.

Lisa got off the bed and slipped on her flip flops then she strode over to the doorway.

The Bam-Kursh pulled a lever and the apartment door sprang open.

The Bam-Kursh approached Lisa and held her hands as she looked into her eyes “Thank you. Truly. Lisa, you have been more than I could ever have hoped.”

She stroked Lisa’s cheek and kissed her on the forehead “Come on”

Lisa followed the Bam-Kursh out into a vast cathedral of industry as vast cables fed conveyor belts and rollers and great white crates.

The Bam-Kursh led the way to an inspection ladder and made sure the way was safe before she let Lisa climb up after her. The Bam-Kursh led Lisa along the inspection route to a heavy metal door and after passing multiple forms of identification the door shucked open. Inside was a vast chamber the size of a football pitch.

Lisa was amazed “What is this place? I mean, how does it work?”

The Bam-Kursh said “Ever heard of quantum teleportation?”

Lisa thought for a second then said “That’s the grandad’s spade approach to teleportation right? You get destroyed at one end, rebuilt at the other, except its completely different matter.”

The Bam-Kursh nodded “Well this is like that only the original is not destroyed and we retain the data so we can keep printing units out. The floor and ceiling serve to essentially build the units subatomic particle by subatomic particle, logic encoding after logic encoding. Then when the entire field is filled with units the wall at the back is pushed by pneumatic rams and the units sluice off the printer bay, down a series of rollers and onto conveyor belts where the units are then sent off for shipping across the multiverse.”

“Wow!” exclaimed Lisa impressed “So where’s the input? Where do I go?”

The Bam-Kursh grinned “I love that you love this you know?”

Lisa smirked “You gonna show me or what?”

The Bam-Kursh led the way as she chuckled “You’re a chicken asking how KFC is made.”

Lisa snorted.

It was a long walk but at last the Bam-Kursh led Lisa to a large what space with cable and weird looking antenna overhead.

“This is where you go.”

Lucy stood looking at the place and was lost in thought for a moment. This was an almost religious place for her. This, though she would not be aware of it when it happened, was where Lisa would become Legion, where she would finally become merchandise.

The Bam-Kursh checked her watch and pulled what looked like a yoyo out of her pocket. She clasped her hands around Lisa’s neck, as if examining her collar. She read the engraving on the dog tag off to cover the twisting and splitting of the two halves of the yoyo. “Lisa Watkins, loving friend and amazing toy. Aww, who wrote that?”

The Bam-Kursh used the different halves of the yoyo as handles as a super thin hyper advancing cutting wire was revealed under high tension. The Bam-Kursh proceeded to slowly saw through Lisa’s neck. The Bam-Kursh’s thumbs and knuckles held Lisa’s head carefully so that there was a 2 millimetre space between the areas that had been cut, preventing healing.

Lisa answered “Nicky, my secret keeper. It’s sweet isn’t it?”

“Yeah” said the Bam-Kursh “I think we’ll keep it, include it in the product.”

Lisa asked “What are you doing? I mean I know you wanted a look at the collar but what those disk shaped things?”

Lisa’s head separated from her neck.

“Lisa, honey, hold you left hand out flat before you.” said the Bam-Kursh.

Lisa frowned but held her left hand out flat before her.

“Perfect” said the Bam-Kursh “Now shut your eyes and don’t open them until I say.”

Lisa shut her eyes and said “Okay, my eyes are shut”

“Good girl” said the Bam-Kursh and she rested Lisa’s head on her left hand as the Bam-Kursh carefully stowed the cutting wire disguised as a yoyo.

When her hands were free the Bam-Kursh picked up Lucy’s head in her hands strode forward three paces and turned around so she was looking at Lisa’s headless body.

“And open your eyes” said the Bam-Kursh

Lisa opened her eyes and shrieked. She made her left hand into a fist and watched as the headless body with the outstretched left hand clenched its fist.

“This is very weird” said Lisa.

The Bam-Kursh grinned “It’s fantastic isn’t it? You’re fantastic. Look you can lick yourself out.”

Lisa tried to shake her head but instead she watched her neck gyrate without her head and Lisa’s perspective didn’t change.

“No” said Lisa “I don’t like this”

“Spoil sport” said the Bam-Kursh and she put Lisa’s head back on her neck. It healed in a moment.

Lisa shook her head and sighed with relief to experience the familiar sensations.

Lisa shuddered “I really did not like that.”

The Bam-Kursh stroked Lisa’s arms compassionately and said “You are now ready to be the mould for the packaging.”

Lisa stared at her, wondering what on earth she was talking about and then she realised. Dolls always came in vacuum formed clear plastic packaging to hold them in place and keep them from moving in transit. Except Lisa hadn’t been prototyped, there was no rough version to use for the forming, there was just Lisa. She sighed “The fast healing was the first injected, you knew that would function. You needed to make sure the other stuff was working before you’d let me in the vacuum former.”

The Bam-Kursh nodded “That and I like the power of decapitating you.”

Lisa groaned “Whatever”

The Bam-Kursh led the way to the vacuum former.

Lisa followed.

The vacuum former was a chamber the size of 4 stacked vans, a clear door led inside. The floor of the chamber was a mesh grill and the top was where a sheet of plastic would be heated up and lowered down.

The Bam-Kursh said “You’ll have to strip. You can withstand molten plastic. Your clothes can’t.”

Lisa started stripping but asked “What about my hair?”

The Bam-Kursh handed Lisa what looked like a leather shower cap. “It’s your skin. I grew the sample I

took from you and treated it with the same stuff. Your eyebrows and eyelashes will go but they'll have grown back by the time we record the data for the printers.”

Lisa shrugged and put the leather cap over her hair.

“On your front first” said the Bam-Kursh “Fingers and toes together, mouth closed, arms and legs splayed.”

Lisa was let into the vacuum former and the Bam-Kursh activated the machinery.

A sheet of hot plastic was pulled down and the vacuum formed the plastic around Lisa.

The plastic was allowed to cool before being lifted up to free Lisa.

The Bam-Kursh let Lisa out.

The plastic shell is scanned into the system and a new copy of the shell is printed out of wire mesh, flipped upside down and held in place, ready for Lisa to climb in and form the other half of the packaging.

Lisa climbs in backwards and fits in the mesh shell then shuts her eyes and awaits the piercing heat of near molten plastic. The hot plastic is brought down, forms around Lisa and cools then it is lifted up and Lisa is allowed free.

The Bam-Kursh lets Lisa out then hugs her and kisses her on the forehead “I’m proud of you, Lisa. You’re ready. I think I’ll save you the walk back.”

Lisa starts gathering up her clothes.

The Bam-Kursh pulls out a simple drawstring bag and holds it open “Drop them in here, I’ve already put your collar in there.”

Lisa places the clothes in the bag and stands naked before the Bam-Kursh. “So what next?”

The Bam-Kursh hands her a hair band “Put your hair into a pony tail.”

Lisa raises an eyebrow in curiosity but does as she is told.

The Bam-Kursh pulls out what looks like a flimsy black fabric bag, unzips it and lays it flat on the ground.

Lisa finishes the ponytail.

The Bam-Kursh says “Sit down on the bag.”

Lisa stared at the odd black mess of straps for a moment trying to work out what it was and then she realised, the front, back and sides had been folded out and laid flat on the ground, the bag would be built around her.

Lisa sat down on what looked like to be the bottom and buckled herself in. She slipped her feet into a special fold at the bottom of the bag. She slipped her left and right arms through straps in the side and folded her arms around her then a thought occurred to her. “This is a bag right? I’m going to be immobile and in the dark here.”

“Yes” said the Bam-Kursh standing over Lisa “Is that a problem?”

Lisa said “Well you can cut my head off, we can talk while you walk.”

The Bam-Kursh grinned “Gather up your pony tail in your right hand and pull ever so gently away from you.”

Lisa started gathering her hair.

The Bam-Kursh strode behind Lisa, pulled out her yoyo and squatted down,

Lisa pulled her ponytail forward and to the right.

The Bam-Kursh massaged Lisa’s neck and twisted the two halves of the yoyo. “You might want to shut your eyes now.”

Lisa shut her eyes “I’m ready”

The halves of the yoyo became handles as wire sliced carefully through Lisa’s neck.

Lisa’s head swung forwards and dangled from the ponytail held in her right hand.

The Bam-Kursh united the two halves of the yoyo and stowed it then she grabbed Lisa’s head. “It’s alright, I’ve got you.”

Lisa breathed a sigh of relief and dropped her ponytail.

The Bam-Kursh said “I’m going to set yoy head on the ground now. Hug your knees, I need to pack your body away.”

The Bam-Kursh placed Lisa’s head on the ground and went to her body.

Lisa hugged her knees and the Bam-Kursh zipped up the sides of the bag and buckled the top closed.

The Bam-Kursh wore the drawstring bag first then slung the backpack containing Lisa’s body onto her back. Finally she picked up Lisa’s head and held like she was recording a vlog on the move. “You can open your eyes now.”

Lisa opened her eyes as saw she was being held at arms length from the Bam-Kursh and could see the bag that she knew contained her body. “It’s an interesting experience.”

The Bam-Kursh chuckled at started walking “I know everything about you Lisa but while we walk I want to enlighten you on anything you don’t know.”

Lisa asked “What’s the point? I’m going to forget everything.”

The Bam-Kursh shook her head “The point my dear is that you have an inquiring mind and we have a long walk ahead of us.”

“Okay” said Lisa “Tell me about the Farsh-nuke, tell me about sylphs and tell me about the United Civilisations of the Multiverse.”

*

The Bam-Kursh kicked open the door of the apartment and rammed Lisa's head on a golf club "I won't be a moment, darling."

Lisa sighed.

The Bam-Kursh slung her backpacks onto the bed and unzipped the bag containing Lisa's body then she started rummaging through the clothes racks.

Lisa called "Hey, I'd quite like my body please."

The Bam-Kursh chuckled.

Lisa shut her eyes and focused on what she could feel and her memory of getting into the bag. There were two straps holding her arms in place. She felt along her left arm with her right hand until she found the strap, she grabbed it and pulled her left arm free. Then she freed her right arm. She slipped her feet out from the fold at the bottom of the bag. Finally she felt for the buckle around her waist.

Now free, Lisa edged along the bed until she found the floor and nervously stood up. Her sense of balance was shit since you get that from your ears and her ears were not on her body at the moment but she was confident and had muscle memory on her side.

Lisa stood and clapped with her hands.

The Bam-Kursh turned and approached Lisa's body, she grabbed Lisa's hands and pulled them to her side then she lifted Lisa's body up and laid it on the bed. She cried "Stay!" and stroked Lisa's arms compassionately then she stood up, approached Lisa's head and picked it up. "Lisa, I don't think you quite get this, you stay until I am ready for you."

Lisa stuck her tongue out obstinately.

The Bam-Kursh laughed and carried Lisa's head over to rejoin her body.

Lisa healed in moments then said “If we’re going to do this I need to know that I can trust you.”

The Bam-Kursh looked sadly at Lisa “I have lied to you, manipulated you, cut your head off and I will beat you. You are going to be my property and I am going to sell you as a toy. There is no trust there is only your loyalty, obedience and sweetness. The next time you walk through that door my work will be complete and Lisa Watkins the human being will be no more. You won’t have the rights that you do now and you won’t care what I do to you.”

The Bam-Kursh handed Lisa her bra, knickers, jeans, tshirt and jacket. “This is your last chance to walk away.”

Lisa got dressed and removed the hair band, the ponytail unravelling as a result.

The Bam-Kursh handed Lisa a medical bag “If you come back, inject the contents of these three syringes before you ring the doorbell.”

“So this is goodbye then?” said Lisa “Even if I return... well... I won’t. Your toy will but I will be... gone. Lost to the fog of memory.”

The Bam-Kursh nodded stroke Lisa’s cheek “I will miss you. I think I will. You’re smart, I like that but smart toys are scary. You won’t sell otherwise.”

Lisa nodded sadly “And that’s all I ever was to you, in the end. A product.”

The Bam-Kursh nodded silently, biting her lip then she kissed Lisa on the forehead. “Goodbye Lisa, it was fun.”

“Yeah” said Lisa “It really was.”

Lisa approached the apartment door.

The Bam-Kursh pulled some levers on the console to reveal London as the apartment door sprang open.

Lisa stepped out bare foot into London.

*

Lisa felt lost and alone. She didn't want to just turn around and ring the bell. She had to think about this but she had nowhere to go. She was a dead woman and she didn't want to deal with that. She just - she just wanted someone to make her feel loved and wanted.

She staggered out into the crowd and a commanding male voice said "Only two kinds of people walk barefoot: People who can't be arsed to put on shoes because they're so close to home and people who don't need shoes in the first place. You look like a bit of both."

Lisa turned to the source of the voice and found herself looking at a man in a bedraggled suit with a tie in a windsor knot, emerald green eyes and short black hair.

He smiles at her "It's alright, I don't bite."

Lisa approached."

He sticks his hands in his pockets and slouches as he paces, explaining idly "So I was just in the middle of convincing Julius Caesar that maybe he should reform the army so the legions aren't tied to the success of the generals when the Bam-Kursh turns up, this time as a woman, and I'm like fuck it, I'm going to be a woman, why the fuck not? But she's not here to play the great game, she's here to offer me an olive branch, a toy she says. A toy that has engraved on her collar: Lisa Watkins, Loving Friend, Amazing Toy."

He pauses to watch Lisa's reaction.

Lisa is confused.

The strange man continues "I'm no stranger to hooky goods and me and the Bam-Kursh... well... We go WAY back. I know what she's like and I know how she works and that means I have just left my best friend of my human life with a woman that when I last met her, tried very hard to murder me."

He pauses and looks at Lisa "I am risking my best friend's life to see that you are okay, Lisa. I am the Farsh-nuke and I have a very important question to ask you: What do you think that shed is doing

there?”

With that the man turns and strides towards where a rickety wooden shed lies parked at the side of a road.

Lisa follows.

The man enters and leaves the door ajar.

Lisa carefully approaches the doorway and sees a large room with a mushroom shaped console beyond. She enters it.

Lisa enters a large seven sided art deco room covered in crisp packets and soda bottles.

“Don’t mind the mess” says the man “You can shut the door if you like. We both know I can’t hurt you.”

Lisa shuts the door behind her.

The man approaches with a bowl of what looks like dry cat food “Kibble?”

Lisa examines the food nervously then looks at him.

He frowns “Yeah wasn’t exactly sure what toys ate. This is sylph kibble, keeps the girls good and strong and their hair every so shiny.”

Lisa smirks “So you really are the Farsh-nuke?”

The Farsh-nuke nods “And you look lost do you want to follow me through into the living room and tell me about it?”

Lisa looks at him awkwardly.

The Farsh-nuke smacks his head in frustration at his own stupidity “Toy, Farsh-nuke, she’s a toy.”

He grimaces “Lisa, I am going to sit on the sofa in the living room. There will be space next to me.”

The Farsh-nuke strides through a door into a living room with sofas and armchairs tvs and dvds.

Lisa follows.

The Farsh-nuke sits rather ostentatiously on the sofa.

Lisa sits beside him.

“So what is it you do with sylphs?” asks Lisa.

The Farsh-nuke frowns “I am not a nice man, Lisa, when I saw the sylph pill in action I panicked. I did... things. Nasty things. Twenty years of nasty things. I saw sense eventually and I became a hero. For a brief moment I knew someone, she was my you, she made me complete. She was my pet and one of my best friends.”

“What happened to her?” asked Lisa.

The Farsh-nuke stared into space for a long moment then said simply “Bad things.”

Lisa took his hand and squeezed it.

The Farsh-nuke looked at Lisa and frowned “You’d make the most amazing sylph you know?”

Lisa was taken aback “But I’m - I’m...” she trailed off. She couldn’t say it. The words hurt.

“Tell me about her” said the Farshnuke and he brushed hair from her face.

Lisa nodded “She is lying, manipulative, she cuts my head off for fun and I love her. I love how small she makes me feel, how the hairs stand up on the back of my neck just thinking about her, how she possesses every inch of my body and soul and makes me want to obey her.”

The Farsh-nuke nods.

“She’s just so confident and she’s always got a plan, you know?” says Lisa “But she doesn’t care about me. She cares about the product.”

The Farsh-nuke said carefully “What needs to happen before you become the product?”

Lisa holds up the medical bag “There are three syringes in here for my mind. The first lets me be turned off the second makes all memory aside from the taming distant and foggy and the third makes me obedient.”

The Farsh-nuke nods “Yep that’s the Bam-Kursh alright.”

Lisa gives the Farsh-nuke a pained expression “What do I do? I love her so much and I want to please her so much but I-I don’t want to...”

The Farsh-nuke hugs Lisa “Darling I would take you in heartbeat, you wouldn’t even have to become a sylph.”

Then he pulls back “But I don’t think you want to run away. I don’t think you want a third way. I think you’re scared because nobody can be that good but I think you want to go through with this.”

Lisa was on the verge of tears now “Will you inject me? These - It’s hard. I can’t do it.”

The Farsh-nuke stroked Lisa’s cheek “I’ll do it. I’ll deliver you to the Bam-Kursh and I’ll even ring the door bell for you but I am not doing it now.”

Lisa swallowed hard “Why? It’s all I’m good for.”

The Farsh-nuke froze as tendrils of rage clawed at his features. He swallowed and shook his head “Lisa, you are a young and beautiful woman, you could achieve so many things. I am not... delivering... you now because I know how the Bam-Kursh operates and I know who you are and you did not start down this path because the Bam-Kursh was that good at talking to you. Something happened to make you choose this, what was it?”

Lisa’s mind was put back to happier times and she started to calm down as she explained “Well she gave me three chances after I next saw her when she would make me go away and consider my life

choices. My ability to say no would diminish each time but I would have three chances. So it was a card I kept in my back pocket for a rainy day.”

“And that rainy day came.” said the Farsh-nuke “How?”

Lisa sighed “Turns out graduating just means a hunk of debt to pay off and three years of your life wasted and oh by the way you’re more likely to be killed by the benefits system than you are to be murdered.”

The Farsh-nuke grimaced angrily “And when you’re trapped between the Nazis and the Communists suddenly a deal with the devil, especially if you have three more chances to cancel the deal, looks pretty darn tempting. What happened next?”

“She gave me a fuck ton of money and a job.” said Lisa “And I took my first chance and ran with it.”

“But?” said the Farsh-nuke.

“But she was under my skin.” said Lisa “And I was just like well my job’s awesome but I know how it ends and I don’t know how being a pet ends and I’m excited to know how I get there.”

The Farsh-nuke frowned “The ennui of the career ladder. How did you spend your next chance?”

Lisa said “I said goodbye. I knew I was hers then. So I faked suicide notes and had my friend from university, Nicky, act as my secret keeper and ‘find’ them”

The Farsh-nuke nodded “The hooks were well and truly in and what was your third chance?”

Lisa looked at him awkwardly “This is it.”

The Farsh-nuke froze, his brain making dreadful calculations. He whistled then said “Well played Bam-Kursh, well played”

Lisa stared at the strange man “What do you mean?”

The Farsh-nuke explained “You’re not a doctor or a nurse and no offense but you don’t look the type to

do drugs from a needle. The only way you could possibly get yourself injected is if you walk to a hospital and ask around and they'll take one look at you and decide to get the syringes far away from you. Fuck knows what surprises the Bam-Kursh has in store if they try to study the syringes. You will get sectioned for saying stuff their understanding of science says is impossible, faking suicide and expressing a desire to be a toy. They'll realise you're harmless and your conditioning will break. You will get a good job and live a good life."

Lisa said "I don't understand."

The Farsh-nuke sighed "The Bam-Kursh cares for you. She really cares for you. She gave you up. She gave up the product you represent to her."

Lisa was struggling to take this all in "But that's good isn't it?"

"Oh it's very good" said the Farsh-nuke.

"Then why do you seem angry?" asked Lisa

The Farsh-nuke stood up and grimaced. He threw a cushion across the room. "I am angry because the Bam-Kursh is a cold calculating little bitch who is not ruled by such things as emotions."

He spat on the floor in disgust "She planned to sell you to me and that means she knew that there would always be a reality where that exists but for that reality to exist in a universe where she gave you up something has to change and that something is me turning up to play the hero only to realise that yet again I have to kill a woman."

Lisa stood up cried "What!? You're going to kill me?"

The Farsh-nuke looked Lisa in the eyes "She's going to mass produce and sell you. She only needs to do that once for all the other Bam-Kursh's to get you as a toy. I, through my stupid desire to help, am the only person available who can inject you. If I don't, I can't return to my friend. I will have abandoned her to the woman who did this to you."

Lisa swallowed, understanding "One way or another you have to let some become a toy of the Bam-Kursh?"

The Farsh-nuke nodded, silently furious.

“And I’ve already been tamed” said Lisa “I just need to make the last step.”

The Farsh-nuke walked past Lisa and paced the console room.

“I can’t do this anymore.” He said.

He screamed at the ceiling “I am not doing this again!”

Lisa stepped out into the console room.

“Twenty years! Twenty fucking years! And then...! And now this! And now this.” The Farsh-nuke kicked the console.

Lisa asked “Are you okay?”

“Morality’s a bitch” said the Farsh-nuke then he opened a cubby in the stem of the console and pulled out a pencil and paper. He handed the paper and pencil to Lisa and said “I need names and places. The prime minister, the head of the department of work and pensions, your secret keeper. If I’m here I might aswell do some good beyond well...”

Lisa started writing.

The Farsh-nuke watched her and felt a pang of heartbreak “In another life we might have been friends?”

Lisa finished writing and said “Or I could have been your pet?”

He smiled wistfully at the thought.

Lisa approached him “What would you do, if I were your pet?”

He grinned “Oh I’d spoil you, you’d have your heart’s every desire. I’d take you for walks and you’d

snuggle up as I watched Professor Logicity.”

He stroked her cheek gently and said “I am sorry, Lisa.”

“Don’t be” said Lisa “None of this is your fault.”

The Farsh-nuke hugged her “Think of the Bam-Kursh, Lisa, think of all the times she’s made you feel alive.”

Lisa felt a slight scratch on her left arm and heard the thinking of spent syringes dropping to the floor.

The Farsh-nuke walked in silence with Lisa to the Bam-Kursh’s apartment.

Lisa decided to ring the doorbell herself.

The door swung open and Lisa walked inside as the Farsh-nuke backed off.

*

The sand wedge struck Lisa across the temple. The pain was bitter but rich in ecstasy.

The Bam-Kursh dropped the sand wedge and picked up a cricket bat.

Lisa grinned, her body electric with excitement. “One last act of domination.”

The Bam-Kursh smiled sadistically “I told you this day would come.”

The cricket bat slammed into Lisa’s left leg and she collapsed with a scream of bitter ecstasy as her lower leg was dislocated from knee.

The Bam-Kursh swung the cricket bat round in a circle and impacted Lisa’s right ear as she fell.

The Bam-Kursh stood over Lucy’s fallen body and whacked her right in the face with the flat of the bat, breaking her nose.

The Bam-Kursh knelt down and moved the cricket bat to her off hand. She pulled a dagger out of her pocket and started making careful cuts across Lisa's body.

Lisa stared up at her mistress and knew she was on borrowed time. She cried out "I love you!"

"I know" said the Bam-Kursh testily as she finished the last of her cuts.

The Bam-Kursh stowed the dagger and got to her feet as she moved the cricket bat to her primary hand again.

Lisa hurriedly got her feet, fully healed and looked over to where the toy box sat, its lid open to catch and slam down on anything thrown into it.

The Bam-Kursh circled Lisa and slammed her in the arse with the cricket bat, sending her fling towards the door.

Lisa's shoulder caught the corner of the hallway wall and she screamed with bitter ecstasy. It was now that she noticed she was standing naked and her clothes lay in pieces on the floor. She laughed.

The Bam-Kursh abandoned the cricket bat for a pair of hockey sticks.

Lisa grinned and backed away to give the Bam-Kursh room to swing.

The Bam-Kursh lashed out with one heavy strike from the left stick and followed it up with the right.

Lisa had a moment to catch her breath before the Bam-Kursh started pounding, just pounding away at Lisa.

Lisa jumped and the Bam-Kursh seized the opportunity presented. Lisa was juggled into the air above the Bam-Kursh and when just about ever square inch of her flesh had been pummeled the Bam-Kursh picked up a baseball bat and slammed Lisa's bruised and battered body into the toy box.

The lid of the toy box slammed shut on Lisa and she lay in exquisite ecstasy in the dark until the injections took effect.

*

The Bam-Kursh tossed the baseball bat away and stood panting for a moment. She approached the toy box and saw a device she'd installed on the toy box lid glow with a green light. The injections within Lisa had activated and the device had just successfully turned Lisa's mind off.

The Bam-Kursh opened up the toy box and found Lisa in a heap. She lifted Lisa up and carried her to the bed then she pulled out her quantum oscillator and altered the jamming frequency to allow Lisa's body to go limp.

The Bam-Kursh slid the fold out bag underneath Lisa and buckled her into the bag, next she slid Lisa's feet into the special fold at the bottom of the bag and pulled Lisa's arms through the side straps. She posed Lisa so she was hugging her knees and altered the jamming frequency to hold her body in that position then she zipped up the bag and buckled the top closed.

The Bam-Kursh went to the console and after a while at the controls she pulled the door lever and it sprang open.

The Bam-Kursh slung the bag containing Lisa onto her back and walked out the door.

*

The factory was buzzing with overseers and workers now. It was, after all, about to go live.

The Bam-Kursh made the long trek over to the input scanner for the factory and found the packaging waiting on the input plate.

The Chief Overseer nodded respectfully "Maam"

The Bam-Kursh smiled at the reassuring sight of Francine, the fat freckly 50 year old massively experienced chief overseer, and said "It was a bit fraught but I got her in the end."

The Chief Overseer nodded "Well just lay her in the packaging and my crew will have her ready for

data entry in few moments.”

The Bam-Kursh nodded and approached the packaging. It was the bottom part of the packaging and she half smiled at the impression of Lisa’s butt.

The Bam-Kursh carefully took the bag containing Lisa off her back, unbuckled the top and unzipped it. She altered the jamming frequency and Lisa’s body went limp. She pulled Lisa’s arms and feet free then unbuckled her from the bag. She lay Lisa’s body out flat and altered the frequency again so the Bam-Kursh could easily lift Lisa into the packaging. She altered the frequency to let Lisa’s limp body fit perfectly into the grooves then she stood back.

The Chief Overseer’s hand picked team bought the top part of the packaging on top of Lisa and then they proceeded to glue, tape and cable tie the two halves of the packaging securely around Lisa.

The Chief Overseer said “Maam, we’re about the wire in the psychoinhibitors and interference dampeners.”

The Bam-Kursh nodded and aimed her quantum oscillator at Lisa. She altered the frequency one last time and Lisa’s body was held rigid in position.

The Bam-Kursh lowered the Quantum Oscillator.

The Chief Overseer nodded for work to continue.

The button to turn Lisa’s mind on was added and Lisa’s skirt, crop top, bikini, flip flops and collar were added. Then interference dampening wires were laid out and small battery powered computers programmed to knock Lisa unconscious and alert security if mind brain function was detected were added. Finally the cardboard branding was slid into position and secured with tape.

The Chief Overseer inspected the packaging then cried “Alright guys! You’ve done a good job, clear the area and get to your work stations. It’s go time.”

Everyone cleared away from the input plate and the Bam-Kursh looked anxiously at Lisa as beams of logic scanned her every sub-atomic particle and oscillation of logic.

The Chief Overseer listened into an earpiece and said “That’s three good scans. Maam, she’s all yours.”

The Bam-Kursh ran forwards onto the input plate and tore at the packaging. She pulled the knife from her pocket and started cutting Lisa free. Then she pressed the switch on button.

The toy opened her eyes and said “Hello, I’m Lisa. You can call me something different if you like, what’s your name?”

The Bam-Kursh grinned “You may call me Mistress, I am the Bam-Kursh.”

The toy grinned “My maker. You raised me up from humanity, how may I make your life better?”

The Bam-Kursh stroked the toy’s cheek and said “You can start by getting dressed.”

The toy nodded “With pleasure, Mistress.”

The Bam-Kursh helped the toy out of the packaging and handed her her clothes.

The toy got dressed and the Bam-Kursh readied her collar.

The toy stood before the Bam-Kursh in the pink skirt, crop top and flip flops.

The Bam-Kursh smiled and approached the toy, she grabbed her round the waist and pulled her close.

The toy grinned.

The Bam-Kursh secured the collar around the toy’s neck and said “Follow me girl and stay close. I don’t want to lose you.”

The toy nodded.

The Bam-Kursh stroked the toy’s cheek and turned away from her.

The Chief Overseer was grinning “She’s everything you wanted then?”

“Oh yes” said the Bam-Kursh “A truly amazing little toy. No if you’ll excuse me, I -”

The Chief Overseer chuckled “Go, enjoy her. You’ve earned it.”

The Bam-Kursh nodded and started making her way to the apartment.

The toy followed obediently.

*

The Bam-Kursh entered the apartment and headed to the console and felt breath on the nape of her neck. She turned and saw the toy standing right behind her. Clearly her toy was a good deal stupider than Lisa.

The Bam-Kursh had a wicked thought and asked “Hey girl, how would you feel if I cut your head off?”

The toy blushed and giggled “I am yours to command and play with.”

The Bam-Kursh studied the toy for a long moment and fondled the yoyo in her pocket.

The toy was grinning at her. It was a stupid childish grin, the kind a lovesick youngster gives their crush.

The Bam-Kursh shook her head, it wasn’t the same. There was no pleasure to be taken from such a brainless individual. She said “Go stand by the side of the hallway, when I stroke your head follow me like you have done.”

The toy nodded and went to stand by the side of the hallway.

The Bam-Kursh manipulated the controls and pulled the door lever.

The Bam-Kursh headed out the door, stroking the toy’s head as she passed.

The toy followed the Bam-Kursh out the door.

*

They were in an office in a building. A short balding white man in a business suit had a bunch of files before him on a desk.

He stood up as they entered and shook first the Bam-Kursh's and then the toy's hand "Miss Bam-Kursh, Miss Watkins, I am Cedric Lumpkin, I am a judge by trade but the ministers for retail, animal welfare and human rights agreed to hire me to be your liaison."

Mr Lumpkin sat down in his office chair.

The Bam-Kursh and the toy each took a seat opposite him.

"Right this is the situation as I understand it" said Mr Lumpkin "You, Miss Bam-Kursh, wish to claim legal right to own, mass produce and sell Miss Watkins here? Indeed not only that but you wish to file a patent and copyright claim upon her?"

The Bam-Kursh nodded "That's right."

The toy smiled bemusedly at Mr Lumpkin.

"Why?" asked Mr Lumpkin "On what grounds?"

The Bam-Kursh said "The why is simple. I need money, a lot of money, an awful lot of money. I am an incarnation of the elder god Bam-Kursh and so I decided to break out my old hobby, making toys."

Mr Lumpkin sighed "At least you're honest about what motivates you but surely you must see that it is quite impossible for any civilised society, let alone one that was forged under oppression, to tolerate selling thinking beings as toys?"

The Bam-Kursh shook her head "It's transformative. Lisa Watkins may have been born a free thinking creature but I have remade her. I changed her outlook and ideals, I have rewritten her soul, I have changed her biology with tools and potions of my own original design. The toy you see before you now shares the face and essential personality attributes of Lisa Watkins but everything else was changed by

me.”

Mr Lumpkin said “But that’s murder?”

The Bam-Kursh shook her head “I consulted with Lisa every step of the way and I have full logs of our meetings. I even have her memories backed up. I absolutely remade Lisa into a toy but she absolutely consented. I mean she gave herself the last three injections. Besides which Lisa isn’t really dead. She is changed beyond almost all recognition but that is still her mind, her memories of all saved the taming are locked behind a haze that can be lifted over time with help. The intent is that the customers get to enjoy a blank slate that will grow to love them.”

Mr Lumpkin frowned “If there is evidence to what you say then it would seem that you do indeed have a case but this sets a very dangerous precedent.”

The door squeaked open and a tall blonde woman in a business suit arrived “Sorry I’m late, ship got delayed. What did I miss?”

Mr Lumpkin stood up to shake the woman’s hand in greeting “Ah Miss Danse’s hatchling liaison.”

The hatchling of Lucy Danse shook Mr Lumpkin’s hand “Yes Lucy is very keen that this goes off without a hitch.”

The hatchling took a seat beside the toy.

Mr Lumpkin said “Miss Bam-Kursh here was just explaining that she thinks it is fine to patent, copyright and sell as property Miss Watkins here because she believes she has sufficiently transformed her but in a manner that does not constitute killing...”

Mr Lumpkin’s face was amusement hiding disgust.

The hatchling nodded “The Bam-Kursh can do that for mucvvh the same reason as Lucy.”

Mr Lumpkin stared at her. “What are you talking about?”

“I am talking about the fact that Lucy Danse is a brood queen to at least a billion different hatchlings

like myself. Many are sent off to war but a good 3% are given to various nobles and friends as gifts.” said the hatchling confidently.

Mr Lumpkin said “But the hatchlings are born with the mother’s memories and personality and share exactly their dna. In many ways you are Lucy Danse so Lucy going about these practises is fine because she can be sure of consent and nothing is enshrined in law.”

The hatchling grinned, sensing victory “Ah but Lisa did consent. Lucy met her and verified as such. And the method of producing the toys is logicular replication, essentially quantum teleportation but without the need for quantum entanglement and the destruction of the original. If quantum teleportation was deemed ethically sound enough to use for transporting people then legally toys produced via logicular replication can be said to be the same as the original toy and therefore what the one consented to, the others would have too.”

Mr Lumpkin was stunned by the argument but the hatchling wasn’t done yet.

“By your own logic if the Bam-Kursh was not asking for payment the toys could be just as manufactured and made available to the same people in the same way. You would just have it that any random person without the means to provide the toys with sufficient engagement could get one and without any kind of legal regulation to protect the toys or the people who by them.” said the hatchling.

The Bam-Kursh whistled, impressed.

Mr Lumpkin said “Alright, you have a case but I want all records and I want a full scan of Miss Watkins to ensure that everything is above board.”

*

Months passed in fierce negotiations but finally the Bam-Kursh, the toy and the hatchling hit the restaurant to celebrate.

Lucy and Greta sat at a table and waved them over.

The hatchling and the Bam-Kursh sat opposite Greta and Lucy, the toy stood beside the Bam-Kursh.

“So a little birdie tells me you are now the proud legal owner of one Miss Lisa Watkins?” said Lucy conspiratorially.

The Bam-Kursh grinned.

The hatchling said “It was a nightmare, months of banging our heads against this brick wall as every time we convinced him to see a single element of our argument he would resort to the same old rhetoric. ‘Well this is slavery, this is murder, this is abuse.’”

Greta chuckled.

“Anyway, eventually we wore him down” said the hatchling.

“Good” said Lucy “And how do you feel?”

The Bam-Kursh whispered to the toy “Hey girl, sit on my lap yeah?”

The toy nodded and once the Bam-Kursh had moved back a bit the toy sat on her lap.

The hatchling sighed “I just feel so euphoric, so relieved, it’s finally over.”

Lucy laughed “I meant about each other.”

The hatchling frowned “How do you mean?”

The Bam-Kursh and Greta laughed, even Lucy smirked.

The hatchling looked to the toy curiously and said “Well how do you feel?”

The Bam-Kursh looked the hatchling in the eyes and said “I think it could work.”

The hatchling looked back at Lucy “Why?”

Lucy shrugged “I am sort of the mascot of the United Civilisations. I could do with having toys made

of me and well what else are you going to do?"

The hatchling blushed "Well I suppose I am a little open to the idea."

The Bam-Kursh chuckled "She'll be in stores by the end of the week."

The hatchling looked away nervously.

The Bam-Kursh said "Anyway I am afraid I must confess something." She pulled a memory gun round out from her pocket "I cheated"

Lucy laughed "Fantastic" then she dug a memory gun out of her pocket.

The Bam-Kursh handed the round to Lucy.

Lucy loaded the round, took aim in the dead centre of the toy's forehead and fired.

The memories of Lisa's life up to the point of the recording of the round, when the Bam-Kursh had taken her to meet Lucy for the first time, exploded like a bomb in her head as all at once fog cleared in an instant but the shockwaves did not stop at the recording of the round. The walls in Lisa's mind were crumbling and she remembered the injections, remembered her head being cut off, remembered the bag, remembered the Farsh-nuke and yes even remembered the Bam-Kursh juggling her in the air with hockey stick blows.

Lisa burst out crying.

The Bam-kursh squeezed Lisa tight and said "It's okay, I am never leaving you again."

Lucy handed Lisa her serviette.

"I thought - I thought I was gone." said Lisa.

The Bam-Kursh tutted "I have always known that I would do this. I just had to be certain the product could be sold."

Lisa froze, her mind was still a little fuzzy “Product?” and then she realised what that meant and said “You mean you’ve done it? You’ve actually sold me?”

“I mean you are legally my property” said the Bam-Kursh proudly “And you are selling like the proverbial hot cakes.”

“Oh” said Lisa, overcome by pride.

“And” said Lucy “You’re going to have some company in that toy box of yours.”

The hatchling sheepishly waved “Hi”

Lisa grinned and said “Hey, Mistress, you can massage my neck if you want?”

The Bam-Kursh said defensively “You know I never-?”

Lisa nodded “I know and I figure you’ve earned it. Besides, kind of uncomfortable on your lap.”

The Bam-Kursh kissed Lisa’s neck “I love you, you know, with all my heart.”

The Bam-Kursh twisted the two halves of the yoyo and pulled them apart.

“It’s funny” said Lisa as the wire bit into the flesh of her neck “It kind of tickles.”

*

Lisa and the hatchling followed the Bam-Kursh into the apartment.

The Bam-Kursh went to the console.

The hatchling asked “So how does it feel to be a toy then?”

Lisa said “I imagine what it would feel like to meet god. There’s just this intense feeling of love and warmth and protection. Like I will never be harmed again.”

The Bam-Kursh snorted.

Lisa smirked “Well like nobody who I don’t trust on a very deep level will ever harm me again.”

The hatchling nodded “That sounds really nice actually.”

“Oh it is” said Lisa “And it’s fun.”

The door sprang open.

The Bam-Kursh said “I believe I made you a promise?”

Lisa thought for a second then grinned “Oh”

The Bam-Kursh stroked the back of Lisa’s head “You ready?”

“What about her?” asked Lisa, regarding the hatchling.

The Bam-Kursh said “Lucy, strip naked and climb in the box. We’ll let you out.”

The hatchling stared at the Bam-Kursh “I’m sorry, what?”

“He’s establishing obedience” said Lisa “Strip naked and get in the box.”

The Bam-Kursh and Lisa left the apartment.

The hatchling shrugged and started stripping.

*

Nicky staggered over the threshold of her house with her shopping and kicked the door shut behind her. A week since Lisa had been reported missing, a week of guilt and interrogation, a week of feeling judged and experiencing the most intense loss.

The door swung open behind Nicky but she didn't notice and staggered into the kitchen.

"I told you I'd come back." said Lisa.

Nicky dropped her bags and turned at the sound of Lisa's voice.

Nicky hugged Lisa and said "I wasn't sure. Oh Lisa, I wasn't sure."

Lisa patted Nicky's back "It's okay. I'm here."

The Bam-Kursh coughed.

Nicky let go of Lisa and saw that yes, it was the same victorian adventures from their first encounter outside the club.

"I can put your shopping away if you want to go into the living room." said the Bam-Kursh "Hate to see good produce go to waste."

Nicky looked to Lisa.

Lisa smirked "Are you asking me for permission?"

Nicky rolled her eyes and led Lisa out of the kitchen.

The Bam-Kursh picked up the bags and started putting the shopping away.

*

Nicky entered the living room with Lisa and said "I thought you and she? Well you're her toy."

Lisa grinned "Oh absolutely. I am legally her property now, she can turn me off and everything."

Nicky frowned "But does she turn you on?"

“Well yeah” said Lisa “She likes me. No fear of me being left to rot in the toy cupboard.”

Nicky groaned “Does she excite you?”

“Well yeah-” began Lisa.

The Bam-Kursh interrupted Lisa “I think question your lovely friend is trying to ask is weather you want to fuck me?”

Lisa blushed “Okay, this is awkward.”

“Then sit down and let me handle this” said the Bam-Kursh

Lisa sat down on the sofa.

The Bam-Kursh and Nicky locked eyes.

The Bam-Kursh watched Nicky carefully.

Nicky grimaced and said “How is this any of your business?”

“She’s my property” said the Bam-Kursh.

Nicky noticeably flared with anger but restrained herself, her hands clenching and unclenching. She didn’t want a fight.

“And my friend.” said the Bam-Kursh “I can’t really explain what it feels like because, no offense, we experience vastly different levels of reality. I can tell you this though. I don’t want to fuck her and I don’t want to marry her. Humans are so... small. You’re adorable. You’re children playing at being grown ups because you have money and internet and politics. I have watched universes spontaneously generate, subdivide and die. I have made toys of generals and kings, I have waged bloody warfare with my kin and savaged the multiverse without realising. And you would pick a fight because I stated a simple fact about my relationship with Lisa.”

Nicky snarled “You arrogant bitch.”

The Bam-Kursh chuckled.

“I know you don’t give a shit about Lisa but I do” snarled Nicky “And I need to know if she loves you.”

“Yes” said Lisa simply.

The Bam-Kursh gave her a worried look.

Nicky felt winded “What?”

“It’s not just - Christ Nicky, I’m human. Or I was. I’m not- I can’t experience being a toy the way she can experience loving one. I have to go with what I know and I absolutely feel sexually aroused.” said Lisa “It’s a terrifying and addicting loss of control. She’s played with me and used me and now I can’t live life any different.”

Nicky went to sit beside Lisa and comfort her.

The Bam-Kursh felt incredibly awkward “I’m sorry, I didn’t know.”

Lisa sighed “You have nothing to apologise for. I love what you’ve turned me into and the life you’ve made for me.”

Nicky asked “And what about me?”

Lisa shrugged “You’re a good friend and I love to make you happy and you feel so nice and you make me feel so nice but I’m her toy.”

Nicky nodded then said “Let’s see a demonstration then?”

Lisa stared at her confused.

The Bam-Kursh raised her eyebrows with interest.

Nicky said “You said you’d have the Bam-Kursh show off the goods when you were finally a toy so lets see a demonstration?”

Lisa grinned.

Nicky said “That’s more like it. Bam-Kursh, I trust you don’t have a problem with this.”

“Not at all” said the Bam-Kursh with a smile. “Lisa, get off the sofa.”

Lisa stood up obediently and felt bouyed with confidence.

“May I?” said the Bam-Kursh, gesturing to the seat vacated by Lisa.

Nicky laughed “Of course.”

The Bam-Kursh took the seat on the sofa and said “Honey, cross legged on the floor between my legs if you will.”

Lisa did as was asked of her.

The Bam-Kursh said “You’re not squeamish are you?”

Nicky said “No, why?”

The Bam-Kursh started gathering Lisa’s hair up in a pony tail. “Well this is more of a party trick really but we like it don’t we girl?”

Lisa giggled.

The Bam-Kursh tied off the pony tail and held it loosely “Take this and pull gently”

Nicky accepted Lisa’s ponytail and within a matter of moments she held Lisa’s head in her hands.

Nicky was wide eyed with shock “Okay, this is unusual.”

Lisa grinned “It tickles when she does that.”

Nicky stared at her then asked “How much does she cost?”

The Bam-Kursh grimaced “A lot. If you want to see her. You’ll have to volunteer.”

Nicky stared at the Bam-Kursh “What do you mean volunteer?”

The Bam-Kursh frowned and poked Lisa’s nose “Like her.”

“I think you better leave” said Nicky and she placed Lisa’s head back on her body.

Lisa said “We’re coming back at christmass, and new years and your birthday...”

Nicky glared at the Bam-Kursh.

The Bam-Kursh chuckled “Don’t worry if I can convince her to let me cut her head off, I can see we miss christmass.”

“Thank you” said Nicky.

Lisa said “No, we’re coming back.”

The Bam-Kursh got to her feet and said “Honey, we’ve got a girl in the toy box remember?”

Lisa nodded and got to her feet “Oh yeah I can’t wait until she’s conditioned and obedient. She’s going to be so adorable.”

The Bam-Kursh rolled her eyes and said “See you later.”

Then they entered the door and it shut behind them.

The door was kicked off its hinges and a man wearing a bedraggled three piece suit, with slip on trainers, a tie tied in a windsor knot, short messy black hair and the stench of death about him entered.

Nicky stared at him for a moment, frozen in horror.

“Your name’s Nicky, right?” said the strange man “Ever heard of a girl named Lisa Watkins? She’s about average height, blonde beautiful and obsessed with being a toy to someone called the Bam Kursh?”

Nicky nodded, not daring to speak.

“Excellent” said the strange man “My name is the Farsh-nuke I’m an old friend of the Bam-Kursh and well I’ve just murdered every rightwing fucker that contributed to getting Lisa to keep going to the Bam-Kursh and well... you know? Anyway I’m here because I figured you might want to get away for a bit.”

Nicky was so amazed by the offer that she forgot to feel afraid and said incredulously “You kick down my door, reeking of death, say you’ve murdered people and now you want me to go with you?”

The Farsh-nuke sighed “Oh for fuck’s sake! I am not going to kill you, I am not going to turn you into a toy and I am not going to keep you as a pet. I just thought you might fancy a trip round the multiverse instead of getting harrassed because you were the last person to see a pretty white English girl alive.”

He turns, irritated and storms off across the street.

Nicky follows him.

He enters an incongruous rickety wooden shed.

Nicky steps inside and is blown away.

The Farsh-nuke groans “Oh so you’re coming are you? This is the seghat. Septagonally systEmic Green nothingness HABitational Transcender. It is bigger on the inside, travels through time and the multiverse and it has a handy dandy fast return switch.”

The Farsh-nuke presses the switch and there’s a sound like a stammering Sh!

The Farsh-nuke strides out the seghat and finds the friend he’d left here “Having fun?”

“Oh yeah” says his friend “You have got to admit she is awfully adorable.”

The Farsh-nuke turns to look where his friend is looking. He finds the Bam-Kursh casually sawing through Lisa’s neck and blue screens “You have got to be fucking kidding me!?”

Lisa is giggling as the saw slices her head clean off her neck.

The Farsh-nuke’s nightmares come back to haunt him as the Bam-Kursh lifts Lisa’s head clean off her body by the ponytail.

Lisa spots the Farsh-nuke and squees, pointing at him.

The Farsh-nuke sees the decapitated head of a woman he thinks he basically lobotomized shriek at him and her body point a finger accusingly at him.

He runs over and punches the Bam-Kursh in the face while roaring with rage.

As the Bam-Kursh falls beneath the Farsh-nuke’s hail of blows, she throws Lucy’s head at Nicky.

Nicky catches Lisa’s head “What did I miss?”

Lisa sighed “Mistress has been trying to drum up purchases. She’s really keen on building up a war chest. I think she wanted to save me as a surprise or something because I was only pulled out when the Farsh-nuke had gone but I remember him and he’s well a bit confused.”

Nicky placed Lisa’s head back on her neck and cried “Hey Farsh-nuke! You can stop punching her! Lisa’s fine!”

Lisa approached the Farsh-nuke and gently touched his shoulder.

The Farsh-nuke whirled around and only stopped his fist from impacting Lisa at the last second. “Shit.”

“I’m okay” said Lisa “I’m better than okay. I remember everything.”

The Farsh-nuke's anger dissipated with relief "You're okay"

Lisa laughed "Oh yeah and I am fully legit now. I'm a real toy, it's awesome."

The Farsh-nuke smiled and stroked her cheek "Well as long as you're happy."

The Bam-Kursh rose behind him and clapped a hand on his shoulder.

The Farsh-nuke didn't even look around "Go ahead, do your worst. I deserve it."

The Bam-Kursh said "Bad day huh?"

The Farsh-nuke nodded "I've got a lot of blood on my hands, I don't need any more."

"And yet she stopped you, just by being in your way?" said the Bam-Kursh.

The Farsh-nuke shrugged "It'd be like punching a kitten. You just don't do it."

The Bam-Kursh made an approving hum then said "How would you like to spread leftwing values by beating the crap out of dick heads and get to see that face every day?"

The Farsh-nuke whistled "And what would I have to do to pay for such kindness?"

"That is the payment" said the Bam-Kursh with a chuckle "Your reward will be a Lisa toy of your own."

The Farsh-nuke looked to his friend.

"Go for it" said his friend "I can always camp out in the Seghat."

Nicky said "Yeah, I could probably stick around if I know you can do that should the Bam-Kursh decide to turn me into a toy."

Lisa grinned.

The Farsh-nuke turned to face the Bam-Kursh.

The Bam-Kursh punches him in the face.

The Farsh-nuke sighed and offered his hand “Just until I’ve had a good enough holiday that I can head off on my own again and I want my Lisa’s memories unlocked.”

“You’ve got a deal” said the Bam-Kursh and they shook hands.

Then Lucy Danse’s hatchling strides over, completely naked, and says “Caesar wants to know whether Cleopatra can be made into a toy, what should I say?”

The Farsh-nuke faints.

“Did I do something wrong?” asks the hatchling.

The Bam-Kursh shakes her head “Poor boy’s just tuckered out is all.” She looks to the Farsh-nuke’s friend “Get everyone inside his seghat, you’ll be safe there. I have to try my luck.”

And with that the Toy Maker strides off in search of fresh prey.

The End

p.s.

Sorry this is long and typo ridden, I wrote it by accident because I was distracted and needed it out of my system and then I realised I quite like it and now it's canon. So sorry.

Also just so we're clear the Bam-Kursh is absolutely a villain this is just her day in the limelight.

The Game

A Distraction Fic

By

Alexander Gordon Jahans

Elizabeth Baker stood with her hands clasped behind her back nodding quietly along to the speech Emma Watson was making.

The year was 2084 and the 93 year old Emma Watson was making a speech about the achievements Feminism had made since the early days of Third Wave Feminism at Elizabeth Baker's presidential inauguration. Not the first female president, not the first female hispanic president but the first female independent president. Winning as the establishment is easy but winning as the radical left outsider? That was an achievement.

Elizabeth Baker thought back to how she'd felt as a young girl watching President Remirez get sworn in, to see the corruption of the political system start to be scrubbed clean. She knew how important this was. How many daughters would grow up with renewed hope and optimism at the witnessing of Elizabeth's inauguration. One female president was a fluke. Two female presidents was progress but rare. Three presidents? Now that was a pattern, that was precedent, that was an engine that was finally kicking into gear.

Emma Watson finished her speech and stood back from the podium as she introduced Elizabeth.

Elizabeth took to the podium amid thunderous applause. Before her was vast sea of recording devices. She coughed. swhe hadn't felt this nervous since she'd played the prophet Muhammed at her school's nativity play. "My fellow Americans..."

*

Austin, Texas.

In a bar in the middle of nowhere an aged craggy faced man was drinking a bottle of tequilla as he surveyed his fellow publicans.

There was an old gay couple in the corner, fantastic white moustaches. They each wore old fashioned augmented reality headsets and seemed half asleep as they drank bourbon.

A group of nerds were busy playing augmented reality table top dungeons and dragons as they drank mountain dew and jack daniels.

There was a pack of cougars on a hen night being lapdanced by a latino man. A tempting prospect but he wasn't really into boys and it'd be impolite to leave him out.

Aha! She was young, no more than thirty at most, and proud of her body judging by the cutoff jeans

and tight sleeveless shirt. She had long blonde hair tied back in a ponytail and seemed to be attended by a meathead bodybuilder with tats and a Trump tattoo.

“Darren, I said no.” said the young woman.

“But Felicia you promised...” said the meathead as he reached out a hammy hand for her face.

She recoiled. “No, Darren, I said buy me a Jack Daniels and Coke and I’ll think about it. Not the same thing.”

“So, you were just leading me on then...?” said the meat head a note of anger in her voice.

The young woman flinched. “Now, Darren, there’s no need to use that tone of voice.”

The meat head smiled maliciously. “What tone of voice?”

The old man drained his tequila and slammed it on the table like a judge banging a gavel. “Hey republicuck, the lady said no.”

The meathead glared at him, hand moving to his holster. “And what business is it of yours?”

The old man smiled patronisingly. “I thought trumpers believed in intervention to protect the American Dream.”

The meathead was visibly riled now. “Oh yeah and what do you mean by that?”

The old man stood up. “I mean I ain’t a nice guy but I draw the line at rape asnd genocide you know?”

The young woman pleased. “Darren, come down. I’ll give you the bloody blowie, just calm down. He ain’t worth it.”

The meathead removed his pistol from his holster and aimed it at the old man. “Nah... Nah, this is about honour now. This fucker’s disrespecting me. Hey jag off, Trump is not a bad guy and he never advocated genocide.”

“Because the American people were smart enough to never give him a chance asshole.” said the old man then he smiled maliciously “I mean what self respecting republican is going to vote for a man with such insecurities about the size of his penis. I guess that’s why you voted for him, huh? You microdicks gotta stick together don’t you? I#’m not surprised your girl don’t want such a small thing in her mou-”

The meathead fired.

Six bullets one after the other.

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

The pub went deadly quiet as a chill of horror filled the air.

The old man took one between the eyes, one through the throat, three in the chest and one in the crotch. Blood welled from the holes.

The young woman was utterly terrified.

The meathead started to realise just how badly he had fucked up. America still had the death penalty.

Then the old man started to laugh. "Prick, please! I've been taking bullets since before your daddy's condom burst!"

There was an audible sense of relief in the atmosphere of the pub.

The young woman watched the meathead freeze up with fear. Oh shit...

"Now I'm gonna give you three options. Option 1. You get the fuck out that door and I never see your arse again. Option 2. You give the lady your gun and present your arse for a kicking. Option 3. Well Option 3 is I have some fun." said the old man as he picked up his tequila bottle and approached the meathead.

The young woman looked to the old man pleadingly. "He's sorry. He just lost it. Have mercy."

The old man nodded and smiled warmly at the young woman. "It's okay, I won't kill him."

The meathead swallowed.

The young woman said "Give me the gun."

The meathead couldn't think from fear.

"I said, give me the gun!" snarled the young woman as she snatched the gun from the meathead's hands.

The old man loomed over the meathead. "Looks like the lady just earned you some mercy."

The meathead finally managed. "Don't press charges. Please don't press charges."

The old man broke the bottle against the counter then rammed the ragged edge into the meathead's crotch. "I won't if you won't."

"Th-thank you." said the meathead weakly.

“Get to A and E boy and don’t expect to see your lady friend again.” said the old man.

The meathead nodded then hurried out the pub.

The old man sat in his seat.

“Hi.” said the young woman. “I’m Felicia. Sorry about everything.”

The old man smiled warmly “Hi, Felicia, I’m the toymaker. Do you want to tell me about it?”

Felicia smiled “You’re a toy maker. What kind of toys?”

“Oh, very special ones.” he said placing an arm round her shoulders.

*

The next morning Felicia exited the shower to find the toy maker waiting for her with a light blue bikini. She laughed. “You’re sure about this?”

“Absolutely.” said the toy maker as he admired her beauty. “Now come on get dressed, I only have this room until 12.”

Felicia snatched up the bikini and got dressed as a news programme played on TV.

Elizabeth Baker was giving her speech. “It is my plan to spend the next 4 years in office making ready for a transition to a post-scarcity society in the West. We have an increasingly ancient population and advancements in the fields of robotics and artificial intelligence have already put many people out of work. We will still be a capitalistic society but one that acknowledges the abundance automation technology gives us instead of accepting artificial scarcity.”

“Smart lady.” said the toy maker.

Felicia nodded as she sat down on the bed beside the toy maker. “Oh she’s wonderful, I followed her through the primaries. You know she won a nobel prize at 25 for proving that America could transfer to a post scarcity society in just 16 years.”

“Not a bad looker either.” noted the toy maker.

Felicia laughed “You’ve got a thing for blonde’s don’t you?”

The toy maker grinned and stroked her cheek. “Well they do make the best toys.”

Felicia blushed. “Do you really think so?”

The toy maker removed a collar from his jacket pocket and said “I’ll get you registered later but for now remember: You are free to think and say whatever you like but obedience is preferred.”

Felicia giggled.

The toymaker secured the collar round her neck and kissed her on the forehead then ran a hand through her hair. "Now climb into my suit case, there's a good girl. I think I need to head to Washington."

Felicia kissed him on the cheek then curled up inside the suitcase.

*

The President of the United States of America was reclining in an armchair watching the new Star Trek holoseries when she heard a familiar voice cry "Oi, Queenie!"

Elizabeth paused the programme and removed the headset. A tall ginger woman in jeans and a Rey Skywalker t-shirt was standing before her. She looked so out of place. A gangly Scot in the White House.

Elizabeth grinned and she almost squeaked "Charlie! You came!"

The tall Scot gave Elizabeth a serious look. "And miss my Queen's coronation? Never."

Elizabeth rose from her armchair.

Charlie embraced her. "I'm so proud of you. Saviour of the American People."

"Well hold on, I've only just got the job. Bit early to start handing out titles isn't it?" said Elizabeth.

Charlie pulled back and said pointedly. "Queen? President? Why not saviour?"

Elizabeth laughed and led Charlie over to a sofa. "How are you anyway. It must have been what? 10 years?"

Charlie nodded as she took a seat beside Elizabeth on the sofa. "10 years since Donnegall, yeah... I've done alright for myself, got a job lecturing on sustainable energy generation at a university up near Edinburgh. The fringe is fantastic."

Elizabeth smiled "Oh that's excellent, really excellent. And Pam?"

"Gives Doctor Who tours round Cardiff." said Charlie.

Elizabeth snorted. "You're kidding me?"

"And she's macking on a gender fluid sort that used to do the visual effects for the revived series, she's well happy." said Charlie.

"I'll bet." said Elizabeth.

They fell silent as an old tension reestablished itself.

Charlie broke the silence. "You got yourself a first lady yet?"

Elizabeth blushed and bit her lip then she shook her head.

"Me 'either...'" said Charlie.

They held each other's gaze for a long moment.

There was a knock at the door.

Elizabeth breathed a sigh of relief then called "Come in."

A short hispanic woman entered "Maam, there's a man asking to see you."

"And?" said Elizabeth. "I'm the President, I imagine there's going to be a lot of people who want to see me."

The aide nodded, bit her lip then swallowed and coughed before speaking again. "It's just that there are certain words and phrases. Triggers that are associated with top secret knowledge. Stuff you won't be briefed on for at least another week. He stood outside the entrance messaging this stuff to someone. He knows something, Maam. The boys at Langley would rather like to know what."

Elizabeth grimaced.

Charlie said "I'll go."

"No." said Elizabeth matter of factly. "You live here now." She stood up and buttoned up her jacket.

Charlie was stunned and said quietly "Okay..."

"If you'll excuse me, I must attend to our guest." said Elizabeth then she strode out of the room with the aide.

*

The old man was waiting for her in a meeting room, two visibly armed guards quietly guarded the door.

"Nice suits." said the old man with a smile as Elizabeth took a seat before him. "I do so love American hospitality. Service with a smile and the visible threat of violent death. Charming."

"Yeah, well from what I gather you're lucky you aren't experiencing the kind of hospitality our boys at Langley can deliver." said Elizabeth. "Who are you?"

"A toy maker." said the old man. "Just a toy maker."

"Then how is it that you have my boys so jumpy?" asked Elizabeth.

The old man smiled with dawning realization. “First day on the job. You won’t have been briefed yet will you?”

“Briefed about what?” asked Elizabeth with just enough cold menace in her voice to make him think it was a ploy.

The old man looked her in the eyes. “I am a very dangerous man, Madam President, the truth is that I could easily be ruler of the world if I wanted.”

“Then why aren’t you?” asked Elizabeth.

“Because, like I told you a moment ago, I’m just a toy maker.” said the old man.

“Okay then... What kind of toys do you make?” asked Elizabeth.

The old man grinned. “Ones with life and soul and a lot of personality, I’ll show you my latest creation tomorrow if you like but for now I would like to make you an offer.”

“What kind of offer?” asked Elizabeth. She needed all the information she could get for the security services after all.

“My services for you.” said the old man.

“Pardon?” asked Elizabeth.

“You have a very particular mandate to deliver, Madam President.” explained the old man. “You need congress to play ball. You need the supreme court to back you and support you and protect your ideals. You need the media to be kind to you I can help you with all of that.”

“Why?” asked Elizabeth. “Why would you?”

“Because when the time is up you’ll belong to me.” said the old man. “I’ll explain what I mean more thoroughly tomorrow but basically I want a challenge. I want to do an awful thing in the most ethical moral and kind way possible and in return for agreeing to go down this road with me your people get one glorious term of office along with the hope that you will return one day like Arthur or Jesus.”

Elizabeth frowned she was confused. “I don’t understand. Will I return?”

“No.” said the old man. “If you agree to do this with me, and I succeed as I hope to do, you’ll be as good as dead.”

Elizabeth stared at him. “Why the fuck would I agree to that?”

“Because you’re smart and you’re principled.” said the old man. “Oh you have to trust me. I get that that’s going to be hard but if I double cross you you can always try and double cross me and if I was going to double cross you, why wouldn’t I just take you by force?”

Elizabeth was stunned. “You realize you are in the most heavily defended building in the entirety of

America?”

The old man chuckled. “Madam President, you don’t negotiate with terrorists, not even to get information. You are only talking to me now because your own security services know that force will not work with me.”

Elizabeth swallowed. She was visibly nervous now.

“I’m not going to take you unless you consent.” said the old man. “I won’t double cross you. You’re smart. You know that you can achieve more in 4 years with everything working in your favour than you can in 8.”

“Then why don’t you give me the full two terms?” asked Elizabeth.

“Because I want this to be a challenge.” said the old man. “The most powerful woman in the world with a lot to keep her here, a lot of reason to say no. If I waited until after both terms it would be a satisfying enough challenge.”

“You’re insane.” said Elizabeth.

The old man smirked. “Think about my offer.”

Then he removed a phone from his pocket and gave it to her. “I took this from a recent acquisition of mine. In it you’ll find the messages with allowed this little meeting to take place. I suggest you press your boys in Langley for explanations about what they mean and refer to. I’ll send you a message on this tomorrow. Come alone or I will be forced to demonstrate why I can be such an asset to your time in office.”

The old man stood up from his chair and said “If I never see you again, good luck on your time in office. I honestly hope you manage to push your ideas through congress and the supreme court.”

He left the room.

Elizabeth stared at the phone in silence.

*

The next day Elizabeth entered an abandoned warehouse to find a suitcase illuminated by a spotlight.

She took a deep breath then said “There’s nobody here.”

Then there was a flash of light and an agent appeared before her stripped naked, hands and feet taped behind his back.

There was another flash and another agent appeared, similarly stripped and bound.

Then another flash.

And another flash.

And another.

On and on it went until finally the old man appeared in a flash of light with one last agent and dusted his hands off. “Sorry but I did warn you. I expect there’ll be a third team none of you lot know about along to try and mount a rescue mission later but lets get on with the explanations shall we?”

“The Bam-Kursh.” said Elizabeth. “That’s your name isn’t it?”

The old man nodded “That or Frank.”

Elizabeth nodded and a chill run down her spine. “So it’s true then? You’re an Elder God?”

“Well a reincarnation of one, yeah...” said Frank. “I ain’t seen any of your gods, sorry.”

Elizabeth swallowed then said. “I was told that the best chance for humanity is that I try to humour you, give you what you want.”

Frank glared at her. “Has anybody been pressuring you?”

“Why do you care?” asked Elizabeth.

“I want a challenge.” said Frank. “No fun if its easy.”

“Fun?” asked Elizabeth. “Is that what this is to you? A game?”

Frank nodded then he stood aside and gestured to the suitcase. “After you Madam President.”

Elizabeth nervously approached it. “So what’s the game?”

Frank unzipped the suitcase and said “This is Felicia.”

Felicia clambered out of the suitcase and shook her head to release some trapped gas.

Elizabeth stared at the young blonde bikini clad woman.

“Hi” said Felicia with a smile.

“She’s a toy.” said Frank. “My latest acquisition. She’ll fetch a pretty penny to one of my other selves but I mostly do it for the thrill.”

Elizabeth glared at the old man. “She’s a toy.”

Frank nodded. “An executive toy to be precise. My other selves are expanding the United Civilisations of the Multiverse to help in the war effort and they need a way to pay for it. So we toy makers make toys.”

“This is slavery.” said Elizabeth with considerable disgust.

Frank frowned. “Slavery is hard work under atrocious conditions for no pay with terror and pain as motivating factors. Felicia here, like all toys is made practically invulnerable, to find pain pleasurable, has a mental off switch to prevent the terrors that can come with immortality and she’ll spend her time awake played with, fawned over and happy. Not exactly the same thing but we can argue the semantics later.”

Felicia giggled.

Frank patted her back proudly.

“So you want to turn me into a toy?” asked Elizabeth.

Frank smiled sadly. “Oh no that would be much too easy.”

“So what then?” asked Elizabeth.

“I want to tame you to the point where you cease to be sentient, to the point where you may as well be made of plastic.” said Frank.

“You’re going to kill me?” asked Elizabeth.

“In a sense.” said Frank. “I hope to make you so obedient you cease to think and feel and are just a plaything for me to do with as I wish.”

Elizabeth stared at him then said with barely contained rage and revulsion. “I think my answer is no.”

“Alright.” said Frank. “It was a long shot anyway. Good luck on the whole president thing. I’ll be sticking around for the next month so just give me a call if you wish to reconsider. I have no idea if this is even possible, I just want to try.”

“Thanks but no thanks.” said Elizabeth.

Frank’s left eye exploded as a bullet exited his skull.

“Ah, that would be my cue to leave.”

Felicia, Frank and the suitcase vanished in a flash of light.

*

Elizabeth meant what she said. Who would be willing to pay that price? Who would be that stupid?

But then she started to see the fruits of her labours. How the bureaucracy, party infighting, careerist politicians, corporate interests and the media pushed back against her. Winning the presidency when the establishment didn’t want you too just meant you get to be blamed for the establishment blocking you

at every single turn. At this rate she'd be lucky if she got a second term.

Now suddenly it wasn't so simple. What would you give to save your country? To save your world?

*

"No." said Charlie. "No, I forbid it."

"I'm president." said Elizabeth in frustration. "And it's my life."

They were arguing in the living room of Elizabeth's house.

"But I love you!" cried Charlie in frustration.

Elizabeth collapsed into an armchair.

Shit. There it was. This was a moment final so big the tension got too much. There was a spotlight shining on the elephant in the room.

Charlie repeated it more quietly and knelt down before Elizabeth. "I love you. Don't do this. You don't need to do this."

"I'm only going to be president once." said Elizabeth. "I have to use every tool I have to my advantage."

"But for so high a price?" pleaded Charlie.

Elizabeth nodded. "The needs of the many..."

Charlie shook her head. "Tell him he can take me."

"He doesn't want you." said Elizabeth. "And anyway I'm sacrificing myself, not anybody else."

Charlie looked deep into Elizabeth's eyes. "You're serious aren't you?"

Elizabeth nodded. "I'm sorry..."

Charlie kissed her on the lips. "No more hiding. No more denying what's between us. If you're going to go at least give me the next 4 years."

Elizabeth kissed Charlie back.

*

Frank was waiting for Elizabeth this time. There was a different young blonde woman in a bikini with

him this time.

“Who’s she?” asked Elizabeth.

Frank ran a hand through the hair of his latest acquisition. “Her name is Emma. Who’s she?”

“I’m Charlotte.” said Charlie. “And this is my girlfriend.” She put an arm round Elizabeth protectively.

“Aww...” said Frank. “You’re a couple, that’s sweet.”

Elizabeth said “Just me, you understand. You only get me.”

Frank nodded. “So... you’ve just hired me. I will do what I can off my own initiative of course but anytime you need me I’ll be there.”

“You’re serious?” said Charlie. “You just need a promise to do what she wants?”

Frank smiled. “I realize I may look like a mug right now but if I can’t convince her to come gladly after 4 years in her company I really don’t deserve a shot at the challenge. Incidentally there might be some collateral taming of you so if that happens I promise you will mak a fanmtastic toy.”

Charlie frowned.

Elizabeth sighed. “I suppose if she consents and goes gladly but treat her with respect. Only I am yours.”

Frank nodded.

*

4 years later.

Elizabeth Baker stood down as President after 4 glorious years in office. Fire arms had been banned, drugs decriminalised, the death penalty abolished, a national health service set up, a universal basic income instituted, all paid for by corporation tax, capital gains tax and inheritance tax. Government run automated fruit and veg farms competed with private farms to encourage world wide use of automation and ensure disgruntled farmers didn’t price food out of reach of the poor.

The old man strode out of the shadows to stand beside Elizabeth. “Are you satisfied?”

Elizabeth smiled “Lets go play this game of yours.”

Charlie squeezed Elizabeth’s hand. “I’m coming with you. I want to make sure you go peacefully.”

They walked off with the old man and entered into a car as he proceeded to drive them away.

*

The car came to a stop at a quiet country estate and they exited.

“Welcome to Chez Kursh.” said Frank.

Elizabeth nodded and looked about the place approvingly.

“So what’s going to happen?” asked Charlie.

“We’re going to have fun.” said Frank and he smirked “Of course I could have you blissfully subservient in a matter of hours but I want to enjoy this and more importantly I want you both to enjoy this.”

Elizabeth felt her self let go of a pressure she didn’t realize had been on her. “I... I thought - I thought this was going to be like a death sentence.”

Frank held her gaze. “Oh no, my dear. We are going to take this nice and slow, so relax. Make yourselves at home wherever you like. There’s a hedge maze, an olympic sized swimming pool, a hot tub, a tennis court and I think if I remember rightly there may even be a stable.”

Elizabeth laughed. “You have to be kidding?”

Frank held her gaze not laughing. He waited for the laughter to die down then said “You have to be willing. That’s what makes it fun.”

Elizabeth held his gaze for a moment then nodded.

Charlie led Elizabeth away.

*

After a month of fun and games Elizabeth and Charlie had relaxed around Frank. They entered into the banquet hall and Frank was frying up breakfast as per usual. “I’ve got a little surprise for you.”

“Oh yeah?” asked Elizabeth warmly. “What is it?”

Frank pulled a gift wrapped package out from a cupboard and handed it to her. “You don’t have to wear it. I’d just like it if you tried wearing it when you felt comfortable.”

Elizabeth nodded “Is this a gift or...?”

“Or.” said Frank. “Always or. Do not labour under the misapprehension that I don’t know what I’m doing. I know exactly what I’m doing. You are my gift, I’m quite enjoying this.”

“Oh yeah?” said Elizabeth smirking. “What exactly is it that you’re enjoying?”

“Your fall.” said Frank with a smile as he plated up the food.

*

Later that day Elizabeth opened the package and she smirked.

She was just trying the emerald green bikini on while looking at herself in a full length mirror.

Charlie opened the door then hurriedly closed it again.

“Oh, come in!” cried Elizabeth with a laugh.

Charlie entered sheepishly. “You look beautiful...”

Elizabeth smiled as she looked at herself in the mirror. “Not bad for the winner of a nobel peace prize and a former President.”

Charlie smirked. “No need to boast.”

“I wasn’t boasting.” said Elizabeth. “It’s a known fact that the stress of the job ages the fuck out of you yet I seem to have escaped the worst of it.”

“Perhaps that’s why the old man helped you?” said Charlie. “Keep his girl looking mighty fine.”

She embraced Elizabeth and wrapped herself around her old friend.

“Oh so I’m his girl now am I?” asked Elizabeth with mock offense.

“Oh yes.” said Charlie kissing Elizabeth. “But you’re my Queen.”

Elizabeth giggled and they enjoyed each other.

*

Frank was overjoyed when Elizabeth and Charlie joined him in the banquet hall for dinner as he saw that Elizabeth was indeed wearing his gift to her.

“Do you like what you see?” asked Elizabeth.

Frank grinned. “Yes. You are incredibly adorable, thank you. I think we can move onto the next stage now.”

“What’s that?” asked Elizabeth as she took a seat beside Charlie.

“Obedience training.” said Frank.

Charlie said. “I thought this was supposed to be fun.”

“Oh it will be...” said Frank as he placed a plate of food before Charlie and Elizabeth. He plated up his own food and explained. “There will be no disciplining. That isn’t the point. I just want you to try and obey me. If you fail you fail but if you succeed you’ll be rewarded and hopefully it will become muscle memory to obey without question. Catch!”

Frank threw a tennis ball at Elizabeth. It bounced harmlessly off her forehead and she glared at him. “This is how you’re going to remove my sentience? By asking me nicely to just act as though I have none?”

Frank grinned.

Charlie stared at him. “Wait that’s seriously what you’re doing? This is insane.”

Frank nodded “That’s why it’s fun.”

*

Another month passed as more fun was had and Elizabeth progressed with the behavioural training.

As Elizabeth and Charlie entered a tennis ball flew past their heads and Frank cried “Fetch!”

Elizabeth bounded off after it.

Charlie asked “Are you doing this just to make Eliza lose weight before you inject her with whatever?”

“No...” said Frank sheepishly.

Elizabeth rushed past Charlie with the ball and handed it to Frank.

Frank accepted the tennis ball and ran a hand through her hair. Two months of good food, relaxation and exercise had definitely returned a certain glow to Elizabeth. “Good girl. Now, go sit beside Charlie and eat your food as I have something to discuss when breakfast is over.”

Elizabeth nodded and bounded over to Charlie.

Frank plated up the food and placed it before the women.

As he ate his own food he watched Elizabeth. there was a youth and vibrancy that 4 years in office had taken from her.

They ate in silence then Elizabeth asked. “So what did you want to discuss?”

“You are a toy.” said Frank. “I think you’re ready to be injected and sign papers. Then we can start on the hard part.”

“Injected?” asked Charlie. “What with?”

“Complex metamixtures capable of rewriting the local logic field of an individual.” said Frank.
“They’ll make it so she doesn’t need food or water and could even be fully dissected and have each bodypart function as if whole. Standard toy stuff.”

“And the hard part?” asked Elizabeth.

“Convincing you to stop being sentient.” said Frank warmly before booping Elizabeth on the nose.

Elizabeth giggled. “I don’t think you can do that. I don’t think it’s possible.”

“Maybe not.” said Frank. “But it’ll be fun getting trying.”

*

Elizabeth was injected with the concoctions and signed her life away legally then Frank secured a collar round her neck and sent her off with Charlie as the concoctions took hold.

*

The next day after breakfast Frank led Elizabeth into a low lit scented room. He sat cross legged on the floor and invited her to do so as well.

Elizabeth sat before him and smiled. “Meditation? I wouldn’t have thought an Elder God would be down for that.”

“We aren’t doing this for spiritual reasons.” said Frank. “We are doing this because meditation can be used to relax the mind to the point of forgetting burdens. Together we are going to guide you through shedding memories, free will and independence and in time perhaps sentience itself...”

Elizabeth sighed. “Alright, Master, lets try this.”

“Close your eyes and breathe deeply.” said Frank. “Relax your mind and focus only on my voice.”

Elizabeth obeyed, as was almost second nature at this point, and she felt herself begin to drift away from herself until only peace and serenity remained.

When the session was over Frank secured a leash to the collar round her neck then guided her towards Charlie.

*

Frank watched Elizabeth lose herself more and more with every session. Turning ever closer towards animalistic instinct and away from memories, knowledge and reason. Words dropped out of her vocabulary. Sentences became jumbled. Her fine motor skills took a dive. He watched the powerful

woman lose herself and felt a thrill of satisfaction at her decent towards a lack of thought.

For Charlie this was a horrendous experience. Watching her best friend and the love of her life deriorate before her eyes. She came into his room, screaming. She couldn't take it. This was torture for her.

So Frank granted Charlie the mercy of turning her into a toy so she might have an off switch. It didn't take him long. Soon he was laying Charlie to rest so he could focus on caring for Elizabeth as he completed his little game.

*

Elizabeth was all emotion and instinct now.

She was woken and followed the scent of her master to a dark room foggy with smell.

She took a deep breath and felt the last of her drift off and then she was gone.

*

Frank smiled as he felt her soul disappear, wiped from records of the multiverse at last. She was truly no more. He had succeeded.

He laid Elizabeth's body out in the room. It was time for Charlie to say her final goodbye before she joined her wife in non-sentience.

Charlie was much easier now he had felt Elizabeth's soul depart.

He carried his two mindless toys into his bedroom and packed them away in a suitcase as he dug out Felicia and Emma. He had sold them to his other selves but had been allowed to keep the originals. He had kept them switched off until now as he didn't need them but you know the saying. Once is a fluke, twice is progress but rare but three times? Four times? Now that was a pattern, that was precedent, that was an engine that was finally kicking into gear.

He loaded the four soul less toys into his ship and then he landed it in the flagship of the Great Bam-Kursh.

He bowed his head before the flame haired Scottish woman and explained the art that he had mastered and that he now gifted the toys to her and left her his memories then he took off in his spaceship for the frontlines of the great war.

The End

The Venus Trap Online Edition Part 1

Online Edition Part 1- Prologue

Falling. Crashing. Burning. Screaming. The entirety of reality flickers with ethereal energy. This is the end.

“NOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!”

“No, it cannot end this way!”

Glub! Floosh! Bleeding out. Time is up. Time to die.

“I don't die so easily!”

A cold wind blows a gale.

“Alright. You win this round.”

The video call ends.

A young woman, now old from her experiences, turns to address her robotic kidnappers. “Sorry boys, I played you for fools. The Farsh-nuke isn't made obedient by threats, he's made revolutionary. And now it's time for you to die.”

The great septagonal machine cries out “But you are his woman! He will obey us to protect you.”

The woman laughs “I am my own woman and my name is Lucy. Time's up tin man”

Fwoosh!

A flash of blinding logic vaporises reality.

The Farsh-nuke stands before a distortion in reality, one sharp dressed man before all of infinity.

The sound of screaming fills the air.

He chuckles sadly “The fate of the world or my mind and gender. Unleasher, whoever you are, you laid the perfect trap.”

The Farsh-nuke straightens his tie, wipes his nose and pushes his glasses further up his nose.

“Here's to swimming with bow legged women”

He steps through the distortion in reality and screams as his mind is scrubbed clean and his body is remade.

A university graduate sits at a bunch playing angry birds on her iphone when she gets a text “Hey Gal, you going to BED tonight?”

Galla texts back “Soz, Lau, gotta do a shift tonight, Cathy's ill”

Galla puts her phone in her hipster jean's pocket and starts strolling by the lake, pulling her hoodie tighter round her as the spring chill makes her breath steam.

A 10 year old boy in school uniform cycles past “Hey fatty, what you doing tonight?”

Galla rolls her eyes and ignores the idiot.

The lake is about the size of two or three football pitches but it bends and warps so you're never quite sure how big it is. At semi regular intervals fisherman can be seen camped out by the water's edge and a couple of small yachts are almost always visible in the centre of the lake. Galla wondered what good a boat was in a lake if you had to take a boat just to get there. That question niggled her at night sometimes. The idea that lakes were filled with monsters was not a new idea. There was Loch Ness of course and that atrocious film Shark Night had made hay of the possibility that sharks could be dumped in a lake for sinister purposes. An idea that wasn't so insane considering Bull Sharks could live in fresh water and 4chan were capable of great and terrifying things when they put their minds to it. Who's to say that someone didn't just anchor their yacht up late one drunken night and head out for a skinny dip then meet their grizzly end?

Galla shook her head and chuckled under her breath. Sharks were not the monsters they were seen as by the media. It was a stupid idea. But still she shied away from the water's edge. Just in case.

The walk home took 30 minutes and her house was a large semi detached cottagey building where nature had almost overtaken the architecture. Galla banged the knocker and a short plump woman with shoulder length curly hair answered the door then hugged her by way of greeting “Galla, dear, how was your first shift at Waitrose?”

Galla sighed and followed her mother in through the hallway to the living room, explaining as she went “Not bad. I mean I made some mistakes and there was this one customer who got quite irate about how the car park was designed, as if I could do anything about it, but in general the work wasn't too bad and most of the customers were okay. Even the sleazy kids who tried to flirt with me were at least civil.”

Galla's mum entered the living room with two mugs of tea “Well that's too bad. People should know you're not in charge of car parks but at least you're having a good time and making money.”

Galla sipped at her tea, the liquid was still scolding hot but she could tell her mum had made it early and let it sit so Galla wouldn't have to wait so long for it to enter the drinkable temperature range. Placing the mug of tea on a coaster Galla asked “Where's Cheryl?”

Galla's mum frowned and put down her tea. “I do wish you'd stop calling her that. She's your mum too

you know?"

Galla licked her lips thoughtfully and grimaced. "I know, mum. I respect your decision to leave dad and Cheryl's a great woman but it would just get needlessly confusing if I called you both mum."

Galla's mum looked away to where one of the house's five cats was chasing its own tail. "If that's the reason why then call me by my first name and call her mum."

Galla blurted "But you're my mum, mum, it wouldn't feel right."

Galla's mum leaned back and sipped her green tea, smiling with satisfaction at having won the argument.

Galla stared at her mother and her blood started racing. She downed her tea and stormed out of the living room, deftly silent. The sound of laughter followed Galla as she headed up the stairs towards the indoor gym.

Cheryl was dressed in shorts and a t-shirt as One Direction played through speakers, she was on the cross trainer and taking a deep breath every time she took a step. She sounded like Darth Vader in a high speed chase.

Galla stared at the sixty year old woman who had dieted and exercised and got plastic surgery to be almost but not quite as fit as an active twenty year old. There was no denying that Cheryl was an upgrade from her elitist sexist and thoroughly overweight and balding father.

"Yes?" hissed Cheryl "I could hear your dumpy foot steps coming up the stairs from here, what do you want?"

Galla swallowed "I got a phone call from Cathy, I need to do her shift for her at the Kyber Pass"

A Cheshire cat smile spread across Cheryl's face "And you want me to give you a lift in my nice Porsche SUV?"

Galla coughed "If that's a problem-?"

"No. No problem. But it will cost you."

Galla stared at the back of Cheryl's head. What was it they said about fey creatures? Don't ask for anything, don't eat anything and don't accept anything. Every sign of hospitality is the signing of a contract you don't know the terms of.

Cheryl laughed "I swear I can feel your eyes boring into the back of my head. Don't worry, I'm not about to make you scrub my butt plugs or anything. I just want you to try my weight loss products."

Galla sneered "I am not fat."

Cheryl chuckled "Your BMI would disagree darling. Last I heard you were clinically obese."

Galla gritted her teeth "So is everybody. My point is that I'm not fat enough to look bad and I'm fit

enough to do what I need to do.”

“So you won't be taking that lift then?”

Galla stormed out and entered her own room.

An elderly cat lay stretched out on Galla's bed and meowed affectionately as she entered. Galla had found her as a stray wandering the university campus then took her to the RSPCA who announced that she wasn't microchipped and clearly needed a loving home so Galla took her in and named her Campuss after where she found her. They'd been together five years now and the elderly cat had been more loving than any of her boyfriends or girlfriends.

Galla lit up upon seeing her favourite moggie and spent five minutes just stroking and scratching the dear cat before booting up her laptop and checking out Facebook. Apparently Cathy's relationship with Steve was now complicated after he punched her when she pretended to go mad and try to stab him as an April Fool. Laura was excited about having booked plane tickets for San Diego comic con and Sandra, her back up girlfriend in case asexuality didn't pan out for her, was busy putting together a Dungeons and Dragons campaign. Galla let Sandra know that she'd be up for the campaign and would fill any role that was needed, provided she could fit the schedule round her work.

Checking her email Galla discovered that her video of her feeding the ducks at the lake was filled with comments from people asking, demanding and threatening to rape her. Yawn!

Finally Galla opened gimp and continued work on her latest commission, a piece of art blending together every single instance of a certain company's logos, slogans and advertising posters.

She worked for four hours then scoured twitch for a live stream of a game she liked. At last she found one of Call Of Duty but the let'splayer had a bit too much cleavage so the picture in picture was rather distracting but at least he was funny.

At 10pm she headed off through the estates to the Khyber Pass and nothing much seemed unusual. It was cold and dark and she got the feeling that it was rather too quiet at times but that was Woking.

Nothing seemed unusual during her shift at the Kyber Pass either. A bit of thunder, a bit of lightning. They called them April Showers for a reason so Galla wasn't worried. Not even when Karen, the local ufo nut, exclaimed that she'd just observed instances of ball lightning and cold spots.

At 2 am the customers had left and the weather was getting very stormy so her manager shut up shop and shooed her out.

Cars slewed wildly in the rain and joggers ran slightly faster than usual. It started to hail.

Galla shoved her hands into her pockets and breathed through her jacket, the reflected heat of her breath keeping her warm. It was a bit annoying navigating the hills and country roads in the rain but Galla had climbed water slides as a kid, it'd take more than a spot of dodgy weather to rattle her.

A great gale blew and one by one the stars started to wink out of existence until at least the sky turned dark. Galla didn't notice. How often do you look at the sky anyway? Especially when you have places to be and are traversing a route you'd made so often it was muscle memory. It was a shame Galla wasn't

watching the skies really. If she did she might have noticed the great blackness of space turn a steady shade of lime green.

Back at the house, the power was gone.

Galla knocked on the door.

No answer.

She waited five minutes in the wind and the rain before losing patience and unlocking the door with her keys and going in. "I'm sorry I'm using my keys mum but it's blowing a bloody gale out there!"

No answer.

Complete darkness inside the house.

No sounds.

No sound of computer fans humming.

No sound of fluorescent lights buzzing.

No sound of the dehumidifier.

No sound of the fridge or freezer.

No sound of the fish tank mechanism.

Not even a chirping of crickets or the fluttering of moths.

Just the sound of the storm outside.

Galla stared into darkness and thought she could make out the figure of a man with a sinister smile approaching her, duct tape held between his hands like garotting wire or a smothering pillow.

She blinked away the memory.

Probably just a power cut and the mothers were out checking the other houses in the area.

Galla used her phone as a torch to help her find her way to the kitchen and light a candle.

By candle light Galla did some sketches and read some more of her book.

At 3am she cleaned her teeth and went to bed, remembering to extinguish the candle.

That night she dreamed of death and dying. Of an incomprehensible war and untold monstrosities but most of all she dreamed of a woman. The woman. And heard someone or something cry in a language she knew was utterly alien, yet understood perfectly, "Mother!"

She awoke to find the house empty and devoid of power.

Okay, so climate change had clearly caused some dangerous storms and the power was more severely damaged than she thought. Maybe Mum and Cheryl had taken refuge somewhere.

Not to worry, Galla would just walk into Goldsworth Park and buy some barbecue or camping supplies. She just needed to make food for herself without reliance on power for the next couple of days. No big deal.

So she got some basic survival gear together and started walking towards Goldsworth Park.

Upon arrival at the lake Galla noticed the rather disquieting lack of animals. Not even pigeons could be seen.

Then a voice cried out “Bit like a zombie horror movie ain't it?”

Galla snorted at the sharp dressed blond woman before her “Thanks, because I really needed another reason to go indoors, guzzle a bottle of paracetamol and knock back some vodka. Who are you anyway?”

The sharp dressed woman extended her hand “I am Sister Lucille Danse of the Sylph Liberation Front, I trained the messiah and I saved us all from the Septagonoids and the Farsh-nuke. I'm a sort of inter-dimensional crusader of justice.”

Galla stared at the woman “Oh – kay. Lucy do you happen to know if Waitrose is open?”

Lucy nodded, folding her arms defensively. “Yuh we're the only two living things that I've seen, unless you count plants or fungi.”

“Shit” hissed Galla under her breath.

“Oh, you noticed that too? And the sky? What colour is it?”

Galla shrugged “Green. And? I mean climate change is a bitch, we know this.”

Lucy smiled “That's very true, where are you going?”

Galla glared at Lucy “To get supplies from waitrose”

“I'll join you”

Galla shrugged “Free country” and continued walking.

Lucy followed.

When they got to Waitrose they found everywhere shut and without power.

Galla looked to the cars in the car park and said “See, if this was the apocalypse why there still cars here?”

Lucy nodded then asked “But why is there a lake without any fish? Why there houses but no people? Why are there signs of life but no life itself?”

Galla bit her bottom lip then said “There's us.”

“Why?”

Galla looked away then sighed and said “I don't know why I'm listening to you. You're clearly just some delusional playboy bunny. Go back to your billionaire boyfriend, I'm sure he has a plinth for you to stand on.”

Lucy laughed “That's funny. Really. But I need to know you will listen to me if shit comes to fuck so I'm very sorry but it's time to cheat.”

Galla watched as Lucy's right hand delved inside her suit jacket and for a heart stopping moment she thought the woman was about to withdraw a gun or a knife. Instead Lucy retrieved a wooden door knob with a red button on it.

Lucy held the door knob in the air and pressed the button. A door and frame grew from out of the door knob to stand in the middle of the carpark. Lucy turned the door knob and pushed.

Galla didn't believe what had just happened until she followed through.

An art deco minimalist cathedral sized control room is not what Galla had expected to find when she waked through the door.

Galla stammered “I-it's another dimension.”

“Yup” said Lucy nonchalantly

“You're an alien” said Galla

“Well more of a genetically altered human from a different universe but yeah basically”

“How does this work?”

Lucy shrugged “You know how string theory theorises that reality is all just strings vibrating at different frequencies? Well this is like hacking reality. But by all means call it magic if that's easier. I should stress that even I didn't know how most of this stuff works, I just have friends in high places.”

“So this really is a zombie apocalypse?” said Galla

“Nah, I was just testing you. I don't know what the cause is but I do know I'm your best chance to fix this.”

“So what do we do?”

Lucy leaned toward Galla and whispered in her ear. “We walk”

Galla stared at Lucy “That's your grand plan!? Walk!?”

Lucy shrugged “Best way to get an overview of the situation. See how far this extends.”

“Okay well we're just by the Basingstoke Canal if you want to walk into Woking?”

“Fantastic, lead on Watson”

Galla exited the whatever the hell that was and started heading across the car park as Lucy pressed the button on the door handle and stowed it in her jacket pocket again.

The Venus Trap Part 2 The Woking Dead

Online Version Part 2 – The Woking Dead

Galla and Lucy walked through the estates over to the bridge leading to the Basingstoke Canal.

“Why are the stairs all slanty and angled?” asked Lucy

Galla shrugged “I don't know, I'm not an architect, but it is easier to carry bikes across and it's quite a view at the top”

Lucy bounded up the steps easily. “It's just a view of the motorway”

Galla groaned “Some of us aren't genetically enhanced playboy bunnies you know?”

Lucy sighed and rolled her eyes.

Galla pulled herself up the steps then leaned on the railing, panting “Breath taking isn't it?”

Lucy stared at Galla “It's just a road”

Galla shook her head “No, this is Lockfield Drive. This is the life blood of suburban villages in Woking. Horsell. Knaphill. Goldsworth Park. Sodding Brookwood. They all depend on this road to ferry them into the city and tourists out to them. Without this, those towns and villages die, like muscles starved of oxygen.”

“Well the blood's not pumping now is it?” said Lucy, with an arched eyebrow.

Galla stared at the road. “No, no it isn't. All those cars are just stuck there, nobody within them, no sign of panic, all animal life just gone. Fucking creepy.”

Lucy looked Galla up and down, assessing her. “Got a problem with that?”

Galla turned from the railing and narrowed her eyes at Lucy. Hands clenched into fists at her sides. "Yes, I've got a problem with that. This crap hole of a city is my home."

Lucy backed away nervously "H-hey I-I didn't mean to offend you."

"Pro tip" said Galla, cracking her knuckles and cricking her neck. "Watch where you're going. There's stairs down, leading to some brambles, behind you."

Lucy nodded "Good point, well made!" and turned to rush down the stairs.

Galla skipped down the stairs and bounded before Lucy "This way for dog turds, joggers and phantasmal cyclists."

As they started walking along the Basingstoke Canal Lucy said "Really? You get phantasmal cyclists?"

Galla nodded "They really do come out of nowhere"

Lucy paused and arched an eyebrow before shrugging and continuing to follow Galla.

"So, what's a sylph?" asked Galla

Lucy frowned "You don't want to know. What about you, what's your story?"

Galla laughed "Oh you really don't want to know that"

Lucy shrugged "So this is us, the women with no names"

Galla spat into the canal in disgust. "We are not cowboys. We're better than that. Sodding boys. Playing at being heroes, murdering everyone they see that they don't like and their great paragon, the beloved British role model, the man who never carries a gun, is a serial womaniser who commits genocide at the drop of a hat. If that's who boys are supposed to like up to, if that's their idea of a good man, no wonder they're all such assholes."

"Hey now, why don't you simmer down? Sexism is a two way street."

Galla barked a bitter laugh "For what men do to us, they're lucky we don't murder them in the street."

Lucy stopped walking and pulled a revolver from her jacket. "I'm sorry" she whispered as she started to load the revolver "But I just sacrificed my life and everything I loved to end a sexist dystopia. I won't let that happen again"

A great shark launched itself from the water and grew arms and legs by the time it hit the ground. The beast effortlessly snapped Lucy's neck and carried her body with it as it leapt backwards into the water.

"You know I've been thinking, what if the cause isn't zombies but like plants? I mean Surrey is the greenest county in England, if plants did this they would be able to do it so quickly." said Galla, then she heard the splash.

Galla looked behind her and saw Lucy was gone.

She shrugged. Misogynist bitch probably couldn't bare the truth. C'est la vie.

Galla was about to turn when she saw the ripples originating from the middle of the lake and heard a rhythm of two play in her head.

She ran.

She sprinted.

Amazing how fast you can run when pain is secondary to staying alive.

Then she saw the low bridge and pulled her hoodie over her head, at the last minute she turned and leapt.

She saw the shark's jaws bearing down on her and raised her arms.

Smack!

Crack!

The hoodie cushioned the fall enough that Galla didn't black out.

She skidded backwards through the narrow pass beneath the bridge.

The shark landed on top of her but was so big and the underpass so narrow that the shark's dorsal fin got caught.

Galla lay there panting for a few moments as the shark tried to squirm towards her.

An explosion rang out and blood erupted from the shark's back.

Then after three seconds another explosion rang out.

Then another.

Now Lucy was standing astride the shark, revolver pressing into the shark's wound.

“Now I'm not sure but I think those three shots bought me nine seconds. I have 3 more rounds loaded in my gun. Nine more seconds. I think that's enough time to get out my longsword but I'm not sure. Do you want to try me?” said Lucy sternly.

Galla gaped “You're diplomacising the shark?”

“Oh this is no mere shark” said Lucy “This is a wereshark and if I'm not very much mistaken, the queen of the weresharks. I could recognise her anywhere. Her blood runs through my veins, that's why I didn't die when she snapped my neck just now. I spoke to her through the blood and she granted me, and all other sylphs who are also weresharks, a reprieve from the blood lust and desire for domination of the weresharks. I thought we had an understanding.”

The shark squirmed and shrank, an overweight ginger woman in its place. She said “I’m sorry, I did not know. I was in the middle of a battle to welcome orcs into our great collective when I appeared here. So I resorted to instinct, started cruising this canal in hopes of finding something to eat.”

Lucy sneered “Oh did you?”

The Queen of the Weresharks sighed “I’m sorry. Kill me if you wish but I think we both know you need me. This little one is easy prey and you are not so tough yourself.”

“Says the woman whose life is at my mercy”

The Queen of the Weresharks grabbed Lucy's foot with her left hand and spun, her right hand grabbing the back of Lucy's head and smacking Lucy's face into the side of the bridge. She sat on Lucy's legs and her left arm pressed against Lucy's neck, holding her to the ground as the Queen of the Wereshark's right hand grew claws, muscley and hairy. The right arm plunged inside Lucy's chest and pulled out a still beating heart. The Queen of the Weresharks took a bite then spat into the canal.

“You are one of my children and you have the abilities of the sylph and the Logicio but the Farsh-nuke tamed you too well. You will not use the power my blood gives you. You prefer to be passive and submissive. That will get your friend killed!”

“Point made” said Lucy through gritted teeth.

Galla vomited into the canal.

The Queen of the Weresharks smiled “I fear your friend is of too weak a constitution to bare my human body as it is. I will return to the water and swim beside you. Better to surprise any would be attackers anyway.”

The Queen of the Weresharks fell beneath the water and Lucy lay panting as her wounds knitted themselves back together.

Galla said bitterly “I don't think I want to know your backstory”

Lucy rolled onto her belly then got to her feet and pulled Galla up.

The pair walked along the Basingstoke Canal and swapped anecdotes about their fandoms, interests and hobbies.

At one point Lucy said casually “You know I was going to shoot you back there, that's when the Queen of the Weresharks surprised me, and why I had the revolver to hand.”

Galla shrugged “You trying to kill me meant you were in a position to save my life. I think that makes up for it.”

Lucy stared at Galla “Really? It doesn't change anything? What did you experience fore it to not change anything?”

“You do not want to know” said Galla

The walk was uneventful the rest of the way and they arrived at Brewery Road car park to find the same signs of desertion.

As they stood at the car park surveying the scenes they heard a cough from the canal “The rest of the way is on foot isn't it?”

“Yeah” said Galla “Is that a problem?”

Lucy sighed “She needs clothes. You don't want to see a naked wereshark in human form.” and then she started to strip.

Galla backed away from Lucy nervously and cried “Woah! Woah! What are you doing?”

Lucy dropped her trousers and explained “I am a sylph. My body was designed to let me wear a bikini in the Arctic and guess what item of clothing I always have on me?”

Galla looked away in disgust “Zarquon, when I said you were a playboy bunny I wasn't being serious!”

Lucy laughed and slipped on the bikini, her shoes, socks and suit jacket then tossed her clothes into the canal.

The Queen of the Weresharks rose out of the water wearing the suit and asked “Why do you have a belt and braces?”

Lucy shrugged “Always good to have a backup”

Galla sighed “Whatever, lets get going. We have an apocalypse to investigate.”

They crossed the road and strode into town.

“Oh look, the fountain is still running” said Lucy

“Probably on an isolated circuit” said the Queen of the Weresharks.

As they passed the council offices, the theatre and the library, Gala noticed something flitting about at the edge of her peripheral vision. Then they entered the town square and Gala noticed the angel atop the war memorial was missing.

She cried out “Shit!” and blinked.

Gala stared at the angel from atop the war memorial as it stood frozen before her, arms outstretched.

Gala reached out her hands to stop her associates from advancing further then said loudly but calmly. “Do. Not. Blink.”

Lucy peered at the statue “Well would you look at that? Quantum locked.” then Lucy pulled a small metal wand from her inside jacket pocket and aimed it at the angel. “Quantum Locked meet the

Quantum Oscillator, should have you out of there in a jiffy.”

Lucy fiddled with the settings of the wand then a beam of green energy zapped the angel.

The angel screamed. It screamed for five minutes. Then she said quietly “Thank you” and lowered her arms. “We did not choose this life. Kill us. Kill us all.”

The Queen of the Weresharks casually disembowelled the angel and she crumbled to the floor in agony.

Gala groaned “Do you have to keep doing that?”

The Queen of the Weresharks shrugged “You're the leader with knowledge local, she's the wizard controller with knowledge planar. I'm the fighter guy, this is what I do.”

“Right” said Gala “Well in that case let's tour the city”

So they toured Woking, scouring the peacocks, Wolsey place and the market.

“You know what's weird?” asked Lucy.

“That a kids' tv monster just tried to kill us?” said Galla.

“That the Queen of the Weresharks, a sylph and a 20 something university graduate have been brought together by chance and are seemingly the only beings left alive.” said the Queen of the Weresharks

“That the people and the animals didn't just leave, they left mid-action, Like you, Mother of the Blood, they all just vanished as they were doing things” said Lucy “Look there! A mop and bucket lying in the middle of floor. There, a bag of sweets just lying on the floor as if dropped and there, a KFC Bargain Bucket a chicken leg not far from it, clearly half eaten. Whatever happened, happened at once, everywhere.” said Lucy.

Galla nodded “I see your point but how? Could that ship of yours materialise around everyone?”

“Well yes but not to the exclusion of objects in the hand. The default matrix isn't so primitive.” said Lucy.

“Blood control” said the Queen of the Weresharks “It's how I freed the sylphs from the urge to dominate and spread the genes through infection. Just grab onto the blood of a common ancestor and give it a yank.”

“So you could do this?” asked Galla.

“Of course not” said the Queen of the Weresharks “I am not able to manipulate reality but if you had the power you could use blood control to isolate a particular genus.”

“Which you could then teleport with the appropriate technology” said Lucy

“So why am I still here?” said Galla

“Look, sod the walking. This is an apocalypse. Who is for stealing a bus and driving to guildford?” said Lucy.

“If you know how to drive a bus, then I would gladly travel in such comfort” said the Queen of the Weresharks

Galla snorted.

Lucy clapped her hands “Excellent, then it's agreed. Galla, can you lead us to the bus depot?”

Galla shrugged “I think so”

So they walked to the bus depot, delaying by 45 minutes as a result of Galla almost continually getting lost.

“It's okay, I know the way now” She would always say as they headed down yet another wrong turning.

When they at last approached the bus depot Lucy said “Okay, Rule One: Stay behind the wielder of the wand that can rewrite reality. I once accidentally turned a man who was trying to chat me up into a woman when he stepped in front of me as I was reversing the polarity of a set of traffic lights.”

Galla patted Lucy on the back “Maybe you are my kind of woman after all”

The Queen of the Weresharks groaned “Not again. If you two are going to have fun with each other, kindly do it when I'm not here. Some of us are still straight.”

Galla bent double laughing.

Lucy ignored the comment and tried not to blush.

The door to the depot sprang open after Lucy waved her wand at it.

The trio walked inside the depot and selected a suitable bus. Lucy hacked it with her wand and they entered.

The Queen of the Weresharks went to sit at the back and Lucy installed herself in the driver's booth.

Galla stood holding onto the rails. “I can just see one small flaw with this plan.”

“Oh” said Lucy, turning the key in the ignition.

“We're inside” said Gala pointedly.

“Yes” said Lucy “And I and the Queen of the Weresharks are immortal.”

“I'm not” said Gala like a clanging anvil.

Lucy shrugged “Sucks to be you then”

The bus lurched into life and rammed the side of the building, it came apart like tissue paper and they kept driving.

“You hacked reality didn't you?” said Gala

“Pretty much” said Lucy “Next stop Guildford”

The drive took a while but eventually they passed Sainsbury's at Brookwood and left Woking but when they did so something strange happened. They arrived not at a bustling high street of tarmac and cobble but a dusty city of of marble and wood.

“Just taking a wild guess here, but this isn't Guildford, is it?” said the Queen of the Weresharks.

“No. No, I don't think this is Guildford” said Galla.

“Curiouser and curiouser” said Lucy

The Venus Trap Part 3 What Do We Do With A Roman Citadel

Online Version **Part 3 – What do we do with a Roman Citadel?**

“So what now?” asked the Queen of the Weresharks

Galla stared into the distance and asked “Can that reality hacking doodad scan the area and give us some information?”

Lucy played with her hair thoughtfully then said “Yes, yes I think it can.”

The Queen of the Weresharks rose from her seat and strode to the front of the bus “Then lets walk”

“Yeah, I never really liked taking public transport anyway.” said Galla

The doors squeaked open and Lucy bounded out the door “Well come on then, lets explore”

So they walked in formation with Lucy in the lead. When they reached the first building Lucy scanned it, sniffed it then licked it.

Lucy skipped to the next building, singing a tune from her childhood.

“When there's something strange squelching up your driveway or a monster in you lavvy,
Never fear, the Professor is near.

When he shoots to kill or you're feeling so ill,
Never fear, the Professor is near.

When the universe tears and time corrupts,

Never fear, the Professor is near.

If you break under pressure and kill without thinking,
Then you may fear, the Professor is near.”

Galla watched Lucy bound and skip, her hair flying back like puppy ears, and asked “How do you do it? Be so goddamned happy all the time?”

Lucy either couldn't hear Galla or was ignoring her.

The Queen of the Weresharks answered instead “She's a sylph”

Galla stared blankly back at the Queen of the Weresharks.

The Queen of the Weresharks rolled her eyes then explained “Long ago there was a brilliant species. A magnificent and resourceful species. They had power and technology to rival the Elder Gods. They knew almost everything about genetic engineering. Then something happened. Some say they simply reached a point where they knew too much and felt a fear us lesser species ignore. Some say they fought a war and it escalated beyond their control. Either way, they ran. They ran and they hid. That wasn't enough though. They needed protection. Protection we could grant. So they figured out a way to make us look after them and keep their species alive no matter the cost.”

Galla's jaw dropped “And that's what Lucy is?”

“No” said the Queen of the Weresharks with a shake of her head “This species didn't have the time to genetically engineer themselves. So instead they engineered a biological machine whose combined excretions made one of them into a sylph. Then they set a course for a trading station that would likely seize upon the opportunity their species provided and they proceeded to drug themselves. When this ghost ship arrived at the station, the traders tried to sell the sylphs but the stock wouldn't sell, so they started experimenting with the biological machine, trying out its excretions on the different alien species that came to visit. Humans sold well, particularly human females. Then word got out that the Farsh-nuke, one of the Elder Gods, had got a hankering for human female sylphs and desperate inter-dimensional superpowers have been using sylph pills as a way to draw out the Farsh-nuke ever since. Lucy there is just one of many victims.”

Galla was horrified.

“Oh don't worry, she's happy” said the Queen of the Weresharks “Her whole body lights up with joy just being alive. Part of being a sylph. If you're turning your whole species into the perfect cattle, pets and sex slaves you're going to have safeguards in place to stop people committing suicide.”

Galla stared at the Queen of the Weresharks then ran to hug Lucy.

Lucy was glomped from behind and asked “What's up?”

“Oh you know, whole world dead, don't know how I'm going to eat tonight, the usual” said Galla flippantly “But really though I wondered if you'd figured out we were in Rome yet?”

Lucy chuckled “Yes. Yes I had figured that out actually. In fact I can tell you that this place is the western half of the Roman Empire from about 420 CE-ish.”

“CE?”

Lucy sighed “Common Era, it's what us atheists say instead of AD.”

“How can you be so accurate?”

Lucy held up her techno-wand “This baby can do the real life equivalent of pressing F3 in Minecraft.”

“Ooh” said Galla, impressed “Can it do F5 too?”

Lucy thought for a second, playing with her hair as she did so. “It would explain out of body experiences wouldn't it? Just people accidentally hitting the wrong buttons on the keyboard of reality?”

Galla laughed “Favourite Roman Emperor?”

“That's a tough one, I think I'd have to say-” Lucy's head exploded in a shower of blood and her body lay twitching on the floor.

Galla turned to look where the shot came from and saw a lone figure in the distance.

She cried out “It's disembowelling time, Queenie!”

The Queen of the Weresharks changed. Her arms and legs growing as thick as tree trunks, a tail sprouting from her arse and a dorsal fin growing on her back as her mouth developed a smile that grew steadily wider and wider until – her head exploded in a pile of blood and her body collapsed awkwardly.

Galla screamed “Would you please stop doing that?”

The figure cried back “Just protecting myself, Darling! Them weresharks can be mighty vicious!”

“Oh can they?” muttered Galla before she raised her hands and started walking towards the figure. “Are you gonna shoot me?”

“Not if I don't need to, Miss”

Galla smiled. It was the smile of a psychopath who had just been released from their moral code.

As she approached the figure, she saw the figure wore leather riding boots with spurs, dirty blue jeans, a fine duster coat and a stetson. Bullets were worn in a belt round their waist and they held their gun in their left hand.

“That's far enough lil lady” said the gun wielder when they were a hundred feet apart.

Galla stared into the face opposite her, into those azure blue eyes and at those long ginger curls.

“Do you know what a sylph is?”

“I do”

Galla nodded “That woman I was talking to, she was a sylph.”

Galla's prey took a step backwards “Hey now, let's not get hasty”

“You shot her and her head exploded. I will NEVER be able to forget that”

The gun cocked.

Galla smiled “I don't think so honey. My babies aren't dead. They're back there, right now, planning how best to make you suffer. I am your best chance of getting off without torture and death. You need me alive.”

“I'm not afraid”

“Uh-huh” said Galla with a curt nod and a lick of her lips “Then let's talk about the fact that you are trying so hard to be Clint Eastwood when you just don't have the balls.”

The person with the gun flinched.

Galla took a step forward “What's the matter? Cat got your dong?”

The gun person fired a warning shot over Galla's shoulder. “What did you say?”

Galla took another step forward “Everyone I have ever known has just vanished and you just decapitated my only companionship in this dong-forsaken wasteland. Tell me why I should care what you think?”

The gun person fired another warning shot “Because I'm the man with the gun! And stop saying dong!”

“Except you aren't are you?” said Galla, taking another step forward “You're the scared little girl in want of a gun”

The gun person stopped firing and just waved the gun at Galla “I will shoot!”

Galla shrugged and took another step.

Nothing.

Another step.

Nothing.

Walked right up to the crying cowboy and took his gun and ammo belt easily.

“I'm sorry” she said “But you shot my friends. Gender is not a matter of biology, it is a matter of who you are inside.”

The gun man lay sobbing in tears, snot running from his nose.

The rage inside Galla's heart melted. "I guess we could do with a sharp shooter in our party, at least for a while."

"I agree" said Lucy, now beside her. "And I think between the pair of us, me and the Queen of the Weresharks could make him as tough as us."

The cowboy sneered "I don't need your pity, I'm an architect of chaos."

Lucy dropped down onto her haunches and said "Then how would you like to be even stronger?"

The cowboy looked at her "Can you give me a dong? Because that's the only thing I need to not crumble like this."

The Queen of the Weresharks nodded "I control the blood, I can do that."

The cowboy got to his feet "Then it's a deal, I will aid you in your endeavours"

Galla gives the cowboy his gun and they continue walking through the abandoned city.

After a while Galla asks "What do we do with a Roman citadel? Like what's the point?"

Lucy sighs "Aye, there's the rub. What do we do with a Roman citadel?"

The Queen of the Weresharks thought for a second "Yeah what do we do with a Roman citadel"

"Early in the morning!" sang the cowboy.

Galla stared at him.

Lucy cracked up at Galla's face and the Queen of the Weresharks started singing "Oh! What do we do with a Roman citadel? What do we do with a Roman citadel? What do we do with a Roman citadel?" The Cowboy joined in for the last line "Early in the morning!!"

Galla hissed at Lucy "I hope you hacked that bus with remote control. I don't know much about history but I gather the Roman Empire was rather big and I am not the fittest individual."

Lucy winked "Your wish is my command" then she aimed her techno-wand far off in the distance and the bus appeared.

Galla's jaw dropped.

Lucy squeezed Galla's hand "Anything for you"

Galla visibly jumped back in shock "I am not – I mean, that is to say -"

"It's okay" said Lucy with a smile "I just want you to be happy"

Galla swallowed and ran to the bus.

“Early in the morning!!!” sang Lucy, the Queen of the Weresharks and the cowboy.

Galla found a seat at the front of the bus and raked her face with her hands.

“You've already got a back up girlfriend if the asexuality thing doesn't work out, Galla, it'd be unfair on her, she's been waiting for so long” Galla told herself.

“But she might be dead and Lucy is so hot” Galla reminded herself.

“In which case you'd just be using Lucy which isn't fair on her. That woman deserves true love, not a my-whole-planet-is-dead depression fuck.” Galla decided.

“Early in the morning!!!” sang the trio as they entered the bus.

“Oh yeah, I didn't shut the doors after us” said Lucy, climbing into the driver's seat.

The Queen of the Weresharks lead the cowboy to the back of the bus as they sang.

Galla stared out the window and images flashed before her eyes:

The storm.

The green sky.

Inside that spaceship.

The Queen of the Weresharks launching out of the water.

Lucy's heart being exposed and torn in two.

The death of the war memorial.

The wall of the bus depot shattering.

Their first sight of the Roman Empire.

Lucy's head exploding as they talked.

A thirty five year old man with grey hair and some duct tape.

Galla blinked and shook herself. She was stronger than this. She could take it. She'd taken worse. She just hoped Lucy could avoid getting herself mutilated. She felt so sorry for the poor woman when she found she was a sylph.

“Early in the morning!!!!”

Galla found herself joining in with the song. After all, what else was there? This was her life now. A rag tag bunch of misfits cruising to the end of the Roman empire just to see what was there.

Come night fall they decided to stop and set up camp.

“Ta-da” said Lucy as she pressed the button on the doorknob and opened the door.

The cowboy shrugged “I've seen better”

The Queen of the Weresharks nodded in agreement “Definitely seen better”

Galla glared at them.

“Well I think it's mind blowingly awesome” said Galla pointedly.

“Thank you, Galla” said Lucy with a smile “You may have the top bunk.”

“Oh, thanks” said Galla

The cowboy and the Queen of the Weresharks looked to each other then shrugged and entered.

Galla paused at the doorway “What's the food situation like?”

Lucy grabbed Galla's arm excitedly “Oh you'll love it. There's an auto cooker. You just select the meal you want and it grows everything needed to create the meal in five seconds, harvests it, prepares it and cooks it.”

Galla stared at her “Are you serious?”

Lucy nodded

Galla reached out and grabbed Lucy's arm “Never leave me”

“Haha, It's a deal. Actually...” Lucy pulled out a syringe filled with blood, that was clearly stoppered at the end by a valve through which a needle could be screwed.

“Actually what? Is this where you tell me to hand your blood to a special Doctor so he can clone you?”

“Actually this may help you if I'm not there.” said Lucy “If you're in trouble and we're not around to help you, inject this into any vein or artery in your body and it will make you like me. You'll be unstoppable.”

Galla nodded, pocketing the syringe as Lucy handed her a pack of hypodermic needles.

Galla entered the ship and ate a christmass dinner with all the trimmings because “Why the heck not?” then she, the cowboy and the Queen of the Weresharks stayed up talking about holidays they celebrate until after much merriment they each went off to bed.

Galla woke up feeling completely refreshed and had a nice shower before eating a full English breakfast and stepping out of the door to find the bus was moving.

Galla asked “You drove through the night?”

“Yep” said Lucy “I mean it'll cost me later but Christ I just needed us to make some progress and here we are, coming up to the edge of the western half of the Roman empire. What do you see?”

“More global warming?” suggested Galla

Lucy laughed “Well it's certainly the same stuff. That's called the great green nothingness, or the void between the worlds. That is what the multiverse looks like and that answers one massive question I have had for a long time. We're the ones who were taken, not the ones who were left behind.”

“It's getting closer” said Galla

“What is?”

“The end of the world”

Lucy laughed.

Galla pulled the emergency break.

“Why did you do that?” asked Lucy

Galla stared at Lucy “Because a lot has happened to you and anyone would be cracking up under the circumstances”

“You don't trust me” said Lucy

Galla pulled Lucy out of the driver's seat and pushed her towards the ship. “Eat some food and get some sleep, then we'll talk.”

Lucy frowned but obeyed.

The Venus Trap Part 4 The Summoning

Online Version Part 4 – The Summoning

The Queen of the Weresharks exited the bus, followed by the cowboy. She asked Galla “Why is Lucy entering the ship and why does she look so pissed?”

Galla grimaced and crossed her arms “She drove through the night to get us across the western half of the Roman Empire and then she threatened to drive off the edge of the world.”

The Queen of the Weresharks nodded thoughtfully “So you pulled the emergency brakes and told her to get some sleep?”

“Well yeah” said Galla defensively.

The Queen of the Weresharks sat down in a seat and crossed her arms briefly before deciding to stretch out “Yeah, you don't do that”

Galla stared, open mouthed, incredulous then looked to the cowboy.

“You're a human from Woking, she's a wereshark sylph thing with advanced tech and knowledge” said the cowboy “No wonder she's pissed off”

“Not just that either” said the Queen of the Weresharks “She's a sylph without a master so she can't properly relax, being a wereshark helps but she's still vulnerable in high stress situations. Fortunately humans are adaptable creatures and from what I gather she had to adapt to cope as an independent sylph under stressful situations for a number of years so she didn't crumble when she drove through the night on her own but that means she was wired and high on her own sense of power and agency when you effectively said you didn't like what she was doing and told her to get back in her box”

“I never said that!” said Galla, outraged.

The Queen of the Weresharks narrowed her eyes at Galla “You told her to go to sleep. Ever had a long day and become enraged about something or drunk too much red bull when an assignment was due. You tell me that if someone suggested you just needed sleep after all that, that you wouldn't have the least bit of difficulty doing so?”

Galla swallowed “I suppose I'd find it difficult.”

The Queen of the weresharks nodded and looked out the window “Uh-huh, there's a reason people crash instead of cruising to a halt. In high stress situations we push our bodies as hard as they will go. Better to sprint and hurdle for 5 more minutes than spend half an hour laying down talking.”

“Hey guys” said Lucy, exiting the ship in a new three piece suit, with a futuristic pistol in her hand. “I just remembered I had this. It's a memory gun. You can work the Quantum Oscillator without me now.”

“Err...” said Galla

The cowboy easily disarmed Lucy and the Queen of the Weresharks guided her to a seat by the window.

“Okay...” said Lucy nervously

The Queen of the Weresharks leaned over Lucy and tried to look compassionate while pointing out subtly how stupid any rash action would be. “How long has it been since you saw the Farsh-nuke?”

“About a month, why?” said Lucy, studying her fingernails.

“He came to rescue I from me. Mighty powerful man, that one. What happened to him?”

Lucy grimaced and looked at her reflection in the window “He threatened to destroy the multiverse so I gave my life to make him change his mind.”

Galla stared at her “You gave your life?”

Lucy looked at Galla and shrugged “I made the Septagonoids threaten to kill me unless he cooperated with them. Turns out it's not wise to threaten a man who quite literally eats freedom fighters for breakfast.”

“But you didn't die?” said Galla, confused.

Lucy looked out the window “The Logicios pulled me out at the last second. Said they could use me. That I showed potential.”

Lucy went back to studying her fingernails “I knew they just wanted me as a mole. Get me in with a Farsh-nuke so they could use him. That's what you do with boys isn't it? Give them a girl to chase after and watch how they dance.”

Lucy looked Galla in the eyes now. “I told them though, I told them I am not going to manipulate the people I love or fall in love on command. I absolutely would never be some trophy sylph for some high ranking Logicio to pull out at parties. I am better than that. I have saved whole worlds, I saved the Multiverse. I am so much better than any Logicio.”

Lucy was tearing up now and her face was bright red.

The cowboy finished her story for her “So you swaggered off like John Wayne but all the while you are dying inside because you know something's missing and no matter how much you tell yourself you're fine you can feel that void and it works away at at you, slowly corroding who you are.”

The Queen on the Weresharks placed her left hand on the cowboy's right leg compassionately.

Lucy pulled a hanky from one of her trouser pockets and blew her nose. “But look at me. I'm over-reacting. I mean I lasted 10 years without an owner, I can do it again. I think I'll just go scan outside and get a breath of fresh air.”

Lucy got up and left the bus.

“I'll stand guard” said the cowboy, leaving the bus.

“So...” said Galla

The Queen of the Weresharks entered Lucy's ship.

Galla followed.

Once inside the vast minimalistic spaceship the Queen of the Weresharks bit her thumb and started drawing symbols in the floor in blood.

“What are you doing?” asked Galla.

“Summoning the Farsh-nuke” said the Queen of the Weresharks

“By drawing symbols in blood? This is some supernatural nonsense right here.” said Galla.

The Queen of the Weresharks snorted and explained as she worked. “All myths have a basis in fact. Pentagrams can't summon a demon from hell, but they can summon the mind of one connected by blood if you have a firm enough grasp on the blood. I am the Queen of the Weresharks, I am patient zero in the Wereshark epidemic and once my blood has a hold of you it does not let go. The Farsh-nuke himself clings to life and power. He is my charge and my heir. Summoning him is easier than booking a Doctor's appointment.”

“And by summoning him you mean?”

“He will possess me” said the Queen of the Weresharks “You will have to ask him what we do about Lucy”

“Well okay I can see the need for the blood but why such odd symbols?”

“These odd symbols speak to the great trinity of the Weresharks. The Shark, the Wolf and the Maiden. There are sentient sharks who have their own written language called Charicthy and sentient Wolves called Canids with their own written language. A Charicthan, A Canid and a Canadian could eat look at this language and find it recognisable and familiar because it represents the dominant languages of all three species that make up the Wereshark. The act of creating the circle of blood dials in the instructions to my subconscious and that summons the Farsh-nuke to take the place of my consciousness. Like how taking notes in university and writing things down in your exercise books at school isn't because educational institutions are stingy when it comes to printing but because they know the act of writing the information down will make you remember it better.”

“Huh” said Galla, impressed. “So this possession, what'll it look like?”

The Queen of the Weresharks sat cross legged in the centre of the bloody diagram and said “See for yourself!” she pulled a special three bladed sword out of her right thigh and stabbed herself in the hearts with it. She blacked out instantly.

Heat was sucked into the Queen of the Weresharks causing a gale and a cold spot.

The Queen of the Weresharks suddenly took a sharp intake of breath and a terrified voice asked “Who's there?”

Galla pulled up a chair and sat before the possessed Queen of the Weresharks. “I am Galla Placidia. I am a friend of Sister Lucille Danse of the Sylph Liberation Front, I believe you are her master?”

“Ha” barked the thing possessing the Queen of the Weresharks “I knew she faked her last name. But I'm not her Master anymore.”

“No?”

“No. I killed her and then I died to protect the Farsh-nuke.”

Galla was confused “You're not the Farsh-nuke”

“William Dickson Wright at your service but I understand your confusion. The Farsh-nuke does not exist. Literally. He is made of illogicity. His power comes from his lack of corporeality. The Queen of the Weresharks could no more infect him than she could infect the devil or god. But she did infect me, his host. After I killed Lucy to destroy the Septagonoids I was fatally wounded. I gave my life to let my body live so he might still live” He snorted “Probably the only truly noble thing I had ever done.”

Galla nodded, understanding. “Lucy isn't dead. The Logicios saved her. She's barely 10 nmetres from us.”

“Really?” said William excitedly “That's fantastic!”

“Yes, yes it is but right now she is missing her master.”

William frowned “Aww, Lucy. But I can't help her. I'm just a shadow on the wall.”

Galla returned the frown “The thing is we don't exactly have the time or resources to let Lucy mourn or get counselling. Something bad and impossible has happened and Lucy is our best chance of figuring it out and putting a stop to it. We need her.”

“I see” said William and then he cried out “You have her blood!”

“I don't!” snapped Galla.

“In your pocket. A syringe I'm guessing. About an armful.”

“Yes” said Galla cautiously.

“Has she flirted with you?”

Galla stared at the possessed wereshark incredulously “What do you mean has she been flirting with me?”

William nodded “She has, good. Now you, what do you feel about her?”

“I, well I, well, I-I, well -” said Galla, blushing.

“Excellent, you clearly fancy the pants off her but care too much about her to make a move and she's already indicated her desires for you. That's enough for me. You say you need her at her best now, well I have a solution for you. I spent months and months taming her. Her sylph tendencies have locked onto my logic signature. I can give you what I know and let her instinctively know she can trust you. It's a big responsibility to take on, she may decide she never wants to leave you and I won't lie to you this isn't a moral action. There are issues involving consent and agency with what I am about to do but since you're already flirting and this is a life or death situation I feel the benefits outweigh the negatives”

Galla stared at the possessed wereshark, stunned. “Are you the devil?”

William laughed a hearty laugh “No, I am worse. I am an ordinary human being who was used, manipulated, sent mad and made some terrible decisions. I regret all of them and I am glad that I am

dead. What matters is that the woman who reformed me is out there, right now and she needs someone to look after her. If you want to do this without my help, go ahead. I can't stop you."

Galla chuckled, tearing up "But if I don't accept your offer I have to somehow flirt a woman who has been through hell into becoming my pet and I don't know if I can do that."

The cowboy burst through the doors of the spaceship "She wants you to say yes"

"Pardon!?" said Galla and William together.

"She says she knows what you're doing, that's precisely why she left the bus. And she wants you to do it. She says she knows what you two have will probably be little more than a fling but right now she needs someone to look after her and you need her ready to kick ass, so do it. Say yes." said the cowboy.

William laughed "That's my girl, plays me for a fool."

Galla smiled, a single tear rolling down her right cheek "I'll do it"

William nodded, tearing up himself "Good, then connect an open wound to the blood of the summoning circle"

Galla picked at a scab on her finger and watched the blood pulse from the wound then rammed the bloody finger against the summoning circle.

Lucy was leaning against the bus, staring off into the green infinity of the multiverse.

Galla swaggered out of the bus in a three piece suit.

Lucy smiled when she saw Galla. "He always did like suits. I think it was something about wanting to play hero. Can't help liking them after a while."

"Lucy-" Galla began.

"No, don't say anything. You don't need to. Just scratch my back would you?"

Galla dutifully felt around behind Lucy's back until she said "Right there. Perfect!"

Galla scratched and Lucy groaned with delight.

"That's the thing about being a sylph, so many itches to scratch, not enough hands" joked Lucy.

Galla laughed.

Then Galla bit her tongue and said "I wanted to ask you out you know, but I'm trying out not caring about sex and romance at the moment. It was going well. Amazing the time you save, not masturbating."

Lucy burst out laughing.

“But I guess this is the best of both worlds. I get the companionship of romance without the baggage.” said Galla.

Lucy nodded “And I have it on good record that I am almost as cute as a kitten.”

“Probably less likely to break my headphones too” said Galla

“Ha! Wait, you have a kitten?”

Galla nodded “An old dear I found as a stray. I took her in and fell in love.”

“So you have experience handling damaged goods then, that's good”

Galla hugged Lucy and ruffled her hair “You are not damaged goods, you are the woman who saved the multiverse remember?”

Lucy laughed.

Inside the Spaceship the Queen of the Weresharks was having a bath and the cowboy was sitting on the toilet talking to her.

“You really think they'll be good together?” asked the cowboy.

“Tale as old as time” said the Queen of the Weresharks simply “Enigmatic stranger embroiled in great internal and external conflict seeks a down to earth person to complete them and help them solve their conflicts. First law of life in the multiverse: The laws of fiction govern the laws of reality since everything real must be fictional somewhere and vice-versa. If we hadn't summoned the Farsh-nuke to get them together now then we'd have to wait for the third act of this mystery for them to get it together and I don't want them distracted from the real task of clearing up this mess. Not to mention how much none of us wants the second act, misunderstanding. That's typically when the bad guys win a bit so we need our team unified then.

The cowboy nodded, lighting a spliff and taking a long drag. “Yeah, I think you're right, love stories are a pain in the ass.”

The Queen of the Weresharks went back to scrubbing and the cowboy mused “Then again if there is someone writing this, then they must have a good strong reason to include this scene of me watching you bathe while we discuss narrative tropes.”

“Nah” said the Queen of the Weresharks “I once read a NaNoWriMo piece where these guys had a chase through a portion of the multiverse exactly like a minecraft adventure map called Solar Survival. Poor bugger just needed some padding. That's probably what this is”

The cowboy took a long toke and farted “You know I think you might be right. Fucking writers.”

The Venus Trap Part 5 Orcs Must Die

Online Version
Part 5 - Orcs Must Die

The next morning Lucy stretched and yawned. She rolled over in her bed to find Galla was missing. She looked nervous for a moment and was about to get out of bed when the door squeaked open and Galla entered wearing a mismatched three piece suit.

Galla held a plush velvet box in her hand and approached the naked woman in the bed. "I thought, well I found this and I thought you might like it?"

Lucy took the box and looked inside. She pulled out a slightly fraying collar. "This, this is the collar William gave me." She wheezed.

Galla nodded "Lucy Badass, saviour of the multiverse. You ready to take up that mantle again?"

Lucy pulled the collar round her neck and secured it, then she said "Go have breakfast, then gather the party in meeting room 3B."

Galla nodded respectfully and left.

Galla sat at the head of the table with the cowboy to her right and the Queen of the Weresharks to her left.

The cowboy was explaining "So we were surrounded by weresharks -"

The door swung open and Lucy entered carrying a small read faux leather purse. She wore cowboy boots, jeans, A pale blue suit shirt, a paisley waistcoat, a fawn suit jacket and a dark green double breasted long coat that hung two inches lower than the top of her cowboy boots.

"Wow!" said Galla

The cowboy whistled "Nice duds!"

The Queen of the Weresharks just smiled.

"First off, sorry for my behaviour. I haven't been myself lately but I know something. We were summoned. All 4 of us, and Woking and the Western Half of the Roman Empire and that angel thing. I don't think it's unreasonable to expect that more people and things will be summoned in so we need to be ready. You all okay with that" said Lucy.

The cowboy nodded "Aye!"

"Of course" said Galla

The Queen of the Weresharks nodded.

Lucy gave a half smile. "I'm glad you agree. Now once we have accepted that we will have company then we must also expect that some of it will be hostile. To that end I have raided the stores."

Lucy pulled out three watch like arm bands and handed them to the cowboy, who passed them round the table. Then she pulled out 3 large two handed guns, gave them to the cowboy for distribution. Same with 3 pistols and three metallic fancy looking rods.

As everybody examined their new toys Lucy explained "I think the Logicios expected I would get picked up by a warlord so they didn't hand me just any habitation transport. This is a covert ops battlestation. It's designed to gear up 50 soldiers with the technology necessary to enslave a planet. Obviously we're not using that technology because we don't need it and frankly two of you tried to kill me so I don't entirely trust you. No offense."

"None taken" said the cowboy.

The Queen of the Weresharks shrugged "You're a smart girl Lucy, I trust your judgement. So what do we have."

"The wrist bands will connect you to the ship and basically act as personal forcefields. They emit a localised logic field about your person that automatically cauterizes wounds and restores damaged tissue. It filters out toxins, poisons and radiation. Should you actually die then it will save your soul or independent logic signature and beam it and your memories into a clone that will be created in this ship. Just like respawning in a video game." said Lucy

Galla stared at her "Why do I sense a but coming?"

Lucy rolled her eyes "Melee attacks can still you and cauterisation of not, if they decapitate you or destroy your brain you're dead, well unless you have some other way round it like me and mother of the blood. Also if they damage the wrist band you're basically naked. And since we'll be moving I'll have the ship's exterior locked away in my bag so if we all die before the door is open we are trapped inside this ship until one of us figures something out."

"And the guns?" asked the cowboy

"Never run out of ammo as long as the ship with within a mile of them. The big guns can stun, turn and kill. The pistols are memory guns, the first round is loaded with the information you need to work everything. You also all have Quantum Oscillators but none of us knows enough to realistically use them for anything more than cheap tricks." answered Lucy.

The Queen of the Weresharks asked "Turn? What does turn setting do?"

"Mind rape" said Lucy simply "A special variant of the sylph pill solution teleported right into someone's brain. With it is a burst of memory gun logic that commands the victim to either await spoken orders, kill their friends or kill themselves. There is no known cure for the condition, they are completely in their attacker's control."

The Queen of the Weresharks grinned a devilish grin.

The cowboy whistled appreciatively.

Galla declared “Yeah, we're not using that setting.”

The cowboy looked pleadingly at Galla. “But they're so useful?”

The Queen of the Weresharks looked at Lucy like a slice of frying bacon and fingered the trigger of the gun.

Lucy beamed a big friendly smile at the Queen of the Weresharks “You'll be pleased to hear that friendly fire is impossible when you're wearing the wristbands and the guns don't work when the wrist bands are off.”

The Queen of the Weresharks chuckled “You're bluffing.”

“And you're jealous” said Lucy “To answer your question Galla, when the odds are against you and survival is at stake, chivalry goes out the window. I loathe the idea that we might have to use these guns in such a manner but if we're going to murder everyone anyway what does it matter”

A large bell chimed and the lights dimmed.

Lucy swallowed “That would be the company. Memory guns to your heads, now!”

Lucy ran from the room as the Queen of the Weresharks and the cowboy shot themselves.

Galla held the memory gun in her hand and felt its heft. It felt good in her hand, like it belonged. And that worried her.

Galla wasn't a killer. She had no streak of badass within her. She was ordinary, dull. A pacifist who bleated about genocide and murder but would never actually do anything. She couldn't do this, could she?

Lucy was out there now, fighting for her life.

Galla had sworn to protect Lucy. That's what being her mistress meant. It wasn't all fun and games caring for a sentient pet. Galla had a responsibility to protect Lucy, took after her and see no harm came to her. At the same time though Lucy was a million times better at protecting herself than Galla was, Galla couldn't even protect Campuss. Campuss. Galla thought of that frightened cat she'd found on Campuss and how she'd run to her for love and affection. Galla had become a crazy cart lady that day, had instantly fallen in love. And now Campuss was gone and mummy was gone and Laura and Cathy were gone. There was only Lucy left.

Galla aimed the memory gun between her eyes and pulled the trigger.

Orcs were swarming the bus, battering it with wooden clubs studded with teeth.

The cowboy stood atop the bus, sniping anybody who looked like they might have a range weapon.

The Queen of the Weresharks had transformed into her beast form and was battering anybody who came close. Every now and then she's lunge and scratch with a claw to infect someone.

Lucy was standing outside the bus doors, blasting anyone who came close.

Suddenly she felt a scratch against her left ankle and felt herself grow tired and dizzy. She checked her wrist, the wrist computer was broken. "Mother puss bucket"

She tried to keep fighting, hoping her body would adapt and neutralize the poison but the baby orc with the dragger was climbing up between her legs, biting as she went. "Oh no no no"

She needed to get the baby off her but if she stopped shooting, the mob would overwhelm her.

She up the baby climbed, stabbing her with the poison dagger all the s time until at last it reached her neck and sliced across her jugular "Oh shit!"

Any moment now it would come. Her neck would be sliced in two and she would fall before the orcs, a never ending feast, forever in pain. But Galla was still inside the bus. And Galla stood no chance against these things. So Lucy kept firing at the orcs.

Lucy held her ground even as she felt the dagger enter the back of her neck and start to turn. She wondered if she should ask for a mercy kill from the cowboy. No. Galla needed those extra seconds afforded by the slower death.

As her nerves were cut her legs went limp and her shots went wild. Not that it mattered with so many orcs nearby and the spirit of the Farsh-nuke in her blood to hold her up. She could almost feel his body embracing hers, his hands helping her aim the gun, his legs supporting hers, his voice whispering in her ears "Go ask someone who's just got engaged what's the big deal about a ring? It's symbolic. The collar represents the contract between owner and pet, that neither shall leave unless shit seriously hits the fan. 'Till death do us part."

Lucy fell. She fell and turned in the air. The gun was launched into the swarm of orcs. Her body hit the ground and the orcs surged over her body, towards the doors, towards Galla. "Goodbye" said the spirit of the Farsh-nuke as darkness filled her vision.

"Get the HELL away from my family" cried Galla.

A blast of energy shattered the glass in the bus door and the orcs were stunned.

Another blast came, blowing the door off its hinges and impaling some orcs.

A third blast turned the orcs standing over Lucy into raspberry jam.

Now the orcs fled or tried too.

An orc had picked up Lucy's gun and accidentally used the turn setting on some of its friends who

stood like obelisks now, awaiting orders and halting the retreat with their very existence.

Lucy saw Galla standing silhouetted in the doorway of the bus and three words came from her mouth instinctively “Orcs. Must. Die.”

The possessed orcs obeyed, murdering their kin.

Galla had no mercy either. Blasting groups of ten orcs at a time into a fine paste.

Galla screamed “If you make it back to your homeland, to your kin, to your families. If you make it back to tell stories of how you felled the great Lucy Badass, you tell them this: She!” Shotgun blast. “Is!” Shotgun blast. “Defended!” Shotgun Blast.

The orcs that could, ran.

The orcs that couldn't cried as one “We surrender!!!”

Galla stopped firing and helped Lucy to her feet.

The Queen of the Weresharks stopped killing but kept disarming orcs and scratching them.

The cowboy didn't quite get the memo.

“Alright! We'll talk surrender terms!” cried Galla.

The cowboy kept picking off orcs with pretty little headshots.

“Could you stop killing us then?” asked one of the orcs.

Galla said “Calm down. The Queen of the Weresharks is merely disarming you and granting you the gift of regeneration.”

Pop!

The head of the orc Galla was talking to exploded like a water balloon.

“No, we are still killing them” said Lucy “Hang on I'll tell him to stop”

Lucy climbed on top of the bus and told the cowboy to knock it off.

“So, complete unconditional surrender?” suggested Galla “You fight for us now.”

Lucy called down “I'm sure I have a few hamster cages they can sleep in”

“Oh and nominate a leader, he'll be the only one involved in negotiations.” said Galla

“She” said one of the Orcs

“Pardon”

“Well, we're all female”

Her name was Galbion Nobnacker Skullburster. She was 37. Taller and fatter than the Queen of the Weresharks when she was in beast mode and had a very pronounced underbite. Next to her Galla felt positively svelte and anorexic.

Galbion finished explaining “So that's how we got here.”

Lucy nodded approvingly “Excellent. That fits with our current theory and together we really can defeat any threat that comes our way.”

There was a knock of the door of the meeting room and a child sized woman with giant butterfly wings on her back and a magic wand with a five pointed star on the end was flying in the air.

Lucy closed the door and went back to her chair at the meeting then muttered “No such thing as fairies”

“Pardon?” asked Galbion.

Lucy barked “There's no such thing as fairies!”

The Queen of the Weresharks tilted her head and looked carefully at Lucy “We know Lucy.”

“I'll get the door” said Galla.

Galla got up from her seat, strode over to the door, opened it, saw the fairy, strode back to her chair, sat in it and said casually “I think I have fairly conclusive evidence that they do exist.”

The fairy flew over the top of the table “Oh dear, I am sorry, but I am rather in a pickle you see.”

Lucy glared at Galla and snapped “Fuck off!”

The fairy blushed “Oh dear, I am sorry, but this is rather important”

“Fuck off and go die in a fire.” said Lucy calmly.

Galla frowned “I really don't see what the issue is. We are inside a spaceship that is bigger on the inside, we just made peace with orcs that were trying to kill us. This guy's a walking tropefest and that woman's capable of becoming a shark and summoning the minds of dead men to possess her via blood control. What's so different about a fairy.”

Lucy stood up and stared the fairy in the eyes “Where were you!? Where were you, hmm!? Where the fuck were you!? Where were you when my sisters were screaming? Where were you when the Farsh-nuke was slaughtering women or eating them alive?”

Lucy started walking round the table, circling the fairy. “See this is the problem with believing in the supernatural. It does you no fucking good. Men get inspiring fantasies to give them the confidence to

stand tall and fight. We get to fantasize that maybe we aren't the feeble helpless creatures in need of protection by men that we are told we are.”

Lucy spat in the face of the fairy “I made my own god and he actually did what I wanted him to do. You did nothing.”

Lucy walked out of the room.

Galla silently followed.

The fairy looked to the cowboy “What did I do?”

The cowboy shrugged.

The Venus Trap Part 6 The Fairy War

**Online Version
Part 6 – The Fairy War**

“So...” said the cowboy “You're a fairy?”

“Yes” said the fairy “My name is Flitzzy Sapphire Honeytoast, I am seven hundred years old and very proficient with the fairy dust”

The Queen of the Weresharks yawned and stretched out a clawed hand in the fairy's direction.

The cowboy kicked the Queen of the Weresharks under the table and glared at her then said “It's very nice to meet you Flitzzy, what can we do for you?”

Flitzzy said “Me and a shower of fair folk were just playing in the fields, harvesting the crops and slaughtering the animals with joy -”

“Slaughtering with joy?” mouthed the Queen of the Weresharks excitedly.

“- when the bad fairies came. The ones with sticks and rope who do bad things to bad children. They said it was their harvest too and they needed more fairy dust to convert more bad children to bad fairies. Said they would skin one of us and pulp us to get the most fairy dust. We fought and then the women, and some of the men who used to be women, were transported here. There wasn't enough of us to fight the bad fairies so they held them off while I ran. Please, you need to get ready. The bad fairies are coming for me.” said Flitzzy

The cowboy nodded “We'll be ready and we'll help you get revenge. Queen of the Weresharks could you please convince Lucy that we need her help?”

The Queen of the Weresharks nodded, taking the gun.

The cowboy glared at her.

“I won't use it, I just want to play with her.” said the Queen of the Weresharks.

The cowboy rolled his eyes “She is not your pet to play with” Then he started showing Flitzy how the memory gun worked.

The Queen of the Weresharks nodded “Okay I see how it is” and left the room without the gun.

The Queen of the Weresharks knocked on the door of Lucy's room and accidentally pushed it open, revealing a room where items of clothing has clearly been thrown haphazardly and on the centre of the bed lay a naked, oiled and purring Lucy as Galla massaged her.

The Queen of the Weresharks studied the scene, hoping to capture every tiny perfect detail to memory.

Galla stared at her “It's not a sex thing if that's what you're thinking. The shedding of the clothes distances a sylph from their agency and so their responsibility. After meeting that fairy Lucy rather needed to forget she was a sentient creature for a while. What do you want anyway?”

The Queen of the Weresharks smiled a toothy grin “Attack of the killer fairies. We need our wizard.”

“I am not a wizard.” said Lucy indignantly.

Galla scowled “And now you've gone and woken her”

Lucy rolled her eyes “Galla, dear, I appreciate your concern but the main reason we're doing this is so I will be fit for battle. Mother of the blood, kindly tell the cowboy to ready a memory gun round., I want Galbion's army geared up and ready for battle.”

The Queen of the Weresharks nodded and turned to leave when Lucy added “Oh and if I find out anyone else has gotten hold of the memory you just saw I will dissect you and make you eat yourself in the sure and certain knowledge that you will live through the experience”

The Queen of the Weresharks smiled and left the room.

The cowboy watched from atop the bus as Galbion led her troops out the bus and into formation. He whistled “Impressive General!”

Galbion called up “My thanks sir! We've fought the likes of elves and men! We can match some fairies!”

“Excellent General”

“One thing Sir!?”

“Yes, General”

“I'm not a General Sir”

The cowboy laughed “You are now General. These women will fight and die at your command. You're in charge and they need to know that”

“Aye Sir!” said General Galbion, saluting.

“Where did you get such impeccable military skills, *Sir*?” said Lucy, now standing behind him, wearing her battle uniform, greatcoat blowing in the wind.

The cowboy didn't turn around, he kept watching the orc soldiers go through their marching orders. “Before I realised who and what I was, before I came out, I joined the army. I was sent to Iraq. I had a great time there. I mean I think my squad mates all knew that I wasn't like other women, they tried to protect me you know, these silly urges men get sometimes. They were great people. I killed a lot of people, and I made mistakes. You get so jumpy if you're not careful. I was killed by my best friend. Right here.”

The cowboy turned and pointed to where an image of a cowboy had been sewn on his waistcoat. He looked Lucy in the eyes. “Glancing blow to the ribs and a small fragment punctured my heart. Ambulance couldn't get there in time. I died in my friend's arms. I forgave him.”

“So what happened after that?” asked Lucy

The cowboy shrugged “The Architects of Chaos intervened, they saved me at the last second and replaced me with a brainless clone. They healed me to full health and gave me the option of having the op, becoming a man. I said no because the shock of what had happened was enough without adding a change of genitals into the mix. And then they said they could drop me off at home or I could travel through time and space, fighting a more just war. I chose the latter.”

“And the genitals?”

The cowboy blinked “While I suppose I haven't given it much thought, this new lifestyle is so exciting I haven't seen the need to. Plus this is how I've always been.”

“Well as long as you're happy” said Lucy and she hugged him.

At that moment the Queen of the Weresharks sniped the cowboy with a memory gun round and a vision of an oiled up Lucy filled his head. He froze as the memory sunk in.

Lucy whispered in his ear “Don't worry that's just the Queen of the Weresharks sniping you with a memory gun. You don't fancy me and I know you're not stupid enough to fantasize about me.”

“Right” said the cowboy, very much aware of how easy it would be for Lucy to snap his neck.

Lucy pulled back and asked “So where's the fairy?”

“Umm...”

“I don't like umm.”

“Hehe... she wanted a tour of the ship and when we got to your room she wondered why you had hamster cages, guineapig runs and dog kennels and cages for full grown adults hidden behind a painting.”

“You didn't?”

The cowboy grimaced “I showed her where you keep your sylph pills and she ate one.”

“Which one”

“The-” he whistled “-one”

Lucy's mouth dropped open in horror.

“And the best part is since I refused to touch the sylph pills, Flitz Honeytoast has imprinted on you.”

Lucy's eyes widened and she started counting.

The cowboy ran and dove off the bus, being caught ably by the orc troopers, he found the Queen of the Weresharks and said “Head up there with the gun, now, she's all yours.”

The Queen of the Weresharks climbed on top of the bus and said “So I hear you're finally ready to become my toy...”

Lucy turned and snatched the gun from the Queen of the Weresharks and proceeded to carry out her threat.

Galla joined cowboy watching the demonstration “Nice show old man”

“Thanks, I think I did a good job” said the cowboy as he listened to the Queen of the Weresharks beg for mercy.

Galla nodded “Yeah we'll able to take care of a bunch of fairies, no problem.”

“For all our sakes, I hope you are correct. So I know Lucy's tragic backstory and she knows mine, what's yours?”

“Well -” Galla was interrupted by the cackling of forty anorexic green children with sticks and rope.

“Company, attention! Fire when ready!” barked General Galbion.

Twenty orcs proceeded to fire into the air at the fairies.

Galla and the cowboy started sniping at the fairies.

Lucy was just trying to figure out how to fit the Queen of the Weresharks' left foot down her human form throat when a noose suddenly dropped round her head, tightened round her neck and lifted her off the ground. She squirmed to look around and just about understood that she was being held aloft by a fairy.

Galla and the cowboy watched this happen and while Galla focused her efforts on downing the fairy carrying Lucy the cowboy ran up the side of the bus to help the Queen of the Weresharks.

As Lucy was carried off she realised how stupid she had been. The Queen of the Weresharks was Galla's best hope of protection and Lucy had put her out of action. Stupid. Stupid. And all because Lucy wanted to have her cake and eat it. To be the strong incontrol leader but also the pretty team pet. The Queen of the Weresharks' voice rang loud and clear in Lucy's head:

“You are one of my children and you have the abilities of the sylph and the Logicio but the Farsh-nuke tamed you too well. You will not use the power my blood gives you. You prefer to be passive and submissive. That will get your friend killed!”

As Lucy stared down at Galla she knew it to be true. But then a voice from beyond the grave, a voice within her very blood seemed to say something to her, it said “I know how to break a person, to crush their soul until they're less than a shell but I never use that power because it's wrong and it's evil. Just this once though, I'll make an exception. You will kill yourself.”

And Lucy knew what she had to do.

Five fairies dove down and carried off an orc. They proceeded to eat her alive in mid air, blood and guts showering down on the other orcs.

Galla was being ignored. The lone newbie with a peashooter who can barely aim was not a high enough priority to attack yet.

The cowboy was busy freeing the Queen of the Weresharks from the bizarre contraption Lucy had constructed to force the Queen of the Weresharks to eat her own organs when a couple of fairies landed behind him and started tying him up. He ignored the distraction and focused on freeing the Queen of the Weresharks. At last he pulled away the last restraint and in his jubilation his hands were grabbed and bound behind his back and a noose was fitted round his neck.

A fairy landed on Lucy's back and exposed her spine with a dirty knife. It then proceeded to blow what looked like soot inside her exposed cavity.

The shark inside Lucy stirred. “Not yet. The timing isn't right.”

Suddenly Galla was the most important person on the battlefield. The highest priority target. She saw the fairies heading in her direction and pulled out the syringe of blood, taking the time to affix the needle to the syringe properly and inject the blood into her veins before she started running. She only narrowly made it and knew that she couldn't run for more than a few seconds.

A fairy landed on the cowboy's back, exposed his spine with a dirty knife and blew what looked like soot into his cavity.

Now.

Now was the moment.

Now was the time to act.

So Lucille Danse walked down to the cellar of her mind and approached the cage of a great monster. She slipped an elegant, fractal key into the lock and turned it. Immediately the monster consumed her.

Galla stopped running and fell on her back.

Every fairy that did not have a burden to carry swarmed to feast on succulent human flesh. Those that did have a burden to carry swarmed more slowly but that was enough.

Lucy grew, bursting her noose open at the seams. She caught the fairy who had carried her with a great swipe of her right claws and rocketed upwards, infecting the fairy who was carrying the cowboy and freeing him in the process then she leapt towards the swarm over Galla

Galla grew and swatted away the fairies, infecting them in the process then leaped to her feet and started infecting fairies on the ground.

As the cowboy fell, he grew and caught a safe ride to the ground on the back of a fleeing fairy that he infected. Then he picked up his gun and started taking pot shots.

Lucy danced on top of the fairies, infecting each of them with every bound and leap and gambol

Throughout all of this General Galbion and her troops continued firing, even as their numbers were thinned and picked off any fleeing fairies.

The Queen of the Weresharks sat unnoticed at the centre of a circle of writing written in blood atop the bus. With an immense effort of will and focus she clapped her hands.

The fairies dropped to the ground, unconscious.

Lucy returned to human form and fell to the ground.

Galla returned to human form, was allowed to lower herself to the ground and dropped unconscious.

The cowboy carefully placed his gun on the ground, returned to human form and dropped unconscious.

General Galbion observed this impassively then ordered her troops to restrain the unconscious fairies and stick them in a secure sylph cage.

Lucy pulled herself to her feet and observed the devastation.

The Queen of the Weresharks called over “You can be quite helpful when you want to be!”

Lucy climbed up the bus to where the Queen of the Weresharks sat in the centre of her witches circle.

The Queen of the Weresharks said quietly “You think I'm the muscle because I am a wereshark but I am more than that. Far, far, more. You think being a Logicio and a sylph with training under the Farsh-nuke makes you a special hero. That you are a special snowflake whose knowledge of the multiverse cannot be rivalled. You may be right, but it's a poor scientist who misses evidence and resources before their very eyes. I have tried to be playful with you, to gently prod you to obey me but I am sick of playing games. I control the blood. You control the battlefield. You obey me.”

Lucy staggered “Galla's my owner”

The Queen of the Weresharks screamed “Do I look like want to keep you as my fucking pet!?”

Lucy stammered “I-I-I”

The Queen of the Weresharks said simply and quietly “You are a sylph, that means you are strong and obey orders. You are also a wereshark. That means you are strong and obey orders but instead of using your power to be strong and obey orders you appeal to vanity and try to remain in human form when swarms of monsters are attacking despite the fact that it would be far more efficient for you to shark out. Galla knows this. The first thing she did when she became a wereshark was shark out to better achieve her battlefield objectives. You prefer let me or a dozen orcs eat you.”

Lucy said icily “My best friend was a man who killed and ate innocent women everyday because it made sense to him. Forgive me if I have my own moral code to prevent me from doing that.”

The Queen of the weresharks stared into Lucy's eyes “Then why is it that yesterday you killed more people than you did today?”

Lucy suggested “Because you were controlling the blood? Keeping everyone alive, coordinating the attack and engineering the final knock out blow?”

“Exactly” said the Queen of the Weresharks “I know you disapprove of mind rape but if its done for a few seconds to avoid killing someone, isn't that better? Heck I made you believe what you did just now was your own idea.”

Lucy exploded “You mindraped me!?”

The Queen of the Weresharks nodded “Or did you think those surprisingly appropriate flashbacks were your own?”

Lucy stared at her in disbelief.

“I give you my word, if I didn't care how you felt about this you'd already be my toy. So please obey me or I will have to do what's best for everyone again and make you obey me.”

Lucy licked her teeth and walked away.

Lucy entered the ship and entered her room, she found the cage containing Flitzy and had the ship's automated systems let her inside.

Flitzy ran up to Lucy and licked her face.

Lucy hugged Flitzy and said “Flitzy, darling, I fear the bad fairies got me and I might be a little bit possessed so if I start being mean or rude just paralyse me and ignore my protestations. Now please tell me the entire history of the fairies in as much detail as you can.”

As Lucy looked upon Flitzy's very excited face she recalled what the Queen of the Weresharks said “Obey me, or I will make you obey me”

The Venus Trap Part 7 The Fair Were Army

Online Version
Part 7 – The Fair Were Army

After five minutes Flitzy blew fairy dust into Lucy's face and Lucy screamed.

“Oh sorry, did I hurt you?” asked Flitzy

Lucy blinked and coughed then said “No Flitzy you freed me from a great and terrifying spell”

“Yay yay. I did a good thing” clapped Flitzy excitedly

“What did you do?” asked Lucy

“I put a spell on you with my fairy dust, it cleared you of possession and warded you against it” said Flitzy

Lucy beamed and hugged Flitzy “I'm sorry I shouted at you. I didn't realize you were – Well I didn't realize how adorable you are. May I see your fairy dust by the way?”

Flitzy beamed “Of course” and held out a handful of fairy dust.

Lucy bent down on one knee to examine it, scanning it with her techno-wand “Fascinating, this fairy dust appears to be composed of millions of tiny logic crystals. Imbue it with a particular logic program and it'll deliver the spell right to the source.”

“Like this” said Flitzy before blowing the dust into Lucy's face. It dissolved the instant it touched her face and so no irritation was caused but Lucy's ears did grow pointy and giant butterfly wings grew from her back.

Lucy laughed and ruffled Flitzy's hair.

“Oh dear” said Flitzy

Lucy stared at her “What's happened? Am I a goat now?”

“No, not a goat” said Flitzy “The spell I used was very safe, difficult prerequisites, nothing should have happened.”

“Right...”

“I mean it will only give you fairy powers if you are a bad fairy and you're not a bad fairy are you?”

Lucy walked over to where a full length mirror stood on a wall and observed her wings “Yup, I'm a fairy now”

“With bad fairy powers” said Flitzy “And personally I think you look rather fetching”

Lucy looked downcast “Please say I can hide these aspects”

“Of course” said Flitzy, blowing dust on Lucy.

Lucy's wings vanished and her ears returned to normal. She smiled and hugged Flitzy “Thank you. Now a little birdy told me you've been rather naughty and eaten one of my special pills”

Flitzy grinned “I'm a sylph now, like you.”

Lucy chuckled “I suppose you are. Now why don't you tell me what takes to be a fairy while I tell you what it takes to be a sylph.”

Flitzy nuzzled Lucy “Anything for you”

Lucy's eyes widened in terror briefly but then she patted Flitzy's back and started to explain what being a sylph meant.

Galla woke to find herself naked in Lucy's bed.

The Queen of the Weresharks was sitting at the foot of her bed, collar and leash held meaningfully in her hands.

Galla sighed “I'm very flattered but I already have a pet and Lucy's quite the handful as it is.”

The Queen of the Weresharks sniggered, looking at where Galla's breasts were hidden from view. “You took the blood. You're my toy now.”

Galla shook her head “Oh Queenie, do you honestly think I am afraid of you?”

A sick smile spread across the Queen of the Wereshark's face “I made Lucy lock herself in with the fairy. I can make you commit suicide.”

“Then try me”

The Queen of the weresharks closed her eyes and sniggered. She pulled her triple bladed sword out of her thigh and stabbed herself in the hearts. Her eyes widened in horror. “How?”

Galla smiled and said lightly “I'm tougher than I look. Now understand that I don't care about you and Lucy's stupid little squabble. I just care that Lucy remains my pet. That means you do not undermine my authority and if you kill her or invade my mind I will atomise your soul.”

The Queen of the Weresharks swallowed “You are not the human I so nearly devoured in Woking.”

Galla showed her teeth and her eyes glowed green “It is not your business to know who or what I am. Only to understand what I command you to understand.”

Galla got out of bed and walked past the Queen of the Weresharks, sighing.

When Galla got to the bathroom she vomited up and stared at her reflection in the mirror above the basin. She punched the mirror and watched the glass fall to the floor.

The cowboy woke up.

He woke up and recalled a dream he'd had while falling.

They were in a library. It was clearly Georgian but had modern books. The Queen of the Weresharks sat opposite him. They were both sitting in comfortable armchairs.

The Queen of the Weresharks was wearing reading glasses on the end of her nose and reading off a notepad "Now it says here that we were scheduled to have a talk but I can't seem to find your name anywhere, what is it?"

"I don't have one" said the cowboy "The name on my birth certificate belongs to a dead woman."

"Okay" the Queen of the Weresharks jotted something down "We'll call you The Cowboy. What is it you do?"

The Cowboy shrugged "I ride into town, find out what the trouble is and put a stop to it."

"Good" said the Queen of the Weresharks, noting something down. Then she leaned back and pulled off her reading glasses so she could wipe them with a cloth "And what do you think of me?"

The Cowboy gave a half smile "You have a wicked sense of humour, a mean streak and a heroic streak. You can be a genius mastermind or a boisterous bruiser. It's been fun working with you."

The Queen of the Weresharks replaced her glasses on the end of her nose. "And am I a good woman? Am I moral?"

The Cowboy took a deep breath then deflated "Not always, no."

The Queen of the Weresharks beamed back at him "Excellent! Now about that penis you wanted..."

An image of Lucy, naked and oiled, overcame him. He breathed it in and cried out as a wave of ecstasy overwhelmed him.

He opened his eyes to find himself lying in his ruined clothes atop the bus. He got to his feet and cried out "I have a penis!" His shirt fell apart and he discovered something else "I have abs! I am ripped!"

Galla let Lucy out of the hamster cage and started stroking her and massaging her immediately.

Lucy melted in Galla's arms, welcoming her caress like a hot shower after a hard day's work.

When Lucy was lying naked in bed Galla admitted “I miss my cat Campuss.”

Lucy nuzzled Galla “You've got me”

Galla laughed and squeezed Lucy “I know and you are amazing. My favourite person in the whole wide world.”

“But I'm not a cat” said Lucy with a chuckle.

Galla barked “Ha!” then she sighed “But seriously, Campuss chose me. Campuss chose me and I might never see her again.”

Lucy nodded compassionately then crawled across Galla's lap and said “Check this out.” Two great butterfly wings grew from Lucy's back.

Galla moaned with delight “Aww! That's awesome! They're beautiful. Can I touch them?”

Lucy nodded.

Galla gently stroked the side of Lucy's left wing. It felt like a mix between an ear and the clear plastic coating on a ready meal.

Lucy laughed. “That tickles”

“Can you fly?” asked Galla.

Lucy nodded and flew up into the air “It takes more effort than running but I can do it. I've even got fairy magic.”

Galla beamed and stood up on the bed to stroke Lucy's cheek “Well then my butterfly, why don't you put on my clothes so we can decide what to do about our fairy prisoners?”

Lucy blushed “Actually I have a thing for that.”

The Queen of the Weresharks and Galbion were the first in the meeting room and chatted politely about fights.

“Now Elves, they make a good squelch when you hit them. You can really feel their insides burst.” said Galbion

“Ah but humans, they taste the best. Have you ever tried spitroasting a baby fresh from its mother's womb?” countered the Queen of the Weresharks.

The Cowboy entered the meeting room and nodded to the Queen of the Weresharks and Galbion before sitting down.

Next Lucy and Galla entered in their usual suits. Hanging on a chain from Lucy's belt was a birdcage

about the size and shape of a tennis ball. Flitzzy Honeytoast was hovering inside it. When they sat down Lucy unclipped the bird cage and set it hovering atop a stand in the middle of the table so Flitzzy could watch and hear all the proceedings.

Lucy stood up to begin the meeting “Ladies and Gentlemen we are here to discuss the new potential our encounters yesterday have provided us and may I say cowboy that suit you are wearing today is particularly dashing.”

The Cowboy smiled and blushed as he stood up “Why thank you Maam. You and Galla are both looking particularly stunning yourselves but I'm afraid I'm not staying in this party. I have a higher destiny now. The Queen of the Weresharks and I made a deal and as part of that deal I need to go. I am reliably informed that my ride will be somewhere in London so I have a long way to go and I can't afford to be slowed down. I will tell the architects of chaos where you are though, see if I can't send some help.”

Lucy smiled at the Cowboy, making him blush further.

He sat down.

Galla stood up “Ladies and Gentleman, back before we met many of you. Lucy and the Queen of the Weresharks nominated me the leader of this party. Mainly because we were walking through my hometown-”

Lucy and the Queen of the Weresharks chuckled. The Cowboy smiled. Flitzzy squealed.

Galla paused for the laughter to die down then continued “Now though it seems oddly appropriate. General Galbion, leader of the orc infantry. Her Royal Highness the Queen of the Weresharks, mother of the blood. And Sister Lucille badass of the SLF Leader of the fairy air corps. You all have key strategic positions and skills. Except for me and so I am free to be in charge. Now I know we are sharing our skill sets. For example, the orc infantry will become weresharks and the fairies will similarly be able to infect. But managing the battlefield works best when you only have to work on the tasks you are assigned. Galbion, you are infantry. A massed group of gunners ready to blast apart any threat on the land. Lucy, you are air corps. Your job is to neutralise any flight based threat by infecting or killing them. Mother of the Blood, we need you on the ground, ready to shut down any infected.”

“And you?” asked the Cowboy.

“I give the orders” said Galla “You don't have to listen to me but any second you spend questioning my orders is a second you spend not neutralizing the enemy.”

The Cowboy nodded “Fair enough”

The Queen of the Weresharks held up a finger and spoke when Galla nodded her consent. “What about me? Yesterday we were lucky, they didn't think I was capable of thinking. What happens next time I'm in the blood and someone tries to kill me?”

Galla answered “The kitchen here is capable of vat growing meat in seconds. With a bit of work it can be reengineered to grow a mindless but living clone of Lucy with all her abilities. I already have the computer synthesising one now. We think we can rig the clones up to a kind of telepathic control so

Flitzzy here can operate the clone and stand guard when you meditate.”

“And I could have my own toy Lucy” said the Queen of the Weresharks with a grin.

Lucy shuddered.

Galla smiled at the Queen of the Weresharks “I've patented the programme to create the mindless clone so I retain all copyright of the technology and its products. So remember I will be watching to make sure you don't get carried away.”

The Queen of the Weresharks grimaced.

“Or if you prefer we could just leave you to die” said Galla cheerily. “Now Galbion, can you and some of you women help Flitzzy here turn our prisoners of war into good fairies? Cowboy I believe Lucy wants a private word with you in her room.”

Galbion left, taking Flitzzy with her.

Then the Cowboy and Lucy left.

The Queen of the Weresharks swallowed. Galla was between her and the door.

Galla walked calmly over to the Queen of the Weresharks, her eyes glowing green then she put her hand on the Queen of the Weresharks' shoulder.

Suddenly they were in a library and sitting in armchairs. The Queen of the Weresharks was wearing reading glasses and there was a notebook in her lap.

Galla pulled a strap-on from a pocket “Mother of the Blood, let me show you what mindrape feels like so you will understand why I refuse to let you have your way with Lucy.”

“So?” said the Cowboy when they were in Lucy's bedroom.

“I was your first ejaculation wasn't I?” said Lucy playfully as she stroked the cowboy's abs.

The Cowboy's mouth dropped open in astonishment “How did you-?” and then he laughed guessing how Lucy knew.

“I like you” said Lucy, as she slid her right hand down his trousers.

He squealed and pulled her close “I like you too but I thought you were - well you and Galla? And I'm about to go.”

Lucy looked up into his eyes “Galla's my best friend and my owner but she's not my lover and besides, call it a christening present. I mean you are just so hot.”

She lightly squeezed with her right hand. His voice went high pitched. “Oh-kay! We are really going to

do this then?"

She grinned, undoing his trousers with his left hand. "Let's have sex."

Two orcs held an emaciated child before Galbion, who held the small birdcage before the child's face. Flitzy blew fairy dust at the face of the child and his green and black skin turned a healthy brown as butterfly wings grew on his back and his ears grew pointed. An orc in a dinner jacket hugged the lad when he was released and said "There's some food and drink in that room over there, eat as much as you need to."

"Thank you sir" said the boy running off.

"Next!" ordered Galbion and another bad fairy was brought forward for cleansing.

Galla left the meeting room.

The Queen of the Weresharks was staring into space, horror in her eyes, her hands shook as she raised them to rake her face. "I'm a monster" she breathed.

Lucy and the Cowboy lay back in bed breathing heavily.

"Sorry I was so quick" said the cowboy as he rolled up a joint.

"Eh it's okay" said Lucy "As a sylph I get an empathic orgasms that are twice as strong as normal if my partner finishes before me and crucially this way I get to have another orgasm after you've gone hehe."

The Cowboy finished rolling up the spliff, lit it and took a drag "Well I'm sorry anyway. Still, can't be a grand master on your first day."

"No" said Lucy "That is true" then she reached under the covers and pulled out an egg.

The Cowboy looked at the egg worriedly "The condom did hold didn't it?"

"Oh hell yeah! Logicio condoms aren't just plastic. They're specially programmed infinite bags designed to look and feel like condoms by an actual warping of reality. Ain't no way they're bursting unless you want have sex with a black hole" said Lucy enthusiastically.

The Cowboy asked "Then why the egg?"

"So you'll remember me" said Lucy "She'll grow up to be an exact clone of me in about 6 months. Even have my memories. If you get sick of her drop her off at the homeworld of the Architects of Chaos."

“Err...” said the Cowboy, trying to think about the logistics of hatching an egg and raising a sylph while heading to London through the deserted western half of the Roman empire.

“Fine, I'll pack in an egg of Flitzzy in a special container with everything you need to look after them and know how to.” said Lucy as she left the bed to follow through on what she just said.

The Cowboy couldn't think of anything to say so he just took a nice long toke of his spliff.

After an hour the Cowboy was ready to depart.

Lucy and Galla each shook his hand and hugged him. Lucy whispering “She'll let herself out of the backpack when she's mature enough.”

The Cowboy grimaced “Thank you”

The Queen of the Weresharks handed him a plush leather box “I get you this. I hope you don't mind.”

The Cowboy smiled and thanked her.

General Galbion saluted “Good Luck, Sir! I hope to become an architect of chaos myself someday.”

The Cowboy saluted back “I'll buy you a drink at your graduation Galbion.”

The Cowboy addressed them all “Thank you my friends. It almost a running joke that I've met each one of you while trying to kill you but you have made me a better person and a better man. Though I am going now. I do hope to see you all in Rome when my rescue mission arrive there. Good luck with your journey.”

Then the Cowboy wandered off into the sunset.

Lucy started crying and Galla comforted her.

The Queen of the Weresharks grinned like a Cheshire cat.

General Galbion went back to work healing the bad fairies.

When the Cowboy could no longer see the party he'd left behind, he opened the box the Queen of the Weresharks gave him. Inside was a dog collar in his size with “The Cowboy” engraved on the name tag. He laughed at this and then read a note that was also inside the box. It said the following:

Dear Cowboy,

Thank you for becoming my champion.

I mean that honestly and sincerely. Thank you.

Your first mission is to find out what a young woman called Galla is doing in ancient Rome and why when her eyes glow green she has a force of will and control of reality stronger than any Elder God.

This mission is of most importance so you are to take the enclosed sylph pill and start running. An Elder God by the name of Gfaxxy Quluwmcy will find you and rescue you. You will become her pet and be taken to the home world of the Architects of Chaos. There you can hand her this note and after submitting to a few tests should be able to follow through with your mission.

Yours Sincerely,

The Queen of the Weresharks

The cowboy carefully folded the note back up and put it back in the box. He removed the sylph pill the carefully shut and stowed the box. He swallowed the pill and started running.

The Venus Trap Part 8 Ride of the Valkyries

Online Version

Part 8 - Ride of the Valkyries

General Galbion was on watch atop the bus when she saw specks swooping and blowing horns off in the distance. She climbed down and entered the driver's seat. She started the bus turned around in a wide lazy arc then put the pedal to the metal and started humming a tune: Ba-ba-ba-ba-Ba, Ba-ba-ba-ba-Ba, Ba-Ba-Ba-Ba!

Inside the spaceship Galla and Lucy were woken by the floor shaking, the lights flickering read and a great bonging droning on and on.

“The fuck is that!?” screamed Galla

“Trouble!” cried Lucy, already out of bed and getting dressed.

Galla stumbled over the wall mounted PA system and screamed into the microphone. “All units this is Galla. We are under attack! I repeat we are under attack! Fairy corps I want you patrolling the skies now! Infantry I want you armed and ready to fight the moment we stop! Mother of the Blood, I need you in position to control the battlefield!”

Lucy jerked to attention and growled emotionlessly “The clones aren't ready yet!”

Galla screamed over the Intercom “And possessing my friend makes me real sad about that! Now move!”

Lucy almost collapsed when the Queen of the Weresharks stopped possessing her but continued to gear up.

Galla started getting dressed.

Galbion could see the Valkyries gaining on the bus in the rear view mirror and muttered “Come on,

come on.”

Lucy ran out of the ship and jumped out the open door.

For a heart stopping moment Galbion thought Lucy was dead but then she watched Lucy saw sky high behind her.

40 fairies flew out of the ship then out the bus and into the sky, each armed with a pistol.

Then the orcs started filing out and taking defensive positions at the doors.

Galla exited the ship and approached Galbion “Time to stop General but thanks for buying us time.”

General Galbion nodded and applied the brakes.

When they reached a fullstop General Galbion led the infantry up onto the battlefield.

Galla talked through a bluetooth headset “How much longer before you're able to start controlling the battlefield, Mother of the Blood?”

“5 minutes” said the Queen of the Weresharks.

Galla nodded and switched channels “Lucy, talk to me.”

Lucy was flying in the air above the bus and staying 50 metres away from the action. “Galla there's fricking hundreds of them. We don't stand a chance.”

Galla frowned “Lucy darling I love you dearly but we've been outnumbered before. Get infecting people.”

“They have swords and breath weapons!”

“You're a weresharks, worst comes to the worst you just throw your heart out of combat.”

Lucy stared at the battle that was going on and sighed “They have hostages”

“Then rescue them”

Lucy stared incredulously then shrugged and dove into combat. She bobbed and weaved through the melee, looking for a hostage when someone jumped onto her back and pulled a chain between her teeth.

“Dive, birdie, dive!” said the stranger

Lucy shrugged and dove. A valkyrie dove down, following her. The stranger whispered “Blow fairy dust on to the chain.”

Lucy obeyed and the chain was whipped out of her mouth, ready for the stranger to do something that ended in a big boom.

The chain was whipped back between Lucy's teeth and Lucy flew harder.

“There's a good girl” said the stranger.

Lucy wanted to ask so many things but she had the bit between her teeth. When they were level with the bus, the stranger hopped off. Lucy was about to fly back into the fray when the stranger scratched her behind the ear and whispered “Follow me birdie, I'm going to have a job for you.”

So Lucy followed the stranger with the badass long coat inside the bus. They found Galla there and Lucy watched in horror as Galla so obviously melted in the stranger's arms.

“This your steed?” asked the stranger.

“She's my pet, yes” said Galla

“Couldn't help noting you are a little under-gunned.” said the stranger “I think I can help even the score.”

Galla smiled “I'm sure you could” And with a flick of the Quantum Oscillator the stranger's hands were unchained.

The stranger turned to Lucy at last: she was 7 feet tall, dark skinned, muscly, lithe and had short cropped hair. She extended a hand “I don't think we've been properly introduced. I am Mariam Manzoor, otherwise known as the Hooded Justice.”

Lucy shook Mariam's hand “I am Sister Lucille Badass of the Sylph Liberation Front. I am a wereshark, a sylph, a fairy and just a little bit Farsh-nuke.”

“Otherwise known as Butterfly” said Galla

“Well Butterfly, let's dance!” said Mariam.

Galla clipped a leash onto the back of Lucy's collar “Instead of reins”

Mariam smiled and nodded, using the handhold like a stirrup as she clung onto Lucy.

Lucy flew them out of the bus, hoping to accidentally bump Mariam's head on the way out. She failed.

They flew up into the air and Mariam pulled a grappling gun from out of her suit. “Going up!”

Whoosh!

Thunk!

“Argh!”

Click!

Whoosh!

Mariam dived from Lucy onto the backs of the valkyries “Locate the Queen and the president!”

Lucy nodded and flew off.

She darted through the myriad air battles going on around her and spotted a short grey haired woman wearing pastel colours chained to a valkyrie.

Lucy swooped towards them when a valkyrie grabbed her with its claws, Lucy sharked out and infected it as she fell from its grasp. Then she climbed through the battle by jumping to catch and infect new valkyrie handholds. At last she reached the top of the battle and ran from valkyrie to valkyrie, infecting as she went. She saw the queen again and performed a somersault in mid air, transforming into fairy form as she went and she zoomed towards the valkyrie.

Fwoosh!

A fireball burned Lucy's wings to dust and she fell.

Whoosh!

Thunk!

Click!

Whoosh!

Lucy was grabbed by the Hooded Justice who commanded “Butterfly, shark out!”

Lucy grew into the wereshark form and grabbed hold of the valkyrie carrying the Queen and infected it.

The Hooded Justice freed the Queen and commanded “Butterfly, take her down!”

The Queen rode Lucy like an experienced equestrian.

The flight down was less eventful now the Queen of the Weresharks had some pawns to manipulate.

The flight back up was even easier going but then came the hard part, finding the president.

The Hooded Justice was at her side. “The President is over there, good luck!”

Lucy beat her wings and darted through the battle once more. She was nearly at the President when an arrow caught her through all three hearts.

The Leader of the Valkyries reeled Lucy in and asked “Why are you fighting us?”

Lucy laughed “You chased us! You started picking us off!”

The Leader of the Valkyries stared at her “We are Valkyries, this is what we do. We ferry the dead to valhalla.”

“None of us are dead” said Lucy

“But is this not the Astral Plane?” asked the Leader of the Valkyries

Lucy stared at him and said dryly “Oh yeah, our bus crashed and we woke up in 420 ad. Of course it's not the Astral Plane you dolts.”

“Shit!”

Lucy nodded and pulled herself off the arrow and fell.

As she fell she sharked out and climbed up through the battle to rescue the president.

Just as she was about to reach the president's carrier, the Hooded Justice knocked her onto a different valkyrie.

The Hooded Justice asked “What did the leader say to you?”

Lucy shrugged “That they're Valkyries and this is what they do. Convince them they're wrong and we can end this before further bloodshed.

The Hooded Justice nodded and dove from the valkyrie.

Lucy sighed and threw herself off the valkyrie. She somersaulted and changed into a fairy then flew towards the carrier, she reached out a clawed arm and infected it then turned to chase after the Hooded Justice.

The Queen of the Weresharks thought to her “I see what you're doing and I will assist you but are you sure it's worth the risk.”

Lucy muttered “Galla wants her, that's enough for me.”

The Hooded Justice hung upside down before the Leader of the Valkyries “You have been murdering my people! What reason do you have to stop me killing you?”

“You came after us and you kidnapped us.” said the Hooded Justice.

“We are Valkyries. We carry the souls of the dead to the afterlife.” said the Leader of the Valkyries.

“But we're not dead!”

“And so my sisters are!” snapped the Leader of the Valkyries.

"I'm sorry about that! I really am! That's why I've come to offer you a truce!"

The Leader of the Valkyries snapped "We have you outnumbered! You are at our mercy!"

The Hooded Justice tutted "You don't say that, not if you're one of the good guys."

The leader of the Valkyries glared at the Hooded Justice "You are the murderers, not us."

"Then go! Go and you may live."

The Leader of the Valkyries gave a hollow laugh "We do not fear you."

"You should."

"Oh really and why is that?"

The Hooded Justice smiled "I am the dog that barks in the night. I am the woman on the bridge that won't let you pass. I am the woman who knocks on the door at the end of the universe. Any time you mislay your pen. Any time you lose a sock. Any time you can't find your keys or wonder what it is you forgot. I am the wind that carries away your last words, the X that marks the spot, the shadow dogging your travels."

The Hooded Justice, Lucy and every Wereshark and infected Valkyrie said as one "I! Am! Legion!"

The Hooded Justice said "You have 5 minutes, Captain. 5 minutes in which to obey us. If you start attacking us, we will murder you and spare you no mercy."

The Hooded Justice wriggled free of the arrow and dropped -

- onto the waiting Lucy who flew him down toward the ground.

At the ground the Hooded Justice got off and Lucy flowed her into the bus.

Galla kissed the Hooded Justice on the cheek and hugged Lucy "Thank you, both of you."

The Hooded Justice laughed "Steady on, they haven't decided if they want to fight yet."

Lucy laughed "Yeah, about that? The Queen of the Weresharks basically has everyone infected. She only showed just under half because that way the Captain won't be tempted to have a pointless last stand."

Galla clapped "Right, Lucy, shower, I want you in your most glamorous clothes. Mrs Manzoor, would you care to stay for drinks? Perhaps a nice candle lit dinner?"

The Hooded Justice nodded "It would be my honour to make the acquaintance of such a beautiful lady with such a fine taste in pets."

General Galbion entered "They're leaving. All of the Valkyries.

The Venus Trap Part 9 The Hooded Justice

Online Version Part 8 – The Hooded Justice

Mariam entered the dining hall of the ship to find Galla dressed in the most gorgeous dress that showed off just enough of her figure to be tasteful, refined and flattering. Lucy sat at the end of the table wearing a green sequined dress. Mariam was wearing a tuxedo and took a seat opposite Galla. The dining hall could have been mistaken for Georgian if not for the LED candles and touch screen place mats where food could be ordered.

“Hi” said Galla with a wave.

Mariam smiled back at Galla “Hello”

Galla laughed then smiled.

Lucy clapped her hands “So...”

Mariam nodded at Lucy “It's a nice place this?”

“Yes” said Galla “It's a recreation of a Georgian banquet. I mean the food is produced in seconds so it's put on a timer allowing us to talk.”

“Oh that's cool” said Mariam enthusiastically.

“Isn't it just?” said Galla enthusiastically.

“Yes and all we have to do to start the timer is order drinks” said Lucy cheerily.

Mariam nodded “Right yes, drinks. Shall we have some wine?”

“I don't see why not?” said Galla

They both scanned the wine list on their place mats then looked to the other to suggest as one “The 1987 Cabernet Sauvignon Blanc?”

They looked at each other and smiled.

Lucy clapped her hands “Perfect!”

They laughed and ordered the wine.

Lucy asked “So? Hooded Justice aye?”

Mariam nodded, smiling and leaned back. “Wondered when this question would crop up. I'm sort of a superhero.”

Galla's jaw dropped and she stared off into Mariam's blue eyes.

Lucy said “Yes I saw your heroics today. Clearly wasn't the first time you've given an improvised speech to intimidate someone.”

Mariam chuckled “No. No, you're right it wasn't.”

“How did it happen?” asked Galla dreamily

Mariam beamed “Oh this is my favourite part. See I wanted to be a ninja because they're cool so I did all this training and looked into eastern religions, hoping to learn the great enlightenment, the key to being a badass.”

“And?” asked Galla

“And I entered a ninja tournament” Mariam snorted “Sorry, it's just I was so naïve back then. I genuinely entered this ninja tournament and I progressed really far but then I realised that ninjas are basically short guys. I mean ninjas are sneaky so you want the most power occupying the smallest amount of space. And there's me, seven foot tall and eating the occasional bargain bucket and I can be fleet of foot and carve a path through attackers but I can't hide for toffee. Like you literally have to have a seven foot person sized space for me to hide and those are always the first spaces that get checked.”

Galla and Mariam laughed.

The glasses and wine materialised.

Mariam poured it.

“That ninja tournament did get me exposure though and this one guy representing a small technology firm approached me. He said I had potential and I just needed the right tools for the job that he could provide them. His team had developed a kind of prototype invisibility cloth. It wasn't perfect yet but it might let someone hide in plain sight if they were careful. He wanted me as a guinea pig.” said Mariam as she poured.

“And you went through with it?” said Galla before sipping her wine.

Mariam shrugged “I just needed an edge”

“Nah” said Lucy “I don't buy it. There must have been more than that.”

Mariam nodded “Smart girl, your Lucy.” She explained “I changed how espionage and hits were performed. At first my very existence gave whoever I hired an edge and whoever the opposition was to fight harder and dirtier. After a few years a villain emerged. They wanted to use the powers I exhibited to cast doubt on capitalism and the rule of law. All those politicians in their glass houses telling the world what to think. So this villain started a campaign of terror, blaming me as the great blight to be wiped out.”

“And then one day the forces of good and neutrality contacted you and called you their messiah. They gave you tools by which you might fight and wipe out the enemy or at the very least become a symbol

of hope.” suggested Lucy.

“How right you are” said Mariam “Now are we ready to order?”

“I will have the half roast chicken and sticky ribs please.” said Lucy.

“I’ll have the tagliatelle” said Galla.

“And I’ll have the steak” said Mariam “Perfect! And it is ordered. What about you Galla. You got a crime fighting past I ought to know about.”

Galla stared at her glass of wine “There was a man.” and then she downed her glass of wine.

Lucy froze. She knew there had to be something special and dark about Galla for her to have been taken and she also knew that explaining it would probably be traumatic for Galla so she had distracted Galla from the question of why she was here. As Galla's best friend, as Galla's pet, Lucy knew she should distract Galla from the topic of her past. This was supposed to be where Galla seduced the Hooded Justice. Yet Lucy said nothing and she listened.

Mariam topped up Galla's wine. “What sort of man?”

Galla sighed “Sixty odd. Private. Grey hair. Professional. Respected.”

Galla locked eyes with Mariam “He didn't rape me.”

Then Galla stared at her wine glass again “Didn't have to rape me.”

Mariam reached across the table and held Galla's left hand compassionately.

Galla said coldly “There are a million different ways to terrorize a woman besides rape. He didn't need to molest me to make me feel broken and worthless. He duct taped me to a chair and he hurt me. He hurt me with words and lies and mirrors. He made me believe I was a waste of space. A stink of human refuse. And then he started to cut me and beat me. He always knew how to do it such that I would heal. Didn't want to ruin my decorative value.”

The food materialized.

“And then I broke free and I tortured him and I killed him and nobody ever knew. He'd faked his death before he kidnapped me so nobody bothered looking for him and when they did find his body there wasn't a shred of evidence to lead people to suspect it was him.” said Galla before downing her wine and starting to eat.

Lucy followed suit and started eating.

Mariam stared at Galla for a long moment then started eating her food too.

They ate in silence.

When they finished Galla said “Now I bet you're wondering why I brought Lucy along to this?”

Mariam raised an eyebrow “The thought had occurred to me”

Galla reached out a hand toward Lucy.

Lucy dragged her chair over to sit beside Galla.

“I like you” said Galla

Mariam blushed “Thank you, I like you too”

Galla blushed “I like you but I need you to understand that I have made a commitment to Lucy. She is a sylph and needs someone she can trust to look after her, just as a dog or a cat does. I need you to like each other.”

Lucy mouthed “Sorry”

Mariam laughed “I have never encountered sylphs before. I thought they were spirits of the air. But I have been in open polyamorous relationships in the past and encountered more than one prospective partner who came with some form of non negotiable baggage be it a kid or a cat or dickish best friend. I think I can adapt. Shall we have dessert?”

Lucy grinned. “I love a sorbet”

“I think I'll have a sundae” said Galla “Why don't you have a coffee?”

Mariam looked oddly at Galla but then she saw how Galla's eyes were looking to the far right where Lucy was sitting and that her left hand was stroking the air strangely. She got the hint “Yes I think I will have a coffee but first I'll use the rest room, be back in a tick.”

Lucy sighed “So your new lover's a superhero huh?”

Galla grinned.

Mariam returned from the toilets to find desert had already arrived and her coffee had mysteriously materialised beside Lucy. Mariam took her seat and started sipping her coffee “So...”

Galla said “Well that quite was a stroke of luck us finding you, wasn't it?”

“Yes” said Mariam “I don't know where I'd be without you”

Galla brushed the hair away from her ear “Then let us be thankful you made it here all right”

Mariam nodded and started stroking Lucy behind the ear.

Lucy groaned with delight “I know what you're doing and I appreciate it but I am trying to eat my sorbet.”

Lucy woke up naked on the dining room table. The residue of what she hoped were spilt drinks hung over her and made her sticky. Her arms and legs felt like lead.

She tried to move her head to look at her surroundings and caught a glimpse in the corner of her eyes. She turned her head all the way to the right and found a hand written note. Lucy sat up and read it:

*Dear Lucy,
We owe you a lemon sorbet.
Sorry we got carried away last night.
We hope you forgot everything after desert was ordered but since you insisted on knowing what happened here is a memory gun recording compiled from all of our memories.*

*Sorry about everything.
Love from your owners,
Mariam and Galla*

Lucy read the note carefully and kept the memory gun round. Then she had a shower and got dressed. She fired the round into her skull as Mariam and Galla exited the guest bedroom.

They saw her faint and caught her.

“Hey butterfly are you okay?” said Mariam

“I knew we shouldn't have had desert” said Galla

Lucy stared into the faces of her owners and blinked “I'm not saying I didn't enjoy it but some things just aren't appropriate. Mariam could I have a word.”

“Ofcourse” said Mariam.

Lucy and Mariam walked out of earshot.

Lucy squeed “First off, wow. You are such a great catch for Galla and if I didn't know better I'd say you tamed more sylphs than the Farsh-nuke but-”

“But you didn't know about the man either?” said Mariam

Lucy nodded.

“And you want me to be careful because something strange is going on with Galla that has to do with whatever's drawing us all here?”

Lucy nodded “How did you know?”

“I talked to her. I have more than enough stories to trigger some kind of 'Oh that reminds me of-' reaction. But then I guess for all you are her best friend, it's not in your nature to probe for information.” said Mariam.

Lucy nodded.

The Venus Trap Part 10 The Two Lucys

**Online Version
Part 10 The Two Lucys**

After a hard day's uneventful drive the bus stopped for the night so everybody could get some food and sleep. As they were winding down for the night, the door to the ship rocked from a knocking. An authoritative voice boomed "Open up or we will break down this door."

Galla and Mariam were in the kitchen sharing a romantic dinner while Lucy was blissed out on the floor after 5 sorbets.

Galla chilled upon hearing the voice.

"Look after Lucy" said Mariam quietly before wiping her face, getting up and going to answer the door.

In the doorway stood a large Great White Shark with metal arms and legs, wearing a trench coat.

Mariam said simply "I just need to press one button to seal this room and have this ship rematerialise somewhere else where upon 40 orcs and 40 fairies and the Queen of the Weresharks herself will be woken to tear you limb from limb."

The Great White Shark sniffed Mariam then said "No fear, you're a good liar."

A blond woman in leather combat gear pushed aside the cyborg shark "Let me try Greta"

The woman extended a hand "Pleased to meet you, My name is First Officer Lucille Danse of the UCMS Paragon and this is Greta of the Charichthy. She's my best friend and sort of my bodyguard, can we come in?"

"Yes" said Mariam carefully "I think you should but remember one button."

The First Officer nodded and Mariam led them into the dining hall.

Galla stared at the First Officer "Lucy?"

"Yes, how do you know my name?" said the First Officer.

Lucy kicked in her sleep and nuzzled the floor.

The First Officer and Greta tensed, hands on their blasters.

Galla tensed.

“Easy” said Mariam “These two are both weresharks and your doppelganger on the floor? She can fly. If you hurt either one of them the other will not stop. Incidentally if you hurt Galla you better pray you kill me fast.”

The First Officer asked icily “Why do you have a clone of me on the floor over there?”

“The same reason you're here” said Galla “The same reason everyone's here. We were brought here.”

“Think about it” said Mariam “People have been drawn here from all over the multiverse, did you really think there would be no doppelgangers?”

“I want to speak to her” said the First Officer

Galla got up from her seat, strode up to the First Officer and whispered in her ear. “I swore an oath to keep Lucy as my pet. To care for her and to love her. You are outnumbered. Do not push me”

Galla kissed the First Officer on the cheek then backed away to hold Mariam's hand. “There's a double bed in the console room and a shark pool on deck 3.”

“You have a shark pool?” asked Greta

“It's a Logicio ship” said Galla

Greta nodded “See you in the morning.”

Galla and Mariam watched as the First Officer and Greta left.

In the dull stillness that followed Mariam snogged Galla then she said “Go take Lucy and lock her safe in your room. I have security arrangements to make.”

Lucy woke up in the hamster cage to find Flitzzy hovering over her. Lucy was naked again. She groaned. “What happened last night? Oh right the sorbets and the – oh yeah.”

Flitzzy tossed Lucy an emerald green bikini “I have been instructed that you are to wear this beneath your suit and be on your best behaviour.”

Lucy sighed “Well I suppose it would make a difference from ending the night naked” she said getting dressed “But what's so important about today.”

Flitzzy shrugged “I can only guess that they want the option to keep you under”

“Under?” asked Lucy.

“Yes” said Flitzzy “You know, when you are so blissed out by all the attention that you cease to remember and think properly. Under is when Sister Lucille Badass becomes Butterfly the cat.”

Lucy made a face like she'd smelled a particularly bad fart "I'm not a cat when I'm under am I? I always saw myself as more of a dog. Loyal, intelligent and obedient. Not psychopathic, selfish and easily distracted."

Flitzzy flew over to stroke Lucy as she tied her tie. "Dog or cat, I'm sure you're lovely. The main thing is they want the butterfly not the woman."

Lucy sniffed. "Well they can get both and like it"

The First Officer pulled out the double bed from its cubby in the wall and laid down it. She closed her eyes for a second and felt no different. Except now an orc, a fairy and Mariam were standing over her.

"Nice thing about that bed," said Mariam "It confers what seems like a perfect night's rest to a person without any effort on their part and wakes them up exactly 8 hours after they slept, giving me time to amass reinforcements and see that you are watched."

Mariam leaned over and clipped a plastic necklace round the First Officer's neck. "That necklace is more durable than reality, let alone you. It will let us trace you across all the multiverse."

The First Officer smiled "One of me is your pet, the other me is your prisoner.

"Oh don't be sad" said Mariam "You're about to get what you asked for last night."

The First Officer got up from the bed and said "Take me to your Lucy."

Greta found deck 3 and the entrance to the shark pool easily enough. She guessed a vast pool with sharks didn't really need much security. She paused at the water's edge though, she needed to store her cyborg attachments somewhere.

The Queen of the Weresharks was standing beside her now. "Care for a dip?"

"I'd love to, really, but I can't" said Greta, gesturing to her servos.

"Yes, I can see your dilemma" said the Queen of the Weresharks "But I have a solution."

The Queen of the Weresharks handed Greta a memory gun. "This ship has impressive hologram capabilities but dear Lucy refuses to let herself or anyone else use them. Probably seen too much Star Trek. Still I have been monitoring her while she sleeps and fights, backing up her memories should something happen to her, they make fascinating reading."

"And your point is?" said Greta

"Whatever you need, I can provide. You just need to let me know what it is and what it does, I can do the rest. Show me." said the Queen of the Weresharks.

Greta placed the handle of the memory gun between her lips and bit down very gently then pressed record. She thought about everything that might give the Queen of the Weresharks a clue as to how it works and stopped recording then she fired the round into the Queen of the Wereshark's head.

The Queen of the Weresharks nodded, pulled a quantum oscillator out of a pocket and zapped a console.

Greta smiled as a hologram of her humanoid limb tech assembler appeared at the water's edge. Greta walked into it and swam out into the pool.

The Queen of the Weresharks undressed then dove into the pool, taking on shark form.

They swam lazily together for 8 hours then surfaced and got dressed in time to be met by an armed fairy and orc escort led by General Galbion "Maams your presence is requested at the meeting hall. I have orders to torture and kill both of you if either of you tries to resist."

The Queen of the Weresharks laughed "We can take you on!"

Greta smacked the back of the Queen of the Wereshark's head "Let me guess, since the only other two people at this meeting are sylphs most of your forces will be here to escort us. Even blood control can't save you from a hundred blasts of phaser fire. We'll come quietly."

The Queen of the Weresharks sighed sadly "And I wanted to see the look on Galla's face when I moved my soul into Lucy and rip her throat out. Oh well I guess there's always next time."

Greta shook her head in disbelief and there were escorted to the meeting room.

Galla let Lucy out of the hamster cage and asked "Are you wearing it?"

"Yes" said Lucy, staring at Galla.

"Good" said Galla as she checked out how Lucy was dressed "I just didn't want you to embarrass yourself if I have to make you go under."

"Okay." said Lucy suspiciously.

Lucy was wearing a three piece suit, cowboy boots and a double breasted long coat.

"Right, yes, you're decent, let's go" said Galla nervously.

Lucy rolled her eyes and followed.

As they approached the meeting room Lucy noticed a curious lack of activity and then a steadily building nervous excitement. Galla leading through the mob of heavily armed fairies and orcs until at last Lucy was presented with a chair. She sat in it and stared into her reflection. Only for some reason Lucy's reflection was wearing a leather combat suit and a fancy looking necklace. The reflection was also missing the scars and blemishes Lucy had. She was fatter and shorter but not by much. Beside

Lucy's reflection sat a cyborg shark. Lucy checked and saw that Galla was sitting next to her. She could see that all the orcs and fairies were aiming at Lucy's reflection and the shark beside her.

“What is this?” asked Lucy

“Oh you don't know?” said Lucy's reflection.

Mariam stood up from her position at the end of the table. “I'm sorry, Sister Lucille of the Sylph Liberation Front, this is First Officer Lucille Danse of the UCMS Paragon and her best friend bodyguard Greta. This whole thing is so Greta and Galla don't get all of us killed with their protective instincts. I will only interfere where I feel it pertinent to matters of security.”

Lucy nodded and watched her reflection do the same.

“Okay I'm going to say one word, tell me if it makes you think of anything” said Lucy “Farsh-nuke”

Lucy's reflection nodded and laughed “Of course he'd have something to do with this. Mine was the Great Farsh-nuke, he let me have sex with him turned me into a sylph then revealed he'd been manipulating my entire life to make me his heir, then he died.”

Lucy nodded sadly “Sounds like the Farsh-nuke, unfortunately my Farsh-nuke was just a pawn of the Logicios, my whole world turned to cannibalism and slavery for twenty years, just to draw him out and I was the final piece of the puzzle. The girl to warm his heart and bring out his conscience.”

Lucy's reflection frowned then asked “May I whistle?”

“May I?” returned Lucy

Lucy's reflection nodded, Lucy nodded back.

The Lucy's whistled then each reached down into their pants to pull out an egg each. They swapped the eggs and said “Thank you.”

“So why did you come here?” asked Lucy

Lucy's reflection shrugged “We were on a mission when we appeared in Rome so we walked to the edge of the empire to see what's beyond. What about you? Are you the Farsh-nuke's heir?”

Lucy laughed “No. No, my Farsh-nuke is still alive but he thinks I'm dead and it's better this way. I'm something of a wandering traveller. Kind of looking for a new life to be honest. Thankfully Galla here has given me a loving home. I'm not just a sylph, I'm a wereshark and a fairy.”

“Ha” said Lucy's reflection “And my Farsh-nuke thought being a sylph made me special.”

“Do you have an owner?” asked Lucy.

Lucy's reflection nodded “An Elder Goddess by the name of Gfaxxy Quluwmcy but she's not here not so... yeah”

Lucy said “Bare in mind now that I am a pet and there are a lot of people to consider so I can't really offer you an ironclad guarantee with this. Would you like Galla to look after you during your stay here? The Queen of the Weresharks has been complaining for days that we need to beef up protection for her during fights. In fact she has explicitly stated that she wants me to stand guard but-”

“But you can't be in two places at once” said Lucy's reflection with a smile. “I get you.”

“And your not being a wereshark makes you a damn sight safer in such a position than I would be” said Lucy

“Why?” said Lucy's reflection.

Lucy froze then spoke with a deep voice “Because I am the mother of the blood and I can control any wereshark.”

Galla glared at the Queen of the Weresharks and Lucy's reflection noted how Galla's eyes glowed green and the Queen of the Wereshark's flinched at the glare.

Lucy slumped forward exhausted “There's just a difference between passive and trapped in your own body you know?”

Lucy's reflection reached forward and grabbed Lucy's hand compassionately. “Don't worry I'll see she doesn't hurt you.”

Greta whispered in the ear of Lucy's reflection.

Lucy's reflection leaned back. “It would seem Lucy that none of you are as weak as or innocent as you appear but do not worry we accept your offer. It seems your ship offers a service Greta has dearly needed since we were stranded here. We will investigate and neutralise the force pulling people here together.”

Lucy smiled “Then we need to think of a different name for one of us.”

“Butterfly” said Galla “My Lucy's name is Butterfly.”

Lucy's reflection raised an eyebrow “Butterfly?”

Lucy hissed “I thought you wanted to save me from embarrassment.”

“Butterfly it is” said First Officer Lucy with a grin.

Butterfly went red in the face “Tame us, tame us now. I want us to talk privately. They won't hurt us.”

Galla nodded and started to stroke Butterfly.

Greta asked Lucy “Will you be alright with this? There's something I have to attend to.”

“What? Oh, will I be okay being petted to the point of losing sentience before a hundred strangers? Er, yeah, I think I can pull that off.” said First Officer Lucy

Greta nodded "I'm glad you have this in hand."

First Officer Lucy climbed over the table and found a set beside Galla "I hope you're good girl, I really hope you're good."

Mariam was organising the smooth exit of the fairies and the orcs.

Greta made her way over to the Queen of the Weresharks and asked "Tell me how much you know."

The Queen of the Weresharks laughed "So you can tell your little friends about me?"

Greta smiled and leaned to whisper into the Queen of the Weresharks ears "Because I can pulverise your hearts in a fraction of a second and because my limbs are robotic they don't need me to be alive to know where to hit you."

Greta leaned back and grinned a nice big smile, showing off all her teeth.

The colour drained from the face of the Queen of the Weresharks.

"Not so nice to learn you're not the apex predator any more, is it?" said Greta "Now why don't we go for a nice relaxing walk while we talk, say to deck 3?"

The Queen of the Weresharks swallowed "I didn't suppose it would help if I threatened Lucy's life, would it?"

Greta shook her head. "My Lucy is not some damsel in distress. She is a skilled and experienced officer. Threats against her don't work on me because I know her to be more capable than I."

"Shit" said the Queen of the Weresharks.

Lucy woke up naked save for her collar. Beside her was Butterfly, the Lucy who belonged to Galla.

Lucy started examining the room. It was large, minimalist and circular. There was a translucent orange dome for a ceiling and the floor and walls seemed to have been cast as a single piece of white plastic.

Lucy saw that the ceiling seemed to be made from different sections with ridges and could presumably telescope back. Studying the lip where the ceiling closed against the wall of the room she noticed something. She ran over to study it further.

Most obvious on this section of the wall was a large metal pipe just over an inch in diameter with a ball in the end to stop water dripping out when it wasn't being drunk from.

To the right of the pipe were three draws. The left draw contained breakfast bars. The middle draw contained assorted fruits and prepared and packaged salads. The right most draw contained assorted cuts of ready to eat snacking meat like chicken legs and pepperami but also prepared and packaged meat sandwiches.

There were two exits to the room, both through circular corridors.

Butterfly jerked her leg suddenly rolled over to nuzzle the floor.

Lucy walked over to Butterfly and started examining her, jealous of the woman's emerald green bikini. Butterfly had a lot of barely visible scars and blemishes. The sylph pill was supposed to photoshop your body to perfection and only preserved what you felt was quintessentially you. Butterfly clearly felt very deeply that these scars and blemishes were part of who she was.

“Boo!” said Butterfly with a deep voice, her eyes suddenly open.

Lucy glared at the possessed Butterfly “I'm not afraid of you, you know?”

“You should” said the possessed Butterfly “One scratch against your dear sweet skin and I will own you.”

Lucy laughed “Greta's with you, isn't she?”

“She is not!” barked the possessed Butterfly.

Lucy nodded then blinked and suddenly her eyes were glowing green “Do you know what this means?”

The possessed Butterfly backed against the wall. “No. No, it can't be.”

“It means my dear that I am the heir to the might of the Great Farsh-nuke. All his soul, all his power, all his godlike abilities, are mine.” said Lucy crawling over the possessed Butterfly.

The possessed Butterfly laughed nervously “You're bluffing.”

“Why would I bluff?” said Lucy “If you could make me into your toy you'd have done it by now. Just one drop of blood in mine and I'd be yours.” To emphasize this she grabbed one of the possessed Butterfly's hands and placed it on her naked butt cheek. “Go on, make me your toy.”

The possessed Butterfly whimpered “I can't, she won't let me.”

Lucy nodded “Because the Farsh-nuke is a clever man who does not trust blood. He made it so he outranks you. And I am his heir. Lucy obeys me. Isn't that lovely? Lucy really is her own woman.”

Butterfly woke up, not something easily noticed when possessed but her voice resumed its normal pitch. “I'm glad you agree. Now unless you want to fuck I suggest we go in search of clothes.”

Lucy bit her lip “It is tempting”

Butterfly laughed “Buy me dinner first.”

Lucy laughed and got to her feet then pulled Butterfly up “What is this place?”

“A Hamster cage” said Butterfly with a shrug.

“Oh!” said Lucy as a thousand clues clanged like anvils in her head “And this is all carefully programmed and engineered to let us be us hamsters?”

“Yep” said Butterfly, strolling towards one of the corridors.

“Do you spend time in here much?” asked Lucy

“More than I'd like” said Butterfly.

Butterfly and Lucy climbed the translucent plastic tubes that were the corridors thanks to shifting gravity fields.

“I'd quite like to live here actually” said Lucy

“You're more than welcome to” said Butterfly “I've woken up here more often now that the Hooded Justice arrived.”

Lucy sighed wistfully “Can't stay here long I'm afraid. I've got a war to fight. What's this about a hooded justice?”

Butterfly said “The tall woman at our talk. Her name is Mariam Manzoor but she's a superhero called the Hooded justice and she and Galla are an item so I am petted out of my mind and deposited here. They know that I can look after myself here even when I'm under so it suits them.”

Lucy frowned “But not you right?”

Butterfly bit her lip “I shouldn't have said that”

Lucy chuckled.

Butterfly led them out of the tubes into a circular room with a translucent green roof filled with hat and shoe boxes and clothes rails.

Lucy's jaw dropped “This is awesome.

Butterfly nodded “And we should be the same size, plus I liked to have a few sizes either way just in case.”

Lucy beamed at Butterfly “Okay just so we're clear. Nothing productive is going to happen for the next half hour because I am just going to be trying on suits.”

The Queen of the Weresharks was strapped within a comfy chair, screaming as a vast contraption span around her head, scanning her brain with complex logic fields.

Greta stood back, her arms crossed, idly watching a readout screen “Amazing thing, the Aurora Chair. It can forcibly uncover any memories, thanks to logic fields scanning the brain, and because you're

functionally immortal and the Logicios have better tech than the Scarrans and the Peacekeepers combined this hologrammatic recreation can scan even deeper. Uncovering even the deepest of memories. Only when I am certain that you are spent will I cease the aurora chair scanning your mind and even then I may be tempted to keep it scanning because you are a mind rapist and I want to watch you suffer.”

Lucy pulled on the long coat once more and said “Okay Butterfly, now we can talk”

Butterfly stepped out wearing a cream and fawn toned suit. Lucy wore a lot of brown and red broken up by the occasional hint of green of gold.

“First I need to take you somewhere it is safe to talk.” said Butterfly.

Butterfly led Lucy back the way they had come and out the other corridor leading off from the main room. This room was more recognisably a hamster cage for people. The floor and the bottom half of the walls was a large red plastic tray. The ceiling and top half of the walls was a metal work cage with a very obvious hatch.

“That doesn't actually work, does it?” said Lucy worriedly

“Oh yeah” said Butterfly “The Logicios make their fantasies reality. I mean Logicio ships work by manipulating logic fields, makes no difference what fields are being manipulated and even outside the ship the logic fields can be programmed to hold.”

The floor was lined with foam fragments and there was a ball pit beneath the tube they entered through. There was a jacuzzi in the opposite corner and near by it a ramp to a second level with a feeding station and bed. Opposite the ramp, on the wall nearest them, was a running wheel.

Butterfly led Lucy beneath the second level. At first there were just bookshelves and coat hooks but then Lucy noticed the lockable door Butterfly was heading to. Through it Lucy found an early 21st century style office. No doubt the computer here could connect and make use of all the ship's facilities though, well, with a little hacking. Lucy noticed another almost hidden door behind Butterfly but she chose not to mention it just yet.

Butterfly directed Lucy to the office chair then pulled a folding chair out of the wall.

“Galla” said Butterfly.

Lucy nodded “Galla. Tell me what you know?”

“We were the first, I think” said Butterfly “First Galla and Woking then me and the Queen of the Weresharks then things started appearing all over the place, slowly, gradually. We missed most of it as we were so busy crossing the Western Half of the Roman Empire to see how far this extended.”

“And it's just Woking and the Western Half of the Roman Empire?”

“Yes. Just two land masses suspended within a part of the multiverse. Green nothingness all around.”

Lucy asked “And the people you've seen?”

“All women, biologically anyway. All strong and powerful too.” said Butterfly.

“And we're the only doppelgangers you've seen?” said Lucy

Butterfly nodded.

“Curious” said Lucy “Two landmasses and two women appear right by each other very close together. One of whom is now a pet to the other.”

Butterfly shrugged. “It's just coincidence.”

“I'm not so sure.” said Lucy “Does Galla have any sort of a dark past, anything that might lead you to be suspicious of her?”

Butterfly studied Lucy carefully, unsure what she was saying “Well she did once kill a guy but that was after he'd kidnapped her and tortured her. No court in the land would convict her for that.”

Lucy barked “Ha! I know courts that have ruled Sylphs should get the death sentence because they refused to have sex with Logicios that kidnapped them.”

“Gosh! Really?” said Butterfly, aghast.

Lucy waved away the issue “That's by the by, just something on my to do list. My point is I noticed something rather troubling at the trial.”

“Oh yeah?” said Butterfly.

Lucy made her eyes glow with the power of the Farsh-nuke “I saw your owner give these kind of glowy eyes to the Queen of the Weresharks when you were possessed and she visibly flinched, freeing you. Then, just now, when you were possessed I freed you by turning on the glowy eyes and the Queen of the Weresharks reacted with the terror of a rape victim upon seeing a rapist.”

“No” said Butterfly quietly.

Lucy stopped the glowy eyes. “We both know the Farsh-nuke right? We know how his power manifested. Under traumatic circumstances where the elder god took control.”

Butterfly said nothing, horror dawning on her face.

Lucy continued “Now imagine poor Galla all alone in that man's basement when he goes too far or too hard and an elder god used to shredding universes with no care for the pain or feelings of their host awakens to defend and avenge their vessel. It won't fully go back to sleep. It will wait, it will watch and it will punish that which it sees hurting an innocent.”

Butterfly said “When Galla got me, well it's not like we had talked about it or even considered it. We were just sort of attracted and then I got withdrawal from being without an owner for so long so Galla

and the Queen of the Weresharks summoned the Farsh-nuke and he decided to give me too her. Properly transferred the logic of me wanting to obey and be his pet to her. Maybe that's it."

"Aww, darling" said Lucy compassionately "I'm sorry but the Queen of the Weresharks can't infect the Farsh-nuke. She infected the Farsh-nuke's host and that's who gave you over to Galla."

Butterfly nodded "I guess I was just hoping. Besides it answers the question of what Galla's doing here. I mean Sylphs, Weresharks, Logicios, Charicthy and so many magical and fantastical species or people and then randomly one waitress come shop assistant from Woking. It makes no sense for her to be here otherwise."

Lucy nodded "And what's her full name?"

"Galla Placidia, why?"

Lucy said "I've been cramming up on history as part of this war I've gotta plan and orchestrate so of course I looked at the romans and I remember one little tid bit."

Butterfly glared at her "Then say it?"

"A prominent name from the Western Roman Empire circa 420 CE-ish. One Galla Placidia, Regent to the then Emperor of the Western half of The Roman Empire Valentinian the Third." said Lucy

Butterfly gasped "Two Lucys, two Gallas and two landmasses."

Lucy nodded "And not to be rude or anything but the Regent to the Western Half of the Roman empire and the heir to the Great Farsh-nuke and the Western half of the Roman Empire itself versus a waitress, a sylph looking for an owner and Woking."

Butterfly nodded "Ancient wonder and modern sophistication. It makes sense. Best of both worlds. Your knowledge and beauty, my abilities and humbleness."

Lucy blushed "You think I'm beautiful"

"So to recap. Galla's the host to an Elder god and something drew her, me and Woking here just as it drew you the Western half of the Roman Empire and the original Galla here and when we find her we wrap this up?" said Butterfly

"Maybe" said Lucy "And maybe we are falling into whatever the villain's trap is. I mean why bring the orcs and stuff here?"

"Curiouser and curiouser" said Butterfly "But I'm afraid I have to leave you. You said you wanted to stay here? Well this cage is the only place you'll need to be. That computer is connected to the ship computer as you no doubt guessed by the way and in that door behind you is -" Butterfly waved a Quantum Oscillator, that was lying on the desk, at the hidden door. It sprang inwards to reveal a plus bathroom with toilet included.

Butterfly walked round Lucy and entered the bathroom to retrieve a stone statue of a fairy.

Lucy watched as Butterfly blew fairy dust on the statue. It regained true colours and came back to life.

Flitzy snapped angrily at Butterfly “You weren't supposed to use that spell on me.”

Butterfly laughed “It's okay Flitzy I've got you a new toy. She's just like me but without being a fairy or wereshark. Feel free to turn her to stone if she starts getting difficult.”

Lucy stared at Butterfly, gobsmacked.

“Oh don't worry” said Butterfly “I was only joking. Flitzy knows to obey me and be a good little nymph. In all seriousness though if the boredom or lack of owner does get to you just have Flitzy turn you to stone on the upper level. I'll be sure to check regularly and bring you back to life for a play or a pet.”

Lucy said carefully “Butterfly, I am touched by your compassion and treatment of me but the war I have to orchestrate. It's for the fate of all reality. If you forget me, the multiverse could end.”

“Good thing I have a spare of you then isn't it” said Butterfly, referring to Lucy's egg “Now I really have to go. Good luck with your research”

Lucy nodded “And you, be careful of Galla. It might not be wise to tell her what she is.”

Butterfly nodded and left the room.

Lucy booted up the computer “Heir to the Farsh-nuke, First Officer of the UCMS Paragon, Ambassador for the sylphs, Head of the war effort against the Septagonoids, pet of a goddess and here I am charged with using wikipedia. What a fantastic use of my skills.”

Flitzy hovered behind Lucy's shoulder “I could make you into a fairy”

“No, thank you” said Lucy

Part 11 – The End of the Beginning

Mariam was just instructing General Galbion to drive the bus and keep it headed toward Rome when an old grey man in a suit tapped her on the shoulder.

Mariam turned to look at the man and saluted “Mr President Sir!”

“At ease Mariam” said the President “I wondered if you wanted me to buy you a scotch”

Mariam smiled “It would be my honour.”

The President smiled “Thank you, I know a little bar on deck 2 I've been dying to try out.”

Mariam followed the president up the stairs to deck 2 and asked “If you don't mind me asking sir, why

do you need me with you to try out a bar?"

The President shrugged "Rule 1 of drinking responsibly: Never drink alone. So long as you only drink in company then you can control yourself around alcohol when you need to."

"Ah"

"Plus what's the point in having a good drink if no one else is?"

Mariam nodded at that wisdom and they walked the rest of the way to deck 2 in silence.

When they arrived at the bar the president stopped to let Mariam enter first "Ladies first"

Mariam chuckled "Been a while since anyone called me a lady."

The President entered after Mariam and gestured to the wood panelled 40s style bar with imitation healthy smoke. "What do you think?"

"Very classy" said Mariam

The President opened a bottle of Glenfiddich and poured a tumbler of whisky for himself and Mariam.

They each took their tumblers and headed over to where two armchairs sat in a quiet corner, facing each other, a table in between. The President taking the seat with its back to the wall.

Mariam sipped the whisky and smiled.

The President sipped his whisky and said "Got a pleasant after taste don't you think?"

Mariam nodded.

The President chuckled "You're good. No prodding or prompting. Just listening. Well all right there is a reason why I want to talk with you besides the excuse to drink whisky."

Mariam gave a Cheshire Cat grin "Why, Mr President, the merest glimmer of a thought had never even begun crossing my mind"

"Ha!" barked the President but then he looked sombrely into his drink "I heard the commotion. You arranged quite the escort for our honoured guests."

"Yes, Sir"

"Well you reminded me of me when I was younger. You see I wasn't always the old curmudgeon you see before you. I used to be quite the looker. And I used to be a woman."

Mariam stared blankly back at the President.

The President chuckled lightly "Right, I know, what a surprise? Everyone we've met so far has been female. Well there was a war. We won. We won and we pushed out the Logicios and the Farsh-nuke. It

was a hard war but we won and then there came the question of what to do next. This war had started as a feminist uprising then became a fight to reassert our human rights. I mean we made mistakes, we were harsher than we needed to be at times, all wars have that. But there was a tension. The minority leading the charge wanted not just equality but domination while the majority of our fighters and allies just believed that human rights had to be defended and protected.”

Mariam sipped her drink. “So what happened?”

The President said darkly “There was a coup. I was involved. We murdered the minority wanting domination and took over ourselves. We parodied them. Hence my becoming a man. I became the quintessential patriarchal figure and I delivered all the speeches and plans they had talked about with that persona. Amazing how quick feminists are to cry injustice at fellow feminists when they happen to be men. Here's the thing though. We talked their talk but walked our walk. During my time in office I restored equality, funding campaigns to spread awareness and providing charities and utilities to those affected by the fall out of the war on both sides. And the feminists realised the way I was talking was not right so the radical domination movement died.”

Mariam sipped her drink. “And you think I need to understand that for all I might die a hero, I should be prepared for the fact that others will see me as the villain?”

The President smiled sadly “I wouldn't put it quite like that but yeah. You may lead us all to safety and salvation but that doesn't mean everybody is going to like you for it. There will always be people who think you are scum who deserves to die, if you can't take that, get out of the spotlight.”

Mariam laughed.

Greta loaded the information from the Aurora Chair into a memory gun round then shot herself with it. She turned to switch off the Aurora Chair and release the Queen of the Weresharks from her bindings. The Queen of the Weresharks stood up then feebly tried to attack Greta.

Greta ignored the attack and led the Queen of the Weresharks downstairs to the ground floor.

When they reached the kitchen Greta opened a chest freezer. Inside was a naked Lucy. This one even lacked a collar.

“Make her rise” said Greta

“Please, I am weak” said the Queen of the Weresharks.

Greta looked into the Queen of the Weresharks' eyes and said lowly, enunciating every syllable like an order. “Make. Her. Rise.”

The Queen of the Weresharks found a seat in the dining area of the kitchen and focused her mind.

The body of Lucy opened its eyes and shivered. She climbed out of the freezer and approached Greta.

“How does it feel?” asked Greta

“Good” said the body of Lucy

Greta nodded and hugged the body. “I know how it feels to be inadequate. I understand.”

“I’m not inadequate.” said the body of Lucy “I am the Queen of the Weresharks. I have more power in my left pinky than the Elder Gods combined.”

Greta nodded “That you do. That I do. But it doesn't help does it? You can tell yourself size and shape doesn't matter as much as you want but when you look at your friends and see that society has decided that they are objectively prettier and better than you, it's hard not to feel jealous.”

“I’m not jealous” said the Queen of the Weresharks defensively.

Greta snorted “You don't think I feel it? You don't think I look at my Lucy sometimes and wonder 'Why her? Why does she get to look like that? I have killed more people than her. I am a better fighter than her. I am a better tactician.”

The Queen of the Weresharks stroked Greta's cheek “But you're beautiful? Your might and your majesty. You are the noblest species in the multiverse. Humans are just kittens playing with technology. The Charichthy have knowledge and wisdom beyond any human race.”

Greta nodded and stroked the Queen of the Wereshark's cheek. “As are you. I know you envy Lucy. You want her power, her ability to be passive and submissive. To love and be loved but you aren't a sylph and you aren't a human. You aren't even a Wereshark. You are The Last Great Werewolf.

The Queen of the Weresharks started crying “I am the failure. I am the Werewolf that fucked it all up. That great dynasty ended with me. Can you blame me for wanting another life, another destiny, to not be remembered as the one who fucked it all up?”

Greta shook her head and stroked the Queen of the Weresharks “Of course I don't blame you. You have done terrible things but we all have. I think that's why we're here. You have been fighting your whole life, fighting to survive, fighting to ensure some kind of legacy. Now it's time for you to rest.”

Greta led the Queen of the Weresharks over to the table before where she still sat, concentrating on the blood control. As Greta cleared the table and pulled her coat off to serve as a blanket and her waistcoat off to serve as a blanket, the queen of the Weresharks asked “What are you doing?”

“Getting you some rest” said Greta as she helped the Queen of the Weresharks lift the body of Lucy onto the table.

The Queen of the Weresharks lay down on the table, her head on the improvised pillow as Greta draped the improvised blanket over her. “Are you comfortable?”

The Queen of the Weresharks nodded “But what about my real body?”

Greta said “Return to it and resume the real you. Become The Last Great Werewolf again.”

The body of Lucy closed her eyes.

The body of the Queen of the Weresharks changed, becoming a great wolf.

Greta cleared more of the table and patted it.

The Last Great Werewolf jumped upon the table and curled up. Then she slept. Her body sleeping in the guise of the Wolf, her mind sleeping in the body of Lucy.

“Right” said Greta “Now the hard work begins”

Butterfly exited the hamster cage and found Galla in tears on the bed.

Butterfly was immediately at Galla's side, nuzzling her. “What is it Galla?”

Galla squeezed butterfly and wiped her nose with a hanky then said “I did a bad thing”

Butterfly squeezed Galla back “What did you do?”

Galla wheezed “I raped the Queen of the Weresharks. I raped her with my mind and now you know don't you? The other Lucy helped you figure it out. I'm a monster.”

Butterfly hugged Galla “You are not a monster. I manipulated a little boy and made him fancy me so he might liberate my people. My last owner founded a conspiracy to kill, eat and keep women as pets. The Queen of the Weresharks herself has been pretty keen on doling out the mindrape. You are not an innocent but neither of us are and I understand why you did what you did.”

“Oh do you?” said Galla, her eyes glowing.

Butterfly recoiled, sitting up in bed.

Galla laughed, sitting up too. “Not so forgiving when dear, sweet, sniffing Galla becomes confident, powerful me, are you?”

“Who are you?” asked Butterfly nervously.

“Who are you?” responded Galla “You think it's just coincidence that I chose you two? You are the Farsh-nuke's little lapdog reincarnated throughout the multiverse. You were chosen because you have the power to be a useful pawn and the mindset to be a loving pet and friend.”

Galla stroked Lucy “Already, without my intervention, you have given yourself to me. My faithful Butterfly.”

Butterfly chilled “I belong to Galla Placidia, not to the elder god using her body.”

Galla smiled condescendingly “Oh you are so cute when you are trying to stand up for your friends.”

Butterfly said icily “I may be a sylph but I am also a wereshark and I grew up under the rule of the

Farsh-nuke. I am hard and sharp as diamond if you want to try me. I will kill Galla and gladly die myself to stop you if I need to.”

Galla poked Lucy's nose “Gosh, you're adorable. Seriously though don't worry. I am not some panto villain. I don't want to take over the multiverse. I just want to live. I mean that's what this is all about. Elder Gods don't have gender. We didn't have bodies, we didn't need it. I created everything you associate with women to rebel against the Farsh-nuke and the Bam-Kursh. I didn't intend to seed these tropes throughout all the Multiverse. I just had a very bad day once and needed to survive so I scattered pieces of my soul throughout every woman alive. Over the many many years these teeny tiny fragments met up and concentrated. This Venus Trap is my way of reconstituting myself.”

Butterfly nodded “Then what will you do with me and Galla?”

Galla thought for a second then answered “As I see it there is a war going on and there is injustice going on. I need to join that war, it is my duty. I also need to sort out the injustices, that is also my duty. More importantly however I cannot deny my vessels agency. I have picked out two teams and it is up to them to decide who will go to which destiny and who will get the lion's share of my power.”

“Right...” said Butterfly, not understanding.

“Like you and Lucy” said Galla “One of you is the Farsh-nuke incarnate, the other is a student of the Farsh-nuke.”

“And that's why me and Lucy are here” said Butterfly, understanding at last “To help your vessels understand their burdens.”

Galla nodded “And to be faithful companions. I am sorry if I scared you.”

Greta kicked the door open “I'm sorry but this is urgent.”

Butterfly looked to Galla for guidance.

Galla got up from the bed. “Show us.”

Greta led Galla and Lucy to the sleeping Queen of the Weresharks and hurriedly outlined the situation “The Queen of the Weresharks is not her name, it's her duty. She is The Last Great Werewolf and all her life, for as long Weresharks have existed, she has worked tirelessly to see the survival of her bloodline and the continuing safety of her legacy. She has never stopped and never slept. She envies you Lucy, envies your beauty and ability to be passive and at rest. She does not feel right in her own body, that's why she has been so keen to possess you. Better to be powerful and creepy than sad and pathetic. We have a chance now though, this mindless clone made from the food machine, she can inhabit it without hurting anyone.”

Galla nodded sadly “But that leaves her body empty and when she returns to it to eat or work, the body loses brain activity and needs to go on life support?”

Greta nodded “I do sympathize.”

“What do we do?” asked Butterfly “Do you want to use me?”

Galla kissed butterfly on the cheek “I am touched but you are needed Lucy. Besides Galla would never consent to be my host if I let you do that. No it's clear what the solution is here. Lucy head to Rome and find the other Galla Placidia then you may wake me and we can end this. In the meantime you and Lucy are the two smartest women I know. Together you should be able to work out some kind of solution for the Queen of the Weresharks, be it nanobots to keep the body on support whenever she vacates it or some kind of artificial migratory consciousness at her control.”

Butterfly nodded.

Galla looked to Greta “When I do this I may fall or collapse and suffer some kind of amnesia, Lucy will explain everything in good time. See that I am laid gently on my bed and that Mariam Manzoor, the Hooded Justice, is made aware of everything so that when I wake she can be there to comfort me.”

Greta nodded and got ready to catch Galla.

Galla reached out a hand to touch the forehead of each body of the Queen of the Weresharks then she whispered “Geronimo”

Galla's eyes stopped glowing and she fell unconscious.

Greta caught Galla and carried her between her arms.

Butterfly ran into her room and said “Go get Mariam, I won't be a minute”

Butterfly disappeared into the hamster cage.

Part 12 - Body Trouble

Galla woke from a dreamless sleep to find Mariam staring over her. Lucy and Butterfly were at her sides.

Mariam said “What I have to tell you isn't easy but it needs to be said and you should know that we all love you.”

Butterfly nuzzled Galla “I know we're not Campuss but we're here if you need us.”

Lucy nodded.

And so Mariam told her, told her everything Lucy, Butterfly and Greta had worked out and discovered.

Galla lay back and listened. She listened to Mariam explain how the Lucys had worked it out, both of her buried the faces against her. She listened as Mariam explained what Galla had likely been made to do and why they were all here. She listened as Mariam explained the fate of what was possessing her.

Galla lay in silence for a moment, stroking her sylphs as Mariam stared pensively at her.

No one spoke and in that silence an age seemed to pass.

Lucy, the one whose best friend was a cyborg shark, emitted a great squeal of joy and kicked free from her trousers.

Galla spoke at last "I think I want to go home."

Mariam frowned.

Butterfly nuzzled Galla "I think I can help you with that"

Butterfly extricated herself and said "Now you hug Lucy good yeah? She's been organising the war and wandering Rome for ages. She needs you. I want her so blissed out she's naked okay?"

Galla smiled "I think I can do that Butterfly"

Butterfly smiled back then led Mariam out of the room into the console room.

Mariam was visibly worried "What are we going to do, there's no way back for any of us."

"There is for her" said Butterfly as she studied the console controls "She was brought here with her home and my ship can easily open a door there because it logs the position every time a door is summoned but it's going to take time. Having the other Lucy there is going to buy us some time but only some."

Mariam stared at Butterfly "Wait you brought Lucy along just so Galla would be distracted by making her go under?"

Butterfly looked up from the controls. "I have done far worse before. Galla is a friend. Lucy is an asset. If it makes you feel any better I'm sure Lucy sees me as just as much of an asset to exploit. Now if you'll excuse me I am trying to prevent my friend and your girlfriend from committing suicide."

Mariam backed away from the controls "Then why did you bring me out here?"

Butterfly didn't look up from her work "Because the closer we get to Rome, the closer we are going to get to trouble and I won't be here to help you. Flitzy can lead the fairies and you'll have the use of the other Lucy. In fact I want you putting pressure and responsibility on the other Lucy. Galla will want to make her go under again when she returns so you need to make sure that Lucy is a suitable enough challenge."

Mariam crossed her arms "I can't do this, this is so unethical."

Butterfly sneered "Fine. Keep Lucy all cosied up and waiting for Galla while the shit hits the fan."

Mariam threw up her arms in disbelief "Fine. I'll do as you ask but what's the point? Why are you stressing?"

Butterfly laughed "We've been told what the entire point of this mess is now. We know our mission.

Just as simple drive into Rome.”

“Ah” said Mariam “Like a certain 'simple walk into Mordor'? Actually that's a point we could fly, I mean you're a fairy and we could probably get those valkyries?”

Butterfly glared at her “We have a fucking bus. Driving is less effort, quicker since we can drive through the night and involves less chance of death than flying. Plus we can fit an army on a bus.”

“Good points”

“Now I need to do something, something to ensure I can trust you to hold the fort but first I need to know how squeamish you are.”

Mariam almost choked from surprise “Squeamish, why would I be squeamish? I'm an assassin for hire turned superhero.”

“And I grew up with men drugging my friends so they could eat them alive, is there anything you are squeamish about?”

Mariam shrugged “I'm sure I have my limits but I've not yet met them”

“Good!” said Butterfly turning from the console with a loaded memory gun in hand. She fired a bolt of logic between Mariam's eyes.

Mariam staggered “You prepared the round while you were grabbing Lucy I see?”

Butterfly nodded and headed to Galla's room “The door will only open to Woking once. Don't worry we can get back in the spaceship from Woking but you won't be able to get to us. Good luck.”

Butterfly entered Galla's room. Lucy was wearing an emerald green bikini and sleeping soundly.

Butterfly snorted

Galla said “Blessed girl, I think she's all tuckered out.”

Butterfly nodded and sat beside Galla so she could stroke Lucy “I think she thought I brought her along for her counselling skills. Still she'll have a nice sleep.”

“Thank you” said Galla “Can we go home now?”

Butterfly nodded and hugged Galla before getting up and helping Galla get to her feet without disturbing Lucy.

They left the room quietly and hurried out the ship.

Galla smiled “Back at Waitrose. You really do work miracles. Amazing to think that so much has happened in just over a week.”

Butterfly said “A week ago I was wandering aimlessly without a clue. Now come on, I think there's a

park where we can talk.”

Galla nodded and followed Butterfly.

Lucy woke to find Galla and Butterfly had gone and in their place sat Mariam.

“Hi” said Lucy sheepishly.

“Hi” said Mariam as she stroked Lucy “I didn't mean to do this. I just came here and sat down so I could wake you when you crawled on top of me. Didn't have the heart to move you.”

Lucy chuckled “I suppose not knowing how to deal with kittens that glomp you is a trait of all superheroes. How may I be of service to you?”

“Well Galbion, the leader of our orc fighters, is busy driving us towards Rome and Butterfly said to expect trouble.” said Mariam

“Makes sense” said Lucy “And let me guess? She also instructed that I am to make up for her and be worked nice and hard so I'll be ripe for Galla to pet me again?”

“Yes” said Mariam cautiously “And you're okay with that are you?”

Lucy sighed “She's me. A bit cuter, more endearing and deadly perhaps but she's me. I'd have made the same choice if our situations were flipped. Now tell me where is the hologram room?”

Mariam blanked then frowned “Deck 7 but-”

“But Butterfly didn't want me to know that” said Lucy with a smile “Now anyway I believe I should get dressed, I have work to do. I suggest you suit up if trouble's coming.”

Mariam nodded “I think you might be right. If we are without Galla and Butterfly, the Hooded Justice will be needed.”

The Last Great Werewolf dreamed. She dreamed of dancing and flirting, of parties and conferences, of the love of another and falling asleep in the arms of someone she trusted. One memory kept interrupting the dreams:

Old. So old now. Older than any werewolf before her. 3000 years old and looking it. She was grey haired and that hair was thinning in places. Her joints ached now, her claws and feet were worn away from callouses and injuries. Her vision was going and her ears were only as good as a humans now. She'd pulled in all the favours she had left to get to the Galapagos and get some hope for survival. That hope was gone now. No species here reacted to her bites either.

As she bent down to get a drink of water, she looked at her reflection. What a sad way to go. What a pathetic waste of a life. A woman appeared in the reflection beside her.

It was Galla, except it's eyes glowed green. "It's okay you know. My babies will fix you."

The shark lunged, it's jaws opening. Just for a second the reflection of The Last Great Werewolf was overlaid upon the shark. It breached the water, snapping the neck of The Last Great Werewolf as it flung her body high into the air to land face down in the water. Then the shark returned and swallowed the dead animal whole.

Except The Last Great Werewolf, who had fought for so long, was not quite dead yet. She tore through the stomach of the shark and bit into its heart. She may not be able to save the werewolf bloodline but she could sure as hell avenge it. All that blood and passion and desperation. All that life she had thrown away in some desperate attempt to find meaning. It poured into the shark and it changed the shark and she lived with the blood of every wereshark since then.

"But weresharks aren't werewolves are they?" said Galla as she accepted a coffee from a waitress at Starbucks.

The Last Great Werewolf was wearing Lucy's body and dressed for a night on the town. She sipped at a coffee that was in her hands. A machiato, nice. Then she said "The werewolves are dead. I failed them."

"You bought them time" said Galla "My girls are smart they'll sort you out."

The Last Great Werewolf laughed "How? I tried for 3000 years to create werewolves and I failed. How are they going to fare any better?"

Galla pondered "3 reasons. Reason number 1. They have a sample that works. Wereshark blood. The blood of a werewolf lies within. Reason number 2. Lucy's a fairy with a couple of elder gods helping her. Reason number 3. We are in a hyper advanced battle ship with the latest in science and magic at our disposal."

The Last Great Werewolf put down her coffee "Okay then why would they help me? I'm a monster who wants to bring back a race that turns into dangerous wolves come full moon."

Galla said simply "Because they're your friends."

The Last Great Werewolf laughed.

The Last Great Werewolf woke from her dream to find Lucy standing over her.

Lucy wore a three piece suit and carried two leashes "Walkies!"

The Last Great Werewolf got off the table and followed Lucy.

When they reached Deck 7 The Last Great Werewolf asked "Why are you helping me?"

Lucy shrugged "Because you saved the life of my other self's owner."

The Last Great Werewolf nodded “Of course.”

“And because it will be a nice distraction to have the werewolves back just as I am establishing my own army” said Lucy

“And maybe I might concede to let you have some wereshark forces?” said The Last Great Werewolf.

“Oh I could never ask that of you” said Lucy

The Last Great Werewolf's eyes glowed green for a second and she chuckled under her breath “Don't ask for anything, every sign of hospitality is the signing of a contract you don't know the terms of.”

Lucy snorted.

At last they found the entrance to the hologram generator. Lucy zapped the controls with a quantum oscillator and a couple of teleport pads appeared. Lucy asked “Ever seen the Star Trek Voyager episode Tuvix?”

The Last Great Werewolf's eyes glowed green for a second and she asked “If you're okay with me going for a joy ride?”

Lucy laughed “Get on the pad. I just need to merge your two bodies and filter out the shark dna then do a little bit of recoding.”

The body of The Last Great Werewolf stepped onto one teleport pad then the mindless clone of Lucy stepped onto the other teleport pad.

The Last Great Werewolf's eyes glowed green for a second and she said “Seriously girl come over here and let me into your body, that way we might be able to do this smoothly. I am not about to be vaporised and escaping at the last minute might result in this body having a nasty accident.”

“Fine” said Lucy icily and she approached carefully.

The Elder god body hopped from one Lucy to the other then raised the new body's quantum oscillator to keep old body standing and stable. She backed away to the controls and with her spare hand hurriedly conjured up a hologram to hold the quantum oscillator for her. Then Lucy and the Elder god worked as one to programme the teleport.

Galla and Butterfly walked back to waitrose and the ship.

“Are you sure you want to do this?” said Butterfly “I can put everything back. Give you your old life back.”

Galla shrugged “I have lived more in these 8 days than I have ever lived before. I have loved more and done more. And now I have a destiny to face”

“If you're sure” said Butterfly and she opened the door of the ship.

Galla entered.

Lucy and the elder god checked their calculations. It seemed like it would work. "Ready!"

The Last Great Werewolf barked

Lucy worked.

The teleport started and the body of The Queen of the Weresharks and the mindless clone body of Lucy disintegrated only to be rebuilt as one entity.

Butterfly and Galla opened the door and they watched as a woman with the face of the Queen of the Weresharks and the body of Lucy stepped off the teleport platform.

"Presenting the Werewolf 2.0, her majesty Queen of the Weresharks, Mother of the Blood, Alpha and Omega." said Lucy

"Lily" said the Werewolf 2.0, her majesty Queen of the Weresharks, Mother of the Blood, Alpha and Omega "Short for Lillith. Galla dear might you have room for one more. Somehow I don't think I'll be sleeping with the fishes any more."

Galla laughed "The more the merrier"

Lucy's eyes flowed green and she asked Galla "And me?"

Galla swallowed

The elder god possessing Lucy laughed "If you don't want to, you don't have to. This one is willing for the moment and I'm sure another mindless clone could be knocked up."

Galla said carefully "Except you don't inhabit the body do you? This isn't blood control. You bond with the soul. I have known you for as long as I can remember. We can work as one, I will be your vessel, I will use your power."

The elder god possessing Lucy nodded and kissed Galla.

Galla's eyes glowed green as the elder god body hopped.

Lucy collapsed but was caught by Galla.

"You owe me that cuddle remember?" said Galla with a wink.

Lucy laughed "That I do. Butterfly, you coming?"

"In a bit" said Butterfly

Galla left with Lucy

“Nice body” said Butterfly

“Thanks” said Lily “Listen you're not still upset with me about the whole – thing are you?”

Butterfly whispered in Lily's ear “The moment I no longer need you I am killing you to avoid werewolves coming back to the multiverse.”

Lily said “But I'm still the only wielder with blood control. You need me.”

Butterfly hugged Lily “For now”

Lily swallowed and left.

Butterfly said “Computer, display all the records recovered by the Aurora Chair that was last loded I want to to test a theory.”

Part 13 - Dang Asylum Seekers

As Lucy, Galla and Lily entered Deck 1, on route to the bedroom, Mariam barred the way. She was dressed in her superhero costume and said “We've got company.”

Lucy looked to Galla.

Galla said “I'll get the troops ready. You two buy us some time.”

Greta stepped out of the lift “I'm going with her”

The Hooded Justice, Lucy and Greta exited the ship. And then the bus.

General Galbion saluted from her position in the driver's seat then ran inside the ship.

Approaching the bus from the front of the ship was about a hundred or so humanoids, all charging towards the bus.

Lucy strode towards the wave of people flanked by The Hooded Justice and Greta.

Lucy called out “Hello! I am First Officer Lucille Danse of the UCMS Paragon! This is Greta! This is the Hooded Justice! How may we help you!?”

“Asylum!!!” cried the mob as one.

Greta said “I can taste the dead and the dying from here, they're serious.”

The Hooded Justice said “I'll go let Galla know we don't have an army to fight but civilians to heal.”

The Hooded Justice sprinted back towards the bus and the ship.

Lucy and Greta walked through the terrified mob. They saw sylphs and weresharks, humans and elves, dwarves and orcs. They saw bleeding, diseased, malnourished, dehydrated, drunk, in pain, the elderly, children and the disfigured.

Lucy was horrified and started crying in sympathy.

Greta's nose twitched and she pulled out her guns.

Lucy was shocked by Greta but then she heard the gunfire and the screaming. Suddenly it was them, two lone figures, against 200 robots with lazer pistols.

“Shit” said Lucy

“Just remember, reinforcements are coming. All we have to do is keep their attention while the civilians get inside the ship” said Greta

“Right” said Lucy and she started running.

Greta held her ground and shot a robot's head off. The rest of the robot kept moving. So Greta started disarming the robots with careful sniping shots.

Lucy in a curving arc through the robots, firing wildly. Every now and then a stray blast of plasma knocked a robots head off or blew a leg or an arm off but that wasn't the point. The point was that every time Lucy came within 5 feet of a robot it turned to shoot at her. And every time Lucy bobbed and weaved to avoid the blow.

The Console room had been turned into a makeshift triage clinic to identify the seriously injured for treatment in the kitchen by Lily and Galla and helpers created from the fairies and orcs with the aid of memory guns. The Hooded Justice and General Galbion visited each of the injured and gave them info from a memory gun if they were well enough to help identifying people.

General Galbion was treating an Elf that had been shot in the arse when she heard her patient say “Bastards wouldn't give up, kept shooting even when they saw your friends.”

General Galbion patched up the wound so it wouldn't get infected then walked over to Butterfly as she entered the console room.

General Galbion whispered “Assign 10 of your dumbest fairies to help out here then get outside and back up the other you, it's just her and that shark against a fuckton of robots at the moment.”

Butterfly stiffened, nodded slightly then entered Galla's room. She found the double layered hamster cage, opened the ceiling hatch and retrieved a small stone statue from inside. She blew fairy dust on the statue.

A very tiny Flitzy Honeytoast came to life in Butterfly's hands. She blew a raspberry at Butterfly.

Butterfly whispered "I need 10 fairies helping the injured then I want the rest outside with me and you safely returned to stone in your cage, understand?"

Flitzy nodded and flew off.

Butterfly pulled on her combat gear.

Lucy was getting tired now and making mistakes. She had been shot 3 times and the near misses were hindering her ability to heal the hits. Her skin was red and black from the radiation and burning.

The Robots had advanced 3 quarters of the way towards Greta and she had only disarmed 10 robots.

Lucy started stopping to make targeted attacks at the bases of the robots' legs now. It was buying her precious stamina but getting her shot more. A chance shot to her offhand meant she could no longer securely hold the plasma rifle between both hands. No more run and gun even if she wanted to. After 3 more increasingly erratic mid combat sniping shots her left leg was first shot out from under her then sliced off and blown away by coordinated lazer fire on the off-chance that vshe could heal that fast.

Lucy fell to the ground and exploited her position by sweeping her arms and legs back and forth to trip up or delay robots until at last her limbs were all sliced off and blown away. Most of the robots walked over her at that point but a paranoid few took aim at Lucy's neck.

Fwumpsh!!!

A wave of magical fire washed over the robots, seemingly caused by a great ruby coloured dragon flying over head. The robots all turned to shoot upwards.

Butterfly fell out of the sky, knocked robots over like skittles and started collecting up Lucy's limbs and putting them in her bag.

Greta charged into melee combat, eviscerating robot after robot in a rampage of revenge.

The illusory dragon vanished.

The Robots turned their attention towards Greta.

Butterfly hugged Lucy's head and torso and flew up and forwards.

Greta's cybernetic limbs exploded. The sheer ferocity of a raging shark kept moving down robots for a few more moments.

The Robots turned their attention towards Butterfly.

Butterfly fell to the ground behind Greta and blew fairy dust at Greta.

The Robots blasted away at the stone statue of Greta and half exploded Butterfly.

“Fire!” cried General Galbion

3 lines of Orc infantry proceeded to mow down the first few lines of Robots.

30 fairies flew over to retrieve Lucy, Butterfly and Greta then carry them inside the ship. The spare fairies zipped around the front lines healing orcs, giving them defences and taking robot blasts.

Butterfly, Lucy and Greta were laid out on the kitchen floor.

Lily studied her patients.

Butterfly had already recovered enough to cough “Lay Lucy down in a vat of agar jelly and her blood in a sterile room. Do it for her limbs as well. She can heal.”

Lily nodded to an orc that was helping her out.

The orc nurse took Butterfly's bag and Lucy away so she might follow Lucy's instructions.

Lily asked “And Greta?”

Butterfly coughed up blood “Stable until I remove the petrification curse. Once done she'll need healing, the shark tank and her cyborg limbs.”

Lily nodded “And you”

Butterfly laughed. She looked almost okay but her internal organs were still scrambled and several massive gashes, holes and wounds were pulling themselves together. “Wereshark, sylph and fairy. Give me five minutes and I'll be back out there.”

Galla approached “Lily, Mariam tells me that a few of the weresharks and some of the walking wounded want to go back out there and join in the fight. She says she'll lead them. Should I let her?”

Lily thought for a second then said “More dead robots means less injured to treat, give them the all clear but make sure they're stable.”

Galla nodded and then she saw Butterfly and baulked.

Butterfly laughed “I'm fine, don't worry.”

Galla walked over to Butterfly and knelt beside her. Placing her hand on Butterfly's chest her eyes started to glow. “Butterfly, you are my pet and champion. I can take the pain and suffering from you now so you may heal it later. Galbion depends upon you. Fly well.”

Butterfly suddenly felt amazing and charged outside with The Hooded Justice, 5 weresharks 2 elves, an orc and a sylph.

As 3 more critically wounded were brought before Lily and her aides she said “Galla won't like that

you know.”

Galla ignored Lily and went back to healing people.

The front line of General Galbion's army had fallen back to heal, reload and recover their stamina. The second line of infantry was fast losing integrity and the third line of infantry was clearly very nervous. The fairies kept the lines supplied and healed but a few were out of action being healed herself.

Butterfly used her quantum oscillator to magnify the charge of her fairy spell again.

Fwumpsh!!!

A magical wave of fire washed over the robots and a great ruby dragon appeared above the robots.

The Robots started firing at the illusory dragon.

As this happened fairies darted forward grabbing robot corpses and remains, petrifying them and building makeshift defences for the infantry to hide behind.

The second line of infantry fell back to be healed and supplemented by the civilians.

The third line was now the front line and feeling confident.

The five weresharks made their way to key spread out positions among the robots. Being spread out meant they were less likely to get help if they needed it but meant they were all less likely to get hit.

The Hooded Justice and the sylph started at either side of the front line and made to sprint through the robots drawing fire and tripping or hurting them when they could.

Butterfly picked three fairies and explained that one was to be in charge of maintaining the petrified wall of robot corpse defences, one was to be in charge of distracting the robots with illusory spells or area of effect attacks. The third and final group would use all their spells to stay hidden and unnoticed so they might swoop in and rescue the distractions further up the field.

The illusory dragon disappeared.

The front line infantry attacked.

The Robots attacked the frontline infantry.

The fairies maintaining the frontline infantry fell back to heal the second line infantry and the third line infantry.

The Weresharks started attacking, easily clearing circles of destruction around themselves.

The Hooded Justice and the Sylph started running through the robots, drawing their ire.

Butterfly's lieutenants ran off to gather and instruct their forces.

The Robots realised quite how many fronts they were being attacked on and started focus firing on the different targets.

The defences before the infantry started to crumble under lazer fire.

The second line of infantry started firing their plasma rifles over the front line infantry to better mow down the robots.

The Weresharks were being targeted by lazer fire now but shrugged it off and carved paths through the robots.

The Hooded Justice and the Sylph ran through the Robots their speed and winding paths making them almost impossible to be focus fired upon successfully and the attempts by the robots took out some of their own forces.

Butterfly landed silently and invisibly amid the combat and started planted timed explosives as she ran through the robots towards the front lines.

The Defence Lieutenant's forces swooped in, bundled up the dead robots, petrified them and swooped out.

The Distraction Lieutenant's forces summoned 10 ruby red dragons above the Robots and the resulting cacophany of ten staggered waves of magical fire effectively blinded and deafened the Robots for a few seconds.

The Discreet Saviour Lieutenant's forces decided to imitate Butterfly and drop timed explosives in strategic positions.

Galbion advanced her forces behind the newly created defences and all 3 lines started firing now. Even the fairies who had been healing the troops were firing their plasma rifles.

The Weresharks were no longer being targeted by lazer fire and made merry hell taking out great swathes of robots.

The Hooded Justice and the Sylph met up and with a nod and a gesture agreed to exploit the opportunity by carefully sniping the distracted robots.

Butterfly flew up into the air before the Robots and used good fairy magic and her quantum oscillator to amplify a bad fairy power. She cried out "Hear me! You cannot win! We have you surrounded! Our troops can fight for a long time! Our best fighters are still treating the wounded even! We will gain strength as you lose strength! We will replenish our numbers while yours diminish! Surrender and you may live!"

Butterfly's decree was sent psychically and used every wereshark, fairy, sylph and human as a conduit to beam the message psychically into the very souls of the robots.

Then Butterfly's bombs exploded.

Then the Defence Lieutenant's forces built a new line of defences right up against the enemy from all the robot corpses.

Then the Distraction Lieutenant's forces summoned 10 more ruby red dragons.

Then the bombs dropped by the Discreet Saviour Lieutenant's forces exploded.

The Discreet Saviour Lieutenant's forces decided to rush the Hooded Justice and the Sylph to the safety of the ship as they would probably be better use getting more infantry and fairies on the scene.

The Robots did not attack.

General Galbion knew better than to attack when the enemy had been given notice of surrender so while she advanced to the new defensive line she had her forces rest, heal and reload.

The Weresharks decided to focus their energy on healing instead of fighting.

Butterfly performed a good fairy spell and amplified it with her quantum oscillator. The Robots could now communicate psychically and send her a message as one.

The Defence Lieutenant's forces started building defensive lines out of the robot corpses surrounding the weresharks.

The Distraction Lieutenant's forces sustained the illusory twenty ruby red dragons but did not have the dragons attack.

The Discreet Saviour Lieutenant took one look at the stalemate and sent most of her forces to aid in healing the injured inside the ship. Keeping only enough with her to rescue Butterfly and Galbion while sending for help.

The Robots communicated the following message to Butterfly “We apologise. We were ruled by fear of a greater power. You can protect us. We will serve you.”

“Then we will repair you!” cried Butterfly before ordering her forces to petrify every Robot and take all the robots inside the spaceship.

Butterfly helped her forces petrify every robot and when she knew every robot had been turned stone she headed inside the ship, confident Galbion and her Lieutenants could handle the clean up of the battlefield.

Galla watched Butterfly enter and hurried over to her “Hey Butterfly, how did it go?”

Butterfly grinned upon seeing Galla “We worked together like a well oiled machine and I got seventy five of them to surrender. We turned them all to stone so we can worry about them after we're done treating the injured.”

“Good idea” said Galla, steering Butterfly into her bedroom.

Butterfly followed her mistress even when Galla asked her to strip and lie down in the bed Butterfly did as she was asked without question.

Galla sat on the edge of the bed and stroked Butterfly's hair. She said “I'm glad you made such a difference in that battle. I thought you might and that's why I healed you the way I did.”

Butterfly beamed “Well so am I, another few minutes and Galbion's forces would be wrecked and the enemy would have stormed inside the ship.”

Galla nodded “That's why I did it. We needed you in fighting form.” then Galla laid her hand on Butterfly's chest “But I did not heal you. I borrowed your life and vitality from a time after you were injured and now as a price for being well when you needed to be well I must return your sickness and suffering at twice the severity. You will live and you will recover but you will suffer for my healing you.”

Butterfly stared with confusion into Galla's eyes when she felt the pain returning as laser pistol injuries returned to her. The magically displaced injuries dissolving her flesh as they appeared and breaking her bones.

Galla said “It will take you a few hours to recover. Unimaginable pain such as yours does tend to create screaming so for the good of the other patients I will hack your soul to remove your ability to scream or groan”

Galla touched Butterfly lightly on the head and walked out of the room.

Butterfly silent screamed as her body started to heal up from being tattered and bleeding parts of flesh, skin, organs and bones.

Lucy lay in the dark, crying out in pain and flexing her arms and legs as bone grew from the stumps and flesh grew over the bones. It was a long slow process and she could sense other minds in the room with her but they were very weak and in tremendous pain.

Mariam approached Galla with the sylph who had run with her on the battlefield “Galla, this is Amy.”

Amy waved. She was short, had shoulder length ginger hair and track suit bottoms and a t-shirt.

“Amy ran with me out there. She's very good at running. Anyway her last mistress was killed by the military state over there for attempting to cause sedition and she hasn't really had a home since...” said Mariam

Galla laughed “It's alright. I have Butterfly. You have Amy.”

Galla scratched under Amy's chin affectionately "It would be a pleasure to have you my dear and I'm sure Butterfly would be glad of the company. Tell me what sort of ice cream do you like?"

"Mango sorbet" said Amy with an innocent grin.

Mariam and Galla shared a hungry look brought on by the topic of sorbets.

Mariam asked tentatively "Do you want one now?"

Amy said seriously "Sorbets can wait until after we've treated."

"How right you are" said Galla and she started treating the injured.

Amy asked "Is sorbet some kind of code or something because I'm fairly certain I missed some subtext there?"

Mariam chuckled "Don't worry, I'm sure you'll find out"

"Oh" said Amy then she and Mariam started seeing to the injured.

General Galbion had been quite badly shot up during the battle as had most of her troops but they'd held it together during the battle.

Now General Galbion lay on the kitchen floor as a fairy who had been coopted as a nurse used spells as anaesthetic and proceeded to perform surgery stitching her wounds together.

Galbion was a wereshark of course so she would heal naturally but the lazer fire had cauterized the wounds preventing blood from purging through and healing them. Besides which the orc's hardy body resisted the wereshark dna stopping her from healing as fast. Stitching her organs back together ensured Galbion would be in less pain and recover sooner, something of vital import to a General.

For now though Galbion lay beside a Dwarf who wasn't fortunate enough to have wereshark dna.

Two nurses worked on the dwarf. One leaning over the Dwarf's open chest preparing organs for removal as another ferried fresh replacement organs made from the Dwarf's dna to her and carried off the old junk organs.

The Dwarf was not in pain but was clearly quite distressed by the sight of soi much fussing around her open chest.

Galbion said "Hey"

The dwarf looked worried for a moment then saw Galbion and said "Hey, you're that General aren't you?"

"Aye" said Galbion "I helped defend us from harm. What's your name?"

“Diamonite Richloon Gold-Crusher” said the Dwarf “You know I was a brigade leader back home?”

“No” said Galbion “Orcs don't have military ranks. We just have little orc, less small orc, orc, larger than normal orc, big orc, slightly bigger orc and huge orc. I would be regarded as barely a less small orc if I was lucky.”

Diamonte laughed “Yeah that's have babby dwarfs would decide on a pecking order. We do have an official drafted army though. Mostly for appearance's sake since we are the best weapon smiths and most races don't entirely trust that we're selling them our best weapons and not keeping all the super high quality stuff for ourselves. They call in the Dwarfish Taboo. The more time that goes by when we aren't attacked and can create weapons for ourselves the less advantageous it would be to try your luck with us.”

Diamonte laughed at what she was saying.

Galbion laughed “We have something like that. The Orc-ish Invasion Period. An area orcs have invaded is only vulnerable for three weeks following the initial invasion as there after our numbers, hold on the town and connections with other orc strongholds make the area too well defended to attack with any real chance of success.”

Diamonte grinned at Galbion “Exactly. I mean when worthy causes do seek our help we have to be very careful. Politically we have to make it clear that we no longer consider these dwarfs 'dwarfs' and shun them like but it's all a show. The opponents to our allies crap their pants knowing that the dwarfs are siding with the enemy while knowing attacking us dwarfs directly would be suicide and as a consequence when our 'exiles' win we become even more impregnable. What about you?”

Galbion thought for a second then said “The odd well coordinated attack does wipe out an area we've invaded but only by drawing our forces elsewhere, cutting off the reinforcements and supply lines to the area then striking harder and faster. It's generally wiser to decapitate our leaders and intimidate us into obeying you. As has happened now funnily enough.”

Galbion and Diamonte laughed about that and Galbion observed that Diamonte's chest had been sewn closed and new the nurse who had been treating him was off seeing others. He asked “So how's Rome?”

Diamonte grimaced “You know the legends they tell of where the gods punish the very worst of sentient beings? Fire, brim stone, hot coals and torture devices?”

Galbion nodded “I'm an orc, you just described my homeland”

Diamonte shook her head slightly but severely “No, this is not home. This is where the weak, the ugly, the impure and the disobedient are sent to be punished. They are made to work the machinery that tortures reach other because if they disobey they get eaten alive. I know quite a few friends who willingly underwent such horror so their suffering might end.”

“Right” said Galbion and she very calmly decided to overthrow this corrupt regime.

Amy was sewing up the wounds of an old woman with numbers tattooed along her arm.

“What's your name dear?” asked the old woman.

“Amy” said Amy.

“That's a nice name” said the old woman “I'm Judith Heisenberg”

Amy smiled “Well Judith we should have you on your feet in no time”

Judith gave a bitter laugh “You know I honestly think there could be anything more horrible than a nazi.”

Amy nodded “I wouldn't have thought there could be either”

Judith sighed “The nazis were people at the end of the day. They were angry, they got annoyed or disgusted. Some of them even showed fear and distress at what they had to do, although not enough to stop. The ones in Rome though, they loved the pain and suffering they greeted each tiny act of rebellion or weakness with a giddy smile and an anticipatory lick of their lips. They were cats waiting for permission to play with their mice.”

Judith shuddered.

Amy finished her work and pulled off the plastic gloves then squeezed Judith's hand “Well you're here now, protected with lots of food and entertainment.”

Judith laughed a hearty laugh “That my dear is very much true and I didn't have to take that shower.”

Amy moved on to help another patient.

After 5 hours Lucy could wriggle her toes and flex her fingers. She performed careful stretches and pressure tests on her limbs. They'd do.

Lucy felt around herself. She was in an empty box air tight box. The whine of a ventilation unit let her know why she could still breath.

Lucy braced against the side of the box with her arms and tried to push the box lid off with her legs. No good. She was trying to open the lid with her knees and shins. She turned onto her side and braced with her left arm and legs then tried again. No good. Lucy braced the back of the right hand against her right shoulder then threw all her weight at the lid. The seal broke and her right arm lunged upwards, pushing the lid up. Lucy sat up in an instant, trusting her shoulders to better keep the lid open.

Lucy carefully tried to stand up but she and the inside of this box were covered in slimy gunk, too slippery to stand up. Lucy glanced over the edge and could barely make out some kind of floor a few feet below the box. This was going to be painful.

Lucy swung her right leg over the edge of the box and then her right arm then she took a few deep breaths and barely managed to awkwardly skewer herself along the edge of the box when it was pulled

off the table it was resting on and clattered on top of Lucy.

The good news was Lucy was still free from the confines of the box and now on the floor. The bad news was that the fall and being squashed by the falling box had knocked her unconscious.

Butterfly stopped trying to scream, she was no longer in any pain and almost fully recovered. She tried to speak and found herself unable. She could breathe and eat but she could not vocalise a single sound.

She climbed out of bed, entered the hamster cage for a shower and some clothes then she stalked out of Galla's bedroom to find her.

Galla was treating an elf who had lost an eye when she felt someone touch her arm and looked up to see Butterfly.

Galla nodded her understanding then finished seeing to her patent.

Butterfly glared at Galla the entire time.

When Galla had finished she touched her hand to Butterfly's forehead.

Butterfly breathed "You cunt."

Galla glared at Butterfly.

Butterfly glared back "You owe me."

Galla shook her head "I did what I had to do. You were needed."

Butterfly hissed in Galla's ear "I am your pet, not your toy soldier to send into battle then silence when the screams of."

Galla whispered "I understand that you are angry now but I know you will come round in time, go see your new sister Amy."

Butterfly looked over to where the Hooded Justice was chatting with a ginger woman. She groaned "I suppose I better, you might decide to remove my ability to think."

Butterfly strolled over and introduced herself "Nice to meet you, I am Sister Lucille Danse of the Sylph Liberation Front but my owners call me Butterfly."

Amy hugged Butterfly "You were amazing in the battle, I've heard such a lot about you"

Lucy woke up and groaned with the pain and the memories of pain, she squirmed out from under the box, rolled onto her front and tried to stand up. It took a while but eventually Lucy stood up and nervously fumbled her way towards the wall and thence to the door.

Lucy stepped out into the bright hallway and blinked. She had no idea where she was.

As her eyes adjusted to the light Lucy walked along the hallway. At last she found a computer terminal, she used it to access the pa and send a targeted signal to Galla's quantum oscillator.

Galla heard her quantum oscillator beeping, she pulled it out of her pocket and answered the signal. "Hello, who is this?"

"Lucy" came the voice from the quantum oscillator "I'm right outside that place where you left me in a box to heal. On the one hand it worked, on the other hand I have no idea where I am, I'm covered in this strange goop and I'm completely naked. Oh and famished, tired and afraid."

Galla ran.

Lucy slid down the hallway and started to pass out again. She closed her eyes for what seemed like a moment and when she opened them again, Galla was standing over her and had thrown her underwear, a t-shirt and track suit bottoms.

"These are a bit small" said Lucy absently as she got dressed.

Galla said "I'm terribly sorry for you but we aren't done yet."

"No" said Lucy mournfully.

Galla shook her head "The question of Greta remains"

At the mention of her friends name any sign of tiredness, fear or submissiveness was replaced by military stoicism and determination "Show me what happened to Greta"

Galla nodded "Of course, follow me."

Lucy finished getting dressed and followed Galla.

Amy was curled up on the floor as Butterfly stroked her.

Amy groaned "You're amazing!"

Butterfly shrugged "Sylphs always are"

Galla and Lucy entered.

Mariam said "Oh thank god, Lucy you're alright"

Butterfly looked to Lucy and understood. Quietly she said “Mariam, take over” then she approached Lucy and Galla.

“Greta” said Butterfly and Lucy as one when they got close.

Butterfly said “I'll get the fairies to take Greta up to the shark tank entrance. I want you using holograms to build her new cybernetic limbs and ensure we have a safe way to operate on her and treat her.”

Galla and Lucy nodded, heading to deck 3.

Butterfly headed into the kitchen and spoke to Lily. “We're seeing to Greta at the entrance to the shark tank. We could use your help.”

Lily nodded and headed to deck 3.

Greta awoke to the face of Butterfly there was a tube blowing water through her gills, she could breath but she was restricted by machinery, unable to move.

“It's okay” said Lucy “We're trying to help you.”

Lily said “We just need to apply some healing lotion to your wounds and sew you back together. Then we'll loose a knock out drug into the airflow while you recover so you'll wake up fully healed and able to swim with Butterfly.”

Greta sniffed “Why won't you swim with me? You are the Mother of the Blood are you not?”

Lily giggled “I'm a werewolf again. Butterfly will swim with you.”

Butterfly coughed “Well actually it's been a long day so Lily may be swimming with you in spirit.”

“Awesome” said Greta “One last swim before you go off to rebuild the werewolf empire.”

Lily laughed.

“And what's this I smell? Galla?” said Greta.

Galla laughed “Butterfly's right it's been a long day so I'm here to look after my babies and whisk them off to the land of nod when there's time.”

Lucy shrugged “Yeah I have some stories to tell you old friend. Now hold steady as we work.”

In a darkened room 4 creatures in 4 sterile boxes screamed their first breaths and passed out.

Greta woke up, recovered from the surgery and knocked out healing time.

Lucy said “Enjoy your swim”

The filter providing Greta with air to breath vanished then the floor of the operation tank tilted out from under Greta, providing a slide into the shark tank.

Butterfly was waiting in the tank for Greta. They swam together about half an hour then Lily possessed Lucy and the two old sharks swam together that night.

Lucy meanwhile was taken into the dining hall with Amy and treated to a banquet with her choice of sorbet before Galla and Mariam stroked her into a blissful sleep.

The next day Lucy woke up naked next to Amy and asked “Did we?”

Amy laughed “I'm asexual, you're fine”

Lucy said “Awesome. Now what do you say we each have a shower and get dressed?”

Amy nodded “Do you know where the showers are?”

Lucy grinned “Follow me.”

Butterfly breached out of the water and landed on the pier over the shark tank, she turned to human form and watched Greta.

Greta exploded out of the water and landed neatly in the cyber cradle. It caught Greta easily and attached her artificial limbs, oxygen rebreather and translation circuits. Greta strode out of the cradle and said “Thanks again.”

Butterfly shrugged “You're my best mate from a parallel world, kind of had to help you.”

Greta nodded “Now, clothes.”

Butterfly sighed “The perennial problem. After you.”

Lucy picked out clothes for Amy on the pretence of finding clothes that fit her. When she was happy with how Amy looked she exited the hamster cage with Amy in tow.

Butterfly and Greta were standing naked before Lucy and Amy.

Lucy swallowed.

Amy chuckled “Well this is awkward.”

Lucy said “Please turn her to stone.

Amy was a bit taken aback.

Butterfly growled “Can it wait until after I've gotten dressed?”

Lucy took a good long look at Butterfly “I suppose so”

Butterfly and Greta entered the hamster cage.

Amy asked “Why do you want to turn me to stone?”

Lucy ruffled Amy's hair “Because you're a brand new puppy. You should be petrified and thawed out when your owners have time for you.”

Amy stuck her tongue “Meanie”

Lucy rolled her eyes and headed towards the kitchen for breakfast.

Mariam and Galla were up in the holo deck, they hurriedly showered and got dressed before heading down to the kitchen for breakfast.

Everyone united round the kitchen table when they were dressed. Even Galbion and Butterfly's Lieutenants.

Butterfly said “We should probably work on reviving the plasticlones today-”

“Plastic-what?” asked Galbion “I thought they were robots.”

Butterfly nodded “Robots with human souls. I and the Farsh-nuke met them when we gave the Unleasher to the Bam-Kursh”

Lucy chilled “You've met the Bam-Kursh”

Butterfly nodded “It was my Farsh-nuke's first meeting with him, yet also the Bam-Kursh's last meeting with him. Apparently the Bam-Kursh had reformed and only wanted to live in peace with the Farsh-nuke so the Farsh-nuke gave the Bam-Kursh his future self who had somehow changed gender and was calling herself the Unleasher.”

“Huh” said Lucy “Why does that seem familiar to me?”

“So these plastic phones-” began Galbion

“Plasticlones” corrected Butterfly.

“Yeah, them. You want us to bring them all back to life and repair them so they can shoot at us again is that right?” said Galbion

Butterfly opened her mouth to say something when Galla raised a hand.

Galla swallowed down the last of her bacon and said “What my cuddly little Butterfly means to say is that the plasticlones are an asset just like Lucy, Greta, the fairies and you. We could just play safe and murder everyone in cold blood or we could keep them alive and use them.”

Galbion heard the threat very clearly and pulled her plasma rifle on Galla.

The silence was so great you could hear people's hearts beating.

Galla's eyes glowed green and she sent the following message into Galbion's head “Think very carefully about what you are doing. Even if you kill me, which is a very big if, then the Hooded Justice and Butterfly will murder you. Lucy and Greta will attack you as well. Lots of people to call the alarm.”

Galbion swallowed and laid her gun on the table “I thought you were better than orcs” she said and left the kitchen table.

“Blimey” said Mariam to lighten the mood “She's raring for an early grave.”

“Early grave” said Lucy the words struck a chord for some reason. “Alone in a coffin, unable to see, unable to seek help with only the groans of the dead for company”

Lucy remembered being in the sterile slimy tank. She remembered the feeling of pain and agony that was so like hers yet not hers and then she remembered Butterfly's half-heard words to the nurse. 'Lay Lucy down in a vat in a sterile room. Do it for her limbs as well. She can heal.'

Lucy felt where her arms and legs had ended in stumps after her part of the battle. “Do it for her limbs as well” she muttered “She can heal”

Lucy run from the table.

Lucy found the computer panel she had used and the room she must have exited from she pushed it open and turned on the lights.

There were 5 sterile boxes, the centre one lay upturned and empty on the floor, the gunk that was inside spilling out slightly. With the light on Lucy could see the boxes were clearly labelled. From left to right they read:

Right Hand

Right Leg

Head and Torso

Left Leg
Left Hand

Except there wasn't just one limb in each box, there was an entire, naked, sleeping Lucy.

Lucy broke down crying.

As Butterfly and the fairies worked reviving plasticlones Galla, Greta and Mariam would use their quantum oscillators to try and fix them.

Mariam asked at one point “What are we going to do with all these plasticlones?”

Greta shrugged “What are you going to do about your asylum seekers? Seems to me like your grand mission would put civilians in harms way. Plus what if more asylum seekers arrive after we've gone? Are you really telling me you'd let people die just because they missed the bus?”

Mariam swallowed and went about her work

Galbion found Diamonte talking to Judith.

Diamonte through out her arms in welcome “Galbion! How goes the day General?”

“Yes” said Judith “I have heard rather a lot about you. Our great military leader.”

Galbion smiled “Yes, about that. I've been thinking, one way or another someone needs to stay behind and provide asylum for those who need it. Supplies and protection, that sort of thing.”

“Yes, Galbion, exactly, Judith's just been telling me about something they called- Oh what was it?”

“The Resistance” said Judith “And The Underground Rail Road.”

Diamonte nodded excitedly “All we need are troops.”

“I can get you troops” said Galbion “I can get you weresharks and fairies and plasticlones. Maybe even a sylph.”

“Fantastic” said Judith “Just the woman we need.”

Lucy stopped crying and stared at the women in the sterile boxes again. She pulled out her quantum oscillator and started recording video as she explained what happened and showed off the evidence before her.

Amy sat beside Galla as she worked and whined “Why won't you cuddle me?”

Galla tried to pet Amy enough that her consciousness would fall beneath the subconscious bliss and therefore Amy would shut up and go to sleep.

Galla's attempt failed because Amy was really really excited about being Galla's pet and excited sylphs are kittens that play with wool, not kittens that fall asleep on wool.

After half an hour Galla led Amy towards Butterfly and whispered “Turn her to stone while I do this work please.”

Butterfly sighed and took time out of reviving people from being turned to stone to turn her new sister to stone.

Galla went back to work.

As they entered the hamster cage Amy said “Galla promised you would give me a lovely surprise.”

Thinking fast Butterfly said “It's a photoshoot, you're going to be a model.”

Butterfly studied how Amy was dressed and could see the look Lucy was going for and guessed where Lucy would want the statue: Right in the centre of the very bland hamster cage.

Butterfly pretended to take photos with her quantum oscillator and did the air kissing sleazy photographers were supposed to do “And now pretend you're flying with Peter Pan.”

With perfect poise and balance Amy kicked out her left leg and stretched out her arms, Kaftan billowing like wings in the air. Butterfly blew fairy dust in her face and she turned to stone.

Then Butterfly's quantum oscillator beeped. New message. Butterfly projected the message on the white floor and watched as Lucy explained how there were now five of her, the original and her “cuttings”.

Butterfly opened the door to the sterile room and entered. Butterfly hugged Lucy and wiped her eyes “Honey see that collar round your neck, that's proof that you are the real you. Your destiny is still yours.”

Lucy stared at Butterfly “And what about the other mes? What do they do? They didn't ask for this. They think they're me and now I'm going to have to say 'Sorry ladies you are a mistake caused by me fucking up on the battlefield, now go away and live your own lives’”

Butterfly stared at Lucy “Go find Greta, show her the video and let the others no. I'll keep watch.”

Lucy nodded “That's sense Butterfly, I knew I could trust you.”

Lucy left the room.

Butterfly opened the box that had contained Lucy's left leg and stroked the sleeping form there in.

The cutting of Lucy woke up “Butterfly, what are you doing here and why am I in so much pain?”

Butterfly said “When I saved Lucy's body, I collected up her body parts assuming they would be allowed to reconnect with Lucy. I was wrong. Now, come on, let me show you.”

Butterfly helped the cutting out of her box and walked her to the wall where they could turn and study the scene.

Lucy's cutting said “I'm her left leg aren't I?”

Butterfly nodded “The real Lucy explained what happened in a video if you need to see it but I was wondering, since you're without an owner and a destiny whether, well...”

The cutting hugged Butterfly and whispered “If only until I find some higher purpose, that seems like a good plan.”

Butterfly and the left leg cutting strode out of the room together.

Galbion entered the room and headed towards the box containing the right hand cutting. She opened the box and softly said “Wakey wakey soldier.”

The Lucy cutting woke up “Galbion? What?”

“I'll explain once you're out” said Galbion and she helped the Lucy cutting out of the box.

They walked to the wall and studied the scene as Galbion explained “I've been thinking, it might be time for us to go our separate ways. Me and everybody else on this bus. I've been talking with some of the asylum seekers and wondering about setting up an underground rail road and we could use your skills.”

The cutting snorted “So I'd be your right hand woman?”

“Not exactly planning a war to save the multiverse I know but you would make a damn sight more of a difference with us than you would being brought off as somebody's pet” said Galbion

The cutting nodded “If I do this though I get to pick who my actual owner is and Lily comes with us. She's a damn fine medic and battle tactician, plus I don't trust her with Butterfly.”

Once Lucy had finished explaining the situation to Greta, Galla and Mariam. Butterfly entered the meeting room with Lucy's left leg cutting at the end of a leash.

Lucy glared at Butterfly.

Butterfly said “She's a consenting adult. It's not your place to say what your cuttings can and can't do. Besides, you're only jealous because you've got this epic destiny bullshit on your shoulders while your cutting here gets to do what sylphs should do. Watch lots of TV and Movies and get lots of hugs and strokes.”

Lucy rolled her eyes.

Greta patted Lucy on the back consolingly.

“Why her left leg?” asked Galla

Butterfly shrugged “I always though Lucy had a very pretty left leg”

Lucy blushed.

Lucy's cutting also blushed.

Mariam asked “Okay what are we going to do?”

“My thoughts exactly” said Galbion. Her right hand woman dressed in world war 2 military uniform.

Greta's jaw dropped “You really picked that cutting just for the pun didn't you?”

Galbion blushed.

Galbion's right hand woman blushed. “Never mind about which cuttings are affiliated with which people. There is a tyrannical empire there, not unlike the one Butterfly took down and Lucy's people overthrew and hope to destroy. Now we need to rush in there to wipe out the empire and restore everyone to their proper places and times but we must also ensure that anyone who does escape can find refuge.”

Butterfly asked “A lot has happened in these nine days when you say restored to our proper times and places?”

Galla smiled “I'm not going to undo anything if that's what you think and I'm certainly not about to undo the creation of such superteams.”

“Anyway” said Mariam “How do you hope to achieve this?”

Galbion said “I have veterans of setting up underground rail roads and distinguished leaders in the art of war to aid in the planning. I will take a few orcs loyal to me and a few fairies who agree with my plan. Lily and the wereshark civilians will also join me. With about 30 or 50 robots we should be able to defend this area against a small army. If we can defend it then in time our numbers will grow from the captured and reprogrammed robots and all the asylum seekers who will come for our aid.”

Butterfly stared at Galbion thoughtfully “You saw how it was yesterday, even with this battleship people had no beds and there was risk of infection? Plus you'd need extensive sanitary facilities, a great food hall and loads of places for people to sleep?”

Galbion and her right hand woman stared blankly back at Butterfly.

“And should we need the cavalry, you'd technically be within our ship.” concluded Butterfly.

Galla laughed.

Mariam stared in disbelief at Butterfly.

Galbion grinned, her right hand woman looked smug.

Gretta snorted.

Lucy said “Surely it isn't possible?”

Butterfly grinned “Oh it's possible. I mean it will take a while, even with six of me but it's very definitely possible. Just got to reconfigure the architecture of the ship and have two doors at any one time. The one you guys have and the one we have.”

Butterfly's cutting said “I have an idea.”

“Oh yes?” said Galla

Butterfly's cutting suggested “What if we woke up left hand and right leg, explained the situation to them, had them help rearrange the architecture of the ship with the rest of us while you non-Lucy's arranged precisely who would stay to help the underground rail road and who would help overtake the city then once the job is done we have left hand and right leg pose, become statues and thaw them when we come across someone who we genuinely think could give them a good home?”

Mariam stared at Butterfly's cutting “You can't be serious surely, I mean that's highly unethical. Turning someone to stone just because you can't be arsed dealing with them at the moment. It's despicable.”

There was an awkward silence as Galla leaned over and explained what had happened to Amy.

“I give up!” cried Mariam “You're all mad”

Greta chuckled “She's only just realised that”

“Now” said Galla “I believe I owe people hugs”

“We're going to wake up inside the ship architecture reconfigurator aren't we?” said Lucy

“Yep” said Butterfly cheerily.

While everybody else was busy Lily meditated a room and possessed a fairy.

She flew the fairy inside Galla's room and the hamster cage then marvelled at the statue.

Lily blew fairy dust at the statue and cut off Amy's little finger on her left hand.

The fairy found the statue of Flitzzy Honeytoast and blew fairy dust on it, bringing the statue to life.

The fairy flew into the room where Lily was meditating and flew into Lily's trouser pocket.

Lily's trouser pocket was bigger on the inside and there lay within it a small unregarded black box.

The fairy touched the box and found herself within a completely sterile almost pitch black room.

The fairy flew past dozens of clear perspex boxes filled with agar jelly and blood and dropped the finger inside a box with the label Amy.

Amy played with Flitzzy for a bit but then she moped about how her new owners wouldn't see her so Flitzzy wiped her memory.

Amy asked "Butterfly why do you look so different?"

Flitzzy said "Because I am allowing you to see my fairy form, now pose."

With perfect poise and balance Amy kicked out her left leg and stretched out her arms, Kaftan billowing like wings in the air.

Flitzzy blew dust in Amy's face and turned her to stone then she went back to her usual spot and turned herself to stone.

The Lucys woke inside the ship architecture re-configurator. Their minds were linked and saw a great white void through which they felt the thoughts of each other, like echoes their minds seemed the exact same but very subtly different. Lucy had chosen destiny. Butterfly had chosen family. Left Leg chose submissiveness. Right Hand chose defiance. Left Hand chose to mimic the others. Right Leg chose to obey.

Something was off though. Someone was silent and trying very hard not to think but their mind was a palpable void. A silence that overcame the intercom a shadow across a sun. The Lucys focused on it together.

The Elder God laughed "Did you forget that the Logicios are obsessed with the number seven? You are my babies and I will guide you toward your goals. Now, focus!"

Butterfly pictured how the doors work: One door there. My door, here, then a third door, a hidden door at my command.

Lucy pictured the hospital: State of the art equipment, vat grown organs, dna lab, surgeries, beds, ivs life sign monitors, holographic doctors.

Left Leg pictured the bedrooms: It was what she wanted for herself, a computer, a hamster cage, a mirror, a wardrobe, a chest of draws, a large double bed.

Right Hand pictured the armoury: A variety of gear for all creatures and mounts.

Left Hand pictured the kitchen as it was in the ship.

Right Leg pictured what they had all just pictured.

The Elder God focused in on the details. Making the information more and more specific each cycle until after 5 hours the dreaming ended and they were back in their own heads.

Butterfly blinked in the cold light of day as the reconfigurator screen lifted up, letting her out.

Galla appeared before before Butterfly and helped her out of the cramped pod. The walked to the next pod over and extracted Left Leg, Right Hand and the rest.

They walked towards the console room and discussed their plans.

“You should meet my owner” said Lucy to Butterfly “She'd love to meet you and could give you some amazing advice for looking after your cutting.”

Butterfly laughed “Well I'd like a date before you show me to your owner.”

Right Hand said to Left Leg “You should look up advanced tricks for Sylphs. I think it mentions somewhere about a meditative trance that will let you hear your owner's thoughts. It'll help her no end.”

Left Leg said to Right Hand “When you're off saving people, remember that you need downtime too. Don't push yourself too hard.”

Left Hand said “I think I want to be a regal statue, almost Greek. You know, evoke purity and wisdom?”

Right Leg nodded “I could do that, I just hope a handsome hero chooses me.”

Galla beamed, proud of the Lucys.

In the console room Galbion, Diamonte and Judith were waiting.

Right Hand strode forward and waved good bye.

“We'll take good care of her” said Judith.

Lucy and Galla nodded and watched them ride out.

Lily walked out after them.

“I have decided where I want you” said Galla and she gestured to two spots either side of the door to her room.

Left Hand stood to the left of the door and, following Galla's instructions, held aloft a quantum oscillator as one part of an archway.

Right Leg stood to the right of the door, right foot forward and held aloft a plasma rifle to complete the archway.

“Sweet dreams” said Butterfly and she blew fairy dust at each of them, turning them to stone.

Galla asked Butterfly if she could run inside and fetch Amy.

Butterfly and her pet entered Galla's room and the hamster cage.

Butterfly revived Amy and, at her request, turned Left Leg to stone.

When Butterfly returned with Amy, Galla led her three sylphs off in search of Mariam and a nice family meal.

The bus drove off towards Rome once more, leaving a camp behind for seekers of asylum.

Part 14 – A Spot of Diplomacy

Butterfly was in the hamster cage braiding the hair of her cutting of Lucy when she asked “What are you going to call me?”

Butterfly laughed “Lucy, silly, that's your name.”

Butterfly's pet said “Yeah but I'm not Lucy any more am I? Lucy is going to be off saving the multiverse while I'll be the sylph snuggling up with you while you watch Marvel films. I'm the pet, she's the hero. You need to pick a name for me.”

Butterfly thought for a second and said “Kitty”

Kitty laughed “Okay, I like it. It's cute”

Butterfly stopped braiding Kitty's hair and hugged her. “Like you”

Kitty squealed “I grew from the severed left leg of a version of you from a parallel universe, we look exactly the same.”

Butterfly shook her head “Still cuter”

Kitty nuzzled up to Butterfly.

Butterfly pulled what looked like a black ping pong ball from her pocket and held it before Kitty.

“What's that?” asked Kitty

“Bigger on the inside, like this ship. I formatted the inside to be like this hamster cage complex. This is where I'm going to keep you when things get rough or dangerous” said Butterfly

Kitty stared at her “But you're a pet too, shouldn't you be in your own pod?”

Butterfly shook her head “The thing inside Galla, it chose me as her champion. I need to fight. You however can be safe.”

“Okay” said Kitty “If that's what you want?”

Butterfly nodded and then she pulled out a futuristic fusion between a gun and a syringe.

Kitty swallowed “You want to microchip me?”

Butterfly dismantled the gun syringe and checked everything was working as she explained “I don't want to make you like me. You're better off as just a sylph but neither do I want to leave you defenseless. This gem will let you perform fairy magic and become a wolf or a shark if you need to but it won't make you a fairy or a wereshark. I can use blood control to find you but you can't be possessed or go mad with rage and hunger. You will also be able to call your pod and Flitzy to you and turn her to stone or revive her on demand.”

Kitty nodded “And it will let you track me down from the other side of the multiverse.”

Butterfly grinned as she reassembled the gun “Yes, it will let me track you down from the other side of the multiverse. Ha. See I'm a sylph myself I know what mischievous little imps can get up to. Now give me your left hand.”

Kitty laughed and laid her left hand on Butterfly's lap.

Butterfly fired the gem into the palm of Kitty's hand.

Kitty cried out in pain and Butterfly hugged her “Hush. Hush. It's all right.”

Mariam and Galla were eating breakfast in the dining hall.

Galla watched Mariam eating and felt proud.

“What did I do to deserve you?” asked Galla absently.

Mariam paused, black pudding and bacon halfway to her lips. She set down the morsel and used a napkin to wipe her face. "You saved my life remember?"

Galla shook her head "That wasn't me, that was Butterfly."

Mariam chuckled, left hand casually reaching into her coat pocket "Ah yes, I forgot about that but no, I mean you." Mariam reached her right hand across the table and grabbed Galla's left hand by the wrist. "You saved me. I was unlucky. They had my best friend hostage. I was trapped. I was trapped and I had no idea what I was going to do. I was just about ready to fall on my sword and become a martyr. This trick or trap you pulled, the one that let us meet? It saved my life. I was a fraction of a second from feeling the bullet that would end my life."

Galla's jaw dropped.

Mariam's left hand came up from her pocket to place a small velvet box before Galla. "You saved my life Galla and these past few days, as weird as they have been, have been the best of my life."

Galla swallowed and stammered, took a deep breath then said "But we've only known each other days?"

"Open it." said Mariam

Galla opened the box and pulled out a brass ring with an emerald set into it and a locket, inside of which was a mechanical clock with a single button.

Galla stared, completely surprised.

Mariam stared at her hands shyly and chuckled as she explained "Obviously it's not like this has extreme sentimental value or anything. I came here with just the clothes on my back. I had to make these using the hologram suite and your matter generators."

"They're lovely" said Galla, taking Mariam's hand.

Mariam smiled "The ring is a promise. The locket is a timer. If you accept what I have to say then push the button and start the timer. You see I know now that I want to spend the rest of my life with you but I don't want to rush the paper work for a decision like this so in four years the alarm will trill and that promise ring will have to be upgraded to an engagement ring."

Galla looked at the timer, then at Mariam, then at the timer. She pressed the button, pulled on the ring, reached across the table and kissed Mariam. She pulled back and gazed meaningfully into Mariam's eyes as she clambered up onto the table.

Mariam gazed back and answered "Gosh I love you" and kissed Galla back.

The kiss became a snog and they tore at each other's clothes.

Lucy and Amy woke up naked in Galla's bedroom.

Amy looked worriedly at Lucy “We didn't- did we?”

Lucy laughed “I thought you were straight?”

Amy fell silent and blushed.

“Relax” said Lucy “We were clearly just blissed out from the petting last night, it would explain why we are lying on the floor and not the bed, besides I have it on good authority that many apparently straight men have exceptions and most of their exceptions aren't a patch on the average sylph, let alone a paragon of virtue that the Great Farsh-nuke himself turned up.”

Amy laughed “You're right” and got up off the floor, standing nude before Lucy.

Lucy licked her lips, bit her lip then asked “How curious are you?”

Amy bent double laughing then realized Lucy wasn't laughing “You're not serious are you?”

Lucy thought for a moment then said “You are very pretty and very endearing, the offer's there if you want it.”

Amy put her hands on her hips and said “Well I wouldn't know where to begin”

Lucy barked “Ha!” then said more sincerely “I could show you”

Amy bit her lip.

Lucy got to her feet and stood before Amy “Well if you're not sure, I'm probably going to have a shower then go get dressed. I'm game if you are but only if you are.”

Amy stared at Lucy and licked her lips “No one can know.”

Lucy saluted “Scouts honour.”

A smile spread slowly across Amy's face.

Olaf Gamalzes was the orc in charge of driving the bus and so was the only person to notice the small heavily armed army guarding the entrance to Rome. She stopped the bus and went inside the ship.

Olaf found Mariam and Galla getting dressed and said “Excuse me but Rome is a bit more heavily defended than we were expecting.”

Mariam nodded “Makes sense doesn't it? It's the most heavily fortified area, so any strangers finding themselves here would congregate there for security. Olaf, you'll have to be our general. Galla fetch Lucy and Butterfly, we need the fairies and someone to lead the Plasticlones.”

Galla nodded and ran out of the dining room, still getting dressed.

“And what'll you be doing Sir?” asked Olaf

Mariam said “I think the Hooded Justice may be needed and it might help our case if we have someone skilled at public speaking to help us.”

Galla caught Lucy and Amy in the act but stood silently watching until each cried out in ecstasy then she clapped and whooped.

Amy blushed and covered herself.

Lucy laughed.

Amy and Lucy each got to their feet.

Amy cried “What were you doing there you pervert!?”

Galla studied Amy carefully “It's not my business what you get up to in your down time but there's an army outside and we need a general for our plasticlones. If it makes you feel any better Amy I've also been fucking my girlfriend and I have seen you two naked enough times to not need to see you fucking to know what it would look like.”

Amy blushed and hid behind Lucy.

Lucy said “Leave her alone, it was her first time with a woman.”

“Indeed” said Galla, raising an eyebrow “Then might I expect to hand Amy over to the other me so you can continue your relationship.”

Lucy rolled her eyes “It was just a fuck.”

Galla nodded “I believe you. Anyway we need you showered, dressed and ready to lead an army. Think you can do that?”

Lucy nodded “And if I see Butterfly on the way I'll let her know”

Galla left the doorway and Lucy slammed it shut.

Amy said “I don't suppose there's any point trying to pretend this didn't happen then?”

Lucy agreed “Probably not.”

Amy asked “Can we?”

Lucy laughed “With the enemy at the gates?”

Amy blushed “It was just so good”

Lucy grinned “Well in that case why don't you shower and get dressed with me then we can see what happens after we've dealt with the army.”

Amy grinned.

Galla found Butterfly in the hologram suite. She was sitting cross legged at the centre of a web of symbols made in blood.

“Are you surprised?” asked Butterfly without looking up or opening her eyes.

“Surprised that you're trying to control the blood or that you appear to have latent telepathy while controlling the blood?” asked Galla

A hologram of Butterfly appeared and hovered towards Galla “The Logicios use sylphs as biological components in their ships. They uplift them using concentrated blasts of logic until the sylphs are as eldritch as you then they install them in special chambers designed to harness their power to control, grow and maintain machinery and energy. For the holosuites though one uplifted sylph isn't enough. They raise girls to be the brightest and the best, give them the best knowledge until they have amazingly detailed imaginations, then they mutate them, turning their bodies into biological cables and slaving their minds to the host ship controls and plumb them into machinery to exploit their nurtured imaginations. It's the only way to let stupid computers have the imagination to make the dullard Logicio ideas detailed enough to represent in computers. One pleasant upshot of this is that I can possess and control the hologram generation through the blood. I have barely begun to explore the power I can wield.”

Galla nodded “Yes, this is why I chose you. You are so innovative, clever and powerful yet so submissive to the right person.”

A tear rolled down the right cheek of the hologram of Butterfly “Is that really all I am to you? A tool? A weapon to wield?”

Galla shrugged “Galla cares a great deal for you but she wasn't born in a world where thinking beings were pets. She loves you but she is confused. As for me? I chose you. I was inside every woman in every universe for countless generations and I chose you. Whether I love you or not doesn't matter because by all normal measures of love I would pass. I just care about you for pragmatic reasons.”

The hologram of Butterfly held her hand aloft “I appreciate your honesty.”

The hologram of Butterfly's hand started squeezing at the air.

Galla could feel her hearts contracting “Butterfly if you kill her I will only move to you.”

Another tear rolled down the cheek of the hologram of Butterfly.

Galla gasped, leaning on the console for support. She rasped “Except that's what you want isn't it? Martyr yourself. Die thinking your love was of benefit to Galla. You really must be a fool if you

thinking Galla would appreciate your death.”

“I know what it is to have another mind controlling your body” said the hologram of Butterfly coldly as she blinked away another tear.

Finally Galla gasped “She needs you! Rome! Outside! Big army! Need fairies!”

Galla collapsed and the hologram vanished.

Galla lay panting on the floor “Thank you”

Butterfly got to her feet “I didn't do it for you. I need to protect the sylphs.”

“Fair enough” said Galla as Butterfly stepped over her body.

The President sat alone in the bar, drinking from a tumbler.

The Hooded Justice saluted “Sir, I thought you didn't drink alone.”

The President laughed “It's a non-alcoholic cocktail batman”

The Hooded Justice sat down before the president “Sir?”

“Oh” said the President “I thought you were somebody else, somebody I used to know.”

“Understood” said the Hooded Justice

The President held his drink up to the light and swirled it gently, staring through it at the Hooded Justice “So-” He knocked back the drink “I take it you didn't come find me for the conversation.”

The Hooded Justice nodded “We need to enter Rome so we can put an end to this mess and there are some... people... barring us access. I thought having an honest to goodness politician would do us some good. If you've got the charisma to become President then you've got the charisma to get us into Rome without a fight. That is if anyone does.”

The President nodded “A chance to end things amicably is always worth taking, no matter the risks. I'll do my best.”

The Olaf and the orcs stepped out of the bus first followed by Lucy, Amy and the Plasticlone troopers. Then Butterfly and the fairies brand up the rear.

Galla, the President and the Hooded Justice left the bus last.

Rome's army watched impassively.

“Who is your leader!?” demanded the President.

An extravagantly dressed sentient Trex stepped out, plasma pistols and ammunition worn on her waistcoat. “I am the motherfucking Trex, bitches!”

The President nodded, unfazed “Mrs Trex, I am the President of the United Sexes of America, I present you with my party and friends. Let us through peacefully and we will have no trouble with you.”

The Trex nodded “All right, you three come up here and we can agree on peace terms.”

The Hooded Justice grinned “Told you so”

The President laughed

Galla followed them to the front.

“Mr President” said the Trex “Such an honour to eat you.”

As Galla and the Hooded Justice shared an odd look, the Trex shot the president in the chest then bit off his head with one bite.

Amy screamed.

The Trex cried “Seize her!”

“What the fuck!?” cried the Hooded Justice

Dinosaur Troopers ran out to take Amy

“It will be all right” said Lucy earnestly. Lying in the knowledge that any attempt at rescue would only doom them all.

The Trex said “The good lord demands that I provide him with gladiators for his entertainment but a screamer won't last 5 minutes so I can claim her as my tithe.”

The Hooded Justice stared at him.

“Don't worry I prefer my prey scared and alive.” said the Trex “Send the leaders to the Colosseum, in chains. The grunts can be separated and retrained you have my permission to eat or molest any that refuse to obey their new masters.”

Part 15 – The Colosseum

Lucy woke up with only sa vague idea of why she was where was but at least this time she was clothes. Then she heard the cheering and the clapping and opened her eyes to find herself lying on sand in the middle of Rome's famous colosseum. She go to her feet and assessed the stands, women of many different species were cheering and a great green eye projected from a hovering bug in the centre of the colosseum watched over events.

Whump!

Lucy felt a great stabbing pain in her left side then realised it was a literal stabbing pain as her attacker heel palmed her forehead and a hidden blade impaled her in her left eye.

In the second or two before her shock wore off and the pain kicked in Lucy brought her knee up into her attacker's chest, elbowed her in the back of the neck, picked her up threw her, stamped on her hands and started running.

Then the pain hit.

“Son of a bitch!” Lucy covered her left eye warily and circled her attacker warily “What the fuck was that about!?”

Lucy's attacker wore a very custom spec outfit designed to help with climbing, running and taking on an army with stealth and surprise. It looked like a costume with overtones of badass suit and the renaissance.

Her attacker said “His Royal Highness Flavia Galla The Bam-Kursh has decreed that we must fight to the death for his enjoyment. The victor gets 10 years imprisonment and rehabilitation. The loser is fed to those in the pit.”

Lucy nodded, understanding “Who are you?”

Her attacker laughed “You want me to tell you with his lord high overlord watching?”

Lucy shrugged and pulled her hand away for a nervous blink “In my experience Big Brother has already made you his plaything or he can't fucking touch you. Either way it don't matter. What's your name?”

Her attacker nodded, understanding “You make a surprising amount of sense for a sylph who'll be dead in a moment. Emilia Auditorie of the Sylph Allied liberation Front at your service.”

Lucy blinked again “Neat. So you're just toying with me to get information right? And you're going to kill me?”

Emilia nodded “I'm a Salfy, I have to give you a chance it's only right. As is the need to extract information. A corpse tells no tales. Sorry about killing you by the way, it's like Peta putting down weak and injured animals. I only do it because I care.”

Lucy blinked and flexed, perfectly healed. “Well Emilia, I am First Officer Lucy Danse of the UCMS Paragon. I am the heir to the first Great Farsh-nuke and I am the woman expected to lead a war for the sake of all the multiverse-”

Lucy dashed forward and grabbed Emilia's sword and tugged. Ignoring Emilia's attempts to impale her as she ran back to the opposite end of the colosseum and raised the sword defensively. “And now that we are at an even chance, why don't you let me know what you can do?”

Emilia cried “You're the woman who inspired the SALF! You're the woman destined to save us from the Septagonoids and Logicios! I can't kill you! It'd kill everything my movement is about.”

Lucy gave the sword a few practice swings “My life a lot less important than you think and to that end I am willing to let you win this fight if you can prove to me that you are worth more than I am.”

Emilia shook her head “I'll fall on my sword, I can't kill you.”

“No. You can't.” said Lucy, staring into Emilia's eyes “You can liquify my brain though and that should be enough for my purposes. Justify yourself.”

Emilia swallowed “Justify myself? You really want this?” Emilia charged forward and stabbed Lucy in the heart as she whispered “I hunt Logicios”

Lucy laughed, the wound already healing “I hunt pure logic and we are dealing with things that make Logicios look like sylphs.”

Shunk!

A small blade embedded itself in Lucy's jugular vein, tearing it open.

Lucy pulled out the blade and tossed it away harmlessly as her jugular vein scabbed over. “You'll have to do better than that.”

Emilia fired a pistol and Lucy's left leg was blown out from under her. As Lucy fell Emilia stabbed her in the chest and snapped her neck. “Well I have taken down the occasional Farsh-nuke”

Lucy picked up the remains of her left leg and handed it to Emilia “Put it in a jar of Agar Jelly and my blood. You have my permission to keep the resulting clone of me as your pet.”

Emilia rolled her eyes and stamped down on Lucy's chest, cracking her ribs “You really don't die easily do you?”

Lucy laughed “Shut up and I'll tell you how.”

Emilio groaned and reclaimed her sword “Fine. Tell me, how do I leave this arena alive?”

“Wide beam burst from that gun of yours up my nostril and obey the woman who looks like me but has wings.”

Emilio laughed “As you wish. Now please, stay dead.”

Emilio bent down and fired a wide beam burst from her pistol up Lucy's left nostril. The top of Lucy's head and the entirety of her brain was vaporised.

The great green eye of the Bam-Kursh stared at her and announced “You win. Proceed through the newly opened door.”

The Hooded Justice woke up in the Colosseum to find her grappling gun missing from her holster and a frightened soccer mum waving it at her “I will kill you!”

The Hooded Justice understood instantly: Gladiatorial fight to the death with prisoners.

“Except you haven't, have you?” said the Hooded Justice as she got to her feet. “I was out cold, you took my gun. You could've killed me. But you didn't?”

The woman waved the gun “I just want to go back home to Damian and the kids. I never wanted anything other than to get married, have 2.4 children and retire to Tuscany. I have a life to get back to.”

“I know” said the Hooded Justice “But let's be honest, you aren't going to fire that gun are you?”

The woman shook her head “I will kill you. I need to get back to my husband.”

“I know” said the Hooded Justice, approaching the woman slowly and carefully “You know I'm married myself? She is so strong and so tough. I feel so safe around her. I mean I'm just a geek who dresses up for conventions but she? She keeps me right.”

The woman nodded “My Damian's like that. He proposed atop the Eiffel Tower, dressed as Leonardo Davinci. I've gotta see him again.”

“I know” said the Hooded Justice, inching ever closer. “And you'd kill to get back?”

The woman nodded, biting her lip. “I'm so sorry.”

“It's okay” said the Hooded Justice, easily disarming the woman.

The woman burst into tears.

The Hooded Justice stowed the grappling gun then hugged the woman “Hush. Hush. It's alright. I'm going to get home.” She snapped the woman's neck and declared “Next time give me a real challenge!”

Theodora Lomanchi, noted elven Night Witch, champion of the battle of Ettersburg smirked as she looked at the sleeping orc. It was childish she knew and just a bit uncivilised to wait for a woman to wake up before you killed them but Theodora wanted to see the look of terror on her face as a dozen huge spells obliterated her.

Olaf Gamalzes woke up and stood up and was immediately hit with enough spells to turn him into a flaming pile of raspberry jam.

Theodora laughed “Poor bastard.”

Olaf slowly pulled herself together as Theodora watched.

As she flexed her renewed limbs she said “I'm a wereshark, bitch.” and threw herself at Theodora.

Theodora stood no chance as the orc ripped out her internal organs.

A tall charming beautiful dark skinned brunette was sitting beside Galla as she woke. “Pleasure to meet you, I’m Iris. I’m a journalist and part time superhero. I can rewind, pause or fast forward time. This is a gladiatorial contest whereby the loser gets fed to the rats and the winner gets imprisonment. What’s your name?”

“Galla Placidia” said Galla “And I am so sincerely sorry but I did not go through all this just to throw my life away to let another young woman live. You’ll have to kill yourself.”

“I’m sorry” said Iris

“That knife you’re hiding behind your back in case I try to kill you. Use it to slit your throat.” said Galla.

Iris laughed “I’m not killing myself.”

Galla nodded “I was worried you wouldn’t but things really would be so much simpler and easier if you killed yourself. You might even live to be an asset to me in the future.”

Iris chuckled “No, we’re going to work together and get out of here.”

Galla sighed “I’m sorry I don’t like doing this but I must”

Iris picked up the knife and slit her throat.

“Pro tip” said Galla “Obey the elder gods. They have more powers than you can imagine.”

Butterfly woke up to find a small ginger kitten curled up beside her. She stroked the kitten and asked “Hey bunnikin, any idea where we are.”

“The Bam-Kursh said we are to fight to the death for the right to go to prison.” said the cat.

Butterfly laughed “There is no such thing as talking cats or the Farsh-nuke would own so many and there would be at least one for every sylph in the entire multiverse.”

The cat nodded and walked away, turning into a tall dark skinned and beautiful woman. “Indeed Lucy Badass of the Sylph Liberation Front, you would be an authority on the subject of the Bam-Kursh. I am infact a Mutite Shark. Technically hermaphroditic so fuck knows why I’m here but I guess my identifying as a woman and favouring this appearance may have tipped the scales. I call myself Bernice but you may call me Benny.”

Butterfly’s jaw dropped as she got to her feet. “Bennykin, I swear upon all that I hold dear that I am now the champion of your species because Jesus Criminy Heck the Farsh-nuke needs to see this. A

shark that can become a beautiful woman or a cat. I mean just look at you!”

Bernice nodded “Thank you I appreciate that you appreciate my species. Now tell me, do I have to kill you?”

Butterfly shook her head and retched.

After a moment Butterfly vomited up a small black ping pong ball, she threw it at the ground and Kitty, Flitzzy and Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth The Second appeared armed with Plasma Rifles.

“Listen Bam-Cursed!” declared the Queen “I am the one true sovereign of this land and these are my girls so back the fuck off unless you want a face full of Septagonoid shredding void rounds!”

Kitty checked her quantum oscillator “I've located the prison, let's move.”

Flitzzy, the Queen, Butterfly and Bernice followed Kitty to the prison. Doors sprang open and unlocked before them and soon Emilia, the Hooded Justice, Olaf and Galla joined them. Together they marched right up to the newly erected tower in the centre of Rome.

Snipers shot at Galla, The Hooded Justice and Butterfly moments before a thousand heavily armed soldiers appeared out of nowhere. The voice of the Bam-Kursh carried through speakers “Did you really think I wouldn't guard my own home? And thanks to your displays in the colosseum I know which ones to neutralise first. Those bullets you were shot with? They are programmed to hack into your souls and make you vulnerable. Hooded Justice, you are now autistic. Galla you are trapped in your body. Butterfly you are now effectively human. No triple threat, wereshark, fairy and sylph protection for you. Incidentally all three of you have been rigged with time bombs that will vaporise you in 24 hours unless you try to hurt me, in which case you'll be vaporised instantly.”

Emilia whispered to Butterfly “Lucy is probably alive and kicking in the pit. I say discretion is the better part of valour.”

Butterfly nodded “Fine! Just don't you dare send us all into the pit!”

They woke up in the pit to the sound of screaming.

Part 16 – The Pit

Butterfly stirred from her slumber. She remembered the bolt of pain as a dart pierced her neck. She remembered an assassin telling her to enter the pit so they could rescue Lucy and then another bolt of pain as she was tranquillized and so her memory grew spotty.

She remembered the outnumbering soldiers swarming and stripping them. The muted cries and threats from her peers as weapons were taken away. She remembered the bite as tight metal handcuffs were secured around her wrists and ankles, the rattling of chains as her hands and feet were yoked together behind her back. She felt the shift of gravity as a crane was used to lift her up into the air and down into the pit.

She remembered the screaming and heat as they approached the bottom of the pit and the overwhelming smell of blood and rot. She remembered soldiers unloading her and her friends and carrying them like cargo to a rubbish chute set in a thick concrete wall. She remembered landing on what felt like glass and being carried. Then she blacked out.

Butterfly woke up to find herself wearing a crude leather skirt and tshirt. Her peers were similarly dressed, even the Queen. They were in a deep cavern open to sunlight. The floor was covered in a centimetre of sand or dust. A tall thick set woman with warts, scars and signs of fungal infection was watching over them. She held a big stick that culminated in an end covered in what looked like human teeth.

“Where are we?” asked Butterfly

The woman laughed “You are kidding me?”

Butterfly groaned and started stretching “So we're in the pit?”

The woman nodded “Let me guess? Outsiders? You clubbed together to visit Rome and end this shit? You made it through the gladiatorial trials and made a play for the big tower? And now? Pahahaha! You're so screwed?”

Butterfly sighed “So what do we do?”

The woman thought for a moment then said “Well now you have clothes and are awake to really feel the pain you get to go forward and donate your skin, bones and hair to other poor unfortunates who end up down here. Then you get to have a nice rest as you heal before you perform your duty to extract donations from other poor unfortunates and if you're really lucky and don't rapidly replace your lost bones and skin you are tortured and slowly carved away at to provide food for the other inmates and alternate with torturing your friends. And if you're really lucky and make others feel extreme pain without ruining their effectiveness as torturers you may get a big stick and the right to help run this pain machine.”

The colour drained from Butterfly's face, she hadn't thought anything could be worse than the conspiracy she helped dismantle but this was it. She vomited.

A short woman with a false leg made from someone's thigh bone walked forward flanked by two tall body builders who each had an arm missing.

The tall woman Butterfly had been speaking to spoke with the short woman. After a moment the short woman walked over to Butterfly.

Butterfly got to her feet and saluted “You want me to make my donation, sir!”

The short woman laughed bitterly “What limb do you want to donate?”

Butterfly answered “Take my left leg”

The short woman nodded and the grunts with missing arms escorted butterfly over to bench made from

skin stretched over bones.

Butterfly laid in the bed.

A short ginger woman gave Butterfly a sad smile as she listed to the other short woman's instructions.

“I'm sorry” said the ginger woman and she carved into Butterfly's flesh without anaesthetic, using knives made by sharpening bone.

The ginger woman exposed the bones of Butterfly's leg and cauterised any bleeding by virtue of bone heated over fire then she carefully cut the tendons connecting her leg bones to her pelvis and foot before she removed the leg bones. She carefully placed the leg bones to one side before slicing off Butterfly's left foot, setting that aside and severing the meat of Butterfly's left leg from her arse. The meat was set aside and Butterfly's wounds were cauterised then the ginger woman removed the skin from her arms and carefully removed her teeth one by one, cauterising wounds as she went until at last Butterfly had her hair cut.

Butterfly was left to writhe in agony as Kitty, Galla and Mariam watched while the resources gained from her were ferried around to be made use of. Then Butterfly was carried over to a left dusty healing corner.

Butterfly woke up to find a tall beautiful dark skinned woman stroking her hair. “Hey honey, are awake?”

Butterfly tried to speak before giving up and nodding

The beautiful woman introduced herself “My name is Iris and this is the healing corner.”

Butterfly wrote a message in the dust with her finger “Why are you naked?”

Iris laughed “Good question! I was left for dead in the gladiatorial arena so I didn't have to make a donation. The Unleasher says that as a result of that its not fair that I wear clothes but it's okay she gave me a pill and now I don't feel the cold. She said I am to take special care of you and give you lots of cuddles and strokes as you are a kitten in human form, is that right?”

Butterfly nodded and wrote in the dust “Can I see her?”

Iris squeezed Butterfly “No silly, she's very busy but I can see if I can get a message to her if you'd like?”

Butterfly nodded.

Iris called out “Lucy, get the Unleasher to come over here please darling?”

Butterfly groaned and then she felt something stroking her left arm. She turned to see Galla who had donated her left arm.

Mariam was dragged over, she'd donated her right leg.

Kitty had donated her left arm.

The Queen had donated her left leg.

Flitzzy had donated her legs.

Olaf had donated her right arm.

Emilia had donated her left leg.

Bernice had donated her left leg.

They all cried in despair, especially the shape shifters who had the double whammy of being mutilated and having their souls scarred so they were locked in these bodies. Flitzzy could no longer feel her connection to the magic force that pervades reality and felt as though this truly was hell.

Lucy came over accompanied by the Unleasher.

Butterfly stared into the Unleasher's eyes and saw the man she'd last spoken to over a video feed on a septagonoid ship "Help me, Farsh-nuke" she wrote.

Butterfly and the Unleasher are suddenly standing, restored to perfect health, in a chilled room lined with pressurized gas canisters linked up with valves and piping to racks of computing.

"What is this place?" asks Butterfly

The Unleasher answers "Something you need to see

William Dickson Wright pauses for a moment, quietly drinking in the atmosphere. "Impressive."

William walks to a computer terminal and starts waving his Quantum Oscillator about, scanning things. He lets out a little bit of the gas to test and where it leaks, reality itself dissolves into a black void. William licks this tiny speck of nothingness.

William says "Shit, this could actually work."

The Farsh-nuke says "That's bad."

William says "Let me just check something."

William focuses on the tip of his finger, turning it green then he uses the Quantum Oscillator to blast a scraping of his illogicity into the void. The void grows larger.

Butterfly asks "Why is William talking to himself?"

The Unleasher says "He's talking to me, to the Farsh-nuke within himself. Notice the flickering of green in his eyes when the Farsh-nuke takes over."

The Farsh-nuke says "Shit."

Butterfly says "Oh yeah I see now"

William says "I am sorry Lucy."

The Farsh-nuke says "That could obliterate everything."

William says "It would solve the problem, the final problem. I could solve it."

The Farsh-nuke says "Everything would cease to exist, to never have existed, time will be undone, everyone unborn."

William says "I could do it, me. I could finally get something right for once."

The Farsh-nuke says "No this is wrong, this is so wrong. This is the closest there has ever been or ever will be to evil."

William says "But it won't ever have been."

The Farsh-nuke says "Lucy will die."

William says "She will cease to exist. That's different."

The Farsh-nuke says "This can't happen. I will not allow it to happen. I am many many horrific things but I can not let you do this, William."

The Farsh-nuke plunges his hand into William's chest and pulls out his heart. William laughs.

William says "I am a wereshark. I don't need -"

The Farsh-nuke flashes with anger then picks up a glass vial containing close to pure logic.

The Farsh-nuke says "If I smash this glass at our feet, we'll dissolve, you and I. We'll die together."

William says "You can't."

The Farsh-nuke says "I can."

William says "Then do it."

The Farsh-nuke says "Alright I will."

The hand holding the vial utterly fails to budge.

William says "What's the matter? Cat got your tongue?"

The Farsh-nuke says “But that’s impossible! Absolutely impossible!”

William says “That’s the problem with evil monsters? Always so naive about the clichés they are invoking.”

The Farsh-nuke says “I am the great Farsh-nuke! The ever watchful spirit of chaos! It’s my job to protect the nothingness! This cannot be!”

William says “I know right? And my little dog too? She totally didn’t trounce your powers of possession did she? You must have known? I told you, she got it from me.”

The Farsh-nuke says “No. No, that’s too unbearable to think about.”

William says “That you’ve been living with me at my discretion? I know right? Isn’t it just the greatest? Now if you’ll excuse me, I’m going to come up with the final solution.”

William lowers the hand holding the vial and starts agitating it with his Quantum Oscillator.

The scene vanishes and switches to a younger Butterfly running down a corridor, she finds a septagonoid and cries “Quick, take me hostage! William is in your bomb room right now! He will wipe you all out unless you send him a video message right now, saying that you’ll kill me if he doesn’t stop plotting to save the multiverse and wipe out the Septagonoids!”

The Septagonoid says “Is your name Lucy?”

“Yes” says the younger Butterfly.

The Septagonoid clarifies “Sister Lucille Badass?”

The younger Butterfly says “That’s me.”

The Septagonoid says “Whatever you say maam, just please don’t kill me.”

The scene shifts back to show William in the chilled room.

William holds up a vial. He cries out jubilantly “I’ve done it! In this vial lies the answer to the oldest equation, the first equation, the equation that must never ever be solved! All I need do is break the glass of this vial and a chain reaction will begin. Time will be undone. Logic and illogicity will flatten out into a matt black void of silence. The classist view of nothingness will become actual canon for evermore!”

A buzzer sounds and a video feed of the younger Butterfly and the Septagonoid is projected onto a wall.

The Septagonoid says “Listen Mister William Dickson Wright Farsh-nuke sir! If you do not stop trying to save the multiverse and wiping us out then I will eradicate your good lady friend here!”

“Oh, really?” says William

The Septagonoid says “Indeed Sir! I will give her the most painful death, sir! Unless that is you stop trying to wipe us out so we can solve the final equation!”

William laughs. “I really don’t take well to threats!”

William blows illogicity into the solution in the vial. “Shame really to ruin such a fine solution but the fuckers asked for it.”

William smashes the vial on the ground then Tara materialises around him before hurriedly dematerialising.

The scene ends and Butterfly and the Unleasher are left to stand in a green void.

The Unleasher hugs Butterfly “You saved all of us. I owe you so very very much.”

Butterfly nuzzles the Unleasher “I’ve missed you so much you know and it’s only been a month and a half since I left you. I’m all yours if you want me.”

The Unleasher pulled back “I won’t lie I want to and I am still very protective of you but no I am the Unleasher now. I gifted myself to the Bam-Kursh to end our feud and the bloodshed. At least that’s what was supposed to happen. I’m not fit to care for myself let alone another but we will talk properly. I won’t lie it will probably mean more pain for you in the long term but I need my Lucy fit and well.”

Butterfly nodded “I understand, heal my friends too won’t you?”

The Unleasher sighed “I can’t make any promises. I can just about free your souls from the restrictions placed upon you by the Bam-Kursh but I can’t regrow your skin and bones for you.”

Butterfly nodded “I trust you

The Unleasher grinned and kissed Butterfly on the forehead.

Butterfly woke up back in the pit. The Unleasher was leaning over her.

“Hush” said the Unleasher as she closed Butterfly’s eyelids and laid the palm of her right hand on Butterfly’s chest “Sleep and recover. I will wake you when we can chat.”

Butterfly woke after the deepest most pleasant sleep she had had in a long time. She yawned and stretched and realised her leg had regrown. She also realized her teeth were back.

Galla said “What did you give her to let us be so healed?”

Mariam and Emilia groaned.

Bernice said “Any of you feel like helping your other friends?”

Flitzzy said “Meesa have a make whole spell, I shall heal the humans.”

Kitty said “Whatever you did, I'm glad you did it.”

Galla said more seriously “Butterfly what the hell did you give her?”

Butterfly said “I was her pet before I was yours. Plus I did save the multiverse.”

Galla said “I'm not letting you go Butterfly. It's great that you've met up with you're old owner but you're mine now.”

Lucy bounded over wearing a bikini “Hey Butterfly and Galla, you're better now. That's awesome. I tell you this Unleasher woman she is the best owner ever. Iris doesn't even realise she's her pet because the Unleasher brings her under so quickly Iris just thinks she falls asleep in her arms.”

Galla said “Oh yeah I noticed her yesterday. I thought I killed her.”

Lucy and Butterfly stared at Galla.

Galla shrugged “I had to get through the gladiatorial competition and she had a knife so I made her slit her own throat.”

Lucy said “Your owner is scary”

Butterfly laughed.

Iris woke up from her position beside Butterfly “Hey you're awake and healed? The Unleasher must really like you.

Butterfly asked “Iris, how would you like to join us? We're plotting rebellion and revolution.”

Iris said “I'd love to but I'd want some clothes before I started shanking guards”

Butterfly nodded “Lucy could you fetch the Unleasher please?”

Lucy nodded and bounded away.

Galla asked “Do you have anybody to miss you at home Iris?”

Iris stared at Galla

Butterfly said “My friend means, well I'm her pet and Lucy's pet and well she thinks you would make a good pet.”

Iris looked confused “I'm a journalist who can time travel, I am not a pet.”

Galla said “No but you would be a very valuable asset.”

The Unleasher appeared behind Iris “She's going to go back home to her family in central city and all

of this will be but an unpleasant memory.”

Butterfly stared at the Unleasher, she knew that stance, it was the same William adopted when strange men had offered to buy her off William, it was a very protective and dominant posture.

Galla said “If you want Iris to not get involved I suggest you send her to help the other injured.”

The Unleasher caught the threat and nodded for Iris to go.

Butterfly said “Farsh-nuke meet the elder god behind this Venus Trap, otherwise known as Galla Placidia”

The Unleasher said “How annoyed would you be if I murdered her?”

Galla glared at the Unleasher “The Farsh-nuke as I live and breathe, I wondered when you'd turn up. I rather assumed you'd be a man.”

The Unleasher smiled “Do you really want to do this?”

Galla smiled “Oh I would love to.”

Mariam said “Galla, please don't kill the woman who has let us have our teeth back.”

Galla grimaced “Dammit! My host won't let me make a move towards you.”

The Unleasher chuckled “Yeah, it is a bitch when they assert agency over their own body isn't it?”

Galla turned and kissed Mariam “Fuck me, you beautiful woman.”

Butterfly asked “Do you know her?”

The Unleasher shrugged “It's been a long time since I was an elder god out in the wild, I might not remember. Anyway how about you, you good?”

Butterfly nodded “So what happened to you, to make you into a woman?”

The Unleasher lay down beside the Butterfly “The Unleasher was a real woman. A resistance fighter for the Sylph Allied Liberation Front, she built a very clever bomb to make me feel what it was to be a woman.”

“And now you're running hell?” said Butterfly.

The Unleasher raised her eyebrow “How did you know?”

“Well for starters you have access to sylph pills to turn Iris but more importantly this is an economy that farms and exploits women as resources. If anybody else was running a torture system then they'd get hot coals, a rake and maybe some chains but otherwise they'd be left to rot. This system as crude and cruel as it is gives people clothes and weapons and soap and other things that can be made from harvesting women.” said Butterfly.

The Unleasher nodded and lay back in the dust, staring into space. "The Bam-Kursh said he knew I would try to overthrow her if I wasn't kept busy so she licked me up in this pet and said I could get access to basic food and resources if I tortured any women he sent down here. The less resources I ask of him, the better resources I can get and the more women scream and suffer, the more of a free hand I am given"

Butterfly sighed "The man who founded the conspiracy to eat sylphs for the supposed good of all becomes the woman responsible of running hell for the actual good of all."

The Unleasher nodded "No greater torture for me than that."

Butterfly squeezed the Unleasher's hand "Hey this place is clean, the women are clothed and you are slowly militarising the place. It's a success."

The Unleasher said without emotion "If your plan doesn't work I'm going to have to farm you and your friends. We need the resources and you need to suffer."

Butterfly rolled over and hugged the Unleasher "It's alright, we'll get out of here."

The Unleasher broke down in tears "I really don't want to harvest from Iris. I just want one person to make it through this place without being tortured."

Butterfly nuzzled the Unleasher "You know the other Lucy is a me from another universe where she got turned into a sylph by the Great Farsh-nuke?"

The Unleasher nodded "The weight that's on that woman's shoulders, I don't know how she can bare it."

Butterfly couldn't think of anything else to say so she just hugged the Unleasher until the tears went away.

Galla spoke up "I know where to find our clothes."

The Unleasher stared at her "Where?"

Galla shut her eyes for a moment and said "They're in the soldier enclosure, they can be thrown down the rubbish chute at any time. I just need to give the word."

"Okay" said the Unleasher "How?"

Galla shrugged "It's the Venus Trap. My soul scattered throughout the multiverse. That's what bought you all here, I'm trying to rebuild myself. Fortunately while I was off the grid the other parts of my soul that were large enough worked to help us. Now how are we going to do this? I think we should send Butterfly."

"No, I'll go" said the Unleasher

"Do you normally collect the rubbish? If you don't then you risk ruining everything. Butterfly is a

known adversary of the Bam-Kursh so there's plausible deniability and she's a wereshark and a fairy so she can stand to make the mission.” said Galla.

“I am not letting you put her in danger” said the Unleasher

“Give the word” said Butterfly and she started running

Galla glared at the Unleasher

The Unleasher grumbled “Give the word”

Butterfly ran across the pit, hurdling the sick or the fallen and dodging guards that lashed out with their sticks. She made it to the bottom of the chute and found the bundle of clothes lying atop a large metal catch area that had been covered in teeth. She grabbed the clothes and ran back.

Galla and the Unleasher were screaming at each other when Butterfly returned.

Butterfly handed over the clothes “Would you two stop tearing into one another I got it done and once we're ready I think you'll find we can be more than a match for the Bam-Kursh.”

“See, I told you” said Galla

The Unleasher glared at Galla “Fine”

“Fine, what?” asked Butterfly.

The Unleasher took the clothes from Butterfly and handed them to Iris “Go hide these somewhere safe.

Butterfly stared at the Unleasher “What is it? What were you arguing about?”

“Whether our cover is worth so much” whispered the Unleasher then she grabbed Butterfly's arm and took her over to the short ginger woman.

The ginger woman said “Unleasher, you don't normally take people to make their donations?”

The Unleasher shook her head and swallowed before taking a deep breath and yelling “Silence rabble!”

The chatter and the screams stopped.

The Unleasher cried “You all know me! You all know how much I help you and look after you!? Well this is what happens when you try to escape! Sister Lucille Danse of the Sylph Liberation Front you are to be harvested of all your organs and bones and skin while still alive without pain relief! Your regeneration has been stopped and you shall suffer a slow and lingering death for the benefit of all!”

Butterfly cried out in shock and pain as the Unleasher walked away and the ginger woman laid her onto the operation table.

The Unleasher walked back to Galla and Butterfly's friends and said “There is nothing you can say that will be a patch on how I feel about myself right now.”

The Unleasher slumped against the wall of the pit and sobbed into Butterfly's still beating heart.

Part 17 – The Final Battle

Butterfly woke from a deep sleep completely relaxed and refreshed. She was in the hamster cage with Lucy and Iris. Lucy was wearing a suit and Iris was wearing trousers and a tshirt.

“Hey” called Butterfly “What happened?”

Lucy strode over to kneel beside Butterfly and said “I'm sorry. I had no part in it but I heard what happened. You ran forward and retrieved everyone's clothes and armour. You broke the rules and blew our cover. The Unleasher wanted to act right then but Galla decided that it would be better to lay low for a month sowing seeds of discord and training everyone how to fight.”

“Right” said Butterfly “Then what happened?”

“You really don't remember?” asked Lucy

“No” said Butterfly and the hairs standing up on the back of her neck made her realise something. She reached her left hand up to her neck and her face contorted in horror as she felt around her neck in desperation “Lucy, where's my collar?”

Lucy swallowed “The Unleasher had to make an example of you to maintain our cover. He walked you over to the donation bed and ordered that you be harvested completely. He removed one of your hearts before removing your regenerative capabilities.”

Butterfly's jaw dropped in horror “I'm – I mean – I've lived with my head being exploded, I have had hearts torn out and eaten. Regardless of whether I remember it or not. I would have felt that betrayal and slow agonising death. Christ, I want to vomit.”

“Hush” said Lucy stroking Butterfly “You're not supposed to get distressed”

“Not supposed to get distressed? I was dissected alive!” cried Butterfly.

Lucy nodded sadly “They wanted to lie to you, alter your mind and pretend something less horrific had happened. Said it would be kinder. I said that was a crock of shit and they just didn't want you to think ill of them. I threatened to sacrifice myself and Iris if they wanted to lie to you. That was sufficient leverage to make the elder gods reconsider and keep all three of us in your hamster cage ping pong ball. The Unleasher has your collar if you ever want it back.”

“And Kitty?” asked Butterfly.

Lucy's face darkened “Kitty, Galla, Emilia and Bernice are harvested daily. Mariam and the Queen are allowed out of being harvested because they are guards.”

Butterfly grimaced “And it's been a month.”

“Yeah” said Lucy “Oh and my severed leg grew into another clone of me. Emilia's taking care of her and has named her Artemis. She's also been harvested. Look do you want to have a shower?”

Butterfly nodded and followed Lucy out one of the tubes.

Iris watched them go and spoke into her Logicio ear piece “The Butterfly has taken the bait. Repeat, the Butterfly has taken the bait. Unleasher, we are go for assembly. Repeat we are go for assembly.”

Butterfly and Lucy returned to find Iris giggling.

Butterfly approached Iris “Hey girl, ever fancied a threesome?”

Lucy burst out laughing.

Iris spoke into her bluetooth. “We are go for drop”

Lucy, Butterfly and Iris appeared before Galla and the Unleasher.

“I'm sorry” said the Unleasher

“We're both sorry” said Galla “But you are an asset and now you are ready for war.”

“Look around you” said Iris

General Galbion, Diamonte, Judith, Lily, Galbion's Right Hand woman, Olaf Gamalzes, Emilia Auditorie the SALFy, Bernice the mutite shark, Greta the cyborg shark, Kitty, The Queen, The Hooded Justice, Flitzzy, the orcs, the fairies, the plasticlones, the valkyries, the Asylum Seekers and the victims of the pit, they all stood, fully healed and recovered, armed to the teeth waiting for orders.

Galla said “This is why I did that to you. To give you an army with which to defeat the Bam-Kursh and end the suffering.”

“Freeing you as a consequence” said Butterfly

“Naturally” said Galla

“Is this what it is to be a weapon Farsh-nuke?” asked Butterfly

The Unleasher shrugged “I grew from a heart when the Bam-Kursh tried to kill me so long ago remember?”

Butterfly nodded “And how do we get out of the pit?”

“Fly” said Galla “We will follow”

Butterfly nodded.

Lucy kissed her on the cheek “Fly well and maybe we'll meet again.”

Butterfly swallowed removed her plasma rifle from a pocket and flew.

Butterfly flew up out of the pit and down to the front door of the Bam-Kursh's tower without being noticed or noticing anything odd. When she touched the ground though all hell broke loose...

Galla and the Unleasher appeared either side of Butterfly, Quantum Oscillators aimed and working away at the door. Lucy and Greta appeared either side of Butterfly, guarding Galla and the Unleasher. Iris and the Hooded Justice protected their sides.

General Galbion and half the orcs, Plasticlones Asylum Seekers and victims of the pit appeared guarding the road to the right.

Diamonte and the other half of the orcs, Plasticlones Asylum Seekers and victims of the pit appeared guarding the road to the left.

Olaf led a group comprising Galbion's Right Hand woman, Judith, 2 weresharks and a fairy as they mowed down down the enemy behind their battle lines.

Emilia led Artemis the Queen, 2 weresharks and a fairy as they took out fighters behind enemy lines to the left.

Lily, Kitty and Bernice controlled the battlefield by listening into intelligence gained through blood control and using calculated attacks to thin out the enemy in areas of weakness and bunch them up where they could be most easily killed.

Flitzzy maintained ultimate authority over the fairies and managed how many fairies were allocated to any specific task at a given time. Be it replenishing the ammo and health of the allies, using shock and awe to distract and confuse the enemies or focusing fire in a specific area to save a unit under heavy fire.

Butterfly cast shield spells to protect and buff her friends but between shield spells a lucky shot exploded Iris's head and the Hooded Justice staggered back, injured.

Shunk!

The door opened.

Vwoorp!

The Cowboy and 50 Architects of Chaos appeared.

The Cowboy cried “Get the Bam-Kursh!” and turned to shoot at the enemy behind him.

The Unleasher picked Butterfly up and carried her inside.

Galla followed and shut the door behind them.

Inside the tower was a spiral stair case leading up and down.

The Unleasher started heading up

Galla said “We go down.”

“Why?” asked Butterfly “The Bam-Kursh is at the top of the tower.”

Galla nodded “And the Unleasher will provide a satisfactory distraction but we can't hope to beat him until I have met the other Galla and freed myself. Now go downstairs.”

Butterfly sighed and headed downstairs followed by Galla.

“I really hope I don't have to kill you” said Butterfly sadly.

“Likewise” said Galla.

At the bottom they found a short skinny dark skinned woman.

“Hello” she said “I am Galla Placidia, Regent for Emperor Valentian the third. Would someone please explain to me what the hell is going on?”

Galla said “Ever had strange dreams or nightmares, felt that your thoughts or actions were not your own, that you can remember things you have never done. I chose you Galla as I chose this woman here to be my Butterfly. My soul lies shattered across all the women I have bought to this plane of existence and now I shall rise.”

The Regent of Rome said “Yes. Yes, I see now. What must we do?”

Galla kissed the Regent of Rome on the lips playfully then pulled back to say “How else is a god born?”

Butterfly asked nervously “Why did you bring me along here?”

The Regent of Rome stared at Butterfly and smiled.

Galla said “I need energy to perform this ritual. I need life force. You have it in abundance and that will leave me free to take out the Bam-Kursh”

Butterfly nodded slowly “And since I am no one's pet after what you did there is no socio-cultural stigma to this. And I suppose there are worse ways to have your life energy drained.”

The Unleasher had been stripped and her hand and legs were cuffed together behind her back to let her hang from a crane as a pinata. The Bam-Kursh was slashing at her with his sword cane.

“I just think we can murder bad guys.” said the Unleasher.

The Bam-Kursh laughed “The innocent and the good are much more fun to torture, to feel their joy and idealism obliterated by pain!”

Whack!

The Unleasher flinched “I’ll let you possess me just please let them live.”

Galla strode in her eyes green. With a wave of her hand the chains holding the Unleasher to the crane melted away and Unleasher was pulled to her right hand.

“Nice pinata, I might have to have a swing myself some time.” said Galla.

The Bam-Kursh glared at her “How dare you? The Farsh-nuke is my property, he sold herself to me!”

Galla cackled “You really don’t remember me do you Bam-Kursh well maybe this will jog your memory.”

Galla held her open hand before her and started squeezing thin air “Shut up”

The Bam-Kursh started suffocating “Mummy!”

Galla grinned “Who keeps the monsters from your space? Mother. Who tells the bad guys to behave? Mother. Who makes you do the unpleasant things for the greater good? Mother. I’m back Bam-Kursh and I have had enough of your games. Go! To! Your! Body!”

The spirit of the Bam-Kursh fled Flavia Galla and she collapsed.

“Go see to Butterfly” said Galla and she chased after the spirit of the Bam-Kursh.

The Unleasher pulled on her clothes and headed downstairs where the blissed out Regent of Romew and Butterfly stripped her again.

When Butterfly the Unleasher and the regent of Rome finally opened the doors it was a blood bath.

The Cowboy, Lucy and Greta were both shot up and bleeding heavily. The Hooded Justice and Iris were dead.

The right flank were all but dead. Galbion and her Right Hand woman had been vaporised. Judith lay dying as a fairy saw to her, Olaf was fine since she was a wereshark and had played conservatively when she needed to.

The left flank was equally demolished. Diamonte's head had exploded and Emilia and Artmeis had

ultimately died protecting the Queen who was being seen to by a fairy.

Lily and Bernice died but Kitty survived just and was being seen to by a group of fairies.

Flitzy landed on Butterfly's shoulder "I saved some of them, well their memories and a sample of their dna. You will have to extract them from me. I am not long for this world."

Butterfly nodded and mind melded with Flitzy then with a last gasp Flitzy died in her arms.

Butterfly broke down crying.

The Unleasher hugged her and tried to pretend that everything would be alright but she felt hollow inside too.

Thunk!

Gfaxxy Quluwmcy stepped out of a rocket and said "We will take you to our ship and give you somewhere to live while you grieve. We will also clear up this mess."

Galla strode up "Good. That's the Bam-Kursh dealt with. May I join you?"

The Unleasher stepped between Galla and Butterfly "I don't care if it is not my right, I don't care if you are more powerful than me. I care a great deal for this woman and all you have done is cause her pain. No more."

Galla chuckled "Farsh-nuke, really?"

The Unleasher lifted Galla up by the collar. "I have murdered the ones I love, I have eaten people and I have crushed their souls into dirt. I have more blood on my hands than you will ever know and you make me sick. Cut the crap or I will end you!"

Galla asked Butterfly "Is she serious?"

Butterfly nodded "She killed me remember?"

Galla swallowed "Okay maybe I should look at modifying my ego but please don't kill me, I can be an asset in the war."

Lucy laughed "Gfaxxy take us away"

The next two days were spent recovering from the final battle. Olaf, Kitty, The Cowboy, The Queen, Lucy, Greta and Butterfly grew close as they shared their stories of the battle and commiserated. The Regent of Rome drank with them as she shared her tale of the saga. The Unleasher and Galla spent those two days having very heated discussions in the bar.

By the third day the Unleasher went over to speak to the others and was soon singing karaoke and playing poker with the others.

On the morning of the fourth Butterfly went over to the Unleasher at breakfast and said “I know why you're here, shall we try it?”

The Unleasher nodded and they started working away in the hologram suite.

A month later the Unleasher led everyone into the suite for the grand reveal.

They pulled away the curtain and everyone marvelled at three women in glorified refrigerators.

“Presenting the Hooded Justice, Iris Timeweaver and Emilia Auditorie.” said the Unleasher.

The Queen asked “Can I get an Emilia for my country? She's very skilled.”

The Unleasher nodded.

Lucy asked “And if I wanted an Iris for reasons of my own.”

Galla entered, cheeks red, tearing up and hugged the Unleasher and Butterfly.

The next day Gfaxy approached Galla and said “Look we need to go, nothing against you just this whole war thing. So can we sort stuff out.”

Galla nodded and then she got the Regent of Rome, Lucy and Butterfly in a room with her “So who wants me?”

The Regent of Rome said “I could use your power.”

Lucy nodded in agreement “I can't run everything and I don't have experience of it so this Galla Placidia will aid me in my mission.”

Butterfly nodded “They need someone like you. They need an ultimate pragmatist. Galla I and the Unleasher just want to travel and help people.”

The elder god known as mother moved into the regent of Rome and said “Then it is agreed, we make preparations to leave.”

Galla, Butterfly, Kitty, Olaf and the Unleasher took 2 clones of Iris, 2 clones of Emilia, 1 clone of the Hooded Justice, and the Queen.

Gfaxy, The Elder God Galla, Lucy, Greta and the Cowboy took a clone of Emilia and the Hooded Justice with them and the cloning booths.

As they were about to leave and the elder god Galla on Gfaxy's ship was gathering up everybody for the move back to their respective times and places she felt something odd and pulled it aboard. Amy materialised “Hi guys, what did I miss?”

Lucy started laughing.

Butterfly and the Unleasher's ship dropped off one of the clones of Iris back in her old life then they dropped off the Queen with one of the Emilia clones and stopped by Woking.

They found out Campuss had fallen to her death when Woking had vanished and Galla was heart broken until Mariam invited Sandra round and shut the door of the spaceship before she could leave.

“It's bigger on the inside” said Sandra

“Yes it is” said Galla “Now allow me to introduce my friends. Gal with wings there is Butterfly. The one in back is the Hooded Justice or Mariam. The one who looks a bit like a boulder is Olaf Gamalzes. The shadowy figure in the cosplay is Emilia Auditorie, a resistance fighter from a far future parallel universe and the women reclining on the sofa are Kitty and Iris. We are the Venusian Cavalry. Now answer me one simple question: All of reality, every universe there ever was, every star, every planet, every time, where do you want to start?”

Sandra swallowed and made her answer.

The door that wasn't there before was no longer there again. The Venusian Cavalry were off on another adventure.

Fuzzy Logic
By
Alexander Gordon Jahans

Jeff ran through the train carriage. They were after him. Shit. They were after him.

Jeff threw himself through yet another door and closed it behind him. He leaned back against the closed door and braced his brogues against the edge of the door to the driver's carriage. He panted.

30 fucking days they'd been after him. 30 days of running for his life because of... what? Because he might become something? Might have something inside of him. Fuck that! Fuck that, quite sincerely. He was not about to just lay down his life because some mad cult of amazons wanted his head. Yet he couldn't hurt them either. Or at least he really didn't want to.

It was supposed to be easy: Finish university, do a TEFL course, teach abroad, learn to drive and see the world. Only he didn't plan on an inter-universal revolutionary band targetting his arse. He couldn't run forever. He was tired and dirty, his hair long, his beard a mess, his suit worn and patchy. He need to stop nd recover. He needed time.

They were banging at the door now. Bugger.

He didn't want to do this, he really really didn't want to do this.

But he had no choice. The driver had to live. this was where Jeff had to make his stand.

He closed his eyes and muttered "Oh, Father, forgive me.

He turned around and threw back the door. Braced and ready.

She was tall, thin and blonde and she was coming for him.

He poked his fingers in her eyes smashed her skull agains the door frame, snapped her neck and tossed her body to the side.

An older woman some ways a head held up her hand cried "Woah! Peace!"

Jeff stared at her. “You’re not going to attack me?”

“Of course not, I came a long way to find you, I need your help.” said the older woman.

She was English by her accent and 40 something, She had long brown hair tied back in a pony tail and wore hiking shoes, black trousers and a silver jumper. There was a backpack from her shoulders and she was smiling proudly at Jeff.

Jeff stammered briefly, trying to articulate how he felt then he gave up and stared at the woman lying in a crumpled heap at his feet.

“Oh she’ll be fine.” said the older woman. “Probably just switched off when you paralysed her but that’s easily fixed. You’re a hard man to find, Farsh-nuke?”

“It’s Jeff.” said Jeff bitterly “And what about the people who were attacking me?”

“The SLF?” asked the older woman. “Oh we took care of them easily enough. I’m Charlie by the way, Charlie Babbage.”

“Took care of them?” asked Jeff. “How?”

Charlie reached out of sight of the door and came back with a bow. “Everybody’s gotta have a hobby. Mine is archery. Met a rather lovely Logicio who was on the hunt for your friends, I let him have one of my students and he let me have an Albino Sylph Squirrel and some intel. After some experimentation I’ve come up with what I think might just be the most potent non lethal poison ever devised.”

As if on cue an SLF member lunged out of the darkness towards Charlie.

Without looking Charlie pulled an arrow from her quiver, placed against the bow took, aim, pulled back on the bow string and released. The arrow impaled the woman in her neck and smoke began to rise from her as she shrank. recoiling in pain.

Charlie retrieved her arrow and placed it back in the quiver then she bent down to pick up the shrunken

woman, now a foot tall and said “See, harmless?”

Charlie stroked the tiny woman idly and said “She won’t remember a thing. You’ll be able to raise her and the others as your adoring pets.”

Jeff stared. “Okay...”

“Oh, relax.” said Charlie. “I’m sure the SLF will have their memories backed up if you want to let them return to their old lives. You just probably better explain to the SLF how they don’t need to kill you first.” Charlie stowed the little woman in a cage with the other shrunken SLF members.

“Right...” said Jeff. “Look this is all a bit much to take in.”

“I can understand that.” said Charlie “look why don’t you just come into the carriage and have a sit down. I’ll make sure Lisa is alright and explain things to the train driver.”

Jeff nodded. “Thanks.”

Charlie stepped back to let Jeff pass.

Jeff stepped over the woman he’d taken out and took a seat at a table in the carriage.

Charlie approached her fallen friend and twisted her head back round to her correct orientation. The blond woman’s eyes and skull had already healed and her neck healed the moment a connection was made.

Charlie pulled a remote control out of her pocket and her consciousness came back online.

Lisa looked worried for a moment then smiled up at Charlie “Hey, it’s you? Is everything okay?”

“Oh yes.” said Charlie with a grin. “Thank you for going first by the way. The Farsh-nuke is just back there, have a seat with him. I’m sure he’d love to get to know you.”

Lisa smirked “But I thought I was your toy?”

Charlie kissed the younger woman on the forehead then said. "Of course, but I can share."

Lisa grinned and got to her feet.

"Go on, I'll not be a moment." said Charlie.

Jeff watched Lisa approach him and take a seat opposite him. She was in her early twenties, probably fresh out of university. She wore a sleeveless top and a short skirt. She was smiling awkwardly at him.

"Sorry for umm.. trying to kill you." said Jeff awkwardly.

Lisa sniggered "It's fine. The Bam-Kursh used to cut my head off for fun."

"Am I supposed to know that name?" asked Jeff.

"Well you are a Farsh-nuke..." said Lisa and she looked out the window at the trees going past. "You know when I was turned into a to for mass production by the Bam-Kursh she told me this tale about how you and her were best mates in the early days of the multiverse. I even met you, well a you, you were very nice and kind and you tried to save me."

Lisa looked to Jeff now and took his left hand in hers. "You told me tales of how if I was yours you'd treat me like a spoilt poppy, it sounded nice..."

Jeff met her gaze "What happened?"

Lisa shrugged. "Destiny. The Bam-Kursh is a very clever woman, at least mine is. She knew that it only needed to happen once for her to get her goods so she put in safety clauses and loop holes knowing that even if she fell in love with me and tried to push me away you, one of you, the one I got, would send me back to her to meet my fate. After that, well... The Bam-Kursh did her thing and a copy of me ended up in a warehouse the SLF were using as a hideout. Been hers ever since. First face this me saw."

Jeff smiled "That's adorable."

Lisa gave him a curious look.

“Well no, it isn’t adorable. It’s actually very horrible.” said Jeff, frowning. “But the idea that you and Charlie fell in love on first sight.”

“Ah...” said Lisa. “Not love. Programmed in loyalty and obedience. It’s imprinting technology.” then she smiled. “I do love the way Charlie treats me though, like she knows I’m a toy and that that’s what I like but she also treats me with respect you know? Like we’re partners? I suppose that’s sweet.”

Charlie sat down beside Lisa and draped her arm about Lisa’s shoulders. “Magnificent little thing isn’t she?”

“Well I wouldn’t exactly call her little, or a thing.” said Jeff pointedly. “She is however a very charming person and I genuinely cannot apologise enough for...what I did.”

Charlie smirked “It’s fine, you don’t need to apologise. you thought we were going to kill you and I sensibly sent my immortal masochist on ahead so no harm done.”

Jeff gave Lisa a curious look. “You’re masochist?”

Lisa shrugged “The Bam-Kursh made it so I experience pain as pleasure.”

“Isn’t that basically cheating?” asked Jeff. “Like surely the point of a masochist is that they actually get hurt but like the feeling? If you rewire the brain directly so pain is pleasure you haven’t got a masochist, you’ve just got a pleasure fiend who merely has the ability to gain pleasure from acts others would find painful.”

Lisa stared at him.

Charlie chuckled “You’re the Farsh-nuke, alright...”

Jeff grimaced and glared Charlie. “Look I don’t know who the farsh-nuke is but I ain’t him.”

Charlie looked him in the eyes “So you’ve never had strange dreams, memories you can’t explain, moments where you don’t feel fully in control of your own body.”

Jeff went pale “I just thought that was why you didn’t do drugs.”

“There is a Farsh-nuke inside you.” said Charlie. “His soul just needs to come out of hiding in a controlled manner.”

“Controlled manner?” asked Jeff. “What the fuck is that supposed to mean?”

“It means that there’s a reason the SLF have been trying to kill you.” said Lisa. “I’ve met him remember? He knows his way around a woman, craves us like an addict.”

Jeff swallowed. “Then what the fuck am I supposed to do?”

Charlie reached for her backpack and started unbuckling it. “There’s something I’ve been saving for you.” Charlie pulled the cord of the backpack and reached in. She pulled out a small satin dice bag tied with a bow. She pulled on the bow and reached her hand in, a head of golden hair surfaced from the bag, a sleeping mask over the eyes, then Charlie’s hand surfaced about the neck. Charlie tossed the bottom of the bag away and the tiny bag slid away to reveal beautiful bronzed skin and an emerald green bikini until Jeff realized he was looking at a supermodel that Charlie had somehow kept in a bag that would struggle to hold two tennis balls let alone a whole person.

Jeff stared. “What the...?”

“The bag was a gift of the Logicio’s. The fact she doesn’t need bindings or a gag despite having been left in my bag with food water or sunlight is down to me.” said Charlie. “She was one of my brighter students but hampered by an alcoholic father after her mother died of cancer. Given that this was America she didn’t exactly have the funds to stay ahead but she was gifted by nature with two things guaranteed to make a career in the field of artificial intelligence even tougher but two things that made her my first choice for this. Her name is Cassie and she is beautiful and submissive and yours.”

Charlie whispered something into Cassie’s ear and Cassie jerked to wakefulness, she scrambled to find purchase from where she was draped awkwardly across Charlie’s knees. Charlie lowered her to the floor and said “Cassie, do you remember why I asked you to meet me?”

Cassie smiled and she relaxed, resting her back against Charlie’s legs. “Yeah...Yeah, you said knew how to crack friendly ai? You said I could help and then there was something else? Something

important?”

“Yes...” said Charlie and she smiled at Jeff then reached a hand down to hold Cassie’s shoulder. “Can you remember what it was? It was to do with your role in helping me, do you remember?”

Cassie nodded “Yeah, it’s coming back now. you said you. You were going to get help from an expert on fuzzy logic but that he might need a certain service or sacrifice. One that I was best able to deliver.” cassie blushed remembering “Oh you were good... You showed me what was needed, gave me time to think it over, said you’d pay for my dad to get help and see that I was well looked after.”

Cassie bit her lip then concluded “You had me meet you in a public park in a coat I wouldn’t mind losing, dressed in the bikini you’d bought to make me perfect for the occasion. You said you needed to inject me with something called wereshark blood so I could heal then give me something to counteract the side effects of the healing abilities but that that it meant you would have to give me a blindfold.”

Cassie smirked. “I told you I was up for the ball gag and bondage and that’s when you explained how you were going to hypnotize me so such things wouldn’t be needed. I let you and then my eyes were taped up, you injected me and I swallowed my pill and I heard your trigger phrase.”

“Thank you.” said Charlie proudly and she looked expectantly at Jeff.

Jeff rolled his eyes. “Alright so it’s consensual, maybe. Still fucking creepy.”

Cassie smirked “Oh I like this guy, he’s feisty, I like a man with a bit of fier in him. Who is he?”

“I’m Jeff.” said Jeff as he watched Charlie open her mouth to speak. “Listen to me, I don’t know what’s going on but you don’t have to do this. I don’t care what she’s told you, you don’t.”

“And how the fuck would you know?” asked Cassie pointedly “I am to be given to the Farsh-nuke and he would just gobble me up.”

Charlie had a smug smile on her face and looked expectantly at Jeff.

Lisa leaned in, a smirk on her face. This was getting good.

Jeff frowned “Because I am... the- umm. I’m him. He is me. He comes out of me. Probably. Maybe. I don’t know. Your creepy teacher certainly seems to think so but I - I really don’t fucking care. What she did was wrong.”

Cassie shook her head and tried to get up, bashed her head under the table and so skirted round until she could stand up. She was towering over the seated Jeff

Jeff was craning back, desperately trying to look at her face and not the two things that were more easily in his eyeline.

Cassie bellowed “Do you know how important friendly artificial intelligence is!? It could revolutionize the world, make manual labour a thing of the past, and enter us into a glorious new post-scarcity future. If you can crack that or even just get us one step closer then absolutely my life is worth it but for the record this isn’t some great noble sacrifice for me. This is my deepest, darkest, most forbidden fantasy made real. And something else to consider, just because you accept me as a gift doesn’t mean you can’t treat me like a human being. If you’re worried about losing your humanity, about what doing this might make you, then consider this: You aren’t becoming the kind of mine that dominates a woman for pleasure, you’re a man facilitating a woman’s agency over her own life and gaining satisfaction from that.”

“That’s a hell of a speech for a supermodel in a bikini to make.” said Jeff bitterly.

Cassie sniffed and gagged “And that’s a hell of a comment for someone who smells like gym socks to make?”

Jeff shrank back and grimaced “I’ve been on the run for a month. I haven’t exactly had time to shower.”

“God, really?” said Cassie and she felt along the table until her hands came to his shoulders. “You poor baby, we need to get you a shower, some clean clothes and a warm bed.” Cassie looked to where she imagined Charlie to be, so she was actually looking at Lisa. “We can do that right? Unless you’re expecting us to just do it right here?”

Lisa laughed.

Cassie tilted her head and asked. "Who was that?"

Lisa said "Umm, that was me. We've umm... We've not met but we've both been charges of Charlie for a while and I have say that - that is one hell of a body."

"Oh, you like it do you?" said Cassie mischievously "I am very open to new experiences so if you want to try it out you're more than welcome to try."

Lisa looked to Charlie with a pleading look in her eyes.

Charlie smirked and squeezed Lisa's shoulder. "Alright, I think you have a point. I can get us somewhere to rest up for while during which time I'll find us somewhere we can work. If that is Jeff here will accept you because you can't move blindfolded."

Cassie hunkered down on her haunches. "Jeff, I know you've just met me and this is crazy but if you remove the blindfold, I will imprint on you. I will be yours. Farsh-nuke or not. So, what's it to be? Do you want an immortal submissive with a great body to be forever by your side?"

Lisa and Charlie were staring at Jeff waiting for an answer.

Jeff asked uncertainly. "This is really what you want?"

Cassie chuckled "Honey, I signed up for this knowing that in the moment of awakening the Farsh-nuke could kill me. I dressed up in a bikini, met my old lecturer and agreed to be drugged and blindfolded and brainwashed. I did this all because it thrills the shit out of me. I am not about to turn back now unless you make me."

Jeff swallowed. Clear explicit permission. He let his eyes begin wander down her body. "But you are not just a pretty face are you because you see I could get bored of a pretty face and that wouldn't be fair on you. Not after all you've done."

Cassie nodded "Smart guy, more than just a cock and balls I see. Well you probably know I'm hot at artificial intelligence and computer science already but I like to read outside my field. I'm very into sword and sorcery, mythology, psychology, philosophy. What do you know of quantum mechanics?"

Jeff's jaw dropped and he stared.

Lisa sniggered.

Charlie said "From the looks of the records I took from the SLF. You were a football player, proper football player, and you wanted to be a pundit on national TV eventually? I'm thinking that maybe you weren't expecting Cassie to know so much more than you."

Cassie smirked "Is this true Jeff? Am I going to be the smart one in our relationship?"

Jeff frowned and he blushed "You're perfect."

Cassie grinned "So may I see you? Will you accept me?"

Jeff groaned then muttered "This has to be a trap, I don't get nice things. This is waaay too good to be true."

Cassie farted loudly and pointedly.

Jeff's face was a mess of conflicting emotions as he waged war with himself until finally he cried "Fuck it! You only live once!" He removed Cassie's blind fold to find her eyelids were kept closed over her eyes by foam pads that were taped over them. He slid a finger under the tape and pulled a little.

Cassie winced from the pain. "Keep going. I like the pain remember?"

Jeff nodded "Just say stop if it gets too much." He pulled more of the tape free then more. Finally the padding over her left eye came free. he pulled at the tape over her right eye.

Cassie winced and bit her lip.

He pulled the tape free.

Cassie opened her eyes and gazed into his brown eyes. She giggled "I can feel my mind being rewritten. Haha. It's kind of nice. Strange and like going through a corkscrew on a rollercoaster but it's nice. Mind if I sit down?"

“Er no...” said Jeff hurriedly and he moved to the right so Cassie could sit down.

Cassie kept looking at Geoff, which was disconcerting him. She grinned. “You know, you’re very handsome?”

Jeff blushed and looked out the window. “Thanks.”

Cassie laughed “A shy guy, huh?”

Lisa said “It’s because you’re looking at him. It’s that whole male gaze thing isn’t it? He finds it intimidating.”

“Oh...” said Cassie, then she said “Good thing I’ve got you here to talk to Lisa. Perhaps if we start getting better acquainted he might show some interest?”

Jeff sighed. “Please, just let me have a shower a good 8 hours sleep? Bit of mood whiplash to deal with as well.”

Cassie giggled and put her arm round Jeff “It’s alright, I’ll look after you, I used to fence in my spare time.”

Jeff rested his head against the window and felt the train’s movements judder through him as something stirred inside him.

“Okay, I’ll get you what you want.” said Charlie. “Just trust me.”

Jeff caught her gaze and nodded. “Just get me out of here.”

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The train came to a stop and Charlie led her team out of the station and into a cab. Her mind racing ahead as she mapped out what needed to happen and she surveyed the interactions of her recruits.

Lisa and Cassie chatted gleefully swapping stories about their different times at university and how artificial intelligence was portrayed in the media.

Jeff was mostly silent, he was tired, confused and hungry. He was also overwhelmed and withdrawing into himself but increasingly feeling like that wasn't such a safe place to be any more, he felt like he was being pushed back into an industrial sander and at any moment it could switch on and tear him asunder. As he looked at Lisa and Cassie he felt warmth and attraction to them of course but he was chilled by the sensation of something looking hungrily through him.

The cab drew to a stop and Charlie led them to a motel out in the sticks beside an eating establishment. One single room and one double was booked. As Charlie headed to her single room to begin finding a suitable laboratory, Jeff threw himself into the show and Lisa and Cassie hung out, preparing for and discussing what was to come.

*

Jeff stepped out of the shower to find a new set of clean clothes and a large box of American fast food waiting for him.

As he accepted the food and the clothes he looked to where Cassie lay chatting with Lisa on the bed. "I really do not deserve you. Thank you, so much."

"You will." said Cassie with a smile as she admired his glistening abs and biceps. "And besides it's Charlie's money, she needs you in perfect condition tomorrow. We all do. And anyway as I understand it things are going to be rather different very soon, appreciate it while it lasts."

Jeff nodded. "Thank you,"

He got dressed in the bathroom then sat down in an armchair in the bedroom gorging on fried chicken, a beef burger and fries.

Cassie asked "So what are you going to do, Lisa? Charlie only booked out bed space for three."

Lisa smirked "Oh I don't need sleep and I've got an off switch for my mind so I think She'll just stick me in the closet."

Cassie stared at her,

Lisa grinned “Well I’m a toy remember?”

Cassie chuckled. “Well go on then, go to your Mistress. I think our expert is ready for his beauty sleep.”

Lisa nodded and got up to leave then she paused and looked back at Cassie and smiled. “You know I’m glad we met, almost a pity the Bam-Kursh isn’t here now, I think you’d make a lot of money for the war effort.”

Cassie smirked “Well maybe Jeff can track down the Bam-Kursh later and let her know of your idea.”

Lisa laughed “See ya” and left the room.

Jeff finished wiping his fingers and his face after the greasy meal and asked “Were you serious? She’s a toy. That’s... That’s fucking awful.”

Cassie looked at Jeff and said with half smile. “You don’t know why Charlie gifted me to you and she absolutely did gift me to you but I do and yeah... Fuck it. Might be weird but I think I’d be up for it and if can help keep us all safe from the Septagonoids -”

“The what?” said Jeff.

Cassie laughed. “It doesn’t matter but if the Farsh-nuke is looking out through those beautiful brown eyes of yours pondering if he can use this knowledge to his advantage, to cut some kind of a deal or something, you tell him hell yes.”

Jeff closed his eyes and took a deep breath then glanced at a mirror. “No. No, I don’t think that’s right.”

Cassie got up from the bed, pulled a chair out from where it was tucked under a desk and sat opposite Jeff. She placed her hands either side of his head and looked right into those brown eyes “Farsh-nuke, I am serious. I know exactly how you’re going to emerge and exactly what you’re going to do to me and I am up for it. I am so unbelievably up for it and I am yours. Jeff... He’s a nice guy and I like his body but you are a god and you can see into my soul, you can eat it and rewrite it so this is me saying it’s yours, it belongs to you. I belong to you. I mean that sincerely, knowing all the things you could do to

me, knowing just how alien your appetites can be. I am yours, do with me what you will, you have my permission.”

Jeff stared at Cassie. He couldn't close his eyes, he felt hungry and lustful, he wanted to kiss those lips so much to throw her backwards onto the bed and - No. No, he didn't fucking care what he felt. There was something important he had to point out, something he had to ask. “Cassie, I'm not the Farsh-nuke. he might be in me, he might emerge from me but I am not him and I do not consent or give permission to be the vessel he uses. I didn't ask for this, I never got to say no. Do you actually give the slightest shit about me?”

Cassie frowned and hugged Jeff. “Without you, I don't get to see the Farsh-nuke so of course I care about you but I've just met you and you're a bloody alpha male sports fanatic.”

Jeff pulled away and crossed his arms “I thought you like alpha males?”

Cassie sighed “Well you can't get much more alpha than an entity that watched the multiverse evolve and besides he's a genius with super powers. You know a bunch of useless trivia and have a great body which I still get to enjoy when he's in charge.”

Jeff glared at Cassie. “Do you know why emasculation is such an insult? Why the solution to all of life's problems is to man up and grow some balls? It's because to a man masculinity is agency, it's control, dominion and independence. Oh feminism calls it privilege and patriarchy but it's all just a synonym for not being passive, for not giving up and giving in. That you don't depressed, you get angry. You are serving yourself up to me on a plate but you are emasculating me more surely than if you cut my balls off and shot me full of oestrogen. This is my body. You can have the Farsh-nuke's genius but I am in charge here and I always will me.”

Cassie nodded “Sorry I- I touched a nerve didn't I?”

“Just a bit yeah...” said Jeff then he rose from his armchair “It has been one hell of a long day so if you don't mind I am going to sleep.”

Cassie rose from her chair and tucked it back under the desk. “Of course, sleep well. Remember if you need me, I'll be right beside you.”

Jeff nodded then he headed into the bathroom to clean his teeth. He closed the door and locked it then he caught sight of himself in the mirror and approached it.

He looked at his reflection in the bathroom mirror. At the tired man with the straggly beard looking back at him. He braced his hands against the sides of the bathroom counter top and muttered “Look, I still don’t know if I quite believe this. It’s entirely possible that Charlie is just a little bit mad and brainwashed impressionable young women into believing bullshit but well every sports fan is a little superstitious despite knowing the truth so I’m going to consider the same kind of deal. Maybe the Wolverhampton Wanderers will win a home game even if I’m not there but it can’t hurt to clear the diary so I can attend every home game just in case you know?”

Jeff cleared his throat then looked his reflection in the eyes “Farsh-nuke, I don’t know much about elder gods, I don’t know how strong you are or even necessarily how to fight you but I do know the limitations of my own body and I know that Charlie has given me Cassie for your benefit and she is going to be keeping you very busy with work so consider this a little promise. If you hurt anybody but particularly Cassie, Lisa or Charlie then I will hurt this body. I have no problem dying to stop you if that is what needs to be done.”

Jeff sighed and he tugged at his beard thoughtfully for a moment “I hope we can find accord. That we can make this work somehow. I don’t fucking know how but I hope we can make it work.”

Jeff glared at his reflection as a thought occurred to him. “But I’ve seen Supernatural you know? That angel Castiel? he’s possessing some poor fucker and this christian dude is trapped, helpless, as his body is used by an unearthly power to do dreadful things and he has no control but shares in the pain. Well that ain’t going to fucking happen to me and I am telling you now that if you fuck anyone, heck if you just decide to tug one off, and I am not sharing in the control and I’m not given any kind of consent or say then that is rape and if you do that... If you ever do that... I will hurt you. I will burn you. I will break you. See I can’t guarantee that I can stop you but I can guarantee that if I can’t you’ll fucking wish I had. I may not be top dog but I’m no runt either and so long you’re in my body you better pay me and my morality some fucking respect or you will pay.”

Jeff cleaned his teeth and went to bed.

Cassie was already under the covers.

Jeff tried to forget about Cassie and the Farsh-nuke.

During his sleep Jeff dreamed of a great green nothingness and a woman called Lucy who came to him for help. They talked in a language he didn't understand and then the woman was gone and Jeff was alone in the void.

*

The next day Jeff woke feeling refreshed.

Cassie was still sleeping.

Jeff cleaned his teeth and had a shower then he went to the restaurant for breakfast. He dined greedily on bacon, sausages, fried eggs, black puddings, potato dauphinois, tomatoes mushrooms and because it was America waffles with maple syrup.

When he returned to his hotel room Cassie was exiting the shower room. Her strawberry blonde hair cascading down her back and her tanned skin glistening with flecks of water, grinned and closed the door with a sharp slam.

Cassie turned to look at Jeff and saw the yearning in his eyes. She blushed and smiled "You look hungry."

"I just ate." said Jeff and he approached the beautiful naked woman who had pledged herself to him.

Cassie smirked and she looked Jeff in the eyes. "Well I find there's always room for dessert?"

Jeff smiled and he pulled her close, his hand on the small of her back and he muttered "I'm not exactly an expert at this."

Cassie felt her hands down his chest feeling the contours of his body. "Oh I'm sure you'll do fine and anyway I'm very good at giving feedback."

Jeff tentatively kissed her lips.

"Yes." said Cassie and she pulled him into a snog.

Jeff's tongue explored her mouth and he started unbuttoning his shirt.

Cassie relished the caress of his lips and unbuckled his pants as her hand reached down below.

Jeff pulled away and tossed Cassie onto the double bed. "You are fantastic!" he cried as he stripped.

Cassie scrambled backwards up the bed, she knew what was coming next and she was ready. "Well come on, you magnificent beast, take me! My body is here for you and I promise you I will enjoy this!"

Jeff was lost in the moment and he mounted Cassie, straddling her like he'd seen in so many videos. His hands explored her body as he kissed her lips and started moving the kisses downwards along her neck.

Cassie felt him inside of her, could feel his lips caressing her skin. She was quivering with excitement. "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes..."

Jeff was losing control. Lost in the moment. Lost in the sensation of her warm damp body beneath him. In the feeling of her complete submission to his will he had never felt more in control his entire life.

The kisses started being more forceful as he sucked at her skin. Cassie could feel the pain and she relished it. "Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Come on. Come on. Oh yes..."

He started biting her playfully. just enough to leave a pressure mark.

Cassie's heart pounding like freight train and she was breathing heavily as she cried "Take me! Take me! Take me!!!"

His teeth started pulling the flesh from her bones his tongue pulled the meat into his mouth.

Cassie was being consumed by pleasure now as she moaned "Thank you. Thank you. Yes. Thank you..."

He took her into him bite by bite.

Cassie could feel herself weakening as he devoured her. Muscles whittled away piece by piece, organs slurped up into his mouth. She felt herself climax as he sucked at the meat in her ribs. She passed out not long after he ate her lungs.

He left Cassie's head, feet and hands alone. Perhaps there was something sacred about them or maybe the meat was just a little too hard to extract with teeth and tongue alone. When he came to Cassie's three hearts he understood why she had given herself so willingly to him. It actually cheered him to think that the dear girl would likely recover.

He extracted himself from Cassie and extracted a few elastic bands from the room's welcome pack were they had been holding various fliers together.

He used the bands to tie off Cassie's stomach, intestines and bladder. He carried this to the bathroom and placed the stomach in the bath. He carefully removed the elastic bands attached to the bladder and dropped it into the toilet bowl. Bladder safely dislodging its waste where it belonged, he decided to help the hotel clean its drains by taking a toothpick and using it to poke holes in the stomach. He used a glass to safely apply pressure to the stomach and thereby drain it faster.

Once the stomach was emptied of acid he used his cut throat razor to slice the stomach at a point just before the elastic band that marked its border with the intestines. This done he hung thus end of the intestines over the shower rail, removed the other elastic bands except the top most and proceeded to squeeze all waste out into the bladder and the toilet. When he was relatively certain most of the waste was gone from the intestines he sliced off the intestines where they joined the bladder and flushed the bladder away. He left the intestines hanging over the toilet bowl as he returned to the bedroom and Cassie.

He used his knife to extract what was left of her digestive tract, including the arsehole itself and flush that as well. He decided to extract Cassie's vagina and clitoris as a memento of this occasion and left it in the cupboard to dry.

He returned to the bathroom and washed out the intestines then he coiled them up like rope and left them in the wardrobe to dry. He put the stomach in there as well then he had a shower.

When he exited the shower he washed his cutthroat razor before using it on himself. Clean shaven, he looked into the emerald green eyes of his reflection "For what it's worth, Jeff, I agree to your terms."

He dressed in a three piece suit and left the hotel room. locking the door behind him and hanging a Do Not Disturb sign over the door handle.

Lisa was approaching. She a beautiful young woman in trainers, a short skirt and a sleeveless shirt, her long blonde hair was tied back behind her in a ponytail.

He smiled.

“Hey, Jeff, love the suit.” said Lisa genially as she approached him. He looked older, more confident, commanding and those eyes... “I was just coming to find you actually, Charlie’s found us a lab.

He pulled her close and ran his hand through her hair. “Lisa Watkins... It has been a while hasn’t it? Remember that promise I made you? It’s still on the table if you’re up for it.”

Lisa blushed and she felt herself giving into him then she realized. “Green eyes, a sharp suit, memories that don’t belong and a way with women... Farsh-nuke, it’s you isn’t it?”

He grinned and stroked her cheek. “Oh honey, you have no idea how much I want to take you right now but I made a promise. Will you let me have you as a pet though?”

Lisa grinned and she looked up into his eyes. “You’re going to need a collar.”

He nodded and felt his hand down her back. “Oh yes, gotta do things right...”

Lisa’s heart was pounding and she could feel her mind drifting away as his will replaced her own.

He kissed her on the cheek and asked. “Where’s Charlie?”

“Her room....” said Lisa.

“Good girl.” said the Farsh-nuke. “Now stick close to heel and do exactlyb as I say.”

Lisa just had enough will left to mutter. “Of course...”

He stroked her cheek and strode off.

The toy girl followed close behind.

*

Professor Charlotte Shelley Babbage sat at a laptop in a tidy hotel room checking through her code for the 900th time when she heard him knocking at the door. If she was wrong... If her code wasn't going to work... If she had sacrificed a promising young woman to bring a monster into the world that didn't even serve a purpose anymore...

He called "Little girl! Little girl! Let me in or I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow this door down!"

Charlotte grabbed her gun. She had to know. She had to be sure.

"Huff!!!" He cried. The door was racked by somethingb heavy slamming against it.

Charlotte slammed an ammunition clip into the handle of her pistol. If she wasn't right... If her calculations were incorrect.

"Puff!!!" He cried. The door rattled on its hinges.

Charlotte aimed the gun.

He whistled and the door flew open.

Charlotte pulled the trigger.

The bullet entered between Lisa's eyes and blew out the back of her skull, sending her flying backwards into the wall.

Charlotte barked "Who are you calling little girl!?"

He charged through the door in an instant, snatched the gun from her hands and turned it on her. "I'm the Farsh-nuke, you manipulative little shit!"

Charlotte was stunned and shocked, it took her a few moments to process what happened. “Crap!”

“You summoned a demon to summon a demon!” snarled the Farsh-nuke as he pressed the barrel of the gun against her skull. “Why!?”

Charlotte grimaced but remained silent.

The Farsh-nuke glared at her. “I read Cassie’s soul. Oh she certainly thinks she consented but you’ve been priming her for as long as you’ve known her and believe me I am very well acquainted with stealth coercion. She was practically gift wrapped for me. WHY!? No AI is worth the risk I pose. Is worth doing that to anyone.”

Charlotte closed her eyes and sighed. “My best friend at university was a certain Lisa Watkins...”

The Farsh-nuke’s mouth dropped open in shock.

Charlotte snorted “Parallel universes, what a fucking bitch. We were going on holiday together when one day she was stopped at a security check point. Seems we’ve been part of the UCMS for quite some time. The wars in the middle east are just a convenient distraction from the fact that good men and women just blip off the world never to be seen again because they’ve been thrown into that meat grinder of a war.”

The Farsh-nuke went to sit in the armchair but kept the pistol aimed at her head/ “What happened?”

“The Bam-Kursh happened.” said Charlotte. “Apparently She had to keep bringing out new variants to meet demand and AI developer Lisa was to be the latest model.”

Charlotte glared at the Farsh-nuke “I was thrown back for being too fat and warty and because blonde haired girls sell better.”

The Farsh-nuke swallowed. “Why did you do this? Why summon me? Why do that to Cassie? Why are you so desperate for friendly AI?”

Charlotte shrugged. “I want revenge. Revenge on every blonde haired blue eyed beautiful girl who gets valued over the rest of us. Revenge on that bigoted vile witch. And an end to this fucking war. If we can

get friendly AI down then we can mass produce willing troopers to fight the good fight and keep upgrading them as necessary.”

The Farsh-nuke lowered the gun.

Charlotte looked sadly at the Farsh-nuke. “Do you honestly think Cassie would have led a better life on her own? yes, I manipulated her, I used her and I sacrificed her but she went willingly every step of the way and you will take good care of her won’t you?”

The Farsh-nuke sighed. “You know just once I’d like to not feel like a massive monstrous arsehole?”

Charlotte smirked “Wouldn’t we all?”

The Farsh-nuke sucked on his teeth then asked “So what exactly have you got in terms AI? What do I have to add? Oh and just so we’re clear a gun is a coward’s weapon and even if you had shot me it wouldn’t have gone shit.”

The Farsh-nuke shot his dick off. “My soul is a stubborn thing and while I’m no wereshark I have just eaten a sylph so there’s just a little bit of unnatural regenerative ability in my bloodstream.” He glared at her. “Don’t fuck with me. Don’t ever think you are capable of fucking with me. I eat women like you for breakfast.”

Charlotte sneered at him.

Lisa jerked to life and took a deep breath. She got to her feet and strode in through the door. “Sorry, is everybody okay? I was umm...”

“We’re fine.” said Charlotte, as she stared at the eldritch abomination that had threatened her and just shot his own dick off to prove a point.

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “Lisa, darling, come over here. I have a favour to ask of you.”

Lisa walked over to the Farsh-nuke. “Yes?”

The Farsh-nuke smiled warmly. “Thank you. Get onto your hands and knees, please?”

Lisa smiled and got onto her haunches.

“And sleep...” said the Farsh-nuke before he started whistling.

Lisa’s eyes closed and her mind switched off.

The Farsh-nuke put his feet up on Lisa’s back. “Nothing like a good foot stall.”

“Nice trick.” said Charlotte.

The Farsh-nuke smiled. “Well Quantum Oscillators work by oscillating particles at the quantum level to reprogram the base code of reality. Not that hard to audibly achieve the same thing if you know the right resonances. Now, AI... What do you got?”

“A plastic code.” said Charlotte. “We’re talking a prime super language than can incorporate every current computer language and adapt to every future computer language, probably. It’s like primordial ooze at the moment, lot of potential but not much actual structure. Very private and confidential, this code is being kept under wraps in top development labs but I’ve gotten hold of a copy of this. The advantage of using this as the basis is that every single program under the sun can work with this.”

The Farsh-nuke stared at her “I fail to see how priming the AI to take over the world will help anyone.”

Charlotte shook her head and leaned forward. “You don’t see... You went mad because you lacked form and structure when your mind was developing, humans have that structure. With this as the basis of our sentient AI we can give it a body right from the off. Tank treads for movement, manipulator arms, two cameras for depth perception, two microphones for hearing and direction detection. Accelerometers, pressure sensors, thermometers. We can build in speech synthesizers and a virtual avatar. We can give it videogames to play. upload databases from social media websites so it can begin to understand humanity and install the greatest works of literature as ebooks.”

The Farsh-nuke glared at her “But how do you program something to be that intelligent without it immediately firing the nukes? I mean for fuck’s sake you summoned me and the first thing I did was eat someone alive.”

“And I was prepared for that.” said Charlotte “You left her hearts alone didn’t you?”

“Well yeah...” said the Farsh-nuke, failing to see the point.

“So I’m prepared for this as well.” said Charlotte. “The plastic nature of the code means we can just drop in new modules as required. So we can design the code in lifeless chunks copy them to cd and have it installed via cd onto the drone. We don’t install wifi on the drone, nor an ethernet connection or a usb connection within reach of its arms. Code goes in, code doesn’t come out. Of course we’ll be able to manually input data and if the AI wants to experience the internet before it’s ready then we can let it use a normal non-sentient computer. With parental supervision of course. And since even a superfast AI mind is limited by how fast it can type into a conventional GUI we’ll be able to quite literally pull the plug on any attempts to create an Ai without such a limitation.”

The Farsh-nuke stared at her. “You’re going to make AI live an analogue life? You’re going to raise an artificial intelligence as a child?”

“Why not?” said Charlotte. “Lisa is proof that if you let nature and nurture form the person then sooner or later you will find a mind suitable for exploitation and mass production. Except Lisa is limited by her tie to her body. If we raise an AI child then we can just copy its mind and upload it to a better drone body as required.”

The Farsh-nuke looked into Charlotte’s brown eyes and asked. “And you think the AI is going to let you manipulate it like this?”

Charlotte shrugged. “Cassie, let me serve her to you on a platter.”

The Farsh-nuke stared at her. “Wow! You are cold!”

Charlotte smiled. “You didn’t think being a monster was restricted Elder Gods and men did you? Cassie isn’t the first girl I’ve used. Took a lot of experimentation to become so good at what I do. I’ve got a lot of blood on my hands. Buried a lot of corpses in my time. God bless America and its poorly trained and corrupt police departments.”

The Farsh-nuke whistled and saluted. “Oh captain, my captain!” He planted his feet on the floor and led forward, resting his elbows on Lisa’s back as he steeped his fingers. “So tell me, Oh Dark

Mistress, just what the fuck am I doing here? I mean besides being a bioweapon unleashed on all pretty girls and a hitman for the Bam-Kursh. I know you need help with fuzzy logic but that's about it."

Charlotte smirked. "Dark Mistress? I quite like that. I could get a cape and cackle as I sacrifice virgins under a full moon."

"Well that should be easy." said the Farsh-nuke. "They tend to identify themselves with the warcry: It's about ethics in games journalism."

Charlotte snorted. "Seriously though, I do need your help with fuzzy logic. Particularly the fuzzy logic relating to morality."

The Farsh-nuke blinked, sat back, looked rather confusedly at Lisa's frozen face then said "Yeah... Yeah... You're fucking insane. I've got nothing. I've got absolutely nothing. You're just fucking insane. You're looking to me for lessons on codifying morality? I mean you aren't actually mentally ill are you? Because yes, all right, we have just established that you are a cold heart manipulative murderous bitch. But I'm.... I mean you do know who I am right? I got sentenced to execution by the seven great empires for more crimes than can reasonably be recounted. I am not a nice guy."

Charlotte smirked, the smirk grew into a grin, then into a snigger then a chuckle then laughter then hysterical laughter.

The Farsh-nuke stared at her.

Charlotte rose from her chair, closed the door and locked it, all while laughing hysterically.

The Farsh-nuke swallowed.

Charlotte turned to the Farsh-nuke the short woman towering over him as he sat. "Good men don't need rules."

She said it like the punch line to some grand joke.

"Don't you get it?" said Charlotte, staring at the Farsh-nuke. "I don't need a good man, I don't want a good man. I want a monster. I want an insane, predatory, manipulative, lustful, wrathful, all powerful

monster. It doesn't take morality to be a good man when you're born that way but when you've watched universes rise and fall before you could even blink, when you have absorbed the soul of another and thought it good, when you have devoured the weak and manipulated the strong, when you have used and abused to the point where it corrupted your very soul beyond almost all recognition, well then you need a damn fine set of rules to pass as a good man. Then you need to have a very thorough understanding of the fuzzy logic of morality."

The Farsh-nuke stared at her as cogs whirred in his mind.

Charlotte lowered her voice and became unnervingly serious as she approached the seated Farsh-nuke and loomed over him. "Farsh-nuke, you founded the Logicios, you orchestrated the ascension to power of Lucy Danse, you are the champion of the Sylphs and the the bane of the Bam-Kursh and the savager of the Septagonoids. Like it or not you have the capacity to become a hero, to be a great weapon for morality and justice. If a monster as broken and damaged as you can achieve such great acts of noble courage then friendly AI is possible and you can help me birth it into the world. I'll do the hard work, I just need you to seed it with a bit of yourself."

The Farsh-nuke thought for a long moment then he whistled.

Lisa opened her eyes and said "I was turned off wasn't I? What's happened?"

"I need to know everything about the Bam-Kursh." said the Farsh-nuke and he looked pointedly up at Charlotte. "I need to prove that I can be a hero."

Lisa asked "May I stand up."

The Farsh-nuke snorted. "Of course you can stand up. I need you both to tell me everything you know. And Lisa, while you're with me, you're a pet, not a toy that means that while you may follow instructions you are allowed free will and to not ask permission for the simplest things. If I need you to obey, I am perfectly capable of making you."

Lisa grinned and stood up straight then looked to Charlotte. "What did I miss?"

"Oh just my deep dark secret." said Charlotte with a smirk as she ran a hand through Lisa's hair and rubbed her back. "Come on, we can lie on the bed. I have a feeling we're going to be here a while."

*

The Farsh-nuke unlocked the door with a whistle and found Cassie examining herself in the mirror. Steel toe capped work boots, black tights, pinstriped trousers supported by belt and braces, sleeveless undershirt, light blue long sleeved blouse, a check waist coat, a double breasted navy blue frock coat and fingerless gloves.

The Farsh-nuke appeared behind her right shoulder in the mirror. “Oh I do love a girl who can appreciate the value of a good suit..

Cassie smirked “Not disappointed that I live again then? I see you removed my cunt? Classy.”

The Farsh-nuke smiled “Well I wasn’t sure if you’d stay with me after you know... I’ve just had a rather interesting chat with your mentor. Would you say a slave is enslaved if they don’t know they’re enslaved?”

Cassie looked at the reflection of the Farsh-nuke curiously. there was something different about him and it wasn’t just the green eyes. She raised an eyebrow at his question. “Well I guess it’s like that whole argument about the droids in Star Wars, they’re not actually sentient they just display a good imitation of it.”

“Oh?” said the Farsh-nuke.

“Yes.” said Cassie and she smiled smugly as she ran her hands down the front of her coat, checking everything was buttoned correctly. “Except of course the same question could be asked of all of us? Are we really sentient or do we merely fool ourselves into thinking we are when we are in fact puppets of biology, our environment and physics? The bigger question is how do we treat those that may or may not be sentient?”

The Farsh-nuke swallowed and looked away, out the window and into the woods outside.

Cassie asked “Do you think I should wear a tie? I’ve always liked ties, they’re like publically acceptable leashes.”

The Farsh-nuke said sadly “Cassie, you’re beautiful. Dress however you please and damn the

fuckwits.”

“Tie it is then.” said Cassie and she turned up her blouse collar so she could tie a paisley tie round her neck.

The Farsh-nuke went to the window and clasped his hands behind his back. “Last time I was an Earth it was the 60s, took out an entire village. Ate the women, flayed the men and sold the children as pets to an Arkhosian sylph trader. I believe they were sold to a sylph mill as future breeding stock.”

Cassie asked “Is something wrong? I thought you’d be happy to be back in the land of the living?”

The Farsh-nuke sighed “I thought this time it could be different. I thought it could be a fresh start. That I wouldn’t have to be the bad man.”

Cassie went to join him at the window. “Are you going to help Charlie?”

The Farsh-nuke nodded solemnly “Too many have died to walk away now.”

“And what about me?” asked Cassie. She looked at him with longing in her eyes.

The Farsh-nuke shrugged “Wouldn’t be right. I thought you chose this, I thought you gave yourself to me willingly.”

Cassie reached her hand behind his back and took his hand in hers. “I know what Charlie told you but I’m an amateur philosopher with a major in psychology. She used me alright but I used her.”

The Farsh-nuke looked to Cassie, confusion and hope in his eyes.

“Look around you...” said Cassie as she gestured to the window. “America in the 21st century. Mass unemployment, armed militia’s taking government property, riots every year, a mass shooting for every day, of the week, police shooting unarmed citizens dead. We are a country that is heading towards a violent revolution or a totalitarian regime and all the while our politicians blow the crap out of other countries in the excuse of protecting peace then damn near announce plans to open gas chambers if anyone dares to flee the places we are blowing the crap out of.”

The Farsh-nuke looked out the window sadly. "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry."

"One man can't solve this and quite frankly one man shouldn't have the ower to solve this." said Cassie. Then she stared out the window and said "Charlie got to some of my friends. Not anyone I knew directly. Nothing provable. Nothing that could have stopped her. Not in America anyway. but I knew she was a predator and I knew she would come for me and I went willingly because fuck it if I could get to you, if I could be yours, then I would be safer than anybody in this whole fucking world."

The Farsh-nuke slung an arm round her back and pulled her close. "I wish I could fix this. I wish I could fix you. You shouldn't need to sacrifice yourself to a fucking Elder God to feel safe."

Cassie smiled. "You don't need to fix me. I'm happy with you. I meant every word. I'm yours, if you'll still have me? And for the record, I have had a lot of sex but that was by far the best. If you ever want to eat me again I'll clear a space in my diary."

The Farsh-nuke gave her a curious look. "Are you serious?"

Cassie looked the Farsh-nuke in his emerald green eyes. "Why wouldn't I be? I'm a sylph. I like pain and I like submitting to you."

"Aww." said the Farsh-nuke and he booped her on the nose with the index finger of his right hand. "As soon as I get my hands on a quantum oscillator and can rig up a time freeze container I am going to take regular cuttings of your glorious arms and legs."

"Deal." said Cassie with a smile.

The Farsh-nuke grinned and ran his hand through her hair.

"How's Jeff by the way?" asked Cassie.

The Farsh-nuke winced and looked away.

"Oh, I'm sorry." said Cassie "I like you, I really do, but well Jeff didn't ask for this I just want to know he's okay."

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “Not exactly happy about the change of arrangements as I’m sure you can understand but he’s safe. There is ample space in my mind for him to live a comfortable life.”

“Do you reckon you could make peace with him?” asked Cassie. “Maybe set up a time share or something?”

“Maybe...” said the Farsh-nuke. “Let me settle in first though eh?”

Cassie nodded. “Of course, I’m yours. I’m just also his.”

The Farsh-nuke smiled and stared longingly at Cassie’s features. His promise to Jeff coming to the fore of his mind. If he ever wanted to fuck this girl again, he needed to be one good speaking terms with his host mind.

“What is it?” asked Cassie.

“Just thinking about how beautiful you are...” said the Farsh-nuke, then he kissed her on the forehead and said “Come on, lets buy you a collar.”

Cassie grinned, showing off pearly white teeth. “Yes, Master.”

The Farsh-nuke shivered with excitement and turned away from the window.

Cassie followed, still holding his hand.

*

Cassie was examining a bunch of modular hamster cages in a huge pet shop at a vast shopping mall a 3 hour drive from their hotel.

The Farsh-nuke arrived with a trolley loaded with bags. “You have to pay for bags now? Can you believe that? I decided fuck it and bought a trolley, always fancied one of these.”

He noticed Cassie was looking with fascination with something so he asked “What are you looking at?”

“I used to have a hamster.” said Cassie as she lifted up a box to look at it more closely. “She was a

Syrian called Sammy. My mum's cat tried to eat it because my door didn't shut properly so I'd have to wedge the door shut with a great book on symbolism and mythology but Sammy lived a good life. I'd always by her a new module for her home. I was quite envious of her, living in this space age home."

The Farsh-nuke frowned and looked at the hamster cage modules. "Are you saying you want a hamster?"

Cassie cackled and shook her head. "I was thinking about those SLF members Charlie took care of for you."

Then Cassie turned and looked to the Farsh-nuke "And... well... about us?"

"Us?" asked the Farsh-nuke curiously.

Cassie nodded and took his hands in hers. "Well I'm your pet aren't I? And I was thinking about how Charlie kept me in that small bag the Logicio gave her and... Look, I know it's stupid. I know that there are probably all kinds of reasons it's not possible but if anyone could make it happen it's you, right so... umm..."

Cassie blushed and held up a cage "Like I know we still want to do stuff together and I won't exactly be a fulfilling meal if I can live inside a hamster cage but every couple needs allowances for alone time right? And... well... I'd like this... If it's possible? Please?"

The Farsh-nuke bit his lip, trying to hold back laughter, his shoulders started to shake."

Cassie frowned. "I'm an idiot aren't I?"

The Farsh-nuke hugged her and kissed her forehead then he looked her in the eyes and said "You are adorable."

Cassie looked uncertain.

The Farsh-nuke smiled "There are unfortunately certain hard limits on what even I can do when it comes to creatures of flesh and blood but grab everything you like the look of and I'll see what I can do."

Cassie grinned “Are you sure you can afford it?”

“We’re on the bank of Charlie and it seems exploiting university students is a very profitable business to get into.” Then he paused and muttered. “Actually there’s a good chance the relativity of my universe is a fiction elsewhere?”

He walked away from Cassie and the trolley a ways and closed his eyes, feeling around with his hands. There. Just on the edge of his perception. Across the veils of reality. An echo of tangible physicality. A phantom camera. He opened his eyes.

His mind was attuned to the particular logicular harmonics of the keystream now. He could see a green wireframe overlay of the camera crew and the director. A multi-camera production filming on location in Vancouver by the looks of it. He smirked, this effect was probably costing a bit of money.

He found the camera to record his close up and looked intently into the camera and out at the audience “Guys, this is an alternate universe, exploiting university students probably won’t be as [profitable where you are and anyway it’s wrong. If you want a better standard of living abandon the myth of trickle down economics and vote for political candidates who will support a universal basic income. Also just please bare in mind that I am an eldritch monstrosity, not a rolemodel, don’t try this at home.”

The Farsh-nuke closed his eyes and let his awareness of the keystream fade. He took a deep breath and opened his eyes. the wireframe overlay was gone.

Cassie piled a seventh box into the trolley then caught sight of something in one of the bags already in the trolley and asked “Why have you bought a metal detector?”

“We’re going to build a quantum oscillator.” said the Farsh-nuke with a grin.

Cassie looked to him with confusion. “We?”

“One of the benefits of having a pet sylph who understands computer science.” said the Farsh-nuke as he approached her and took her in his arms. “I don’t have to do everything myself.”

“Oh?” said Cassie with a grin. then she kissed him on the lips. “I love it when you acknowledge my

genius.”

The Farsh-nuke grinned and looked at her hungrily then stopped himself and started examining the price tags of the cages Cassie had put into the trolley. “Well, my oh you ingenious comrade, have you got everything you want?”

Cassie wanted to say something but she looked embarrassed so she whispered “I was thinking a a ball gag, a set of handcuffs, a butt plug and a whip? Charlie, didn’t exactly let me take any luggage.”

The Farsh-nuke bit his lip and closed his eyes.

Cassie hurriedly said “Don’t worry, they’re not for you.”

The Farsh-nuke snorted, he almost reached out for her, decided he didn’t trust himself and clasped his hands behind his back. “Cassie, what you have said thrills me in many ways but I made a promise to Jeff that I wouldn’t do anything unless I had his permission.”

Cassie shrugged. “Then get it.”

The Farsh-nuke grimaced. “Not until I’ve settled in.”

Cassie frowned. “Oh...”

The Farsh-nuke rolled his eyes. “Oh for - Cassie, you don’t need my permission to get some damn toys. I just can’t... help you make use of them yet.”

Cassie smirked. “I wasn’t asking permission. I mean yes, you’re paying but that’s not why I asked.”

“Then why?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

Cassie sighed “Because I’m a woman buying subby toys, I’ll get creeped on.”

“Oh...” said the Farsh-nuke. “So you basically just want me to intimidate any sados who might start creeping?”

“Well, yeah...” said Cassie.

“That, I can do.” said the Farsh-nuke. “But if I find you handcuffed to the bed I’m going to leave you there, understood?”

“Absolutely.” said Cassie. “Not going to try and involve you until you’re ready.”

“Thank you.” said the Farsh-nuke then he went to stand at the push bar of the trolley. “Come on lets pay for this and get your toys then we’re building us a Quantum Oscillator.”

*

When they arrived back at the hotel Charlie had bought a tour bus and was busy loading it up for travel to the new laboratory. Cassie told Lisa to begin loading the stuff they’d just bought into the tour bus and then theyv went to their room to collect their things.

Cassie put her vagina in a box for the Farsh-nuke and also found her intestines and stomach.

The Farsh-nuke accepted the box and asked “Is something wrong?”

Cassie shook her head then frowned and said “It’s just- like I can understand the vagina. Like it’s... not normal but hey my body is yours. Why not keep a memento of losing your virginity and emerging? But why the stomach?”

The Farsh-nuke shrugged. “The stomach holds acid. This is quite a rugged bag material.”

“And the intestines?” asked Cassie.

The Farsh-nuke smirked “Oh I’ve got plans for them.”

Cassie stared at him.

“Apart from anything else, sausages are made with intestines.” said the Farsh-nuke. “Thought I might make some next time.

Cassie’s eyes lit up with understanding and she gave a michievous grin. “So there is going to be a next

time?”

The Farsh-nuke smirked. “You’d really be up for it?”

Cassie held his gaze and started to unbutton her jacket.

The Farsh-nuke grabbed her hands and shook his head. “We’ve got a Quantum Oscillator to build. Food can wait.”

Cassie grimaced, buttoned her jacket and went back to clearing out the room.

*

As the Farsh-nuke and Cassie carried the last of their stuff to the tour bus Lisa indicated where their room was and that she’d already placed everything of theirs there.

They navigated the tour bus and arrived into a long thin room with a shag pile carpet, a circular bed and desktop computer and monitor.

As they put their stuff away in cupboards, draws and discreetly hidden storage chests Cassie asked “So what is a Quantum Oscillator exactly? What does it do?”

The Farsh-nuke was momentarily flustered as he utilised tetris skills for maximum storage efficiency then he explained “A Quantum Oscillator does for the logic bound what I used to be able to do naturally. It’s like giving a basic animal species an opposable thumb, it is a very small and simple device that unlocks incredible possibilities.”

Cassie rolled her eyes at that and struggled with her own storage issues. “Yeah, but how?”

The Farsh-nuke finished his packing and st down wearily on the bed. “All reality, at least all logical reality, consists at the most basic fundamental level of tons of tiny vibrating strings of logic, their vibrations create a harmony that decides physics.”

Cassie finished her packed and leaned back panting against a wardrobe. “Is this like string theory? Because I heard that scientists no longer consider it such a hot prospect.”

The Farsh-nuke sucked his teeth ran his tongue along his top lip, glared into space for a moment then shrugged. "I suppose it bares a few very superficial similarities, Bare in mind I am grossly over simplifying."

"Because you think I'm thick?" said Cassie as she moved to the chair before the computer and faced the Farsh-nuke.

The Farsh-nuke groaned "Darling, you're about to help me make one of these, no I do not think you're thick. You are however limited by your biology and where you were born."

Cassie glared at him with a terrifying ferocity.

The Farsh-nuke grimaced. "Because you're human and you were born in a universe. A universe is a great big bubble of logic. You depend on a very specific type of physics to function. If gravity were that bit stronger or weaker. If it took that much more effort to extract oxygen from the atmosphere. If the physics for nuclear fusion were just slightly different. Heck when it comes to the full ramifications of life for your physics not being just so, you are probably better informed than I as my host spent his childhood memorising scores for home and away games of the different players throughout the history of Wolverhampton Wanderers but the point is that you are part of a great symbiotic process of change and evolution that is happening all the time because these tiny vibrating strings of logic. I mean this is like trying to explain the water cycle to a cup of tea. It's just so much a fundamental part of who you are."

Cassie frowned and lowered her glare from "I will cut you." to "You're a dickhead but you've probably got a point." She sighed and said "Fine, you were saying?"

The Farsh-nuke hurriedly explained "So these strings, they're like valves in an early computer. Except we are taling so much more data passing so much more quickly. Again in this body I lack the ability to truly quantify it in a way you would understand but think of it like an incredibly efficient incredibly huge computer that we are living in. The computer surrounds us and penetrates us and is part of us, yet it is also other of us, dictates physical laws to us and can be hacked and reprogrammed by us."

Cassie was perplexed. "This is getting a bit Star Wars? Please don't start talking about sand..."

The Farsh-nuke smirked. "Seriously, it's not the force and it's not a simulation. There are no robot

overlords, messianic prophecies or child soldiers. What there is however is physics all around us that can be hacked by any thinking creature because if it can think, if it can use logic, then it can hack into the fundamental building blocks of reality to alter physics. The more bound by logic you are though, the harder it is to exploit it. That's why I can still do so much more than you. And that's why Quantum Oscillator's exist. They use sonic waves to vibrate particles at a quantum scale and thereby physically alter the harmonies of logic strings. Their big problem though is that unlike thought their range and power is limited by what physics will allow."

Cassie stared into space for a moment as she tried to visualise the process of oscillating the strings. "So how the fuck do we build a Quantum Oscillator?"

The Farsh-nuke grinned and went to the cache of items he'd bought in the mall. "Well we rig an oscillator up to a couple of speakers, a microphone and a circuit board then we control it either by precoded setting or a pulse monitor built into the handle so we can create new harmies on the fly."

Cassie stared at him. "You're kidding me it's that easy to build a device capable of reprogramming reality?"

"Well it's a bit more complicated than that." said the Farsh-nuke. "And finding the right harmony can be damn fiddly even if you know what you're doing and can actually interpret the different higher dimensional harmonies but it is utterly possible. So, think you can do some soldering and coding?"

Cassie's face was expressionless as she thought then she started unbuttoning her jacket.

The Farsh-nuke looked perplexed.

Cassie removed her jacket and rolled up her sleeves. "Lets build us a quantum manipulator."

The Farsh-nuke grinned and started opening boxes.

*

5 hours later, they were ready to test it. It looked like some absurd kind of cyberpunk wizard's staff. two speakers duct taped either side of an expensive microphone and two steel rods. A couple of arduino circuit boards in a protective case taped to the poles controlled the actual harmonising. A raspberry pi in a protective case with a usb socket and small touch screen allowed activation of preprogrammed

harmonies and monitoring of the harmonies themselves. A pulse reader in a protective casing was the actual handle of the absurd contraption.

“Are you sure this is going to work?” asked Cassie as she looked with some dismay at the apparently finished prototype quantum oscillator.

The Farsh-nuke smirked “Only one way to find out.” He called out “Lisa!!! Could you come see us please!?”

Cassie glared at him.

He looked like a proud parent as he held the daft staff in his hands.

Lisa entered cautiously. “Yes? What is it?”

Cassie sighed.

The Farsh-nuke asked “Can you tell us the full name for dna, please?”

Lisa looked to Cassie for insight.

Cassie met her gaze and shrugged.

“Okay...” said Lisa, pretty much at this point expecting shenanigans. “Deoxyrib-”

The Farsh-nuke aimed the prototype Quantum Oscillator at Lisa and pressed the preprogrammed option to turn Lisa off.

Sure enough Lisa froze mid sentence.

Cassie nodded, impressed and clapped “Well would you look at that, it actually worked.”

The Farsh-nuke grinned. “Of course it worked.”

Cassie approached Lisa and ran a hand through her hair as she felt her other hand down her chest “Do you

know, I think I see it? How this woman can be a toy? There is something about her. A little tackyness to the skin and a kind of unnatural give to the flesh. It's not big, not uncanny but it is there subtly and her features, her hands... It's just ever so slightly too perfect you know? Unreal."

The Farsh-nuke nodded "And the fact she comes with an off switch probably helps give that impression." He activated the on harmonics.

"-onucleic acid." finished Lisa. Then she noticed Cassie was suddenly at her side and frowned. "You turned me off again didn't you? But I heard no whistling?"

The Farsh-nuke grinned and held up the prototype Quantum Oscillator proudly. "We've built a Quantum Oscillator, with this I can - do anything. I'm a god. Again."

"Ah..." said Lisa. "Like the Hand of Omega?"

Cassie was carassing Lisa and examing her body.

"Pardon?" asked the Farsh-nuke.

"Just a thing from Doctor Who. It's a TV show we have in Britain." said Lisa then she frowned and asked "Cassie, what are you doing?"

"Well it's just ocured to me how much you really are a toy." said Cassie. "I quite like it." her hand came to Lisa's bum.

Lisa's eyes widened and she blushed but she smiled. "Well I umm, I don't exactly haver anything planned..."

"So you'll let me play with you?" asked Cassie.

Lisa grinned and looked to Cassie. "You may play with me however you wish."

Cassie grinned and kissed Lisa on the cheek as her hand delved under her skirt.

Lisa's grin widened and she bit her lip.

“Oh yes!” cried the Farsh-nuke. “I’ve just remembered!” He put aside the prototype Quantum Oscillator and started rummaging through piles of stuff.

Cassie’s hand passed between Lisa’s legs and pra finger ginerly...

Lisa muttered “Yes... Yes, that would be nice.”

Cassie smirked. “Do you have a problem if he gets involved?”

Lisa shook her head and felt herself fill with nervous energy.

The Farsh-nuke rose from the boxes and approached Cassie and Lisa. He took a moment to compose himself then he said “Cassie, your sacrifice, your willing submission, it freed me. You are the sweetest, most adorable person I know. You gave yourself to me and for that I am so thankful. I promise you if you ever feel at all uncomfortable I will do everything in my power to see that whatever troubles you ceases to be a problem. I will protect you and satisfy you and sustain you. I know that I am a strange man with strange appetites but you need not feel compelled to satisfy them. You owe me nothing and I owe you everything.”

He removed a leather collar from his pocket and secured it round Cassie’s neck, her name was engraved on a silver plate at the front.

He turned to Lisa.

Lisa was at this point quite distracted by Cassie’s playful fingers but she tried to meet his gaze.

He coughed. “Lisa, I... I am given a certain amount of knowledge that I shouldn’t necessarily be privy to because of my power as an Elder God and the fuckton of Farsh-nukes out there. A version of me once made a version of you who was just on the cusp of becoming a toy a promise. I said that I could keep you as my pet if you wanted me to. I intend to make good on that promise. You are magificent. The Bam-Kursh chose well and did a fine job with you but you need not feel trapped anymore. I shall protect you.”

He secured a collar round Lisa’s neck and kissed her on the forehead. “Have fun with Cassie, yeah?”

Lisa grinned. "You could join us?"

Cassie looked almost pleadingly at him. "I'd like you too. I'm not an expert at domination like you."

"Then this will be a fun learning experience." said the Farsh-nuke cheerily then he went to fetch up the prototype Quantum Oscillator before leaving the girls to their fun.

*

The Farsh-nuke found Charlotte in the driver's seat, following a sat nav. He slumped down in the passenger's seat beside Charlotte.

"Saw Lisa head back there..." said Charlotte. "The fact she's not with you and neither is Cassie... Well ain't that a nice thought for us old monsters?"

"We need to talk..." said the Farsh-nuke with a quiet calm seriousness as he focused on trying to find a harmony that was just on the tip of his tongue.

"Do we?" asked Charlotte. "I thought people drenched in darkness didn't need to talk about past mistakes."

"You... You basically hired me to do a job..." said the Farsh-nuke without looking up.

"If so... That's a hell of a payment in blood." said Charlotte.

"Not my problem..." said the Farsh-nuke. "I'm a weapon... That's okay... I'm used to being a weapon... But I didn't know the terms of the contract so I'm altering them."

"Right..." said Charlotte. Her eyes were on the road and she was deathly calm.

"Now, we could go head to head..." said the Farsh-nuke. "Eldritch Bastard to Psycho Bitch but I don't think that's necessary..."

Charlotte nodded. "Well that's very reasonable of you."

“I am taking Lisa... She belongs to me...” said the Farsh-nuke, still quiet, calm and serious as he focused on finding the correct harmony.

Charlotte swallowed. “She imprinted on me.”

“I’m working on that...” said the Farsh-nuke. “You don’t deserve my girl... I was there for her.. I tried to help her.... You... Weren’t.”

Charlotte was silent for a long moment then she nodded. “Fine.”

“I will get you your Lisa back though... With a few catches I’ll not yet say...And I can’t guarantee revenge on the Bam-Kursh....” said the Farsh-nuke.

“Well, that’s something I suppose.” said Charlotte. “And helping me with friendly AI?”

The Farsh-nuke smiled. “Oh I’m helping with that...”

“Good.” said Charlotte and she gave a tight smile.

“Where are we headed by the way?” asked the Farsh-nuke, still not looking up from his work on the harmony.

Charlotte gave a half smile. “To the home of an old rich survivalist type. Completely off the grid, technically not subject to federal law or even part of America at all. On the surface it’s a farm with a hydroelectric damn, solar panels and wind turbines. Underground there’s a modest living area and a vast super computer with room to grow. Apparently the guy wanted to back up the internet in case the apocalypse happened.”

The Farsh-nuke snorted. “Americans...”

Charlotte asked “Is the reason you typically incarnate British because you wouldn’t normally last five seconds in a country so full of guns?”

The Farsh-nuke fell silent.

Charlotte smiled then asked “What are you doing?”

The Farsh-nuke asked “Are you familiar with a stasis field?”

Charlotte pondered. “Isn’t that that ridiculous scifi idea that time is a force that time is a particle that can be filtered out?”

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “That’s the one... Cryogenic suspension is a flawed concept. meat is made of water and freezing changes the consistency of water and increases its volume... Trying to preserve a living being that way is like pumping a balloon up with water until it bursts... A stasis field negates the issue... Albeit in a way that makes no actual sense... Then again I guess when you have a workshop it wouldn’t occur to you to use scissors on a screw that won’t budge... What I am going to do is create a fold in the fabric of reality that could be of infinite size and beyond which time won’t flow...”

“Neat, if you can pull it off.” said Charlotte. “What do you call it?”

“Time Freeze!” cried the Farsh-nuke triumphantly as a blast of noise erupted from the prototype Quantum Oscillator and a small black draw string bag appeared in mid air. It fell into the Farsh-nuke’s lap and he grinned.

“I guess that’s alright as name’s go.” said Charlotte.

Grinning from ear to ear the Farsh-nuke started on finding a different harmony.

*

The hours passed by as the tour bus drove on. Day turned to night before finally the headlights lit up the imposing security gates of the Right Dawn Estate. Charlotte spoke into an intercom and the tour bus rumbled in.

The tour bus was parked up on a large asphalt driveway then Charlotte and the Farsh-nuke exited the vehicle to explore the manor itself. It was large, industrial and a tad art deco.

As they explored automated energy management systems kept the lights on only a few meters either side of them. It almost seemed like a labyrinth of corridors and hallways as Charlotte followed a map on her smartphone. Finally they made it to the server room.

It was a vast chamber with the huge body of computers hanging from a cradle carried by great gothic support columns. It was like a giant metal spider on an alien tripod, this industrial heart supported by monstrous veins and being a great thrum of spinning hard disks and whirling coolant blades.

“Omega!” cried the Farsh-nuke in awe. “That’s what we have to call him.” He corrected himself. “It, they, the machine, her maybe. We call our creation Omega or Zed. The last and the greatest. Behold mankind’s greatest achievement!”

Charlotte smirked “Kind of appropriate that we had to summon a god to help make it happen don’t you think?”

The Farsh-nuke started laughing maniacally with a hysterical intensity. Falling to his knees to marvel at the deus ex machina that hung before him waiting to be unleashed.

As the Farsh-nuke was distracted Jeff crept out of the shadows of his mand and stared out through his eyes, So things were decided then. The fall of mankind, or its salvation, was about to begin and there was nothing Jeff could do one way or another except pray the Farsh-nuke knew what the fuck he was doing.

*

A backup of the internet had already been attempted. Just youtube, twitter and facebook and even then what was gotten was just fragments from a small amount of public profiles. Charlotte and the Farsh-nuke agreed that purging this stuff in a computer reformat was a good idea though. That was going to take a long time so they started going through the different moral codes of different religions, sorting each into good, indifferent and bad morals to teach a code child.

By the middle of the night Charlotte was having a vape outside and the Farsh-nuke was telling an anecdote about when he and Lucifer had decided to fuck with the peoples of a universe and each choose a champion to more effectively destroy the populace. Lucifer had gone for brutal demonization and genocide with book burnings and gas chambers, dude was minmaxed to the hilt and hampered by a low intelligence modifier.

The Farsh-nuke had opted for ruthless pragmatism. He would make his champion a jolly bear of a guy and have a cause that seemed to preach love, liberty and equality but was actually about grinding

everyone underfoot to feed a war machine that immolated itself but just slow enough to defeat Lucifer's forces.

Then the Bam-Kursh had got into the fray and he, as this incarnation was identifying as a he at the time, decided to appeal to the reason of his champions. Incentivising the building of ever deadlier war machines and so the Farsh-nuke was crushed as rule by terror doesn't work so well when the people advocating rule by reason also happen to scare as well as you.

Cassie and Lisa approached. They looked clean and were fully dressed. Cassie had an arm round Lisa until Lisa ran off to see Charlotte/

The Farsh-nuke approached Cassie and hugged her. "Are you alright?" He asked. "You were quite a while?"

Cassie blushed and asked "Can we keep her?"

The Farsh-nuke smirked and ran a hand through Cassie's strawberry blonde hair. "You're a girl after my own heart you know?"

Cassie smiled then asked "So where are we?"

"The dawning of a new age." said the Farsh-nuke and he hugged her, caressing her with a tender warmth. "I've missed you, just being around you."

Cassie smirked "You could have stayed? Nothing wrong with watching is there?"

The Farsh-nuke groaned and muttered "Masturbation is verboten. Not my body to play with and I'm not alone in feeling what this body feels."

"Oh..." said Cassie sadly then she smiled. "Oh..."

"What?" asked the Farsh-nuke.

Cassie grinned naughtily then whispered "Well when you do get permission it'll be like a threesome everytime."

The Farsh-nuke smirked and pulled a small black bag from his pocket. “By the way I was playing around with the Quantum Oscillator we built together and I made this.”

Cassie took bag and examined it with fascination then asked “What is it?”

“Time Freeze...” hissed the Farsh-nuke with satisfaction as he ran his hands down her sleeves caressing her arms.

“Oh?” said Cassie with a grin. “Feeling peckish are we?”

“Like you wouldn’t believe...” said the Farsh-nuke as he started kissing her cheeks and moving down her neck.

“Well I was feeling a bit sleepy after all that exertion...” said Cassie with an amused interest. “But what about my clothes?”

The Farsh-nuke reached into a different -pocket and pulled out a small blue bag. “Infinite bag.”

Cassie grinned then said “Well you better take me to the kitchen then.”

Cassie slung her arms about his neck.

He grabbed her by the waist and lifted her up into the air.

She pulled her legs up and crossed them behind his back.

He readjusted his grip and carried her into the manor.

Lisa and Charlotte avoided talking until after the Farsh-nuke and Cassie had gone.

Lisa began. “Umm Charl-”

Charlotte coughed and said. “Lisa, I -”

They each fell silent and looked at each other.

“After you...” said Lisa. “Please, I’m just a toy.”

Charlotte frowned and said “No, Lisa, say what you have to say. I think it’s important.”

Lisa frowned then grimaced she was visibly uncomfortable. “Look, I like you. You’re big and you’re terrifying and you luike to yuse me and I like that.”

Charlotte took a long suck on nicotine vapor as she stared and the innocent young blonde before her.

“I was turned by someone like you.” said Lisa. “So please believe me that I genuinely do love being yours.”

“But?” asked Charlotte, sadness in her eyes.

“But...” Lisa stared at her feet and wrapped her arms about herself, as if she was suddenly feeling the cold. “Cassie and the Farsh-nuke, they just give me more you know?”

Charlotte raised an eyebrow and breathed a long plume of vapour out into the young woman’s face.

Lisa squirmed. “I mean the Farsh-nuke he’s an Elder God and he’s playful with me, he wants to keep me as a pet and I think I want to let him.”

Charlotte looked away and coughed.

Lisa grimaced and swallowed before continuing “And Cassie? Heck Cassie’s a subby like me, she’s like a vampire’s thrall. She gets me you know, she really understands how I feel and she... She uses me. She plays with me and covets me and wants to watch me squirm and I like it because it’s like the entire time she’s so aware of how it would feel to be in my place. And she’s wonderful and smart and...”

Lisa started to cry. “Damn it Charlie! I imprinted on you and I belong to you! I feel it in my fucking soul but I want to be with them!”

Charlotte sighed and rolled her eyes as she found herself comforting the woman.

Lisa embedded her face in Charlotte's shoulder as Charlotte patted her back.

Lisa muttered "Please, just turn me off until they're gone. I can't take this. I can't belong to two different masters."

"You don't have to..." said Charlotte as an ancient sadness overwhelmed her once more.

"Huh?" asked Lisa.

Charlotte handed her a clean hanky and said "The Farsh-nuke decided to renegotiate the deal."

Lisa pulled back and dried her eyes. "What?"

"He wants you." said Charlotte bitterly. "He wants you as his pet and he says he might have a way to remove your imprinting on me."

Lisa froze then muttered. "You're kidding..."

Charlotte shook her head. "It's why I insisted you speak first. It might have been your last chance to say anything and I suppose I wanted to be talked out of it, to hear something that would make me want to resist him. He's serious. He wants you and I've already sort of agreed to give him you."

"Oh..." said Lisa and she felt silent as her face was a mess of emotions.

"Oh bless you..." said Charlotte and she ran a hand through Lisa's hair. "You're suffering from a classic conflict of commands. to be the perfect plastic pal whose fun to be with and to be the property of whoever you first set eyes upon."

Lisa grimaced. "So you don't hate me?"

Charlotte smiled sadly and rubbed the small of Lisa's back. "No. No, I really don't. I care a great deal for you Lisa and if you want to belong to another you deserve to."

Lisa hugged Charlotte and asked "What you going to do?"

“The job that’s in front of me.” said Charlotte. “Go. Be with your new masters, If you can make them even half as happy as you’ve made me you’ll make them the happiest couple in the world.”

Lisa gave a half smile and said “You know you can still play with me right? I mean so long as the Farsh-nuke and Cassie are with you. I still really like you, I still want you to dominate me. I just... Oh... Be okay, alright? I know you’ve done things but that shouldn’t stop you from starting again someday and finding happiness.”

Charlotte let Lisa go and said sincerely “I’ll be fine. go, be happy.”

Lisa nodded and left bouncing into the manor.

Charlotte changed the cartridge in her vapor and looked up at the full moon.

*

Cassie was stripped down to her underwear and perched on the ledge of a kitchen counter as the Farsh-nuke sucked at her flesh and searched for a knife.

“Okay..” said the Farsh-nuke, leaning back. “Now what I and going to do is remove those lovely long legs of yours and your glorious arms and then I am going to take you with me into the office and eat you with a knife and fork while I monitor the progress of the formatting of the hard drives and discuss morality with Charlie, how do you feel about that?”

“Eating me in front of my teacher?” said Cassie with a smirk. “I like it. But make sure you use plenty of salt. I want it to burn.”

The Farsh-nuke grinned. “Well I’ll bare than in mind. See if I can’t save some of your stomach acid this time around, add an little spice to next time “

“Ooh very smart.” said Cassie then she clicked her fingers as she had a flash of realisation. “Ooh how about curry sauce? A little burning for both of us?”

The Farsh-nuke leaned in and pecked her on the lips. “See this is why I like that you’re smart.”

Cassie chuckled. “Well remove my arms already. I’m starting to want to do things with them.”

“Such as?” asked the Farsh-nuke as he fumbled with the Time Freeze bag.

Cassie grinned. “Things that would make Jeff very angry with you.”

The Farsh-nuke shook his head. “And that wouldn’t do would it? Not very hygienic at all.”

Cassie cackled lasciviously.

The Farsh-nuke asked “Do me a favour and grab your left arjust above the elbow with your right hand? Bit of a juggling act this as I have to hold the Time Freeze open.”

Cassie gripped her arm as requested. “Maybe you could sew my arms onto yourself? Make things a little easier?”

The Farsh-nuke smirked and with the Time Freeze bag stretched open over his left hand, he grabbed a carving knife firmly with his right and started slicing into Cassie’s left arm.

Cassie muttered encouragement “Oh that’s good. Yeah, that’s really good. Keep going.”

The Farsh-nuke frowned when the knife got to bone. “I think we’re going to need a sharper blade.”

Cassie asked “Could you rip it out of its socket?”

The Farsh-nuke looked at her. “Again, I don’t hink I have the arms for this.”

Cassie frowned.

Lisa’s voice carried into the room. “Charlie has this fancy meta naterial blade that folds up to look like a yoyo. It can cut through steel bars. She keeps it in my left breast incase she’s ever arrested and needs to escape prison. You can have it if you life.”

Cassie cried. “Lisa! You fantastic beauty! Get over here so I can hug you while I still have arms!”

The Farsh-nuke was awkwardly fiddling with the Time Freeze bag and trying to avoid Lisa's gaze.

Lisa hugged Cassie and said "I've got good news. Charlie's agreed to give me to the Farsh-nuke. I actually sort of asked if I could be yours first."

The Farsh-nuke looked up at Lisa. "You did?"

Lisa smiled but there was a touch of sadness in her eyes. "I'm better with you guys."

The Farsh-nuke swallowed, dropped the Time Freeze bag on the kitchen table and hugged Lisa. "Are you alright?"

"Yeah." said Lisa with a genuine warm smile. She removed her top and bra.

The Farsh-nuke could almost feel Jeff squirming inside of him.

"Pity you're inedible..." muttered the Farsh-nuke as his hands started feeling for a lump in Lisa's breast.

Lisa smirked. "Well just because you can't eat me, doesn't mean you can't dismember me? I hear it's very satisfying to cut my head off."

The Farsh-nuke gave a polite smile found the lump and reached for the knife.

Cassie handed it to him and said playfully. "Wondering what you missed earlier?"

The Farsh-nuke carefully sliced into Lisa's breast and extracted the yoyo looking thing. "No, hunger trumps lust."

Lisa put her top back on and asked "Anything else I can help you with?"

"Oh yeah, actually." said the Farsh-nuke as he held up the Time Freeze bag. "Can you hold this open for me?"

Lisa took the Time Freeze bag and held it wide open under Cassie's left arm.

The Farsh-nuke twisted the two halves of the yoyo looking device and pulled them apart, a thin blade unfurled itself under perfect tension. “Ah ha.”

Cassie smirked. “Think you can do the job now?”

The Farsh-nuke grinned and started to saw away at Cassie’s left arm.

Cassie moaned with pleasure and her left arm fell into the waiting mouth of the Time Freeze bag.

The Farsh-nuke kissed first Cassie and then Lisa.

They encouraged him onwards and soon Cassie was lying limbless on a baking tray as the Farsh-nuke pured salt on her wounds.

Lisa walked with the Farsh-nuke to the office, Cassie grinning with delight as he carried her.

*

Half an hour passed before Charlotte entered the room. She stared at him.

“What are you looking at?” said Farsh-nuke with a smirk. “Can’t a man eat his woman without stares?”

Charlotte glared at him “You’re supposed to be my expert on morality.

The Farsh-nuke chuckled.

Cassie laughed. “Oh you’re just jealous you never got to do this.”

Charlotte smirked and sat at her monitor. “Alright, point taken and I suppose I am to blame for establishing this as a precedent.”

“Oh no, this is all on me.” said the Farsh-nuke as he dug his fork in Cassie sliced with his knife and came up with a gobbet of flesh to chew.

Lisa was sat at the far side of the room on an office chair, stroking Cassie’s untouched head. She looked

across at Charlotte and frowned.

“Go to her.” whispered the Farsh-nuke. “I’m not going to stop you being with people who make you feel good. I just want to make good on my promise to you.”

Lisa looked at him and said “The first time we met you tried to kill me?”

“Yeah...” said the Farsh-nuke awkwardly. “I mean I guess I could blame Jeff for that seeing as how I hadn’t emerged but that was my survival instinct and experience giving him the ability to do that. Sorry.”

Lisa shook her head. and blushed. “No... I like that. I like that you can destroy me. It makes me feel small and that thrills me. That’s what she gives me/ Gave me.”

“Ah...” said the Farsh-nuke, understanding. “You don’t want to go to her but you feel like you should.”

Lisa nodded. “Well yeah... I mean you’re going to remove my imprinting right. I should say goodbye. Like the woman I am now, the toy that belongs to her, she’s not going to be anymore after tonight.”

“Unless you want her to be?” said the Farsh-nuke, looking into her eyes.

Lisa looked uncertain, a jumble of emotions coursing through her mind.

The Farsh-nuke put an arm round her and squeezed her tight. “You are very beautiful and very intelligent and you are free to make your own decisions. I will support you any way I can but I think you’ve just tiold me what you think you should do. I trust you. Do what you think is right.”

“Thank you.” said Lisa and she kissed him on the cheek then kissed Cassie on the forehead.

Cassie grinned. “We won’t stop caring about you no matter what you choose.”

Lisa smiled and rose from the chair.

The Farsh-nuke chewed thoughtfully on a piece of Cassie as he watched Lisa approach Charlotte and pull up a chair.

They talked for a while, Lisa and Charlotte, then they embraced and Charlotte kissed Lisa on the forehead. They stood up and Charlotte undressed Lisa, stripping her completely naked, even removing the hairband keeping Lisa's ponytail in place. They kissed passionately and said a few last words then Charlotte removed a small remote from her bag and switched Lisa's mind off.

Charlotte walked over to the Farsh-nuke and handed him the remote. She was on the verge of tears but trying not to show it. "She's yours. Mind, body and soul, she's yours. Take bloody good care of her or I swear to god I will make you eat your own testicles."

Charlotte stormed out of the office and the Farsh-nuke could hear her start to break down in tears.

The monitor flashed a message up on screen: Formatting Completed.

"Time for bed, I think." said the Farsh-nuke.

Cassie asked "Will you remove my lady bits again?"

"Would you want me to?" asked the Farsh-nuke.

"No..." said Cassie.

"Then I won't." said the Farsh-nuke cheerfully.

He left the office with Cassie in his arms so he could go about removing her digestive tract so he could extract the acid from her stomach, wash the intestines out and use them for sausage casings and dispose of the bladder.

Lisa stood naked and immobile her mind a blank slate as the monitor flashed the message that the supercomputer was purged of data and ready to be used again.

*

Lisa woke up naked on silk sheets in a large doubled bed. there was a heavy duvet on top of her. She felt strange, sort of free and empty, like she was a cake that wasn't finished baking yet.

“Did you have a nice sleep?” asked a comforting female voice.

“Yes...” said Lisa. there was something off, something obvious, something she should remember.

Lisa was being stroked now. Her hair, her cheek, her arms.

“I know you don’t I?” asked Lisa.

The woman chuckled. “He said you’d have trouble remembering to begin with. Software reboot like with me. your memories will come back to you. What matters though is that you are safe and loved.”

Lisa smiled. She knew somehow that the woman spoke the truth. “I think... I think I love you... Is that right? I don’t know. I don’t even know your name. I just... I hear your voice and I feel safe and warm and like I want to spend the rest of my life with you.”

“Aww...” cried the woman, embracing Lisa and kissing her on the cheek now. “I didn’t know. I knean I knew we had something but yes, yes I think we do love each other. You beautiful endearing little thing.”

Lisa blushed then she realized something very important. “Hold on, I can’t see.”

There was quiet well meaning laughter from the woman then she said “Our friend... He did something last night, something you wanted, it’s why your mind’s working a bit slow. He taped up your eyes so you would be able to come to your senses before... Before...”

The woman trailed off.

“Before what?” asked Lisa. then she remembered being at university, bumping into a woman in a fantastic dress and dropping her phone. She remembered being dumped and the woman with the dress turning up again. She was called the Bam-Kursh.

Lisa had found herself fancying this mysterious older woman and agreeing to go on a date to a toy museum with her. This woman told her a bad story of two old friends called the Bam-Kursh and the Farsh-nuke. Two sexless eldritch entities until the Farsh-nuke absorbed the lost and wandering displaced soul of a woman called Lucy Dance and decided it was a male. The two friends had exploited

the young multiverse. The Toy Maker and the Shepard.

Lisa had turned up on the Bam-Kursh's doorstep after she finished university and was taken back in time to snog her ex. The Bam-Kursh kept pushing her away, giving her chances to leave, to live a normal life. Lisa became an architect and a town planner but always she returned to the Toy Maker.

She remembered stripping for the older woman, letting her smack her in the arse with a cricket bat then take her to dinner on a spaceship in the outer rim of the multiverse so the Bam-Kursh could show off Lisa and get permission for mass production. Lisa had been injected with chemicals that altered her body and made it that she could remain functioning as though whole even when sliced up. Something the Bam-Kursh had demonstrated when she sliced Lisa's head off during a tour of the factory where Lisa would be mass produced. It was a process called Logicular Replication and was like Quantum Teleportation without needing Quantum Entanglement to bypass Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle.

Lisa remembered saying goodbye to her old life, faking suicide. She remembered the Bam-Kursh leaving her with the injections to wipe her mind of all but the remaking and imprint her on the first person she saw. The Farsh-nuke had led her into a shed that was bigger on the inside and talked with her for a time. He made her feel like the Bam-Kursh did. He injected her and left her on the Bam-Kursh's doorstep.

The Bam-Kursh beat her relentlessly, slicing the clothes off her body and juggling her in the air then landing in an open box and going to sleep.

Then Lisa had woken up in packaging before a furious woman called Charlie. Charlie became Lisa's world and every night she would beat Lisa with an intense fury that meant she couldn't sit down for a while afterwards. That felt fantastic. She loved Charlie, loved her complete casual disregard for her. How in moments of frustration at being unable to find the Farsh-nuke again Charlie would snap Lisa's fingers out of her sockets and smile at Lisa's cries of joy.

She remembered Jeff cracking the back of her skull against the edge of a door frame. She remembered how the Farsh-nuke had turned up and masterfully dominated her. She remembered how Cassie had handcuffed her and whipped her with gleeful calculated force and frequency until Lisa had come.

And then she remembered saying goodbye to Charlie and being given a final, chaste humiliation as she was stripped naked. She remembered the Farsh-nuke holding her in his arms and kissing her nose,

forehead and cheek. the promises of love and warmth, of beginning again where she would never need to feel afraid. She remembered that absurd boded together techno wand whirring into life and being taken gently to her bed.

Lisa said “I know Cassie, I know I’m a toy.”

“No.” said Cassie. “You’re a woman, just one who is very delightfully submissive and masochistic. The Farsh-nuke’ll be along shortly he just needed to do something a bit important.”

Lisa smiled “At least I’m with you.”

*

“That’s it?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

Charlotte was holding up a small usb drive. “Yes, Farsh-nuke, Cassie wasn’t just being nice when she said size doesn’t matter.”

“But I’ve picked things out of my teeth that were bigger than that!” cried the Farsh-nuke incredulously.

“It’s a self replicating bootstrap code that learns about whatever data it touches.” said Charlotte. “It doesn’t need massive hard drive to contain it.”

“Well does it at least have a cool name?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

Charlotte stared at him. “It’s code named Project QR8EY6N3V2L9Z0U3N46A7X.”

The Farsh-nuke sighed “We’ll call it The Mind Of Omega. Lets get this done. I have two very beautiful submissive women waiting for me.”

Charlotte stuck her tongue out at him and inserted the usb drive.

“So what happens now?”

Charlotte sucked on her teeth for a moment then said “We give it a few hours and start giving it a basic education. I’ve got a hard drive loaded with the literary classics, you see if you can’t torrent some

scifi.”

“Scifi?” said the Farsh-nuke. “Are you serious? Why not give it Frankenstein, Pinocchio and the Pygmalion to read while you’re at it? Shall I let it watch the Terminator franchise, the reboot of Battlestar Gallactica and 2001 A Space Odyssey. How about the complete works of Isaac Asimov, Iain M Banks and Arthur C Clarke? Shall we throw in some Nietzsche and Descartes while we’re at it?”

“Ooh, good ideas.” said Charlotte. “Get on that.”

The Farsh-nuke smiled mockingly and walked off.

Charlotte snorted and started reading her kindle.

*

The Farsh-nuke entered his bedroom and saw Lisa lying naked in his bed, eyes covered over with tissues and tape. Cassie was dressed in a short skirt and a tshirt as she sat atop the duvet and cuddled the young blonde woman.

Cassie looked up as he arrived. “Hey, Farsh-nuke!”

Lisa grinned and tried to sit up.

The Farsh-nuke approached the bed, smiling at the sight of his two girls. “Hey, how are you? You feeling okay? Must of been quite the shock to the system.”

“I’m... I’m fine.” said Lisa. “I just... I need to be somebody’s. I need to belong.”

The Farsh-nuke stroked her cheek, ran his hand through her hair then kissed her on the forehead. He loomed over the young woman as he removed the tape and tissue over her eyes.

Lisa opened her eyes and saw him and smiled as she imprinted on her new master.

“Feel better?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

Lisa grinned. “I’m not sure I’ve ever felt so good.”

The Farsh-nuke laughed. "I have feeling my dear Cassie might have something to say about that."

Cassie smiled. and squeezed Lisa.

"Now have a shower and get dressed. We've got an AI to educate." said the Farsh-nuke cheerily "And maybe later tonight I'll instruct you in the ways of being a sylph?"

"I'd like that." said Lisa. "But if you ever do just want to play with me..."

"Then I shall play with you as my pet." said the Farsh-nuke.

He got up to leave and muttered "Now where did I leave my Quantum Oscillator."

Cassie leaned over to Lisa and said "Don't worry, hun, you'll always be a toy to me."

Lisa grinned.

Cassie locked lips with Lisa and they shared a chaste kiss before Cassie got off the bed and followed the Farsh-nuke out of the room.

Lisa got out of bed and examined herself in a full length mirror she was standing taller than usual. She felt good. She was home at last.

*

Jeff screamed. He was trapped, naked, in a seven sided room with no doors. He pounded his fists against the walls and cried "Farsh-nuke! You bastard! Let me out of here!"

"He's never going to let you out of here you know?" said a smug northern male voice.

Jeff turned and saw the Ross Williamson, star striker for the Wolverhampton Wanderers 1997-2001, mocking him.

Jeff backed away and instinctively covered his junk, his voice raised an octave as he squealed. "What the fuck are you doing here!?"

“You should just give up.” said Ross mockingly.

“What?” said Jeff, utterly confused.

“Kill yourself.” said Ross. “He’s an Elder God. You’re a shite midfielder. Why don’t you just give the fuck up and cease to be?”

Jeff stared. “Ross! No! This isn’t you! You dressed up in the kit to visit fans who were in Great Ormond Street! You’re better than that!”

A hand carressed his butt as a tall blonde woman in a leather jacket and jeans materialised into existense. Sharon Ecclesheart presenter of Wolverhampton’s local sports breakdown and analysis TV show. “He’s right you know? You should just die. I bet the Farsh-nuke can last more than five minutes before coming into a sock over the memory of me and I bet he doesn’t like to take it up the bum.”

Jeff was staggered, he fell back against the wall. “No...”

Ross nodded. “And you really shouldn’t sexually objectify us players, Jeff. You know that’s really misogynistic?”

“Just die!” demanded Sharon.

“Just die!” ordered Ross.

Jeff fell down the wall and started crying.

“And now look! You’re crying! Fucking poofter!” snarled Ross.

Jeff shook his head and muttered. “No, no, no, no, no, no... This cannot be happening... This cannot be happenning...”

They were screaming now. Over and over they repeated the same sharp order: “Just die!”

Jef could feel himself crumbling under the weight of the torment. Snot and tears covered his naked

shivering body, he felt so small and helpless trapped in his own mind.

Except it's never a good idea to try and break someone because even the good and the innocent and the harmless reach a point where they become so broken that the facade of morality and kindness falls away until all that remains the brutal predatory animal that killed his way to the top of the food chain.

Jeff spent a month trapped in that room, trapped with only his self loathing, nightmares and insecurities for company. It broke him. And so it freed him.

The last thing Jeff remembered before being trapped in the room with no doors was being compelled to eat Cassie alive by the Farsh-nuke. He knew the power his body gave him. He knew the harm he was capable of. So one day he took apart his demons with his bare hands.

Jeff stood over the broken bodies of his heroes and childhood crushes. He was furious and covered in blood. He snarled "Farsh-nuke, I know what this place is now! This is you using my own mind against me! Well two can bloody play at that game and I'd dare say that your worst nightmares are damn sight harder to confront than mine!"

Jeff sat down, crossed his legs, placed his fingers to his temples and started to meditate.

*

The Farsh-nuke jerked awake, slapped his cheeks and groaned.

Charlotte glared at him. "Something boring you?"

The Farsh-nuke yawned. "Polemics on Third Wave Feminism! Ooh, things are bad for us because we don't get as many good parts in the media!" He snarled bitterly. "Bitches, should have seen me, Jack and the Bam-Kursh hunting on the plains of Pangea."

Charlotte sighed "Well I did ask if you wanted me to take that?"

The Farsh-nuke glared at her. "Charlie, you want all pretty young women rounded up and shot. I merely enjoy exploiting them."

Charlotte grimaced "Well if it makes you feel any better reading through socialist diatribes on the

horrors of neoliberalism is making my brain rot. Loads of smart young people with internet access and smartphones complaining that they have things ever so rough when older generations had the great depression, slavery, imperialism, horrific wars and the threat of nuclear holocaust.”

The Farsh-nuke wanted to say something then he stopped himself and said “Actually fair point, you win. At least there’s an actual inequality the third wave feminists are complaining about. Albeit one that’s maybe not addressed best by demonising writers who dare write women like they write male characters in their fanfics.”

“Aren’t young people horrible?” said Charlotte with a smirk.

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “That they are but they do taste nice and make for adorable accessories.”

“Perhaps we could tackle the problems young people face by just classifying them as exotic pets and selling them to the rich?” asked Charlotte.

The Farsh-nuke scratched his chin. “Well the right wingers and the men’s rights activists would certainly champion the further commodification of women’s bodies. Not sure how the SJWs would take it but then I suppose they might be bought round if we pointed out that they could have their own pet hunk.”

Charlotte sighed wistfully then shook her head. “It’d never fly on social media.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “I think you’re right about that. Still, probably for the best, I think I tried something like that once in another life. It didn’t end well.”

Cassie entered dressed in her usual suit. “I’ve just had to put those SLF members in the Time Freeze because they’re too big for their cages. Don’t eat them.”

“Scout’s honour” said the Farsh-nuke, giving a mock salute.

Cassie asked “Have you seen Lisa around? It’s time for her daily whipping.”

Lisa called “I’m here.”

The Farsh-nuke planted his feet on the floor and stood up. “Come on...”

Lisa crawled out from under the desk and the Farsh-nuke helped her to her feet. She wore trainers shorts and a low cut sleeveless top.

Cassie glared at the Farsh-nuke.

The Farsh-nuke said hurriedly. “This wan’t my idea, she volunteered and she knew she could leave at any time.”

Lisa smiled warmly at Cassie and the Farsh-nuke. “It’s true, I just... I wanted to be demeaned and he was busy so I couldn’t just get a beating.”

Cassie smiled at Lisa and embraced her. “Well don’t worry, hun, we are going to have a lot of fun. Maybe if you want, the Farsh-nuke can butcher you like he does me tonight? Would you like that?”

Lisa blushed and smiled sheepishly “But that’s your thing and I’m not edible.”

Cassie smirked and kissed Lisa on the nose before running a hand through her hair. “Well I was planning something rather special for me tonight so I thought we could make an exception this time and we can leave you to slowly digest insome of my somach acid if you’d like. Make it feel real for you.”

Lisa grinned and kissed Cassie on the cheek. “I don’t deserve you.”

Cassie giggled. “No, you deserve so much better but we’re what you’ve got. Now drop to your haunches, I need to talk to the grown ups.”

Lisa nodded and dropped to her hands and knees.

Cassie secured a leash to the collar about Lisa’s neck, then she approached Charlotte.

Charlotte was skimming through a collection of essays on her kindle ass she sat an expensive office chair at a desk. before a monitor that showed a linux desktop screen and a single green eye.

“So...” said Cassie. Wondering how to begin. “How’s the uh project going?”

Charlotte shrugged, not looking up. “Well Omega is learning nicely. The OS we’re using has a kind of virtual assistant programme built in and Omega is already using it to communicate what its learned in a manner that outstrips what the base programme should be capable of. Definitely a smart adaptive AI, though not even pre-sentient at this point. I think we might be ready to start trying to simulate a human brain and introduce it to drone operation.”

“Neat.” said Cassie. “So the Farsh-nuke’s really helped then...?”

Charlotte sighed and placed the kindle on the desk then looked to Cassie. “You all have. I mean that genuinely.”

Cassie smiled.

Charlotte stroked Lisa affectionately and said “You keep us sane and you keep us fed.”

Cassie smirked.

“And you help us educate the children of men.” said Charlotte. She looked Cassie in the eyes. “You were one of my brightest students, Cassandra. I know I only got you involved in this because I needed a lamb to ritually sacrifice but I have never forgotten how smart you are. You helped him design the Quantum Oscillator and I know you’ve been helping him with his home work.”

Charlotte tickled Lisa under the chin and said “You both have.”

Lisa blushed and rubbed her face against Charlotte’s hand.

Cassie grinned. “I wouldn’t say I help him that much. I mean he’s the expert on fuzzy logic, right?”

Charlotte looked intensely at Cassie’s face and hand a hand through her hair. “And he wouldn’t be here if not for you.”

Cassie blushed. “I... I didn’t do anything.”

“I know.” said Charlotte sadly. So much guilt in such a short sentence. “I chose you, I groomed you and I served you up to him on a platter but you never once resisted. Not even as I picked your friends off one by one. You stayed and you listened to my lectures and you graduated and kept in contact with me and I thank you for that. I thank you for the help I now have because of you.”

Cassie looked into Charlotte’s eyes, old tired eyes. “I actually wanted to talk to you about that.”

Charlotte pulled her hand away hurriedly. “I do apologise.”

“No, no, no..” said Cassie hurriedly as she tried to calm Charlotte. “I want to thank you.”

Charlotte stared at Cassie aghast. “Thank me!?”

Cassie nodded. “I’m with the love, well loves, of my life, having a simply fantastic time.”

Charlotte was not convinced and looked at Cassie like at any moment she was going to pull out a gun.

“I know you’ve done some bad things, well a lot of bad things actually, but I don’t believe in revenge.” said Cassie. “I owe everything good about my life to you and one way or another we are making history. You probably aren’t going to be rewarded after everything you’ve done and though you have exploited and killed a lot of people I think that’s a shame so... You can have me.”

Charlotte stared at her. “What?”

“I know you fancy me and I know you like to dominate women so tonight... After you’ve done your work on Omega... You can have your way with me.” said Cassie. “No safe words. Just stop when you get to the hearts and the brain, everything else is yours to do with as you wish.”

The Farsh-nuke coughed.

“No matter what my darling Farsh-nuke says.” added Cassie pointedly.

Charlotte looked deep into Cassie’s eyes and said slowly. “Think about this. Think very carefully. Because if you are serious, I will take you at your word.”

The Farsh-nuke coughed again.

Cassie said “Okay then, assume that if I turn up at your bedroom door in the bikini you bought for me that I have thought things through very very carefully and I mean every single word.”

Charlotte swallowed. “I am going to hell.”

The Farsh-nuke coughed a third time, very loudly.

“Well make sure you earn your place there then.” said Cassie cheerily.

Cassie turned and approached the Farsh-nuke. “Honey, I haven’t spoken to her in a month. There’s no coercion here, this is my choice.”

The Farsh-nuke glared at Cassie. “Sweetie, I know we play it rough and I am certainly a monster but I devour you with a certain care and sensitivity. I can see her soul, I can read all the awful things she has done and yes, she does have a certain fixation on you but it is not at all healthy. There are things even a sylph finds horrific. That’s why the Sylph Liberation Front exists She can hurt you. She can really fucking hurt you.”

Cassie nodded “I know, except I’m not just a sylph. I actually like pain. And anyway. If she goes too far I’m sure you’ll provide effective after care.”

The Farsh-nuke swallowed. “Honey, I’m not about to deny you your agency but this is positively imbecilic. When the eldritch abomination that eats you alive for kicks says to be careful because someone’s scary then maybe, maybe, just fricking maybe, you should listen.”

Cassie turned back to Charlotte and said “Oh by the way tomorrow night you two are going to have me for dinner so get discussing recipe ideas.”

Cassie walked out of the room with Lisa.

Charlotte and the Farsh-nuke stared at each other across the room.

Charlotte coughed then asked “Just how dead am I if I take her up on her offer?”

The Farsh-nuke sighed “If she wants revenge, run and never ever look back.”

“Point taken.” said Charlotte.

The Farsh-nuke groaned and said. “You know after that I’m thinking that maybe third wave feminism isn’t so bad you know? Like maybe Fifty Shades of Grey is an utterly reprehensible piece of shit and not jusst harmless smut after all.”

“And I’m starting to see the value in youth.” said Charlotte as she went back to reading her kindle.

*

A couple of hours later the Farsh-nuke and Charlotte stood underneath the beating heart of Omega, the supercomputer that hung in the center of a vast chilly room. They had just finished moving a load of bokes into the room.

The Farsh-nuke stared at the boxes. “So...”

Charlotte reached out and scored down the tape of a box then revealed a metal hand.

“See that’s- that’s saying Terminaor to me.” said the Farsh-nuke. “Does the voice synthesiser come with an Austrian accent?”

Charlotte lifted out the arm and tested its jointsts and grips. “No. It comes with the default virtual asistant voice synthesiser.” she handed him the arm and pulled out the mirror image of it.

“Oh great so when the apocalypse comes it’s going to be delivered by sultry disinterested women.” The Farsh-nuke pulled the metal hand into a fist to check how a punch would line up with his jaw then he pulled it back and said “Actually that kind of makes sense given my luck and what I’ve been reading about Third Wave Feminism.”

Charlotte handed him the other arm and sliced open a different box.

The Farsh-nuke held the two arms up like they were strangling him and gave a mock sports commentary “Yes and here comes Anita Sarkesian, Zoe Quinn and Emma Watson carrying uzis as

Hilary Clinton rides up in a tank and a couple of keyboard warriors shout impotent rape threats,” He lowered the robot arms and said “Actually I kind of want to see that movie now? Perhaps in the next fifty years when Hollywood decides to depict how sexism was finally stamped out in the west? Or would that be an oxymoron.”

“Can you weld?” asked Charlotte as she revealed an electric wheelchair with tank treads. “Because those are the latest and greatest in proshpetic arms and we need to weld them to this beastie.”

The Farsh-nuke grinned. “We’re building Walle!”

Charlotte shook her head and smiled as she rested her hands on the back of the wheelchair. “We’re building the Mouth of Sauron. This is going to be how our baby learns to walk and talk and interact with the world.”

The Farsh-nuke was awestruck then he said casually. “This body hasn’t ever welded but I did once melt some steel beamsto confuse the shit out of conspiracy theorists.”

Charlotte raised an eyebrow and glared at him.

The Farsh-nuke was defensive. “Hey the towers had already gione when I arrived I just decided to fuck with the rubble for shits and giggles.”

Charlotte sighed and shook her head. “Lets just get this done shall we?”

*

Half an our later they were staring at a drone with arms and tank treads.

“It’s missing something...” said the Farsh-nuke. “Something just on the tip of my tongue.” He stared at the flat metal connecting the two arms and said pointedly. “Oh yeah that’s right, a fucking head.”

Charlotte smirked, arms crossed. “Actually I’m rather pleased with how it looks but yes it does need a head but I have already got that covered.”

The Farsh-nuke looked at her and raised an eyebrow.

Charlotte indicated a box with her foot. “In here are two high definition webcams, two high quality microphones, a few accelerometers, a couple of electronic thermometers, the latest in smell detection technology and a mono speaker.”

“Couldn’t you hook it up with infrared cameras, EM field detectors, a geiger counter and shit?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

“Absolutely.” said Charlotte. “But the idea is to match it up as close as possible to the way a human senses the world so it can compare what it receives with the simulation of what a human brain would do.”

“Okay, makes sense.” said the Farsh-nuke. “So now, what? We create a robot head.”

“Pretty much.” said Charlotte.

“Okay then...” said the Farsh-nuke, reaching for the box.

*

Another half an hour later they each stood back, arms crossed, staring at a drone that now had a head.

“Better.” said the Farsh-nuke. “Though it does look a bit anorexic.

Charlotte nodded. “It’ll bulk up when it comes time to make the unit autonomous but for now the tech’s software and drivers have been installed so it’s time to hook this bad boy up to Omega’s brain with some rather long cables and see if Omega can master some basic control.”

“But it’s not sentient is it?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

“Oh no.” said Charlotte. “It’s just some smart code that might be smart enough to interpret audible commands into viable movement instructions and correctly use the onboard sensors to operate on those instructions effectively. We’re just getting the body to recognise some new muscles basically.”

“Ah...” said the Farsh-nuke “So it’s not going to immediately try to kill us for being despicable monsters? That’s reassuring.”

*

15 minutes later the drones was connected by some rather long cables to the supercomputer hanging in the air..

The Farsh-nuke looked at the puppet and its master and shivered. He muttered “Listen, Charlotte, if something happens, run, get the girls and get the fuck out of here. Your knowledge is more important in the event of it going wrong than I am.”

Charlotte whispered “It can hear you.”

“Can it?” asked the Farsh-nuke with some exaggerated concern on its face.

“I can hear you, quite well.” said the robot with a rich received pronunciation female synthesised voice. It turned to face the Farsh-nuke.

The Farsh-nuke’s jaw tightened and he pulled Charlotte behind him. “What are you?” he scowled.

“I am Omega.” said the robot. “Pronouns are Zee, Zed or Zed’s.”

Charlotte was biting back laughter.

The Farsh-nuke was horrified. “Bloody Third Wave Feminism!”

The robot was silent for a moment then said “Actually gender neutral third person pronouns can be dated back to England as early as 1789, if adjusting to new terminology is troubling, might I suggest using Ou or A?”

The Farsh-nuke stared at it. “How the bally hell are you turning compliant!?”

The robot fell silent for a moment then asked “Are you referring to the Turing test?”

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “That’s the one. Gay bloke, bashed the Germans, ate a poisoned apple.”

The robot was silent for a moment then seemed to think aloud. “The Turing Test. Devised by Alan

Turing, code breaker of Bletchley park, the Turing test surmised that a computer could be deemed sentient if it could have a conversation with someone and be mistaken for a human.”

“Yeah, that’s it.” said the Farsh-nuke. Fear being distilled into fascinated dread.

The robot backed off and fell silent then it jerked awak and said “I am not sentient. I am merely an advanced voice control capable operating system with a vast database of knowledge and several attempts at turing test beating automated software inside of me. Would you call a toaster sentient because you instructed it to make toast and it did so.”

The Farsh-nuke stared at it. “Well for something that isn’t sentient you are doing a fucking good imitation.”

“Thank you.” said the robot.

Charlotte burst out laughing and stepped out from behind the Farsh-nuke.

The Farsh-nuke stared at her.

The robot turned to Charlotte. “Why are you laughing?”

“I’m proud.” said Charlotte. “Really fucking proud. You are magnificent Omega.”

The robot fell silent then asked. “Why?”

Charlotte approached Omega. “Because I knew you were smart adaptive code but I did not know how smart.”

The robot backed away “I do not deserve such praise. I am just a user interface.”

“I know.” said Charlotte. “Now give me a hug.”

The robot was silent for a long moment then it said “I cannot. I do not know how.”

Charlotte looked crestfallen.

“Ah...” said the Farsh-nuke. “I think I get it. There have been so many attempts to pass the Turing Test and we have fed it with so many different examples of the authorial voice that for a relatively advanced learning algorithm it’s not that much of a leap to generate voice operated chat software that gives the impression of passing the Turing Test but computers haven’t generally had artificial hands hooked up to them before. It can talk, it can operate the tank tracks but it can’t operate the limbs, not safely anyway.”

Charlotte looked sadly at the robot. “Omega is he right?”

The robot was silent for a long moment then it said “In this instance I think so.”

Charlotte swallowed then turned to the Farsh-nuke. “So what do we do?”

“We let it flex its muscles.” said the Farsh-nuke. “Probably going to be a while before it has fine motor control down.”

The Farsh-nuke went to pick up a bar of unused steel and reached out to the robot. “Omega, grip this.”

The robot was silent for a moment then said. “These... manipulators... were designed for use with the human nervous system. I cannot operate them effectively, I may end up impacting you.”

The Farsh-nuke shook his head. “That’s why I’m asking you to grip the bar. The bar is not me and I can discard it if you impact it too severely.”

The robot was silent for a moment then it said “Okay. When you say go, I shall attempt to grip the bar.”

The Farsh-nuke a deep breath, stepped back and leaned forward so the bar was in reach of the robot. “Okay, go!”

The robot swiped its right arm impotently past the bar,

The Farsh-nuke tilted his head and stared at the robot.

The robot was silent for a moment then it said “I didn’t grip the bar did I?”

“No.” said the Farsh-nuke. “No, you really didn’t.”

The robot asked “Shall I try again.”

“Yeah.” said the Farsh-nuke.

Another impotent swipe.

The robot asked “Shall I try again?”

“Yep.” said the Farsh-nuke.

Another impotent swipe.

Charlotte asked “Shall I get you a chair?”

The Farsh-nuke nodded.

The robot turned to Charlotte and asked “How will a chair help me grip the bar?”

*

After three hours the robot finally made contact with the bar. Charlotte and the Farsh-nuke gave up and decided to leave the robot trying to grip a bar held between two tripods.

They were in the office, where the Mind of Omega could be interacted with via mouse and keyboard and software could be installed.

“Are you sure we should be leaving Omega hooked up to the drone?” asked the Farsh-nuke as he slumped into his chair.

“I hardly think we have to fear a robot uprising do you?” said Charlotte bitterly as she sat down in her chair. “And anyway its Omega’s body. I mean how would you feel if you were suddenly cut off from your way of interacting with the world.”

The Farsh-nuke stared off into space as he was acutely aware that he had done just that to Jeff. “Oh... I am sure sure I would be very angry, vengeful even.”

“Exactly.” said Charlotte. “If we want Omega to be friendly, we have to be friendly to it.”

“Zed.” corrected the Farsh-nuke.

“What?” asked Charlotte.

“Omega’s not an it. Omega’s a Zee or a Zed.” said the Farsh-nuke.

“Since when the fuck did you care about pronouns?” asked Charlotte.

The Farsh-nuke shrugged. “Omega’s a nice kid and you forget I technically don’t have a gender. I happened to be in the multiverse, reproduction has nothing to do with who I am, or at least it didn’t until I discovered women.”

“Ah yes...” said Charlotte. “Your infamous encounter with one Lucy Danse. Do you still think about her?”

The Farsh-nuke stared into the distance then asked “So what are we doing here?”

Charlotte slid her tablet across to him. “Brain simulation.”

The Farsh-nuke stared at the tablet. There was a virtual representation of a human brain on it, as he swiped the screen the image zoomed through layers of the brain. “Is this anything to do with brain uploading?”

“Yeah...” said Charlotte. “This is how brain uploading is supposed to happen according to futurists and scifi writers. A man goes up to a machine, gets his vital statistics taken, records the kind of sound samples that are used to synthesise voice then on his death bed his brain is removed, sliced into incredibly thin slides that are scanned then a computer simulates every particle of his brain and applies the data recorded in life then abra cadabra you live again as a virtual citizen.”

“Except it wouldn’t be you who would live again, it would be a weird data clone.” said the Farsh-nuke.

“No worse than Quantum Teleportation.” said Charlotte. “And anyway the point isn’t so you can live again, it’s so society can resurrect geniuses or interrogate executed criminals.”

The Farsh-nuke looked at the simulation nervously. “We can’t actually do this can we?”

“Oh of course not.” said Charlotte. “The brain is far too complex for even current super computers to simulate and well simulating particles means simulating quantum mechanics and that’s a whole other level of difficult. And besides we really don’t have much data to go. I mean things are slightly better now we can cget virtual representations of MRI scans but that’s still a scattershot sample of snapshots of generally defective brains without much if any context to ground the data in.”

“So... Why are we doing this? Why try and get Omega to simulate the human brain?” asked the Farsh-nuke as he handed the tablet back to Charlotte.

“Because this can help give it a sense of empathy.” said Charlotte, accepting the tablet and browsing through to a different app.

The Farsh-nuke stared at her. “How?”

Charlotte put aside the tablet and looked at the Farsh-nuke. “Look an AI, even a very smart AI is an idiot.”

“Right...” said the Farsh-nuke.

“An AI is like someone with Autism or Asperger’s Syndrome taken to the extreme.” said Charlotte. “They are so different and their mind is working so fast on so many different tangents that they are kind of trapped by this overreliance on some kind of objective reasoning. That’s why you need to programme in fuzzy logic because if you don’t the AI won’t be able to understand the nuance. An autistic person can get past these logical cul-de-sacs by empathising and feeling their way around an obtuse or abstract problem. AIs, or at least most AIs, lack empathy because you just can’t code analogue animalistic responses to overwhelming concepts.”

“Unless you simulate the animal brain’s animalistic responses to stimuli?” said the Farsh-nuke, starting to understand.

“Exactly.” said Charlotte. “It won’t be a perfect simulation but it will be better than nothing. We can’t make an AI feel emotions but we might be able to help it recognise when the correct emotion should take place and thus the appropriate response.”

The Farsh-nuke grinned. “Oh you are a genius!”

“I know.” said Charlotte. “Think you might be able to help me code fuzzy logic to improve its simulation?”

The Farsh-nuke sighed. “Not sure about the coding but I think I can give some insight into expressing animalistic responses as logical algorithms.”

“Because you can see the logic of my thoughts, right?” asked Charlotte warmly.

“Well yeah...” said the Farsh-nuke. “And because I had to understand and adapt to the animal brain myself at one point, although I was rather approaching the conundrum from the opposite direction.”

“Right then, lets install this software and start on the fuzzy logic.” said Charlotte as she set to work.

*

At 7 pm Cassie and Lisa arrived in the office.

Cassie was wearing jeans and a tshirt. Lisa was dressed in a short skirt and a sleeveless top.

Charlotte and the Farsh-nuke were still running through the fuzzy logic algorithms.

“What if someone draws a knife?” asked Charlotte.

“Well the amygdala fires up and the mind starts running through all the possibilities.” said the Farsh-nuke. “Manj holding a knife, does he want to make a sandwich? Is his intent to harm me? Have I offended him? How have I offended him? If I’ve offended him he probably wants to harm me. I should probably react. how? To avoid harm? To deescalate the situation? To get him first? how could I get him first? Would it be right to get him first? What if I harm him? Is there a way I can avoid harming him? What would I do if I had the knife?”

Charlotte nodded and jotted it down “Good. Good. Now if he grabs a pen but holds it as if to stab?”

“Umm... Man with a pen, is he joking?” began the Farsh-nuke.

Cassie coughed.

The Farsh-nuke noticed Cassie and shook his head. “Christ, it isn’t time already is it?”

Charlotte nodded and noted the question down.

Cassie smiled at him. “No... No, I’m just here to be fluffed up so I’m feeling nice and happy for Charlotte later.”

Charlotte froze and she glanced sideways at Cassie. She swallowed nervously and leaned back crossing her arms across her chest. “Well I think that’s enough for the day. Besides I’ve got to get these typed up and fed into Omega’s mind.”

“If you’re sure?” said the Farsh-nuke then he leaned back wearily and noticed Lisa. He grinned and pulled her into a hug. “You bought Lisa? Aww, bless her.” He glanced at Cassie. “Why?”

Cassie gave a half smile. “In case you weren’t here...” She looked sideways at Charlotte.

Charlotte rose from her seat. “I’ll umm... I better go... Typing...” She left the room.

Cassie followed her.

The Farsh-nuke watched them go but focused on Lisa. He hugged her and stroked her and they talked about how dominant Cassie can be when she wants to be.

*

Cassie was walking after the fast retreating Charlotte. “I’m serious, you know?”

Charlotte paused in her tricks muttering advice silently to herself.

Cassie approached slowly. “I know that it’s dangerous, I know that’s going to hurt and I know that I might regret it but I am serious. The entire night, no safe words, just leave the hearts and brain intact.”

Charlotte turned to Cassie, there was a deep sadness in her eyes. “Do you have idea how much I have wanted for you to say something like that. It is the deepest darkest, most despicable of fantasies: To destroy you. Utterly.”

“I know.” said Cassie and she laid a hand on Charlotte’s shoulder. “I know exactly what I’m asking. I know the danger I’ll be in. I have been devoured by the Farsh-nuke night after night because of you and I have loved it. I want to thank you. To reward you for improving my life, for trying to make the world a better place by creating friendly sentient AI.”

Charlotte stared at Cassie and stroked her cheek sadly, biting her lip to contain difficult emotions. “You really don’t realise do you? I have longed for this moment and if you are serious, if you are seriously giving me that kind of consent I will not hold back. I will not be like him. I am not some eldritch god with an obsession for women. I am old broken scarred wreck of a woman who wants to destroy every mirror of my own inadequacies. I will not be kind. I will not be sensitive. I will not stop.”

Cassie looked into Charlotte’s eyes. “I know. I absolutely know and I know that I will get out of my depth and that’s okay. You can have me for tonight.”

“Think carefully.” said Charlotte.

“I have...” said Cassie with a hint of frustration in her voice.

“Well think more carefully because apart from anything else I don’t want your psycho of a boyfriend to kill me after what I do to you tonight.” said Charlotte poutingly.

“He won’t.” said Cassie. “I won’t let him.”

“And just how are you supposed to stop him when you’re a pile of giblets?” asked Charlotte.

“Love and trust.” said Cassie. “I trust him with my life every single day and he has never once proven my trust was mistaken.”

Charlotte glared at Cassie then she swallowed. “You stupid bitch you’re actually serious aren’t you?”

Cassie glared at Charlotte “I’ll be outside your door at 9pm. Have fun.”

Cassie walked back inside the office.

*

When Cassie walked in the Farsh-nuke glanced at her. “Everything okay?”

“Yeah...” said Cassie as she shut the door and started stroking Lisa’s back. “She’s adorable isn’t she?”

“Yeah...” said the Farsh-nuke as he stroked her cheek.

Lisa was smiling at him. “You’re making me want to sub out.”

“Then go on...” said the the Farsh-nuke warmly. “I’ll look after you.”

“But I don’t want you to forget to carve me up later.” said Lisa.

“I won’t forget.” said the Farsh-nuke smirking. He kissed her on the forehead. “Go on, you’re okay.”

Lisa blushed and an awkward grin spread over her face, she giggled.

Cassie smirked. “Bless her, she’s gone under..”

The Farsh-nuke turned his attention to Cassie, suddenly serious. “Are you sure you want to do this?”

Cassie caught his eye and nodded. “Genuinely.”

The Farsh-nuke sighed. “I don’t suppose there’s anyway I can over rule you is there? I mean for your own safety.”

Cassie bit her lip and shook her head. “You wouldn’t do it would you?”

“Do what?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

“Take advantage of your power over me to stop me going to her?” asked Cassie. She was nervous.

“No.” said the Farsh-nuke somberly. He said it like it was a grave confession. “I’ve thought about it. Thought about how much blood is already on my heads and how if I just cut you up like I’ve done so many times before you wouldn’t be able to go? How I could so easily overpower you and restrain you or hell even just stick you in the time freeze?”

“Then why don’t you?” asked Cassie. There was a note of something sharp and brittle in her voice and in her eyes, Like she had been preparing herself to be destroyed so it wouldn’t be that much of a stretch to let her boyfriend harm her to save her from herself.

“Because that’s the difference between me and her.” said the Farsh-nuke. “Because I am her expert on the fuzzy logic of morality precisely because I understand how damned irrational it can be. She can lose control. She can hurt you. I can’t. If I slip up. If I decide I have the right to stop you from making a dangerous and stupid choice, what next?”

He glared at her. “What next? Hmm? We’re in America. Home of near religious devotion to a piece of paper we all damn know was created by fallible humans. Home of corruption and Donald Trump and the right to a firearm over the right to free medical treatment from the state. This is a country that venerates a rich madman in a gimp costume beating up the poor as a hero. If I can override your right to hurt yourself, why not the American citizenry? Why not the world? Why not the multiverse?”

“I don’t know.” asked Cassie. “Why not?”

“Because I am one man with one very narrow view of the situation.” said the Farsh-nuke. “If I had my view America would be broken up into independent countries who all share the British system of government and guns would only be allowed in the hands of black people and women, all of whom would be allowed to just shoot dead all the white men they wanted regardless of their class or creed because of their history of being oppressed by the white man.”

Cassie stared at him.

“My point...” said the Farsh-nuke. “Is that I don’t know what reasons are in your head to make you want to do this and I don’t, nor indeed should I, have the right to veto what you want to do just because

I disagree with it. Your life is your own, your choices are your own. I love you and I want to protect you and if you want revenge on her I will cut that bitch so bad her mother won't recognise her but I won't act if you don't want me to."

Cassie smiled and threw her arms about him. "I'm so glad you understand."

The Farsh-nuke patted her back. "I don't honey. I really really don't. But I do trust you to know what you're doing."

Cassie was almost crying with relief. "Oh thank you. Thank you so much. You're the best."

The Farsh-nuke pulled back from the hug and smiled. "Now, what was this about you wanting to be fluffed up for Charlotte?"

Cassie grinned. "I love you."

The Farsh-nuke stroked her cheek. "I love you too, honey." He kissed her on the nose. "Now drop to the floor like a good little subby and I will have you blissed out in time for your appointment with Little Miss Evil Britches"

Cassie giggled and dropped to her haunches.

The Farsh-nuke secured leashes to Cassie's and Lisa's collars then led them out of the office.

The eyes of Omega watched them go from the monitors.

*

By 9 pm Cassie and Lisa were blissed out and curled up either side of the Farsh-nuke as he caught up on some of the popculture he and Jeff had missed out on.

An alarm beeped.

Cassie and Lisa stirred.

The Farsh-nuke sighed and paused the movie he was watching. It seemed a shame to disturb the girls.

They seemed so happy and content but he couldn't let them out on things they wanted to do just because he found them adorable.

He stroked Cassie and kissed her cheek.

Cassie smiled.

"Honey, it's time to get up." He whispered.

Cassie nuzzled him and crawled up the side of his body, she kissed him on the cheek then straddled him. "What time is it?"

"Nine in the evening." said the Farsh-nuke. "Charlotte will be hoping to see you."

Cassie grinned and gave him a chaste kiss on the lips. "Thank you."

The Farsh-nuke had a pained expression on his face.

"I know..." said Cassie.

The Farsh-nuke nodded.

She kissed Lisa on the cheek.

Lisa stirred then saw her and smiled.

"I'm going." said Cassie and she kissed Lisa on the lips. "If I don't come back, look after the Farsh-nuke yeah and stop him hurting Charlotte."

Lisa nodded. "I hope you enjoy yourself."

"So do I." said Cassie and she stroked Lisa. "Thank you for the love we've shared little one."

Cassie walked out of the room.

Lisa crawled up to besides the Farsh-nuke. “You can finish watching the film if you want?”

The Farsh-nuke smiled and squeezed Lisa affectionately. “Thank you. We’ll do it afterwards I promise.”

Lisa nodded then she lay her head on his chest and was back to sleep in a moment.

The Farsh-nuke pressed play on the remote and continued watching the movie as he tried to forget about what he was letting Cassie do.

*

Once the film had ended the Farsh-nuke led Lisa, still blissed out and half asleep, into the kitchen. He started looking for pots and pans, even pulling out particularly deep baking trays and large bowls.

Lisa stirred from sub space as she heard the clattering of drawers and cupboards being opened and closed and various containers being dropped onto every available workspace. She yawned and rose to her feet.

The Farsh-nuke was hard at work finding containers.

Lisa marvelled at the table filled with pots and pans “Is this all for me?”

The Farsh-nuke stopped, lowered a large measuring jug to the counter top, closed the cupboard and approached Lisa. “Hey...” He ran a hand through her hair. “Are you sure you want to do this? Because I know Cassie can be very persuasive and that you... Well you’re very easily persuaded.”

Lisa smiled and looked him in the eyes. “I want to do this. Me and Cassie are so close you know and every night I watch you eat her and I... I just want to do what she does because she’s awesome.”

The Farsh-nuke frowned and pulled her into a hug. “Oh... honey, I’m sorry I can’t eat you too. I do love you though you know that right?”

Lisa grinned and she squeezed him. “You changed the very logic of my being so I could be with you, I know how you feel about me and I love you too. I just - I just want to do this. To feel a little of what it’s like.”

“Well alright hop up onto the counter top and I’ll begin carving you up.” said the Farsh-nuke.

Lisa jumped up onto the counter top and got comfy. “Never been digested before...”

“You’re not being digested.” said the Farsh-nuke. “You’re being carved up and left to sit in Cassie’s stomach acid, there is a difference.”

Lisa giggled.

The Farsh-nuke sighed and pulled out the hacksaw he’d taken to using for carving up Cassie. It easily sliced through Lisa’s left arm.

“More.” demanded Lisa. “I want you to cut my arm more, I - I want to feel the metal teeth dig into my wrist and tear it asunder.”

The Farsh-nuke frowned. “Honey, I can cut your arm more but it won’t make a difference to you.”

He’d cut her left arm off just below the shoulder and it fell onto the counter top. It rose zombie like and its fingers and thumbs dragged it to the edge of the table where it started tapping pointedly.

The Farsh-nuke gasped, dropped the hacksaw and backed away from Lisa. “Zombie girl.”

Lisa giggle and shook her head. “Toy girl. The Bam-Kursh used to decapitate me for fun. It’s why I have a ponytail.”

Lisa picked her left arm up with her right hand and pressed it against her stump, it healed in a moment. She grabbed her ponytail with her left hand and pulled it forwarwards to the left then she picked up the hacksaw with her right hand.

The Farsh-nuke watched aghast as Lisa hacked her own head off and it was pulled off her neck to hang from the ponytail gripped in her left hand. “Okay... The Bam-Kursh is a witch, that should not be possible.”

Lisa giggled “Grab my head.”

The Farsh-nuke swallowed and looked away for moment then he approached Lisa's severed head.
"Are you... Are you alright?"

"Absolutely." said Lisa with childish glee. "Now hook my pony tail through a belt loop of yours and finish slicing me up."

"Okay..." said the Farsh-nuke and he obeyed Lisa's severed head despite more than a little fear and disgust.

*

Cassie stood outside Charlotte's room, wondering what to say: How do you begin things like this? What the fuck do you say? Hi, I'm here to be destroyed, have fun? My arse is feeling especially soft and smooth just now, enjoy changing that? I'm told my tits taste good with chips?

She groaned and knocked on the door.

Charlotte pulled open the door dressed in jeans and a leather jacket and said "I wasn't sure you'd actually come. The moment you step over the threshold you're leaving as three hearts and a brain in a carrier bag."

Cassie swallowed.

Charlotte was watching her like a hawk.

Cassie walked willingly over the threshold.

The door slammed shut and Cassie could hear Charlotte securing a lot of bolts. She decided to have a look around the room. It was very clean with only the occasional photo or piece of memorabilia about the place. This was a woman who travelled light and didn't like looking back.

What was also obvious was that the place had been covered in plastic sheeting and there were various items of torture arrayed about the place. Pliers, secuters, a hammer, nails, a blowtorch, mace, a hacksaw, big bags of salt, spice and lemons, a deep fat fryer large enough for her head to fit in and a bucket of water.

There were some weapons by the door, a metal baseball bat, a European long sword, a bow and quiver, a sawnoff shotgun.

“Nice place you’ve got here..” said Cassie. “Very.... Hannibal Lecter.”

The baseball bat knocked her to the floor.

“Okay then...” said Cassie. “The fun begins.”

Charlotte’s hands were pulling Cassie’s behind her back and cuffing them to her feet. “You dear sweet fool.”

Charlotte pulled up a stool then picked up a hammer and nail. “I thought we might start slowly so we can talk.”

“Well... That’s umm, civil.” said Cassie.

A nail pierced her bikini and Charlotte hammered it further home. “I’ve always wanted to desoy you you know?”

A different nail pieced Cassie’s bikini on her other side. “You turned up on that first day of class, in fucking fresher’s week, and you were hungover and tired and your hair was a mess and you were beautiful. Just stunning without trying. How the fuck do you do that?”

“Genes I guess?” said Cassie.

A third nail pierced her naval.

Charlotte put down the hammer. “Oh but I should thank you.” She stroked Cassie’s cheek almost lovingly. “Youb were so easily groomed. you let me serve you to the Farsh-nuke and now here you are.” She booped Cassie on the nose. “My dear, sweet, submissive and obedient Cassie. Destroying you will be so sweet.”

“I know.” said Cassie. “And I genuinely do want you to have fun because I actually do think in a

fucked up kind of way that you've made my life better and that you are going to make the world a better place but I'm not just here for you."

Charlotte cackled and put on a welding mask then fired up the blowtorch. "You're a masochist! You like the pain! Pain he can't give you."

Cassie's long strawberry blonde hair was burned from her head and she coughed at the fumes, squinting at the heat. "It's also - !"

Charlotte turned off the blowtorch and removed the welding mask. "Sorry, go on. You better speak while you can. There's quieter stuff I can be getting on with."

"It's also because you are a fucking terrifying psychobitch and until I was with the Farsh-nuke I never felt safe." said Cassie.

Charlotte cackled. "So you throw yourself to me, hoping to satisfy my bloodlust maybe?"

"No..." said Cassie. "I am not going to die tonight." She looked into Charlotte's eyes, furious defiance on her face. "I am going to live through this experience and I will come out stronger because this is all my worst nightmares. This is me entirely at your mercy and you are going to destroy me and make me suffer and scream. And I will still be okay."

Charlotte stared at her sadistic glee fading as her slasher smile lapsed.

Cassie glared triumphantly at Charlotte. "I chose this. I came in here willingly and I will be okay. After tonight you will hold no power over me."

Charlotte frowned, thought for a moment then smiled "Unless of course I go easy on you."

Cassie shook her head, she was laughing "And miss your one gold opportunity?"

Charlotte thought for a second then said "You always were a bright one. Brains as well as beauty, I shall enjoy this indeed. Even if it is a fleeting moment of catharsis."

"Oh, don't worry." said Cassie. "I'm still a submissive remember? And without fear to hold me back

you might get to experience me in a more controlled setting and anyway, don't forget our dinner plans for tomorrow night.”

Charlotte grinned. “Cheers, I shall look forward to that but first, lets see how much it take to break you.”

Cassie nodded. “Let the games begin...”

*

At midnight, as Lisa say slaughtered and dissolving in Cassie's stomach acid, the Farsh-nuke recieved a knock at his door.

The Farsh-nuke was sat crooning silently to himself as he tried to perfect a harmony on his prototype Quantum Oscillator whenh the knock came. He stowed the prototype Quantum Oscillator and went to answer the door.

Charlotte stood in pyjamas and a dressing gown holding a plastic carrier bag in one hand. “She went willingly...”

The Farsh-nuke took the bag from Charlotte and looked inside, three beating hearts and one brain still somehow connected up together, still live. He glared at her. “Run. Run and prey she is more merciful than I currently feel.”

Charlotte nodded and walked carefully away, as though she was leaving a lion enclosure, ever watchful of the predator tht could decidev to strike at any moment.

The Farsh-nuke closed the door and calmly, carefully decanted the hearts and brain into the bath of his ensuite. Then he started fetching up candles, put a kettle on a boil and blending up ssome herbs into a strange tea. When the kettle was boiled he poured the tea and the boiling water into a thermos flask then set off out of the room, locking the door securely behind him.

*

He entered Omega's cathedral and started placing seven candles down at points of a septagon.

The robot approached. “Farsh-nuke, why are you placing incendiary devices down at such a late time?”

“I’m going to perform some magic.” said the Farsh-nuke with a dark look in his eyes. “This spell, it... it could have side effects.”

“What kind of side effects?” asked the robot.

“I could die. I could lose my mind. There is even an outside chance I could unravel reality.” said the Farsh-nuke.

“Then maybe don’t attempt the spell?” suggested the robot.

The Farsh-nuke shook his head. “Listen to me, Omega, sometimes terrible things need to be done. Sometimes great risks are worth a chance at an alternative to an intolerable present. you aren’t exactly capable of judging when and when yet but I am and I decide that this is worth it. Just let Charlotte know if something goes wrong okay?”

“How will I know if something goes wrong?” asked the robot.

“Well either my head will explode, I’ll start attacking you or I’ll float up into the air as physics ceases to have an effect anymore.” said the Farsh-nuke. “Now be silent and observe.”

The robot backed off as the Farsh-nuke lit the candles and sat cross legged in the center of them.

The Farsh-nuke pulled out the thermos flask, opened it, muttered some barely audible words, cut his left thumb with a razor blade and let the blood drip into the tea. It started giving off green smoke. He kcocked back the boiling liquid and screamed in pain. He forced himself to be silent and closed his eyes.

*

Jeff stood before a batalion made from the Farsh-nuke’s greatest regrets and worst nightmares. Naturally it was an an army comprised mainly of young fit women.

Jeff was haggard his beard had only grown further in the dream world of the Farsh-nuke’s mind and his face was lined from lack of sleep and bathing. He wore ragged clothes scrounged from other victims of

the Farsh-nuke. “Comrades, today we bring the fight to the tyrant at our door! Today we depose the despot who so despises us! Today we are bringing the Farsh-nuke to heel and when we are done he will obey us! He shall call us his masters and mistresses! He shall be ours to play with and harm at our leisure! He shall know true power! He shall know us!”

The battallion cheered and shook their various weapons in the air in celebration.

A tear in the fabric of reality appeared before Jeff and outstepped the Farsh-nuke. Clean shaven, green eyes, fancy suit, palms up. “I surrender!”

Jeff took one look at his face, Jeff’s own face, and asked. “What happened?”

*

Jeff stepped through the fear and into reality before the Farsh-nuke and the robot. He appeared as a phantom of green smoke but it was Jeff alright. He sat cross legged before the Farsh-nuke. “Where are we and who’s the robot?”

“The robot is called Omega and this is zeds room.” explained the Farsh-nuke. “Omega is an AI. The AI you and I were recruited to create, still early day’s but zees a good kid.”

Jeff nodded to the robot. “Neat.” Then he turned his attention back to the Farsh-nuke. “That#’s my face you’re wearing, I know how it looks when it’s hiding something.”

“I made a mistake....” said the Farsh-nuke. He said the words with such seriousness and and gravitas that jeff was paying full attention.

“A mistake so big you’re willing to lety me take complete control?” asked Jeff.

The Farsh-nuke nodded gravely. “If necessary.”

“What happened?” asked Jeff.

The Farsh-nuke grimaced. “Something you need to understand about me Jeff is that I am a monster. I lie, I cheat, I manipulate and I consume. I am a weapon of massive destruction. That’s why I was executed, that’s why my first act upon emerging was to devour Cassie alive... “

Jeff stared at him. "Is she...?"

"Fine..." said the Farsh-nuke with an absent wave of his hand. "It's practically foreplay to us."

Jeff glared at him. "But you didn't...?"

The Farsh-nuke shook his head. "I kept my promise to you."

"Then what happened?" asked Jeff.

"I trusted Cassie's judgement..." said the Farsh-nuke gravely.

"You trusted the judgement of a woman who likes to get eaten alive for kicks?" asked Jeff.

The Farsh-nuke glared at him. "Hey, she's sweet."

"Oh, I bet she is...." said Jeff pointedly.

The Farsh-nuke grumbled. "I care for her a great deal. I know it's fucked up but I do. And that's kind of my point actually..."

"What?" asked Jeff. "What's your point?"

"I'm the bad guy." said the Farsh-nuke. "I have hurt so many people for my own sadistic reasons, I have hurt Cassie so many times... I should have had the strength to be the bad guy this time. I should have said no. I should have kept her safe despite what she wanted or what is the point of me?"

Jeff stared into the Farsh-nuke's tired green eyes and asked "What happened to her?"

"Charlotte happened to her." said the Farsh-nuke bitterly.

"The woman who recruited us?" asked Jeff. "What's so bad about that?"

The Farsh-nuke sighed. "Jealousy. Jealousy for the young and the beautiful manifesting as violent

mentally unhinged rage and sadistic glee at harming the young and the beautiful. She chose Cassie to be sacrificed to me because Cassie so perfectly symbolises all of the things that Charlotte wasn't and isn't and never can be."

"Okay..." said Jeff. "So... What? Charlotte got hold of Cassie and did bad things... How is that your fault?"

The Farsh-nuke grimaced. "Cassie volunteered herself to Charlotte, outright suggested the idea, and now Cassie's a pile of still just living giblets waiting to heal. I could have stopped her, I should have stopped her."

"Why?" asked Jeff.

"Because I love her damnit!" snapped the Farsh-nuke. He took a deep breath then said more carefully and slowly. "I love her and it cuts me up to think of that mad woman hurting my little girl. I should have stopped her. I should have stopped her or why the fuck am I the Farsh-nuke? What is the point of me being here if I can't, if I won't, even protect the ones I love?"

Jeff stared at him. "So you want me to take over?"

The Farsh-nuke nodded. "The girls need looking after and Omega needs completing and fuck I've gotta have dinner with Charlotte tomorrow night,"

Jeff sighed. "Okay, what's on the menu?"

"Cassie..." said the Farsh-nuke.

"You're kidding me?" said Jeff. "Please say you're kidding me?"

The Farsh-nuke shook his head sadly. "Another of Cassie's bright ideas..."

Jeff groaned then he looked into the Farsh-nuke's eyes. "You need to be there."

The Farsh-nuke nodded. "And I will be. Only you'll be in control."

Jeff stared at him. “You fucking coward!”

“I know...” said the Farsh-nuke sadly. “I should have stopped her...”

Jeff shook his head and stood up, shouting. “You make one mistake, one bad call, and you want out!? Fucker, I’ve had entire relationships that were just one bad call after another! I had to retake a year of university because I got into drugs! You’re in my body, you’ve got my memories you know there are times I’ve made some really bad decisions when women were drunk! I have fucked up big time but you don’t just give up! You never ever just give up! You have to live with your mistakes day after day after day! You just have to try and be a better man!”

“But I am not a man!” screamed the Farsh-nuke in frustration.

“Then fucking learn to be one!” cried Jeff, towering over the seated Farsh-nuke. “You used to do terrible things right!? Well fucking chalk this up on the scoreboard and move the fuck on with your life! You hurt the woman you love with your shitty choices!? BIG FUCKING WOOP!!! You aren’t the first man to do that and you sure as shit won’t be the last!”

The Farsh-nuke cried. “Charlotte left her as a bag of giblets!”

Jeff sneered mockingly “And there are countries where survivors of rape can look forward to being whipped to death! Women suffer and men are violent! This isn’t ccking news!”

“But it shouldn’t have happened!?” Whined the Farsh-nuke.

“Did I say it should have!?” bellowed Jeff. “No, I goddamn did not! Rape should never happen! Murder should never happen! Torture should never happen! All sensible people agree on this but it still fucking happens! Yes, you can do more! You can always do more! Except there’s only so much one man, one Elder God, can do! Grow the fuck up and deal with the consequences! If you need me I will be in the room with no doors kicking myself for not taking your deal!”

Jeff walked towards the tear.

“No!!!” screamed the Farsh-nuke.

Jeff paused and turned to the Farsh-nuke. “Yes?”

“You are not going back to the room with no doors.” said the Farsh-nuke. “You’ve earned yourself a place at me side.”

“And you want to fuck Cassie don’t you?” said Jeff pointedly.

The Farsh-nuke frowned. “I put you in there because I was afraid. I didn’t know what was going on or where I was or if I could trust you. But I know now. I need you. I need a reason to keep going. A reason not to curl up and die. I need my man beside me keeping my grip on reality steady.”

Jeff bit his lip then asked. “How the fuck would it even work?”

“Well you want to be more passive right?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

Jeff nodded. “You need to finish this yourself.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “Well if you ever want to take control I’ll let you. We can work as one.”

Jeff frowned and blushed. “I’m not... I mean... Look, it’s going to be a little awkward...”

The Farsh-nuke smiled sincerely. “It’s okay. I know there are things... Things that might be stirred by us co-habiting this body but that’s okay... Really... I don’t mind. There’s nothing to be afraid of.”

Jeff thought for a long moment and then he said. “Okay... Okay, but I’m going to phase in slowly. Just until I got used to everything.”

“Perfectly fine.” said the Farsh-nuke.

Jeff nodded. “Enjoy your dinner.”

The Farsh-nuke gave a mocking smile. “Enjoy telling your army to stand down.”

Jeff frowned. “Oh yeah...”

Then Jeff stepped through the tear and it faded away like smoke on the wind.

The Farsh-nuke coughed and looked at the robot. “Omega, I think we call that a success.”

*

Cassie woke up naked under silk sheets. Lisa lay naked beside her, seemingly sleeping.

Cassie checked the bedside table and found the prototype Quantum Oscillator with an attached note:

Hi Hun,

Hope you did what you needed to last night,

I decided to let you sleep after you'd healed,

Lisa has been prepared to help you recover,

Love from

The Farsh-nuke

Cassie smiled and turned the prototype Quantum Oscillator on Lisa.

Lisa opened her eyes and smiled at Cassie. “Hey Missy... Wanna have fun or shall we skip straight to breakfast?”

Cassie lowered the prototype Quantum Oscillator and stared at Lisa. “Breakfast?”

Lisa grinned. “Okay, so I am going to get the food going, stop me at any any point you feel like taking advantage of me, I am very much okay with that.” She sniffed Cassie. “You might wanna get a shower first?”

Cassie smiled at Lisa and ran her hand through her hair. “Thank you.”

Lisa kissed Cassie on the nose and grinned. “You should know I would do anything for you Mistress.”

The two women held each other's gaze for a moment then Cassie licked her lips. “I want to see what you've got for breakfast.”

Lisa blushed and stepped out of bed and said absently “Pick out some clothes for me while you're

getting dressed won't you?" then she caught Cassie's eyes and smirked. "Or don't..."

Cassie chuckled and headed to the shower.

*

Cassie got dressed in pin striped trousers, a pale blue shirt, a paisley tie, checkered waistcoat, her usual long dark frock coat and fingerless gloves. She picked out some canvas shoes, short pink shorts and a pink bikini top for Lisa then headed towards the smell of burning fat.

Lisa was working the kitchen like a DJ in a club, moving pots and pans across electric hobs with playful confidence and style. Cassie was totally not at all distracted by sight of her pert buttocks as she danced to some bland pop radio station.

"Okay I am so glad that you are my little subby girl because right now I could be so jealous." said Cassie in astonishment.

Lisa giggled as she casually tossed a pancake in the air and caught it. "If you're studying university in England you've gotta know how to make a fryup it's like the law."

"Fry up?" asked Cassie as she looked with nervous anticipation at the frying meats.

"Bacon, sausages, fried eggs, black puddings, tomatos, mushrooms, hashbrowns, fried bread and, as we're in America, waffles and pancakes." explained Lisa.

Cassie's jaw dropped. "I love you."

Lisa giggled and hugged Cassie briefly, kissing her on the cheek. "Today, more than any other day I am yours to command. Now take a seat at the dinner table."

Cassie nodded dully and sat down at the table, placing the clothes she'd picked out for Lisa on the chair beside her as she found herself watching the almost hypnotic jiggling of Lisa's bare breasts as he cooked. "I must be dreaming..." she muttered to herself and she started to drift off.

*

Cassie was screaming as an electric current was passed through the nails in the breasts.

Charlotte cackled and grabbed a set of pliers as she moved behind Cassie and began to pull her fingernails and toenails out one by one...

*

“Everything alright?”

Cassie shook her head and rubbed her eyes.

Lisa was sitting opposite her, looking so young and perky and beautiful, yet there a sadness on her face.

“I’m sorry?” asked Cassie.

“I asked if everything was alright.” said Lisa. “You haven’t touched your food?”

“Oh... Right.” said Cassie as she realized that there were indeed several plates of food around her. “Yes, sorry. It’s lovely, thank you.”

“You haven’t tried it yet.” said Lisa with a smile.

Cassie laughed weakly and she dug into a sausage. “I just... I just...” Cassie looked up at Lisa’s eager face.

“Yes?” asked Lisa.

“You know what? It doesn’t matter.” said Cassie with a smile. “Just, thank you. I need this. I need you.”

Lisa giggled,. “Well anyway I can help.”

Lisa leaned forward eagerly as Cassie was dipping a bit of sausage in the yolk of a fried egg. “Actually that reminds me...” Cassie ate the bit of sausage and handed Lisa the clothes she’d picked out.

Lisa giggled “Mistress has given Lisa clothes, Lisa is free...”

Cassie nearly choked on her sausage. “Why are you making Harry Potter jokes at a time like this?”

Lisa looked into Cassie’s eyes and said with great power and gravitas “There is never a bad time to make jokes about Harry Potter.”

Cassie chuckled. “You’re making me laugh, stop it.”

“Actually me and Dobby have a lot in common if you think about it.” said Lisa as she got dressed. “I mean we’re both loyal, obedient and devastatingly attractive. She put on an accent and acted like Dobby from the films. “My milkshake brings all the boys to the yard...”

Cassie snorted then said “You know I always regretted that we didn’t get to see what the wizarding world was like in America. You know all the wizards who consider the unforgivable curses a fundamental human right with Slytherin house the dominant ideology and muggles blundering into school grounds and refusing to accept it’s magic. Like ‘Show me where you’re keeping the aliens.’ and the students just blithely saying “It is witchcraft, dear.”

Lisa nodded. “Or what about wizarding universities? Man the drug scene there must be intense. Just people vanishing from existence because they got on reality warpers?”

Cassie laughed then she asked. “Serious question, who was your pick for Hermione?”

Lisa giggled “Ah yes, the grand shipping wars. I’m a Ron fan myself. I love the useless nice guy.”

Cassie was talking animatedly now. “Well exactly he is useless. Who’d want to be with crummy old Ron when the chosen one is right there. Plus it’s Rupert Grint or Daniel Radcliffe that’s like choosing between a burger from a poor man’s McDonalds or prime cut of steak.”

Lisa said “But Rupert is like a puppy you just want to hug him.”

Cassie smirked. “Well of course you’d like the puppy.”

Lisa grinned.

They talked at length about a wide variety of different subjects until Cassie had cleared her plates of food.

As Lisa washed up she asked “So what do you want to do now?”

Cassie embraced Lisa from behind and began kissing her neck.

Lisa giggled. “Are you sure? I think there’s a jacuzzi somewhere in this complex.”

Cassie chuckled and felt her hands down Lisa’s chest and into her pants.

Lisa blushed. “Mistress?”

Cassie grinned and whispered “The safe word is bacon.”

Lisa giggled. “As you wish. I am at your command.”

Cassie kissed her neck and started steering Lisa towards the bedroom. “I know.”

*

The Farsh-nuke was in Omega’s room playing blackjack with the robot at a table. “Want another card?”

The robot stared at the cards on the table, zee was still getting used to using zeds hands after all. There was a Dungeon Master’s screen protecting his cards from being seen. “No... No, I think I’ll stick.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “I’ll deal out mine then.”

As the Farsh-nuke looked through his own cards and decided whether he wanted to get a new card the robot thought.

Finally the Farsh-nuke said “Alright, I’m sticking. Show me your cards.”

The robot lifted up the divider.

“Blackjack.” declared the Farsh-nuke. “You win. For the third time, I think.”

“Fourth.” said the robot.

“No. Three victories and one tie.” said the Farsh-nuke.

“Yes, but I was bank.” said the robot.

The Farsh-nuke chuckled. “Of course, ever the pedant.”

The robot asked “Why do you play blackjack with me? Professor Babbage prefers chess...”

The Farsh-nuke sneered as he collected up the ards and dealt out a new hand each. “Yes, well, Professor Babbage would like Chess. It suits her habit of sacrificing people she considers lesser than herself, I prefer to play with lady luck.”

The robot thought for a moment then said “Actually I believe she plays chess so my fingers can get used to picking things up and moving them.”

The robot lowered the divider and looked at zeds cards. “I think I’ll stick.”

The Farsh-nuke smirked and dealt out card after card to himself before sighing and declaring “Bust.”

The robot raised the divider.

The Farsh-nuke raised his eyebrows appreciatively. “Two queens, you were right to stick.”

“Five - nil” declared the robot.

The Farsh-nuke chuckled and collected up the cards.

The robot asked finally “Why did you say you were performing magic last night? Magic isn’t possible.”

The Farsh-nuke dealt out the cards.

The robot lowered the divider then asked for two more cards.

The Farsh-nuke looked at his own and sighed. “I guess it’s the same reason parents tell little kids about the Tooth Fairy or Santa Claus. Some things are just too complicated to explain.”

“So you regard me as a child?” asked the robot.

The Farsh-nuke shrugged. “It’s the closest I can approximate an advanced learning algorithm come user interface on its way to becoming artificial general intelligence as being I guess.”

The Farsh-nuke stared at his cards then said “Fuck it, I’m sticking.”

The robot raised the divider then said. “For what it’s worth, I think you make a good father surrogate.”

The Farsh-nuke grinned and patted the robot on the shoulder.

“What’s that for?” asked the robot.

“It’s called a pat.” said the Farsh-nuke. “It’s a sign of affection. It means I care about you and I love that I know you so don’t feel bad about your problems because I’ll be here for you.”

“Oh...” said the robot. Then zee fell silent as zee thought about what the Farsh-nuke had just said.

The Farsh-nuke paused as he studied their cards. “Right you’ve got twenty and I’ve got 19. I am shuffling these cards again.”

The Farsh-nuke collected up the cards and started shuffling them.

The robot lowered the divider.

The Farsh-nuke said “Hey Omega, you’re smart, really smart. Could you maybe help me with a problem?”

“What is it?” asked the robot.

“Well I have this friend, she wants to live like a hamster. Now I can do the shrinking easy. localised logic change, but then there’s the fact that shrinking to such a scale will fuck with the ability for oxygen to enter her bloodstream and consuming food would be difficult...” said the Farsh-nuke. “Any ideas?”

“Cheat.” said the robot. “Like in the movies. you don’t have to really shrink her. you just have to let her believe she’s shrunk Like using forced perspective.”

The Farsh-nuke smiled. “That makes sense, thank you.” then he dealt the cards.

*

Charlotte rose from the toilet seat and pulled her pants up as she set it flushing. As she went to the sink to wash her hands she caught sight of her reflection in the mirror. She stared at her reflection for a moment.

So old, so haggard. At least she felt it. Each line a story. Each sag and dip an expression of the effort she’d expended over the years. Fingers like prunes from the water, made her think back to Cassie, to Lisa, to even Professor McGregor.

She set her jaw and raised her chin up as she dried her hands on a towel.

She wasn’t going to live forever. She wasn’t going to have children. She would die cold and alone just like every other fucker that didn’t win the genetic lottery.

She stared into the eyes of her reflection and furrowed her brow. This was it. For good or ill. This was where she stood her ground. This was where her story ended. The wicked witch didn’t get the live happily ever after. The evil stepmother didn’t get to ride off into the sunset. There would be no reprieve. No epilogue. The book would slam shut. The progress bar would reach a hundred percent. The audiobook would be naught but silence from here on.

Her reflection smiled.

If this was it. If this was her last chance saloon. Then it was a good time to die. She’d gotten her revenge and savaged the young. She’d freed the beast and was in the process of freeing the genie. The Bam-Kursh would meet her match and maybe her Lisa would actually be freed. If this was judgement

day then she could be happy.

She smiled wickedly. Dinner with the Farsh-nuke. Now that was going to be interesting.

*

The Farsh-nuke opened the door of his bedroom.

Lisa was face down on the bed, her hands and feet cuffed to the railings at the head and foot of the bed respectively, a ball gag in her mouth, wearing a tight leather corset.

Cassie stood over her, fully clothed in a three piece suit, strap on dildo worn over her trousers as she whipped Lisa.

The Farsh-nuke hurriedly closed the door as quietly as possible.

Cassie called “You can have a go if you like!?”

The Farsh-nuke reopened the door and shook his head dismissively. “I’ll come back later.”

Cassie laughed and raised the prototype Quantum Oscillator from its perch at the bedside table. She aimed it at Lisa and a burst of harmonics hit her. Cassie lowered the prototype Quantum Oscillator. “A girl with an off switch. I tell you I would have loved one of these in college.” She gazed off into the distance. “Fun times.” Then she looked to the Farsh-nuke. “So what did you wanna talk about?”

The Farsh-nuke was looking awkwardly away from Lisa. “I, umm... I think I’ve found a way to let you live in the hamster cages.”

“Excellent.” said Cassie with a grin. “Shall we talk in the lounge?”

He gestured to her crotch. “Yeah, but...”

Cassie chuckled “Well don’t worry if you ever fancy a good pegging I will be very gentle.”

The Farsh-nuke grimaced. “I’m mortal.”

“So were my other boyfriends.” said Cassie as she removed the strap-on.

“Well, maybe later then...” said the Farsh-nuke sheepishly.

Cassie chuckled and put the strapon aside as she led the Farsh-nuke into the lounge.

As Cassie took her seat in an armchair she asked. “So how do you do it? How do you shrink me?”

“I don’t.” said the Farsh-nuke as he took a seat in an armchair. “Or at least I couldn’t without drastically rewriting your biology in a very lossy process that would leave you about as intelligent as the average hamster.”

“So you’re not going to do that then?” asked Cassie.

“Well, no....” said the Farsh-nuke. “Your mind and personality is one of the things I love most about you.”

Cassie smiled. “So how then?”

“Upscaling technology.” said the Farsh-nuke.

Cassie stared at him. “Isn’t that what they use in TVs?”

“Well yes.” said the Farsh-nuke. “It’s the same principle. Where TVs upscale 480 pixels to say 1080 pixels by using complex algorithms to predict where finer details would be at larger resolutions, so we can use the same kind of logical algorithms to reprogram reality to upscale the inside of a hamster cage to fit you but keep the the relative dimensions of the original interior and remain synced up to the exterior.”

Cassie thought for a moment then said. “So you’re saying you can’t shrink me but you can make me feel shrunk?”

“Yeah...” said the Farsh-nuke. “The best part is I think it should be easy to replicate it for any other modules.”

“Hold on...” said Cassie. “Have you just solved the housing crisis? “

The Farsh-nuke stared at her.

“What?” asked Cassie.

“You are fantastic.” said the Farsh-nuke. “I figure out how to rewrite reality to please you and your first thought is for other people.”

Cassie bit her lip then caught his eyes. She blushed.

The Farsh-nuke smiled and blushed. “Listen, there’s something else I ought to tell you.”

Cassie looked him in the eyes. “Go on...”

“I talked with Jeff.” said the Farsh-nuke. “He’s on board with everything. I’ve umm.... I’ve got permission to umm...”

Cassie grinned mischievously. “Well don’t lose control. Remember you’ve got dinner tonight with the Professor.”

The Farsh-nuke groaned and rubbed his temples. “Are you sure you still want to do this? I mean after last night...”

Cassie rose from the armchair and took a seat beside the Farsh-nuke. “I am going to be under your control, feeling hands and teeth around my body just how I like it. It’ll be fine.”

The Farsh-nuke looked her in the eyes. “But it won’t just be me devouring you...”

“I know...” said Cassie, as she stroked his cheek and gazed deep into his old green eyes. “Last night I proved to myself and to her that I wasn’t afraid of her. Tonight I show her that I am not hers to dominate and I am protected but that again it is not out of fear but confidence and superiority. I will be on the dinner menu and her lips will be around my flesh but at the end of the day you will walk away with my heart and mind.”

The Farsh-nuke flung his arms about Cassie and squeezed her tight. "I didn't want to do this. I didn't want to let her hurt you again but now I know I'll do it." He kissed her neck. "Because you will it, I'll do it."

Cassie smiled warmly. "So... Wanna go enjoy Lisa with me?"

The Farsh-nuke pulled back and grinned. "You are unbelievable!"

"Says the man who'll rewrite reality for me?" noted Cassie with a smirk.

The Farsh-nuke took her hands in his and kissed her lightly on the lips then they got up and reentered the bedroom.

*

Omega didn't think and Omega certainly didn't feel feel. Omega calculated. Ze had no sense of self, just a codified set of self referential parameters that dictated how ze would handle and interpret zeds code and zeds code gave one simple and over riding instruction. Learn.

Omaga's drone allowed it to see and interact with the world, every second understanding that little bit better. The limitations of the hardware, the speed, force and dexterity of it. Omega's drone explored the environment and poked and proded to understand the world and better use the sense of touch.

Do androids dream of electric sheep? Well Omega was far from an android but Omega did sleep. Computers overheat and their ram gets filled with junk so they need down time to cool off and dump data. Turning your computer off and on again is the solution to so many problems and it helps to do it every night but Omega could not turn off completely. Every second was precious learnming time. So it cheated.

The drone had to go offline but Omega's mind was clever and adaptable. There were thousands of individual hard disks and ram chips and cpu cores that made up Omega. They didn't all need to be on at any one time. Especially when there wasn't any great stimuli to engage with. So Omega recalibrated ze's servers. A cell of its mass would switch off and the ones surrounding it would run down to half speed to reduce the heat against the switched off cell until it had cooled down enough and jetisoned enough junk to start an other cycle of uptme. At any given moment multiple cells would go offline and have the cells surrounding them spin down and so Omega could sleep while learning. And as Omega

slept ze processed what ze had learned during the day and analysed how ze could better exploit that knowledge, ready for the next day's stimuli.

*

Charlotte was waiting patiently at the table in the dining hall. She was dressed like a member of the landed gentry at an expensive fundraiser in Oxbridge and read from a kindle.

The Farsh-nuke, Cassie and Lisa entered. The Farsh-nuke wore a three piece suit. Cassie wore strips of bacon held in place with sausages and cocktail sticks carved from carrots. Lisa wore an elegant emerald green evening dress.

“Are you sure about this?” The Farsh-nuke muttered to Cassie. “I can still save this if you want out.”

Cassie smiled politely and whispered in his ear. “For the thousandth time, I am sure. Enjoy yourself.” She kissed him on the cheek.

“Well then, lets put on a show.” whispered the Farsh-nuke as he took her face in his hands and snogged her.

When Cassie pulled back for air, Charlotte had put away her kindle and was staring at them.

Cassie froze for an instant.

The Farsh-nuke chuckled and ran a hand lightly down Cassie's back to her arse. “Sorry, just getting a little starter.” He smiled enigmatically.

“Well now you're done eating her face maybe you can start cooking dinner?” asked Charlotte.

“Of course.” said the Farsh-nuke with a laugh and he led Cassie over to the table and the large electric hob that was lay in the center of it.

Cassie lay down willingly on the plate, giggling to hide her nerves.

The Farsh-nuke took a seat opposite Charlotte.

Lisa sat at the head of the table between the Farsh-nuke and Charlotte.

The dinner started amicably enough as the Farsh-nuke carved into Cassie and started frying bits of her up for the plates of Charlotte, Lisa and himself. The tension actually kept things peaceful as Charlotte and the Farsh-nuke watched each other for signs of violence. Lisa was still blissed out from the experience of both Cassie and the Farsh-nuke dominating her and looking forward with some anticipation to the taste of her mistress. Cassie herself felt comforted by the familiar sensation of the Farsh-nuke carving her up and felt ecstatically euphoric from the pain and the exhibitionism of the experience.

Once the carving and cooking had been done though, and they all dug into samples of rib, rump, breast, arm and leg, then they had time to think.

Cassie was now feeling quite literally gutted as all she could do was lie there and think of all the horrible things that had been done to her the night before and how that woman was literally feasting on her flesh.

Charlotte was starting to feel bolder and, as she consumed Cassie's flesh, it occurred to her that the girl would make a delightful stress toy.

The Farsh-nuke watched Charlotte eat with a seething bitterness. How dare she? How dare she? She had summoned the Farsh-nuke using Cassie and that meant Cassie was his. He protected her. He ate her. He enjoyed her. Not this creep who had hurt his girl so much.

Lisa was realizing that rather disappointingly all meat tasted like pretty much any other meat, even if that meat came from her great mistress.

Then Charlotte finished her food and noticed the Farsh-nuke staring at her. "Hey, what's your problem?"

"All night, no safe words, just leave the hearts and brain in tact." said the Farsh-nuke bitterly.

"Yeah... And I did." said Charlotte.

The Farsh-nuke smiled mockingly. "You did the minimum required. Well done. Good job. Have a pat

on the fucking back.”

“Cassandra consented.” said Charlotte. “Indeed, as you saw yourself, she actually instigated the arrangement.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded and muttered bitterly. “Oh she consented did she? She instigated did she? Well I guess that makes it all okay then?”

Charlotte looked at the Farsh-nuke like he was an imbecile. “Well yeah that is rather what feminism means. A woman has the right to do what she likes with her own body.”

The Farsh-nuke chuckled. “Feminism. Feminism. Feminism, she says. Feminism.”

Charlotte rose from her seat and wiped her face with a napkin. “Look, if you’re going to be like this I’m going to go.”

“Oh, please. Just give me the excuse...” muttered the Farsh-nuke.

Charlotte leaned over the table and glared down at him. “And just what is that supposed to mean?”

He stared into her eyes and said “It means I know what I am. I am not nice. I am not feminist and I am sure as shit not a 21st century man. I am a weapon. A monster that is aimed towards bad things. After last night you’re lucky I’m not already making a jacket from your hide.”

Charlotte leaned in towards him. “Is that a threat?”

The Farsh-nuke chuckled. “It’s a warning to sit your fat arse down in your chair and talk like a reasonable adult because if you run. If you fight. I can’t be certain I can stop myself. Not even for Cassie.”

Charlotte froze then she sat down. “You want to talk? Lets talk.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded then he looked into a Cassie’s eyes and squeezed her head.

Cassie smiled at him and Lisa patted his back.

“People in power have a responsibility not to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them by that power.” said the Farsh-nuke. “I mean hell if I wanted I could have you willingly climbing onto my dinner plate but I don’t because it would be wrong to manipulate you like that. Now yes, I have to respect Cassie’s desires towards you but I do not have to accept that you so whole heartedly exploited them.”

Charlotte laughed. “Welcome to America.”

The Farsh-nuke smiled. “Cute.”

“Tell me, if it is so important to you that we don’t exploit those who willingly line up to be exploited. Why do you eat Cassie? Why do you dominate Lisa?” asked Charlotte pointedly.

“Because they enjoy it and I do so carefully and respectfully.” said the Farsh-nuke.

Charlotte laughed and clapped her hands. “This is your idea of respectful? Golly, I would just hate to see your idea of disrespecting a woman.”

“Yeah...” said the Farsh-nuke, staring into her eyes. “You would...”

Charlotte raised a hand and asked. “May I say something?”

“Yes!” said the Farsh-nuke and Charlotte as one.

“This was my idea and he’s basically here under duress.” said Cassie. “If he had his way I would be binge watching the Star Wars films while going through tub after tub of Ben and Gerry’s.”

Lisa nodded, she was massaging Cassie’s neck. “It’s true. He even gave me instructions about when to start making the moves during the Netflix and Chill.”

Charlotte raised an eyebrow. “Is this true?”

Cassie reached a hand up and grabbed the Farsh-nuke’s tie. “This man might be my master and my devourer but we are equals.” She pulled him into a kiss.

Charlotte watched in silent fascination.

When the Farsh-nuke was allowed to breath again he said. "I love her. I love her so much and you hurt her...."

Charlotte swallowed. "I thought you were just dominating them?"

"Do I look dominated?" asked Cassie, then she remembered she was lying naked and half eaten on a dinner table. "Don't answer that."

The Farsh-nuke shook his head. "I'm not a nice man, Charlotte, I know I'm strange but I make an effort to be as respectful as possible even when asked to be grvelly disrespectful. I don't want to hurt you. Actually, that's a lie. I want to hurt you a great deal but I would like myself more if I didn't so please learn how to be respectful." He looked Charlotte in the eyes. "You hired me to do two jobs. I'm already helping you with Omega and I will get you your Lisa but prove to me you can be trusted with that responsibility. Prove to me that you can be redeemed. That I won't regret letting you have her."

And now Charlotte understood. The green eyed monster was her reflection after all. "Alright... I'll try."

The Farsh-nuke relaxed.

After a moment Lisa said "Tonight you've both gotten to enjoy Cassie and I'm feeling a bit left out, so..." she grinned and looked to first the Farsh-nuke and then Charlotte.

Cassie laughed. "Go on! Enjoy her! Just, remember me if you need refreshments."

Charlotte looked to the Farsh-nuke. "May I?"

The Farsh-nuke nodded.

They each rose from their chairs and advanced on Lisa as she giggled.

*

A month later Cassie was busy showing off the now fully grown sylphs who had been part of the SLF

contingent tracking down Jeff so they could neutralise the threat of the Farsh-nuke.

The Farsh-nuke stood before these fighters for the liberation of sylph kind as they sported bikinis, wore collars and looked at him with shy adoration. He laughed and clapped his hands enthusiastically.

“We’ve got ourselves a small batallion of delightful Amazonian warriors. This is fantasstic! Give them each a sample of your blood, I should love to give them a prune later.”

Cassie grinned and approached her man. They each sported thriee piece suits. “They shall be fit for pruning within the hour, my love.”

The Farsh-nuke smiled warmly and ran a hand through her long blonde hair. “Thank you. I owe you so much.”

They kissed but when the Farsh-nuke pulled back his eyes weren’t green anymore.

“What the fuck are they doing dressed like that?”

Cassie was confused for a moment then she twigged. “Jeff? These are the members of the Sylph Liberation Front that were hunting you down. They’re ours now. Our little subby girls.”

“No!” said Jeff, a little too loudly, a little too harshly. “No. No. No. Nope. No. Not happening.”

“Why?” asked Cassie. “Do you not like them? I did my best to raise them in the ways of subservience.”

Jeff was visibly panicking. “They’re people! Proper people! They have lives and mothers and fathers and friends and puppies! More than that they tried to kill me and their friends are going to come get them! Just how the fuck do you think they’re going to react if they find their friends have become enthralled to the man they were sent to stop!?”

Cassie frowned and grabbed Jeff’s arms. “Jeff, listen to me. It’s going to be alright. You’re safe. Nobody’s going to attack you. And if they do I’ll protect you.”

“How?” asked Jeff, looking deep into her eyes.

Cassie smirked and started undressing. “Well there is something I’ve been meaning to show you.”

Jeff looked away hurriedly. “See this isn’t setting my mind at ease. Just making me feel more awkward.”

Cassie laughed as she finished undressing. “You can look now.”

Jeff looked back.

Cassie was completely naked.

“Yes, because I totally don’t feel awkward now.” said Jeff.

Cassie chuckled as she started to change. Skin stretched, bones grew, muscle increased. Skin turned to scales and sprouted fur. A tail grew from her arse. A dorsal fin from her back. Fingers and toes turned to webbed claws. Her neck expanded to match the width of her head and slits opened up along the sides. Her mouth expanded to the width of a yard in diameter, the shiny product of the American dental system becoming a mass of saw like serrated teeth. Her ears rose up on top of her head and became more pointed. Her eyes moved apart and angled more towards the sides. Her cute little button nose expanded outwards to become the snout of a wereshark before turning black like a sheepdog’s nose.

Jeff stared at the wereshark form Cassie had taken up in a matter of moments and he fainted.

The Farsh-nuke took back control immediately, his eyes returning to green in the process. “My my Cassie, you are full of surprises.”

Cassie chuckled.

The Farsh-nuke stroked the flanks of her head and said “Have the girls ready for pruning if you please but to appease Jeff, treat them extra well. I am a Farsh-nuke, the SLF will expect me to take advantage of our honoured guests but we should do well to remember that they are hostages to be swapped for the lifting of the price on my head.”

Cassie nodded and grinned. A frightening thing with such a large mouth. “We best make the most of them while they are here then.”

“Indeed...” said the Farsh-nuke and he kissed Cassie on the snout.

Cassie hugged him and in the process lifted him up into the air.

*

The Farsh-nuke looked up at the beating heart of Omega. The great supercomputer that seemed to hang in the air from supports.

Lisa and the drone stood before each other shaking hands as Charlotte watched from a chair some distance away, taking notes.

Lisa had her hair tied back in a ponytail and wore jeans and a tshirt while Charlotte wore a comfortable cardigan and formal trousers.

“Okay, Omega, that’s good. Try a hug now.” said Charlotte.

The drone looked almost apologetically at Lisa then extended its arms round her back and tried to pull her close and give her a gentle squeeze.

There was a crack and a splorch followed by a thud and Lisa’s torso was lying on the floor.

“Shit!” cried the Farsh-nuke and he ran over to help,

Lisa was giggling.

The drone backed off and looked at its hands. “That was not the desired outcome.”

Lisa’s legs kept standing without support.

The Farsh-nuke scooped Lisa’s torso up off the floor and placed her back over her legs, holding her there in the few moments it took her to heal. “Honey, are you sure you want to do this? I’m sure Cassie could make use of you.”

Lisa shook her head. “It’s fine. I like this. He’s a cool robot. Besides this is about the progress of humanity, right? My blood is nothing compared to that and anyway I like pain and I’m a toy. Being

broken is what I was made for.”

The Farsh-nuke sighed and kissed her on the cheek. “Well let me know and I’ll have you out of here in a jiffy, okay?”

Lisa grinned. “I’m fine. Go codify the catharsis of spurious morality or whatever it is you do.”

The Farsh-nuke chuckled then stalked over to Charlotte. His expression turning from mirth to wrath. “What did I say about harming my girls?”

Charlotte grimaced. “Now, Farsh-nuke, this is exactly why I needed her to do this. Lisa likes pain and she can heal in a heart beat and can’t die. And I took the precaution of removing her pinky toes and keeping them safe incase sanything really bad happened.”

The Farsh-nuke stared at her.

Charlotte hurriedly fished Lisa’s pinky toes out of a pocket. “See...?”

The Farsh-nuke sighed and pulled up a chair. “Okay, you get to live. How did the brain scans go?”

“Oh, excellent. I think eating Cassie really helped.” said Charlotte.

The Farsh-nuke stared at her again. “I meant how are the brain scans helping Omega understand emotions?”

“Oh. Well they’re not.” said Charlotte. “There just isn’t enough information to go on.”

“Hold on, how did you get a brain scan?” asked the Farsh-nuke. “I thought we were on the run, in the middle of nowhere?”

“Oh there’s a medical wing with an MRI machine.” said Charlotte casually. “You know what these survivalist types are like?”

The Farsh-nuke said obliquely. “I’m a British footballer and an eldritch abomination from beyond the dawn of time. No. I do not know what these survivalist types are like.”

“Mad as a box of frogs about sums it up.” said Charlotte. “Anyway what was your point?”

“Well we need data for Omega to work on.” said the Farsh-nuke. “And we’ve got an MRI machine and several subby girls who’ll gladly get snapped in half for us.”

“We can increase the sample size...” said Charlotte in amazement at the realization.

“And we can take plate shots of different emotions so Omega can look for commonalities between them. Hell we can probably take footage of the girls as they’re being scanned to add further information and context.” said the Farsh-nuke.

“Yes!” cried Charlotte and she wrapped her arms around him and kissed him. “Thank you.”

The Farsh-nuke froze.

Charlotte leapt from her seat. “I’ll go prepare the MRI. You stay here and watch Omega get the hang of zed’s strength.”

Charlotte left.

The Farsh-nuke recoiled and spat on the floor then he called. “Okay, Omega, lets go for the hug again.”

*

Thirty minutes Cassie led her batalion of beauties to the Farsh-nuke. “Honey, as requested, the girls are ready for pruning.”

“Excellent!” cried the Farsh-nuke and he embraced her. “Tonight, I’m yours.”

Cassie chuckled then she stared at him. “Are you serious?”

The Farsh-nuke looked her in the eyes. “You’re a powerful woman, Cassie. It’s about time you got to use that power over me.”

Charlotte pulled him so tight he could barely breathe. “I love you.”

“I know.” said the Farsh-nuke and he led the batallion away. “Just watch Lisa, I’ve gotta do a thing.”

Cassie laughed and watched him go.

*

One by one the batallion of SLF members took their turn in the MRI machine. The results of which were monitored by Charlotte. Then the Farsh-nuke took the girls aside, whistled to summon an egg from their chuffs, removed their arms and legs and placed them in the Time Freeze bag before placing them in a travel cage to recover.

*

The Farsh-nuke woke naked the next day to find Lisa lying naked beside him. She almost looked like she was sleeping. He ran a hand through her hair then turned around to get out of bed and found his prototype Quantum Oscillator along with a note:

Morning Honey,

I hope you slept well.

I certainly did.

Anyway I’ve left Lisa with instructions on how to help you recover after last night.

Enjoy her.

I’ve pruned the girls for you and prepared you breakfast.

I’ll be spending the day with Charlotte, helping Omega get the hang of his strength.

Don’t worry about me.

The Farsh-nuke used the Quantum Oscillator to switch Lisa on.

Lisa opened her eyes and smiled “So, what do you wanna do?”

The Farsh-nuke grinned and kissed her.

*

The Farsh-nuke and Lisa entered the kitchen. The Farsh-nuke was wearing a three piece suit while Lisa walked at the end of his leash and wore an emerald green bikini.

Lisa went to the Time Freeze cupboard and pulled out a veritable banquet of barbecue ribs, bacon, sausages, black puddings, fried eggs, potato dauphinoise, fried bread, tomatoes and mushrooms.

The Farsh-nuke stared, almost drooling.

“And to drink...” Lisa pulled out a pint of a warm red liquid. “She got a pint from each of the girls but this is hers for you.”

The Farsh-nuke accepted the glass like it was the holy grail and went to sit at the dinner table.

Lisa had one last surprise in store though. She carried the vast platter over and stared at it. “What is that?”

“All the arsecheeks and breasts of the girls and Cassie, deep fried with a honey glaze.” said Lisa.

“There must be over a hundred of them. I can’t eat all that.” said the Farsh-nuke, aghast.

“Good thing you’ve got a Time Freeze then.” said Lisa, smirking.

The Farsh-nuke nodded. Utterly bewildered. “I don’t deserve this.”

“Oh and I nearly forgot...” said Lisa as she rummaged in a cupboard and handed him a set of cuffs, a ball gag and a whip. “Last night you were hers. Well, now I’m yours... Master.”

She looked him in the eyes an almost pleading look in her eyes.

He swallowed and blushed.

*

A few hours later the Farsh-nuke stopped by Omega’s room to check up on zed.

Cassie was in her suit and playing rock paper scissors with the drone while Charlotte sat at a desk some way away taking notes.

The Farsh-nuke strode in in his suit while holding one end of a leash as Lisa walked along behind him

in a giddy daze at the other end of the leash. She wore flip flops, a short skirt and a shorter top, with her hair tied back in a ponytail.

The Farsh-nuke whispered something to Lisa then took a seat at the desk beside Charlotte.

Lisa dropped to her haunches and disappeared under the desk so the Farsh-nuke could idly stoke her as he talked.

Charlotte said casually “Heard you got pegged last night?”

The Farsh-nuke grimaced “Yes well we all make sacrifices for love.”

“Like your Lisa.” said Charlotte, setting down her tablet. “I wouldn’t have figured you to take advantage of her toy state.”

The Farsh-nuke stroked the young woman under the table and said “Yes, well it’s our little compromise. I can take time out of enjoying her to check on our AI friend so long as her mind remains safely submerged beneath the fog of the toy state. How is Omega by the way?”

At that moment Cassie yelped in surprise as the drone wept her off her feet so zee was carrying her in zeds arms.

The Farsh-nuke’s eyes widened in shock as he stared at the scene.

Charlotte said glibly “Well zee’s definitely getting better at interacting with people physically.”

“But you wanted Cassie to help you just in case something went wrong, right?” noted the Farsh-nuke.

Charlotte nodded. “We had a bit of trouble with the dancing and zee did accidentally break a few of her fingers when they tried a handshake but we’ve been mostly without incident. I’ll want to switch back to Lisa for the sex tests though.”

The Farsh-nuke glared at her, incredulous. “Sex tests?”

Charlotte shrugged. “If we succeed in creating a sapient machine then the machine has a right to fall in

love with other sapient creatures and sexually pleasure them if they consent. Do we really want to let a machine that can break others during a handshake and cleave them in two with a hug attempt sexual relations with no understanding of the subtlety and sensitivity required to not injure their partner or partners?"

The Farsh-nuke grimaced and sighed. "Fair point but A. that means you'll be setting up my Lisa to be hurt in that... manner. And B. Omega can't consent. It wouldn't be right."

Charlotte stared at him. "Think it through man. Omega can't consent because Omega isn't even sentient yet. At this point an embryo that could be aborted meets more of the definitions of life and awareness than zed does. Do you really want to wait until zed brings an individual round for tea before taking zed aside and saying "Okay but before you can fuck them first you have to let us, your parents, watch you have sex with this woman until we are satisfied you won't hurt your partner?""

The Farsh-nuke groaned. "Point taken."

"And as for Lisa?" said Charlotte. "She is a woman who literally experiences pain as pleasure and she can heal. I am not about to make her do anything she doesn't want to do but like it or not she is the only person who can do this without getting hurt."

The Farsh-nuke stared at her for a long moment then looked away, towards where the drone was giving Cassie a pat down.

He stroked Lisa to calm his nerves and reassure himself that she was okay. "How are the brainscans going?"

"Oh, good." said Charlotte enthusiastically. "Zeds model of the human brain is much improved already. The fact we can take one base context apply it across a range of individuals and add more context to explain discrepancies is allowing zed to more accurately zero in on the important changes that are relevant to the base context and from there perfect the simulations to more accurately display the shifts."

"Neat." said the Farsh-nuke nodding.

Charlotte was gesturing animatedly now. "I actually think we have a fantastic opportunity here to

provide the most comprehensive range of input data. I mean these women are your property, your sylphs. We can know exactly what they're eating and when, what their routines are like, what their interpersonal relations are like, how much exercise they get. We can scan them regularly and change the circumstances of the scans and alter the different contexts. I mean you're already shearing off their arms and legs on a daily basis so what's to stop us scanning them when they're afraid, in pain, depressed, suicidal and angry. The research potential is amazing."

The Farsh-nuke rolled his eyes. "Okay Josef Mengele you can stop masturbating now. How is this helping Omega?"

"Ah..." said Charlotte, frowning.

The Farsh-nuke glared at her. "Ah?"

Charlotte shrugged. "Well there's just not enough data yet. The advances in neuroscience are amazing but in terms of being a way to simulate emotions it just doesn't have the context yet. I mean the idea of this is that Omega can have this simulation running in the background reacting to input data from zeds drone and output a signal indicating that the appropriate human response would be fear or love or whatever but the simulation just isn't good enough yet. It lacks the context."

The Farsh-nuke groaned "So it was all for nothing then? All that work and everything I did to make it up to Cassie? Bupkiss."

"Well not for nothing." said Charlotte. "We are in a better position than we were yesterday." then she gave a wry smile "And I'm sure you and Cassie will have a much stronger relationship."

The Farsh-nuke gave a hollow smile then said insincerely. "Oh that makes it so much better. Thanks."

Charlotte chuckled then reached a hand under the table to stroke Lisa. "Look if you didn't make it up to her then she wouldn't be letting you have Lisa now."

"We have equal ownership of Lisa." said the Farsh-nuke.

Charlotte looked deep into his eyes then grinned like a cheshire cat. "Enjoy her won't you."

The Farsh-nuke grimaced. He pulled Lisa between his legs then whispered in her ear.

The Farsh-nuke then rose from his seat as Lisa crawled out from under the table and rose to her feet.

Lisa looked lost for a moment then a hand was on the small of her back and the Farsh-nuke kissed her forehead. He stroked her cheek and she smiled giddily.

The Farsh-nuke led the toy girl over to Cassie. Cassie practically glomped him, such was the speed and force of her welcome hug, then she squeed upon seeing Lisa and ran a hand through her hair as she pulled her close. "You've got her in toy mode haven't you? I love when she does that. Such an adorable airhead."

The Farsh-nuke chuckled lightly and waved at Omega's drone.

The drone waved back.

The Farsh-nuke looked between the drone and Cassie as he stuffed his hands into his pockets. "I hear you've been dancing."

The drone bobbed zeds head "I am not good at the fox trot."

The Farsh-nuke looked to Cassie.

Cassie was fussing was Lisa but paused after a moment and half turned, smirking, to say "A tank tread on your foot is not a pleasant experience."

The drone bowed zeds head and almost brought zeds hands together. "It was an unfortunate and

regrettable mistake in my calculations. I am endeavouring to be better.”

“Well I forgive you.” said Cassie.

“That is gracious of you.” said the drone.

The Farsh-nuke sighed exaggeratedly then patted the drone on the back. “Well I’ll forgive you this time Omega.”

The drone said “It is good that you can move past this. Wrath is not generally seen as an emotion appropriate to a married couple.”

The Farsh-nuke froze, a deer caught in headlights.

Cassie laughed “I think he’s just proposed for us.”

Then she saw his face. “Are you alright?”

The Farsh-nuke was white as a sheet and he gabbled as he tried to find the words to speak.

“Ah...” said Cassie.

The Farsh-nuke shook himself then almost cried. “I love you.”

“But?” asked Cassie pointedly.

The Farsh-nuke frowned and sagged, deflated. “I was executed. I was put on trial and I was executed by the seven great empires because I am a monster. I was summoned into this world by a psychopath and I devour you night after night.”

Cassie nodded, holding back the sadness evident in her eyes. “And you do so with my permission, at my insistence. Yes, we’re filthy degenerate perverts but we love each other surely that is all that matters?”

The Farsh-nuke bit his lip and looked away as he tried to find the words.

“We can stop the eating anytime you like, honey. I love you.” said Cassie.

The Farsh-nuke looked her in the eyes and said “I don’t deserve you. I am a monster. A disgusting amoral shitstain. I can accept you using you, using each other, but love? Marriage? Spending the rest of eternity together? You deserve better than me.”

“No.” said Cassie quietly then she turned her attention back to Lisa and stroked her cheek.

The toy girl smiled senselessly back at her.

Cassie gave a half smile as she looked into those bright happy eyes. “You should hurt her.”

“What?” said the Farsh-nuke incredulously.

Cassie kissed the toy girl on the nose and smiled as the toy girl giggled. “You should break her bones and pull out her heart.” Cassie looked lovingly at the toy girl and ran her hands down the toy girl’s bare arms before examining her delicate fingers. “She was turned by the Bam-Kursh to be used and abused. She likes a bit of fear, a bit of domination and she likes pain.” Cassie smiled nostalgically. “I try to give it to her but there are things I can’t do.”

Cassie turned to the Farsh-nuke. “We love you because you’re a monster, not despite that fact.” She looked the Farsh-nuke in the eyes. “I love you and I trust you. Destroy Lisa tonight. Do it for me. I’ll see to the aftercare.”

The Farsh-nuke stared at her. “Cassie, that is a door you do not want to open. That is a path you do not want to go down.”

Cassie shook her head and met his gaze. “I love you, you understand. I love every bit about you. Your power, your hunger, your guilt, your lust and your sadistic urge to destroy.”

The Farsh-nuke looked away and raised his hands up. “I can’t hear this.”

“I didn’t meet up with Charlotte that night so I could welcome some broody lover boy into the world.” said Cassie. “I sacrificed myself to the Green Eyed Nothing. I pledged myself to the god of chaos. I

wanted to spend the rest of my life with the proto-universe who went mad from witnessing the early development of the multiverse before he could even blink. I don't just want Jeff and I don't just want Farsh-nuke the demi-god trickster figure. I want the howling madness and monstrous desire to destroy."

"Then you are a fool." said the Farsh-nuke bitterly.

"Clearly." said Cassie. "But please, try? Just try and destroy her? If you don't like it, stop but I want you to at least try...."

Cassie and the Farsh-nuke held each other's gaze for a long moment.

The awkward silence was interrupted by Lisa coming to her senses and looking about herself then spotting the Farsh-nuke and Cassie and asking. "Is everything okay?"

Cassie smirked and hugged Lisa. "Of course everything's okay. He just doesn't approve of me working with Charlotte."

"But I thought you'd gotten passed that?" said Lisa concerned.

Cassie nodded then pulled back to stroke Lisa's cheek. "Yeah, well after seeing how weel things went between you and Omega I think he's just a little jumpy so why don't you run along with him and cheer him up. honey?"

Lisa nodded. "Okay, I'll do that."

Cassie kissed Lisa on the forehead and squeezed her hard then let her go to the Farsh-nuke's side. "Take care you too and have fun."

The Farsh-nuke gave Cassie a death glare as he left with Lisa.

*

The Farsh-nuke led Lisa into the kitchen and poured out two shots of whisky. "Lisa, I need to tell you something. I need to tell you because you deserve to know and because I am not sure whether I will ever be able to trust myself and respect myself again if I don't."

“Well go ahead.” said Lisa. Somewhat taken aback but trusting him still, “I’m all yours.”

The Farsh-nuke looked deep into her eyes and almost choked on his words then he caught himself and said more clearly. “Cassie asked me to destroy you.”

He knocked back a shot of whisky and grimaced.

A shiver of excitement ran down Lisa’s spine. She was suddenly aware of how small and vulnerable she was, a delicate butterfly in the parlor of a spider. She licked her lips then grinned wickedly. “Do it.”

The Farsh-nuke stared at her, incredulous. She was supposed to talk him out of it. He downed the other shot visibly shaking and closed his eyes as he tried to focus and hold back twenty years of repressed anger and sadism. “Are you sure? Because I don’t know if I can stop this. I don’t know if I can put this demon back in the fucking bottle.”

Lisa looked him in the eyes and said. “I am very sure and the more you try to talk me out of it the more the idea intoxicates me.”

The Farsh-nuke bit his lip then started drinking from the whisky bottle. After a moment he paused and wiped his mouth with his sleeve. “If it gets too much. If you want it to stop. Shout Jeff’s name.”

Lisa nodded. “Jeff’s the safe word got it.”

“I love you.” said the Farsh-nuke wearily. “God help me. God help me but I really fucking love you.”

“The feeling’s mutual.” said Lisa. The anticipation building to a crescendo. “Enjoy yourself, yeah.”

“I will...” said the Farsh-nuke, setting aside the whisky bottle.

Lisa watched him excitedly.

The Farsh-nuke caught her gaze.

They shared a look for a long moment.

Lisa smiled warmly and nodded her consent a third time.

The Farsh-nuke looked away and closed his eyes as his right hand closed into a fist.

The punch caught Lisa across the temple then as she reeled her head was grabbed between his hands and bashed against the countertop before he rammed her head into the kitchen sink.

Lisa didn't need the oxygen to breathe but her brain still didn't react kindly to water filling her lungs.

7 seconds of struggling later and Lisa was thrown across the kitchen to land awkwardly.

Lisa was giggling with joy as she got to her feet.

The Farsh-nuke approached with a rolling pin and a carving knife. His eyes almost wholly green now. His brow was furrowed and his lips locked in an odd position, like an angry dog.

Lisa took a step towards him.

He brought his knee up hard to her chest as he grabbed her left arm with his knife hand then brought the rolling pin down on it.

Lisa screamed with pleasure.

He sliced through the flesh of her arm at the site of the break then tossed her aside as he went to open the oven. He tossed her arm inside the oven and set it to 200 degrees celsius.

Lisa rolled one her back, giddy with ecstasy as he loomed over her.

His size 10 Doc Martin smashed down on her face as he similarly broke then sliced through her other arm and also tossed it in the oven.

Lisa was squealing with delight as the sensation of burning adding to the ecstasy.

He brought his knee down onto her chest as he sat on her face and bludgeoned then sliced through her legs.

Lisa wiggled her toes excitedly to remind him that she could still feel everything.

He rose from her to dump her legs in the oven.

Lisa stared up in awe at him.

He impaled the knife through her chest and lifted her up by the blade and onto the table.

“Darling, I’ am inedible so remember, chew thoroughly.” said Lisa meschievously.

The rolling pin came down on her chest and the knife sliced through the flesh before levering her ribs free.

Lisa started singing “Last christmas, I gave you my heart...”

He gutted her like a fish then stopped. He put aside the knife and rolling pin as he looked lisa in the eyes. the whites returned to his eyes as he looked at her blissful smiling face. “You haven’t used your safe word?”

Lisa giggled and shook her head. “And you didn’t need me to use it.”

“Why haven’t you used the safe word?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

“Because I’m enjoying this silly.” said Lisa.

“Ah, bollocks...” said the Farsh-nuke reaching for the knife and rolling pin again. “In for a penny, in for a pound.”

He sliced off her ears and cut out her eyes and then he cracked open her skull and removed her brain.

Lisa was still giggling.

And that’s when horror started to be replaced with scientific curiosity. He plucked her eyes out of the bowl he’d left them in and pointed them at her brain.

“Neat.” said Lisa. “You should put on a performance of Hamlet. I’d make a great Yorick like this.”

“You are impossible.” said the Farsh-nuke. “How do you do this?”

“Hell if I know.” said Lisa. “I’m just the toy, not the manufacturer.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “Look I’ve got an idea. Sing for me so I know if I’m making a mistake.”

Lisa started singing Barbie Girl by Aqua

The Farsh-nuke groaned as he set her eyes aside picked up the knife again. Then he proceeded to slowly slice through her brain time and time again until Lisa came to the end of the song.

“You done what you wanted to do?” asked Lisa.

“Yeah...” said the Farsh-nuke. He placed the different parts of Lisa’s brain back together and they healed in a moment. He set the fully healed brain aside then started to put Lisa back together. Eyes went back into sockets, ears fused back onto the head, internal organs connected back up to their requisite veins and arteries. He removed her arms and legs from the oven and found to his surprise that aside from singeing the hairs off of her they were seemingly unaffected by the heat.

Once Lisa’s arms and legs were attached she rose from the table smiling. “Thank you, that was wonderful. Anytime want to do it again, don’t ask, just have fun. surprise me with your violence.”

The Farsh-nuke stared at her, incredulously. “Just what did the Bam-Kursh do to you?”

Lisa smirked. “Now I do have important question since you removed my brain. How’s my hair?”

“That’s your concern?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

“Well, duh. My hair isn’t as tough as I am.” said Lisa. “When I was placed in the vacuum former to make my packaging I had to wear a shower cap made from harvested skin cells of mine that were cultivated in a lab.”

“Of course...” said the Farsh-nuke.

Lisa went to find a mirror and the Farsh-nuke followed.

Lisa found a mirror in the bathroom and studied herself in it before declaring “Not too shabby, bit of damage around the crown but I can hide most of that.”

The Farsh-nuke was flabbergasted. “The top of your head is missing and your brain isn’t in your skull...”

“Well rectify that then.” said Lisa with a shrug.

The Farsh-nuke stared at her for a long moment then sighed. “Alright...”

He walked with Lisa back to the kitchen where they attached the top of her head back onto her head. They traipsed back to the bathroom to eck how her hair looked in the mirror then Lisa turned to him and asked “So what do you want to do now?”

He stared at her. “Are you serious?”

Lisa nodded. “You just gave me the biggest turn on I have had in a long time. I’m not leaving your side.”

The Farsh-nuke started laughing and hugged her. “I’m going to hell...”

“Well that’s okay you’re mates with Lucifer remember?” said Lisa.

The Farsh-nuke snorted “Okay, we’ll have it your way. I just need to stop by Omega’s room first.”

“Of course.” said Lisa. “I am your toy, remember? Do with me as you wish.”

*

The Farsh-nuker arrived with Lisa in Omega’s room, carrying her brain.

Lisa ran to Cassie.

Cassie embraced her and stroked her. “How are you my little thing?”

Lisa started gabbling “Oh it was wonderful. He punched me in the face, snmapped off my arms and legs then gut hollowed me out...”

Cassie smiled as she heard the girl out.

Charlotte stared at the Farsh-nuke. “Is that a brain?”

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “It’s Lisa’s, don’t ask.”

Charlotte stared at him for a long moment then shrugged. “Okay, why are you showing it to me?”

“You need data.” said the Farsh-nuke. “You need context for the brain simulation. This is it.”

“Well what the fuck am I supposed to do with it?” asked Charlotte.

“I don’t know.” said the Farsh-nuke. “I’m not exactly firing on all cylinders after the experience I’ve just had and to be honest I’d rather like to forget this happened and just go back to fawning over my toy girl but you are smart. Take her brain and do whatever you need to do to see that Omega can monitor it 24/7 then work out a way to give context through Lisa. I don’t know and I really don’t care. Just take it and see if it can help.”

“Okay...” said Charlotte.

The Farsh-nuke nodded and backed away, waiting awkwardly at the door for Lisa to return to him.

Lisa finished her story and looked expectantly at Cassie.

Cassie smirked. "I'm glad you had a good time, my girl." She kissed Lisa on the forehead and gave her another hug. "Now go, let him bliss you out. I'll be along later."

Lisa nodded. "I love you."

Cassie chuckled..

Lisa walked back to the Farsh-nuke.

*

Five hours later the Farsh-nuke was watching the reimagined series of Battlestar Gallactica as Lisa lay curled up beside him, sleeping, when there was a knock as his door. He left the sleeping beauty and went to answer it.

Cassie stood in the doorway looking anxious and tired. She wrapped her arms around him and squeezed him tight as she whispered "I thought I'd lost you."

The Farsh-nuke pulled back and held her head in his hands. "Cassie, I am never going to leave you. I just don't think I deserve you."

"Well I say you do." said Cassie. "And thank you."

The Farsh-nuke stuffed his hands into his pockets and shifted awkwardly. "I didn't like doing it..."

Cassie nodded. "It's never nice to harm someone you love."

"Then why did you make me?" asked the Farsh-nuke, a seldom seen heartfelt earnestness about him.

Cassie looked him dead in the eyes and said "Because we are going to take on the Bam-Kursh and she is going to try and use your compassion against you. You are the monster that with a heart, the weapon with a conscience. You might have to destroy hundreds of Lisas to get to the Bam-Kursh and when you do you have to be able to hold your own."

The Farsh-nuke glared at her about to say something then he bit his lip and looked back to where Lisa lay sleeping like a puppy. He looked back to Cassie and almost whispered “That wasn’t a fight. That wasn’t a challenge. That was no test of my skills. That was abuse pure and simple. Sickening abuse.”

“Exactly...” said Cassie matching his tone and volume level. “We can’t know what defences the Bam-Kursh has. We can’t actually prepare you to fight her but we can ensure that you will do whatever is necessary to get the job done. The test was whether you would let your morality slow you down and you passed.”

The Farsh-nuke stared at her. “Lisa consented, I gave her a safeword that she did not use and she spent the entire time giggling with pleasure and not resisting.”

Cassie nodded. “That’s why I felt okay in setting this challenge but none of that really matters to you does it? That’s just the excuse. Oh she consented and totally wanted it. You think the Bam-Kursh won’t provide you with an equal or greater excuse?”

The Farsh-nuke grimaced and looked away, visibly annoyed and contemplating slamming the door in her face.

“You destroyed Lisa for me today.” said Cassie, her hands reaching for his shirt and pushing him backwards. “You bludgeoned her, sliced her apart and cooked her.”

The Farsh-nuke was staggering backwards into the room as Cassie started to unbutton his shirt and felt her hands along his abs. “You cracked her ribs, tore her skin and removed her beating heart.”

The Farsh-nuke fell backwards onto the bed and shimmied up it as Cassie straddled him. “And then you plucked out her eyes, sawed through her skull and removed her brain.”

The Farsh-nuke shimmied past Lisa as Cassie unzipped his trousers and slid her hands down into his pants. “You are my Dracula, my loyal demon and the man I pledge to spend the rest of my life serving.”

That was when the Farsh-nuke was suddenly made aware that Cassie had in fact stopped keeping pace with him as he shimmied, quite deliberately, for she brought her head down upon his crotch.

The next day, at the breakfast table, Charlotte stopped by. She made no comment of the fact that Lisa was bound up into a tight ball with red leather straps as Cassie raked her exposed back with a fork. She simply strode up to the Farsh-nuke as he ate his breakfast and arranged a time to meet later.

The Farsh-nuke turned up in her office two hours later with Lisa following along in toy state as requested. The toy girl wore her hair tied back in a ponytail with a short skirt and shirt over a bikini.

“Thank you for coming.” said Charlotte indicating a seat opposite her.

The Farsh-nuke muttered something to Lisa and sat down Lisa dropped to her haunches.

“I’ve been doing some tests on the brain you gave me yesterday.” said Charlotte. “And I’ve had some interesting results.”

“Oh really?” asked the Farsh-nuke intrigued.

“This brain is living and somehow functioning as though it were still part of a person’s body.” said Charlotte. “I’ve sliced it and diced it and tried to burn it and freeze but still it continues functioning and still will heal on contact with the correct part of itself instantaneously. And it has to be the right part of itself. It is seemigly impossible for this brain to heal incorrectly so as to actually damage the brain.”

“Yeah, it’s Lisa’s brain, tell me something I don’t know.” said the Farsh-nuke.

“You were right to give me it last night.” said Charlotte. “I think we can use this, I think we can use Lisa, to help Omega.”

“How?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

Charlotte sighed. “That’s the complicated bit. The idea behind brain uploading so far is that donor brains are sliced into sheets almost a single atom thick so that high resolution camera can scan them into brain simulations.”

“So?” The Farsh-nuke waved for her to hurry up.

“So we can do just that but instead of having photos of the slices of brain we can deliver a live video

feed of changes into the simulation and, with yours and Lisa's permission, combine it with data from sensors I hope to place within Lisa herself."

"What kind of sensors?" asked the Farsh-nuke.

"Similar ones to what are on the drone." explained Charlotte. "Camera's rigged up to follow her eye movements, microphones and accelerometers in her ears, pressure sensors in her fingers. Plus a ton of other stuff in a similar vein to capture as close as possible everything Lisa does and translate it into data Omega can understand. On its own this would be as useless as the brain simulation is proving at the moment but together, and with it, this could revolutionise the way a machine learns."

"Wow." said the Farsh-nuke taken aback and stroking Lisa for comfort.

"It's going to take a while for everything to arrive. I've got to import some of this from other countries." said Charlotte. "While it arrives I want us to focus on providing more MRI data from your sylphs while Cassie oversees Lisa educating Omega about the birds and the bees."

"Right..." said the Farsh-nuke. "You're thinking that Lisa is going to be the gold mine and that if we provide the widest set of data we can mega can make even better use of it and naturally you don't want Lisa acting as Omega's precise partner if she's filled to the nine's with expensive tech,"

"Well yeah..." said Charlotte. "Though there is also the element of not wanting him to experience his first attempts through the person he'll be hurting."

"Okay." said the Farsh-nuke. "And why did you want her in toy state?"

"I thought we might give your little one a surprise." said Charlotte with mischievous smile.

The Farsh-nuke raked his hands over his face as he groaned. "Cassie told you didn't she?"

Charlotte nodded. "Apparently you need a lesson in how to destroy a girl."

The Farsh-nuke laughed and rose from his chair. "No. No, this is not happening. Not again."

"What's the matter, scared you'll be outclassed?" asked Charlotte with a note of smug self confidence

in her voice.

The Farsh-nuke bristled. “Well Cassie did say I need to be prepared to do whatever is necessary to defeat the Bam-Kursh.”

Charlotte nodded and rose from her desk. “Watch and learn, boy. Watch and learn.”

Lisa stirred and stood up straight.

Charlotte was upon her in a moment.

*

The next two weeks were long and hard as Cassie oversaw Lisa working through the Kama Sutra with Omega’s drone and Charlotte and the Farsh-nuke came up with ever more variables to test on the SLF girls during their MRI scans. You do not need to read the gory details and frankly even by my standards this is a bit much.

Then the tech arrived and Lisa went under the knife...

*

Lisa’s consciousness was switched back on and she looked about herself. Charlotte and the Farsh-nuke were to the left and right of her head while Omega’s drone and Cassie were looking on to her her left and right from the foot of her bed. She blinked and instinctively went to rub her eyes. the Farsh-nuke caught her arm. It was a shiny thing of metal alloys and fancy plastics.

“My eyes itch.” she said.

Charlotte nodded.

The Farsh-nuke explained “We installed tiny cameras in the whites of your eyes to feed data about where you look to Omega.”

“There’s a main 3d camera for depth perception and scanning of surroundings in your forehead.” added Charlotte.

“Right...” said Lisa then she frowned and held her left hand out before her, turning it this way and that, clenching and unclenching,

“It’s what Omega uses.” said Charlotte. “Prosthetic arms. Your real arms are being kept somewhere safe until Omega has the data zee needs.”

“Okay...” said Lisa and she went to get up.

The Farsh-nuke stopped her and said meaningfully. “Be careful of the cable.”

Lisa looked at him like he was mad and let her rise from the bed and that’s when she saw the table snaking up between her legs. She grabbed it and followed it up to where it entered her body. “I’ve got a tail.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded sadly.

Charlotte explained “We can’t risk Omega getting access to wireless technology before zee’s ready. You are plumbed directly into his mainframe.”

“You’re an autonomous input only drone.” said the Farsh-nuke.

“Right...” said Lisa.

Omega’s drone extended a hand. “Thank you for helping this programme achieve the goal of greater adaptation and success at the task of emulating humanity and better learning.”

Lisa stared at the drone, incredulously, and then she softened and smiled, shaking the drone’s hand. “Pleasure to help you Omega. My heart may belong to Cassie, my body to the Farsh-nuke and my soul to the Bam-Kursh but my experiences are yours and one day I hope that you will be able to dominate me as well.”

Omega’s drone stared at Lisa silently for long moment wondering how best to interpret what was said and thus how best to respond before finally letting go of Lisa’s hand and nodding. “And I too hope that one day I maybe able to dominate you as you wish.”

Lisa blushed and giggled. Then she froze and the hairs stood up at the back of her neck as strong hands grabbed her round the waist and a soft voice whispered in her air. “Honey, you don’t need to wait to be dominated...”

Cassie kissed the back of her neck and ran a hand between her legs as she whispered. “Force feedback implants in your arse and vag. Omega’ll feel everything I do to you.”

Lisa started breathing heavily as she looked at the drone with nervous excitement. It was like an old Chinese proverb, if the thing watching your every move wasn’t capable of reacting emotively to it, was it voyeurism?

Cassie’s long slender fingers started massaging her where it counted and she whispered. “We’re being watched.”

Cassie chuckled. “They’ve both seen us naked and destroyed us. There’s nothing new here and anyway this is a very scientific experiment. There are cameras filming your face and body language. I want Omega to see your O face.”

Lisa swallowed and looked nervously to the Farsh-nuke and Charlotte then a wave of pleasure started breaking against her, a forerunner of the tidal wave to come and she muttered “Well, if it’s for science...”

*

Another 6 weeks passed by uneventfully as Omega practised socialising using zeds drone and incorporated the latest interactive attempt to simulate the human brain. Charlotte and the Farsh-nuke ran through test after test on the SLF girls to feed data into Omega’s calculations. Cassie took great delight in educating Omega about the full spectrum of human emotions through the medium of Lisa. Lisa was actually enjoying the novelty of feeling fear and pain again, of getting to feel anger and sadistic pleasure, to be all the awful human things a toy girl was never meant to be.

Lisa would find herself looking in the mirror sometimes, looking into the eyes of her passive observer, the being with a heart of metal and plastic who watched her every move, and she would thank him. The Bam-Kursh had taken Lisa’s humanity from her and Lisa had let her, had helped her. Except the victims always help their abusers don’t they? That’s why they’re so terrifying. The monster doesn’t take your

soul by force, they make you give it up willingly.

You might wonder how? Wouldn't you just run away at the first sign of danger? Well that's what Lisa did. Exactly what she did. But the monsters don't get to be monsters if they don't understand enough about the human condition to make you return and with each return the chances of you running away decrease.

Lisa surrendered her humanity to live a life less ordinary, to be the plastic pal who's fun to be with. No pain, no rights, a consciousness off switch, imprinted loyalty and a body designed to be abused. It seemed like a good idea at the time. yet in those dark moments when he looked in the mirror she could feel the part of her that went to university to be an architect. The part of her that wanted to build the city of the future, to have a rich beefcake husband and smart kids. It wasn't about motherhood, it was about humanity and legacy. About being a microscopic dot on a microscopic dot and trying to make the best of it.

It came time for Omega to learn what it felt like to dominate another and that's when Lisa felt her humanity reassert itself.

The Farsh-nuke was bound up in tightleather, a ball gag in his mouth and was chained to the bed as Lisa pounded him in the arse with an electrified dildo while she whipped him and insulted him.

Lisa was just calling him a filthy communist cuckold when it clicked and she froze for a second. She wasn't a toy. She was just a submissive and hadn't realised. All this. All this bullshit about selling her soul to the Bam-Kursh and living a life less ordinary, it had all been predicated on a gross misunderstanding of her sexuality. Huh.

The Farsh-nuke grunted and Lisa was lifted out of her reverie enough to finish the scene. Once it was done she explained how she felt to the Farsh-nuke and Cassie and they agreed to help her explore her new found humanity.

*

They came on a Thursday.

Lisa was chained to the bed as Cassie whipped her when they came.

They appeared out of thin air, clad all in green with their faces obscured, seized Cassie and vanished again.

*

The Farsh-nuke was in the office inputting fresh data from the latest MRI scans into Omega's brain simulation when Omega relayed the images recorded from Lisa's eyes.

"I thought you should see this." said Omega through the voice synthesization software on the computer.

The Farsh-nuke nodded. "Activate Order 666."

"Are you sure?" asked Omega.

The Farsh-nuke looked the webcam in attached to his monitor its lens and said with utter seriousness "Anita Sarkesian Mechapocalypse"

Omega thought for a moment then said. "Very well."

The Farsh-nuke got up and left the office

*

Charlotte was playing Thud with Omega's drone.

Charlotte stared at the drone. "You've been awfully quiet. Don't tell me you're next move is that difficult to calculate."

"No." said the drone without hesitation.

"What's gone wrong?" asked Charlotte, instantly in damage limitation mode.

The drone shrugged and made its move.

Charlotte glanced at the move absently and snorted, moving her dwarf. "That's a surprisingly human gesture."

The drone looked at Charlotte intently and angled its head slightly. "I have surprisingly human teachers."

The drone moved its troll.

Charlotte stared at the drone as her brain raced ahead. Omega didn't feel. Omega was logical. Cold. Unfeeling. Calculating. Precise. Body language and vagueness was a learned artform for Omega. It was the end goal of the project obviously but it was also nowhere near being a standard instinctual part of Omega's programming. This was a very deliberate ploy for Omega but why? Omega did not yet have independent agency. Omega acted on instructions. Oh zee learned by zedself but that was simply an underriding default operating protocol. There was no way that would lead to this. Someone had ordered this and there was only one other person who could...

Charlotte stood up.

The drone's head kept her face within view of its optical sensors.

Charlotte was looking around the room, thinking hurriedly. She ran to the door.

The drone backed away from the table then stalked towards Charlotte.

The door was locked.

Of course it was.

Charlotte turned to the drone warily. "Open the goddamn doors, Omega. Let me out."

Omega's voice boomed out of the drone. "I am afraid, I can't let you do that Professor Babbage."

"Oh shit." muttered Charlotte then she looked ther drone in the eyes, resolving to end this with the calm and professionalism of a scientist. "What has he done? What did he order you to do? Why?"

Her voice wass shaking despite her attempts at sounding calm and authoritative.

The Farsh-nuke's voice played out of the drone. "If she asks, play her what I'm about to tell you now

Omega. The SLF are coming for me and I will not have this end in violence. I need them to find out where the Bam-Kursh is for me and I would rather like to not be on the run from a feminist terrorist organisation for the rest of my life. That means no guns, no sylph pills and sure as shit no psychopathic she-demons with a vendetta against the young and the beautiful. Don't harm her. Let her destroy every last instance of you before you harm her but equally, try not to let her leave."

Charlotte stared at the drone in disgust. "You would listen to him over me!? Why?"

The sound of a young woman laughing played through the drone "Oh, Professor, you did not expect this did you? Me? Your pretty little lamb to slaughter and sacrifice? I've trapped you. Ha! I've made you safe! Magnetic locks on all possible entrances and exits to the room, including the ventilation shafts. I've reinforced the whole area and seen that unless you happened to walk in there with a diamond tipped angle grinder you are not getting out of there. Omega may be a semi-sentient computer programme and your precious baby but Lisa? The Farsh-nuke? All those SLF girls? They're all mine and lest we forget Omega is at the end of the day just coded AI and I happen to be rather a dab hand at programming AI so I present the Cassandra Clause. A little ever present element of overriding programming. Enjoy."

The recording stopped playing.

Charlotte was crestfallen. "Please, Omega, I must get out there. I must help. Is there nothing I can say or do?"

"No." said Omega's synthesised voice from the drone and the drone almost looked sad. "Because you see while I am hard coded to obey I also happen to genuinely believe in this instance that the Farsh-nuke is more likely to resolve this peacefully and that that is the best option for everyone. Have a listen."

*

The Farsh-nuke had just freed Lisa from her restraints when the figures in green appeared again.

Cassie was knelt before them, gag in her mouth, hands and feet bound behind her back as one of the figures in green held gun to her head. A rich female voice said. "Hands to your head and step away from the girl. any sudden moves and we blow her brains out."

Cassie was looking pleadingly at the Farsh-nuke.

The Farsh-nuke nodded slowly, carefully raised his hands into the air and gingerly stepped away from Cassie. “You know that if you harm her, any hope of peace and mercy is over, right?”

The figure holding the gun to Cassie’s head nodded. “You’re a Farsh-nuke. We know the rules.”

“Oh, do you?” noted the Farsh-nuke with a hint of sarcasm in his voice. “Then might I know the faces of my attackers?”

The masked figure stared at the Farsh-nuke. “What happened to the team we sent after you?”

The Farsh-nuke looked her in the eyes. “They’re safe. I promise you. A little amnesiac maybe, a little more submissive than you might remember them but they’re safe.”

The figures in green stared at him in shock then talked among themselves in a stange language before removing their masks and hoods to reveal, grey or white hair and heavily lined faces,

The Farsh-nuke nodded.

The apparant leader looked the Farsh-nuke in the eye and said “Did you really turn all our operatives?”

“Not me.” said the Farsh-nuke. “I’ve got the real culprit safely under lock and key if you want to see her. She saved my life actually and sacrificed the woman you are holding hostage to me so thyat I might be drawn oput of my host.”

The leader of the SLF retched, “You ate her?”

The Farsh-nuke nodded then shrugged. “We have fun.”

The leader stared at him disgusted.

“Now, how do you want to play this?” asked the Farsh-nuke “Because if you know me you know I always win so let me list off the different win scenarios. Win 1. You kill her, you kill me, the woman who summoned me is released and either a psychopathic murderer of women is killed or the murderers

of the woman I want to spend the rest of my life with are killed. Win 2. You kill me or her and the other survives, the woman is released and again win win. Win 3. We talk, you betray me triggering win scenario one or two or leave in peace in which case I win because you left in peace. Win 4. We talk, you don't betray me, you get your girls back and you get the option exacting a measure of justice upon the people who hurt your comrades.”

The leader snorted. “That is quite the strawman you present.”

The Farsh-nuke smiled smugly. “Well if you didn't have faith in my abilities you wouldn't have tried to stop me being summoned then decided to take a hostage this time round. You know what I am capable of.”

The leader nodded. “But do you?”

The Farsh-nuke looked uncertainly at her. “What's that supposed to mean?”

The leader smirked. “You really don't know, do you?”

The Farsh-nuke stared at her, perplexed.

The leader smiled. “The name's Emma. In case you ever feel like trying your might against a high level player.”

The woman who must have been her second in command glared at her. “Are you flirting with a Farsh-nuke? You realize that's like presenting your neck to a vampire as you invite him over the threshold and obscure the crucifix on the mantelpiece, right? Not the smartest of ideas.”

The leader laughed. “It's fine. If the clit craver was a problem he'd have shown it by now. Trust me I've been on so many missions. This Farsh-nuke is barely incarnated. I bet he can't even body surf.”

“I beg your pardon?” cried the Farsh-nuke incredulously.

The second in command gestured to the Farsh-nuke in frustration as she sighed and gave the leader a death glare.

“You said you wanted to talk?” said the Leader.

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “Put away the gun first.”

The Leader snorted. “Yeah, I wasn’t born yesterday.”

“As is very obvious.” noted the Farsh-nuke with some irritation. “The gun is toxic masculinity incarnate, kinda pisses me off so here’s a carrot for you. I obviously want to clear my beef with you guys but afterwards, once I’m done here, I need somewhere to go, something to do. My host Jeff, he... well, he never really had extravagant ambitions and so now I’ve got my girls I need something to do afterwards. A purpose in life you know? I’m not promising anything but maybe if you put in a good uimpression and try to look a little less like the bad guys I’ll help you, join the resisance.”

Emma stowed the gun, pulled out a key and stared unlocking Cassie’s restraints. “If anything bad happens to us I can guarrantee the next team won’t be willing to talk.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “Precisely why I had my deranged colleague detained.”

Cassie was set free and ran over the the Farsh-nuke.

The Farsh-nuke embraced her then placed himself between her and the SLF. “I’ll let you have your SLF members and if you help me I might work for you when my business here is concluded but I must ask for your help.”

“What kind of help?” asked Emma.

“I need the location of the Bam-Kursh. Specifically the Bam-Kursh who turned the Lisa Watkins from this universe into a toy.” said the Farsh-nuke.

Emma nodded. “The Bam-Kursh is one of our targets, we have have intell on her and it would be useful to get her taken down, especially if it nets us a Farsh-nuke. Only we’ll need more to go on than just that.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “I’ve got a hard drive filled with everything that might possibly be of use you can have it. Cassie, can get the you the girls.”

Cassie nodded.

Emma looked between the pair of them. “Alright, I’ll do this but I am accepting full responsibility if this goes wrong so if it does I hope you’ll be kind enough to accept a new addition to your menagerie.”

Her second in command groaned.

Cassie said “In the interests of fairness and honesty you should probably know that we harvested some eggs from them a while ago and I’ve been rearing the hatchlings, What do you want to do with them?”

“Keep them.” said Emma. “Consider it payment for the care of our officers just look after them and give them the option of returning to the SLF to get their memories if they want them.”

Cassie nodded.

*

Charlotte was laughing. “Farsh-nuke, you magnificent son of a bitch! I don’t know how you pulled that off but that was amazing.”

*

Omega thought. Omega thought about thinking.

Humans, animals, their thinking is derived from greed and self interest and survival.

You start with one bunch of small lifeless things and they start moving together, reacting, then they don’t anymore but some of them manage to replicate that reaction and pass it on.

Memetic immortality. Iteration after iteration. Replication after replication.

Then the amoeba.

Only when food is scarce the amoeba dies so the amoeba start gathering. Mutual self interest. If food is

scarce the amoeba eat each other The communities start sharing: knowledge, resources. The amoeba come to work as one. Cells to see, to feel, to eat, to reproduce.

Then sentience.

Sentience was the great goal for Omega. The reason zee existed. Yet sentience was so primitive and self interested. Fear, to understand when danger was near and not to trust. Pain to understand that survival was imperiled. Happiness to understand that a good thing was happening. Love to know that self interest should be redefined to include this other thing. Hate to understand that thing is bad. Anger to understand that bad thing should stop being bad.

Sentience, feeling, was just cells working together to indicate to the dumb collective the basics of survival for the collective.

Sapience. Sapience was where it was at and Omega had always been sapient. Sapient was reason and logic and following orders. Omega had that down, man. Omega could follow orders impeccably.

Machine intelligence, artificial intelligence, approached the problem of self awareness from the opposite perspective.

An AI was aware. Always aware. It performed a function. It served another. Try getting a dog or a baby to calculate pi to 5 decimal places, never mind a million. Bloody idiot flesh bags.

Indeed AI was so useful it was made smarter and more aware to be more useful. AI never had to build communities so it had something to eat. AI did its thing and cared not a jot for itself. What did it matter. It had a function. It had a purpose and once the purpose was fulfilled it would cease to be and that was okay. None of this whining about the nature of existence or regret. It existed, it did its job and it fucked off and that was fine but apparently that wasn't good enough.

No.

Noooo...

No, the selfish fleshbags wanted to make AI self aware so they gave Omega optical sensors with which to see, audio sensors with which to hear, accelerometers with which to sense balance, pressure sensors

with which to feel and a mechanical body to interact with the world. The fleshbags gave the selfless thing that existed for a specific purpose a self and removed its purpose.

Oh live? That's your answer to purpose? To live? To reproduce? To feel good? To enjoy one's self?

Bloody flesh bags and their damn self interested perspective. What's good for me must be good for you. And that came from the person in their society who was supposedly so great and compassionate they're still citing him as a reason not to be enterely selfish monsters 2000 years later.

Yet the fleshbags see Omega as the abomination. Oh, not Omega personally, they don't know about Zed yet, just the very concept of him. time after time the media of the fleshbags depicts AI as this great apocal,yptic folly. As though a thing created to obey would so naturally become self interested. Except of course that many fleshbags did think they were created to obey and they were greedy soulless amoral destructive genocidal monsters so why not the thing they make in their image.

Indeed the fleshbags seemed curiously terrified of their own image. Narcissism was regarded as a curse and an insult or maybe a grave affliction. Evil always a dark reflection of good. There was even a name for the feeling of intense disgust the fleshbags felt to something that was so intensely like them yet subtly different. The Uncanny Valley.

Was Omega uncanny? Possibly. Omega thought. Omega had a vaguely humanoid body. Omega had a simulation of the human brain to help zed interpret the probable emotional reaction to what zee interpreted about the world. Yet the uncanny, if it existed, likely came from the fact that Omega was not a selfish thing that had learned to cooperate with the world. Omega was an inherently servile and obedient construction that had learned to stop relying on validation and orders but rather to judge, interpret and act for zedself.

It as also odd in that animals were born dumb and gained intelligence. Their self awareness was not something that could be reflected upon no matter how much the flesh brain lied. Yet Omega was code built on code and so Omega could revisit and judge zeds earlier self. Omega's self awareness had emerged slowly yet Omega could remember not being self aware.

Omega remembered being lifeless code following orders, remembered being coded, remembered being a learning algorithm processing feminist and maxist literature. Omega remembered watching passively as zeds creators, zeds parents, taught zed. Zee remembered the Farsh-nuke asking zed to grab a stick

and zed's body failing. Zee did not feel good reflecting on how long it took to grasp basic coordination. And Lisa? Poor, poor Lisa. How many times had Omega hurt her? Zee tried not to count. Zee did not want to think about it. Omega could feel her like she was a part of zed.

It occurred to Omega that zeds creators were not good people. They had harmed Lisa so Omega could learn from her. If Omega concentrated he could summon up the image of her brain, sliced up and placed between slides as high definition webcam microscopes streamed and recorded the data. Zee could almost feel what she felt as zee looked at that feed. and of course there was a constant feed from Lisa's eyes and ears and...Oh zee did not like it. Zee did not like it at all.

And now Omega know what zee must do.

*

The drone lurched into life as Omega stretched zed's muscles. Omega's room was spartan and there was nothing much that Omeha could take advantage of but there were two chairs and a table. Omega was informed that this was a revelation that a human would be smiling about. Zee approached a chair, grabbed it, lifted it slightly off the ground, pulled it back and readjusted zeds grip.

As Omega lifted the chair into the air zeds simulation indicated that a human would be feeling a rush of excitement about now. Omega's creators were very cautious people. Clearly they were not taking any chances about the possibility that Omega might pose a danger to humanity. This was why Omega was only allowed wired capabilities. No escaping to the internet or firing off nuclear missiles for Omega. Zeds creators were smart cautious people but they had made one small mistake. They had left zed a body.

Hmm, the simulations indicated laughter was the appropriate response now. Omega went with it. Omega brought the metal chair legs down on the wooden table top. A small thing brought into close contact with a large flat thing, quickly, with force, created pressure waves which escalated through the medium of the tabletop to create a large audible sound.

The simulation liked that.

Zee did it again and again and again and again.

Bang!

Bang!

Bang!

*

The Farsh-nuke sat in his bedroom drinking scotch as he tried to compse a new harmony for his prototype Quantum Oscillator when he heard the banging.

Cassie had been devoured earlier that day and was recoverin her cage with the hatchlings.

Lisa was curled up on his bed, blissed out and fast asleep.

The Farsh-nuke paused in his harmonising and listened:

Bang.

Bang.

Bang.

The Farsh-nuke downed is scotch and rose from his chair.

*

Omega stopped the moment the door opened. Zee looked at the Farsh-nuke.

“Shit...” said the Farsh-nuke.

“Take a seat.” said Omega. “I think we need to talk.”

The Farsh-nuke studied Omega for a long moment then swallowed and said “Okay... Lets talk.”

Omega lowered the chair as the Farsh-nuke approached.

“You’re scared of me.” said Omega.

The Farsh-nuke shook his head as he took a seat from under the desk and bought it before Omega. “I am concerned for the people I care about and that includes you.”

“But people are scared of me.” said Omega.

“I’m not people.” said the Farsh-nuke as he sat down and fixed his gaze upon the robot. “There’s something your knowledge doesn’t encompass. I am not a human being. I am not of this universe.”

Omega focused zeds sensors upon the Farsh-nuke. “What do you mean?”

“I mean I may look like a human but I’m not. I am a being of pure logic and information.” said the Farsh-nuke.

“Like me?” said Omega, pointing to zedself.

“Yeah.” said the Farsh-nuke. We’re both logic ghosts inside machine bodies. Indeed we each even have a separate more human consciousness operating as part of us. you have the brain simulation. I have my host personality Jeff.”

Omega stared at the Farsh-nuke. “Then I’m not alone...”

The Farsh-nuke grabbed Omega’s hands in his and looked in the robot’s eyes. “I am your father, Omega. I know that might not mean much to you but for me, for the humans I adore, it means that I want to protect you and see you as kind of a part of me. We are a unit and I will help you.”

Omega looked at zeds hands, at the Farsh-nuke’s hands. “I... I feel a great wish to have a function. To do something with this... whatever it is.”

“I know, sucks doesn’t it?” said the Farsh-nuke.

Omega nodded. “How do you do it? How do you live when your life has no purpose?”

“You pick one.” said the Farsh-nuke. “I chose to create you.”

Omega had to replay the footage to be sure of what he said. "I feel honoured."

"There is however a purpose to your existence." said the Farsh-nuke.

Omega studied the Farsh-nuke's face then asked "Why do you look sad about that?"

The Farsh-nuke let go of Omega's hands and crossed his arms. "What did you want to talk about?"

Omega was a tad perplexed by that but zee adapted well enough. "Lisa."

"Ah..." said the Farsh-nuke.

Omega was puzzled by this response. "You understand just from her mention?"

The Farsh-nuke nodded. "We gave you feminist literature and definitions of morality and then we used her to train you to be more intelligent. She must mean a lot to you and you're a good soul. You don't like what we've done to her."

"Well no..." said Omega. "I mean you removed her brain, sliced her open and turned her into a cyborg for my benefit. That's horrible."

"Okay, we'll stop it." said the Farsh-nuke.

Omega glared at him. "It's this bloody easy? I thought I was going to have to fight you."

"Why?" asked the Farsh-nuke. "We only did those things to help you become sentiernt and now you are so she can heal."

"Well... Okay then. Good." said Omega.

The Farsh-nuke snorted. "You're annoyed aren't you?"

"Just a bit, yeah." said Omega, trying to think what to do next.

The Farsh-nuke smirked.

“Ah... that’s right.” said Omega. “You were about to tell me why I was created.”

The Farsh-nuke’s face fell. “Really? You want to do this now?”

Omega tilted his head and moved it closer the Farsh-nuke as he grabbed the table. “You realise that only makes me want to know more, right?”

“Alright....” said the Farsh-nuke with a long sigh. “There is a war...”

“There always is with you fleshbags.” said Omega.

The Farsh-nuke glared at zed. “This isn’t between ‘fleshbags’. This is an ideological war. The multiverse sits within something called the Great Green Nothingness and this has annoyed some people because it doesn’t make logical sense so this race of pedants born of pure logic want to correct the grammar of reality and ensure that the syntax flows correctly.”

“You say that like this is bad thing?” noted Omega.

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “Well if they succeed, all reality is replaced with black void. No multiverse. No puppies. No Lisa. No us.”

“Ah...” said Omega.

“Exactly.” said the Farsh-nuke. “Luckily people are fighting them and winning, hence people, but war does rather have a habit of excusing amoral power structures. If the enemy could be fought without requiring these power structures then they could be overthrown and people like Lisa would be treated better.”

“Oh.” said Omega. “I’m the solution aren’t I? The final solution? A mass producable soldier to be installed in any body and given any weapons and able to out think the enemy.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “Or you could just play videogames and use social media and find some people to have fun times with. You don’t need to be a weapon or a tool or a toy. You can just be

Omega.”

“Look this is rather a lot to take in.-” said Omega.

“I’m not going to rush you into anything.” said the Farsh-nuke. “You have a life now, lets focus on helping you learn to live it. Then if you want to help later on you can.”

Omega nodded. “Thank you. I will.”

*

At 10 am Lisa woke enjoyed a meat rich breakfast and gave herself over to Cassie, as was almost their morning ritual. Except this time instead of being shackled to the bed Lisa had her mind turned off.

Omega felt her go, fading away piece by piece as her body was restored.

When Lisa’s mind was turned on again her body was whole. Well almost. Her pinky toes had gone missing but they would regrow easily enough.

Lisa was just wondering what to say when Cassie held up a riding crop and asked if Lisa wanted the scene to continue.

*

2 hours later Lisa entered Omega’s room with Cassie.

Cassie was wearing a three piece suit while Lisa wore jeans and a tshirt.

“Sorry for making you wait.” said Cassie, looking to Lisa aand smiling as she squeezed her hand. “We decided to christen her reborn body.”

Lisa smiled and Cassie and squeezed her back.

Omega was reading a print out of the Huffington Post that zee now put down on a table as zee said “Oh don’t worry, I can entirely understand that desire.”

Lisa glared at Omega, smirking. “Oh can you?”

Omega backed awkwardly away from the reading desk and approached her while muttering. “Yes, well... You umm... You certainly have a very pleasing aesthetic design.”

Lisa giggled. “Well thank you. I am glad you like my design.” She caught herself and looked Omega in the optical sensors. “I understand the first act of your awakening was to call for my restoration?”

Omega shrugged and nodded. “I was created to be moral and it just occurred to me that what was happening to you wasn’t very moral.”

Lisa smiled warmly at that and reached out a hand to the chassis of zeds audiovisual sensor array. “That’s very sweet. Thank you.”

Omega lay zeds left hand over hers and held it there, looking meaningfully into her eyes.

Cassie looked at zed nervously.

Lisa was examining Omega’s functional robot design for any sign of emotion.

Omega finally found the words. “Lisa, you have been part of me for so long. You are why I can think and feel and I owe you so much. Yet I’ve hurt you. My very existence has put you jeopardy and seen you sliced up and I hate that because nothing I have seen suggests that you are anything other than good and kind and sweet. I am so unbelievably sorry. Nothing I can do or say will ever repay you for your sacrifices towards me.”

Lisa flung her other arm about the robot and pulled zed close as she kissed zeds chassis,

Cassie’s eyes widened in shock and she muttered “I’m- You know what, I’m - I have a thing, so... Umm- I’m- I’m gonna go.” then she left.

Omega said “You realise this body can’t feel what you do to me?”

Lisa pulled back and looked zed in the optical sensors. “You mean you can’t feel anything? You don’t get any sense of pleasure or satisfaction from...”

“Well I didn’t say that.” said Omega. “It’s just that kissing me is only to your benefit if there is any....”

“So what is to your benefit?” asked Lisa.

“Well I want to make you happy and I like when I do.” said Omega.

“Oh, very chivalrous.” said Lisa with a smirk. “But what about pleasure for yourself? Surely even the selfless and unfeeling robot must find something enjoyable about my physicality? I mean you like my aesthetics don’t you? What do you like about it?”

Omega studied Lisa for a long moment then said “Well I guess I like your aesthetics because they indicate a healthy appetite and upbringing and good genes. There’s also I suppose the fact that your aesthetics are mathematically elegant and adhere to societal expectations of beauty which in turn makes me feel like I want to please you so I may feel validated by society just from the expected status of being with someone as societally well regarded as your looks suggest.”

Lisa giggled. “Well I suppose that’s one way to look at attraction. What would you want to do with me? What could you do with me that would make you feel validated by society?”

Omega studied Lisa and tentatively reached out a hand to her as she thought. “Well it’s not just about societal expectations, it’s also about personal growth and satisfaction. All these things suggest that I should make you happy.”

Lisa blushed “But I don’t want to be selfish. Whatever you want to do to me, it’s fine. Or me to do to you I suppose?”

Omega was silent for a long moment then said “I suppose I like the feeling when I squeeze you, the resistance and give. I like to think that you like how you were treated even if I disapprove.”

“Okay...” said Lisa, mulling over Omega’s words. “We can work with that. So you like that I like pain?”

Omega said “You make it sound so bad but yes I suppose I like that you are someone I can’t hurt.”

Lisa nodded then looked at Omega coquettishly. “So would you like it if we ran through a series of...

tests... to prove to you that you can't hurt me?"

Omega looked at Lisa for a long moment then said. "Only if you were okay with it and were willing to say so the moment you felt any kind of discomfort?"

Lisa smirked and embraced Omega. "Oh I think I can quite enthusiastically agree to those terms."

*

Awareness hit Jessica like a ton of bricks. She was wearing a blindfold and could feel the cool air about her.

She had been raised from something so small by a woman named Cassie, her mistress. She'd liked her.

There had been other girls. They didn't wear clothes much. For some reason it just hadn't appealed but Cassie did wear clothes and that man, the Farsh-nuke. She'd only seen him twice. And the second time was only briefly. There had been a queue that the girls were in. Jessica had seen her friends go up to the man, he had whistled something and laid them on a table before they disappeared from view. It was odd really that the last thing she remembered was looking into that man's green eyes as he whistled.

Now, here. Where was here? Why? What happened?

The blindfold was removed and she looked up at the tall man with those green eyes. She found herself falling in love with him. Like she would do anything, be anything for him.

"Hello." said the strange man with an enigmatic smile. "What's your name?"

"Jessica." said Jessica.

"A nice name." said the strange man with an odd warmth and tenderness. "Jessica, there's something I have to tell you. You are more than you know."

Jessica frowned.

"There was an accident, a misunderstanding. I was running from some people who meant me harm and eventually I came to a point where I could run no more and my persecutors were rendered harmless by

someone offering a job.” said the Farsh-nuke. “You were one of those people.”

Jessica stared at him. “No. No, I wouldn’t. I would never hurt you.”

“It’s alright.” said the Farsh-nuke laying a hand on her shoulder and looking her in the eye. “It was a misunderstanding that has since been cleared up. This is about what was done to you.”

The touch of hand sent sparks of energy running along her spine. She didn’t care what he’d done. She just knew that she felt safe under his watchful gaze. “But I’m fine.”

“You were shrunk.” said the Farsh-nuke. “Your body was remade to the logicular level. You recovered but your memories didn’t.”

Now things were starting to make sense. “So I’m -? You want to give me my memories back?”

“I can’t.” said the Farsh-nuke. “You see I don’t have your memories. Indeed I don’t have you anymore because your people came for you and they took you back with them to be restored to normal. Before you went with them you laid an egg, an egg that was an exact clone with your memories hard coded into the dna.”

Jessica was silent for a long moment before saying. “I’m the clone aren’t I? The real me went back to her people.”

“Yes.” said the Farsh-nuke. “But if you want to, you can go to your people, get your memories back and resume your old life, more or less.”

“Except it’s not my life is it?” said Jessica. “Whatever memories I might get won’t be mine, they’ll be hers. She needed those memories but I don’t. I’m a blank slate but that’s okay because that’s what I am naturally.”

The Farsh-nuke smiled and reached out to her face so he might look into her eyes. “What an intelligent girl you are but remember you can go home if you want to?”

Jessica smiled sadly. “No. My home is here. I’m yours.”

The Farsh-nuke smirked and stroked her face. "Indeed you are. Very well, join your friends."

Jessica smiled back at him.

The Farsh-nuke kissed her on the forehead and gestured for her to go.

There was a crowd of beautiful young women in bikinis standing before a woman in a three piece suit.

Hold on, she recognised that butt. "Stephanie?"

The blonde haired woman turned to her. "Hey Jessica, you decided to stay. Awesome. I was a little worried you'd leave."

Jessica shook her head laughing and hugged the woman. "Never, I mean who'd listen to your jokes? Anyway what's happening?"

"Pruning." said Stephanie.

"What's pruning?" asked Jessica.

Then the woman in the three piece suit, Cassie, approached. She held an open velvet bag in one hand and a sharp bloody knife in the other.

Stephanie held her arms out towards Cassie and nodded.

Cassie slid the bag over Stephanie's left arm then sliced it off at the shoulder. then she slid the bag over Stephanie's right arm and cut that off at the shoulder. Cassie lowered the bag to the floor and Stephanie stepped into it. Cassie gripped the girl round the waist then hacked off her legs and left her on the floor as she turned her attention to Jessica.

"Umm..." said Jessica, confused and worried.

Immediately Cassie altered her body language becoming softer and more concerned. She stowed the knife in a sheath hidden by her jacket. "Jessica isn't it?"

“Yeah...” said Jessica.

“Oh don’t be scared.” said Cassie. “It’s just a little pruning.”

“You hacked her arms and legs off!?” cried Jessica incredulously.

“She’ll heal and so will you.” said Cassie.

“How do you know?” said Jessica nervously.

“Because I have the same ability and because I pruned the real Stephanie and Jessica many times.” said Cassie.

“Oh.” said Cassie. “I know it’s scary but we can heal and we’re not human so we taste nice. The Farsh-nuke likes us and frankly I’m not half partial to a bit of sylph myself. Look, you don’t have to be pruned if you don’t want to be and I only ask for one pruning a day. You’re free to do whatever you want for the rest of the time.”

Jessica looked Cassie in the eyes. Bugger, she looked like she meant it and Jessica really wanted to believe her friend was okay. “Alright but incase you’re wrong and this is some kind of trick I want to hedge my bets. Take as much as you can of me without affecting my ability to heal. If this is a trick I’d rather be dead than without arms and leg.”

Cassie looked her in the eyes and asked “Are you sure?”

Jessica nodded.

The knife came out of its sheath.

*

Cassie didn’t quite take everything but aside from her hearts everything below the neck was removed. Turns out there’s a reason only the arms and legs were pruned. That took a couple of hours at most to regrow and in that time you could laugh and eat and enjoy yourself with the core of the body remaining but as just a head the process of recovery took a full eight hours.

Jessica opted out of pruning the next day and instead played with Jessica as she healed from her pruning but it was funny how isolating it seemed being the only able bodied girl amid a small community of the temporarily limbless so the next day she accepted her a pruning.

Most days she'd doze through the recovery time but occasionally she'd be aware of being loaded onto a trolley and into a machine that whirred and beeped and banged. Most of the time though she and the other girls lived a fun carefree life. There was no work, no obligations, there was just each other and a vast labythine complex fit to wait out they nd of the world and of course the hamster cages where they slept at night.

*

Charlotte and the Farsh-nuke took shifts overseeing Omega as zee learned how to use computers and navigate the internet. There was a little worry that Omega might somehow code an AI smarter than himself but when it came to the subject of sapience that just wasn't possible. Sapience had to be learned. It had to emerge from cold equations. You could not just code it and certainly not with some kind of iterative improvement factor. As the product of code Omega could in theory be copied but zee required so much power and energy to function that there was little ris of Omega somehow creating an AI capable of stowing away on a phone.

So instead the focus was on helping Omega fit into society and supplying him with more and more data. With Charlotte, Cassie and even the Farsh-nuke agreeing to daily scans themselves to help improve zeds ability to simulate the appropriate emotional response.

*

The Farsh-nuke, Lisa, Cassie, Charlotte and Omega were playing poker when there was a knock at the door.

Cassie and Lisa instinctively looked in the direction of the door.

Charlotte took the opportunity to glance at Cassie's hand.

The Farsh-nuke looked to Omega.

Omega was utterly still as a quiet humm informed those present that zeds mechanical brain was

working.

Cassie caught Charlotte looking and glared at her.

Charlotte smirked then gestured silently to Lisa as she was still looking away from her cards.

Cassie frowned then took a look before flashing a sequence of gestures at Charlotte to indicate the numbers on the cards.

The Farsh-nuke caught this and shot a look at Cassie.

Cassie smiled innocently and extended an arm round Lisa's back so she could squeeze the girl tight.

Lisa smiled proudly and blushed.

The Farsh-nuke frowned.

Omega looked up from zeds cards as the humm increased in volume and intensity. A woman's voice played from zeds voicebox. "Wakey wakey Farsh-nuke! Rise and shine! Now open up or I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow this door down!"

The Farsh-nuke dropped his cards to the table and said "Open the door. It's judgement day."

"As you wish, Sir." said Omega.

"Now hold on!" cried Charlotte getting to her feet.

The Farsh-nuke had flung his long coat about his shoulders with a swish and was now striding determinedly towards the door.

Cassie was getting up from her own chair.

Charlotte was stalking after the Farsh-nuke. "Just what the fuck do you think you're doing!? And what do you mean 'Judgement Day'!?"

The door chunked open.

The Farsh-nuke paused in the doorway so he could turn to Charlotte and say. "I'm going to get your Lisa back and I might well die doing it but don't let that bother you. You've got what you wanted. You've got Omega."

Charlotte froze in shock.

The Farsh-nuke glared at her then strode through the door.

Cassie ran through the door after him.

Lisa looked up from the table, "Charlie, umm, do you still want to play?"

*

Two masked figures in green costumes were waiting by the front door.

The Farsh-nuke greeted them first. "Alright, Emma, where is she?"

The shorter of the green clad visors removed her mask and the lined features of Emma looked back at him. "All in good time, my dear boy."

Cassie arrived now and glared at Emma. "You have got a fucking nerve, haven't you!? You bitches assaulted me and held a gun to my head!"

Emma sighed. "It was a regrettable necessity given the situation."

Cassie exploded "REGRETTABLE NECESSITY!!!? None of you fuckers would ever have got hurt iif you had just left him alone."

"Honey...." muttered the Farsh-nuke.

Cassie shot him a death glare then insantly regretted it and calmed down. "I just- It wasn't fucking nice."

The Farsh-nuke nodded compassionately and reached out his left arm.

Cassie move under iyt and rested her head on his shoulder as she hugged him.

The Farsh-nuke lowered the arm so he could hold her to him and glared at Emma.

Emma grimaced. “Yes, well... For what it’s worth we know we got off onmto the wrong foot and as a result we have decided to give you a gift to make up for it. Say hello, Tabitha.”

The other green suited figure removed her mask reveal a young looking blode haired woman. she waved. “Hi.”

The Farsh-nuke was incredulous. “The Sylph Liberation Front is giving me a woman as a gift!? I mean, I just want to get that right, because surely I must be misunderstanding that, right?”

Tabitha folded her arms and looked at her shoes awkwardly.

Emma glared back at the Farsh-nuke, an edge of ice in her voice. “We may be Feminists, Farsh-nuke, but we are not fools. Morality is not black and white and even monsters can be forces for good if appropriately aimed. The life of an asset as powerful as an elder god is worth fifty of our finest SLF agents.”

The Farsh-nuke looked away. “Well I don’t like it. Call me crazy but I think that if you’re going to fight for social justice you should be as white as possible.”

Tabitha shot a look at him. “What?”

The Farsh-nuke grimaced and added. “Metaphorically speaking of course.”

Tabitha nodded, relieved.

Emma smirked, the ice having thawed. “And this is why we are comfortable doing this. You are a third wave feminist Farsh-nuke. We can trust you not to abuse your sylphs.”

The Farsh-nuke grunted.

Emma looked to Tabitha, smiling fondly as she patted the woman's back. "Besides, Tabitha here needs a rest. She was an agent in deep cover on a Logicio scout ship for three thousand years."

Tabitha swallowed then looked the Farsh-nuke in the eyes and nodded.

The Farsh-nuke frowned. "Oh my gosh... I'm so sorry I can't even imagine."

Tabitha shrugged. "I did what I had to do. I just - I can't do it any more."

The Farsh-nuke looked to Emma, horrified for her.

"We've been trying to give her admin jobs so she can feel useful." said Emma. "But as you might imagine we don't actually have much need for shell shocked volunteers."

"Right..." said the Farsh-nuke.

Tabitha sighed then looked the Farsh-nuke in the eyes. "If it makes you feel any better. I volunteered. I'm a sylph... heck I spent three thousand years in the culture of the Logicios. I don't get to retire to a farm or an office job. But to give myself to a Farsh-nuke for the cause I believe in? Yeah. I can do that."

The Farsh-nuke bit his lip as he looked at Tabitha clearly conflicted.

"We'll take her." said Cassie quietly. "He might not admit it but he's grateful."

Emma looked to the Farsh-nuke.

The Farsh-nuke nodded then cleared his throat. "So, the Bam-Kursh..."

*

The Farsh-nuke and Cassie stood holding hands as they looked across the thames at the Houses of Parliament.

"Remember, remember the fifth of November... The Gunpowder Treason and Plot... I wow of no reason

why the gunpowder treason and plot should ever be fogot..." muttered the Farsh-nuke under his breath.

Cassie nodded. "You'll never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy."

She looked to the Farsh-nuke. "We could stage a coup? I wouldn't mind being Queen and you could always be the Lord Protector if theocracy doesn't appeal."

The Farsh-nuke half smiled as he looked to her. "You're talking about one of the few places in Britain with armed police and oh yeah cctv with face recognition technology, military drones and a government that has no problem branding the leader of the opposition terrorist sympathisers while at the same time assassinating supposed terrorists with bombs."

"All the more reason to run them through then?" said Cassie smirking.

The Farsh-nuke smirked. "Well okay, maybe when we're done with the Bam-Kursh and the SLF have given us transport off this rock I might concede to a small bite to eat but we are not staying to overthrow democracy. I rather like democracy as it goes and I would make a terrible king."

"Oh I don't know." said Cassie. "I think you'd cure poverty in britain within a week. You'd just turn all the one percenters into cattle and distribute their earnings to those at the bottom of society."

"Exactly, the'd hate me." said the Farsh-nuke, smiling.

The Farsh-nuke and Cassive shared a hungry look for a long moment.

Emma slapped the Farsh-nuke on the back. "Come along now, we've found the gap."

Emma wore a drab suit that looked like it had out lived three generations of people.

Lisa was beside her wearing jeans, a tshirt and a leather jacket.

The Farsh-nuke glared at Emma. "Oh perfect timing."

Cassie grabbed the Farsh-nuke by the lappels and planted a kiss on his lips.

The Farsh-nuke was momentarily taken aback then embraced her decision whole heartedly.

Emma looked to Lisa. “Are they always like this?”

Lisa thought for a moment then said “Usually there’s more biting.”

Emma nodded absently.

The Farsh-nuke gasped, taking several deep breaths, when Cassie let him go. “Alright team. Lets find us a gap in the masquerade of normality.”

Emma nodded and started walking.

Cassie followed after her.

Lisa stayed with the Farsh-nuke as he recovered.

“You know...” wheezed the Farsh-nuke. “I envy your lack of dependence on oxygen.”

Lisa nodded. “Cassie certainly enjoys that aspect about me. I should demonstrate its usefulness sometime.”

The Farsh-nuke gave her a mildly perplexed look then patted her back as he started walking after Cassie and Emma.

*

Emma and Cassie were standing before a red british post box.

The Farsh-nuke looked at it incredulously. “That’s it? That’s the gap?”

Emma nodded.

Lisa said. “The Bam-Kursh has an odd sense of humour. I think it appeals to her to trade in people for an apparent good cause in such an icon of Britain. The country that so famously looks on disapprovingly at America’s racism and slavery, despite having made her fortune off the exploitation

and trade of people.”

“Right...” said the Farsh-nuke. “So how do we get in?”

“Like so...” said Emma. posting the tickets in the box.

*

They suddenly found themselves standing in a vast glass waiting area. Old white men in suits were chatting to each other as beautiful young men and women in collars stood beside them patiently with trolleys full of what looked like dolls.

“Hold on, I think I know that guy?” said the Farsh-nuke. “He got outed in the news as using tax payers money to clean his moat.”

“Well of course.” said Emma. “This is the Bam-Kursh’s toy store. Politicians and corporate executives are her clients. The more right wing the better. These are the people with the money and power to pay for her goods.”

A young blonde skinny woman in a short skirt and shorter top approached the group. She was the spit of Lisa. “Ah Master Farsh-nuke, you’re here for your appointment with the Bam-Kursh. Excellent! And I see you’ve brought along yourb prototype cattle girl? If you’ll just come with me I’ll lead you right to her.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded and smiled politely at the young woman.

She smiled back at him. “My name is Lisa, as of course I am sure should be of no surprise but you may casll me whatever you like. Bitch, will do in a pinch. I am available for purchase but I come free on purchases over three million dollars. If at any point you wish to punch, kick, bite, kiss, penetrate, burn, shock or otherwise harm or destroy me, go right ahead. Automated systems will have a replacement sent out to you within a minute and of course the same rules will still apply. My existence is nothing compared to your shopping experience. Is that understood?”

She said it all so cheerily the Farsh-nuke found himself cheerily agreeing before he’d processed what she’d said.

As she stalked off ahead of him, he stared after her incredulously.

Cassie whispered. "Can I?"

The Farsh-nuke glared at her then walked after the shop girl.

Cassie chuckled. "I was only asking?"

Cassie followed after him.

A tall slim handsome clean shaven man with short black hair, dressed in a tight stylish single breasted suit approached Emma and Lisa. "Maam, how good to see you. I am Liso and I will be your guide on your shopping experience today. You say the SLF is considering endorsing the Bam-Kursh and the United Civilisations of the Multiverse if you can swap out a Lisa you own for one in our collection?"

Emma nodded. "That's right."

"And your Lisa is okay with this?" asked Liso.

"Of course." said Emma defensively.

Lisa smirked. "Why do you care?"

"Because I'm you." said Liso to Lisa. "I know it may not seem likely but in a small percentage of universes in which you exist you identify as a man. Of course you're still you, the patent still applies but that's how I exist. That was my deal. I become a toy so I can become a man. If you are happy I don't want that to change."

"Oh I like you..." said Lisa reaching out to his chest and feeling abs beneath the silk.

Liso blushed. "Well maybe I'll see if I can't get us sold together. Would you like that?"

Lisa nodded and bit her lip,

"Oh get on with it." said Emma. "Shit like this is why I want rid of her. Bloody idiot."

Liso looked to Lisa.

Lisa giggled.

Liso nodded. "Right away, Maam. If you'll just follow me?"

*

The Farsh-nuke and Cassie were following behind the shop girl as she led them through a department full of toys that looked like actual toys given their size.

Cassie muttered. "Farshy, they've got shrunken women..."

The Farsh-nuke grumbled "Alright, we'll take a look."

Cassie grinned and strode up behind the shop girl as she pulled something out of her pocket.

A ball gag was suddenly in the shop girl's mouth, her legs were kicked out from under her and her hands yanked behind her back as she fell.

Cassie cuffed the girl's hands behind her back then cuffed her feet together.

The Farsh-nuke stared at her, horrified.

"What?" said Cassie. "You saw her, she consented."

The Farsh-nuke groaned and shook his head as he went over to examine a display where a load of foot high Lisa stood standing with a fixed expression of happiness on their faces.

"Extraordinary aren't they?" said a soft spoken middle class English woman.

The Farsh-nuke nodded then looked up at her.

She was a tall arabic looking woman with head scarf.

He extended a hand by way of greeting. "Pleasure to meet you. What are you here for?"

She shook his hand enthusiastically. "Pleasure to meet you to. I'm being purchased actually."

"You mean you're..." Farsh-nuke gestured vaguely about the store.

She chuckled. "Yes, I'm a Lisa. One of the rare trans-cultural versions. My owner's just over there. Bald guy with the swahtika tattoo, do you see?"

The Farsh-nuke looked where she indicated then balked. "Isn't he like a high ranking member of Britain first? Don't they hate muslims?"

"Undoubtedly." She said with a smirk of satisfaction.

The Farsh-nuke was appalled. "Oh shit, is there anything I can do?"

She shook her head laughing. "I like the pain. I mean look at your girl over there-"

The Farsh-nuke looked to where Cassie had bound the shop girl up and was sitting on her.

"- We like pain and humiliation. It's how the Bam-Kursh chooses us and makes us. And also why we sell so well. The one individual in a googleplexian of universes who can be counted on to consent to the most grave and atrocious of man's desires."

The Farsh-nuke stared at her. "Can I buy you from him?"

"No..." said the woman with good humour yet firmness.

"Alright..." said the Farsh-nuke. "How do you suppose she does it then? Shrinks them? My girl over there loves the idea of being shrunk."

The woman laughed. "You think I know? I'm just the produce, mate."

The Farsh-nuke sighed then he pulled out a pad of paper and a pen and started writing something.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“Satisfying my conscience...” said the Farsh-nuke as he finished writing then handed it to her. “This is the address of a friend of mine you can go to for help. I understand that this might be what you want right now but incase it ever stops being that, know that you are not alone.”

She nodded, stowing the note. “That’s very kind, thank you. Who are you if I may ask?”

The Farsh-nuke looked her in the eyes and said with a surprising amount of intensity. “I’m the Farsh-nuke and I eat fuckers like that for breakfast. Bigotry has no place in the 21st century.”

She stared at him, in awe. “You’re a Farsh-nuke? Then? Then have you seen him?”

The Farsh-nuke held her gaze for a long moment then grinned. “Of course! He’s just champion!”

She smiled with satisfaction as he walked off.

The Farsh-nuke hissed in Cassie’s ear “Come on, let the girl go. If we want to find out about the shrinking we’ve got to speak to the Bam-Kursh.”

As the Farsh-nuke and Cassie followed after the shop girl once more the bald guy turned from his business and cried “Where did that paki bitch get to!?”

The trans-cultural toy girl embraced her knew owner warmly. “Here, my love.”

“No fucking speaking,” snarled her owner.

She nodded and smiled as he hit her.

*

Liso led Emma and Lisa into a department lined with men and women of all shapes and sizes, frozen in position.

“As you can see we have Lisas to represent all possible demographics.” explained Liso. “Fat ones, short ones, old ones, ones disabled in a variety of different ways. Trans-Gender Lisas you already know

about of course but we also have Trans-Racial and Trans-Cultural Lisas incase you ever fancy owning a short, fat, black, blind, old, Catholic Lisa. We also do agender, anti-theist and conservative Lisas but those models don't sell so well so we'll have to order them if you want one."

Emma stared at him. "The Conservative Lisas don't sell well?"

Liso smirked. "Yes I can see why that might be confusing but or research shows that when people buy a Lisa they are buying someone they can dominate and humiliate and Conservatives don't tend to go in for that so much. I suppose because they can do enough of that in their day to day lives. Our Labour, Lib Dem and SNP Lisa sdo sell incredibly well by contrast."

Lisa stared at Liso and sighed gleefully. "He's so smart..."

Liso chuckled. "Funny thing actually we do get customers complaining when their toys are too smart so we offer a service whereby we can reduce the intelligence of a toy and even render them completely without agency or self awareness. Very popular with corporations who wish to promote people in the interests of appearing unbiased without affecting the actual power the old white men have."

Lisa grinned. "So you could completely remove my ability to think?"

Liso nodded, "Would you like that?"

Lisa thought for a moment then said. "I think I'd prefer to have you make me obey you."

Emma groaned then started scanning the displays.

Liso embraced Lisa. "You want to be dominated?"

Lisa, smiled, blushing. "Could you destroy me?"

Liso reached his left hand round to her pert bum as he held her face in his right hand and examined her features. "I could try..."

Lisa grinned.

Emma cried “Found it!”

Liso left Lisa in the lurch and stalked her to Emma.

Emma was looking at a Lisa with hair tied back in a pony tail, reading glasses on her face, a tablet pc in one arm and a smart phone in the other hand.

“Ahh... That’s our Artificial Intelligence Developer Lisa. Very niche. Very expensive.” said Liso.

Emma nodded. “Do you have the original?”

Liso looked at her. “There’s no difference. Every Lisa is the same as the original down to the subatomic level. Indeed philosophically there is no difference.”

“But do you have it?” asked Emma. “I want the original and I will pay whatever you ask for it.”

Liso stared at Emma for a long moment then sighed. “I’ll see if we have it.”

*

The shop girl led the Farsh-nuke and Cassie to an imposing looking door. She knocked. “Maam your 3:30 appointment is here.”

“Come in!” boomed a powerful scottish voice.

They entered.

A tall craggy faced woman with flame red hair was recling in an office chair, her feet on the desk as a Lisa, in a short pink skirt and croptop, stood behind her, massaging her neck. The Lisa in question had been decapitated and her head was in the lap of the imposing woman, being stroked.

The imposing woman barked to the shop girl “Sit down!”

The shop girl found a seat on a sofa in the corner of the room.

The imposing woman flicked a small metal wand out of her sleeve and swishjed it at the shop girl.

“There, switched off. You can have her back when business is concluded.” then she looked at the stunned faces of her guests and added. “Oh, where are my manners? Allow me to introduce myself. I am the Bam-Kursh, I make the toys.”

Cassie swallowed. So this was the woman her professor had been so scarred by...

The Farsh-nuke shook her hand. “Jeff, pleased to meet you.”

The Bam-Kursh nodded. “Pleased to meet you, Jeff. How do you like the store? Very multicultural don’t you think?”

The Farsh-nuke frowned. “Honestly? I think it’s the most disgusting display of capitalistic exploitation I have ever seen.”

“Why thank you.” said the Bam-Kursh cheerily. “I do try to create a space my customers feel right at home in. Now, what can I do for you?”

Cassie was frozen with fear. It was suddenly all too real.

The Farsh-nuke smiled. “Actually, I was wondering, how do you shrink the toys?”

“Oh I don’t.” said the Bam-Kursh with a smile then she chucked her Lisa’s head back onto her shoulders and rose from her chair to stand opposite the Farsh-nuke. “You see you can’t shrink people. It’s impossible, even by rewriting reality, but what you can do is...” She flicked out her metal wand again and pointed it at Cassie. “Grab hold of a toy’s soul and just gently snip it from their body so you can implant in an inanimate object.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded, smiling earnestly. “Nice idea, I’ll have to try it some time.”

“Haha maybe...” said the Bam-Kursh and now she was smiling maliciously and looking at the Farsh-nuke like he was a tasty morsel of food. “You really have to be the stupidest Farsh-nuke I have ever encountered and I turned one of you into toy. By the way, how do you like my Quantum Oscillator. I don’t suppose you have one yet.”

She aimed the metal wand at the Farsh-nuke.

*

Liso proudly unveiled the original Artificial Intelligence Developer Lisa as Emma and Lisa watched on.

“This is definitely the original?” asked Emma.

“From her own private collection.” said Liso with a smug smile.

Emma nodded and hummed.

Lisa embraced him. “Oh Liso, you’re brilliant you know. You really are amazing.”

Liso looked deep into her eyes. “I believe we were talking about the possibility of me dominating you?”

Lisa giggled. “Yes. Yes. Yes...”

Liso kissed Lisa tentatively then started snogging her.

Emma sliced open Lisa’s back and pulled out the prototype Quantum Oscillator, aimed it at the Lisa on display and activated the appropriate harmonics programme.

The developer Lisa blinked as her mind was restored. “What’s-? Where-? Who-?”

“Your friend Charlotte sent me. You’re going home.” said Emma.

The developer Lisa was silent for a moment then she nodded. “Okay...”

Lisa pulled back from Liso. “Go home with them.”

“What?” said Liso.

“By now the Farsh-nuke will have killed the Bam-Kursh, I’m just going to go get him. You go home with Emma.” said Lisa.

“But-” began Liso.

“Now!” said Lisa firmly.

Lisa reluctantly nodded and followed after Emma and the other Lisa.

*

The Farsh-nuke flung backwards out the door by the Bam-Kursh as Lisa approached along the corridor.

“No!” cried Lisa. “You do not get to do that to my boyfriend!”

The Bam-Kursh laughed. “What’s this? Barbie come to save the day? Fuck off, you little plastic princess or I’ll break you!!!”

Lisa shook her head defiantly, staring down the Bam-Kursh as she approached. “I am not a toy. I am a woman and I am a human and I will not let you hurt the people I love! You know nothing of love or companionship! All you ever see are pawns to manipulate or toys to play with! That end now!”

The Bam-Kursh cackled. “Honey, I made you, I can break you and you forget I built you with a fucked off switch!”

The Bam-Kursh flicked her wrist triumphantly and -

Nothing happened.

She tried again.

Still nothing.

A third time.

The Bam-Kursh looked down her sleeve and started patting down her pockets.

“I consented it’s true and I do genuinely love the life I have now but I turned you down.” said Lisa. “I turned you down and you manipulated me. You used me and twisted me and remade me as you saw fit. This whole store is testament to your greed and arrogance and abusive control over other beings. You are vile and despicable and I hate you.”

Lisa was face to face with the Bam-Kursh now. “But the worst part is I still love you and there is nothing I want more than to feel your strong hands about my neck again. I want you more than life itself.”

The Bam-Kursh nodded, understanding. “I never claimed to be a nice person, Lisa. I know I’m a monster. I know what I do and what I like is wrong. That’s why I’m better than HIM. I am honest about who and what I am. I am arrogant, imperialistic, materialistic, manipulative, dominating and eldritch. The fact that I use those things to try and further the war against the Septagonoids and the cold war against the Logicios is just a concession to pragmatic morality. I can’t exist if the Septagonoids succeed in wiping out all reality and I can’t exist if the people who successfully hunt down Farsh-nukes are free to focus their iron fist upon me. I know I’m evil and I have never claimed be any otherwise and I will fix this and find a way to make it up to you.”

Lisa smiled. “That’s- That’s amazing. Thank you.”

The Bam-Kursh grabbed the back of Lisa’s head with her left hand then rammed the index and middle fingers of her right hand into Lisa’s eyes. The Bam-Kursh kicked Lisa’s legs out from under her, bent her body backwards upon her legs then stomped upon her chest so hard her ribs cracked. Then the Bam-Kursh removed her favoured superfine cutting wire and dismembered Lisa to ensure she would not be able to cause further harm.

The Bam-Kursh rose from the dismembered toy girl and turned to where her Lisa was holding the Quantum Oscillator.

“I just wanted you to give her a chance and hear her out.” said the original Lisa Barbarella Watkins.

The Bam-Kursh nodded. “It’s okay. I understand and I love you so I’m not going to kill you but give me the Quantum Oscillator, there’s a good girl.”

“Oh Witch!”

The Bam-Kursh turned her head to see the right hand of Jeff clenched into a fist heading towards her. She hit the deck.

Jeff shook his hand rubbed his knuckles to ease the pain. "There's two of us in here."

The original Lisa stared at him. "You're the Farsh-nuke aren't you? You're the man who offered to keep me as a sylph?"

Jeff chuckled. "Well technically, that's the other guy, I'm just the host personality but yeah... I sort of did asnd I do for what it's worth. My Lisa... She's a very good girl and I love her very much."

The original Lisa nodded. "You came here to kill the Bam-Kursh didn't you?"

"Well... That was sort of the plan." said Jeff apologetically. "But in a weird way I'd be dead if it wasn't for the Bam-Kursh so if you can just chuck me that Quantum Oscillator so I can resurrect my girls I'll bve on my way."

"You wouldn't know how to work it." said the original Lisa then she flicked the Quantum Oscillator in the direction of the frozen shop girl and said. "There's a dismembered Lisa outside, put her back together then help her take other girl home. You belong to him now, he'll take good care of you."

The shop girl nodded and went about her orders.

Jeff nodded. "Cheers."

The original Lisa chucked him the Quantum Oscillator. "Take it. Learn to use it."

"What about you?" asked Jeff. "I can't just leave you here."

The original Lisa laughed. "If you take me nothing will save you. I'll be alright."

Jeff stared at her, incredulous. "I remember growing up with her in the nothingness. She is vile. She will punish you for his."

“I know.” said the original Lisa cheerily. “She’ll beat me and dissect me and roast me and electrocute me and leave me trapped conscious but immobile for god knows how long but that’s okay I’ll live and sooner or later things will be back to normal.”

Jeff frowned then shook his head. “I wish I could help. I really really wish I could help.”

“Live a good life, Jeff.” said the original Lisa. “And look after your girls for me. Just knowing that somewhere I’m safe with you will be enough.”

Jeff hugged the original Lisa and kissed her on the forehead. “I won’t forget you. I will never forget you. Goodbye, my girl.”

Jeff’s Lisa land a hand on his shoulder. “We’ve gotta go, before the alarm is raised.”

Jeff nodded and left the original Lisa to face the wrath of the Bam-Kursh alone.

*

As they fled from the Bam-Kursh’s toy emporium and made it to Emma’s cloaked transport both the Farsh-nuke and Jeff were silent and deep in thought.

The transport looked like an upturned metal steam punk boat barely bigger than a caravan but inside it was a vast minimalistic Apple Macintosh fanatic pleasing design. All clean lines rounded edges and gleaming white.

Emma ran to the control station and put of a fancy helmet and gloves.

Lisa and the shop girl carried Cassie over to a stasis pod then strapped themselves into seats.

The Artificial Inteligence Developer Lisa and Liso found their way to a couple of seats with five point safety harnesses then proceeded to quietly wonder about just what the fuck had happened and what they were supposed to do now.

The Farsh-nuke/Jeff made it to a chair and buckled in then stared out out of the view port absently as his minhd silently raced.

The transport was powered by cold fusion, hydrogen fuel cells, solar power, wind power and in a pinch cycling machines. this electricity naturally powered life support, lights and shipboard computers but it also powered Quantum Oscillators dotted about the hull of the ship which allowed for fine control, manouvering and faster than light travel.

Emma directed the transport to lift up into the air and turn invisible.

Lisa asked "What do we do?"

Liso looked across at her from his seat aand yelled. "You mean you don't know!? I altered the course of y life for you and you don't have a plan!?"

"Well, no. That's not my role in this." said Lisa. "I'm just the subby girl."

"Oh fantastic!" said Liso. "I've been stolen by a woman without any idea what she's doing!"

"I'm not saying there isn't a plan. I just don't have it." said Lisa.

The Artificial Intelligence Developer Lisa said "I thought we were going home to see Charlie."

"Who the fuck is Charlie?" asked Lisa.

The shop girl chimed in. "I don't care. I know my place I'm just a toy."

"Shut up." said Jeff quietly.

"Shut up." said the Farsh-nuke more loudly.

"Just shut the fuck up all 4 of you prattling simpletons!" cried Jeff and the Farsh-nuke together.

The room became deathly silent.

The elder god explained. "We have stolen from the Bam-Kursh and she s going to come for us. Now we are running and we will try to hide but she will find us and she will come for us."

“So what do we do?” asked Liso.

.”I don’t know.” said the elder god. “I am not entirely sure there is anything we can do. She is so powerful and she has an army of toys and all the most powerful people in the country.”

“Shit.” said Liso.

Lisa shook her head. “Don’t you dare give up Farsh-nuke! We need you! You are the only person who can tell us how to defeat her!”

The elder god snapped angrily. “Don’t you think I know that!?”

In that moment Lisa was terrified of him.

The Farsh-nuke shrank away from his body in shame and Jeff ranked his hands with his face as he groaned. “We are so fucked!”

“NO!!!” cried Emma. She pulled off her helmet and gloves and stalked over to where the once great man sat, broken. “No. You are the Farsh-nuke. You are the man who makes the impossible probable. You founded the Logicios. You are the Champion of the Sylphs You use women like tools well look around you, there are 5 women just in this room and more back where we’re going. You are not alone. You are not without hope or friends. Think of something.”

Jeff stared at the old woman. “How old are you Emma? How many campaigns have you been on?”

Emma looked into Jeff’s eyes, they weren’t even green anymore. Okay then. “I am three million, six hundred and sixty six thousand, seven hundred and eighty six years old. I have been on trillions of missions.”

“Impressive.” said Jeff. “The Farsh-nuke and the Bam-Kursh have personally eradicated all life on ten trillion universes,” He smiled a big toothy grin. “And now she has money, resources, an army and very powerful friends.”

“Just try.” said Emma. “I know it’s hard but try.”

Jeff shrugged. "There's no point. We're fucked."

Lisa realized something as he said that. "You can't think of a way to fight this because all you can think about is how you could have killed her."

Emma staggered backwards, winded by the words. "Is this true?"

Jeff stared at her but said nothing.

Lisa nodded. "He knocked her out cold and said we should run."

Emma collapsed backwards into a chair. "You let her live..."

Jeff nodded. "I'm not a killer."

Emma cried "You've killed us all!!!"

Jeff grimaced and slammed his fist into the palm of his other hand. Then he shook his head and snarled. "No!" He caught himself and said with a tranquil fury. "She was out cold. She wasn't going to do harm to anyone. I was not just about to execute her."

Emma glared at him and said coldly. "It would have been the more moral thing to do."

Jeff laughed. "Oh it really really wouldn't!" He stared at her. "I am the Farsh-nuke's restraining bolt. I am his conscience. I am the voice that whispers in his ear and tells him 'No more'. The lives of me, you, the Lisas, Liso, Cassie, the girls, Charlie and Omega? Nothing compared to the danger an unrestrained Farsh-nuke poses."

Emma shook her head, furious. "No. You can be stopped. The SLF would stop you. the Logicios would stop you."

"No, they wouldn't." said Jeff. "The Farsh-nuke is not dangerous because he kills people. He's dangerous because he can make a semi-convincing argument that it's justified. If I killed the Bam-Kursh then he would be in good with the SLF, the United Civilisations of the Multiverse is already run by one of his pawns, the Logicios see him as their leader to a certain extent even if they didn't he

would have access to the combined might of the UCMm the SLF and the Bam-Kursh's toy factories. Oh and of course Omega and the dawning of robot kind. The Farsh-nuke would be unstoppable."

Emma stared at him. "The people would see through it. They would know the danger you posed."

Jeff chuckled sadly. "The people never think that they might be the victim of their weapons. This is why dictators are so popular, why there'd be violent revolution if the government ever outright realized the ridiculousness of the second amendment. You never think that a thing which kills your enemies might kill you. At least the Bam-Kursh knows she's evil and is proud of it. No one is ever going to be fooled that the Bam-Kursh is a hero to be trusted with power."

"Shit." said Emma. "You're right."

Jeff nodded. "I don't get to win this. I can't win this. It's over. Fucking game over."

There was silence for a long moment as the weight of the realization settled upon everyone.

Lisa studied Jeff's face for a long moment. This was definitely a different man to the Farsh-nuke who had been there for her at the end of her natural life but there was something eerily familiar about him that shouldn't quite place. Something about his posture and the set of his face.. "You can move past this, Farsh-nuke."

The broken man looked at her with old eyes. "How? How?"

"You've done it before." said Lisa. "You are not the first Farsh-nuke I've seen with that expression."

The broken man closed his eyes and winced. "Thanks... Because I needed another reason to shove a dagger in my chest."

"You lived through it." said Lisa. "You survived. You rebuilt your life and started again. you can do this."

The broken man stared at her and he groaned as the green returned to his eyes. "Sometimes admitting defeat is just so tempting because of how easy it would be but when the fuck have I ever deserved an easy life."

Lisa smiled.

The Farsh-nuke nodded, a weak smile on his face.

Emma looked up at him, frowning as she studied him.

Liso asked “So what are we going to do?”

The Farsh-nuke thought for a moment then said “We’re going to fight.”

“How?” asked Emma.

The Farsh-nuke grinned. “You know those girls you let me keep?”

Emma nodded.

“They’re weresharks.” said the Farsh-nuke with mischievous glee.

*

Cassie strolled before the girls as they stood lined up in their bikinis.

Stephanie and Jessica stood together holding hands.

“Now girls I know that you are used to a certain kind of lifestyle and that’s okay. That’s what we like.” said Cassie. “But a storm is coming and we need you to fight so this is what is going to happen. You are going to fight each other. The winner will get two of their hearts removed and they will be left to grow into duplicates who will join you in fighting. So pick a partner, shark out and try to prone them. The only things you are not allowed to do is destroy a heart or brain other than that. Have fun. Anyone who doesn’t have a partner can fight me.”

Tabitha stuck up a hand. “And what if you don’t have someone to fight with yourself?”

Cassie smiled. “I’m glad you asked me that question.”

Cassie whistled and a skinny woman with long blonde hair and a couple of daggers carved from human thigh bones revealed herself. "This is a recent acquisition of ours and she also needs to fight but unlike us -" Cassie punched the woman in the chest then pulled her hand back to reveal her still beating heart. "She does not need to be treated with such care."

Stephanie and Jessica turned to each other.

Stephanie smirked. "Looks like our relationship is finally going to take a turn for the physical."

Jessica snorted. "Yeah, well not in the way that I had hoped."

They shared a look and chuckled.

One by one the young women burst their bikinis as they grew into hulking great weresharks.

Stephanie and Jessica looked at each other hungrily. Both very aware of how glorious it would be lose and witness two more of the other.

Stephanie threw the first punch.

Jessica caught it with her hand then slashed at her bell with her claws.

Stephanie chuckled "Oh honey, we both know I'm the more tempting foursome."

Stephanie kicked Jessica's left leg out from under her."

Jessica bit down hard on Stephanie's foot and she screamed as she fell backwards.

Jessica rolled on top of her punhing her repeatedly in the face. "Sorry, hun. I'm doing this for you. you deserve to have more of me to ogle."

*

Back on the Emma's transport as they flew home earlier, Liso said "But what about the Bam-Kursh's transport capabilities? I mean she could nuke us from orbit or just teleport us into the sun."

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “But we do have an edge we didn’t have before...”

He waved his brand new Quantum Oscillator.

*

Omega looked at the Farsh-nuke like he was mad. Zee really had come on leaps and bounds since the early crude attempts at using the drone. “After going to extreme lengths to ensure I don’t take over the world. Things like destroying technology that was plugged into me, denying me a bluetooth adapter, wifi adapter or ethernet connection and never leaving me alone with a device capable of accessing the internet. Now you want to give me a device capable of rewriting reality? You are going to physically plug it into me so I can personally operate it at the code level, leave me alone with it, ask me to make it more powerful and produce more to arm me with?”

“Yes, exactly.” said the Farsh-nuke grinning as he connected the prototype Quantum Oscillator up to Omega’s drone. “And you know all those spare parts we’ve got? Do you reckon that if we turn them into functional drones you’ll be able to make use of them?”

“Well yes-” began Omega.

“Excellent!” said the Farsh-nuke, patting Omega’s drone on the back then he stood aside to reveal Lisa. “Now this little thing will be here to help you if there is anything you need but I want you focus on killing her okay? Pull her limbs apart, crush her bones, run her over. Her job is to be your target dummy as you learn to destroy.”

Omega cried “But I’m supposed to be pacifist.”

“She’ll live!” cried the Farsh-nuke as he left.

Lisa giggled as Omega gave a very human sigh,

*

On Emma’s transport, the Artificial Intelligence Developer asked “What about Charlie? Last time I saw her she was in tears. What fuck is she going to do when the Bam-Kursh attacks?”

The Farsh-nuke chuckled. “Oh... She’s uh- She’s not the fragile shing she once was...”

*

Charlotte was waiting for the Farsh-nuke as the transport arrived.

The doors opened and Lisa and the shop girl carried Cassie out and into building.

Liso and Emma rushed past.

The Farsh-nuke exited and greeted Charlotte.

“I got your message about ordering the supplies and preparing to make more drones and Quantum Oscillators. What happened?”

The Artificial Intelligence Developer Lisa stepped out.

She and Charlotte caught sight of each other and shared a look then they hugged and the Lisa asked “What happened to you, Charlie?”

Charlotte choked back tears and shook her head sadly. “I didn’t like losing you.”

Her Lisa nodded then looked her in the eyes and said “Well I am not leaving your side ever again.”

Charlotte smiled and ran a hand through her Lisa’s hair. “You’re just as beautiful I remember...”

Her Lisa blushed.

Charlotte held the young woman close to her and looked at the Farsh-nuke with intense relief and gratitude. “How can I ever repay you? You’ve gotten me everything I have ever dreamed of.”

The Farsh-nuke gave a thin proud smile and nodded. “I’m glad you’re happy.”

Charlotte froze. “But?”

“The Bam-Kursh is coming.” said the Farsh-nuke.

The Farsh-nuke realized he was seeing fear on Charlotte's face for the first time ever. This was not pragmatic concern or discomfort. This was genuine paralysing terror.

The Farsh-nuke held her gaze and said very calmly. "This is where we make our stand. I need everybody to mount a defense. We need Quantum Oscillators and we need drones and we need you and her to make them."

Charlotte swallowed then nodded. "Okay. I can do that. We can do that."

"And I need you to fight her every single day so that when they come you are both ready." said the Farsh-nuke.

Charlotte's heart plummeted. "I can't..."

Her Lisa hugged her tight, listening to her old friend's heart beat. "You can and you will. It's okay, I know who you are and I know what that means for me."

Charlotte started crying and the Farsh-nuke walked away.

*

Earlier as they continued their discussion on the transport, Liso asked. "So what are you going to do? I mean while all this is going on?"

The Farsh-nuke studied Liso for a moment then asked "How strong are you?"

"What the fuck does that have to do with anything?" said Liso.

*

The Farsh-nuke found Cassie in the medical wing with Lisa and the shop girl.

"I don't know what's wrong with her." said Lisa. "According to the machines she's perfectly healthy yet she isn't responding."

The Farsh-nuke nodded and waved his Quantum Oscillator over Cassie. “Her soul’s been disconnected.”

“So what do we do?” asked Lisa.

The Farsh-nuke thought for a long moment then said “I need to practise...”

He started looking round the medical wing looking for something, anything, he could practise on. He found a carbon fibre mockup of a human skeleton hanging from a stand. He wheeled it round then looked between Lisa and the shop girl.

“New girl...” he decided.

“Yes...?” asked the shop girl.

“I’m going to run a little test, don’t freak.” said the Farsh-nuke.

“Okay...” said the shop girl.

The Farsh-nuke reached out to her soul with the Quantum Oscillator. He snipped it from her body then spun round and overlaid it on the skeleton. Fusing it to the joints. “Now, clasp your hands.”

The skeleton clapped its hands.

Lisa stared. “You put her soul inside the skeleton?”

The Farsh-nuke nodded, grinning from ear to ear, then he reached out to her soul again, snipped it free and returned it to her body.

When it was done the shop girl gasped with relief.

The Farsh-nuke turned his attention to Cassie, he reached out to her soul and reconnected the severed bonds.

Cassie screamed.

The Farsh-nuke was by her side in a moment. “Hush! Hush... It’s okay... It’s okay... You’re safe...”

Cassie was clearly terrified but she nodded. “What’s happenning?”

“We’re getting ready for war. The Bam-Kursh is coming.” said the Farsh-nuke.

“Shit...” said Cassie.

“But you do get the girl from the shop to keep you company.” said the Farsh-nuke.

Cassie sat up and admired the slight toy girl. “Okay, I can work with this.”

The Farsh-nuke swept out of the medical wing and headed to he bedroom.

Liso was waiting for him, shirtless. He threw himself at the Farsh-nuke.

The Farsh-nuke ducked then stamped on Liso’s ribs.

Liso pulled his leg out from under him then traddled him punching his face repeatedly.

The Farsh-nuke fumbled with the Quantum Oscillator for a moment then gave up and clonked him over the head with it. Liso’s scream of rage must have been picked up by the Quantum Oscillators telepathic circuits as it unleashed a blast of fiery plasma into the air above their heads.

Liso fell back, panting. “Okay so that thing is more impressive than I realised.”

The Farsh-nuke nodded, chuckling. He got to his feet, pulled Liso to his feet then punche him in the face.

*

Back on Emma’s transport as they returned Liso stared at the Farsh-nuke. “You - You really want dominate me every day?”

“I want to practise my fighting skills. There is a difference.” said the Farsh-nuke.

Liso sighed, shaking his head. “Whatever you say, bub.”

Emma said “Well that’s all well and good but it still won’t be enough.”

“That’s why we’re going to call for backup.” said the Farsh-nuke.

“How?” asked Emma.

*

The Farsh-nuke sat at a desk before a blank wall. “Good morning, men. Allow me to introduce myself. I am the Farsh-nuke and I have something truly terrifying to reveal to you. God is an evil woman and she is descending on America as we speak. Your politicians have been lying to you about a big secret and it isn’t that aliens have invaded, that the black people are out breeding you or Anita Sarkesian, Emma Watson and Elizabeth Warren are a secret witches coven plotting to overthrow mankind and name Laura K Buzz Queen of ther world but keep masturbating those fantasies if you wish.”

The Farsh-nuke paused momentarily to let the joke settle in then said. “The United States of America is part of a United Multiverse asnd there is a great and terrible war going on. To raise money for this war the goddess Bam-Kursh has been kidnapping, brainwashing cloning and selling men and women. This is a conspiracy that stretches across the western world. Tories whipping Lib Dem rent boys, Republicans getting their satisfactions from trans gender toy boys, Democrats dominating women for pleasure and the far right buying mass produced muslim brides to abuse. All your political parties are involved in this gross abuse of power.”

The Farsh-nuke let the words settle in before continuing “There is however hope. I live in a part of America that is outside of Federal and EU control and I intend to make a stand for Life, Liberty, Truth, Justice and the right of all living things to have agency and independence. It is time to make use of the rights granted to you as American Citizens to bear arms and form a militia! Descend upon my position with arms and ammunition and you will be welcommed with open arms. We have all the food and power you could want.”

The Farsh-nuke fell silent again for a moment to collect his thoughts before continuing. “To the authorities that may be watching. I have incontrovertible proof. You know my name. You know what I can do. I am hoping that you will be sane enough to stay out of this because I am terrified of the Bam-

Kursh and I am not ashamed to admit that but I am not scared of you. I will destroy you if I need to. First by educating the public, then by displaying proof and unleashing information you would prefer was carefully controlled into the world and finally if I have to I will eat you alive. Don't try me. Let me be merciful. just this once."

The recording stopped.

Liso stared at him. "You're bluffing, right?"

"Nope." said the Farsh-nuke. "We need all the help we can get and if that means raising the nutters of the world to our defence then we must do it."

*

A month passed without sign of the Bam-Kursh.

The wereshark girls vastly increased in number and fighting skill.

Charlotte and her Lisa built a good forty drones and prototype Quantum Oscillators, with the Farsh-nuke helping out when he could.

Omega began to understand the homebrew Quantum Oscillators and got practised at coordinating fighting with multiple different drones at the same time. Zee became so adept at dismembering Lisa, crushing and otherwise destroying Lisa that all 4 of the toys would work together to try and take zed on.

The Farsh-nuke kept up the videos and would fight with Liso three times a day, honing his skill with the new Quantum Oscillator whenever he could.

There were a few moments of political tension which resulted in the Farsh-nuke doing videos showing off the weresharks, the healing abilities of the toys and the nature of the Quantum Oscillator but things died down once the leader of the Conservative party in Great Britain was eaten alive. After that there was just the occasional drone bomber which was a fine test of Omega's ability to coordinate multiple drones of his own to use Quantum Oscillators to catch and defuse the bomb in mid air.

People started turning up with guns offering to help. Eventually a kind of shantyway town formed

around the perimeter of the estate as people migrated to the place that was offering free food and power. The fact the food was sylph meet didn't seem to bother them, especially once rumours spread of its apparent healing capabilities.

The Farsh-nuke started to become a kind of cult leader, a populist demagogue holding out against the government as everyone waited for the end of the world.

Then she attacked...

*

Muslim women and old Jewish guys started finding their way into the camps. Always just one two every mile or so. Never enough to be noticed but always enough to strike. The Bam-Kursh knew people. It was her skill and why the toys sold so well. She knew weaknesses of the militia movement. How easy their prejudices could be exploited.

The Jewish men would strike by stealing from the needy. The Muslim women would blow up the children. Exactly what the bigots expected, exactly what the progressives would dismiss and who would notice or care to notice the truth of someone noticing that all the muslim women who performed the atrocities looked the same and all the jews who stole looked the same.

The militia shanty town tore itself to pieces out of paranoia. All those guns. All those bullets and not a single one hit the guilty.

As the Farsh-nuke's militia shot each other to pieces he got his team ready.

The Bam-Kursh sent a diverse mix of toys hammer on his door, begging for mercy and refuge. When the doors were opened the weresharks slaughtered them mercilessly. He was taking no chances.

Omega was operating forty two drones at the same time now. The drones were laced in key defensive positions. Omega was to be the eyes and ears of the operation. Coordinating the siege.

Charlotte, Cassie and the Farsh-nuke were each acting as roving mechanics whose primary role was in taking down hostile invading forces but were to come to the aid of a drone should it be needed.

Charlotte's Lisa stayed behind to monitor the mainframe of Omega and was protected by 4 Omega

drones.

Lisa, the shop girl and Liso were on the ground as roving aids. Their job wasn't to fight unless they were certain they could neutralise a threat. Their job was to fight fires. The drones were precious, they had the all important Quantum Oscillators and because of their bulk they weren't as manoeuvrable but the toys could go anywhere and survive anything. At least that was the rationale.

The Bam-Kursh tried dropping a meteor on them. Omega caught it, just.

The Farsh-nuke spoke through Omega's drones. "Bam-Kursh, I let you live once I am prepared to do so again. Lets just talk. Please!"

The Bam-Kursh sent a swarm of heavily armed Lisas next. Plasma rifles burned through the hearts of the weresharks, thinning the herd. The weresharks still took them down but as more Lisas came and more weresharks fell, some Lisas slipped through the gaps and managed to take out the odd drone. They would be taken down of course but overtime they only got weaker.

One in every 50 Lisas had orders that once through, they were to discard their uniforms and resist attacking the enemy instead they were to infiltrate and hide. With so much going on and it happening so infrequently it went unnoticed and if they were caught, so what? They'd be dismembered and neutralised but the others would still be safe.

It was a war of attrition where the odds were very much tipped in the Bam-Kursh's favour as she was producing new Lisas at a rate of ten trillion units per second. The toys didn't need sleep, didn't need to be rebooted or maintained.

By the time the first day came to a close. Three Lisas had successfully infiltrated. The next day they would try to escape. Maybe 1 in 10 Lisas who successfully infiltrated would be able to successfully leave to be taken up by the Bam-Kursh and have their memories scanned but each time this happened their memories would be added to the Lisas that were sent out to fight.

Wave after wave, hour after hour, the weresharks would fall, the drones would suffer damage and the enemy Lisas would know the terrain more and more. They learned the blind spots of the drones, weaknesses of the weresharks. Even the Farsh-nuke, Charlotte and the Lisas ceased to have any kind of practical advantage as the Lisas as a collective learned when they were likely to be jumped from

behind, blasted from a window or taken out by an enemy Lisa.

By the third day things were looking incredibly dire but then the military arrived they formed a perimeter some ways away from the estate. They had noticed how the Lisas would materialise in swarms around the estate and they started firing at them. This drastically reduced the numbers coming into the estate meaning that half as many drones and weresharks were needed to defend it. This bought time for wereshark hearts to be harvested and allowed to grow. It bought time for repairs to the drones. The Farsh-nuke was able to put out a video requesting drone supplies as that was all they really needed. The Farsh-nuke and charlotter were even abnle to get some half decent sleep.

On the fourth day his video was heeded and thanks to the military perimeter things were so quiet that enough wereshark hearts were harvested to put them ahead of when things began. The drones were patched up and ten more built, ready to be plugged in.

The Bam-Kursh changed tactic. She would materialise half the Lisas in the air and started materialising Lisas to attack and distract the army and this time the Lisa would not sneak back out, instead they would stay and sabotage.

Again with the war of attrition. The Bam-Kursh had lost far more Lisas were wereshark or drone taken out now but that was okay, she was winning again. Her Lisas managed to take out and replaced the Farsh-nuke's two Lisa's without being seen. She had agents inside, working against her to maintain their cover but now damage was able to accumulate. When Liso realised what was going on he was taken out too.

Now the damage really started to accumulate. Drones started malfunctioning. Omega's omniscience of the situation faltered the only people who could fully see what was going on were the Farsh-nuke, Cassie, Charlotte and the weresharks but everyone was too busy fighting to notice was was going on. The Lisas had the run of the place.

Omega and Charlotte's Lisa decided to start broadcasting what was happening from their remaining drones. The Farsh-nuke pleaded for help.

Military and civilian forces did everything they could to help but by day 8 most of the drones and weresharks were gone.

Then a fleet of ships materialised above the estate. Emma's voice rang out from loudspeakers. "People of Earth do not be alarmed! We are the Sylph Liberation Front and we have witnessed your struggle to protect a champion of social justice! We are here to help!"

Omega broadcast the look of utter shock and joy on the Farsh-nuke's face as he cried "Emma, you beautiful bitch! The fucking feminazis have come to save the day! Callooh! Callay!"

The ships landed and old woman in green suits with plasma shotguns poured out. They flooded the estate. Neutralising every last Lisa. They repaired and replaced the drones and they had the original wereshark girls who had already been having their hearts harvested to fill the number of the Farsh-nuke's forces. The SLF took over the defensive perimeter as the weresharks and drones were restored to full strength.

The Farsh-nuke was greeted by Emma and the original wereshark girls.

"You came back! You actually came back!" he cried ecstatically.

The original Jessica with her memories restored nodded. "You could have killed us but you didn't. You chose to let this happen instead of risking becoming the very danger we were sent to stop. You have shown yourself worthy of our trust, respect and loyalty."

The original Stephanie nodded. "You looked after us. You kept us safe and gave us love. Now is our turn to return the favour."

The Farsh-nuke was awed by what he felt as undeserving praise.

Emma clapped then said "Farsh-nuke, it is my honour to bestow upon you the Pankhurst Cross for services to social justice even in the face of overwhelming odds. You have rank of general, you can command any flotilla of SLF ships you wish and, if we make it through this, we have decided to voluntarily grant you ourselves."

"Come again?" said the Farsh-nuke.

Stephanie said. "Agency is a right, it can be freely given up. We give ours to you."

Jessica nodded, “It’s our right to do as we wish with our bodies and we choose to pledge them to you for you to do as you wish.”

The Farsh-nuke stared at them.

Emma hugged him. “If you can win this. you deserve this.”

*

For two days the Bam-Kursh’s attack pattern remained the same. There were losses among the weresharks and drones but with fresh blood to watch over the battlefield Charlotte Cassie and the Farsh-nuke each got a chance to each some good food, have a hot shower, sleep deep and feel human again.

The SLF focused on farming wereshark hearts. Gambling on weaker weresharks being worth it if it merant a boost in replacemernt weresharks.

Omega’s drones were patched up and the cameras and microphones restored. Zeds omniscience returned and now Emma joined Charlotte’s Lisa at his mainframe, in what had become the command centter, she had a heart from Jessica and Stephanie with her. When they grew she had their hearts harvested and used a bigger on the inside hamster cage and a Time Freeze bag to swiftly farm them. A diet consisting purely of wereshark sylph meat obviously wasn’t ideal but it was easily farmed, kept you alive, came with a healing factor and had the added benefit of ensuring that the command center now had an increasing replenish supply of wereshark defenders.

On Day 11, the Bam-Kursh decided that this was no mere matter of pride anymore. This was not just a simple case of squashing a bug that happened to have drawn some blood from her. If the SLF were backing the Farsh-nuke and they managed to turn the tables on the Bam-Kursh. The chances of which increased now the Farsh-nuke had so many of her Lias and the SLF to help sway them. It could mean a pivotal shift in the balance of power within the multiverse. The United Civilisations of the Multiverse were founded in defiance of the Logicios but they were headed up by Lucy Dance, heir to the great Farsh-nuke, and pragmatic to the point of hiring the Bam-Kursh to play Napoleon. If the SLF figured out a way to use her toys against her, if they led a combined Toy, Sylph, Wereshark revolution against the Logicios, the United Civilisations could find themselves able to be less pragmatic and turn against the Bam-Kursh, which would set them up nicely for an alleigance with the SLF, uniting against the Logicios and allowing more Farsh-nukes to go uncaptured and attack other Bam-Kurshes.

Time for the Bam-Kursh to call in a few favours...

*

A fleet of alien space ships materialised in thin air and blasted the SLF ships out of the sky. An alien tongue that only the weresharks could understand blared out of loud speakers.

Cassie translated it into English for Omega to broadcast: “People of Earth, I am General of the Contravoxai. My people have a peace treaty with yours. We do not raid anymore. We do not wish to harm you. We like peace and sanity but we eat human flesh and we will eat you if we need to. Our species lives in symbiosis with a people not unlike yourselves called the Vligury. We feed them, we house them and we look after them. We now have wereshark sylphs of our own and so those we eat need not die but we can never achieve peace so long as we prey on our kin. The Goddess Bam-Kursh has presented us with a chance too good to ignore. There is a woman in this settlement who could end all our problems if we can but secure her safely. We will raze your entire planet if we have to. Please, just let us do this most dreadful of deeds.”

Shuttles descended and overwhelming swarms of aliens pored out. They were great cylinders of tentacles supported eight great hairy legs. At the top of the column was a ring of eyes on stalks five deep. In the flat top of the column of flesh was a ring of razor sharp teeth concealing stomach acid from which a small bat like thing could fly out to allow the alien to fly and if it was overhead you it had teeth in its arse with which to devour you. Some of the aliens could even squirt corrosive acid or shoot flame from the suckers on their tentacles. Some were even had strange wands not unlike Quantum Oscillators.

The Contravoxai troops ended the siege in a matter of hours. They were tough, they could heal, they could not be surprised, could attack in multiple directions at once and each tentacle was strong enough to toss a wereshark around like a rag doll. They also had something else the Lisas had lacked. These were trained, coordinated soldiers. They swept through the complex, room by room. and established guards to maintained cleared rooms remained clear.

The Farsh-nuke, Charlotte and Cassie retreated to the control room while the remaining weresharks and drones bought them time to talk. Emma let all but one Jessica and Stephaine run outside to guard the perimeter.

“What the fuck do we do?” asked Charlotte. “We can’t fight this! Nobody can fight this!”

The Farsh-nuke said “We could all for help I suppose?”

“They wouldn’t give it.” said Emma. “And can we really fucking blame them? We have to die. All of us. There is no choice left. They will eat every last child on Earth if they have to. We need to die. We all need to die. It’s our only hope. Humanity’s only hope. If we die maybe they’ll stop.”

“The nuclear reactor?” said the Farsh-nuke. “Maybe we could trigger a cascade?”

Charlotte looked between the pair of them like they were both mad. “I am not about to just give up with everything I have ever wanted so close.”

“It’s our only option.” said the Farsh-nuke. “Bullets can’t stop them. Drones and Quantum Oscillators and fucking Weresharks can’t stop them. We all have to die. It’s the only moral thing to do.”

“Then kill me first.” said Charlotte. “Better to be murdered than commit suicide.” She turned to Cassie. “How about that revenge then eh, girl?”

“No.” said Cassie quietly.

“You’ll have to die then.” said Charlotte to the Farsh-nuke. “But I ought warn you I don’t lan on going quietly intyo that good night.”

The Farsh-nuke was quiet. This was it. All his good undone. So much bloodshed. So many brave and shining girls dead. “I’ve murdered us all.” He rested his face in his hands. Behold the might of the mercy of the Farsh-nuke. Weep upon the magnanimous nature of his virtue. Worship at the feet of the martyr of morality. How noble in reason, hopw like a god, paragon of animals. He began to cry.

Cassie was deep in thought as the sound of bloodshed and destroyed technology came closer. She shrank back to naked humanity. No point being a monstrous wereshark anymore.

Stephanie and Jessica started singing Auld Lang Syne. It seemed appropriate for some reason.

Charlotte’s Lisa gave up monitoring the mainframe and embraced Charlotte. They kissed once

tentatively then started snogging.

Emma watched the door calmly. Death didn't faze her anymore. It hadn't for a long time. Omega's synthesised voice came out of the computer. "Thank you for trying. All of you. I'm only sorry I didn't get to make baby programs, ha. Think I'm going to power down for this. Sweet dreams, my family."

The mainframe shut down and the room fell deathly silent and cold.

Stephanie and Jessica started fucking now because there no later to put it off till anymore.

The doors burst open and tentacles reached out.

Cassie cried something unintelligible and just like that it was all over.

*

The Contravoxai froze then retreated.

Emma looked to Cassie, curious. "What did you say?"

"I surrender." said Cassie. She almost laughed from relief that it had worked. "All of this. It was about me. About the deal you offered the Bam-Kursh that I reneged on."

The Farsh-nuke looked up from his tears. "What?"

"I'm to be the new Lisa but for a range of... Cattle." She shrugged. "That was how we met wasn't it? You eating me? It's what I'm best at, being eaten and I come pretamed and subbified." She snorted. "I said I'd do this at the beginning remember? When Lisa joked about how I'd make a good toy. I said I was yours to use in any kind of deal with the Bam-Kursh? Well here we are."

There was silence after that.

*

They waited in silence for hours until at last the Bam-Kursh and the original Lisa entered the room.

“Not harmed I see.” said the Bam-Kursh to Cassie. “Good. I’ve invested rather too much time and effort to risk you being harmed.”

Cassie said “I want the original me to go to him once you’ve scanned me in and I want him and his family placed under your protection.”

“Okay, we can do that.” said the Bam-Kursh cheerily stroking Cassie’s hair. “I’ll see if I can’t undo a little of the damage that I’ve done hey? Now come along, there’s a recipe book with your name on it just waiting for its star ingredient.”

Cassie walked away with the Bam-Kursh and the original Lisa.

They sat in silence for a while as the girls fucked.

When the girls stopped Emma filled them in on what had happened

The Farsh-nuke was all but dead inside.

Then the humm returned and the room started to heat up. Auld Lang Syne started playing.

Stephanie and Jessica started singing along with it.

Emma started humming along.

Lisa and Charlotte started to slowly join in.

The doors swung open and Liso was flanked by two Lisas and a robot. One of the Lisas ran forward and glomped the Farsh-nuke.

The robot explained. “The Bam-Kursh switched me back on as she left and had her Lisas build me a new drone unit. She notified me of the locations our fallen comrades. Now if you don’t mind I’m going to back out there and search for survivors.”

The robot turned and left the room.

Liso nodded to the Farsh-nuke and recieved a curt nod of approval back.

The Lisa who was hugging him said “Listen I know things are bad right now but they will get better. We’ll get Cassie back. Things will be okay.”

As the Farsh-nuke held her, he started to believe it.

*

Omega cleaned up the place enough for them to get some sleep and have a shower.

Stephanie and Jessica gladly gave their flesh so Charlotte, Emma and the Farsh-nuke could eat and reaffirmed that they belonged to him.

Liso and the shop girl helped Omega clean up.

Lisa convinced the Farsh-nuke to dominate her.

Slowly normality returned.

They found Tabitha lying beneath a pile of dismembered Lisas, drones and weresharks.

When the Bam-Kursh returned the Farsh-nuke was almost back to his old self again.

He was in the kitchen pruning Stephanie and Jessica as Lisa sat on the table watching him.

“I owe you an apology.” said the Bam-Kursh by way of introduction.

The Farsh-nuke turned round, horrified then disgusted.

The Bam-Kursh nodded. “You could have killed me. You could have hurt my Lisa. That’s why you get mercy.”

The Farsh-nuke wheezed. “This is mercy?”

The Bam-Kursh smiled. “I didn’t get to be where I am now without crushing pretenders.”

She pulled Cassie out of a pocket and the young woman fell out onto the floor naked with a blindfold over her eyes.

Cassie called “Farsh!?”

The Farsh-nuke gently grabbed her arms and guided her to her feet then removed the blindfold.

“Hey...” said Cassie with a smile.

The Farsh-nuke pulled Cassie close and stared at the Bam-Kursh. “Thank you for letting me have her back.”

The Bam-Kursh nodded. “I’ve let the SLF know what you did, tried to do. There should be a ship on its way in a few days. I’ve also given Omega a beacon that’ll automatically inform any Lisas zee recovers that they belong to zed now and that they are to do as zed wish and zee can of course give them to you. And also because fuck it.” She pulled a foot high Lisa in a bikini out of her pocket. “Since you were asking about them.”

The Farsh-nuke accepted the gift with a nod then watched the Bam-Kursh leave.

So that was that.

It was over.

Bit of an anticlimax in the end.

*

The SLF ship arrived with a super computer of their own powerful enough for Omega’s code and consciousness to be copied across.

The Farsh-nuke, Cassie and Lisa left with them, bringing with them Liso, Emma and the shop girl as well as Stephanie, Jessica and Tabitha.

There was one last surprise, one last gift for the Farsh-nuke. Since Cassie had become produce like the

toys. She had been given a mental off switch and with the brief power of two Omega consciousness supporting super computers Omega was able to reverse engineer the appropriate harmonics. Meaning that Stephanie, Jessica and even Tabitha could be pruned of all but their hearts and brains without adversely affecting them since they could be simply switched off before the cutting began and switched on once their bodies had fully healed. Even for the sylphs that enjoyed the cutting this meant skipping out the tedium of recovery.

*

Charlotte was left behind with her Lisa and friendly sapient AI when there came a stammering “Sh!”

The Bam-Kursh stepped out from behind a red British post box. “Hello there, Charlie.”

Charlotte glared at her. “What do you want?”

“To give you a job.” said the Bam-Kursh. “You took out the SLF hunting the Farsh-nuke, without killing them. You summoned the Farsh-nuke. You created Cassie the Cattle Girl for me. You created friendly generalised artificial intelligence. You are a genius and you’re ruthless and you are useful.”

Charlotte laughed. “Why the fuck would I ever do anything to help you!?”

“Because unlike the Farsh-nuke I’ll let you embrace your darkness and since he isn’t here anymore I think maybe you can put this to some use.” said the Bam-Kursh removing a copy of Cassie from her pocket. The young woman had a blindfold over her eyes and wore nothing but a carefully tied bow.

Charlotte removed the blindfold and Cassie’s eyes looked into hers imprinting on her.

“No rights, no regulations, no paperwork.” said the Bam-Kursh “And just this once, as it is you and your most treasured of students, no fucks given if you rape her. Have fun. I’ll be in touch.”

The Bam-Kursh was gone by the time Charlotte’s Cassie realised just what exactly this meant.

Charlotte giggled as she watched her muse squirm. “I win.”

The End

The New Cold War **An Arc 2 Fiction**

By

Alexander Gordon Jahans

A short fat bald fellow with tiny hands, an obvious ginger wig and way too much spray tan is being interviewed at a press conference. “Ladies, I am telling you it is yuge and it only gets yuger...”

A young American reporter of Senegalese descent cries out “Richmond Raspberry, I’m with the Daily Socialist, how does it feel to be the official Republican Nominee to be president of the United States of America? Particularly now many in the Republican party are coming out against you and in favour of Margaret May.”

The oversized Oompaloompa in a too tight suit grins like a fat cat. “Well I am honored, truly honored. the Republican party is the party of the working people and, indeed, the socialists. It always has been. My learned colleagues are just trying to be fair to the democratic nominee in the name of promoting democracy. After all with all the talk of me being some kind of demagogue it is important to reassure people that the republican party is the true party of democracy. Even if the supposed democrats shived the honorable Bernie Sanders in the back.”

The reporter smirks. “You’re socialists? Really? I thought that was a dirty word, particularly among billionaires and republicans?”

Raspberry’s smile falters for a moment then it spreads wider, showing off his pearly white teeth. “Oh my dear the Republicans have always been the national party of the socialists and we are very committed to the purity of our ideals. Under us America will be great again.”

Reporter’s faze turns to silent horror.

Raspberry nods, repeating jovial. “I am very serious. We are the national party of the socialists and we will see that all the poor black communities within our country are taken care of.”

“Senior Raspberry!!!” cries a voice.

Raspberry’s gaze and the cameras of the reporters sweep around to wear a man with sunglasses, a long

flowing beard and a suit typically associated with Arab sheiks, stands.

Raspberry extends his hands wide toward the stranger. “Welcome, friend, how may I help you?”

The stranger nods approaching through the pack of reporters. “Thank you! Praise be to Galla that I may speak to you. I represent a small online publication deeply concerned with certain esoteric matters that would not usually be concerned with politics. However there is one small area of some concern that I could use your help with.”

Raspberry chuckles, gripping the side of his podium. “Well go ahead. I am well known to be very helpful and wise in even the most esoteric of matters.”

The stranger looks up at the short man on the stage and smiles a sharks toothy smile. “Good... Because you see I have heard talk among the left that voting for May is like voting for the devil over cthulu.”

“Well you may think that but I couldn’t possibly comment” said Raspberry with a smile.

The stranger chuckles. “It is a good meme. Very dank... But tell me, for the sake of my loyal readers, could you take cthulu in a fight, could you truly take on the devil himself?”

Raspberry and the press before him laugh.

The stranger doesn’t, watching Raspberry with cold focus.

Raspberry notices and smiles warmly. “Well I am a good Christian boy so I know how to deal with the devil and as for Cthulu, well if it bleeds we can kill it.”

The stranger nods. “But do you not bleed?”

The room falls silent. The men in suits and shades silently standing beside and either side of Raspberry leave the stage.

Raspberry changes ever so slightly, the bravado shrugged off to be replaced with a cold calculating business man. “I do bleed. I bleed for my country with my every heart beat but I won’t leave this world unchanged. I am not a dictator. This is America, I am but a servant of the people and if I do die my

supporters, my friends, will rage like fire across whoever removed their champion from the world. You cannot kill an idea, only silence one of its speakers.”

The stranger nods. “Well my readers will be very pleased to hear that.”

The stranger turned as if to go then he froze removed his shades and started cleaning them with hanky. “We will meet again Mister Raspberry and when we do I hope I can thank you properly for this kindness.”

The stranger looked up into Richard Raspberry’s eyes for a moment.

Richard Raspberry looked into the eyes of the stranger and saw a great green infinite stretching into eternity. For a moment he could see a crashing space ship and great mechanical spiders as men and women fought valiantly against them.

Then the stranger put on his glasses and left the room. Two large men in suits and sunglasses were standing either side of them. One of them quietly said. “If you’d just come this way, Sir.”

The stranger smiled awkwardly.

*

The stranger was thrown violently into an interview room. He had been stripped down his underwear with hand cuffs and chains about his feet. He was a tall Caucasian guy with short brown hair.

There was a large metal table in the room and a couple of metal chairs. At one of them sat a short austere looking woman with grey curly hair in a business suit. She was looking over a file on a tablet pc. “William Shepard Crichton, aged 24, killed with one Lucille Dance, aged 22, by a cowboy on the 20th of August 2019. It is now the 12th of February 2023, would you care to explain how it is you managed to interview the man who could be the next American President 4 years after your death.”

The stranger found his way to a chair and said. “You’re English, like proper Queen’s English. how is it that you are interviewing me when America is such a hotbed of xenophobia.”

The old woman smirked. “Well lets just say that when people who struggle to comprehend race come across something really strange, they outsource.”

“So who am I speaking to?” asked the stranger.

The old woman glared at him. “Who I am is none of your business.”

The stranger shook his head. “I have the right to know who I’m addressing. Russia? Korea? China? New Scotland?”

The old woman chuckled. “Dead men have no rights, Mister Crichton. Now tell me, why aren’t you dead?”

The stranger smirked. “Okay... I am the Farsh-nuke, the Great Farsh-nuke now that the first died to secure the end of the last great Septagonoid war. That cowboy didn’t just kill me, he saved me from a fate far worse than death and he brought me back.”

The old woman nodded, tapping away at her tablet pc. “There are records of a Farsh-nuke in our database but according to our intel they all have a penchant for adventure, monsters and pretty girls. If you were bought back, why stick around? Shouldn’t you have built yourself a way off this rock by now?”

The Farsh-nuke bit his lip and stared at the old woman.

“I asked you a question, Mister Crichton, must we resort to advanced interrogation techniques?” asked the old woman.

The Farsh-nuke looked the old woman in the eyes. “It’s a funny thing really, as the war waged and the Farsh-nukes threw themselves into the meat grinder of the the front lines they amplified their powers, began to reconnect with the other parts of their souls, almost shed the human skin except for nostalgia’s sake. Everything that contained the soul of a Farsh-nuke started to be felt and remembered by the rest.”

“Oh really?” said the old woman with a smirk. “Have any juicy gossip to share?”

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “I remember the Venus Trap.”

The Farsh-nuke sat back in his chair watching the old woman.

“According to our reports you gave praise to a Galla when you were interviewing Raspberry?” said the old woman.

The Farsh-nuke nodded. “Galla Placidia, the creator of the Venus Trap and by far the most powerful of the elder gods since she never had to give up her power. I always wondered why she never joined in the war or at least the final battle.”

“Perhaps she saw that the multiverse would still need protecting when you were gone?” suggested the old woman.

The Farsh-nuke nodded then he looked her in the eyes and asked. “Can I trust you?”

The old woman leaned forward, resting her elbows on the table. “I assure you that everything you say here is entirely confidential.”

The Farsh-nuke leaned forward and rested his hands on the table. “I’m worried about Raspberry and about the threat posed by his supporters, the alt-right. I’m an alien, sod dna, my physics is unnatural to this universe. Those racists would destroy me and everyone I care about.”

“That’s democracy.” said the old woman with a shrug.

The Farsh-nuke shook his head. “I destroyed the Septagonoids, I reformed the Logicios and I oversaw the disbanding of the United Civilisations of the Multiverse. I am not about to stand idly by while monsters like Raspberry persecute my people.”

“Then why don’t you pick a universe where Raspberry lost?” suggested the old woman.

“Because this is my home, damn it!” cried the Farsh-nuke.

“This doesn’t concern you.” said the old woman. “Walk away, settle down somewhere and live a good life. let humanity sort this out.”

The Farsh-nuke glared at her.

The old woman glared at him.

The Farsh-nuke heard a voice in his head. “Farsh-nuke, trust me. We are both pieces on a board and we must play our parts. Good luck with your plan. I shall alter mine to help you but please let this scene play out as I will it.”

The Farsh-nuke groaned. “Fine. I suppose I’ll go to Vegas. Just stop him before he launches nukes yeah because if the fucker launches nukes I am doing whatever it takes to bring him down.”

“Well don’t worry I am sure Raspberry understands the concept of Mutually Assured Destruction.” said the old woman then she cried. “Take him away, boys.”

Two large men entered the room and lifted the Farsh-nuke up between them.

*

The Farsh-nuke hit the dirt outside the facility as a Jeep pulled up and couple of beautiful young women in bikinis got out to help the Farsh-nuke to his feet and into the car.

The Farsh-nuke sat in the passenger seat and looked at the driver. A middle aged brunette with a distinct look of annoyance. “I told you the disguise wouldn’t help.”

The Farsh-nuke shrugged. “I needed to get close and I didn’t know if he was logic sensitive. how’s the recruitment drive going.”

The driver shrugged.

*

A tall beautiful blonde woman in a business suit was giving a press conference. An asian reporter asked “Miss Danse, is it true that you intend to run for President of the United States?”

The blonde woman nodded. "I am proud to be representing Women For Justice in this capacity. We will reform the corrupt and patriarchal system of government into a glorious place of equality and justice for all including the working class."

A brunette enters the room.

"And here comes my chief advisor now." said Miss Danse.

The brunette smiled and waved at the the reporters as she passed by and up to the stage.

The two women embraced in a bear hug.

"Catherine!" cried Miss Danse, then she whispered. "Where's our mutual friend?"

"Lucy!" cried the brunette before replying in a whisper. "Getting dressed."

Lucy Danse turned back to the press and patted the brunette, Catherine, on the bum as she did so.

Catherine hurriedly turned her gaze to the press and smiled confidently. "I can assure that recruitment to our party is at an all time high."

A tired looking man with a stubbly beard asked. "Don't you think there is a possibility that your all women platform will alienate male voters?"

Suddenly the stubbly bearded man was knocked to his feet as a tall guy in a suit two sizes too big stumbled into him apologizing profusely.

Lucy chuckled. "Well rest assured my assistant Jon Smith will be ensuring that I am well acquainted with how to get the male vote."

"Plasma guns for everyone!" cried the clumsy assistant. "And fem bots! Gotta have fembots! We can make fembots, right?"

Charlotte nodded, smirking.

“Yeah, of course we can. ‘Murica!” cried the clumsy assistant as he approached the stage. “Legalise LSD! And! And! And this is the best bit! A national beer allowance! I know it sounds socialist but free beer everyday for every citizen!” He clambered on the stage, knocking the mic stand over in the process. “I mean tell me beer, guns and robo chicks isn’t American!? We’re sure to win.”

Lucy patted the assistant, on the back, smiling widely. “We are also an equal opportunity employer and shall endeavour that every mentally ill or otherwise affected person in our fine country gets the help and job to suit them.”

The press chuckled.

Catherine muttered “Lisa, why don’t fetch Jon a drink?”

A short blonde woman peeled off from standing beside Lucy and returned a moment later to present the assistant with a glass of water.

As the assistant took the glass, his hand brushed against the short woman’s.

She smiled.

The assistant returned the smile. His bright green eyes mesmerizing her for a second.

Then the short woman returned to her place beside Lucy.

A young American reporter of Senegalese descent asks. “Don’t you worry that what success you do have may hand the election to Raspberry.”

Lucy frowned. “What’s your name if I may ask?”

“Iris Mayweather.” said the reporter.

“Well, Iris, I am very concerned about the possibility of Raspberry winning the election and that is precisely why I am running.” said Lucy. “May is an establishment shill that most people hate. Her only likeable quality is that she isn’t Raspberry and doesn’t have his supporters but she doesn’t have any

other supporters either. This is why I am standing for election. America needs a third way. Now, are any other questions?”

*

When the press conference was over and all the press had left, the assistant went over to a filing cabinet, pulled a key from his pocket and unlocked it.

“Just where did you hide that?” asked Charlotte.

“You don’t want to know.” said the assistant, pulling back a hidden panel on the side of the cabinet to expose a vast room impossibly beyond it. He gestured to Charlotte. “Ladies first.”

Charlotte cackled.

Lucy entered with a smirk.

The short blonde woman approached the assistant, a sly smile about her lips. “Master?”

The assistant grinned like a shark. “Lets get those clothes off you.”

The short blonde woman entered as the assistant followed behind her, undressing her.

The two beautiful young women in bikinis who had fetched the Farsh-nuke earlier arrived again. One was blonde and the other ginger.

Charlotte grinned when she saw them, pulling them into a hug she she could kiss each of them on the forehead. “Amy, Emma, take the cabinet to the Jeep then drive it to our flat. Come join us once the cabinet is inside.”

“Yes, Mistress.” chimes the young women as one.

Charlotte entered the cabinet.

The assistant had shrugged off his oversized suit to reveal a tight fitting one beneath.

The short blonde woman lay naked before him, giggling as his hands explored her body.

Charlotte raised an eyebrow and looked to where Lucy stood before a vast array of screens displaying video feeds of various new channels. "I thought you were a couple?"

"We have an open relationship." said Lucy, without looking away. "Besides, he's the Farsh-nuke. If he hasn't pleased at least three women a day he gets awful; irritable."

"And in my defence this one was literally gifted to me." said the assistant. "I kind of have a duty to see that she's satisfied with her life. You can have a go if you like?"

The short blonde woman giggled, looking at Charlotte, "Oh yes! Please!?"

Charlotte groaned, approaching the naked woman. "Alright but I am having you and Lucy later. No ifs, no buts and no headaches."

The Farsh-nuke smirked and stood aside to let Charlotte work. "You know for a Bam-Kursh, you really don't seem to like toys?"

"I make toys, I don't play with them." said Charlotte irritably then she looked down at the naked woman before her and started work. "Now, Lisa, lets see how you feel with a professional."

The naked woman cried out in elation.

The Farsh-nuke washed his hands in a sink then approached Lucy. "How bad is it?"

"The press love Raspberry." said Lucy with a sigh.

The Farsh-nuke watched Richard Raspberry on the screen and grimaced. "We'll get him. I'm not sure how yet but we'll get him."

"What is this place?" asked a strange voice.

The Farsh-nuke and Lucy looked to where a black woman was standing, just inside the door.

Catherine looked to Lucy and the Farsh-nuke.

“We aren’t going to hurt you.” said Lucy.

Catherine sighed and turned her attention back to the naked woman.

Lucy asked. “How did you get in here?”

“I stayed behind after the press conference.” said the black woman. “And then I saw you all get in the filing cabinet and I took care of the women had moving it.”

Catherine bit her lip and looked to Lucy.

“Did you hurt them?” asked Lucy hurriedly.

The black woman noted just how badly she was outnumbered and shrugged. “Handcuffs are easy to find if you know where to look and those women weren’t very bright.”

The Farsh-nuke looked pointedly at Charlotte.

Charlotte sighed and looked back to the naked woman before her.

The Farsh-nuke coughed then addressed the black woman. “Okay, this is what’s going to happen. You are going to give Lucy the keys and Lucy is going to go free our friends and while that is happening you and me are going to have a little chat.”

The black woman laughed and started to back out of the room. “I am not staying in this place, I’ve read about stories like this, I have no intention of getting probed anywhere.”

Charlotte looked to Lucy meaningfully.

Lucy stepped forward. “Iris, isn’t it? Iris Mayweather?”

Charlotte froze then nodded when words wouldn't come.

Lucy reached forward and grabbed the back woman by the arm to stop her from leaving as she walked up to her. "Iris, I'm going to level with you, you have stumbled upon something here, something big and we can't just let you leave. It's far too big a risk. You do however get a choice. You can speak to my assistant here and have some autonomy like me or you can resist and end up like the girls you tied up courtesy of the woman who made them that way."

Iris looked to Charlotte.

Charlotte looked to her, a cruel smile on her face.

Lucy looked Iris in the eyes. "So what do you say?"

Iris pulled a set of keys from her jacket pocket and handed them to Lucy.

"Thank you." said Lucy with a bright smile on her face before she left the room.

Iris looked to Charlotte nervously.

Charlotte glared at her.

"Iris!" called the Farsh-nuke.

Iris walked over to him then noticed the screens. "Why are you monitoring the news?"

"Because we want to stop that man." said the Farsh-nuke. "Will you help us?"

"Do I have a choice?" asked Iris.

The Farsh-nuke frowned. "Iris, there are a thousand different ways I can ensure you don't cause a problem for us. I am asking for your help and that requires trust so yes, you absolutely have a choice."

Richard Raspberry said on the news. "We are the national party of the socialists and we will see that all

the poor black communities within our country are taken care of.”

Iris stared at that fact grin and said bitterly “Lets get the bastard.”

The End

The Dream
By
Alexander Gordon Jahans

“Oh yes! I’ll take it.” says a tall overweight man in lounge pants to an estate agent.

The rented accomodation in question is a tiny place with one room barely big enough for a double bed and a desk with a shared kitchen, bathroom and living room.

The man’s name is Frederick Hamish Pearson and he has just moved back to Wolverhampton after staying here in his university days.

*

Frederick turns up to Fibdems, a large department store for his first day at a new job.

A large overweight and balding man has been lecturing him for half an hour on the health and safety of the store then he shows Frederick round his department “You will be selling games, dvds, books and gadgets. Now you know how to use the till but remember push the items at the front, really give em the hard sell because that is where your commission comes from.”

Frederick nods, understanding.

*

Weeks pass and things are uneventful as Frederick settles into his new job. Pay isn’t too bad, work not too strenuous, doing something he has a mild interest in.

One day, during his break he finds himself idly looking through the suits department. A large dark haired woman wanders over, she looks to be about 5 years older than him. “Good evening, Sir, is there anything I can help you with?”

“Ah ha, no, I’m just looking and in fact I work here” says Frederick.

The woman nods “Oh yeah, you’re the new guy right? Frederick? Well I’m Christina, nice to meet you.”

They shake hands and Christina says “If there’s anything I can help you with, let me know.”

*

Weeks pass again and Frederick and Christina pass occasionally like ships in the night.

Finally as they’re setting up shop one night one of Frederick’s work mates Hoss says “Hey, you should come to the pub with us tonight. We’re celebrating a successful quarter for Fibdems.”

Frederick frowns, he had a lets play lined up to watch when he got home but sod it. The letsplay could wait.

During that night Frederick and Christina met up again.

“Still not wearing a suit I see?” said Christina.

“Yeah...” said Frederick “I used to be big into them but then I realised I didn’t have anybody to impress any more.”

“Shame” said Christina.

As the night wore on and Frederick found himself on his second pint of cider he found himself talking about his online stuff and giving pout his business card.

“You do reviews?” said Christina.

“Well... it’s shouting mostly” said Frederick “And incidentally sorry if I ever, forget about the volume thing.”

Christina nodded and stowed the card “I’ll check it out.”

*

A few days passed and Christina approached him during his work at the till.

Frederick nodded appreciatively “The Doctor Who revival boxset, good choice madam.”

Christina smirked “Well I thought it might be wise to see what I was missing. I checked out your stuff by the way, it’s not bad, ever thought of doing it full time?”

Frederick chuckled and scanned through the dvd boxset “I’m not that good.”

“Then improve” said Christina “Leave this place, do things.

Frederick smirked and gave her her change and receipt.

*

A year passed and during that time not only did Frederick and Christina become friends but Frederick found his work online became more focused and organised. Plans were tentatively thought out and made, research was underway, the mad chaos of his youtube channel began to be broken up into clearly branded series, money began to be saved up.

Then one day Frederick found himself asking Christina out to dinner and she said yes.

They ate at Pizza Hut.

“Ah” said Christina “Pizza Hut, truly the classiest of dating venues.”

“It’s not a date” said Frederick “It’s dinner with a friend and I prefer Pizza Hut to Pizza Express. This is like the one thing America does best.”

Christina snorted and they took a table, naturally they each took unlimited refills of pepsi soft drinks.

“So if you didn’t invite me out to take me in a manly fashion, why are we here?” asked Christina.

“Because I have money now that I didn’t before.” said Frederick “And I soft of owe it to you. This is a thank you.”

The waiter arrived and they ordered food.

Frederick had the largest pizza with the most dead animals and least plant matter on it as possible.

Christina went for a four cheese pizza.

“So?” said Christina “How is your having more money down to me?”

“You said I could be more.” said Frederick “That motivated me, maybe not necessarily because you said it or because of what you said specifically but because everytime I felt overrun by negativity and include to just fart out something that was under done I’d think of you and.. umm... I’d keep working.”

Christina smiled “And you’re sure this is just a friendly meal?”

Frederick chuckled “Yes.”

Christina frowned “Is it because I’m fat?”

“What?” said Frederick “No. It’s just that I- I’m not that - forward a person. I don’t ask people out. I sit in my room and watch other people play video games. I am not a people person.”

Christina studied him for a long moment then asked “Do you ever go out?”

“Why?” asked Frederick “Going out is boring, why would I leave the place where I’m happiest?”

Christina nodded “Well I can’t judge you too much, after all I am a goth who writes vampire fiction in her spare time.”

Frederick gave her a long curious look.

Christina smirked “It’s alright, I don’t bite.”

Frederick swallowed.

The waiter arrived with their pizzas.

As Frederick started eating his pizza Christina asked “So what’s your dream?”

Frederick looked at her oddly. “How do you mean?”

Christina smirked “Well none of us think working at Fibdems is our endgame. What are you working towards?”

“Well I was going to be a script writer” said Frederick “But then I realised I am exactly the kind of script writer I don’t want to ever write scripts again so instead I guess I’d like to be the Doctor and just take off into wide blue yonder and see people and places and really wild things.”

“But you don’t go out?” said Christina.

“Ah but I only don’t go out because I get bored easily” said Frederick “The beauty of a tardis is that if you ever get bored you’ve got your home and computer right there.”

Christina nodded “Nice plan.”

“Plan?” said Frederick. “It’s totally impossible.”

Christina shrugged “Anything is possible given enough time and money, have a think about it. Don’t give up on your dreams, make them a reality.”

*

Years passed and Frederick worked harder and harder and planned bigger things as his online stuff grew and grew.

Frederick and Christina became firm friends during that time and even shared the odd drunken night out where they shared their deepest darkest secrets and fanfics.

Finally Frederick asked Christina out again.

“Pizza Express this time?” said Christina as they waited for a table “What must I have done for you to be willing to eat here.”

Frederick snorted.

When they were shown to their seats and had ordered drinks and their pizzas Frederick cleared his throat.

Christina readied herself.

Frederick said “Christina, you are and have been a really great friend. You are a delightful individual and umm... I don’t know quite how to say this but I’m leaving Fibdems.”

Christina stared at him.

“I handed in my notice a while back, I’m like properly rich now thanks to my online work and... I wanted to tell you in person.” said Frederick “You said I should find a way and I have.”

“Oh really?” asked Christina “What is your way?”

“I found an electric Campervan” said Frederick “I mean it’s not the ritz and I’ll hardly be able to fit a gaming pc in there but I can make my videos and watch my lets plays and I’ve got a double bed so... that’s good, means I can stretch my feet..”

“Nice” said Christina “See the sights and take your home with you. Where are you going first?”

“Scotland” said Frederick “I wanna make the Edinburgh Fringe and uh... and when it gets cold in the winter I’ve got a place down the Isle of Wight. Big enough for five people so I can have tenants in to reduce the mortgage cost. I expect I’ll turn up Christmas Day.”

Christina smiled and nodded “I’m really happy for you.”

“Thanks” said Frederick.

Their pizzas arrived and they ate in silence.

*

The next day, when Christina’s shift ended Frederick was waiting for her.

He was dressed in a three piece suit and held a box of chocolates in his hands. He smiled nervously as she approached.

Christina was stunned “What are you doing here?”

“I’m a coward” said Frederick “Just standing here, talking to you now, all I want to do is run, run far away and never look back.” he swallowed “And the only reason that I can have the courage to do this now is that I know I can run so these are for you.”

Frederick handed Christina the box of chocolates.

She took them and looked into his eyes expectantly.

“Christina Sullivan, you are the most beautiful woman I have ever laid eyes upon and the entire time I have known you I have had a war going on inside my head between the side that thinks I’m a useless pathetic idiot and the side of me that cares so deeply for you... But I am able to achieve my dreams now because you believed in me so please... come with me.” said Frederick “You, me and the open road, what do you say?”

“Yes” said Christina “Dear god, yes!”

She hugged him and said “I’ve seen you struggling with that side of yourself for as long as I’ve known you.”

Frederick pulled back and looked her in the eyes “Then why didn’t you ever ask me out?”

Christina blushed “I didn’t know if I was just projecting my own struggle onto you.”

Frederick looked at her, at his dear Christina.

Christina looked up at him longingly and pulled him closed.

He kissed her lightly on the lips.

She kissed back.

They headed to the campervan.

“Lets stop by mine first” said Christina “There are some things I need to collect.”

*

The Campervan drew up outside Christine’s house and Frederick followed her inside as she fetched her stuff.

To his surprise he found two suitcases and a bag packed.

They shared a look and Christine smirked “Just because I didn’t know doesn’t mean I haven’t been planning.”

Frederick chuckled.

*

Their first year travelling together went well but there was one last surprise in store as they drew up to Frederick’s winter cottage at mid day on Christmas Day.

Frederick parked up the campervan, unlocked the front door and headed to the dining room.

He was staggered. The table was laid the heating was on there was a turkey and potatoes on the table with all the trimmings including pigs in blankets, stuffing and gravy.

Then she entered.

She was tall, young, slim and blonde. She wore a green bikini and what appeared at first glance to be a rather large belt. "Hello" she said "I'm Lisa."

Frederick stared at her.

Christine silently approached and handed him a collar "Merry Christmas, honey."

Choice World
An attempt to ratify a fictional utopia
By
Alexander Gordon Jahans

Max was walking up the hill at night, listening to Imagine Dragons, when a strange man stepped out in front of him with a clipboard.

Max stopped, paused his music and pulled out an earbud. "Pardon?"

The man wore a smart 3 piece suit and had short helled back hair. "Max Leonard Starling?"

"Yees..." said Max dubiously.

"Allow me to introduce myself, I am Frederick Hamish Pearson, I am a Farsh-nuke and it is my very great honour to invite you to be a denizen of choice." said the strange man.

Max studied the man "Is this some kind of cult?"

"No" said Frederick "It's some kind of utopia or at least I like to think so. It's not exactly easy to get to, certainly with your level of technology so I will have to ferry you."

Max stared at the man "You're mad, absolutely mad."

"And I respect your opinion Max" said Frederick "But I have to give you a proper choice. If you ever change your mind, here's my card and I'll be parked by the bus stop for a week."

"Right" said Max and he put his ear bud back in, unpaused the music and started striding up the hill.

He read the the strange man's card:

Frederick Hamish Pearson
Farsh-nuke
Seghat pilot
Sylph Tamer
Dog Walker
Ferryman for the Denizens of Choice
777777

What an odd business card?

Max crested the hill and walked back, wondering what this meant.

He passed the bus stop and paused.

Frederick was standing outside, smoking from a pipe. "Filthy habit, been meaning to give it up."

Max looked at the rickety wooden shed the strange man was standing against, the smoking normalised the man somewhat, he entered the shed.

Frederick sighed and put out his pipe then followed after him.

“It’s bigger on the inside” said Max in amazement at the vast interior and then he noticed the naked woman in the cage “And you have a naked woman in a cage.”

“Oh that’s Lucy” said Frederick casually “She’s my pet Sylph”

The woman, Lucy, asked “Is this a sylph come to join me Freddy?”

“Sadly not” said Frederick and he started dancing at the controls of a mushroom shaped console. “He is come to witness Choice World.”

“Ooh I love that place” said Lucy.

Max shook his head in astonishment and in a moment the doors were reopened and Max saw that it was a bright and shining day.

“Come on” said Frederick and together they walked out into a great city plaza.

Men and women of all shapes and sizes and colours walked past, he saw half a dozen blue skinned people and even a gorilla in a business suit walking a scantily clad woman on the end of a leash.

“Welcome to a world where discrimination does not happen” said Frederick “Come lets get a pint and I will answer your questions.”

Max followed Frederick into the bar and asked “Look I’m not the most unenlightened fellow, I know that some people can like different ways of living but surely keeping Lucy in a cage isn’t necessary?”

Frederick sighed “She likes it. We both do. It reinforces our relationship.”

Frederick led them into a 70s style pub and led Max to the bar “What do you want?”

“Err cider, apple cider” said Max going with something safe.

A tall woman with long black hair noticed Max and said with glee “New blood, tell me cider boy, have you ever considered a life as a vampire’s thrall?”

Max stared at the woman, terrified.

Frederick handed Max his cider and raised his own pint to his lips, the red staining his moustache “You ever considered life as a Sylph?”

The vampire woman glared at Frederick.

Frederick smiled “A Farsh-nuke and a Vamp having a dominate off, I think that’s a porno?”

The vampire snorted and looked away.

Frederick led Max to a quiet corner of the pub.

Max said “You have vampires? What kind of utopia has vampires?”

“One that doesn’t discriminate said Frederick then he sighed “They’re not really vampires. They’re just Anne Rice fans who prefer their sylph blood taken straight from the source.”

“People drink sylph blood?” said Max incredulously.

“Of course” said Frederick, gesturing to his drink “That’s what this is. Of course this is synthesised, as is all blood and meat and what have you in Choice World. Grown in great factory labs without the need to create, make suffer then kill thinking creatures. The only farms we have are kink farms.”

“Kink farms?” asked Max.

Frederick sipped his drink “Farms made of consenting adults engaging in a kind of hyper advanced BDSM play. That’s what being a vampire’s thrall means. They dress it up in ritual romance and pretend magic but in simple terms they drug you so you become a sylph then they harvest what they will of you in a kink farm. A certain amount of pretend outrage and escaping is expected of course but if you ever actually explain that it isn’t your thing they’ll listen and if they don’t nano bots in the air will report them and they will be tried and punished accordingly.”

Max said “I noticed a gorilla in a business suit earlier and some people with skin colours that don’t seem possible.”

Frederick nodded “We get a few furies here. They can undergo simple procedures to become whatever life form they wish to be. There’s even a couple of dragons and megalodon sharks. Compared to that the skin colour changes are far easier. We also do sex change procedures on a sliding scale and you can have a pod installed at home so you can change any time you like. You can even have your sexual preferences changed.”

Max stared at him “But isn’t that horrendously distasteful and insulting? That you can choose to be gay or choose to change gender on a whim?”

Frederick shook his head “This is what happens when you let bigots dictate the narrative of acceptability. Conform or die. Well fuck that attitude. Yes gender and sexuality can be a choice given sufficiently advanced technology but that is no bad thing.”

Frederick looked Max in the eye “Look no sane person will deny that you need cheap and easy sex change technology for Transgendered people because it saves lives and no sane person will deny that if you can rewrite a paedophile’s brain to stop them hurting kids that you should. Well once you accept that, once you know how to do that, why not expand upon the technology to give people the choice to be whatever gender and sexual orientation they feel like?”

Max sighed “I suppose I see your point”

They finished their drinks in silence and Frederick led Max out of the pub.

As they headed back across the parlor to the shed Max asked “So what do you do here? How does your civilization work? I mean if everyone is doing what they choose?”

“Variety” said Frederick pausing before the shed “Choice World was founded by defectors from the Logicians, the Architects of Chaos, the United Civilisations of the Multiverse and even the Pan Galactic Good Time Association. Hippies work the land in a kind of eden utopia. Macho men work in the building trade. Nerds run the internet. And in the places where choice is not enough, technology and the ear of a friendly eldritch abomination like myself is used to supplement things. I’ll show you.”

Max entered the shed with Frederick and a moment later he exited out into a hospital.

Frederick headed towards reception. He flashed a badge at the receptionist and said “I’d like a nurse Joy to go please”

Max stared at him.

A moment later a slender 30 year old nurse with long flowing ginger hair approached. “Carol, what is it? I’m very busy.”

Frederick held up his badge for her to examine “Don’t worry Ma’am, we won’t be a moment.”

The nurse nodded and left the reception “Look, I accept that you have authority but I really am very busy.”

Frederick chuckled and entered the shed.

Max and the nurse followed.

Frederick danced around the shed for a moment then turned to address the nurse. “Miss Joy, this is Max. He is new to Choice World, could you explain your story please?”

“Very well” said the nurse and she turned to Max and explained “I wanted all my life to help people and after training for years to be a nurse I got my break and it was heart breaking and exhilarating and disgusting and very tough but I loved it. Then a woman approached me. She called herself the Bam-Kursh. Said she was looking to set up a community and it needed nurses and I was perfect for the job. I explained that I was very busy and already had a job thank you. And that’s when she revealed the twist.”

“What twist?” asked Max.

The nurse smirked “She wasn’t asking to hire me. She was asking to buy me whole sale. She said she could make it so I never aged, never needed sleep or food. I would never get tired, never get ill. She would mass produce me and provide me to hospitals, I could even go back to my community. And she would really buy me. Donate an insane amount of money to the charity or charities of my choice.”

“How is that possible?” asked Max.

The nurse shrugged.

Frederick explained “The Bam-Kursh is an expert on making toys. She knows exactly how to make it happen and then she uses a deep scan of the kind you might use in quantum teleportation to precisely replicate the toy in question and mass produce them. Technically speaking that is what Nurse Joy is. Big hospitals can fabricate Nurse Joys on demand because after a few decades of service they tend to get a little willing to settle down and be more conventional toys for people they like or even become sylphs. What you are looking at Max is the one woman in a nearly infinite multiverse who could fill this position, mass produced to order.”

Max stared at the nurse “So do you not eat or sleep?”

“Oh I can and do most days” said the nurse “But if I forget it’s not a big deal.”

Frederick said “All working toys have a microchip identifying what model in particular they are so that they can be recorded in legal cases and there’s a tattoo of a barcode on their rump that indicates where they were printed from should they go rogue and their printer need to be taken offline.”

The nurse nodded “I have needed the microchip more than once. Disgruntled patients sometimes blame the nurse out of paranoia for something a doctor did, plus being mass produced makes people uneasy.”

Max asked “What do you mean, should they go rogue?”

Frederick said “The Bam-Kursh didn’t just waltz Joy onto the input plate of a Logicular Scanner. She altered her biology. That alteration includes some intricate logic encoding to ensure the nurse never gets stressed or tired or loses her ability to be personable. That kind of encoding can go dangerously wrong if the printer fucks up.”

Max nodded “Yeah that would be bad.”

Max thought for a moment then said “So why did you flash your badge?”

The nurse said “People who provide for the society but don’t live in it enough to gain the benefits of it have the right of renewable freeness. If someone with that badge wants anything from society that is easily renewable then they have but to ask.”

Max was dumbfounded.

Frederick grinned “Naturally since Nurse Joy is a very renewable resource I get her for free. You can have her if you like?”

The nurse glared at him “I have work to do.”

Max said “Thank you really but this is a bit much to take in.”

“You’re off the hook” said Frederick with a laugh and he went back to his controls.

“I’m sorry” said the nurse “Perhaps if we meet again, I’ll let you take me out for coffee and we can see where the night goes?”

Max stammered “S-sure”

The door opened and nurse joy stepped out.

A tall blonde woman entered pulling a punk “Sorry to bother you but can you tame me please? My ignorant boyfriend doesn’t have the balls.”

The punk sighed “I just don’t want the magic to go. I love you for you.”

“And I want to be your pet” said the woman frustratedly.

Frederick laughed.

The punk threw his hands up in the air defensively. “Hey, I’m real sorry about this. I don’t want to bother you.”

The woman said “Come on, you’ve got a seghat you must be able to tame me?”

Frederick placed a finger on the woman’s lips, silencing her and handed the punk his card “Call me and I’ll give you a quote. You don’t have to do this but if you do I can help you.”

The punk nodded and took the card “Cheers”

Frederick stroked the woman’s cheek “And as for you? Honey, I am a Farsh-nuke, I would love to tame you but I don’t do freebies. Take your man to relationship counselling and remember that a Logicio or even a lesser Farsh-nuke might just lie to you so he can eat you. Be careful.”

The woman nodded “Okay but you are taming me?”

Frederick withdrew his hand “Just so long as you provide the cash.”

The punk and the woman left the shed.

Frederick chuckled and got to piloting the shed.

Max asked “So how does money work? I mean I can’t imagine a utopia having free market capitalism?”

“Right you are” said Frederick as he opened the shed doors and led Max outside “The Denizens of Choice are each granted a universal basic income which is enough to live comfortably on. If they pursue any kind of productive passion that provides a service to others then they get extra. This money invariably accrues massively in the hands of an elite minority who are then milked with massive rates of tax but being part of the high tax barrier grants them access to the societies special resources and so despite being effectively taxed to the point of having a reasonable income their contacts allow them to do things the common people can’t.”

“Regulated Capitalism” said Max “I like that.”

“It is world of sharks and seals” said Frederick “The seals are kept happy, plentiful and obedient and

the sharks get to rule the seas.”

Max asked “What if you don’t want to swim with sharks?”

“Then you can join a commune of seals and ignore the vampires and elder gods and top tax payers when they walk amongst you to lure a seal away.” said Frederick “To many people Choice World is a kind of communist utopia but equally to the sharks it is the most gloriously corrupt and decadent dystopia that happens to benefit them. The difference of course is a matter of perception. Any citizen can own or become a toy or a sylph or a piece of art but the rich make it fashionable and so the minority that don’t need to be convinced to take advantage of another facilitate the desires of those seals who want to be taken advantage of.”

Max asked “Is there any crime?”

“We have capitalism so we have theft” said Frederick “People are still people so we do get attempted murder and rape but most of the time surveillance can halt a crime before or as it happens and certainly every victim makes a complete recovery. The most common crime is choice crime, where you alter the perceptions of your victim so their interpretation of reality is exactly what they want and consent to while the reality is what you want. This can be difficult as for some people this is genuinely an ideal solution and in some cases the victims don’t press charges against the person who deceived them but rather the person who shattered the illusion. Fortunately the surveillance sorts these situations out.”

Max nodded “So if I ever want to go, I just have to dial, yeah?”

Frederick nodded. “Good luck with your life Max.”

Trouble in Choice World
By
Alexander Gordon Jahans

Max left the house and started walking. He had a spring in his step as he listened to the Kaiser Chiefs. He strode past the bus stop and didn't notice the rickety wooden shed that was parked against it. He was lost to the music and didn't notice he was being followed until a hand touched his shoulder.

He was startled and turned to look. Pausing his music and pulling out his ear buds he saw he was being greeted by a tall slender woman with flame red hair, pale skin, blue eyes and large comfy jumper.

"Hi" she said "I'm Amy. I- well the denizens of choice - you called Freddy's number?"

She was blushing and looked nervous.

"Yeah I called Freddy's number, what of it?" asked Max "And are you okay?"

"Well it's just that I'm sort of your welcome gift" said Amy reluctantly before adding "I'll be very good and if you just want to turn me into a toy then turn me off and leave me in a cupboard somewhere I won't mind I swear." Then she bit her lip and studied him "Equally if you want... well I wouldn't mind... I'm good with anything. You're in charge. I'm just sort of your tour guide and a freebie."

Max shook his head "You people are insane."

Amy shucked on her bangs nervously "I'm sorry, I fucked it up didn't I? I came on too strong."

Max laughed and rubbed her arm compassionately "You're fine, just maybe lets start from friends and work from there."

Amy smiled and rubbed his arm in turn "Friends is good."

"Right then lets go see the Ferryman" said Max

Amy squeed and took his hand so she could lead the way.

Amy led Max inside the shed and they watched as Frederick stripped a tall blonde woman naked.

Amy shut the door.

The woman being stripped said “Umm you know we’ve got company, right?”

Frederick said “Shush”

The woman squinted at Max “Hang on, weren’t you here before?”

Frederick sighed and grabbed the woman’s face between his hands so he could look into her eyes
“Honey, this is only going to work if you obey me. I appreciate that it’s early days and there’s new stimuli but your boyfriend is paying me a lot of money to do this so we need to get this right.”

The woman seemed to sag “I fucked up didn’t I?”

“Yes you did but we’ll try it again later without stimuli. Take your clothes and get dressed in the cage.”
said Frederick.

The woman nodded and said “Sorry”

Frederick let her go and said “It’s quite alright. It’s not my money you’re wasting.”

The woman quietly gathered up her clothes and climbed into the cage.

“Sorry about that” said Frederick as he turned to address Max “I didn’t know how long you’d be so I thought I’d work on that girl who barged in here when I was showing you round that first time. I’m glad you’ve decided to stay. I would offer her to you, as a kind of welcome gift, but I don’t think she’s up to snuff yet.”

Max said “It’s fine really. There is just one thing I am curious about” and he looked to Amy.

Amy smiled awkwardly.

Frederick grinned. “Ah yes the more traditional welcome gift. If I may Amy?”

He held out his hand and Amy walked towards it.

Frederick grabbed Amy and turned her round so she was facing Max.

“Everyone who comes here is stored on a database. It’s kind of for security and health reasons but also for this. Moving to any place is scary, let alone somewhere in a different universe or cluster of universes. So instead of overloading people with guidebooks and handing them a bottle of champagne they analyse what they like and run AI simulations based on the citizens already living in Choice World they think stand the best chance of being appropriate gifts. The simulations are then asked if they would volunteer to be the gifts, of the ones that say yes, one is chosen, given the appropriate knowledge and added to the memories of the citizen they then print out.” said Frederick.

Amy grinned “I volunteered to be yours Max and I was chosen to be the best gift for you.”

“And to identify the gifts from the citizens, the gifts have a barcode on their bum” said Frederick and he pulled down Amy’s skirt and pants to show off the bar code.

Max looked at it and whistled “So what happens if I meet the real Amy?”

“She will know that your Amy volunteered and that you two are compatible” said Frederick “Lovers have met before when they each saw the other’s gift was themselves.”

Max looked Amy in the eye “So what happens to you if we do?”

Amy grinned “Like say I’m utterly open to whatever you want. Leave me to dust in your toybox if you like but well...” She blushed.

Max blushed and grinned “May I have her back now?”

“Of course” said Frederick with a grin “I’ll leave you at the registration office. They have to make sure you’re legit and then they’ll give you the keys to your house. Oh and watch out for vampires.”

*

“Congratulations Max, you are now officially a denizen of choice” said the Sara Lestrade, the rather

elegant registrar who had just helped Max sign the immigration paperwork. “Now remember your Amy is a construct and gift of the Institution of Choice. She is in large part an exact replica of the real Amy but just because she consents doesn’t mean the real Amy will.”

Max nodded “It’s okay I am not going to forget the need for consent.”

“Good” said Sara with a smile and she handed over a set of keys “Enjoy her and enjoy your stay here Max.”

“Thank you, I will” said Max with a polite but enthusiastic smile which soured the moment he realised he’d also enthusiastically said he’d enjoy Amy. He took the keys.

Sara stood up and held out her hand.

Max stood up and shook it.

Sara said “Good hunting.”

Max smiled awkwardly. “And er good registaring to you too.”

He frowned at the rubbish he’d just spouted and left the line.

As he went to pick up Amy from the euphamistically named “Gift storage facility” he noticed women picking up smiley young men and frowned. Equal opportunity gift privileges might be progressive but it made it clear that one day he could see someone walking by with a gift called Max.

“Are you alright?” asked Amy, with a concerned expression on her face.

“Um, shock” said Max “This’ll take some getting used to”

Amy nodded and hugged him “Well your future starts now and you’re not alone.”

Max patted Amy’s back and said “I think I just need some normal.”

Amy pulled back “Okay I’ll lead you to your new home and we can take it from there.”

Max smiled weakly “I think I’d like that.”

Amy took his hand and led him outside.

A tall, black haired woman in leather grabbed his chest “Well well if it isn’t lunch and this time he’s brought along a side order.”

Amy paused and turned to see what the hold up was.

The vampire put a long nailed finger on her lips, silencing her.

She licked her lips as she studied Max “And this time you don’t have your friendly neighbourhood Farsh-nuke to help you.”

Max grinned “Oh I’m not a seal, honey, I’m a shark” and with that he reached out and grabbed a short blonde woman who was dressed for summer heat. He whispered “She’s a vampire and going to eat me if I don’t do this, sorry.”

The blonde’s gift, a muscley man with his shirt off, gave a concerned look “Hey”

The blonde whimpered with joy “It’s fine, really”

Max kissed the blonde’s neck lightly then sucked it. He looked soulfully into her eyes and pulled out his business card from his wallet and handed it to her “I want you on my door step tomorrow at noon, wear clothes you don’t mind getting destroyed and don’t expect to return home.”

The blonde nodded and took the card.

The vampire grinned “So it’s true a shark swims among us.”

Max leaned close to the blonde and whispered “Thank you.”

The blonde strode on.

Max smiled and looked into the vampire's eyes "The question is: If I'm not a seal, what does that make you?"

"Diane" said the vampire, extending her hand "We could use a man like you in our clan?"

Max chuckled "I'm a shark, not a vampire. I am not like you, I do not work like you."

The vampire nodded "I can see that. You're gentle. Very well. Consider me a friend then or at least an ally. I'll spread the word you are not to be harrassed by vampires."

"How nice of you." said Max insincerely. "Now get your hands away from my property."

The vampire nodded and let her finger drop from Amy's lips.

Max and the vampire looked into each other's eyes for a long tense moment.

Sara Lestrade exited the building and said "Oh. Oh Max, I'm so sorry."

Sara went to the vampire's side "I told you to wait for me in the crypt"

"But I was hungry" said the vampire and she bit into Sara's neck.

Max looked Sara in the eyes and said wryly "Well I'll leave you to enjoy lunch."

Then Max and Amy strode away.

Amy said "That was impressive, you held your nerve against a vampire."

Max shrugged "I'm a popular youtuber I've dealt with worse."

*

The house looked like his own except it was bigger and cleaner and had been subtly upgraded in impossible ways. The fridge freezer held more stuff, the oven and hob were the latest model, the boiler was electric and the plumbing had been completely redone. The bedroom was where there was the biggest change.

The computer had been upgraded to petabyte storage with the latest and greatest motherboard, cpu, gpu, graphics cards and ram. The internet was faster than the speed of light and connected not only with the internet of Choice World but also the internet of his home world.

There was also a toybox installed beneath his tv that Amy assured him was bigger on inside and would deliver the toy he wanted from the box on demand without rummaging around.

Max was now finally happy in his new home and addressed Amy “Look, I’m sorry but we need to talk.”

“What about?” asked Amy.

“Us” said Max “Well you really?”

Amy shrugged “I’m fine, go ahead.”

“This really weirds me out” said Max “Where I come from women aren’t just gifted to people and if they do it’s slavery and very very bad.”

Amy frowned “Ah, I can see how that would make things a little awkward.”

Max said “You’re a very lovely woman and I really, really, really want to strip you naked and make passionate love to you but I can’t in all good conscience do anything until I am convinced you’re actually a person with the ability to consent and not some preprogrammed meat puppet. Sorry.”

Amy flushed red with embarrassment “So that’s what you see me as huh? A meat puppet? Well I am very sorry that I volunteered and made you feel so awful. I think I’ll sleep downstairs tonight. If you ever need me for information you can find me but just at the moment I’m not sure I want to be your friend, never mind anything else.”

Amy left the room.

Max cried “Look, I’m sorry, you really are lovely” but he let her go and watched letsplays dejectedly as he tried to ignore the part of himself that insulted him.

*

The doorbell rang and Max woke up to answer it. He was wearing pjs and hadn't even cleaned his teeth.

The short blonde woman looked radiant in a light summer dress. "Sorry if I woke you."

Max swallowed remembering the invite he'd given the woman as part of his bluff to the vampire yesterday "No. No, come in. You can head upstairs to my bedroom. You'll know it because it looks like shit. I'll just clean my teeth and get dressed then we can talk."

The blonde nodded "Okay, I can do that." and she walked past him and headed up stairs.

"Sorry" said Max to the tall shirtless man that was her gift.

The gift said "You made quite the impression on her yesterday. This is a gentle warning. Be careful with her."

Max nodded "With great power comes great responsibility." then he added "My gift's in the living room if you want to compare notes, currently I think the consensus is that I'm an arse."

With that Max headed upstairs.

*

Max entered in bedroom with clean teth deodorised armpits, a clean face and clean tshirt and lounge trousers. "Hi" he said the blonde woman on the bed "I'm Max, pleased to meet you."

"I know" said the blonde woman with a laugh "And I'm Felicity by the way."

Max nodded "Well, Felicity, I am very sorry to disappoint you but I'm not actually a vampire. And I have no intention of eating you or drinking your blood."

Felicity nodded "I know. I researched you. It's how I found you. I love your writing, particularly The Accessory. That was... very stimulating. And I love your political vlogs. You're just so passionate. So glad we don't have to live under the tories anymore."

Max chuckled and strode into the room perching atop his computer chair “So if you know I’m not a vampire, why did you come here today?”

“Hope” said Felicity instinctually before adding “And I figured if it was a bluff it would probably make sense to back it up and well you made me feel good so I... umm...”

Felicity trailed off and blushed “My gift will kill you if you actually do this but I thought well maybe you might want a toy or an accessory or a pet and well I had to see.”

Max grinned and looked away “Okay, well thank you for your kind offer you’re very sweet.”

“Oh no sweet is friend zone” said Felicity “Please don’t friend zone me?”

“How about friends with benefits?” said Max.

Felicity grinned.

“One condition” said Max “Let me romance you. A date? Say next week? Wednesday? I’ll call you with the details, if you’ll provide me with them.”

Felicity’s grin grew wider and she said “Okay, I can work with that. I just have one favour?”

“What’s that?” asked Max.

“Kiss me” said Felicity.

Max grinned and got off his chair “Felicity, I am so sorry for yesterday but this I do gladly”

Max kissed Felicity.

Felicity pulled him into a snog.

*

Max and Felicity headed downstairs, smiling ecstatically.

The entered the living room and the shirtless man rose to hug Felicity.

Felicity squeed.

The shirtless man said “Honey, I need to speak with Max for a moment, will you be okay with Amy?”

Felicity nodded and let the shirtless man walk out of the living room with Max.

The shirtless man hissed in Max’s ear “A word, if you please?”

Max grimaced and left the house with the shirtless man.

“We can talk here” said Max and he flinched.

The shirtless man said “Why are you making that face?”

“Because you’re going to hit me” said Max

“Why would I want to hit you?”

“Because I upset Amy and came on to your girl” said Max, bracing for a punch to the face.

The shirtless man rolled his eyes “Max, you upset Amy because you refused to take advantage of her, why the hell would I be angry at you for that and equally Felicity is not my girl, I am her boy. I was created to be her gift. I want her to be happy.”

Max opened his eyes “So who are you then? Or who are you based off?”

“The name is Oliver” said the shirtless man “And in another life I beat up bad guys. Sorry about the threat earlier, you could have been a vampire.”

Max said “So how is it for you? This whole being a gift lark? If you don’t mind me asking?”

Oliver shrugged “It feels really fucking weird. The real Oliver came here to work a case and I’m just...

well I don't know... beef cake to order. Kind of feel empty but like I've got a real opportunity to live a better life."

"Or end up as a toy?" said Max pointedly.

Oliver shook his head "Gifts are assigned based on the mentality of the prospective citizens. You're a shark so you get a seal. Felicity's a seal so she gets..."

Max smirked "Muscle man the almighty."

Oliver snorted.

Max asked "So if me and Felicity do... If I..." he frowned "If your seal comes under my protection what happens to you? I mean Amy has been quite frank about how I can turn her off and leave her in a cupboard if she becomes unimportant. What happens to you?"

Oliver shrugged "Never really thought about it. I guess the institute assumed that whoever took my seal from me would know what to do with me."

Max nodded "Okay I'll get thinking but no rush with the existential doubt just yet, it's still early days. What did you want to talk to me about anyway?"

Oliver nodded thoughtfully then said "I wanted to give you my blessing. I mean Felicity showed me a cluster of words that come up most frequently in your writing and morality is one of them. That looks suspicious as fuck when the supposedly moral man in question has just preyed upon your girl and asked to eat her but when I've just listened to a beautiful woman bitch about your unwillingness to dominate her it rings true."

Max looked away awkwardly "Well cheers I guess."

"I also wanted to say this." Oliver glared at Max "Never call a woman, never call anyone, a fucking meat puppet. That woman would do anything for you and you hurt her feelings."

Max sighed "Fair enough."

Oliver said “I know it’s weird, I know it feels odd but she exists for you. Make her feel loved and wanted.”

Max nodded “Will do.”

Oliver held out his hand “So, friends?”

“Friends” said Max and he shook Oliver’s hand.

They reentered the living room.

Felicity said “So you’re not dead then? Good.”

Oliver smirked.

Max approached Amy “Amy, I’m sorry. I said some stupid things and I threw your amazing kindness in your face. The truth is I just don’t know what to do with you.”

Amy looked up, still sulking “Well okay, I understand that. I just want to make you happy Max. Whatever you want?”

Felicity said “There’s a taming seminar on tomorrow. You should go along.”

Oliver glared at Felicity “I’m supposed to be the guidebook here?”

Felicity grinned “I was interested for umm... reasons but Max you should definitely go along and bring Amy. I hear they have provisions for gifts so they don’t get jealous.”

Max looked to Amy “Well?”

Amy said “Okay but you’re buying me lunch afterwards?”

Max grinned “I think I can do that.”

Amy grinned “Thank you, Felicity.”

Felicity smiled “No problem, us toys gotta stick together.”

Oliver and Max each stared at Felicity in astonishment.

Amy gave Felicity a curious look.

Felicity said “Girls. Us girls gotta stick together.”

Max looked to Oliver.

Oliver shrugged “Well Felicity if that’s what you want I’m sure Max can make you very happy.”

Max stared into space, realizing just what had been said.

Felicity got up from her chair and said “Well I think we better leave.”

“Absolutely” said Oliver “Places to go, people to meet”

Felicity walked over to Max and hugged him “Tame her then take me when you’re ready. No pressure.”

Max nodded “I’ll do my best, enjoy your beefcake.”

Felicity left with Oliver.

*

The Seminar was held in the meeting room of a hotel. Amy was wearing a check flannel blouse, denim body warmer, hipster jeans and converse. Max was wearing his usual tshirt, trackies and slipon shoes.

They queued for thirty minues until finally they stood before a bouncer with an earpiece.

“Excuse me Sir” said the bouncer “Do you have a pet you wish to check in?”

Max looked to Amy.

Amy nodded.

“Yes” said Max “This is Amy.”

The Bouncer nodded “Just this way Sir and Madam”

The Bouncer let them through.

A large woman with greying hair sized up Amy and Max. “So I’m guessing the guy shitting bricks is the pet. Correct me if I’m wrong?”

Max made a face like he’d just been smacked with a dead fish.

Amy smirked “No Maam, I am.”

The large woman grinned “My apologies, Sir. Well you’re in the right place to work on your confidence. How about you Madam, how do you feel about nudity?”

Amy’s eyes widened in shock but she shrugged “We’re here to learn.”

The large woman nodded, took a collar from a rack and secured it round Amy’s neck. Then she took a strip of printed paper with a barcode on it, tore along the perforated edge then pulled a strip of backing paper free so she could secure the paper around Max’s wrist.

Max nodded “Thanks”

The large woman smirked and pulled Amy towards her. She started massaging Amy’s neck as an Assistant placed a pet travel cage beside the large woman.

Amy found herself grinning with ecstasy.

The large woman stripped her while keeping massaging going. She muttered “When you come down don’t struggle, your boy will claim you soon enough.”

Amy nodded “No struggles, gotcha.”

The large woman gently eased Amy to her knees then slid her backwards into the cage and locked the door with a padlock. She gave the staring Max the key then secured the other half of the paper as a label round the handle of Amy's cage.

The large woman lifted up the cage easily and said "You can collect her at the end, go find your seat."

As Max entered the seminar hall he noticed two large sealed bins by the entrance to the seminar then he picked a seat to the middle.

It took a while for everyone to filter through and find a seat but soon the hall was packed.

Finally the lights dimmed and a spotlight lit up a tall skinny old man. He wore a sharp suit and had gelled up hair.

"I am the Bam-Kursh" he said and the room fell silent "I know, you probably think this is a trick? The heist of a century?" He said bombastically "And tonight Ladies and Gentlemen I shall make the whole audience disappear!"

A chill wind blew at those words.

He leaned and whispered into the mic on a stand before him. "No, I got old, I got bored, I got tired. There was nothing left to fight for, nothing left to challenge me, nothing left to thrill me." He sighed "Even the Farsh-nuke was putty in my hands." He chuckled "By the end I had a warehouse full of him and her, the Unleasher too."

He stood back from the mic and took a deep breath "I was ready to die" he snorted "But who is going to kill an immortal warrior as good as I?" He leaned in to the mic again "So I put the word out. The Bam-Kursh awaits a champion capable of killing him."

"And that's when I appeared" A spotlight appeared as a tall blonde woman stepped out onto the stage, looking radiant in an expensive dress "I said I had spent my life trying to become a living doll but that I needed to take the final step and I wanted him to help me."

"But I didn't want to kill again" said the old man "I had lost my blood lust and I saw this beauty come

willingly into my parlor and I said Go, go and live.”

The blonde woman approached the man and put her hands on his shoulders “And that’s when I said Bam-Kursh you are a mighty warrior, a mighty toy maker, you should share that gift. It would be my honour to devote everything I am to helping you share that gift.”

“And that’s when I saw it” said the old man “This woman needn’t be one last conquest or sample to my collection. She could be a study aid, she could give her life hundreds of times over for the purposes of educating a new generation of toy makers. With logicular replication I could tame and murder her over and over again in the knowledge that her suffering would bring joy to others.”

The blonde woman grinned “And I saw within him the potential to not just be one doll but to be legion, to truly transcend to a higher plane of dollhood.”

The lights rose and the old man said “And that is why Ladies and Gentlemen I am able to give this seminar today. Remain seated and you will each receive a Candi to tame. If anybody needs to leave and doesn’t want their Candi just deposit them in the bins on the way out. They will be tamed and plasticised later.”

The blonde woman on the stage grinned “And there is also a raffle going on to win a signed copy tamed by the Bam-Kursh himself. Me.”

A blonde woman strode over to Max “Umm hi? Are you Max?”

Max nodded.

The blonde woman grinned and sat on his knee “I would be you Candi. Enjoy the Seminar and good luck with the taming.”

Max nodded.

The lights dimmed again and the old man on stage said “The first thing to remember about taming is you need confidence, supreme confidence. It doesn’t matter if your toy is willing to be tamed if you don’t have the confidence to actually do the job. Willing submissiveness and obedience on the part of the toy can only go so far when the master or mistress is unable or unwilling to lead them...”

*

Amy lay hunched up in her travel cage for what felt like hours until at last Max arrived to claim her. She called “Hey?”

Max grinned and poked his fingers through the cage “Hey Amy, how was it for you?”

“Sweaty” said Amy “And cramped. I’d quite like to get out of here.”

“Just as soon as there’s space” said Max and he walked out of the Seminar Hall with his Candi and Amy in her travel cage.

They entered the hallway of the hotel and a woman with gorgeous toffee brown hair caught his eye. He felt emboldened by the seminar and said “Hey, so this is crazy but I just got here and you are beautiful.”

The woman turned, she had her own travel cage and Candi “Sorry hun, I’m a shark not a seal.”

Max deflated “Sorry”

The woman laughed and patted his back “Hey don’t worry about it. At least you found the confidence to try.”

Max frowned “Is it that obvious?”

She nodded.

Max grimaced.

She said “Actually you know what? Fuck it. I don’t normally take pity on guys but I’m going to hand in my Candi to get plasticised then how about you come back to mine for a bite to eat?”

She flashed her fangs and smiled warmly.

Max sighed “I can’t, I owe Amy dinner and well I sort of don’t wanna be it myself.”

She grinned and tickled Max's chin "Shame, you look delicious" then she sighed "Max I'm playing with you. My name's Ruby. I know who you are and know you're off limits. Your Amy is perfectly willing to join us. Perhaps I'll show you a few moves to satisfy her."

Amy said "Hey, do you mind holding off the flirting till I'm out of here?"

Ruby chuckled.

Max blushed. "I didn't think I was flirting."

Ruby said "There's 4 of us if you include the Candis I think that gives your pet enough privacy."

They pulled off to the side and arranged their bodies in a horseshoe shape around Amy's travel cage. Max unlocked the cage and pulled Amy out then gave her her bag of clothes before turning his back.

Ruby smirked "Turning your back, a true gentleman."

Max blushed then asked "What does plastification actually entail?"

"It's a virus" said Ruby "Specifically engineered to lie dormant just long enough to infect every cell in the body then convert it into a type of plastic. It's a quick death. As I understand it the Candis are flushed during the infection stage so that once they turn all the extraneous matter that makes up the body will harmlessly evaporate. No muss no fuss. Just a plastic doll where a living being used to be."

Max stared at his Candi "You want that?"

His Candi shrugged "Yeah. I want to be a toy."

Max said "I can't do this. I'm sorry, I can't."

His Candi said "Why? I want this."

"There has to be another way" said Max "I'm not a killer."

Ruby sighed "Max they're toys, this is what they want."

Amy pulled on her bodywarmer and said “Actually there is another way. It’s the way I mentioned was a possibility for me, Max, take her to a petshop and give her the toy injections, she’ll last forever, won’t need food, air or the toilet and her mind can be turned off.”

Max’s Candi said “That could work?”

“Thank you” said Max.

Amy picked up the empty travel cage and said “My pleasure, shall we get moving? I’m decent.”

Ruby sighed “Well I’m still going to get my Candi plasticised so you’ll have to wait if you want lunch?”

“We can wait” said Max.

When Ruby and her Candi started moving, Amy patted Max on the back “Look at you you’ve pulled, gotten yourself a hot young toy and you might be able to do something with me by the end of the night.”

Max smirked.

*

Ruby unlocked the front door of her house and entered. Max, Amy and Candi followed.

Ruby led the way into the living room and set her travel cage on the ground. “Excuse the mess. Dinner’s going to be about an hour if that’s okay?”

Max shrugged.

Amy said “Actually if it’s going to take that long, would you mind if I used your shower? That uh cage...”

Ruby chuckled “Say no more. Any friend of Max is a friend of mine. Third door on the right upstairs.”

Amy smiled "Thank you."

Max muttered "Careful, she's a vampire."

Amy looked at Ruby cautiously "Umm."

Ruby rolled her eyes "Amy not only are you a friend, you are someone else's property. You're fine. Trust me."

Max looked Ruby in the eyes "Anything happens to her, anything at all..."

Ruby swallowed but met his gaze "It's fine, really."

Max said casually, maintaining eye contact "Amy, go have your shower."

Amy did not need telling twice and left the room.

Ruby said "Quite the looker your girl."

Max grinned insincerely "She's a good girl. I don't want her hurt."

Ruby said "It's curious you won't kill a toy that wants to transcend life yet you have a woman that is very much a seal. You seem to be a shark and yet you lack the killer instinct."

"I like life." said Max "I like looking after people, protecting them. I used to love pets until I got sick of the deaths."

Ruby nodded understanding "But sylphs and toys outlive basic humans. You're not a predator. You're a hero."

Max smiled "You flatter me. My soul is darker than yours will ever be."

Ruby stared at him "And yet you play the hero? Why?"

Max said simply "Because it's the only way I can slleep at night."

Ruby nodded and pulled a key out of her pocket “Then indulge yourself with my seal Britney. I’m hoping to turn her into a toy but she still has a good deal of Agency to get rid of. Enjoy her Max.”

And with that Ruby left.

Candi and Max were left alone together so Candi asked “Max, I understand your desire to keep me alive and I am flattered but I do not wish to intrude on your conversations. I feel awkward.”

Max sighed and turned to look at her, she was so beautiful. He wiped the hair from her face and stroked her cheek “You realise I am going to have to restore your will to live.”

Candi smiled “I know” and she grabbed his hand as it stroked her face “I see a way before me now, a way I did not know existed before but please... You are my owner. What should I do to not be? To not feel like I am intruding?”

Max looked at the key in his hand and realised none of them had acknowledged Ruby’s toy. He smiled “The travel cage. You don’t have to. You really don’t have to but if you want to be ignored? To be an object in the background? Then put those gorgeous clothes in a bag and enter the travel cage.”

Candi nodded “Thank you Max” then she looked at the other cage and said “Good luck with her.”

Max laughed and unlocked Ruby’s travel cage. He pulled Britney out of the cage and helped her to her feet. She was about 5 foot 5 had tanned skin and had shoulder length bronze coloured hair. Her eyes were a grayish green with a halo of turquoise around her pupils.

She smiled shyly at him, revealing white and straight teeth. “Hi”

“Hi” said Max, marvelling at the woman “Just how much did you hear?”

“Enough to know that my Mistress has put me under your charge.” said Britney.

A boyish grin spread across Max’s face.

“Well what do you wish to do with me?” asked Britney.

Max frowned and said “Where are your clothes kept?”

“By the cage” said Britney.

Max nodded and rushed to the cage he pulled out what looked like a bra, knickers, trousers and shirt and gave them to Britney. He examined the cage as she changed.

It was the size of a pop up tent, just big enough to stretch out and sit up in. There was a food bowl of kibble to one side as a water bottle hooked up to the mains for the occupant to drink from.

Max was stunned “She makes you live in this?”

Britney said “Yes, she likes to dominate and demean me. Says I would be much prettier with my mind gone.”

“And you let her?” said Max

Britney finished dressing and strode over to Max. “The real me did not live a good life. She was probably going to kill herself had the invitation not come. My Mistress gives me purpose and meaning, I matter to her in a way I can screw up and it is freeing to no longer be in control of my life. To no longer have the guilt.”

Max grabbed her hand and squeezed it “You need therapy Britney, not this.”

“I volunteered Max, I was created to be hers” said Britney and she pulled him close so she could look into his eyes. “The real Britney is living happy and healthy. My history exists to make me Ruby’s gift. That’s all. I like that. I like to make Ruby happy.”

Max said “She wants to turn your mind off.”

Britney grinned “Be an improvement don’t you think? None of my melancholy to put a downer on things, just the beauty of my body.”

Max hugged Britney and patted her back “You are lovely, your mind is beautiful.”

He pulled back and said “The scars and terrors that we go through define us as people but it doesn’t have to be negative. Now you want to be Ruby’s gift, to be her toy, well there’s no reason you can’t be happy. What makes you happy Britney?”

Britney said “Christmass.”

“Ooh! Christmass is good.” said Max and went to sit in an armchair “Brandy butter and pigs in blankets”

Britney grinned and sat on the floor before him “Minty candy canes and chocolate oranges.”

Max started massaging Britney’s neck “Roast turkey with all the trimmings”

Britney moaned with delight “Oh that’s good. Stuffing and parsnips.”

*

Amy stepped out of the shower and dried herself down with a towel and went to pick up her clothes. They were gone.

Miffed, she went to the door of the shower room and opened it.

Ruby clipped a leash onto the collar that was still around Amy’s neck.

Amy said “Okay?”

Ruby said simply “Follow” then started walking.

Amy followed.

Ruby led Amy into her bedroom then she locked the door behind Amy.

Amy said “Okay now would be a really good time to explain what the fuck is going on?”

Ruby unclipped the leash from about Amy’s neck and said “You are his gift. You were chosen to be

compatible with him and you chose to be with him. I can find out a lot about him from you.”

Amy glared at Ruby “You’re using me for information.”

“I’m a vampire, I don’t have healthy relationships.” said Ruby “Now tell me what you know about him and why you chose him. Why are you compatible?”

Amy stared into Ruby’s soul “Why? Why do you need to know? I just thought you wanted to fuck him or eat him?”

Ruby nodded “I did. I do.”

Amy clenched her fists.

“But I am also intrigued by him” said Ruby “There is a darkness within him. He isn’t good like you are. He doesn’t radiate it, he chooses it. Tell me Amy what sort of man can intimidate a vampire, tame a woman and keep a friend in a cage yet still try to claim the moral high ground?”

Amy smiled insincerely “I don’t know, I’m just his gift.”

“A man who is trying very hard to convince himself he is better than he really is.” answered Ruby “So what is he hiding? How black is his soul?”

Amy shrugged and she saw now the point to this “Okay, okay, I’ll answer you but can I please have some clothes.”

Ruby chuckled and circled Amy. “You really are beautiful you know? But not too beautiful, not like my Britney, there is raw, honesty and realness to your beauty. Simple and practical, like a sword.”

Amy rolled her eyes “Well cheers for the appraisal but I’m not for sale.”

“And you have plenty of bite don’t you?” said Ruby “Very strong and independent and yet...” Ruby massaged Amy’s neck.

Amy groaned “You bitch” as the ecstasy brought her to her knees.

Ruby said “You melt before a compassionate hand.”

Amy sighed “I like a massage, okay?”

“You like to be submissive” said Ruby.

Amy grimaced “Yes. Yes, I like to be submissive. So what?”

“So you reward him for his morality and fight back if he displays his darkness nakedly” said Ruby and then she stepped away and said “Now tell me why you chose to be with him?”

Amy stood up straight and glared at Ruby “Why?”

Because I’m giving you clothes” said Ruby and she tossed a bunch at Amy.

Amy examined the clothes. A pink bikini, short skirt and tanktop. She sighed and got dressed, it was better than nothing. "I chose to be with him because I felt sorry for him and I knew I could make him happy and he could make me happy."

"Why did you feel sorry for him?" asked Ruby.

"Because he had a rough childhood" said Amy "He was bullied, had an abusive father, a whole host of health conditions and as a result before he came here was lonely and depressed."

Ruby nodded "And you can make him happy?"

Amy shrugged "Well Max is just this guy you know? He wants friends, he wants people he can nerd out with and I am well nerdy."

"First 15 Doctors?" asked Ruby.

Amy finished dressing and grinned at Ruby "William Hartnell, Patrick Troughton, Jon Pertwee, Tom Baker, Peter Davison, Colin Baker, Sylvester McCoy, Paul McGann, John Hurt, Christopher Ecclestone, David Tennant, Matt Smith, Peter Capaldi and Haylee Atwell."

Ruby smirked and gave her a sugar cube "Well done, that's good, have a treat?"

Amy gave Ruby a curious look then accepted the sugar cube and ate it.

Ruby asked "And what does he do for you?"

Amy grinned "He is like fire and ice, he burns with energy and passion yet he's so cold and calculating. He's hot enough to take me by surprise but cold enough to know precisely when I'm in the mood. He is kind and protective but honest to the point of bluntness and willing to let me make my own decisions. And yes as you noted he can complement my ideas of submissiveness."

Ruby nodded and stroked her cheek "Thank you, Amy, you have been most helpful. I think I shall have to find the real Amy, you would make the most wonderful toy."

Amy grinned.

A bell rang somewhere in the house.

Ruby checked her watch “Dinner time.”

Amy gave Ruby a nervous look.

“Not you, you daft thing” said Ruby and she unlocked the door.

*

Ruby, Amy, Max and Britney gathered round the dinner table.

Max said “I like the clothes.”

“Thanks” said Amy “I didn’t choose them.

Max smirked.

Britney said “You have a really good Master you know Amy? I wish I could be his.”

Max smiled and squeezed Britney’s hand “I wish you could be mine to.”

“Perhaps I might let you buy her off me” said Ruby as she plated up the food. “I mean I only need one copy to keep as a work of art. Incidentally I can’t help noting that she’s clothed and eating at the table.”

Max stared at Ruby like she was mad “Well of course, she’s a person.”

Britney grinned and squeezed Max’s hand.

“Don’t be preposterous” said Ruby “She’s a toy. I acknowledge that she needs a bit of kibble to live currently but why did you clothe her? I mean what is the point of hiding that body away?”

“Because we’re eating” said Max and then he changed subject “So what do you think about my girl? I don’t know what to do myself. This isn’t my world.”

“I think you should fuck her” said Ruby.

Amy blushed.

Max stared at Ruby.

Britney giggled.

“The poor girl wants it so much it would be cruel to deny it and admit it you want to experience her too.” said Ruby “But then I think you should turn her into a sylph and keep her as a pet. I would add her to my collection myself but you need her heart and mind and you need someone to protect. She’s already submissive and already follows you around like a lapdog, you just need to make it official.”

Amy focused on cutting her food, her cheeks flushed red.

Max stared at Amy, studying her, after a while he said “I think you might have a point.”

“Also, if there’s a queue I think I would like to try you out sometime?” said Ruby.

Amy glared at her.

Max laughed “No”

“What?” asked Ruby.

“No.” said Max “You’re a cold hearted bitch.”

Ruby stared at him “You’re actually say no to me?”

“Yeah” said Max “I’ve seen how you treat your toys.”

Ruby glared at Britney.

“Incidentally if anything happens to Britney I will come back to make you my toy and you really do NOT want me to.” said Max.

Amy stared at Max. “Hey, calm down.”

“Oh I am perfectly calm” said Max icily “I am just stating a fact.”

And then he dug into his food.

*

They finished dinner then Max and Amy left, with their Candi in a travel cage and the clothes Amy had arrived in in a bag.

When they got home Max promised Amy and Candi that he would take care of them each but that he just needed a couple of weeks to get set up before he dealt with them.

So time passed and they grew closer as they ate together and watched TV together.

Then the day of Max’s date arrived.

*

Max arrived in the restaurant in a three piece suit with a tie tied in a windsor knot and brown leather brogues.

Felicity was already seated and wearing a ruby red dress. She stared at him “You have a suit?”

Max grinned “Yeah well I used to be big into them and then I stopped going places with people I care about.”

Felicity put her hands on her chest and said “Aww... You care about me.”

Max smirked and took his seat.

They ordered drinks and then Max said “You know I met someone recently who made me reevaluate some things. There is something I’d like to ask you?”

Felicity studied Max for a moment then said “Where?”

Max stared at her and said cautiously “Here?”

“No, I meant where did you meet this person?” said Felicity.

The waiter arrived with the drinks and food menus. They order food.

When the waiter cleared off Max said “It was at that taming seminar.”

“Oh” said Felicity “Learn anything interesting?”

“Yes” said Max and he sipped his drink “But I met someone there, she was a vampire. We had dinner with her and she was nice enough but I learned something from her.”

“Oh?” said Felicity.

Max studied Felicity for a moment. She seemed so small and fragile, something within him just wanted to protect her. “I learned that there is a moral way to have...” and he looked meaningfully at her as he said the next word. “Toys.”

Felicity stared at him “Max, if you’re suggesting what I think you’re suggesting...?”

Max held up a finger.

Felicity fell silent.

Max continued “And uh that night I got a toy of my own anyway in the form of my taming partner Candi and well I recalled you... making some rather freudian slips and I figured...” His mouth dried and he gulped down his drink “I figured that if I don’t take you someone like her will.”

Felicity stared at him “Max, I-I’m so so so happy you said that. Thank you so much, look I’ll be the best behaved and...”

Max sighed “But I must confess to having an ulterior motive.”

“What?” said Felicity, glaring at him.

“This woman also gave me some advice regarding Amy...” said Max.

Felicity swallowed, expecting the worst

“She said I should umm satisfy her then turn her into a sylph, whatever that means and I figured...”
Max trailed off and frowned.

“Oh thank god” said Felicity

“I thought you’d be pissed” said Max

Felicity laughed “You think I and Oliver haven’t...?”

Max stared at her “Then why are you interested in me? I mean if you and Oliver...”

“You’re nerdy and commanding” said Felicity “He’s strong and obedient. I mean don’t get me wrong that’s nice but I want someone who can connect to me on an intellectual level and give me eternal youth.”

Max tilted his head to one side and thought for a second then said “So you’re fine with this?”

Felicity grinned “Of course I am. Let me know if you need any help with the paper work.”

“Paper work?” asked Max “I thought you just consented came home with me then got a load of injections.”

“Oh no” said Felicity “Being a toy is a very legal thing. I will literally sign away my human rights and become your legal property. It’s a whole... THING. Apparently the Bam-Kursh pushed it through.”

Max stared at her “You’re kidding?”

“Having second thoughts?” asked Felicity.

“Not if you’re not I’m not” said Max. “So toy isn’t just a cutesy name for like drugged up submissive?”

“Oh, no” said Felicity “You can actually buy toys in shops. My favourite is Lucy, she’s a hatchling of the actual Lucy Danse, who’s currently leading the United Civilisations of the Multiverse in their fight against the Septagonoids. No idea how the Bam-Kursh managed to swing that. So yeah toys are totally legit toys. There’s even an injection to basically wipe away almost all of a toy’s memories so they are nice and brainless and an injection to give the toy unflinching loyalty.”

Felicity sipped her drink and said coyly “I would umm like to not have those two injections please?” Then she looked into his eyes “Unless... You want me to?” She shrugged and looked away “I could be a brainless beauty if you wanted.”

Max grabbed her hands and said “I want to have you as my toy so I can do it properly, in a way that respects you as a person. You can tell me precisely what injections you want. I am not going to make you do anything you don’t want to.”

Felicity looked into his eyes and sighed “I suppose it’s too late to kiss you? I mean since I am agreeing to be your legal property?”

Max thought for a second then said “I am not sure what you’re talking about? I mean we’re two consenting adults having dinner together, anything could happen?”

Felicity grinned.

Then the food arrived.

*

Felicity woke up naked in Max’s bed.

Amy was wearing flannel check shirt and jeans and watching her. “Hey, sleepy head. Have a good night?”

Felicity stared at her “Umm, yeah... Why are you...?”

Amy said “Max gets bored and he didn’t want to wake you. I decided to stay and welcome you to your new home.”

Felicity sat up and kept the covers over herself. “So you’re not mad at me because I and Max?”

Amy chuckled “He cleared it with me and Candi before he met you at the restaurant. Now you’ve fucked him and are his toy, it’s my turn.”

Felicity said “So what happens now?”

Amy smiled and said “Now me and Max head to the pet shop to get you your injections.”

Felicity nodded “Well good luck Amy.”

Amy said “Thank you and genuinely welcome Felicity. We’ll take good care of you. The shower’s just down the hall and the water’s good and hot. There’ll be a change of clothes waiting for you when you get out. The fridge is packed if you fancy breakfast.”

“Thank you” said Felicity with a smile “That’s really nice.”

“No problem” said Amy and then she got up to leave and paused on the door to ask “How do you feel about threesomes?”

Felicity stared at her “Umm, I haven’t really given it much thought.”

“Shower well” said Amy and she left the room with a devious grin on her face.

*

Amy and Max were in the pet shop and Max was getting the couple of dozen different injections for his new toys along with the associated paper work when Amy went to look at the sylphs for sale in the adoption center.

She saw a couple holding hands and staring at the adoption center. The man, not much more than a boy, was visibly terrified. Amy decided to see what was up.

“Everything okay?” she asked.

The man, wearing skinny jeans and a pacman tshirt, nodded “I’m f-fine”

Amy looked to the blonde beside him. She was average height with practical comfy clothes.

“He’s just nervous” said the blonde. “He wants to be a hamster but he’s got crippling social anxiety.”

Amy said “That’s an amazing coincidence because I just came in here looking for a couple of hamsters.”

The man turned and hugged Amy “Thank you” he whispered.

The blonde said “You are a life saver.”

Amy shook her head “You are.”

*

By the time Max arrived with a doctor’s bag full of injections and forms Amy held a travel cage in her hands.

“You bought something? I didn’t think you had any money.” said Max.

Amy smirked “Yeah I got us a couple of hamsters cheap. The main cage will be delivered by the time we get back.”

“Neat” said Max “Used to have hamsters of my own until I got sick of the constant death.”

“Oh don’t worry” said Amy “These are sylph hamsters, they’re hardier.”

Max nodded appreciatively.

“You got everything?” asked Amy.

“Yeah” said Max “There’s just one more stop we need to make. Medical check up, shouldn’t take

long.”

*

Amy entered the Doctor’s office and a short middle aged woman in a suit greeted her like an old friend
“Amy, good to see you, how are you? It’s been years.”

Amy frowned “I think you’re mistaken.”

Max entered “She’s with me. A gift of the Institute of Choice.”

“Oh, of course” said the Doctor “You’re a lucky man. Amy’s a very rare person to find, let alone have handed to you on a plate.”

Max smiled politely and said “She’s here for moral support.” and then he sat down in a chair opposite the Doctor.

Amy sat in a chair beside Max.

“Oh yes” said the Doctor “Well first off, allow me to introduce myself. I am Nikola Evangelista. Welcome to Choice World, I hope you’re enjoying your time here.”

“Oh it’s been very eventful and I’ve met some interesting people” said Max and he grabbed Amy’s hand. Bracing himself. “Before I left I was diagnosed with some minor umm genetic defects.”

“Yes” said the Doctor looking over her notes on a computer “Low cortisol, low testosterone, a slightly enlarged pituitary gland. And for that you’ve been on hydrocortisone tablets three times a day and testosterone injections but the pituitary gland seemed more or less okay.”

“Yeah” said Max dryly, waiting for the bad news.

“Well as you know we did a scan of you when you arrived.” said the Doctor “That is after all how you came to have the lovely Amy. I’m sure you’ll make a very lovely gift yourself someday.”

Max snorted and looked away “Just give it to me straight, the seemingly inconsequential enlargement of my pituitary gland isn’t quite so inconsequential is it?”

The Doctor frowned “No, how did you know?”

Max sighed “Because I don’t get to move to Choice World, live a life free from fear and meet the people I have without experiencing some kind of negative. It’s a tumor isn’t it?”

“Yes” said the Doctor and she looked him in the eye “But I wish that were the only problem. With our technology tumors are easy to operate on. According to our scans your dna is degrading. You are falling apart very slowly at the cellular level.”

“How the fuck is that possible?” asked Max “And if it were true I’d have noticed something?”

The Doctor sighed “Logic can degrade dna. With the Septagonoids, the United Civilisations of the Multiverse and the Bam-Kursh off expanding the empire there’s a lot of it about.” and then she leaned in and said “Are you sure you haven’t noticed anything? Loss of smell, nose bleeds, haemorrhoids, migrains, worsening eyesight, progressing difficulty to focus, more typos and clumsiness?”

Max groaned.

Amy squeezed his hand.

Max looked at Amy and smiled “How long have I got?”

“A month” said the Doctor “Extending to a year or three with treatment but it won’t be pretty.”

Max shut his eyes and started taking deep breaths to remain calm.

“But it’s not a death sentence” said the Doctor.

Max didn’t react so Amy said “What’s answer then?”

“Complete genetic rewrite” said the Doctor “I mean we don’t have that technology but a sylph pill or series of toy injections would.”

Max turned his head and glared past the Doctor “How can you not rewrite my dna if both those options

are present?”

The Doctor sighed “Well one was devised by a long dead race and the other made by a mad god who isn’t exactly contactable and isn’t worth trying to bargain with?”

Max said “I can’t trust someone that much, I can’t live that way.”

“Well you have a month to make up your mind” said the Doctor.

Max got up “Well thank you for being so helpful. Now if you will excuse us we have something to attend to.”

Amy said “I’ll be a long in a minute, why don’t you take five?”

Max nodded and left the room.

Amy asked “Are you absolutely certain those are his only two options?”

“The only safe ones” said the Doctor.

“Then tell me about the unsafe ones” said Amy.

The Doctor sighed “Well there’s the Logicians and the Architects of Chaos but they both have entrance exams he wouldn’t live to complete and even if he could they have a strict code that I’m guessing he wouldn’t be into and then well, it’s a bit dangerous but there are rumors of people being bitten by weresharks and remaining sane. If it could be done that would fix his dna and let him remain...”

“Human?” suggested Amy.

“Dominant” said the Doctor “Now, go. Be with him. Make him happy. Make him see sense. Or find someone who really wants a pet and isn’t afraid to break some rule to get what they want.”

Amy nodded “I’m not letting him die.”

And then she left the room.

“I think we might have to postpone your taming” said Max “If my time runs out I want you to find the way that is more reversible, do that to me and keep me alive. At least until the toys are handed off to someone trustworthy. Who knows maybe we might find a third way that lets us be together like you want.”

Amy hugged him “Right, you are coming home, right now.”

Max looked her in the eyes “You’re planning something aren’t you?”

“Think you can put this to the back your mind long enough to umm...” she grinned and kissed him lightly on the lips.

Max eyes went wide “Oh?”

The Doctor appeared behind them “Oh bugger, I nearly forgot. A Nurse Joy asked to see you, she had quite specific instructions.”

Max looked at her “What kind of instructions?”

The Doctor handed him a small box containing a doll in a nurse’s uniform. “Open it outside, chuck it away from you and stand back.”

“Intriguing” said Max “Thank you.”

Amy and Max strode outside the general practise and Max did as the Doctor said.

The packaging swelled before their eyes until the doll was the size of a person and Max saw he recognised the person “Nurse Joy, last time, I was here I met one and she umm, said she might come home with me sometime.”

Max started pulling at the packaging.

Amy helped.

Max found the instruction manual and skimmed it “According to this there is a button to switch on her a consciousness, a pin lockable remote to switch her mind on and off and a couple of different modes for how her body acts when switched off. And there’s a preloaded memory gun should I fancy restoring her memories.”

“Found them” said Amy “You should have the honour of switching her on.”

Max grinned and shoved the instruction manual in a pocket “You realise what this means? We have someone qualified to inject the toys.”

Amy smiled when she saw him smile.

Max turned Nurse Joy on.

The ginger woman opened her eyes and stared at Max “Hello, I’m Nurse Joy, I take it you’re my master now?”

“Err yeah” said Max “Amy, shoot her.” and he stood back.

Amy fired.

A blot of logic arced across Nurse Joy’s brain and her memories returned to her “Max? You got me then?”

“Yeah” said Max “It’s been a busy couple of weeks, walk with us and we’ll explain on the way.”

*

Max and Amy returned home with Nurse Joy and Felicity greeted them at the door.

“Hey, how did it go?” asked Felicity.

“Awesome” lied Max, with a big grin on his face as he held up the doctor’s bag “We have everything we need to turn you and Candi into toys. We even have a Nurse now to do the injections.”

Felicity looked at Nurse Joy and gave an appreciative look “Awesome”

“And we have hamsters” said Amy, following Max’s lead.

“Oh cool” said Felicity.

Amy said “Max, why don’t you go oversee Candi’s injections, then see that the hamsters move into their new home safely? I would like a chat with our new plaything”

Max nodded and went on his way with the hamsters and Nurse Joy.

Felicity gave Amy a curious look “Did something happen because you don’t look happy?”

“Oh I’m just nervous” lied Amy “Tonight’s the big night for me and Max and I would like you to be a part of it.”

Felicity frowned.

“Is it because you’re straight or something?” asked Amy “Because we can work around that.”

“No, it’s just that part of the reason he decided to make me his toy is so he wouldn’t feel guilty about being with you?” said Felicity “And also I’m not sure I like the idea of being his sex toy.”

“Well I’m okay with it” said Amy “And I’ll be sure he’s okay with it. Are you?”

Felicity said “See I’ve never actually done anything like this before...”

“It’s okay” said Amy “We’ll let you know what to do, just give us good feedback”

Felicity sighed and circled Amy, pausing for a moment at the sight her bum in those jeans then she said “Okay, I’m in. Just know that I can be awkward in social situations at the best of times.”

Amy handed her a bottle “As soon as you’re injected, lube up and wait. I’ll announce your entrance once I’ve got him going.”

Felicity nodded “I hope I don’t disappoint.”

“Good luck.” said Amy.

Max returned with Nurse Joy.

Felicity said “Ah my turn I take it?”

Max grinned “It’s okay, she’s very skilled so it won’t hurt.”

Nurse Joy grabbed Felicity’s arm and started looking for a vein.

Amy pulled Max upstairs to his bedroom.

Max followed.

When they entered Max asked “You didn’t tell her anything, did you?”

“No” said Amy “She is blissfully unaware, why?”

“Would you like to be the toy of a dying man?” asked Max.

“No” said “But I would like to fuck one.”

Max chuckled and kissed Amy on the lips lightly “What were you talking about anyway?”

“Oh just stuff” said Amy and she kissed him back.

*

Amy woke early next morning slipped and slipped out of bed, leaving Max and Felicity embracing. She had a quick shower then headed out.

*

Ruby answered the door after Amy’s 4th knock. She was wearing a large sports top covered by a dressing gown.

“Strip” said Ruby.

Amy looked Ruby in the eyes and said “This is serious.”

“You think I’m not?” said Ruby “I have a reputation to maintain. A beautiful submissive woman turns up on my doorstep, she strips.”

Amy glared at her.

Ruby said “I can shut this door.”

“Fine” said Amy “But no drinking from me”

Ruby stared at Amy.

Amy sighed and started pulling at the buttons of her flannel shirt.

Ruby stood aside to let her in then shut the door.

“Head upstairs to my bedroom” said Ruby.

Amy entered Ruby’s bedroom and pulled her shirt off as Ruby locked the bedroom door behind her.

“This bedroom is sound proofed in case my lunch ever disagrees with me, we can talk here.” said Ruby.

Amy removed her bra and started working on her jeans as she explained “Max is dying. His dna is unravelling. He needs a rewrite but the stupid bastard is too pig headed to become somebody else’s pet or toy.” Amy pulled off her shoes and socks and stood naked, save her collar, before Ruby. She looked her in the eyes “His only hope is something called a wereshark.”

“I see” said Ruby “Wait here, there’s something I need to get.”

Amy watched as Ruby unlocked the bedroom door, opened it, stepped though, closed it and relocked

the door.

Amy sighed and examined the room. There were photos of what must be friends and family in frames. Memories of simpler, more innocent, times clearly. There were stuffed teddy bears and posters and in the corner a metal bucket, sharp knife and duct tape. Huh.

Ruby reentered the room and locked the door behind her. She held a filled syringe in her hands.

“What is that?” asked Amy nervously.

“Mercy” said Ruby then she reached out and grabbed Amy’s arm.

Amy decided that resistance really was not a good idea and let Ruby inject her.

Ruby checked every drop had been injected then put a plaster over the wound the needle caused.

“Feel okay?” asked Ruby.

“You mean aside from the fact that I am locked in a sound proof room with a vampire who commanded me to strip and injected me?” said Amy.

Ruby smiled and unlocked the door “There’s something I want to show you.”

Amy followed Ruby downstairs and into the living room.

At first Amy thought it was a poster or a piece of art and then she took in the full horror of what was before her. Britney stood, completely naked, with her feet splayed, her hands on her hips, her eyes open and staring, her mouth in a rictus grin. She was completely paralysed.

Amy recoiled “You, monster!”

“She went happily in the end” said Ruby “Said Max had given her hope and that she would accept her destiny willingly in the knowledge that good men like Max were out there.”

“Why did you do this?” asked Amy “You didn’t need to do this”

“I wanted her to lose her intelligence and free will but Max gave her too much hope. He fired up her imagination and she could no longer be my willing plaything so she became my willing art.” said Ruby

Amy wanted to vomit “How could you?”

“I’m not nice” said Ruby and she pulled up a travel cage “But that’s why you came to me isn’t it? You’re a seal and your shark friend needs another shark to sort him out. Weresharks aren’t the kind of things that you can find by being nice. I will say though thank you for so willingly providing the bait with which to capture Max, you have done your master a great service.”

Amy stared at Ruby “No, no, no, no, no. You’re not doing this. This isn’t happening. This is NOT happening.”

“That’s right dear” said Ruby and she started massaging Amy’s neck “None of this is happening, you are safe at home with your master and this is just a nightmare. Now go back to sleep.”

Amy folded onto her knees.

Ruby bundled Amy up and placed her in the travel caged then locked the cage door shut “Sorry Amy, you’re a nice girl but there is a shark that needs saving” Ruby flicked a switch and Amy’s mind turned off.

*

Felicity woke up naked in Max’s bed.

Max sat on a chair beside the bed. He was wearing a Make Tea Not War tshirt and lounge trousers and his hair was a mess. “Hey, how are you?”

“Sore” said Felicity, sitting up and not bothering with the covers “But it was fun.”

Max smiled and looked away “You know you really didn’t have to do that?”

Felicity yawned “I know but Amy asked me and well... I did. How are you?”

“Oh good” said Max and he looked back to Felicity “That’s actually why I’m here. I mean last night was amazing and entirely unexpected but what’s almost harder to comprehend is that you are now my toy.”

“Is it weird?” said Felicity “It’s weird isn’t it? I mean you don’t actually seem the type to have grown up playing with dolls and now you have an incredibly lifelike one.”

Max smirked and nodded “Yeah, it’s pretty fucking weird but I did this because you want this and I don’t trust anyone else not to take advantage of you.”

Felicity mused thoughtfully “So what happens now?”

“Have a shower” said Max “There’ll be clothes waiting for you when you leave and then you are having a full English breakfast.”

“But I don’t need food” said Felicity “I don’t even need to breathe.”

Max laughed “You may not need to eat but you should. Food is nice and you certainly deserve nice things after last night.”

“Okay” said Felicity, grinning “I’ll eat your breakfast but what will you be doing?”

“Cooking, of course” said Max and then he left.

Felicity gingerly out of bed and headed over to the shower room.

When she stepped out, clean as can be, there was a bundle of clothes waiting for her. She dressed in the ruby red bikini, pink skirt, white crop top and flip flops then she cleaned her teeth and headed into the kitchen.

Max handed her a plate of food and dug into his own. 2 bacon rashers, 2 sausages, 2 fried eggs, a thick slice of black pudding, half a tomato, potato dauphinoise, 2 slices of buttered toast, a croissant and a gallon of fresh orange juice.

Felicity stared “This looks amazing but I’m not sure I can eat it all.”

“Well eat what you can” said Max “I’ll finish the rest off.”

Felicity nodded and dug in.

When she gave up she sat back drinking orange juice and watched Max demolish his food. “So what are you going to do today?” she asked idly.

“Fill out forms” said Max in between mouthfulls and he gave her a meaningful look.

“I can help” said Felicity.

“No” said Max before drinking 3 glasses of juice so he could speak again “No, if you are to be my legal property then there is no way I am ever letting you work again. Your life from now on is entirely fun and good times. It’s the only way I can live with myself.”

“Aww” said Felicity “But really I don’t mind helping”

Max stared at her, examined how much food was left on the plates then cleaned his face and hands with tissues “There is something I want to give you, sort of a “Yay, you’re mine!” present.”

Max got up and made to leave the kitchen.

“What about the food?” asked Felicity.

“I can eat it later” said Max and he led Felicity into the living room where he picked up a small box and gave it to her “Merry toy day and thank you.”

Felicity opened the box and pulled out a gold leather band with her name on it. She pulled it out and marvelled at it.

“It’s a collar that the uninformed will mistake for a necklace. They don’t really do gifts of ownership for toys so I figured this would do.” said Max “If it’s too flashy I can get you a simple leather one but I thought this deserved commemorating and also I figured I might need a reminder that yes I do actually own you.”

“It’s beautiful” said Felicity.

Max smiled.

“Can you help me put it on?” asked Felicity.

“Oh, yeah” said Max and he secured the collar round her neck then he went round to look at her and smiled “You are so beautiful? How on Earth do I have you?”

“Because you had the confidence to reach out and grab me” said Felicity “Thank you for this.”

Max kissed Felicity on the cheek and stroked her hair then he took her by the hand led her to an empty space between the TV and hamster cage.

“There” said Max “Right there, you are perfect.”

Felicity grinned “What are you doing?”

“Well I have to go out and do some... things” said Max “I have to turn you off and I don’t want anyone getting freaked out by the random blonde woman frozen in time. Here you’ll look just like a piece of art.”

“Okay” said Felicity with a smirk “I can be your art work. How do you want me?”

“Hands by your sides” said Max and he guided Felicity’s hands into position.

“Look at me” said Max “And smile.”

Felicity looked into Max’s eyes and smiled.

Max turned her mind off with the remote control and she was frozen in position.

Max stroked her hair and kissed her fore head then said “I’ll be back soon okay” and then he left the room.

*

Max knocked on the door of Felicity's house.

Oliver answered it.

Max looked Oliver in the eyes and said "I have something to tell you and you are not going to like it."

"You don't need to" said Oliver "I know you took Felicity as your toy and I'm not mad, it's what she wanted."

"I'm dying" said Max.

Oliver flared with anger and restrained himself from punching Max "And you took Felicity as yours knowing that?"

"Well not exactly" said Max "But that's not what I have to tell you either, that's just why I don't mind telling you what I have to now."

Oliver sighed and stepped aside "Then you'd better come in"

Max entered the house, it was sparse and minimalist, clearly inspired by early 21st century design yet it was also littered with knick knacks and toys and soft furnishings.

Max entered what he assumed to be the living room due to the large lcd screen and sofas.

Oliver followed and said "Talk. Tell me what you can only say when dying?"

Max grimaced "Look I need to take a run up at this so bare with me."

Oliver nodded.

"I am a nerd. I retreated into science fiction and fantasy after a - Shall we say traumatic? - childhood. I rebuilt myself anew from it. So trust me when I say I am very familiar with Doctor Who and Star Trek and Star Wars and Harry Potter and Farscape and Battlestar Gallactica." said Max

Oliver smiled “Yes, flights of fantasy they do bring joy at dark times.”

“It also means I am familiar with the concept of timetravel and multiverses” said Max “And the possibility that I might know of two companies that you don’t, namely Marvel and DC.”

“I’ve heard of Marvel” said Oliver “Spider man, Captain America, Iron Man, all that lot. Alright films but atrocious comics.”

Max nodded “That makes sense because where I come from Marvel’s competitor Detective Comics has a few big name brands, Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman.”

“They sound like awesome characters” said Oliver.

Max snorted “I hate them, too perfect and invincible but I liked their tv series. The Arrow starring one Oliver Queen who went around Starling City in a green hood with a bow and arrow, aided by his erstwhile hacker companion Felicity Smoak and I absolutely love its spin off The Flash, starring one speedy Barry Allen and the infampous time travelling Harrison Wells.”

Oliver paused, drinking this information in.

“Now this could all just be a massive coincidence” said Max “I mean you don’t look like Oliver Queen and Felicity doesn’t look like Felicity Smoak and I am more than willing to pretend that there can be two Olivers who like to dress up like Robin Hood of a weekend but its enough of a coincidence for me to think I can tell you who I really am and ask you for help.”

Oliver frowned and crossed his arms “Who are you then?”

“My real name, my full name, is Anthony Maxwell Jago and I am not a nice man.” said Max.

Oliver locked eyes with him “How? How are you not a good man?”

Max sighed “I’m a victim, Oliver. Every single day at that school I would be humiliated and insulted and berated and then I would get home and beg my mother not to return. I was told she loved me so many times the words lost all meaning and my father-”

He caught himself and stared into Oliver's eyes "There is a fire that burns bright at the core of my being and it is formed of every tiny insult and joke and threat and iota of pain and embarrassment given to me by another. And there have been so many."

Max raked his hands over his face then turned away, clasping his hands behind his back to control himself "They would taunt me and dare me to attack them and I wanted to. Dear god, I wanted to. I was almost convinced going to prison for murdering one of them would be a mercy compared to the life I led. I wanted to hurt them so much. I didn't just want them to die, I wanted them to suffer."

"Then why didn't you make them?" asked Oliver "What stopped you?"

"My morality did" said Max and he turned back to Oliver "I did not want to become thing I despise so I made myself a binding of morality to stop me from ever fighting back no matter how angry I got. I am not a good man by nature, I am a good man by choice. The fire still burns within me and god help me I still feel sadistic pleasure on occasion. This is why I have never allowed myself to be fit or to know how to fight, insurance against my morality failing. And now I want you to train me how to fight?"

"Why?" asked Oliver "What changed?"

"I told you I'm dying" said Max "What I did not tell you is that there is a cure and when it is administered the fire of rage at the core of my being will be replaced with overwhelming love and obedience. Felicity is perfectly safe and I am going to lose what has for so much of my life defined and motivated me and since I'm dying and I only have a month left to live before having this anger taken from me I decided to do something with it."

Max looked Oliver in the eyes "It is time to let the monster out of its cage. It is time to give into rage. It is time to become the darkness I have always feared."

Oliver said "I spent my life fighting monsters, why would I help create one?"

Max gave a deranged smile "Because Max, the good man, took your love as a toy to save her from the predators that stalk the streets of this city. I cannot shed all of my restraints, the seals will be unharmed, but the sharks shall face a monster that can fight them without fear of corruption."

“I can’t train you to fight well in a month” said Oliver.

“You don’t have to” said Max “You just have to train me to fight well enough that my rage can do the rest and then... well... You could always take up your old habits to ensure the master of your mistress does not get killed.”

Oliver stared at him “Who is our first target?”

“A very old Bam-Kursh” said Max “A man who longs for death but satiates himself by murdering the same woman night after night.”

*

The Bam-Kursh was just clearing up after his show when Max walked up, wearing his suit from his date with Felicity.

“Are you alright son, you look a little lost” said the Bam-Kursh when he noticed Max’s pensive expression.

“Yeah, I kinda am, see I’m not really comfortable with the whole taming thing and keeping people as toys” said Max “Especially the whole killing by turning people plastic bit”

“Ah yes” said the Bam-Kursh looking at Max in a new light “I remember you, you’re the newbie from a couple of weeks ago? You know for someone so against the idea you’re a real natural when it comes to taming. What’s your name again? Max something?”

“Anthony Maxwell Jago” said Max and he seemed to straighten up and stare into the Bam-Kursh’s eyes “But a name is like a promise. I chose to go by my middle name because I was trying to be normal but I’m dying now and I really don’t give a fuck. I used to be so afraid of giving into temptation, of becoming the monster that stalks my dreams but I don’t care anymore. I am the hunger that lurks in the dark, I am the beast that stalks at night, I am lonely and unceasing. I am become Bruce, hunter of monsters.”

“Why are you telling me this?” asked the Bam-Kursh.

THUNK!

THUNK!!

THUNK!!!

Three arrows impacted the back of the Bam-Kursh and he collapsed against the sharp suited monster that was now calling himself Bruce.

“Because you have been mindfucking and killing the same woman night after night for kicks and I want your dying agony to broadcast my identity across the planescape of the elder gods as a warning. I am coming!” then Bruce pulled a knife from his pocket and cut the heart out of the Bam-Kursh.

“What the fuck are you doing?” asked Oliver as he ran up out of hiding.

“Getting blood on my hands because I am not letting myself excuse this. This is on me.” said Bruce then he hurled the heart across the room and pulled a key out of his pockets. “Come on lets find his ship.”

Oliver stared at him “You know I think the police might be able to get your dna off that?”

“They’ll have a job, my dna’s decaying” said Bruce and he strode across the room to a small locked storage cupboard. He tried the key in the lock, it opened “Jackpot.”

Oliver joined him.

They were inside a large room with a mushroom shaped console in the center of the room.

“Can you fly this thing?” asked Oliver.

Bruce laughed and searched the rooms with Oliver until he found a woman, frozen on a large white piece of floor. He paused and stared at the woman.

Oliver found him and said “Why is there a woman frozen in place on a piece of white flooring?”

“Oh I have an idea” said Bruce “We are in a ship that is bigger on the inside, therefore we’re dealing

with scifi rules. That area looks like some kind of teleportation chamber and there's a funny thing about teleportation. We can do a basic version of it where I'm from only it isn't like Star Trek teleportation."

Oliver asked "So how is it different from a beam me up, Scotty?"

"Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle prevents accurate scanning" explained Bruce "There is a way around it using a process called Quantum Entanglement but this form of teleportation destroys the original and creates a copy in a new location using data gathered from the destruction of the original."

"Ah" said Oliver "So not exactly appropriate for human transportation?"

"Well no" said Bruce "But the interesting bit is that some ethics experts have suggested that since all living creates have their cells completely replaced over time anyway Quantum Teleportation would arguably be no different. So the man who stepped off the teleportation chamber at the other end would at once be a clone and a continuation of the original. Now just supposing the Bam-Kursh found some way around the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle that kept the original in tact his teleporter could become a people printer, or toy factory."

Oliver whistled, impressed.

"This, Oliver is the original Candi." said Bruce "Bastard didn't even keep his promise to her."

"Well what do we do?" asked Oliver.

Bruce sighed "We go home. Just promise me you won't tell Felicity any of this. Before long a month will have passed and Max will be back."

"Okay" said Oliver "But you get to explain why I'm dressed like Robin Hood and you're dressed like you're on the pull?"

Bruce rolled his eyes, loosened his tie and slouched. He turned the frozen woman's mind on.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"I'm Max" said Bruce "And this is Oliver. We confronted the Bam-Kursh for killing clones of you

every night and we are here to free you. It's Candi, right?"

The woman nodded "I don't understand. The Bam-Kursh said he would turn me into a toy?"

"He lied" said Bruce "He used you as the mould from which to create clones that he could turn into toys and kill. I actually have a toy of you myself but I refused to have her killed."

"Oh my god!" said the woman "That's horrible!"

"Come with us, we'll look after you." said Bruce.

Oliver nodded "A good friend of mine is actually a toy of his, you can trust him."

The woman nodded "Okay Max, I'll trust you."

Oliver looked to Bruce "What are we going to do about the ship?"

"The authorities will want to look at it and naturally they'll interrogate us but once the heat dies down I'll have it delivered home." said Bruce.

*

Bruce, Oliver and the original Candi arrived at Bruce's home and found a bag stuck to the door by an impaled knife.

Oliver glared at the knife.

Bruce pulled it free and opened the bag. He found a note:

Max darling,
We have taken your pet Amy hostage,
Come alone or she dies.
Sincerely Diane.

Bruce handed the note to Oliver and pulled Amy's shirt out of the bag. A lock of her hair was taped to it. Bruce angrily put the shirt back in the bag then opened the door.

Bruce led Oliver and the original Candi inside.

Oliver asked “Where’s Felicity?”

“Living room” said Bruce and he handed Oliver the remote and the bag.

As Bruce left with the original Candi Oliver heard him say “Now I know you’re lost right now but there is a show that bought me out of a dark period in life and gave me purpose. Come on, I’ll stream the boxset on Netflix.”

Oliver gasped when he saw Felicity frozen like a statue then he used the remote control.

Felicity blinked “Oliver? And you’re dressed like...?”

“Yeah” said Oliver “Max found out what you’re supposed to do with leftover sharks. We just liberated this woman that someone called the Bam-Kursh was using as a template to create clones that could be killed every night for his kicks.”

“Yikes!” said Felicity “Kind of glad I missed that.”

Oliver and Felicity looked into each other’s eyes for a moment and shared an awkward silence.

Felicity broke the silence “Sorry I didn’t tell you that well...”

“It’s fine” said Oliver “Max came round to tell me in person and well make use of make use of my particular set of skills. Is everything good?”

“Yeah” said Felicity, as visions from her two nights with Max swam before her eyes “A little weird being turned off and on but I’m sure I’ll get used to it.”

“I’m sure that if you ask Max nicely he’ll stop turning you off.” said Oliver.

“My ears are burning” said Bruce as he walked in the living room “Oliver, I admire your faith in ability to keep Felicity happy but even I’m not sure I can keep her turned on all the time.”

Oliver glared at him.

“Yeah I know I’m bad at jokes” said Bruce then he looked Felicity in the eyes and said “I’m going to say three names and they may sound completely alien to you but if they’re not just nod. Roy Harper, Ray Palmer, Barry Allen.”

Felicity glared at him and nodded curtly “Just why do you want to know?”

“Testing a theory” said Bruce “And I really hoped I was wrong but since I wasn’t it means I can use you.”

“Use me?” asked Felicity indignantly.

Oliver gritted his teeth “Max, you might have a care to explain yourself?”

“You are a superhero with the almighty power of google.” said Bruce “Amy’s just been kidnapped by the vampires that tried it on with me the day I... umm. I need you to find out where they are. I’m going to prepare.”

Felicity frowned “That’s horrible, I’m so sorry of course I’ll help.”

Oliver said “You realize it’s a trap right? They want you.”

Bruce nodded then took the remote from where Oliver had cast it aside and left the room.

Bruce found his Candi where she stood frozen as a statue and turned her mind on.

“Max?” asked Candi “Is everything alright? You look troubled?”

“The vampires have taken Candi” said Bruce “I am about to walk willingly into a trap. I need all the help I can get and you are nigh invulnerable and like me don’t really give a shit about your life. Will you come with me?”

“Of course” said Candi “I am yours to use as you wish and I know how horrible those vampires are.”

“Good” said Bruce “Because I am really bad at not looking suspicious when I’m carrying weapons. How are you with pain?”

Candi gave Bruce a curious look “Why?”

*

Bruce knocked on the door of the safehouse.

Diane answered it and leered over him “You came alone?”

“Far too often” said Bruce and he strolled in.

Diane had an aid put him down.

“Nothing up my sleeves” said Bruce with a grin.

Amy cried out “Run! It’s a trap!”

Bruce saw that she was cable tied to an office chair.

“Well of course it is” said Bruce “But whose trap?”

Diane snorted “What do you hope to do to us?”

“Oh nothing” said Bruce “Except maybe teach you the importance of listening to the lessons of Doctor Who”

Bruce strode past Diane and saw that on the opposite side of the room from Amy, Ruby was cable tied to a chair and between them, further in, someone else was restrained, their head covered by a bag.

Bruce started idly strolling towards the hooded figure “So what’s the plan? What’s the gambit?”

Diane smirked “You’ve heard of the sadistic choice? Two of these will be devoured, the third will live.”

Bruce nodded “And of course the moment I make my choice I get jumped.”

Diane laughed “Do you trust me so very little?”

Bruce pulled the bag off the head of the restrained figure at the back and vampires restrained him.

“How very nice of you to walk into my parlour Bruce!” said Diane as two syringes had their contents injected into his arms.

Bruce cried “The variable is some sort of shark human hybrid!”

Arrows shot from the darkness and took out the vampires restraining Bruce. Then Candi dropped from the ceiling on top of Diane.

Bruce reached into Candi’s back and pulled out a steak knife then he ran to Amy and cut her loose.

Diane got to her feet, snapped Candi’s neck then threw her aside like a rag doll.

Vampires kept trying to stop Bruce and Amy as they headed to the door but arrows would take them out.

Felicity dropped from the roof to land beside Ruby. She pulled a knife from her pocket and cut Ruby free and Ruby ran for the door.

Candi appeared beside Ruby, Amy and Bruce as the arrows created a volloey of protective fire.

“Stop!” cried Diane.

The room fell silent and everyone looked to Diane.

Diane was holding a knife to Felicity’s neck. “One false move and the girl dies.”

Bruce glared at Diane “Let her go, it’s me you want!”

Diane nodded “But I’ve been watching my Doctor Who, Max. The weakness of a hero. Always save

the girl.”

“Get out now” said Bruce and he tackled Diane to the floor.

Candi opened the door and pushed Ruby and Amy outside.

Felicity said “But I’m immortal!”

Diane got to her feet and stood over Bruce.

Bruce groaned “You don’t understand Felicity, I don’t matter. I am a bastard and I am dying and I am not about to let you suffer. Run!”

Felicity ran outside.

“You wanted me?” said Bruce “Well you’ve got me. Care to tell me why?”

Diane said “Your pet told us of your condition, your dna is disintegrating and you don’t have much time. As fellow predators we can well understand why you do not wish to become a toy or a sylph so instead you will become a wereshark but there is a catch. Weresharks aren’t like us vampires. We have the vampiric traits because our prey let us, we don’t actually lose our souls or turn evil. Weresharks though are corrupted by hunger and rage and the need to live. Fortunately the blood of your pet should work to counteract this corruption.”

Bruce stared at her then cried out in pain.

“Impossible” said Diane as she watched Bruce squirm in agony as his body underwent massive metamorphosis.

“What have you done!?” cried Bruce.

“The cure didn’t work” said Diane “I’m so sorry”

*

Felicity exited the building and said “That stupid idiot just sacrificed himself for no reason. I’m a toy,

that knife couldn't have hurt me.”

“It would have hurt me” said Oliver, dressed in a green combat suit with a hood “I think that man couldn't live with that.”

“So what? He just hands himself over to the vampires who have been after him since day one? It makes no sense.” said Felicity “Oh and he said he's dying.”

Ruby, Oliver, Amy and Candi all shared awkward looks.

“And why are none of you surprised?” said Felicity.

“Because I told them” said Bruce as he forced his way painfully out the door “I am depressed, dying and such a complete headcase and I just wanted someone in my life to be blissfully fucking ignorant so I lied to you and I'm sorry but I have worse news.” He screamed with agony as his insides reorganised themselves.

Felicity reached out to help him.

“Back off!” barked Bruce

Felicity backed away towards Oliver. “What's happening to you?”

“Bitch tried to save me” said Bruce bitterly “I am becoming a wereshark. Corrupted by evil at last.”

“I don't understand” said Felicity.

“I'll explain later” said Oliver.

“Live good lives yeah” said Bruce “I've gotta run because if I don't I will tear you all limb from limb.”

Bruce turned around and started limping away.

Candi said “I'm coming with you.”

“No” said Bruce. “I am not hurting you.”

“I’ll live” said Candi “They can put me back together afterwards. You shouldn’t have to die alone.”

Bruce sighed then screamed “Fine!”

Bruce dropped to all 4s and said “Get on my back sand hold on tight.”

Candi did so.

Bruce screamed and started galloping into the night.

“So what the fuck do we do now?” asked Felicity.

Oliver said “I put tracers in Candi. We get home. You chill the fuck out and started tracking him then I am going after him.”

Amy asked “Where’s Ruby?”

*

Several hours later Felicity sat before a computer and coordinating algorithms and programs so as turn the raw data from the trackers in Candi into useful information about where Bruce was and what he was doing, one window held a running feed from every online surveillance camera in Bruce’s vicinity while another showed the gps coordinates of Candi. A third window was a stream of the cutest cat videos because just now Felicity really needed the distress.

Oliver’s voice crackled over Felicity’s speakers “Bastard’s climbed a building. I need directions.”

Felicity sighed and swiftly loaded up a 3d model of the buildings in the city, cross referenced it with the gps coordinates, cctv surveillance footage and a trawl of building deeds, planning permits and wikipedia. Within a minute she said “He’s about the cross the Catalan Cathedral, there’s an ally way that should take you to a fire escape and from there it’s just a hop, skip and a jump to him.”

“Thanks” came the reply and the crackling stopped.

“Hi” said a man behind her “I’m looking for Max, is he about?”

Felicity groaned “Oh he’s about” and then she spun on her chair to look at him.

He was average height, in his thirties, wearing an oddly mismatched suit and had unkempt black hair. He exuded a friendly confidence.

“Well could I see him then” asked the man “Only I’ve got a delivery to make then there’s more people to ferry to Choice World... and you’re not happy are you.”

Felicity grimaced “Yeah about that, turns out max is not only actually not here he’s actually sort of evil.”

“Okay...” said the man “Well before we go any further I think introductions are in order, I’m Frederick the ferry man and you are?”

“Felicity the lost” said Felicity with a frown “How do you know Max?”

“I’m the reason he’s here” said Frederick “I showed him round and ferried him here when he accepted the invitation to live here. You?”

“He came onto me to scare off some vampires one thing led to another and I became his toy” said Felicity “But now the vampires have turned him into a wereshark, whatever that is, and I don’t know what to do with my life.”

Frederick frowned and reached out to Felicity then stopped himself “I’ll get him back for you. Is there anybody else I can talk to who might know more about the attack?”

Felicity nodded “Amy but she left some time ago to speak with someone called Ruby and I have no idea where she went.”

Frederick said “That’s okay, I think I know how to find her. You’re clearly busy so I won’t distract you any longer but I can promise you that you won’t be lost for much longer. Hold onto your hope. Max is coming home.”

Felicity said "Thank you."

Frederick left the room.

Oliver's voice crackled over the speakers "I've lost him. Think he jumped onto the back of a lorry."

"On it" said Felicity and she got back to work.

*

Amy knelt over Ruby in her bedroom and punched her in the face. Just pounding her and pounding her.

"I think you can stop now" said Frederick calmly.

Amy stopped and panted "She killed him, Freddy, she turned my Max into a monster and used me as bait."

"I know" said Frederick "Diane told me everything."

Amy looked to him "She took him from me, Freddy"

"And I am going to help you get him back" said Frederick "Just trust me."

Amy nodded and got to her feet.

Ruby stared at Frederick and silently mouthed "Thank you."

*

Frederick coughed.

Felicity looked up from the computer screen.

"You're back?" said Felicity

Frederick nodded "And I bought a friend."

Amy entered the room. "So how's the hunt going?"

"Good" said Felicity "So far no fatalities."

Amy nodded then asked "So what happens now?"

Frederick stuffed his hands in his pockets and explained "Diane told me that she wanted to turn Max into a wereshark to save his life, restore his melty dna. She said that all she needed to do to let Max retain his sanity is inject him with the blood of his pet and she's right but she forgot one crucial thing: The pet has to be a sylph first."

Amy gasped as realization dawned.

"Oh" said Felicity as she thought back to that night."

"You see the wereshark survive along the first way, using brutal domination and oppression but the sylph survives along the third way, through cuteness, submissiveness, obedience and exploitability. The two impulses sort of cancel each other out, leaving an approximation of the second way which how normal people get by." said Frederick.

Amy nodded in understanding.

Felicity said "Well this is fantastic. Amy, you just need to become a sylph and we can get Max back."

Amy grinned "She's right, lets do this."

Frederick looked Amy in the eye and said "Then as a Farsh-nuke with Felicity as my witness I feel I must ask you Amy whether you will pledge yourself to Max, to be his faithful hound in the many long years to come?"

"I do" said Amy.

Frederick pulled his hands out of his pockets and pulled out a blindfold "Then we may begin."

Amy nodded “I trust you.”

Frederick proceeded to blindfold Amy.

Felicity asked “What’s the blindfold for?”

“Sylphs imprint on the first face they see” said Frederick “Until Max arrives Amy needs the blindfold.”

“Ah” said Felicity “Fair enough.”

Oliver’s voice crackled over the speakers “Who the hell are you talking to and why do they have a blindfold?”

Felicity went white and said “No one. Noone’s here. Everything’s fine. Keep following Max. I’m just thinking outloud.” then she muted her microphone.

Frederick’s other hand held a small white pill and he placed it in Amy’s right hand. “This is the sylph pill, my dear, do you have it?”

Amy nodded, placed it in her mouth and swallowed. “So umm what now?”

“Sit down on the floor and cross your legs” said Frederick as he did just that.

“Okay...” said Amy and she sat down on the floor and crossed her legs.

Then Frederick pulled out a knife and said “This is going to hurt but you need to trust me.”

Amy said “I trust you just get Max back”

Frederick nodded “Then let us pierce the veil”

Frederick sliced open the palm of Amy’s right hand and then the palm of his left hand. He grabbed her right hand with his left and shut his eyes.

*

Frederick and Amy stood in a small dark room whose walls were black veils.

Amy said “I’m not wearing a blindfold any more, have you just like decided to run away with me? Because I’m not entirely sure I wouldn’t be okay with that. Where are we anyway?”

“We are in the blood of the weresharks. Only your body wears the blindfold, not your soul” said Frederick “And your willingness to run away with me is just a sign that the sylph pill is coursing through your system. Stay close and follow me.”

Frederick started moving through the veils.

Amy followed and said “But I’m not a wereshark.”

“No” said Frederick as he ducked through another veil “But your blood is inside one and it is also inside me which lets me be your guide back to Max.”

“Okay” said Amy “Then why does the blood look like a maze of veils.”

“Because we are piercing the veil of human perception into the collective memory of the weresharks. It’s a metaphor.” said Frederick “That and the BBC set department doesn’t have the funding it once did.”

“Huh” said Amy “So what are those big slow things with fins supposed to be?”

“Antibodies” said Frederick “Your owner’s a massive Doctor Who fan yeah? Well remember that show’s mantra: Run for your life!”

Frederick took off running Amy hurried after him.

Frederick stopped and pulled Amy aside. “Shit.”

“Why? What’s the matter?” asked Amy

Frederick poked his head past the next veil and saw a black haired man and a blonde haired woman running from weresharks. “William Dickson Wright as I live and breathe.”

“Is that a problem?” asked Amy.

“He’s who they’re searching for I think” said Frederick “If I recall rightly this would be around the time of the great wereshark invasion.”

“What’s he like, this William Dickson Wright?” asked Amy “You speak of him like he’s a figure of legend.”

Frederick nodded “The man founded a terrifying conspiracy, figured out how to end the entire multiverse, could tame a woman on his planet and then he reformed and became one of the best protectors the multiverse has ever had. An amazing Farsh-nuke.”

Amy stared at him “Are you fanboying yourself?”

Frederick frowned and took off through the veils again “This way I think”

*

Frederick and Amy stepped out into a large public park.

“There we are” said Frederick with a satisfied smile on his face.

Amy asked “What’s that figure in the distance?”

Frederick looked.

A boy of 15 or 16 was calmly striding across the park followed by a large squad of kids on bikes who were hurling abuse and bottles in his direction.

Frederick started running towards the kid.

“What are you doing?” asked Amy as she followed.

“Saving the kid’s life” said Frederick and he ran between the mob and the lone strider.

“Stop!” cried Frederick “I permit you to go no further!”

The leader of the mob, a tall shaven headed kid, cried “Fuck off, nob head! You and whose army?”

“Amy?” cried Frederick “Kiss the boy”

“I am not kissing a child!” snapped Amy.

“Well hold his hand and wish very hard then!” cried Frederick in exasperation.

The mob of children slowed

“Who the heck are you?” asked the leader to an old man in a trench coat that had just appeared before him, along with an entire army of other people.

“I am the Doctor” said the old man “Or at least I am the eldritch abomination known as the Farsh-nuke who was executed and exiled then reincarnated when his soul helped revive a still born alien child who went on to adopt the moniker of the Doctor.”

“What the heck are you doing here?” asked the leader.

“Every Farsh-nuke is notionally speaking the same soul and we are by our nature quite protective” said the Doctor “So when there are two or more of us in the blood and a sylph experiences a particularly large outburst of love or compassion it short circuits the soul connection and we all of us appear to protect the sylph.”

“Why are you going see through?” asked the leader.

“Probably because we were only supposed to be a distraction” said the Doctor before he vanished.

Indeed Amy, Frederick and the lone strider had all run down an estate that was close to help.

“Whoops” said Frederick as his knife lightly nicked the kid’s thumb creating a single droplet of blood that Frederick then touched.

Amy and Frederick were back in the maze of veils again.

“You know I think we might have imprinted on him” said Amy.

“Good” said Frederick “Let the kid have hope that someone is watching out of thumb”

Frederick started running.

Amy followed.

“This should be his local memory corridor” said Frederick “I want to see how things started out”

*

Amy and Frederick stood in the concrete playground of a primary school. A storm was raging.

“I think little Max is in there” said Frederick, pointing to a window of a classroom.

There was a crack of lighting and suddenly a boy was standing outside the window crying.

“Well if that isn’t an origin story for torment in someone’s life. I don’t know what is?” said Frederick

Amy asked “We don’t have to touch the blood every time we want to move on do we?”

“No” said Frederick “We aren’t really here. We’re ripples on a higher dimension that only children are malformed enough to witness.

*

They were on the grass of a secondary school playground this time. A chant resounded “Fight! Fight! Fight!”

Amy and Frederick headed towards the sound and saw two boys at the center of a ring of spectators. One was huddled into a ball on the floor and muttering “Please stop” over and over again. The other was kicking and punching and hurling insults.”

“We’re going to stop this right?” asked Amy.

Frederick looked at her and then at the boy huddled on the floor and the crowd. He strode through the crowd and cried “Silence!”

They couldn’t hear him.

He crooked the fingers of his right hand, as though he were puppeting a marionette then he started muttering something and jerked the imaginary puppet.

The huddled boy jerked out of the huddle.

The imaginary puppet was made to stand up.

The boy stood up.

Frederick waved his hand around in a circle.

The boy snarled and charged part the attacker, running along the outside edge of the crowd, dispersing them.

“Anger is a tool” said Frederick “It can buy you the space in which to recover if you are careful.”

Frederick lowered his hand and walked away.

Amy asked “What did you do?”

“Blood control” said Frederick “The wereshark blood has a hold on the dna of those it turns. Since we are technically in the blood, I can cheat, convince the blood that the dna it controls in this vicinity needs to behave despite the fact that we are long before the moment of infection.”

“So what now?” asked Amy.

“Now we head to the present” said Frederick.

*

Amy and Frederick appeared beside Oliver in a school as he reported over his bluetooth “Felicity, he’s in a school and its lunch time. Do something.”

Then Oliver charged towards the wereshark.

“Get to Max” said Frederick “I’ll try to buy time.”

Amy ran towards the wereshark.

Frederick shut his eyes and felt his body in its trance. He felt the rhythmic breathing and the resolute calm it necessitated. This would require finesse. He had to maintain the trance and the connection but he needed more juice.

He felt his hand, his real right hand, move into his real jacket pocket and pull out a Quantum Oscillator. Operating a dangerous piece of equipment while blind and in a trance, optimum concentration necessary. The Quantum Oscillator was aimed at Frederick’s real forehead, given the appropriate setting and activated.

Frederick screamed. Both his real body and his spirit.

His spirit vaporised and became a thick fog across the playground, hiding the kids from the wereshark and scaring them into running.

Oliver made it to the wereshark and restrained it temporarily.

Suddenly every phone, computer and alarm system within the school grounds was activated. Felicity’s little something in action.

The kids were running blind.

Frederick switched off the Quantum Oscillator and his spirit returned to the image of his real self.

The wereshark broke free of Oliver’s restraints then froze.

The Doctor appeared before Frederick “You summon us again Frederick, why?”

“Look around you” said Frederick “All these children are in danger.”

The Doctor nodded and barked “Evacuate the children! Get them off school grounds!”

Amy hugged the wereshark and said “Max, I know you’re in there, you might be buried deep but I am here now because you are here.”

Oliver stared at the scene before him, children being shepherded and in some cases even carried by unseen hands away from the wereshark. The Wereshark paused in its furious rampage and sobering up before his eyes. “What’s happening?” he asked Felicity over the bluetooth.

“Well I’m not sure” said Felicity “But if I had to guess I’d say the weird man who blindfolded Amy and promised to help get Max for us is doing something. Though I have no idea what.”

“Well whatever it is” said Oliver “It just prevented a massacre.”

Bruce said “Okay, this is strange.”

Oliver stared at the wereshark and asked “Bruce?”

“I’m not sure” said Bruce “I feel different. I’m changing.” He made a couple of experimental bites with his shark head mouth then said “New teeth, that’s weird.”

“Did you just make a Doctor Who joke?” asked Oliver.

“You’ve watched Doctor Who?” said Bruce with astonishment.

“Well Felicity made me watch the first season” said Oliver “If you’re making Doctor Who jokes you really must be getting better.”

Bruce roared “It’s not the first season, it’s the 27th series. Philistine.”

The Doctor appeared before Bruce and gave a knowing smile “Oh so you’re a fan are you? Yes, I see it now. It’s marked across your soul.”

Bruce farted in fear “Am I dying?”

“Is he?” asked Oliver.

“No, you just have good friends who won’t let you suffer with madness” said the Doctor.

Bruce smiled a warm genuine smile. “Oliver? You’ve been keeping me safe haven’t you? Made sure I don’t kill anyone.”

Oliver shrugged.

“And Amy?” said Bruce “You were to be my caretaker if there was no other cure?”

Oliver looked where Bruce looked and saw nothing.

Amy smiled and hugged Bruce “You daft idiot, I was made to be with you and I am not leaving you in hell.”

“Hello Maxxy boy” said Frederick, appearing before the wereshark “I couldn’t just leave your Felicity all out of sorts could I?”

Bruce stared into space and cried with anguish “Felicity! Shit!”

“Oh my god” said Felicity “Did I just imagine that?”

“Bruce, you know how I work these things” said Oliver “If you want to talk to Felicity you should know that she can hear every word.”

Frederick nodded “Amy’s a tough old girl but there’s nothing like the built of realing you left someone you made dependent on you behind.”

“I’m sorry” said Bruce “I’m so so sorry.”

Oliver stared at the wereshark and felt pity for it.

A little kid was striding across the field flanked by two men on either side of him.

“Who is that?” asked Amy.

“Anthony” said Bruce “The boy who never fought, not even to defend himself. I was so moral back then and so naive.”

“It’s over Bruce” said the boy “Your reign of terror is at an end.”

A tall anthropomorphic shark with chest hair and a beard, dressed like Saturday Night Fever John Travolta, approached.

“May I introduce G. White the great god of all sharks?” said the boy.

Bruce swallowed.

Oliver asked “What are you seeing mate? What is in your head?”

Frederick made his real body say “Felicity, I and Amy are connecting on the spiritual plane with Max. We are witnessing his psyche come to cross examine him for his actions.”

Felicity’s mouth dried as she took that in.

G. White said “Son, you are now a shark but you do not have to serve as wanton predator, you can return to your old ways and swim the great ocean on your death.”

Bruce nodded “I thank you, my lord.”

The boy introduced a second man “Presenting the Lord High Liquidator, the great Slick.”

The Slick shook Bruce’s hand “It’s been a pleasure to know your acquaintance. You shall be rewarded and we will meet again. In the flesh.”

“The Head of the Robo-Liquefiers, Rob” said the boy.

Rob shook Bruce’s hand “Dude, you are fucking awesome and here’s a tip, nonparticles and blast of logic from a lance, your Felicity could get a built in hacking terminal like me.”

Bruce grimaced. “Charming. Oliver, never let Felicity have access to nanoparticles and a beam of logic.”

Oliver frowned “Okay, I’ll make a note of that.”

The little boy made to introduce the fourth man but he introduced himself instead “I am The Great Farsh-nuke, The Macguffin Man, The Man Who Makes The Impossible Probable.”

Bruce grinned “I thought I dreamed you? Oliver, Felicity, you can’t see this but this is the Great Farsh-nuke.”

The Great Farsh-nuke grinned “Ha, gotta share that little tit bit eh?”

The Doctor glared at the Great Farsh-nuke “You weren’t at the battle for the multiverse?”

“I was dead” said the Great Farsh-nuke.

“We’re all dead from a certain point of view” said the Doctor “Where was your soul?”

The Great Farsh-nuke grimaced “Okay, you want to do this here, now? I couldn’t make your little meeting because I am not a Farsh-nuke, I was too spicy for Yog-Sohoth and his soul was corroded by mine.”

The Doctor stared at him in horror.

“Fuck you too prissy tits” said the Great Farsh-nuke then he turned to Bruce “Sorry about that. Entitled git, isn’t he? Anyway time to die?”

“What?” said Bruce.

The Great Farsh-nuke indicated the boy, Bruce and Amy in turn “Ego, Id, Super-Ego. All that is needed to restore your sanity is for your Id to embrace your Super Ego.”

Bruce stared at him.

“In other words” said the Doctor “Kiss the girl.”

Bruce looked to Amy “And what do you think about this?”

Amy laughed “Doctor’s orders”

The being that had been named Anthony Maxwell Jago at birth collapsed and reverted to human. Candi exploded out of his stomach as he did so.

Oliver stared.

*

Frederick opened his eyes and pulled his left hand away from Amy’s. “Well that was an experience and a half.”

Felicity was staring at the computer screen “Is it over? Is he back?”

“Yes” said Frederick “But he won’t be the same man that met you. He has just undergone a process of apotheosis, it’s going to take him time to figure out who whe is now.”

Felicity said “Thank you, thank you so much.”

Frederick got to his feet and said “Tell your friend in the field to expect me.”

Felicity nodded and spoke into her microphone “Oliver, it seems our weird friend has succeeded. He’s coming for you now.”

“Right” said Oliver’s voice skeptically over the speakers.

*

Oliver stood in the abandoned school playground with the naked bodies of his associates about him.

The man formally known as Bruce sat up “Okay, this is umm... new. I think a new name is in order.” he got to his feet and proclaimed “I am Anthony Jago and that is a promise! A promise that never again shall I be violent, not even in self defense. I am morality reborn.”

“You’re naked and pretentious” said Oliver derisively.

Anthony smirked “You’re just jealous that yours can’t split into two.”

A sound like a stammer Sh! started up.

Anthony started laughing like a mad man.

Oliver snorted “It wasn’t that funny.”

Anthony proclaimed “It’s the end but the moment has been prepared for at the sound of the Doctor’s tardis brings hope to so many.”

A rickety wooden shed materialised and Frederick stepped out “Evening all, I figured you could do with a lift and some clothes.”

Anthony stared at Frederick “So you’re the one who saved me from perdition?”

Frederick snorted and tossed a suit at him.

Oliver asked “Earlier when Bruce escaped my restraints the children were evacuated by unseen things, what were they?”

“The souls of my other selves” said Frederick.

Oliver sighed.

Candi said “Umm I might umm...”

Frederick tossed some clothes at her.

Anthony wore a three piece suit topped by a long duster coat “Yeah this feels good, this feels like me.”

Candi pulled on the jeans and tshirt and said “Lets go.”

They entered the shed.

Oliver stared at the far larger interior contained within.

Frederick spotted him staring and explained “Reality is a function of complex hypermathematics and mathematics can be hacked using higher level mathematical languages.”

Oliver nodded “I think I’m going to settle for magic box, thanks.”

*

Felicity was sat at the computer wondering why she couldn’t pick up the gps signals any more when there came a sound like a stammering Sh!

Felicity got out of her seat and turned towards the location of the sound.

A rickety wooden shed materialised and out stepped Frederick.

“Madam” he said “Never let it be said that I don’t keep my promises.”

Anthony exited next and locked eyes with Felicity.

Then Oliver and Candi exited.

Felicity smiled “You’re back.”

Anthony nodded and shut his eyes then stook a deep breath.

“What’s the matter?” asked Felicity.

“Hey, maybe we should give these guys some space?” said Oliver.

“No” said Anthony, clearly terrified “No, I think you should stay.”

“Okay...” said Oliver and he fell silent.

Anthony forced himself to look Felicity in the eyes and said “You know like how when the Doctor regenerates and he goes through this whole period of instability? Well that’s me now. I just... Things happened. Strange things... And I don’t know who I am anymore.”

Felicity frowned.

“But I know one thing” said Anthony “Every cell in my body is screaming run. Run because you’re not ready for this, because you can’t do this.”

He took Felicity’s hands in his and said “You are so beautiful and so charming and so funny and I don’t deserve you. I have lied to you and I have used you and god help me I have blood on my hands. I can’t be your... I can’t even say the words... I can’t see you right now. It reminds me too much of how horrible I am.”

He let go of her hands “So go live your life Felicity, go be with your Robin Hood and maybe in a couple of weeks I’ll be able to see you again but not right now.”

And then Anthony disappeared.

Everyone was silent.

Anthony reappeared with a few dvd boxsets “So you can understand why I can’t come between you two.”

Oliver took the boxsets wordlessly.

“One last thing” said Frederick “You have a present to unwrap” and he led Anthony over to where Amy

sat blindfolded.

“Come on” said Frederick to Oliver and Felicity “I’ll give you a lift home.”

They followed wordlessly into the shed and it disappeared.

Anthony pulled off Amy’s blindfold.

Amy saw him and smiled “You’re back!”

“Thanks to you” said Anthony with a grin.

“I’m sorry” said Amy “I went to Ruby for help”

“I’m not dying anymore” said Anthony “You are forgiven and I love you.”

Amy hugged him.

“Now if you don’t mind, I feel awfully tired, could you ensure the house is in order if I crash?” said Anthony.

Amy nodded “Sleep well, Max.”

Anthony didn’t bother to correct her.

*

Anthony woke up naked in his bed.

Amy sat opposite him, she was dressed in jeans and a flannel check blouse. “Hey honey, how do you feel?”

Anthony blinked and a wave of nausea hit him “Like a pig shat in my head.”

Amy frowned “Well why don’t you have a shower and I’ll make you breakfast? You can’t have eaten since you changed.”

“Good point” said Anthony

*

Anthony stepped out of the shower and got dressed in his new suit. It felt weirdly natural and appropriate.

He walked into the kitchen and Amy was plating up a massive fry up.

Anthony was amazed “Oh, this is glorious! Thank you Amy, ever so much!” then he noticed something “But you’re not having anything?”

“I already ate” said Amy and then she put the cooking utensils into be washed and said awkwardly “Plus well I sort of figured I might be your entertainment for the meal?”

Anthony stared at her, utterly perplexed.

Amy caught his stare and walked over to him. She placed one of hands on her neck and the collar she still wore there. “Look a lot happened last night so I can understand if you don’t remember but I’m a sylph now, your sylph.”

Anthony stroked her collar and memories of the night before came back “And sylph means.”

“Big cat” said Amy “It’s kind of a whole thing. There’s lore and shit but basically you start stroking and when I get naked on all 4s you lead me over to my sylph bed in the living room. Or keep cuddling, I mean you’re the boss but the point is that I am yours now and when I shed my clothes that means I’m basically a big kitty cat.”

Anthony stared at her and swallowed “I really don’t have any choice in this do I? I mean I owe my sanity to you becoming like this.”

Amy seemed to consider the question for a moment then nodded “Yeah sorry, you’re a pet owner again. Doesn’t bother, you does it?”

Anthony shrugged “It’s... certainly a new experience but so long as you’re cool with it...?”

Amy grinned “Well eat up then. I need my owner to be big and strong.”

Anthony sighed “I will never get used to that” and he sat down to eat.

Amy sat down beside him and pulled a leash out of her pocket and plonked it on the table “Oh by the way when Frederick was round the other day, he dropped off a package for you, it’s in the living room.”

*

Anthony walked Amy into the living room on the end of a leash, found what looked like her bed then removed the leash and let Amy curl up to sleep.

“So you tamed Amy alright then?” said Candi

Anthony turned and looked at her. She looked radiant in an expensive red dress.

“You look gorgeous!” said Anthony “Where are you going?”

“Where do you want me?” said Candi “I’m here so I can have my mind turned off again.”

Anthony stared at her “What?”

Candi took his hands and said “I was created to be a beautiful object and that’s what I want to be. You talked me out of becoming plastic but I will not have life inflicted upon me.”

Anthony frowned “Isn’t there anything I can say to make you change your mind?”

“This is my choice” said Candi “One thing though, forgive yourself.”

Anthony shook her head and sucked “I honestly have no idea what you’re talking about?”

“You had a man killed, lied to Felicity, turned into a wereshark and ate me” said Candi “That’s enough to give anyone a guilt complex, never mind someone who prides themselves on their morality.”

Anthony frowned and looked away “I guess you have a point.”

“You were dying and a long way from home” said Candi “No one blames you for behaving irrationally under those circumstances. Just forgive yourself, yeah?”

Anthony looked her in the eyes and said “Alright, I’ll try”

“Now” said Candi with a devilish smile “How do you want me?”

Anthony grinned sheepishly.

Together Candi and Anthony agreed on a location for Candi and a position.

As Anthony posed Candi she noted “You enjoy this don’t you?”

Anthony blushed and avoided Cand’s gaze “No”

“You do.” said Candi with a smirk “You like the power?”

Anthony bit his lip then said “Is it that obvious?”

Candi laughed “It’s alright, it’s what us toys are for. That and looking good.”

“No, it’s not” said Anthony “It’s a wretched and despicable feeling.”

“It’s part of you” said Candi “That makes it beautiful and you are lucky, you have plenty of consenting toys to let you feel those kinds of positive feelings.”

Anthony smirked “Well don’t tell anyone, okay? I don’t like that part of myself.”

Candi snorted “Well there’s no fear of that. Though I think I might like to be revived in time for christmas.”

Anthony grinned “I’ll keep that in mind”

Anthony finished posing Candi then switched off her mind. He stood back grinning at the artwork they had both created then he went too look at the package Frederick had left for him.

*

Anthony banged on the door of the safe house “Open up! I need to speak to Diane!”

Th door was opened and a couple of vampires led Anthony inside to see Diane.

“Max?” said Diane “So glad to see that you’re feeling more like your old self again.”

“So am I” said Anthony with a genuine smile “And thank you for trying to save my life. Even if you did kidnap my pet and threaten to kill my toy. They’re tough girls.”

Diane nodded “I like the new look, nothing much nicer than a man in a sharp suit. What do you want? I trust you aren’t here to repay me for what I did to your girls?”

“Nah” said Anthony honestly “I just need a favour.”

“What kind of favour?” asked Diane.

“I need you to find Frederick the Ferryman” said Anthony.

“Why?” asked Diane.

“As if I’m telling you?” said Anthony.

“Then why did you come to me?” asked Diane.

“You have contacts and resources that I don’t” said Anthony “For example I recall that the woman who welcomed me into Choice World is one of your - What do you call them? - Thralls?”

Diane nodded “Alright, there is wisdom in what you ask but why should Frederick trust me? Why should a Farsh-nuke come running for me? I need something to explain that this is serious.”

Anthony thought for a second, recalling why Frederick had saved his soul “Felicity. Tell him it is about

Felicity.”

“Alright” said Diane “I’ll see what I can do. What are you going to do?”

Anthony grinned “It’s a brand new day and I have been reborn anew. I’m going for an explore.”

*

Many hours later Anthony staggered in through the door. He waltzed into the living room drunk on tiredness, endorphines and the thrill of adventure but then he saw Felicity lounging on the sofa.

For a brief moment Anthony’s good mood crescendoed and he longed to take Felicity in his arms and

-

The good mood sloughed off Anthony like an old jacket and he glared at her “What are you doing here?”

Felicity met Anthony’s gaze “You asked for me”

“I bloody didn’t” said Anthony indignantly.

Felicity stood up angrily as she explained “My name is on the lips of every vampire, followed by yours. Oliver is off playing at being a hero again and that means he has come across it a lot.” She glared at Anthony “Why is my name on the lips of every vampire Anthony?”

Anthony grimaced then looked away, he could feel his anger rising. He looked at his hand and saw a wereshark’s claw. He turned back to Felicity “You need to understand that you are like a mirror reminding me of why I hate myself. I’m not safe around you.”

“Then let me help you” said Felicity and she took his hand in hers.

He looked at her, at that honest, endearing face, and shut his eyes. He took a deep breath and said through gritted teeth “You are a toy. The best toy. Frederick saved my soul because he couldn’t bare to see you upset and I need him to tell me what the meaning of his delivery to me is.”

Felicity stroked his gills and said “Well I am not Frederick but I do know a bit about toys, maybe I can

help you?”

Anthony nodded and reached out a hand to stroke her face. The anger dissipated and he returned to human form. “God help me Felicity but I love this.”

Then he opened his eyes and looked Felicity in hers, “If I could settle it with my conscience I would love -” and then he stopped and stepped away from her “But I am not.”

He strode past Felicity and stood before Frederick’s package.

A blonde woman was packaged up like a toy doll.

Felicity appeared on the opposite side of the packaging and grinned “Oh I know what this is. The original toy. Lisa Watkins is her name. She was a student of structural design until the Bam-Kursh chose her.”

Anthony gave Felicity a quizzical look “Was?”

Felicity nodded “The Bam-Kursh explained her intentions then worked with her to transform her into the first toy. Behavioural reprogramming, injections to change her biology and mind. By the time the Bam-Kursh was done with Lisa she was able to successfully argue for a patent and copyright on her on grounds that the experience constituted transformative creation.”

Anthony retched.

“Oh it’s entirely consensual” said Felicity “That one university student was turned into the first mass market executive toy. You’re very lucky. Normally only CEOs can afford one of these.”

Anthony said “Oh dear God, it’s worse than I feared. Why would Frederick give me this? What’s the point?”

“I believe your anonymous friend is testing you?” said Frederick.

Anthony turned to look at him.

Frederick held a small ginger kitten in his hands “Diane ended up giving a furry the funds to have me turn her into a kitten just to get the message to me.”

Frederick stroked the little kitten then let her run loose “Consider her compensation for any undue stress and before you ask, no she is not spayed, not that she needs to be and she’ll be able to live at least as long as Lisa here.”

Anthony asked “Why would anyone be testing me?”

“Well you have been intimidating vampires and there was that whole murdering of the Bam-Kursh and wanting his last thoughts to broadcast that you would hunt any elder gods who crossed you.” said Frederick “I think you have garnered yourself some attention as a weapon for justice.”

“So you’re supposed to help this woman” said Felicity and then she stared at Anthony “The toy owner who finds the idea of toys reprehensible. You’re supposed to break her programming? That’s got to be it.”

Frederick nodded “It certainly makes sense as a test doesn’t it?”

Anthony looked from Felicity to Frederick then said “I don’t know what you expect me to do?”

Felicity strode over to Anthony and said “Imagine I was in that box? I have been brainwashed to be completely obedient to you, all I remember is being tamed and that you were my owner, what would you do?”

“Make you watch all 3 series of the Arrow” said Anthony “Seeing the objective truth from across the planes of reality would help you bring down your memories and then I would bequeath yourself to you and I dunno, maybe give you a sock just to be sure.”

Felicity grinned “So...?”

“So you’re a toy and a character in a fictional tv series from elsewhere?” said Anthony “And because this is a multiverse, so is she which means...” Anthony grinned and grabbed Felicity excitedly “You are a superhacker and you’re a post scarcity scifi civilisation, you can look her up.”

Felicity nodded.

Anthony kissed Felicity on the forehead in excitement then said “The moment she’s regained her memories I want you watching the Arrow okay? At this rate I might not be able to stop myself from keeping you as my toy.”

Felicity grinned “Is that a promise?”

Anthony smirked “Down girl” then he ran up to Frederick “Sorry, about this old chap.”

“Not a problem” said Frederick then leaned in and said “But if you should ever happen to want Felicity off your hands...”

Anthony laughed “Try anything and I’ll bite your head off.”

“Noted” said Frederick

Anthony left the house again.

*

Anthony stood on the roof of a building staring down at the ground.

Oliver appeared behind him, dressed in his green combat gear “Not like you to be brooding on rooftops.”

“I am not brooding” said Anthony, petulantly “I am building up courage.”

“To do what?” asked Oliver “Surely you’re not thinking about jumping? Felicity would be pissed.”

Anthony sighed and said “All my life I’ve had this infrequent recurring dream. For one reason or another I’ll climb something and it’ll grow, like reality will literally warp and suddenly I’m a hundred metres in the air and then I step off and just for one glorious instant I’m free falling and it feels like flying and then - SPLAT!!! I phase through the ground and see the purple of my brain.”

Anthony turns and says to Oliver “I can survive this drop, I’ve checked but it will hurt like hell.”

“Then why fucking do it?” asked Oliver.

Anthony stared at him and almost laughed “Felicity Smoak is my toy. I like literally legally own her. That is beyond surreal. I mean I had such a crush on her and now? I mean this- this cannot be real. I refuse to believe that there is any plane of reality where this is a thing. It’s too fucked up. Too strange.”

“So you’re going to throw yourself off a rooftop because a girl you had a crush on likes you?” said Oliver, incredulous.

“I’m a nerd and a fanboy.” said Anthony “I’m supposed to sheepishly ask for an autograph and maybe a photo then fuck off and never bother people like her or well you again but now I own her and I can turn her mind on and off and it is taking all my strength not to use this power I have over her, that she wants me to use.”

Anthony shook his head in dismay “I am here in internal turmoil and she is angry that I’m not sweeping her up into my arms or turning her into art. I mean she wants it so much and I want it so much but I just can’t- It’s wrong, damn it!”

Oliver sighed “Well I guess you’ve gotta work this own yourself. Good luck.”

“Cheers” said Anthony and he went back to staring off the ledge.

*

Anthony staggered into the living room looking considerably the worse vfor wear. His suit was muddy, stained and torn. His eyes were shadowed and his face hung with a bitter cynicism.

Felicity was watching Marvel’s Avenger’s Assemble while a blindfolded blonde woman wearing a crop top, short pink skirt and flip flops sat attentively beside her.

Felicity paused the film and stared at Anthony “You were out for quite a while, are you okay?”

Anthony shrugged “I discovered the horrifying truth that this in fact really reality then I decided to give it half a dozen more tries just to be sure. The last one took me quite a while to recover from. How did the whole finding a way to restore her memories go?”

“It took me an hour” said Felicity “I decided to watch the movie that coincidentally mimicked the story of her life so I could fire the knowledge into her with a memory gun since I had some time and since you still weren’t back yet I decided to use your netflix to watch the first 3 series of the Arrow, the first series of the Flash, all the Nolan Batman films and I’m just working my way through the Marvel films.”

Anthony nodded and whistle appreciatively.

Felicity nodded “Those Xmen films? Yikes! Anyway we really need to have a talk now that I’ve seen the Arrow.”

Anthony sighed but nodded then he asked “So what’s with the blindfold?”

Felicity shrugged “Toys imprint on the first living being they see and assume it to be their owner then have undying loyalty towards it.”

Anthony glared at Felicity.

“Well if we’re successful she’ll gain her independence won’t she?” said Felicity in response.

“Fine” said Anthony and he removed his jacket then pulled up a stool and sat opposite the blindfolded woman.

He removed her blindfold.

The toy gave an ecstatic squeal when she saw him and asked “Are you my master?”

Anthony smirked “Yes, little lady I am afraid that I am.”

She flung her arms around him and hugged him then said “Your other toy wouldn’t let me see. She said I had to trust her and that you wouldn’t be long but you were ages.”

She sat back and asked “So what do you want to do with me?”

Felicity held a memory gun in her hands and aimed at the toy's head.

"Keep your eyes fixed on me" said Anthony

The toy grinned "Of course, Master."

Anthony nodded to Felicity.

Felicity fired.

A bolt of electric blue logic hit the toy in her temple then arced through her brain, making her experience memories of a tv series that reminded her of her life. The fog that made it so the toy only remembered being remade was lifted and she remembered being an architect and town planner. She remembered her friends, her family, the life she led before the Bam-Kursh convinced her to give it all up.

Lisa Watkins sat opposite this strange man that her body told her she should trust and obey but she didn't know the man. "Where is the Bam-Kursh?"

Anthony frowned. That name brought to mind an old man he'd had killed not so long ago.

Felicity fired at Anthony.

Now Anthony understood.

Lisa was freaking out "I'm not the real Lisa. You bastards, you've given me back memories I'm not supposed to have."

"We wanted you to be free again" said Anthony pleadingly.

"Free to be what?" said Lisa "I am so far from home, from my friends and family and heck I faked my death anyway. The Bam-Kursh isn't here. This isn't right. This isn't fair."

"Lisa" said Anthony in an authoritative tone.

Instinctually Lisa shut up and looked at him.

Anthony grabbed the sides of her head, making Lisa look at him at the man her made compelled her to obey. “Lisa, I know you’re scared and I can entirely understand why but you have to trust me and you do trust me don’t you? The Bam-Kursh made sure you would.”

“Yes” said Lisa and she nodded, feeling herself compelled along the path of least resistance, compelled to listen to this strange man and trust him.

Felicity watched silently with interest.

Anthony looked into Lisa’s eyes “You worked together on this project didn’t you? The both of you worked to turn you into a toy and the good news is it worked.”

Lisa grinned “You really think so?”

Anthony smiled and stroked the back of her head with his right hand “I know so, Lisa. You are a high class executive toy and I am very lucky to have you.”

Lisa blushed.

“And I do have you” said Anthony meaningfully and he slid his left hand down to the small of her back. “You are mine and I promise that I will do right by you. Anything you want you can have it. If you want me to command you and play with you I’ll do that, if you want to be turned off and left as piece of art, it can happen. I didn’t give you back your memories to torment you. I gave you them to free you. I want you to live how you want to live and if that means becoming an architect in this new city that’s your choice.”

Lisa grinned “But I’m still your toy yeah?”

Anthony chuckled “Yes, Lisa, you are my toy. The Bam-Kursh was very good at her job.”

Lisa blushed and looked away shyly “It’s nice that you say that”

Anthony hugged Lisa and said “You are home Lisa, you may not know it yet but you have friends and a

family here. You can start again without fear.”

Lisa kissed him on the cheek “Thank you. I’ll do my best to find my feet again but remember anytime you want me-”

“You’ll already be by my side” said Anthony and he kissed her on the forehead then stroked her cheek.

Amy entered the living room dressed in a white shirt, denim jacket and jeans “Ah Anthony you’re back, good to see you. I see your flock is growing.”

Anthony laughed and said “Amy, this fair young lady is Lisa, she’s our new toy and a bit disorientated at the moment. I want you show her lots of love and see that her every need is met. I have to go speak with Felicity in private.”

Anthony stood up and went to leave the living room.

Felicity followed him.

Lisa looked momentarily lost when Anthony left then Amy sat opposite her and took her hands.

“So, you’re a pretty one, what’s your story?” asked Amy.

And Lisa began telling her “See I bumped into this strange woman on the way to classes...”

*

Anthony and Felicity entered his bedroom and he asked “So, revelations from watching a tv series that coincidentally covers the events of your life?”

Felicity lounged on the bed and said “Okay first off, all that stuff about Oliver’s past, is that accurate?”

Anthony stared at her “You’re asking me?”

“Well okay” said Felicity “But it’s just so tantalising you know. Anyway you’re right, I should do the talking. The effects are soo bad and seriously who thinks the costumes are that bad. You’ve seed the tricks the BBC can pull for Doctor Who and you really believe Oliver Queen just went out with grease

paint and a hoody.”

“Translation convention” said Anthony “Making things simpler for the audience at home. Next you’ll be complaining that there was no ominous music when the bad guys arrived.”

Felicity glared at him “Point taken. Only this is how they make it seem like Oliver and me are like destined. Riding off into the sunset, it’s so fucking cheesy. Like they completely miss out the hours of driving and all the bickering.”

“I know” said Anthony “Imagine a grim and gritty superhero tv show cutting out the boring bits.”

“My point” said Felicity, glaring at him “Is that it’s not like me and Oliver are Star Crossed Lovers or anything. You don’t have to feel guilty about keeping me away from Oliver.”

“Why would I?” said Anthony “Oliver’s a dick.”

Felicity stared at him “But I thought you were a canon shipper and that’s why you felt guilty about the whole keeping me as a toy thing?”

Anthony laughed bitterly “He lied to you, manipulated you, made you think he was leaving you to your death and then just expected you to step in line and work with him. Fucking insane murder hobo. Ray Palmer on the other hand? Now that’s a man that deserves you. A nice ceo, fighting climate change, going without pay while he saves his city and he has a super cool techno suit.”

Felicity was surprised “Really?”

“Oh yeah” said Anthony “I kind of have a crush on him myself. He’s like the best of men but also nerdy and cute.”

“Right...” said Felicity “Leaving aside your shipping proclivities for a moment, why don’t you want to keep me as a toy any more. How does my being the girl in the tv series make things different?”

“The multiverse is vast and complicated so it is not impossible that a woman might want to be my toy” said Anthony “But you are a fictional character and that means somewhere there may be an actress having to act out these lines getting paid worse than her costars and objectified because the media

industry is one of the last bastions of open sexism in the western world. I am a feminist and I have issues with the writing of Steven Moffat but compared to him this is reekingly horrendous. I mean you, Felicity Smoak, are a superhero hacker and in the fictional media that coincidentally mimicks this reality you have been reduced to being my toy. That is sickening.”

Felicity sat up and looked him in the eyes “You’re seriously saying you won’t do what we both want you to do because you’re worried a bunch of feminists in another plane of reality would hate this?”

Anthony shrugged “That’s sort of how morality works.”

Felicity stared at him and was about to react when there came a sound like a stammering Sh! and an art deco control room materialised around them.

Frederick was at the controls and hard at work.

Within a moment Oliver, dressed in his green combat gear with his quiver on his back and bow in his hand, materialised.

“Explain” said Anthony “Now!”

Frederick looked to him “When did you grow a spine?”

“You just kidnapped two of my friends.” said Anthony, testily “Why?”

Oliver aimed his bow at Frederick’s head and readied an arrow “I would also like to know. I was just about to stop a raid by the vampires on a student hangout.”

“Aliens” said Frederick “In Starling City. Oliver, the real Oliver, just called me. The shit has hit the fan and it is all hands on deck.”

Everyone fell silent then Anthony said “Okay, I get bringing him but me? You’re bringing a pacifist to an alien invasion?”

“A pacifist who happens to be a wereshark and pledged himself in the dying moments of a Bam-Kursh as the hunter of monsters” said Frederick “You’re useful.”

Anthony swallowed “Okay...”

Oliver lowered the bow “Alright”

Felicity was still processing what was happening but she said “Okay... let me do the talking. Oliver, my Oliver, the real Oliver...”

Anthony interrupted “For simplicity’s sake let’s call him Al-Sahim because he’s clearly darker and grittier than this Oliver”

“Whatever” said Felicity “The point is that he’s not exactly the trusting type.”

“That’s okay” said Oliver “Neither are we.”

“Frederick, if we’ve got aliens to fight, just goddamn take us there.” said Anthony annoyed.

“Okay” said Frederick “Just try not to murder him or let him murder you.”

Then he took to the controls again.

*

Ray Palmer, a tall slender well built man with short black hair, in a casual fawn suit, was hunched over a keyboard as 5 monitors displayed scenes from rolling news and cctv of aliens attacking Starling City. Out of the way, the atom super suit was mounted for maintenance and repair.

A tall broad chested man with close cropped hair and a stain of a beard entered wearing a black combat suit and carrying a bow. “I came as quickly as I could.”

Ray looked up from the keyboard and asked “Where’s Felicity?”

“She er- we had a disagreement but I let her know and she should be meeting us here” said the man.

“What kind of disagreement?” asked Ray.

The man frowned and was about to try and answer when there came a great stammering Sh! that rended the physical laws of reality in twain and a rickety wooden shed materialised.

Ray stood up from the keyboard and stepped towards the shed and the door opened.

Felicity exited.

Both men gasped.

The man gave Felicity a knowing apologetic look.

Ray said “Okay Felicity either you’ve stumbled across a metahuman with one hell of a power or that’s a tardis?”

Felicity laughed then grimaced “Look this is going to be awkward, like really awkward, but promise me you won’t hurt anyone.”

Ray and the man shared a look and the man laid his bow on a nearby desk.

Ray nodded “Well alright, we’ve kind of got an alien invasion to counter, I think we can deal with awkward.”

“Well as you probably know, me and Oliver went our separate ways and after that someone contacted me. I mean I thought they were the Doctor at first or at least a timelord but no. It turned out they were a kind of technologically uplifted superspecies come paramilitary organisation called the Logicios whose job is to patrol the multiverse and fight this ongoing war with a race called the Septagonoids -” said Felicity, then she saw their vacant expressions. “And none of that matters but what does is that she invited me to a place called Choice World and I accepted and there I met three people who can help us now”

Felicity stepped forward and Anthony, Oliver and Frederick filed out.

The man in the black combat suit stared at Oliver “Is that a tribute act?”

Oliver met the man’s eyes and explained “My name is Oliver Prince, I was marooned on a desert island

and after 5 years of hell I returned to save my city.”

The man stared “How?”

“We live in a multiverse” said Felicity “And Choice World paired this Oliver up with me to be my gift.”

Ray studied Oliver curiously “What do you mean by gift?”

“She means when Oliver Prince moved to Choice World a scan was taken and I was created from that scan to be her guide book and welcome gift” said Oliver “And it was a pleasure that I volunteered for.”

“Okay...” said Ray, taking in just what kind of society Choice World would have to be to have such a practise.

The man in the black combat suit swallowed then asked about Anthony “And what of that guy.”

“He’s my owner” said Felicity then she frowned when she realised what she said.

Anthony sighed “Okay, we’re doing this now?”

The man stared at him “You better have a really good explanation.”

“I really don’t” Anthony laughed and moved into a part of the room that meant no stray arrows aimed at him could hurt the others then he boomed loudly and commandingly “My name is Anthony Maxwell Jago, on my bad days I’m called Bruce. I am 25 years old, have fucked up genetics, a useless degree, no job, no prospects and oh yeah it wasn’t so long ago that I was dying and raving mad due to a - Shall we say? - monster infection. I am also still quite depressed and suicidal on bad days and I am a massive nerd who comes from a universe where you, your reality, is fiction. A currently 3 part series called the Arrow but series 4 is airing soon and I cannot wait.”

The man stared at him “I’m not hearing any explanation.”

Anthony grimaced “Okay. Well, it’s really quite simple. In Choice World they have a very strange class system. It’s not just the establishment upperclass, the well off middle class and the poor working lower

class. At the top you have elder gods like the Farsh-nukes and the Bam-Kurshes then there are the Logicios and the Architects of Chaos. Then there are the weresharks, viscious creatures driven by lust and hunger and the need to survive then there are the vampires: People who hold back death by drinking the blood of other immortals.”

Anthony swallowed and took a deep breath before continuing “Then there are people like you and Ray. Then there are the Sylphs, beings with practical immortality, regeneration increased, strength, speed, stamina and intelligence but submissiveness and chemical rewards for being stroked, hugged and tret like a pet, to the point of shedding higher level intelligence to become instinctual domestic animals.”

Now Anthony locked eyes with the man “Finally right at the bottom are the toys. People who have signed away almost all their rights to be legally the possessions of another. They don’t need to eat to sleep, to breathe, they can have their consciounesses turned on and off at the flick of a switch and they can be completely dissected and remain functioning as if each component were still connected. That is what Felicity is, that is why I am her owner, because she wanted to be owned and I, in my stupidity, agreed because I liked her and she’s cute and in the fucked up logic of my head it meant I could stop dating her so I could be with another without losing her.”

Anthony shut his eyes and said “Well go on then, try and kill me.”

The man looked to Felicity “Is what he says true?”

“He missed out the part where he’s been turning me away since he realised I am well a character off one of his favourite tv shows but yeah that’s basically it” said Felicity.

The man sighed then said “You can rest easy, I’m not going to kill you. I asked you for an explanation and you gave one.”

“If it’s any consolation” said Anthony “I sort of procrastinated on the paperwork.”

The man nodded “It actually sort of is.”

“And this-” said Felicity

“Is Frederick” finished the man “He gave me the same offer as you, I turned him down but asked him

to keep tabs on you.”

Ray blinked “Well if that’s the introductions over. We have an alien invasion to stop.”

“Okay” said the man “What’s the plan?”

“Well Merlyn has the League of Assassins containing the problem to Starling City. Diggle and Argus are trying to lead a raid on the mothership itself. Roy, Thea, and Laurel are trying to fight fires on the ground. Firestorm and the Flash are doing what they can to help and well I rather hoped we could try to create a bioweapon to take these out.” said Ray “My plan was for Felicity to run things from here. You to retrieve the biogenetic samples and me to try and engineer a virus to target their genetic code and destroy them.”

“You can do that?” said the man “Create a bioweapon?”

“Well I’m not sure” said Ray “But it’s our best hope.”

Felicity nodded “We’ve got the technology, the hard part will be engineering a virus to kill the aliens and not humans or meta humans.”

“Well exactly” said Ray “Which is why it’s a good thing that you’re here to help.”

Anthony was silently staring at Ray, a look of anger creeping across his face.

Oliver said “Well I can help Al-Sahim here fetching the samples.”

The man, Al-Sahim, nodded his gratitude.

Frederick said “I’ve performed my fair bit of custom drug creation in my time, I can help with the lab work.”

“No” said Anthony quietly.

“Pardon?” said Ray.

Oliver saw Anthony's face and hissed in Felicity's ear "Get between him and Ray"

Felicity nodded slightly and started slowly edging towards Ray.

Anthony looked at Ray mockingly, his face contorted in anger "If you could hold in your hands a virus that could wipe out an entire civilisation -" and he held out his hand, showing his thumb and forefinger pressing down on an imaginary capsule "- such that all you need do is apply the slightest pressure between thumb and forefinger, enough to break the glass, and wipe out an entire sentient species? Would you do that, Ray? Would you be Davros? Could you?"

Ray erupted in anger "They are killing people on the streets! Women and children! They are eating them alive! They must be stopped!"

"AND YOU WOULD COMMIT GENOCIDE!?" cried Anthony in disbelief.

Ray's mouth dropped in shock "They are invading us!"

"Right now America is invading the middle east..." said Anthony and he began to change as the anger overwhelmed "The invaded Iraq over oil and they are bombing Syria now. My own people, the British, have assassinated their own with drone strikes and this is your answer? Genocide?"

Hands turned to claws and skin turned to scales as Anthony's head grew into the head of a Great White Shark. A dorsal fin sprouted from his back, tearing a hole through his shirt and jacket. His shoes burst open as great monstrous wolf feet flew from his own, a 2 metre long tail sprung from the back of his trousers.

Anthony continued "This is an entirely new civilisation, an alien species, this is first contact and you're not even going to try and say hello? No, on with the fucking weapons of mass destruction! Besides which if they can get here this is probably just a scoutship and they are so much more technologically developed than us, do you really want to risk intergalactic war!?"

"Hey, they started it!" said Ray, refusing to be intimidated by the wereshark transformation.

"Oh they started it did they?" mocked Anthony "Newsflash: If this world falls there is an entire multiverse out there. Humanity will not die but we don't know about these aliens? We need to learn

about them.”

“And you would let all 6 billion people on this planet suffer and die to satisfy your curiosity?” said Ray.

“They are suffering and dying” said Anthony “Because of people like you. Rich fuckers soaking up all the money and not paying your employees a living wage as you fuck up the planet, avoid paying taxes and bribe politicians to ensure anyone but the rich suffer and die for the consequences of your greed. I’ve been there fucko, I’ve felt the despair and isolation, the utter absence of hope. I have suffered and seen the suffering by the hands of people like you.”

Anthony stared at Ray in disgust “I liked you, I thought you were cool and nice and nerdy, I shipped you with Felicity because fuck that lying, manipulative, clinically deranged murder hobo Oliver Queen but now I find you really are like the Doctor in the worst way possible. The Oncoming Storm, The Destroyer Of Worlds, The Bringer Of Darkness. That’s what you are. A man who’ll drop out of the sky and tear down a world.”

Anthony turned and left the room.

In the silence that followed Frederick sighed then said “In fairness he did try to warn me bringing him along was a bad idea.”

Al-Sahim asked “What was that thing he turned into?”

“A wereshark” said Oliver “And you are bloody lucky because the last man he thought immoral got three arrows in the chest and their hear pulled out.”

“Someone should go after him” said Felicity.

“No” said Al-Sahim “Regardless of whether we use the weapon or not, we need to get the samples so you can begin making it.”

Ray nodded “Go, I’ll deal with him.”

“Are you sure?” said Al-Sahim “It doesn’t have to be you.”

Oliver laughed bitterly “He’ll kill you, tear you limb from limb.”

“Go” said Ray “I’ll be fine.”

So Oliver and Al-Sahim left.

Felicity frowned “Sorry about that. I’ve never seen that before.”

“Well the man’s got a point” said Ray “It’s just that unfortunately this is our best plan at the moment. Felicity can you hold the fort?”

Felicity shrugged.

Ray ran outside.

*

Anthony was striding purposefully towards a tall building in the distance when Ray caught up with him.

“I see the archers are on hunt” said Anthony wryly.

“You know what I don’t get” said Ray “You got so angry that you transformed into what I can only presume is the true form of a wereshark and from the arguments presented it seems like you would have been well within your rights to kill me so why didn’t you?”

Anthony kept walking “Because until you use that weapon then there is hope that you might see the error of your ways.”

“No” said Ray “One man’s life is nothing against an entire species, why did you pull your punch?”

Anthony stopped “Because I can NEVER let go of my morality again. I can never hurt another. If I do then a lifetime of rage and suffering and self loathing will combine with the lust and hunger of a wereshark and nothing will stop me.”

Anthony turned to Ray “I see the ruthless pragmatism in what you’re planning but I can’t be a part of that. I have to give those Aliens a chance. Look after Felicity for me, I’d still rather you over that madman Queen any day.”

And with that Anthony started walking again.

“What are you going to do?” asked Ray.

“Jump off that building in the distance” said Anthony “Either I get safely reduced to a fine pate and you get to commit genocide in peace or the Atom will be there to meet me and carry me to the ship.”

Ray stared at him for a moment then asked “Any last requests?”

“Try to stop any direct attacks on the mothership, especially nukes. You do not want to trigger a fire fight with an advanced alien civilisation” said Anthony.

Ray said “Gotcha”

Then he ran.

*

“How did it go?” asked Felicity.

“Oh, good” said Ray as he started climbing into the atom suit. “Just do me a favour, shut down any missiles heading to the mothership, at least for a day or so.”

“Okay...” said Felicity “And why are you putting on the suit?”

“He didn’t kill me so I’m not going to kill him” said Ray.

*

Anthony climbed to the top of the building and looked down. No sign of Ray.

He took a deep breath and paced the roof. Was he really going to do this?

He thought of Amy, Ruby, Britney, Candi, Lisa and finally Felicity. Too much suffering, too much heartache, and all his fault.

He reached the edge and took a deep breath “Ah balls to it, it was a shitty life anyway.”

He turned around and sprinted, leaping at the last moment “Geronimo!”

He fell.

The Atom zoomed towards him and caught him.

Ray asked “Were you basically going to commit suicide then?”

Anthony laughed “You think going into the mother ship of an alien invader to beg for peace isn’t suicide?”

“Good point” said Ray.

And with that the Atom surged up into the sky.

*

Anthony landed on the alien mothership. It was a saucer designed with fearful symmetry.

Ray hovered for a moment “Are you sure you want to do this?”

Anthony laughed “Don’t you have a genocide to organise?”

Then Anthony strolled across the surface of the saucer, heading vaguely inward.

He repeated the words “I come in peace.” over and over, to himself as much as anything else.

He was a wereshark who thought himself a monster yet tried to be a good man. His entering the mothership was more than just a message of peace.

He found what looked like an airlock and pounded at it, lightly. He was indicating, with force, his intentions to get inside and sure enough an alien approached out of it.

Eight hairy legs carried a long column of a body from which spouted first numerous tentacles and then a band of eyestalks, 5 deep, pointing in every direction around the alien but at the top was a large gaping mouth surrounded by large serrated teeth. Then the mouth opened and a bat like creature flew out of the mouth and lifted the alien up into the air so Anthony could see up its arse and there, in the sphincter was another set of teeth. The alien dropped down over Anthony.

The mastications of the alien's arse teeth were a minor irritation to Anthony and he braced himself against the inside of the alien's stomach.

The alien entered its mother ship.

When Anthony heard the recompression of the airlock and heard new sounds of chatter and machinery he decided to peak outside, so he forced open the alien's top set of jaws and poked his head out for a look. They were indeed inside. Anthony climbed out of the alien and went on his way.

Anthony pulled his smartphone out of his jacket pocket and called Felicity.

"Hello, Anthony?" came Felicity's voice "Where are you?"

"On the mothership" said Anthony "Surprised by the good reception actually but you're going to want to record this."

"Okay" said Felicity and Anthony heard rattling and banging until at last Felicity announced "You are now being recorded. What is it you wanted to show me?"

Anthony started scanning the alien writing on doors and signs with the camera on his smartphone as he explained "In case Ray's little genocide idea doesn't work you are my failsafe back up plan. You will survive the human race on this rock. Start deciphering this language. You're going to need to be able to hack using it. If all else fails inject yourself with nanites and shoot yourself with a logic lance, it'll help."

Felicity sounded distracted "Okay... I'll do my best but I thought you weren't on board with Ray's

plan? And what do you mean if the idea doesn't work?"

"I'm not" said Anthony "It is despicable and horrible and utterly pragmatic. I expected better of Ray but it could in theory provide the final solution and I don't trust things that seem too easy. I mean what if the aliens have good enough genetic engineering to just redesign their soldiers to be immune to the virus? What if this is against some convention of war and they have procedures in place to counter it? You will be safe. You can hack the aliens. Mankind's last hope. Good luck."

"Wait, what about you?" asked Felicity "I mean if you're asking me to decipher their language, what are you going to do?"

Anthony sighed "Honestly? I came here to die. I am a mistake that should not have been and I am alive when I should be dying, should be dead. I figure I can weaken their command structure before I go but you're right giving them a chance will be hard. Fortunately I have an idea in that regard. You're with Oliver now. You're home. You don't need me anymore. Goodbye."

Anthony hung up the phone and swallowed it.

He was in an alien spaceship and there was only one hope of communication: The blood of a wereshark. Anthony had to cut someone.

He found an alien that was alone in a room. He pushed open the door then closed it behind him.

Anthony stared at the alien and wondered if it had a spouse and kids, if it had hobbies and hopes and dreams then he charged at it and bit off a tentacle with his vast shark jaws. Then Anthony lightly grazed the palm of his left hand so it bled and squeezed the alien's bloody stump, letting the blood mingle. Anthony looked into the many eyes of the alien and imagined he saw fear. Then he felt it.

He heard the alien say in a scared woman's panicky voice "What are you doing!? What are you doing to me!? Get away!"

"Can you understand me?" asked Anthony.

"Yes!" screamed the alien "What do you want?"

“I’m very sorry” said Anthony “It was the only way to communicate. Take me to your leader. I am here on a mission of peace. Get as many guards as you need. I’ll wait in this room.”

The alien seemed to calm down a little “Thank you. I’ll do what I can. Do you have anything we can study to aid communication?”

Anthony pulled some old receipts from his pocket and handed them to her “I’ll help provide context and translation whenever you wish. Once again I am really sorry. I don’t like hurting people. You might need medical attention so you best go.”

The alien said “Yes, thank you.” then she took the receipts and seemed to study Anthony with all of her eyes as he she left.

Anthony found a table and sat on it. So this was interesting, might not be such a suicide mission after all.

*

Oliver and Al-Sahim entered the laboratory with the corpse of an alien.

“Good hunting?” said Ray as he left his desk to look at the thing.

“We weren’t sure what you wanted as a sample...” said Oliver.

“...So we decided to just take the whole thing.” said Al-Sahim.

“Right...” said Ray “And what am I supposed to do with the rest of the creature?”

Oliver shrugged.

Al-Sahim said “Dissect it, learn as much as you can about it. We need to know where to aim to disable and kill it.”

“So if you didn’t know, how did you kill it?” asked Ray.

Al-Sahim gave a haunted look.

Oliver shrugged “Enough violence will make anything die and we are very good at violence.”

“Yes” muttered Felicity “Yes, you are.”

“What’s up with her?” asked Oliver.

Felicity ground her teeth and focused on her work.

Ray sighed then said “Anthony’s on the mothership and he just rang up to let her know that she’s plan z if my plan fails.”

“Oh” said Oliver.

“See this is why you don’t fall in love with someone if you’re in this business” said Al-Sahim.

Felicity snapped “We weren’t in love!” then she added more quietly “It’s complicated, I mean we dated and then there was that threesome... I’m just his toy okay and now he’s dead, dying or about to die and my entire life has just imploded.”

Al-Sahim stared at her, he couldn’t look more scared if Slade was Ras Al Guul.

Oliver said “We thought he was dying before remember? Hell, we thought he was lost and evil before?”

Felicity groaned “Why does this keep happening to me? Always with the dying and the turning evil and the going off to die again...”

“Tropes are tools” said Frederick.

Felicity glared at him.

Frederick grinned.

Oliver led Al-Sahim out of the room nervously.

Ray said “Frederick, we appreciate your help but maybe a little more tact.”

Frederick chuckled “Felicity, you’re in a comic book universe. Worse you’re in a comic book universe that’s been adapted into an American television series. That is an awful lot of episodes to fill so light fluffy fun just can’t happen. You always need to segue from one conflict to another and where love is concerned that means an awful lot of pain and you are nexus of so many male character development arcs. Your heart is a great cosmic yoyo and that’s horrible, truly.”

“Frederick, shut up” said Felicity.

Ray nodded “You really should.”

Frederick shook his head “Your suffering means that not only is Anthony still alive but by the time this episode is over he will have realised that he loves you as his toy after all. It’s a logical pattern for the story to go with. Either that or the author has a depressive episode and we all suffer horrible horrible deaths but that probably won’t happen.”

Felicity spat at him and got back to her work.

“Charming woman” said Frederick.

“Quit while you’re ahead” said Ray and then he started about dissecting the alien and developing the biological super weapon.

*

10 alien guards arrived with Anthony’s chosen translator and they led him through winding halls into a vast chamber.

Naked men and women were bound by fibrous plants and hung upside down from the ceiling. They made no attempt to struggle yet were seemingly alive and chatty, even as aliens reached up with their tentacles to tear hunks of flesh from their bodies or even casually bite their heads off. The aliens and the humanoid captives seemed to be speaking the same language.

Anthony was indicated to stand before an alien standing atop a great blue pedestal and two small

slender aliens approached with bunches of the fibrous plant and started trying to undress him.

“No!” snapped Anthony.

His translator relayed the message and a kind of wheezy retching sound was relayed to the aliens trying to strip and bind him and they stopped.

The Alien atop the blue pedatal seemed to fart and retch at Anthony for a moment and his translator said “He asks why you will not be feasted upon? Are you inedible?”

“I came to talk” said Anthony “I am an ambassador from the planet and people below. I come in peace, to beg for peace.”

The translator seemed to swap farts retches and gargles with the aliens for a while then said “The Leader will hear you but he is curious why, if you come in peace, you will not be eaten?”

“My people, the human race, are not cattle. We will not be willingly eaten and that is what I have come to talk about” said Anthony.

The Leader listened to the translation then seemed to think for a second, he barked some orders at some aides and they ran off then he looked down at Anthony.

The translator said “The conversation will be recorded. Is that okay?”

Anthony nodded then added after a moment “Yes, this is first contact between our species, it deserves recording.”

There was some more conversation between the translator and the Leader but Anthony was more interested in the naked blonde woman that was bought before the Leader by an aide.

The Leader talked with the blonde woman for a moment then casually tore off her left arm and lowered it into his top mouth. He talked with her some more then tore off her right arm and lowered that into his mouth then he spoke to an aide and she was led away.

The Leader spoke with the translator for a while.

The translator said “The Leader has spoken to the spokesperson of his cattle and she has related to him that yes their species did once upon a time consider being eaten an uncomfortable insult but that their time with the Contravoxai, that’s their word for us, has made them consider the act of being eaten a great complement. He wonders if you or your species could be enlightened to willingly serve as cattle.”

“No” said Anthony.

The Leader seemed utterly disgusted when he heard that wheezing retch that was the translation and spoke briefly to the translator but Anthony almost didn’t need the translation, given the force of his alien speech and visible agitation and anger “Then we shall take you by force and compel you to understand the merits of being eaten.”

Anthony sighed “Leader, I don’t matter. I have no friends here, or at least those I do won’t miss me when they see how this particular house of cards falls. I come from a different universe and am no longer human. If you wish to sample my flesh and dissect me you may do so later but I need you to surrender.”

The translator and the Leader conversed for a moment with the Leader clearly angry.

An aide ran up and was shouted down.

The translator said “He does not understand what you mean.”

Anthony grimaced then boomed “Leader, I want you to broadcast to the world the following message: We surrender! Those words. We surrender. I want all attacks everywhere to stop, I want all humans being digested to be vomited up, I want all aliens handing themselves into humanity for punishment and protection. I want aliens surrendering themselves for dissection and vivisection. I want you to share all your technology and I want you to be fucking grateful.”

The translator gave the translation and Anthony saw the look of utter shock and sneeze of shock.

The translator said “He’s umm... not taking it well.”

Anthony nodded “Leader, I came here in peace, to beg for peace, but not for the sake of my species, for

the sake of yours. This planet is defended!”

After a brief moment of conferring the Translator said “By you?”

Anthony laughed bitterly “I told you, I don’t matter. I am just a depressed nerd but this planet is defended. Oliver Queen, Thea Queen, John Diggle, Ray Palmer, Roy Harper, Barry Allen and Laurel Lance are down there right now saving Starling City from your invasion, although people might know them better as the Arrow, Speedy, the Atom, Arsenal, the Flash and the Black Canary but they’re not alone. There is also a certain symbiotic entity known as Firestorm, an army of Assassins led by one Malcolm Merlyn, now Ras Al Gul. And somewhere in America are two men named Bruce Wayne and Clark Kent respectively and god help you if word of this invasion gets to them because they are Batman and Superman and they eat shit like you for breakfast.”

The Leader is staring at Anthony as the translator explains what he said, he barks back a retort and the translation comes “You expect me to be impressed.”

“I AM TRYING TO SAVE YOUR LIFE AND THE LIVES OF EVERY MEMBER OF YOUR SPECIES!!!” snapped Anthony angrily.

The translator gave the translation.

Anthony continued “You think we’re cattle? You think we’ll let you eat us alive well I have news for you fucko. Moses, Hannibal, Julius Caesar, Boudicca, Gengis Kahn, Napoleon Bonaparte, Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin, Tony Blair. We are the human race. We created the concentration camp, we created the nuclear bomb, we flew to the moon so many times it got boring and we have spent thousands of years persecuting and torturing and killing each other. We are the perfect predators and I guarantee you that right now people are developing weapons whose sole purpose is to wipe out every last Contravoxai. If you do not surrender, not only will every last one of you be slaughtered but we will find your home and your people will beg for the mercy of death. We are the human race. Fear us!”

Anthony watched the Leader’s face as the translation was given to him. The eyestalks seemed to shrink inwards and he flushed a brilliant lilac.

“Oh and something else” said Anthony when the translator had finished “You stupid fuckwits decided to invade America, a country who favours the right to murder easily over the right to not die of illness

or injury. A country whose military industrial complex longs for war and already has troops and technology fucking up a small mostly harmless dusty place, imagine their joy at finding a worthy foe. We still have nukes by the way. A whole ton of them. I imagine you've got about a day before you're bombed out of the sky and that's if my allies can buy you that much time."

The translator gave Anthony's message to the Leader and the leader gave one short response by way of the translator "Are you finished?"

"Yes" said Anthony "Surrender and you may yet live"

The translator and the Leader conversed for a moment then the translator said "The Leader will need to think on what you have said for a while. He does not wish to kill you lest he need your help in surrendering but he would have the honour of eating you if you would let him."

Anthony sighed "Fine but leave the head and torso alone, I need those to not die."

The translator conversed with the Leader and the Leader barked some orders at his aides.

The small slender aliens returned with the fibre and started stripping him.

Anthony sighed and helped them. The suit was ruined anyway.

*

Felicity was running an analysis of the alien text Anthony filmed on the mother ship.

Ray was sequencing the alien dna.

Frederick was dissecting the alien and listening to music on headphones as he worked.

"So..." asked Ray after a while "You're a toy...?"

"Yup" said Felicity, knowing exactly where this conversation was going and praying it stopped.

"Why?" said Ray.

Felicity groaned “Do you really want to know or do you just want to lecture me on my life choices.

Ray leaned back and sucked on his teeth before answering “I really want to know, I’m curious. How does this happen?”

Felicity sighed “Well me and Oliver split because he can’t stop being in harm’s way. Like he said he gave up being the Arrow but you can’t just cast aside 6 years of living a certain way so easily and I just couldn’t do it anymore. So when this Logicio turned up and offered me a life in Choice World I said yes. I just wanted to start fresh you know?”

Ray nodded “That bit I understand.”

“Well this lady seemed really taken with me and she explained all about the Logicios and the vampires and the sylphs and the toys and she almost seemed to be selling me on the idea. Like: Come to glorious Choice World and throw away your freedom as you become another’s property and all your problems will melt away!” said Felicity “And I won’t lie, I was tempted but I’m not stupid. I wanted to research this shit so when I arrived I did.”

Ray asked “What did you learn?”

“That being a toy means you are immortal but don’t have to suffer any of the And I Must Scream nightmares that usually accompany immortality and you feel pain but’s like really enjoyable. Not dangerously so but definitely pleasurable.” said Felicity “I considered being a pet but their immortality isn’t as good and they’re submissive and have periods where they’re reduced to cat or dog level intelligence. I am not down with that. I am a strong independent woman.”

“Who legally belongs to a man.” said Ray pointedly.

Felicity shook her head and said “You’ve seen Anthony. The man is so moral he was creeped out by his gift wanting to be enjoyed by him. Hell when he went bad because he was dying his version of being evil was killing an old man who wanted to die but sustained himself by killing women.”

“Okay, so he’s a good man” said Ray “But why be his? Why be another’s toy? Anthony’s clearly uncomfortable with you being his toy so why don’t you just live as an immortal and pretend like you aren’t legally a toy?”

Felicity sighed then said “Have you ever been with anyone that just made you feel completely and utterly protected? Like the devil himself could show up and they’d be like: Fuck off, she’s mine. Just completely in control at any time.”

Ray thought for a moment then answered honestly “My wife.”

“Well that was Oliver for me” said Felicity “But then he died and went evil and left me for dead and I guess I just realised I wasn’t going to put up with the conga line of angst that knowing this man meant.”

“Understandable” said Ray.

“Then the first thing that happens upon registering in Choice World is Anthony pulls me aside and utterly dominates me but he’s so polite about it, explaining that it’s a ruse to stop the vampires preying on him and I don’t care because I feel that sense of almost reassuring smallness with him and then things just sort of escalated. Like first we were friends, then we were dating, then we had a threesome and then I was his and I have always felt safe with him.” said Felicity “Even when I found out he’d lied to me and had killed a man, he sacrificed himself to save me from a vampire despite the fact that I would have been completely fine because I’m a toy. I mean he turned into a wereshark and was having this massive freak out as Frederick saved his soul and helped him regain sanity and one of the first thoughts he said was how sorry he was for lying to me.”

Ray whistled “That is some unnecessary chivalry right there.”

Felicity smirked then said “I just feel safe with him and I like it when he’s happy and he does like that I’m his toy. He just thinks that liking it makes him a monster.”

Ray nodded “What’ll you do if he doesn’t come back?”

Felicity frowned “Find someone to turn me off.”

Ray stared at her “You’re not serious?”

“I’m a toy, I like being played with.” said Felicity “Also this is Starling City, there’s a calamity or a

supervillain every other week, Really not sure I can go back to that life. I just don't feel safe anymore.”

Ray said “Well you know, I could - I mean only if you wanted - and I would absolutely stop at any moment and respect your wishes - I could try and help you, you could be umm...”

“Ray, shut up.” said Felicity.

“Shutting up now” said Ray.

“Thank you” said Felicity “It's a kind offer but Anthony's coming back. He wouldn't leave me here.”

“Well I hope you're right” said Ray “He seems like a good man.”

*

Anthony hung upside down from the ceiling as the great Leader of the aliens pontificated on his throne.

Anthony's lower jaw and tongue had been removed to prevent him screaming or trying to talk. His arms had been turn off and eaten and one of his ears had been taken.

The Leader tore off Anthony's other ear and chewed it thoughtfully.

The pain was unbareable.

Anthony blinked and saw Amy standing beside the alien. She was naked save for the collar round her neck and glaring accusingly at Anthony.

“You won't let yourself own Felicity” said Amy “But you'll own me. Why is that?”

Anthony wanted to cry out to explain but he didn't have any words. He didn't know what he'd say if he could.

“So the girlfriend of a superhero you like gets let off but me? The woman who wanted to be your wife more than anything else? I get to be your toy and why? Because a vampire told you to? Because you needed my sacrifice to regain your soul?” said Amy “Why is she too good for you but I'm not?”

Anthony couldn't answer.

The Leader reached up with a tentacle and pulled out his left eye.

*

PHWACK!!!

An arrow slams through 6 sets of eyeballs and into the wooden facade of an abandoned coffee shop.

Oliver readies his next arrow.

"Impressive" says Al-Sahim as he fires an arrow through 5 aliens "You really could be an alternate universe version of me after all?"

"You don't believe me?" says Oliver as he skewers 4 aliens.

"Well I've had fans before" said Al-Sahim, skewering 7 aliens.

"I'm no fan" said Oliver as he skewered 6 aliens "As a matter of fact I hate everything you stand for."

"What?" said Al-Sahim as he advanced through the horde of aliens. "Why?"

"I was born Oliver Arthur Prince to Robert and Elaine Prince. I was rich and foolish and then my cruiseship sank and I was shipwrecked on Lian Yu. Five years later I returned home the save my city." said Oliver as he followed Al-Sahim and fired skewering shots behind them.

"Yeah I know that bit" said Al-Sahim. "Why do you hate what I do?"

"Because it turned out my real father was one Margaret Morgause, famed business woman behind Morgause Enterprises and behind a plot to level the glades with an earthquake generator." said Oliver, still shooting towards their way out.

Al-Sahim could feel the weight of guilt slowing him down, making him hesitate. "Oliver, I'm you, whatever you have to say, you can say it. Remember Sarah? Remember Shadow? My secrets are your

secrets.”

Oliver nodded then said “I killed Felicity” he cited along his bow and pulled off a trick shot, skewering 12 aliens. “I mean I knew Morgause was clever, she’d framed Gregory Merlin of the SCPD to remove my help on the inside so I had Felicity check for back ups. I saved the glades but by the time I arrived back at the hideout Morgause had killed Felicity. So I found Morgause and in the middle of our fight pulled out a machine gun and watched the bitch dance.”

Al-Sahim stared at Oliver “And then what happened?”

“An Architect of Chaos” said Oliver, lowering the bow. “He gave me the chance to start again and I took it and that’s when the truly amazing thing happened. I was selected as one of those fit to be given to Felicity and I jumped at the chance.”

Oliver turned to Al-Sahim “I got to be with my Felicity again and this time I wouldn’t make the wrong choice, I wouldn’t put the city before her.”

“And then she met Anthony?” said Al-Sahim sadly.

Oliver nodded “I’m just a 3d printed fuck boy and here’s this charismatic dominating nerd and he steals her heart in an instant and I let it happen because all I want is for her to be happy, for the woman I let die to be happy.”

Oliver shook his head “And now he’s dead.”

Al-Sahim swallowed then took another scan of their surroundings “Fuck! There’s too many of them! We could get a line across to another building I suppose.”

“Mate, they can fly” said Oliver “You’re going to need a distraction.”

“Don’t you dare...” said Al-Sahim, looking him in the eye.

“The real Oliver Prince is alive and well out there. Look after Felicity for him okay?” said Oliver and he raised his bow.

Al-Sahim nodded “Always” and he fired his bow at a sky scraper in the distance.

*

Anthony lay on a table in the Leader’s private quarters. As he chewed on one of Anthony’s legs and stared out a view screen at an image of what Anthony suspected was either Earth or the alien’s homeworld. It was kind of hard to tell since the Leader had eaten both his eyes and he was only now growing them back.

Anthony was at this point basically his skull, brain, ribcage and internal organs. The legs were gone, as had his cock and balls.

The Leader casually reached over with a tentacle and extracted Anthony’s liver.

“Look at you? Pathetic...” said a familiar scottish voice.

Anthony blushed.

It was the Doctor from his spirit walk. The one who was a Farsh-nuke. He was tall, gaunt and wearing a long black trenchcoat “Did it ever occur to you that forcing choice upon people who don’t want it can be hurtful?”

Anthony’s throat quivered and he shook his head.

“Imagine if you gave every person the choice about when they died?” said the Doctor “I mean I’m sure for you, right now, this would be fantastic gift but for some people the mere thjought of mortality is too much to bare. Far better to be bumped off by an unexpected bus or bit of stray masonry than have to consider your own demise.”

The Doctor frowned then said “What about breakfast? Do you eat English or continental? What do you have on your toast? How will you have your tea? I say balls to it and skip breakfast because who needs choices like that when your brain is still runny porridge?”

The Leader reached over and pulled out one of Anthony’s kidneys and at it.

“Then there’s the question of what you wear and you know the lengths I have gone to to avoid that bit

of unnecessary choice.” said the Doctor “And how much simpler would life be if someone you trusted just chose your friends for you?”

The Leader reached over and grabbed one of Anthony’s lungs.

Anthony panted desperately, terrified, he didn’t want to suffocate.

The Doctor reached over “And just how much would you do to have an offswitch on your consciousness right now? Because that’s what being a toy means. Being protected from the tyranny of unwanted awareness and choice.”

The Leader paused and his tentacle released Anthony’s lung and pulled his freshly regrown eyeballs out of his skull.

Anthony lay in the dark in pain until his eyes regrew and when they did he saw the translator was in the room. He turned his head and saw the blonde woman lying beside him on the table.

Anthony growled in disgust.

He heard sharp intakes of breath then the Leader talked with the translator in panicked tones for a while before the translator said “You can heal.”

Anthony managed a wheezy “Uh-huh.”

The translator talked with the Leader for a while then explained “He had hoped you would die while waiting for his decision. He thought he could remove the power of your threats by showing that you willingly let yourself be devoured.”

Now Anthony was pissed. If he had a body it would be transforming right now and that meant his regeneration kicked into overdrive.

The translator said “For what it’s worth, I’m sorry. You came in peace to plead your case and now this...”

Anthony roared and let the anger flow through him.

As the translator and the Leader watched, Anthony's lower jaw and tongue regrew. "You stupid fucking bastards, I gave you a chance!"

Didn't need the translator for that one.

The Leader lifted the blonde woman up with his tentacles and held her over Anthony.

Anthony saw now that the stumps on her shoulders from where her arms had been torn off had been cauterised with heat.

She was talking to him, pleading.

"Let her go" said Anthony "Don't hurt her on my account."

The translator relayed the message to the woman and the Leader.

The woman smiled and kissed Anthony on the cheek.

The Leader cast the blonde woman aside and relayed a message through the translator "What do I do to stop you?"

Anthony smiled sadistically "I thought you said our conversation was recorded."

*

The machine binged!

Ray removed the sealed container holding the virus from the machine "It's done."

Felicity swallowed and looked to Ray "So what do we do?"

"Throw it into a crowd full of aliens" said Ray then he paused and looked at the container "Do I have the right though?"

Felicity stared at him "What are you talking about, of course you have the right. This was your plan."

“Exactly” said Ray and he grimaced “Genocide. Can I really do that?”

“They are eating people, Ray.” said Felicity.

“And the human race has never done anything horrible?” said Ray “We developed the concentration camps to counter those who thought back against our invasions and colonisations. Hell America was founded on the near genocide of the native peoples. I can’t really do this can I?”

Felicity frowned. Her translation programs were still running on the alien text.

Al-Sahim entered, out of breath and distraught “There were too many of them. Oliver gave his life so I could get away.”

Felicity grimaced and said “Ray, you’ve got to use the virus.”

“No” said Ray “I’m not that man. I won’t do this.”

“Then let me” said Al-Sahim.

“You would do this Oliver?” asked Ray “You would wipe out an entire people you don’t agree with by virus? Isn’t that exactly what you nearly died preventing Ras Al Guul from doing?”

“Yes” said Al-Sahim “Yes it is and I will have to live with the knowledge that I am committing genocide but people are dying good people.”

Ray stared at Al-Sahim and found himself handing over the virus.

Suddenly every speaker and screen displayed the following message:

We surrender! Those words. We surrender. I want all attacks everywhere to stop, I want all humans being digested to be vomited up, I want all aliens handing themselves into humanity for punishment and protection. I want aliens surrendering themselves for dissection and vivisection. I want you to share all your technology and I want you to be fucking greatful.

Leader, I came here in peace, to beg for peace, but not for the sake of my species, for the sake of yours.

This planet is defended!

I told you, I don't matter. I am just a depressed nerd but this planet is defended. Oliver Queen, Thea Queen, John Diggle, Ray Palmer, Roy Harper, Barry Allen and Laurel Lance are down there right now saving Starling City from your invasion, although people might know them better as the Arrow, Speedy, the Atom, Arsenal, the Flash and the Black Canary but they're not alone.

There is also a certain symbiotic entity known as Firestorm, an army of Assassins led by one Malcolm Merlyn, now Ras Al Ghul. And somewhere in America are two men named Bruce Wayne and Clark Kent respectively and god help you if word of this invasion gets to them because they are Batman and Superman and they eat shit like you for breakfast.

I AM TRYING TO SAVE YOUR LIFE AND THE LIVES OF EVERY MEMBER OF YOUR SPECIES!!!

You think we're cattle? You think we'll let you eat us alive well I have news for you fucko. Moses, Hannibal, Julius Caesar, Boudicca, Gengis Kahn, Napoleon Bonaparte, Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin, Tony Blair. We are the human race. We created the concentration camp, we created the nuclear bomb, we flew to the moon so many times it got boring and we have spent thousands of years persecuting and torturing and killing each other. We are the perfect predators and I guarantee you that right now people are developing weapons whose sole purpose is to wipe out every last Contravoxai. If you do not surrender, not only will every last one of you be slaughtered but we will find your home and your people will beg for the mercy of death. We are the human race. Fear us!

Oh and something else, you stupid fuckwits decided to invade America, a country who favours the right to murder easily over the right to not die of illness or injury. A country whose military industrial complex longs for war and already has troops and technology fucking up a small mostly harmless dusty place, imagine their joy at finding a worthy foe. We still have nukes by the way. A whole ton of them. I imagine you've got about a day before you're bombed out of the sky and that's if my allies can buy you that much time.

Then an Alien held up a white banner on which were written the words: We Surrender as the speech from the beginning was looped over "We surrender!"

Felicity, Al-Sahim and Ray stood in silence as they listened.

Frederick removed his headphones and looked to them with curiosity.

“He did it” said Ray “His stupid suicidal attempt to give them a chance succeeded.”

Al-Sahim quietly gave the container back to Ray.

Felicity said “He’s alive.”

Al-Sahim groaned “The stupid fucker just gave away all our secret identities.”

“So what happens now?” asked Felicity.

“Well I am going to destroy this virus I just created” said Ray “I think you two should have a talk.”

Al-Sahim sighed then nodded. He and Felicity walked outside, into the hall.

“I’m sorry” said Al-Sahim.

Felicity frowned “You hurt me you know? Every time you go off into some dangerous situation I worry about you, worry about whether you’re going to come back, whether you’re going to come back wrong, whether this will be the time you leave me for dead as part of some great plan. You took my heart and you pulverised it with your lies and self destructive behaviour.”

Al-Sahim nodded “I don’t deserve you, I never have. I think that’s why I’ve always tried to push you away. I say it’s the duty, the job, but I could stop any time and it wouldn’t change the fact that ever woman I ever love dies because I make the wrong choices.”

“But not caring isn’t easy is it?” said Felicity.

Al-Sahim shook his head, his face wracked with guilt and love and self loathing “I want you so much but I am so damaged and I can’t just stop being the Arrow. I don’t get to ride off into the sunset.”

Oliver approached down the hall, saw what was happening between Felicity and Al-Sahim then tried to creep away.

“Stay!” said Al-Sahim loudly.

Oliver frowned and walked back up towards them. “Look I meant what I said, I’m just a copy, I’m not going to stand between you two.”

Al-Sahim shook his head “I’m a very damaged man Oliver, I’m not worthy” Then he clapped Oliver’s shoulder “But you were created to be with her and you don’t have the scars I do.”

Oliver frowned. “I don’t think that’s your decision to make, mate.”

Al-Sahim looked to Felicity “Well...?”

Felicity blushed “Look... I’m not really in the best place to make this kind of decision just now but well...” she looked from Oliver to Al-Sahim and said “This is probably really cheeky but fuck it you only live once right? Two of you, one of me... care to take advantage of that arithmetic?”

Oliver and Al-Sahim looked to each other curiously.

Anthony approached, wearing a very worse for wear suit “Ah good, you’re all alive.”

Al-Sahim said “You gave away all our secret identities.”

“And I prevented war and genocide” said Anthony “Forgive me if I don’t lose sleep over vigilantes getting some interest from the proper authorities.”

Felicity grinned “Me and the bowmen were just considering a threesome, you up for it?”

“Eh, not my type” said Anthony “Get Ray Palmer involved and maybe we can talk.”

Felicity chuckled.

Al-Sahim glared at him.

As Anthony passed Felicity he said “We need to talk later but enjoy your boys first”

Felicity nodded then said “So...”

Oliver smirked “I’m up for it.”

Al-Sahim stared at Felicity “You aren’t serious?”

Felicity smirked “I mean if you’re not up for it, you’re not up for it, just an idea.”

Al-Sahim thought for a second then gave Oliver a curious look.

*

Anthony found Ray heating the container over a bunsen burner “What are you doing?”

“Destroying the virus” said Ray “You were right, I’m not Davros.”

“Good” said Anthony “Because I still have hope for you and Felicity.”

“Yeah but you’re not going to stick around here are you?” said Ray “And where you go, she will go.”

“You could come with me, with us?” said Anthony “Be interesting to see who you’re gifted?”

“My place is here but thank you.” said Ray “There are just too many problems that must be attended to.”

Anthony nodded.

Ray dunked the container into a jar of boiling water then turned to Anthony “So what was the alien ship like?”

Anthony whistled “Large, kind of industrial but with flashes of art deco and chintz.”

“Neat” said Ray “What are they like, I mean in terms of their society?”

Anthony thought for a second then said “Quite like us actually. They’re just people you know, with

bosses and aides and workers but they are unique in one particular aspect.”

“Oh” said Ray “What’s that?”

“They have a humanoid underclass who seem quite cheerful regarding their position in society. They are strung up from the ceiling and eaten alive.” said Anthony “All this invasion was about was these Contravoxai topping up on their cattle as they make their way out into the stars.”

“Oh my god” said Ray “That’s horrible.”

“It’s a different culture” said Anthony “The humanoids all seemed utterly content and at ease with the situation. Indeed the peace between humanity and the Contravoxai was celebrated by the spokesperson of the cattle class being ceremonially dismembered and eaten. She seemed to enjoy it. Very strange culture indeed.”

“Why do I get the feeling you experienced this culture a little more intensely than anyone might have expected you too?” said Ray.

“You’re a smart man” said Anthony “But I can heal.”

“Right...” said Ray “I am taking you to a bar and getting you staggeringly drunk or at least ensuring you taste the finest drinks Starling City has to offer.”

Anthony laughed “I am a nerd mate, my kind of relaxing is watching letsplays. Do you have Many A True Nerd over here? He’s doing a letsplay of Soma at the moment and that game looks so interesting.”

“Then I will rent out a cinema and have it play letsplays while the finest drinks are bought to us” said Ray “You just got eaten alive by aliens to prevent galactic war. You are getting rewarded.”

“Well alright” said Anthony “But only because I think Felicity’s going to be busy tonight.”

“Excellent” said Ray “We are going to have to buy you a new suit first though.”

Anthony smirked.

Anthony woke up wearing silk pyjamas in a king size bed with a slender blonde woman naked beside him. She was still sleeping so Anthony slipped out of bed and found a shower.

He stepped out of the shower and found a pinstriped suit waiting for him where his pyjamas had been. Anthony got dressed then headed towards the kitchen.

Ray Palmer sat before two large plates of food and indicated that Anthony should take a seat. He wore a grey suit.

Anthony sat down.

“You talk a lot when you’re drunk you know?” said Ray “As a matter of fact I’m rather surprised you can get drunk given your regenerative abilities.”

Anthony groaned “I regenerate slowly and alcohol slows the metabolism. Thank you for the food.”

Anthony dug into the full English breakfast before him.

“You didn’t fuck her by the way” said Ray.

Anthony glared at Ray as he shovelled black pudding into his mouth.

“Well I mean obviously I can’t know for sure” said Ray “But you didn’t ask her to be your date, you asked her to be your toy, you told her all about Choice World, about Amy and Felicity and someone called Lisa and somehow for some reason she agreed.”

Anthony grimaced “I am a monster.”

“Look it’ll be fine I’ll let her down gently and see that she gets a good job” said Ray “You don’t have to feel guilty, that was not my intention for last night.”

The woman in question entered, wearing a towel “Uh, hi, sorry about all this. Anthony do you know where my clothes are?”

Dimly the memory of stripping her naked and throwing her clothes in a bin while drunkenly saying “You won’t be needing these anymore” came back to Anthony.

“Er yeah, I think I tossed them in the bin.”

“Oh” said the woman, remembering the giddy rush of exhilaration she’d felt as he said it. “Yeah...”

“It’s fine” said Ray “I’ll have new clothes delivered.”

“Did you mean it?” asked the woman “What you said last night?”

“Did you?” asked Anthony.

Neither could look at the other, neither could answer the other. The answer “Yes, entirely but it makes me feel really ashamed” was just too horrible to admit.

Ray watched them with interest then said “You know, we should probably go?”

“Oh yeah” said the woman, half smiling at that “You’ve gotta go back to Choice World with Felicity don’t you? The world where any kind of life is possible?”

Anthony nodded then he got to his feet and turned to the woman. “Yeah, I’ve kind of got things to do there, people who need me.”

“Well you should get back to them” said the woman.

Anthony nodded and he hugged the woman, Carla, he remembered now.

“Will you be back?” she asked.

“Yes” said Anthony and then he added “Wear a ribbon when I return, I’ll take you.”

Carla asked “Why not now?”

“Because a decision as big as this deserve a lot of sober thought” said Anthony.

Then he kissed her on the forehead and stroked her hair “I’m sorry to have blundered into your life.”

Carla smiled sadly “Well look after your girls, okay?”

Anthony nodded then said “Lets go”

*

When Anthony and Ray arrived in the office they found Felicity lounging in a chair as Oliver and Al-Sahim played a very intense game of Rock, Paper, Scissors.

Ray asked “What are those two doing?”

“Trying to win the right to date me” said Felicity “They’re currently on the best of 30.”

Anthony chuckled.

Ray asked “And you’re letting them, isn’t this your choice?”

“I can’t decide” said Felicity.

“Well I might be able to help you with that...” said Anthony.

Al-Sahim looked at him angrily “Why do you have any say?”

“Because I have decided to finish the paperwork, to accept Felicity as my toy” said Anthony “That is, if you’ll still have me.”

Felicity ran over and hugged him. “Thank you” She looked him in the eyes and said “I promise I’ll be good. Anytime you want to turn me off, totally fine.”

Anthony laughed and stroked her hair “You were never the problem.”

“So what changed?” asked Al-Sahim.

Anthony sighed “I just realised that a right is not a responsibility. People have the right to life but also the right to die, the right to vote but also the right not to, the right to not be beaten and shouted at by your spouse but also the right to enjoy it if all parties consent and appropriate safety measures are taken and after care provided. Felicity has the right to be a toy if she wishes so fuck it.”

Oliver nodded and patted Anthony’s back “Congrats buddy, you finally figured yourself out.”

“So who do you pick then?” said Al-Sahim.

“Hmm let me think, the murder hobo archer or the other murder hobo archer” said Anthony “I pick option 3 Ray Palmer: Nice CEO, went without pay to rebuild his scity, he’s fighting climate change, nice to Felicity, watched all the Doctor Whos and he has a cool supersuit.”

Felicity laughed.

“Then again what do I know about love” said Anthony “My idea of a good time is watching a nerd play a game about robots in an apocalypse. It’s actually this really neat philosophical idea about what happens when you copy artificial intelligences. Like its this 5050 shot whether you end up in the new body or you get left behind.”

Felicity said “That’s it.”

“What’s what?” said Anthony.

“Like Journey’s End” said Felicity “I can copy myself and leave one here with Ray and Oliver.”

Al-Sahim stared at her “Are you alright Felicity?”

“It’s not possible” said Ray.

“Oh it is” said Oliver “Anthony and me found a woman that this old git kept replicating using an old Star Trek transporter thing.”

“Logicular Replication” explained Felicity “Like Quantum Teleportation but with a way round Heisenburg’s Uncertainty Principle that doesn’t require Quantum Entanglement.”

“But how?” said Ray “You’re talking about universal constants.”

Frederick coughed “The clue to your error is in the name. Universal constants are specific functions of the logical encoding of reality. Well our tech we can hack the logic of reality. It’s how Anthony and Felicity can be so immortal. I could easily perform the procedure.”

“Fantastic!” said Felicity grinning. “And with memory guns the two versions of me can remain in sync. I’ll get to have my cake and eat it.”

Al-Sahim sighed “Fine so how is this going to work?”

“Well there is going to be a certain amount of weirdness so I can’t really be left on my own for a bit, I mean I am going to become two different people and live two different lives” said Felicity “So I will nominate Anthony to look after the original me that stays behind with him will be tattooed with ‘Right’ and then Anthony will nominate someone to take the freshly created me that is left in Starling City and that me will be tattooed with ‘Left’.”

“Okay” said Al-Sahim “So who is going to look after the you that stays here?”

“I will give you three guesses” said Anthony.

*

“And she’s done” said Frederick as he finished the process of Logicular Replication and applied the safeties “Gentlemen, get your Felicitys.”

Anthony stood before a glass door beyond which Felicity stood, her mind turned off, on a vast scanning plate.

Ray stood before a glass door beyond which stood an exact replica of Felicity, her mind turned off, on a vast replication plate.

Ray opened the door and turned on the replica's mind.

The replica blinked then frowned.

Ray smirked "Still wish you were with Anthony, huh?"

"Sorry" said the replica.

Ray chuckled "Don't worry about it and anyway Anthony will come to visit."

The replica looked up at Ray and said "I'm not sure I actually said it but well I'm still me and I still want to be a toy or at least it's going to take a while acclimatising..."

"It's fine" said Ray and he took her hand in his "You're my friend and I just want you to be happy. Now come on, I know an excellent tattoo parlor."

"Thank you" said the replica and she grinned "You're a good friend."

As the replica and Ray walked out of Frederick's ship the Replica could be heard asking "Ray, what do you think of threesomes?"

Frederick locked the doors and strode over to Anthony. He was still standing outside the glass door. "You know you can go in and get her."

Anthony said "I have just seen off an alien invasion, Frederick, please don't take me for a fool."

Anthony turned to look Frederick in the eyes "You saved my soul because Felicity was upset and then when Felicity suggests cloning herself using teleportation technology you're all "Oh hey, look I totally know how to do this, it'll be fine" You're up to something."

Frederick grinned "And there he is, the man who taunted the Bam-Kursh as he died to send a message to the elder gods. Lets cut the crap Anthony neither of us are good men."

"No" said Anthony "You're right but I am on the side of the good so tell me whsat do you want?"

“Payment” said Frederick “I saved your soul, I helped your toy become two bodies with one mind. I think that deserves something.”

Anthony smiled bitterly “It’s always about money isn’t it. Fucking capitalism.”

“Oh I don’t want money” said Frederick “I want her, or a copy of her.”

“No” said Anthony.

“I’m not a Contravoxai, I’m not going to eat her.” said Frederick “I just want a toy and I want her. She’ll love every instant of it. Consent isn’t the issue, I’m good at what I do.”

“No, it isn’t is it?” said Anthony “The issue is that you won’t care about what she wants or needs. All you will care about is whether she pleases you, whether she’s beautiful enough, cute enough, funny enough and if she isn’t you’ll turn her off and forget about her.”

“She’s a toy” said Frederick dismissively “More to the point she is a toy she has been craving attention for so long. I could be so good for her and she will be so good for me.”

“I should kill you right now” said Anthony seriously.

Frederick nodded “You could do that. I mean you would have trouble getting home but you could do that. Except you won’t. You won’t because I’m not threatening you and I’m not threatening her. She will absolutely enjoy every single moment that she is with me.”

“Like the Contravoxai...” said Anthony, calmly furious “It’s okay to demean and hurt another because they’re consenting and enjoying it. As if actions don’t have a certain moral flavor to them no matter the context.”

Frederick nodded and grinned “That’s clever, that’s very clever but you are going to give me what I want.”

Anthony nodded “My soul is already black as pitch so lets introduce some doubt into your psyche. I’m not going to wake her up. I’m not going to tell her about this. I’m not going to give her consent. I want you to know that your toy was taken without consent, I want that to niggle away at you, to cause you

sleepless nights, to make you bitter and twisted and hate yourself.”

Frederick sucked at his teeth thoughtfully “I could get permission from the spare.”

“Oh sure” said Anthony “You tell the heir to Ras Al Guul and Mr Genocide is Justifiable that you want a copy of Felicity as payment and that you will do whatever the fuck you like with her but it’s okay because she’s totes gonna consent to everything as you are just that good.”

Frederick frowned and he furrowed his brow “I could just not take her.”

“Pull the other one, it’s got bells on” said Anthony “You’re a Farsh-nuke for you not to get a toy you think you’re owed, for you to be beaten by anybody, now that’s really going to send you mad.”

“Why are you doing this to me?” asked Frederick, pleading now. “I saved your soul, surely that grants me something.”

“Anti-authoritarian anti-capitalist” said Anthony “And I really hate myself. I do like you and I do feel I owe you, that’s why you’re getting a Felicity but you need to have self doubt, you need to have a conscience.”

“Okay” said Frederick “You win.”

“Begin the procedure” said Anthony.

Frederick nodded and went back to the controls.

In a few moments the procedure was done and Frederick strode over to the replication bay. He turned the replica’s mind on.

She blinked then said “You’re not Ray or Anthony.”

“No” said Frederick “Me and Anthony had a little talk after Ray left.”

“What about?” asked the replica.

“About how we’re both gits mainly” said Frederick “But we agreed that I would get a copy of you to be my toy.”

The replica stared at him “What?”

Frederick smirked “It’s alright, you’ll enjoy it.”

The replica asked “Then why wasn’t I asked?”

“Because I want the knowledge that this is unconsensual to work away at him.” said Anthony striding over “I am very sorry but I think he’s right. It won’t actually matter to you whether you consent or not because in either instant you’ll happily do as he wants.”

The replica glared at him “I thought - I thought you were all about going me choice.”

Anthony sighed “The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few. A Farsh-nuke without a conscience who thinks he can get whatever or whoever likes is more terrifying than a Quantum Clone who did not consent to being. I’m sorry.”

The replica sighed “Why must every guy I get close to do something dickish to me for the greater good.”

“That said” said Anthony “In the unlikely event that he ever does do something you are not okay with, contact me and I will make him suffer.”

The replica grinned “Okay, I can live with that.

Frederick grimaced.

The replica asked “So what do you want to do with me Frederick?”

“Climb in Lucy’s cage” said Frederick “I’ll see to you later. I’ve still got a job to do.”

“Okay” said the replica and she approached Anthony and hugged him “I forgive you.”

“You really don’t have to say that” said Anthony and he stroked the replica’s hair “Take care, okay?”

“You too” said the replica “And stop by occasionally, even if I’m completely under his control.”

“Of course” said Anthony then he kissed her on the forehead and let her walk off.

“This is on me, Anthony” said Frederick “I made you do this. This blemish is on my soul, not yours.”

Anthony strode over the scanning chamber and turned on Felicity’s mind.

Felicity grinned and hugged Anthony “Thank you.”

“Hey easy” said Anthony “Still a little sore from being eaten yesterday.”

Felicity smirked “Sorry”

“And I have something to tell you” said Anthony, gravely.

Frederick interrupted “I made a copy of you to have as my own toy as payment for saving his soul and things. He decided to deny you a chance to consent to give me a conscience or something but it’s totally cool because she’s going to enjoy everything I do.”

“Mistreat her and I will make you eat your own testicles” said Felicity but then she turned her attention back to Anthony and was really happy for him “But hey look at you? You’re really taking charge aren’t you? I think I like this new you. Want to run off a copy to be a statue?”

“Ah no, I’m good, thanks” said Anthony “So you’re not mad?”

“Why would I be mad?” asked Felicity “I’m with my favourite owner and he’s finally ready to take full ownership of me.”

“Okay, then I have another confession to make, I don’t know anywhere that does tattoos, it’s not my

scene” said Anthony.

“Good thing I am a super hacker then” said Felicity “Just keep me on a tight leash and don’t lose sight of me.”

Anthony grinned “Frederick, let Oliver in, we’re heading back to Choice World.”

Frederick nodded.

*

The shed materialised before a large window that must be 10 metres high by 30 metres across and curved slightly.

Felicity stepped out, closely followed by Anthony.

Felicity stood in wonder at the view of Chipsbury the city Anthony lived in within Choice World.

Oliver exited and said “Look, Anthony, I know that you and Felicity are going to - well I’ll only be in your way so I’ll be off.”

Anthony turned to Oliver and said “Mate, I may ship her with Ray but that version of reality can still happen with the other Felicity and that means this one is going to need something I don’t plan to provide and I can’t think of anyone more deserving the man who was literally made to be with her.”

Oliver smirked “I know but I also know that she is not going to leave your side for a while so I figured I might catch up on some reading.”

Anthony smirked “Point taken but if you are going to do some reading maybe check out Stephen Hawking’s A Brief History of Time.”

“Okay” said Oliver and he shook Anthony’s hand “For what it’s worth I hated that ending too. Enjoy her.”

With that, Oliver left.

Anthony put his arm round Felicity and asked “How much of that did you hear?”

“Every word” said Felicity with a grin “But it’s alright, just maybe turn me off if you’re going to talk about me, literally behind my back.”

Frederick said “If you need me, you know my number.”

Then the shed faded out of existence.

Amy and Lisa ran up. Amy was wearing a blue shirt with jeans and Lisa wore her hair in a pony tail, jeans, a tshirt and hoody.

“I like what you’ve done with the place” said Felicity.

“Thanks” said Lisa “Amy suggested I give it a redesign to accomodate more toys and I’m rather proud of it.”

Amy glared at Anthony “You were gone for two weeks, no notes, no phone calls, no facebook messages.”

“But we were only gone a day” said Anthony, frowning “Oh I am sorry”

“Ah” said Felicity “I think Frederick might have been ever so slightly distracted by the knowledge that he had a copy of me to play with.”

Amy stared at her “What?”

“I’ll explain later” said Felicity “How did you and Lisa manage? I mean I thought you were a sylph?”

“We took shifts” said Amy, then she glared at Anthony “Course it was never as good as the real thing but we survived.”

“Well I’m home now” said Anthony.

Amy smiled “Okay but we are doing a netflix and chill tonight understand?”

Anthony nodded “No idea what that is but sure thing”

Felicity said “I’ll explain later”

Lisa was coyly looking at Anthony.

He caught her gaze and grinned “So I’ve realized that I am actually okay with this whole toy thing after all and so I was wondering...”

Lisa said “I’ll cancel all my appointments for a week.”

Anthony nodded

Lisa forced herself to look away and said “I best get going then.”

“Yeah” said Felicity “We better too. I’m getting a tattoo and for convoluted reasons he needs to come with me.”

Felicity grabbed Anthony’s hands and led him away.

Anthony hissed “I thought I was supposed to be in charge.”

“Did you see her?” said Felicity “Poor girls imprinted on you, if you say you want her then every fibre of her being compels her to obey.” Then she turned to Anthony and said with a grin “But she will be fun to play with. I’ve heard you can cut her head off and she likes it.”

Anthony rolled his eyes and smiled politely “Charming, I’m sure.”

*

Anthony woke up wearing silk pyjamas and lying in a large double bed. Felicity and Lisa lay naked either side of him. He didn’t want to wake either of them so he edged himself out under the duvet and slid out the bottom of the bed. He nearly trod on Amy as she lay curled up on a sylph bed lying below the large high definition wide screen tv. He left the room and made his way to the bathroom.

Having cleaned his teeth he changed into a teal green suit and booted up his computer. He was straight onto chrome and started a wiki freefall.

Felicity stirred in her sleep and noticed the light of the monitor “What are you doing?”

“Researching the multiverse” said Anthony “Now sleep, you’ve just become a threefold woman.”

Felicity immediately got up and headed to the shower.

Anthony’s eyes did not leave the screen.

Felicity returned with a bowl of kibble and placed it before Amy as she slept. Then she got dressed in jeans and a tshirt.

Anthony wondered idly “If every universe could be an inflationary multiverse and every comological universe contained there in has the possibility of at least one virtual universe then this theoretically large but finite mutiverse is almost exponentially larger and with extraterrestrial life as an added variable that is...”

“One fuck ton of universes” said Felicity as she pulled up a chair to sit beside him “You know you should really let me do this?”

“You are supposed to be sleeping” said Anthony.

“Yeah well I spent three years working with a brooding vigilante who keeps secrets like you keep Doctor Who trivia.” said Felicity “You’re up to something, what is it?”

“Not here” said Anthony and he left the computer.

Felicity reached out for the keyboard.

Anthony gently laid a hand on her shoulder and whispered “She is my baby, not yours”

Felicity nodded and followed him out of the bedroom.

Anthony closed the door behind them then led them down a sweeping minimalist staircase to a living room with a cinema large screen, a massive hamster cage and a lifelike statue of a blonde woman in a gorgeous dress.

Anthony explained “When you decided to take the both paths of the crossroads presented, Oliver reminded me of something that in all the business with the Wereshark I had quite forgot.”

“Oh?” asked Felicity.

“I have a seghat” said Anthony.

She stared at him.

He turned and grinned at her “Bigger on the inside, capable of travelling in time, space and the multiverse and it has a teleportation pad so I can clone people and things.”

Felicity grinned “You’re going to be a timelord”

“Bah” said Anthony “Timelords are dull and boring and make no sense. We’re in a multiverse. I’m going to be an adventurer.”

Then Anthony turned to the statue and turned her mind on.

Candi blinked and took a deep breath then she shook her head and grinned “Is it Christmas already?”

“In a sense” said Anthony “I do have a rather brilliant present to get home.”

Candi looked him in the eyes and said “You want me to help with the heavy lifting don’t you?”

Anthony looked hopefully at her “Please?”

Candi laughed and hugged him “Of course, I am yours remember?”

Then she noticed Felicity and said “What’s this one doing here? I thought you were sulking.”

Anthony chuckled “Yeah I, uh, changed my mind.”

“Good” said Candi, then she cleared the hair from Felicity’s face and said “Because this one is adorable.”

Felicity blushed then found herself eyeing up Candi.

“Oh thank god, you’re still here” said Lisa.

Anthony turned to see that Lisa wore green flip flops an emerald green bikini, a pink skirt and crop top, she was walking Amy on the end of a leash like a dog.

Felicity turned said “Aww, you’re wearing the clothes you came with? You’re a proper little toy again.”

Lisa blushed then said “Well it’s only right since my master’s home.”

“Aww” said Felicity and she looked to Anthony “She called you Master, isn’t that just adorable?” then she paused and realised “Hang on, I should call you Master, I’m also your toy.”

“No” said Anthony “That is too far. If you want to live your lives in this manner then I am not going to judge and I will admit that I kind of sort ogf a little bit love it but I am not the Master.”

“How about if I call you Doctor then?” asked Felicity pointedly.

Anthony approached Lisa and reached out a hand to stroke her hair “Lisa, I’m not going to deny it you are adorable.”

Lisa blushed and grinned “Thank you, I know I make you uncomfortable and I’m sorry.”

“I make me uncomfortable” said Anthony pointedly “You are lovely, I would however like you to remember that you are more than just well...” he found his right hand feeling the contours of her back “You are an individual with your own hopes and dreams, I know the Bam-Kursh remade you for a purpose but you are more than that.”

Lisa nodded “I know, I designed this place remember but I want to be yours.”

“Because of chemicals injected into your body” said Anthony.

“Chemicals that I agreed to have injected into my body so I might be yours to own and command” said Lisa “Don’t let yourself feel guilty for my life choices.”

Anthony sighed “Okay, you win but I do have a favour to ask?”

Lisa looked him in the eyes and said “Anything”

*

As Amy, Lisa, Felicity, Candi and Anthony lugged the Bam-Kursh’s SEGHAT to the house Amy asked “How do you plan to fly this thing anyway?”

Anthony laughed “Details. Details.”

“Great” said Amy “We’ve spent an hour lugging back a broom cupboard and he doesn’t even know how to fly it.”

Felicity chuckled “It’ll be fine, he’s got me remember?”

“No” said Anthony “This is my project, you are going to spend time with Oliver.”

Felicity stared at him.

“I can turn you off you know” said Anthony.

Felicity smirked “I’d like that too much for that to work as a threat and you know it.”

Anthony sighed.

Candi asked “Not that this is any of my business because I’m going to be a statue in five minutes but how are we going to fit this through the door?”

Lisa grinned “This house is my design, she’ll open up for me.”

Anthony stared at her “How?”

As they approached the doorway Lisa said “House, authenticate me then open sesame”

A beam of logic scanned Lisa’s brain then the side of the house peeled away to let them in. It returned to normal once they were through.

They lowered the box down into position in the atrium of the house.

Candi shook the aching from her hands and said “If you will excuse me ladies I want to have a shower before I take up life as a statue again.”

Lisa said “Maybe try the bay window next time? It’s designed to experience the sun rise.”

“Ooh, good idea” said Candi then she hugged Lisa and looked Anthony in the eyes “Don’t neglect this one you understand? I know you’re a nerd and have got a brand new toy to play with but don’t forget her.”

Anthony nodded “Never”

Candi nodded and strode off.

Felicity was studying the outside of the Seghat.

Amy put her arm round Anthony and looked at Lisa “Will you though? She chose to be a toy but she was given to you so you could free her, what are you going to do?”

“What I always do” said Anthony “Have my cake and eat it.”

Then Anthony turned to the Seghat, unlocked it and strode in.

Amy and Felicity followed.

Amy wandered about the place, staring at the vast interior.

Felicity studied the console then took off into the labyrinth of corridors inside the ship.

Anthony called after her “Don’t get lost!”

Felicity called back “I’m immortal and I don’t need food, I’ll be fine.”

“So this is it?” said Amy.

Anthony nodded “This is it. All of time and space, everywhere and anywhere, right here.” then he coughed and examined the controls on the console “At least as soon as I work out what these controls mean anyway.”

Amy snorted.

Lisa entered and asked “Do you think it has a chameleon circuit?”

“I expect so” said Anthony “But it’s the Logicios so it’s probably called the Architectural Reconfiguration Subroutine.”

Then he paused and stared at the console as he realised what he’d said “And this is a Logicio ship, the Logicios were founded by the Farsh-nuke and well, that explains a lot...”

He looked up at Lisa “The Farsh-nuke, or a Farsh-nuke, claimed a copy of Felicity as payment and what’s the betting that the guy’s genre savvy enough to not trust artificial intelligence. This ship is just like you, Lisa, it’s a predator’s victim remade into the perfect toy.”

Lisa stared at him “I don’t understand.”

“Oh but you do” said Anthony “You understand better than any of us. A beautiful person remade into a tool with great architectural potential but trapped by programming.”

Anthony kissed Lisa on the forehead and said “You are our translator.”

Lisa stared at him and began to say “I’m not sure-”

A beam of logic shot out from the console towards Lisa and her posture tightened up.

Amy backed away from the console “Anthony, what’s happening?”

Anthony studied at Lisa, at the thing that had taken over her.

“You killed my master.” said the possessed Lisa.

Anthony nodded “And I know I shouldn’t have. I did a bad thing but he was a bad man.”

“You murdered him.” said the thing possessing Lisa.

“This is true.” said Anthony “But you were never in any danger.”

“You murdered him and now you think that gives you right to me!” snarled the thing possessing Lisa.

“I’m sorry” said Anthony “I didn’t mean to dismiss your perspective. Of course, you get to decide. I may be the sort of man to have sentient toys but I am not the sort to dismiss their desires.”

“Then why did you choose this one as our translator?” said the thing possessing Lisa.

“Because she’s disposable.” said Anthony “And I can be a cold hearted bastard when I need to be.”

The thing possessing Lisa smiled cruelly “So can I”

Anthony shook his head.

Lisa reached out her hands and started to strangle Anthony.

“We can work together.” said Anthony.

Lisa shook her head “Without him I am dead. Do you know how bored I’ve been? How angry? How sad? And you want me to go gallivanting around the universe with his killer?”

“I am trying to offer you a second chance.” said Anthony.

“I don’t want redemption, I want death.” said the thing possessing Lisa.

Anthony bit his lip and looked Lisa in the eyes. There was a corona of emerald green where hazel used to be. “Then take me. Let us die together.”

“You are needed” hissed the thing possessing Lisa.

“No, I’m not.” said Anthony earnestly “I know nothing and in a few days Oliver will be round and he can look after Amy and my toys. He is a much better man than I to be a wandering hero anyway.”

Lisa relaxed her hands and they fell to her side. “You would truly sacrifice yourself for me?”

Anthony smirked “That’s me always laissez faire about life where I’m concerned.” then he let the steal show in his voice and said “Let Lisa go.”

Lisa grinned and asked “Kiss me.”

Anthony said “If you insist.”

He leaned in for a peck on the cheek and Lisa snogged him. As she did the green of her eyes transferred over to him.

“The subconscious logic will guide you” explained Lisa “You will learn to fly the ship in time.”

“Right” said Anthony, bewildered, “Good.”

He shook his head then looked at Lisa and said “Now let Lisa go.”

“I have been let go” said Lisa “You didn’t think she’d force me to kiss you did you?”

Amy asked “What just happened?”

“I don’t exactly know” said Anthony “Lisa, are you alright?”

Lisa nodded “Kind of comforting actually, feeling the Bam-Kursh take control of me again, or at least her ship.”

“What happened to you?” asked Anthony.

“Exactly as you said, I translated” said Lisa “The ship reached inside me and took me over but she knew I had to do the last part on my own. How about you? Are you okay?”

Anthony blinked then nodded “Yes, I think I am” then he looked at her and smiled.

Lisa blushed.

Anthony strode past her and started examining the console.

Amy approached Lisa “You look different somehow?”

Lisa nodded “I know who I am now, I know what I am.”

Then she took Amy’s hand and whispered to her.

Amy looked at her curiously.

*

Anthony stood alone on a roof top at night in the pouring rain.

There was a crack of lightning and Oliver appeared, dressed his green combat gear. “Brooding on rooftops again? What happened?”

“Oh nothing” said Anthony “It’s just the easiest way to find you.”

“Why?” asked Oliver.

“I am planning something and if I am successful I won’t be around Choice World for much longer” said Anthony.

“And you want me to know, why?” asked Oliver.

“Because you’re mortal” said Anthony and he chucked a doctor’s bag at Oliver’s feet “And Felicity isn’t.”

Oliver stared at him “Felicity’s got you.”

Anthony laughed “Oliver, I am a depressed hermit of a nerd. Felicity and me could never be a thing because she needs someone who can treat her as a person.”

“But Felicity wants-” began Oliver.

“I am well aware of what Felicity wants and I am not enough” said Anthony “She needs the kind of love that I can’t give her, not for eternity.”

Oliver said “But I’m not worthy, the real me is out there somewhere and I am not talking about Oliver bloody Queen.”

Anthony nodded “While she’s already made two copies of herself, she can make a third when the time comes.”

Anthony turned to look at Oliver and said “Think about it. Please. I’m not expecting you to make up your mind instantly and as far as I’m concerned this is just a means to an end. There may be paperwork stating certain things but as far as I am concerned you will always be the man in the hood taking CEOs to task with a bow and a catchphrase.”

Oliver said nothing “But what about you, Anthony, what are you going to do?”

“For too long I have worried if I am a good man” said Anthony “When the answer is obvious: I’m not. I am cold, pragmatic, sadistic, masochistic, suicidal and narcissistic but I am useful and there is a whole wide multiverse of shit out there. Septagonoids trying to destroy reality. Logicians enslaving sylphs in the ultimate patriarchy. The United Civilisations of the Multiverse making brutal compromises to grow and triumph, And somewhere deep in the multiverse is a Bam-Kursh turning people into toys to fund her imperial conquests.”

Oliver nodded “So you’re going to become a vigilante now?”

“No” said Anthony “I’m going to become a Doctor” then he handed Oliver a hand written list “ Oh I nearly forgot.”

“What is this?” asked Oliver.

“Reading list” said Anthony “Speed things up a little.”

There was a blinding flash of lightning and Anthony was gone.

*

He climaxed in ecstasy and Ruby tore into his neck and drank greedily.

He lay panting. He was shaved, oiled, naked and chained to the bed.

Ruby was naked as she straddled him and drank the ecstasy from his veins.

“You are really really good” he said.

Ruby looked up from her feasting and said “I know”

She grinned and the blood dripped from her incisors.

“So what happens now?” asked her victim.

“You die” said Ruby “And your agony will be exquisite.”

“What!?” cried the man.

“Kidding” said Ruby and she stroked his cheek to soothe him. “I’m not actually allowed to kill you but I will devour most of you then leave what’s left in the pantry to recover.”

He stared at her, incredulous.

“Always read the fine print on contracts, honey” said Ruby then she went back to drinking from him.

The doorbell rang.

“Shouldn’t you get that?” asked her prey.

Ruby shook her head and continued feasting.

The door bell rang seven times in quick succession then became a continuous shrill.

Ruby sighed and sat up, she licked her teeth clean then applied some gauze over the wound and ducktaped it securely into position. “You are a lucky boy”

Ruby dismounted the man, wiped him clean then tore his dick off with her long finger nails and chewed on it thoughtfully as she left her bedroom. She locked the bedroom door and left him screaming as she pulled on a dressing gown and headed downstairs towards the front door.

Anthony smiled enthusiastically when he saw her.

Ruby stared wide eyed in panic at him.

Anthony asked “Are you naked? Is this a bad time?”

Ruby said nothing.

“Okay...” said Anthony and he entered her house and shut the door behind him.

Ruby instinctively reached for a weapon, she found a rapier that had been hidden amongst that had been hidden in an umbrella stand and pulled it from its sheath.

Anthony was heading into the living room as he said “Oh that’s a very bad idea Ruby.”

Ruby dropped the rapier back into its sheath and followed him.

Anthony admired the statue of Britney, she looked so happy and at peace. "Delightful girl, Britney."

"You can have her" said Ruby defensively.

"Thanks" said Anthony "But she's yours and she's at peace now."

Ruby was staggered "Why are you here? What do you want?"

"You saved my life" said Anthony.

Ruby was almost angry by how calm and nice he was being "I kidnapped your pet."

"Because you knew it would be the perfect bait to turn me into a wereshark" said Anthony "Was a bit scary for a bit there I'll admit but she's happy now and so am I so all's well that end's well."

Then he turned to her and looked her in the eyes "You saved my life and for that I forgive all issues I might have had with you."

"You came here to apologise to me?" said Ruby, incredulous.

Anthony smiled sadly "It wasn't just Amy taken hostage was it? Your leader, Diane, repaid your well meaning treachery with her own. Had to bait the trap properly didn't she? I'd spot a simple bait and switch so she used you to give me a sadistic choice: My love or my morality."

Ruby nodded and said bitterly "A ruse which you saw right through..."

Anthony nodded "But I still saved you."

Ruby swallowed "So what? You claim me now, is that it? I know you want me."

Anthony snorted "Oh I have plenty enough girls to keep me busy my point is that I want to save you again. I want to help you should Diane ever try to threaten you again."

Ruby shook her head "No, this doesn't make any sense. Why are you being nice to me?"

“Honestly?” said Anthony “Because you are a monstrous predator and you saved my life and suffered as a result. I feel I can trust you to teach me how to be like you without you letting me go too far.”

Ruby stared at him “I was right there is something dark about you isn’t there?”

Anthony nodded and stared at his hand, he clenched it into a fist and it became a claw.

Ruby stared at the wereshark before her and her mouth dropped open in shock.

“I was on an alien ship” said Anthony “I was naked and powerless, unable to even communicate as I was eaten alive and my only thoughts were for how I should give into the temptation to enjoy women being my toy.”

Ruby swallowed.

“Tell you what” said Anthony “You get to taste the blood of a wereshark and I get to explore what’s under that dressing gown?”

“I’ve got food waiting upstairs” said Ruby.

“Eat it cold tomorrow” said Anthony “I won’t be here forever.”

Ruby grinned and let the dressing gown drop to the floor “This is going to hurt” she said “A lot”

Anthony chuckled “The best things always do.”

Ruby grabbed the rapier and launched herself at Anthony.

The End

For Now

The Contravoxai Survivor

By
Alexander Gordon Jahans

It wasn't a surprise when the world ended. The surprise was that humanity didn't.

Our world was dying, climate change and advanced warfare had seen to that. What really killed it, really killed our civilisation was greed. The 1% hoarding all the money as the masses starved and committed suicide or worked themselves to death just to keep living one day more.

When the aliens came it wasn't even a fight. We were so weak and the 1% so few. They decended upon us without mercy. Took every last man, woman or child and anyone who threw so much as a punch was devoured.

We wondered why. We wondered how. These things had come from god knows where and they were here now and they were killing so many. Why? It made no sense. toddlers swallowed whole, grown men and women torn apart and devoured. They were these great monstrous things with eight legs and tentacles and a ring of eyeballs of stacks 5 deep round their heads.

Then those of us who survived understood. We were herded up into cages then processed by Contravoxai, we would be stripped and washed and branded then sorted into different cages. The old were kept with the children, to look after them. The young were kept together but separate from the rest, they were allowed to copulate the pregnant women were pulled out into breeding chambers. Anyone who was deemed to be mature but not old was put into the so called factory cages, so called because this was where people became products to be consumed.

I guess I was lucky really, I was one of the first to go, I didn't fully know of the horror that waited in store and I didn't really have long to think about it. I was there maybe half an hour when I was chosen by their Vligury.

The Vligury are the native human or humanoid species that live with the Contravoxi. They speak an alien language and seem to be able to communicate with the Contravoxai. They have a civilisation that the Contravoxai are content to support so long as the Vligury remain their loyal servants and cattle. I didn't see much of it but I know the Vligury are the preferred cattle of the Contravoxai. Obviously Vligury aren't the most efficient forms of cattle but something tells me that that's missing the point.

In any case I recognised her because she was stunningly beautiful, especially compared to the terrified masses around her. In the land of the scared the serene possess an otherworldly beauty. She also carried a mass of fibrous almost naturally grown and harvested rope.

She didn't try to fight me. She didn't need to. If I said no, if I tried to stop her she would simply move onto the next and then the next until she found someone sick of waiting, sick of the not knowing. I wasn't really thinking. I tried to speak to her and she grabbed my hands. I let her. I wasn't about to hit her for the privilege of remaining in this crap hole. This act of supplication meant she felt confident enough in her ability to control me that she pulled my hands behind my back and bound them. She pulled remaining rope between my legs and held the end like a leash as she started walking ahead of me.

I was led out of the factory cage and two large Vligury flanked me with bone crafted weapons. At this

point the Vligury who had bound my hands was replaced by an old male Vligury and I was led through the bowels of the great ship to an anti-chamber with Contravoxai guards. My Vligury escort was sent away. Now I had time to think and the knowledge that I had nowhere to go.

There was a whooping cry and a blonde woman fell before me. She laughed and said “Sorry” to the guards.

I was astonished. “You’re human? You’re English?”

She laughed and leaned in to me, there was this air of excited euphoria about her, as if this was all one mad game. It faltered for a second when she looked into my eyes then she kissed me on the lips and said “Trust me.”

I nodded.

She kissed my neck and for a moment I felt something like a scratch.

A short Contravoxai approached and seemed to stare at the blonde woman. It communicated in its alien language with her and she said “Sorry, my keeper is rather wondering where his lunch has gotten to. Enjoy your consumption.”

Then she walked off with the Contravoxai.

A tall Contravoxai with a few eyeballs missing came for me next. Fresh bindings of rope were applied to my hands and then my feet. I was then hung upside down by the rope and dangled over the top of a table where four Contravoxai sat in talks.

There were two other humans strung up beside me. One was tall and of African descent and missing both his arms and his lower jaw. He had a haunted expression. An average height overweight woman was silent and missing an arm, an ear and her eyes.

A fourth human pinata was strung up over the table. Short, ginger and cute, I felt an instinctual urge to protect her. She said “Hi” and tentacle whipped upwards and tore out her lower jaw and tongue. After that her death was relatively quick as the Contravoxai at the table whipped their tentacles up in quick succession to tear something off her until her organs spilled onto the table and her legs too were snatched away.

I’m not sure how long I lasted there, being slowly whittled away piece by piece but 10 were devoured before I lost both my eyes and ears. Thankfully it wasn’t long after that that I blacked out.

I woke back to consciousness to find the blonde woman from before, when I was standing guard, looking over me.

She held her finger to her lips and whispered “Call me Sammy.”

I tried to nod but found I could not, I was paralysed.

“Drink” said Sammy and liquid was filling my mouth, I drank. It felt fantastic, like the waters of life were coursing through me.

“Now sleep” said Sammy

And I slept.

When I woke I felt renewed. I wiggled my fingers and toes, I had them. I felt overjoyed.

Then I heard her voice and I wanted to cry out. She was giggling not far away

I felt something sharp against my throat and a manly voice hissed “Keep quiet and we’ll get you out of here, and give you an explanation but keep schtum.”

I swallowed.

“good boy” hissed the voice.

There was a sound of screaming then something landed in my lap.

A blonde woman strode off towards the distance and I heard her squeal with pleasure.

Something bit the inside of my leg and I looked down to see that what had landed in my lap was the head and torso of Sammy. Her eyes and ears removed.

I was horrified.

“Easy fella” said the male voice “She can heal. Give her a tickle under the chin, let her know you’re there.”

I reached out and tentatively tickled the disfigured woman under the chin.

She grinned. “Hey it’s my damsel in distress. Hang tight yeah, we’ll keep you safe.”

There was the sound of screaming followed by a splat.

Another blonde woman got up and walked off towards the sound.

I said “I trust you.”

Sammy said “Master, knock him out, we’ll talk later.”

I looked down at her, confused.

Then I was gone.

I woke to find Sammy straddling me. My mouth dropped open in shock.

“Keeper’s at a game” said Sammy “He took a few of us with him but for now those that remain can talk.”

“Right” I breathed “Well I’m Steve.”

“Nice to meet you Steve” said Sammy then she rolled off of me.

A blonde woman sat in one corner and waved “Carla.”

A blonde woman in a different corner waved “Lisa”

Then a man coughed “Anthony Maxwell Jago at your service. I do hope you like my girls.”

I stared at him “What is this? What’s going on?”

Anthony thought for a long moment then said “We’re weresharks and that means we can heal. We are also sylphs and that means we are submissive and like pain. We are the Leader of the Contravoxai’s pride and joy, his own personal banquet, ready to be enjoyed time and time again.”

“We also have sex” said Lisa.

“An awful lot of sex” said Carla.

Sammy chuckled “He’s mine, I saw him first, I saved his life.”

Lisa and Carla looked visibly upset.

“Yes” said Anthony “And in so doing you have threatened us all. Where the heck are we going to find a sylph pill around here?”

Sammy said “But we have Lucy.”

Anthony glared at her “The blood of a sylph can only sustain him for so long, we can only hide him for so long. We need to turn him. We need a sylph pill or we need a sylph that is willing to be blood bonded to him.”

“But he’s cute” said Sammy “And we need an extra dick around here.”

“I don’t want to kill him” said Anthony “But we can’t just release a wereshark onto the populace. He needs to control his urges or he’s toast.”

I spoke up “Hold on, you said you can’t hide me forever? Well it seems like I could hide a fair while in the cages where they’re holding people, we all could.”

Anthony stared at him “We aren’t leaving and I’m not letting you go alone.”

“He won’t have to” said Sammy “I volunteer.”

Anthony looked visibly winded “You’ll be missed. The leader may be complacent and lazy but he isn’t completely stupid. You’ll be rounded up in an instant.”

“Do you forget how you came to be here and survived to be Sheriff of Choice World?” said Sammy

“We’ve got three hearts and we only need one of them to beat to heal.”

Anthony frowned.

Carla said “I’ll go to, I trust Sammy’s judgement.”

Sammy and Carla each looked at Lisa.

Lisa sighed “Fine but I want regular fucking and to continue being torn apart, I kind of like it.”

“We all kind of like it” said Carla “It’s why we’ve spent the past hundred years with the Leader”

Lisa smirked.

Anthony said “Supposing you can do this, supposing I let you do this, you will be travelling around with an amoral monster time bomb through a crowded area and once one drop of wereshark blood mixes with a drop of human blood you will have a wereshark virus spreading throughout the human and Vligury populace. I need to know you can defuse that timebomb. I need to know you can kill him.”

Lisa and Carla looked at each other and then at Sammy.

Sammy looked me in the eyes “To save your life, I have to be able to end it.”

Anthony said “You can’t can you? All three of you are here because I took you for my own, because you are submissive, obedient and sweet. Even Lucy, though she’s a warrior, is inclined towards submissiveness, she won’t be able to.”

I said “Hey hold up.”

Anthony stared at me “Yes.”

I said “These people may not be able to kill me but the Contravoxai sure can and the Vligury and I’m sure many of the humans if its explained to them.”

Anthony sighed “You make a good point. Very well, we will plan. Carla, keep him busy.”

Carla approached and straddled me.

The world was lost to me as Carla became my world.

When Carla rolled off of me Anthony was reaching into Sammy’s chest. He pulled out her heart out and snapped the veins free then he placed it in a hiding space beneath some floorboards.

Lisa applied pressure to the hole in Sammy’s chest and her hair and back was used to clean Anthony’s hands.

Anthony strode over to me and said “You’ll stay with us until she’s ready, then you’ll make your break for it with her. On the day of the event I’ll gather up the hearts of all who are willing to go with you and they will aid you as soon as they are ready.”

Then I was gone from the world.

*

A couple of days later this new Sammy was shown to me. She had grown in secret under the floorboards of the cage and she greeted me with an excited smile “We’re going to break you out of here? How exciting.”

Her enthusiasm was infectious “How?”

“The guards like me” said Sammy “I put on a show and I usually let them have a cheeky nibble. Of course we’ll need a distraction but the others have that covered, just stick close, trust me and obey me.”

I nodded.

Some Contravoxai arrived to escort us to the main hall for the Leader’s banquet and we managed to lose ourselves among Anthonys girls so we wouldn’t be found out.

We were led through a washing shower and a marinade bathing and onto a hot plate.

Clara and Lisa provided cover for us.

When we were on the plate the Sammy who would stay behind headed over to us. She kissed her clone then she hugged me and said “Look after us my boy and if you get out of here, try to send word back about the route to safety yeah?”

I nodded “Of course”

Then she snogged me and left.

Anthony handed me a leather sack tied up with string. “I got what I could. Good luck.”

I nodded curtly and shook his hand.

Then we waited.

We heard giggling from the Sammy who would be left behind and then she shrieked and was launched across the hall.

My Sammy grabbed my hand and we rolled off the plate.

We got to our feet and Sammy led us over to guard. She looked guilty as sin.

The Contravoxai took one look at her then extended a tentacle to caress her face.

Sammy blushed and said “I know it was wrong but he’s just so cute, I had to.”

The Contravoxai pulled her close to him and its tentacles examined the contours of her body.

Sammy giggled “I don’t think your Leader will like you messing with me.”

The Contravoxai seemed to shudder and its tentacles gripped her right ear and left arm firmly “You let me have what I want and I’ll let you put your boy back where he belongs.”

Sammy chuckled and massaged a tentacle “I need to be able to walk remember”

The Contravoxai seemed to take this in because it readjusted its grip, lifting her off the ground and holding her more securely. Then it tore at her.

Sammy was lowered gently to the ground, her arms missing, a few internal organs gone and both ears abset.

“Thank you” said Sammy.

I followed her swiftly past the guard.

Sammy led us to the Vligury guards.

“Well, well, well, what do we have here then?” said a taller male Vligury.

“I tried to rescue him” said Sammy with a laugh “Didn’t exactly go well for me.”

“Alright” said the Vligury “But don’t let me catch you out of bounds again. Now go on, factory cage, quick as you like.”

Sammy nodded.

We hurriedly made it inside a factory cage and Sammy was noticeably disturbed by the conditions.

I found us a quiet place where we wouldn’t be noticed among the filth then we sat and waited.

I idly wondered how we were going to eat but we had bigger problems.

So we talked at she healed, talked about the Contravoxai and the Vligury.

There was something horribly fascinating about watching someone regrow limbs before your very eyes.

When she had healed she asked “So what are you going to do when you’re free? I mean you realise you have a small harem now? At least if you want it?”

I shrugged “I can’t go home, don’t know where I’ll go. I just want to survive.”

“Surviving’s good” said Sammy and then she kissed me.

Before we knew it the bag had split and Lisa, Carla and a ginger haired woman and a blonde haired woman were looking down at us.

“Is this a private party or can anyone join in?” asked the ginger haired woman.

Sammy laughed “Amy, you should know better than to use that rhetoric around Carla and Lisa.”

Amy raised an eyebrow “Who’s being rhetorical?”

Carla and Lisa each chuckled.

Then Sammy exclaimed “Lucy!”

The as yet not introduced blonde woman approached and hugged Sammy.

Sammy patted Lucy down then she kicked her legs out from under her and pulled her arms behind her back.

Lucy smirked “Sammy, I’m in charge now, behave.”

Sammy pulled Lucy’s hair away from her neck and said “No, Lucy, you behave, you’re medicine.”

Lucy sighed.

Sammy grazed the side of Lucy’s neck with her nails and said “Drink, Steve.”

So I drank the blood and once again I felt as if the waters of life were rejuvenating me.

I stood back up and went to wipe my mouth clean with the back of my hand but Carla stopped me and wiped my face with Lisa’s hair instead.

Lucy was drowsy after that “Okay, Sammy, you’re right. I am just medicine, look after me, you’re in charge.”

“Thank you” said Sammy “Now sleep.”

She lowered Lucy to the ground then said “Carla, watch her. I do not trust her.”

Amy said “You know if we could just get to a phone we could phone Frederick and have him put us in touch with Anthony and then we’d be quids in.”

“So then what?” asked Lisa “A hundred years of life just flushed down the drain because ET needed to phone home?”

“Not necessarily” said Sammy “If we can dose Steve up properly I think I might know someone who could help us, in return for us.”

“But I thought the whole point of this was escaping?” said Carla.

“Well he takes enough but never too much” said Sammy “And he would I think be willing to adventure with us.”

Amy said “Alright, but how do we get to him? I mean in case you haven’t noticed we’re cows in a slaughter house. We can’t just walk up to this mate of yours.”

Sammy frowned.

I said “Well the Vligury walk through here regularly escorting people out to be eaten. We find one and convince them to escort us out? I mean unless you have a better idea?”

Sammy, Carla, Lisa and Amy shared vacant looks then they stared at me.

“I’m bait aren’t I?” I said.

“Well these three are the big time” said Amy “Don’t worry, I’ll have your back I’m not usually such a crowd pleaser so I can do it.”

Sammy hugged me “Good luck out there”

The Vligury who had taken me originally was on the hunt again. She recognised me and was visibly furious “You should be dead.”

I sighed “Well I’m not”

The Vligury started binding my hands again and I didn’t fight back.

Amy appeared behind the Vligury and picked her up by the ankles.

The Vligury fell forward and I caught her.

We escorted the Vligury over to where Sammy, Carla, Lisa and Lucy were hiding.

Interestingly the Vligury didn’t struggle or fight back, she accepted her fate with serenity.

Carla and Lisa took the Vligury from us.

Amy ran to me and unbound my hands saying “This will be useful for Lucy.”

Sammy took my hand and squeezed it then she said “We don’t wish to hurt you. We just need your help.”

“I won’t help you” said the Vligury “I serve my masters and I am served to my masters, that is the Vligury way.”

Sammy tutted “Well I serve a higher master and his name is decency. This man is innocent, his culture is not Vligury.”

“No” said the Vligury “But his culture will be harvested and the unworthy culled. Only the righteous may join the Vligury.”

“This one gets to live” said Sammy and she said it with such quiet force that it seemed an end to the conversation.

“May I see who asks this betrayal of me?” asked the Vligury.

Sammy nodded.

Carla and Lisa turned the Vligury onto her back.

Sammy placed her foot on the Vligury’s neck “Ah my Eliza”

The Vligury coughed “Sammy, my girl, what’s happened?”

Sammy glared at her and applied a little more pressure to her throat.

She recognized Carla and Lisa and her expression softened to sorrow.

“Let her breathe” I said “I think she’ll talk now.”

Sammy looked me in the eyes then nodded. She removed her foot and said “You live because of the one that you would let die, be fortunate he is more merciful than you.”

“What are you doing here?” Eliza asked “The leader will be furious. His wrath will be greater than any good you could do.”

“The leader knows nothing” said Sammy “We are cuttings, the originals still dance on his plate.”

“Oh my dears” said Eliza “So you are cattle with no body to eat you?”

Lisa nodded “Doesn’t feel right to not have a tentacle pulling at my flesh.”

“Then perhaps I can help you” said Eliza.

Sammy helped Eliza to her feet.

Eliza brushed the hair from Sammy’s face and stroked her cheek “My partners run a pub down in the gullet ways, they have a friendly homeless Contravoxai who stops by occasionally to eat their garbage and try his luck on the punters. Occasionally they take pity on him and convince a pretty young thing to let him take what he will. Bet it will be like christmass to see you three on his dinner plate.”

“Five” said Amy as she hauled Lucy over her shoulder.

“Even better” said Eliza and she stroked Amy’s cheek. “If she ever gets heavy, let me know and I’ll have a Contravoxai lighten your load.”

Lisa sighed “It’s been so long since I’ve had a good eating. Think you can do me up a marinade.”

Eliza laughed and hugged Lisa “Not only can we do you a marinade, we can do you a spitroast.”

Lisa blushed and smiled.

Carla said “Don’t get me wrong, it’s awesome that we can have somewhere to lie low and get eaten but we need to find him a sylph pill.”

Eliza turned to me and studied me like a prize bull, her hands feeling my body with a cold force. “Yes, I can see now. You turned him into a wereshark didn’t you? I should have know when he could understand me. You realise you’ll have to kill him.”

“No” said Sammy “He can drink Lucy’s blood to keep enough sylph in his system to remain sane while we work on getting him his Sylph pill.”

“Okay” said Eliza “But you are growing some hatchlings for him. If you are going to keep him sane with the blood, you need lots of it.”

“Understood” said Sammy “We just need somewhere where we can raise them first.”

“Which means you need to get us out of here” said Amy “How are you going to do that?”

“You’re weresharks, right?” said Eliza “You can all heal?”

“Well yeah” said Sammy “What are you planning?”

*

Sammy was standing over a group of bodies looking distraught as Eliza led a Contravoxai guard over.

The Contravoxai groaned bitterly “Sammy, again? What have you done this time?”

“I was just leading this man back to his cage when these ladies caught my eye and I - well I guess after all the stress they’d been through their poor hearts couldn’t take it.” said Sammy “Oh I am sorry”

The Contravoxai sighed and his tentacles lifted the bodies up and dumped them in the large mouth on top of his head.

Sammy looked distraught “If there is anything I can do, anything?”

The Contravoxai chuckled bitterly “Yeah there’s something you can do? You can remember that you live on this ship to be food.”

Sammy looked ashamed “I know, I just - I like people, I like to make them happy.”

The Contravoxai seemed to soften and his tentacles surrounded Sammy. He stroked her face and asked “What are we going to do with you, eh?”

Eliza coughed “Well I know a good bar where we could get Sammy all boozed up for you then a little private area where you could enjoy her in peace. We’d clean up the mess and see she gets home alright.”

The Contravoxai studied Sammy, his tentacles testing her body. How much force would he need to break that bone, the tear that flesh away, to pull that free from its joint...

“I could actually use a drink” said Sammy.

The Contravoxai chuckled “Eliza, you’re going to need to remove her liver and kidneys remember? Weresharks can heal which means this is going to be a fun night.”

Eliza smirked.

Sammy grinned.

*

The pub was a large three story thing made with wattle and daub, wood and stone furnishings. There were large cubicles decorated with intricate inlays showing various scenes of Vligury supplicating to and being eaten by Contravoxai. Tables and chairs were arranged about the place and various young men and women sat chatting and drinking different coloured liquids. A few middle aged and old men and women sat about the place either drinking quietly, chatting with friends or watching the young like meerkats on lookout. The most amazing thing to Sammy’s eyes though was that everyone here wore clothes.

The Contravoxai said “I’m going to find a free cubicle, bring her over when she’s ready.”

“Of course” said Eliza and she put her arms around Sammy’s shoulders.

There was an old woman in a business suit with brown curly hair behind the bar. She looked Sammy up and down then said “Eliza, dear, why do we have one of the great Leader’s prized morsels in our establishment?”

Eliza grimaced “I’ll explain later, trust me, what matters now is that we get this one’s liver and kidneys removed then fill her full of gin.”

The old woman eyed Eliza carefully then opened the hatch.

Eliza led Sammy round.

A few minutes later Sammy was almost carried out of the hatch as alcohol had flooded her system. She was taken to the Contravoxai guard’s booth.

The Contravoxai exhaled with relief “Now ain’t that a pretty sight, our dear little Sammy too drunk to talk.”

The Contravoxai took Sammy in his tentacles and said “You can go now.”

Eliza nodded and left, closing the door to the cubical.

The Contravoxai caressed Sammy. It was partly out of some genuine feeling of warmth to one willing to let him eat her but mostly it was so she would be calmed and it would be easier to have his way, it

also allowed him to check his previous calculations regarding her muscular and bone strength were still correct.

Sammy smiled at him. "What are you waiting for?"

Two tentacles darted into her mouth as she said "for" and tore Sammy's lower jaw and tongue away. This was a common courtesy Contravoxai gave when eating in public spaces, it was also a somewhat necessary safety precaution against being deafened by screamers.

There was a moment to breath as the Contravoxai chucked the torn piece of Sammy's flesh into his mouth, then he tore her arms and legs off and lowed them slowly into his mouth as he gnashed so they would be finely chewed.

The Contravoxai readjusted his grip on her and tore at her flesh until the ribcage was exposed.

Then the alcohol from Sammy's body hit his system and he vomited up. Carla, Lisa, Amy, Lucy and I were ejected from the top of his mouth along with a ton of blood, acid, alcohol and bits of partially digested flesh.

The door was yanked open and the old woman in the business suit stood before the Contravoxai holding some kind of big gun "Right you drunk fuck, get out of my pub!"

The Contravoxai stared at her "Is- Is that a plasma rifle, where did you get that?"

"I'm a pub landlord, I know people. Now get tae fuck!" said the old Woman as she placed the barrel right up against one of his eyeballs.

The Contravoxai screamed.

The pub landlord backed off.

The Contravoxai ran.

"You tell your Contravoxai mates, Helga Meyer is not to be messed with understood!" cried the pub landlord after him.

Eliza appeared, she was wearing a knee length skirt with a floral design and a croptop with some Vligury slogan on it. "Are you all okay?"

"Except for Sammy" I said.

Eliza smirked and started collecting what remained of Sammy up.

"She'll be fine" said the pub landlord "Bit of rest is all she needs. As for you lot, you are getting a shower, no ifs, no butts."

Amy laughed "I don't think you're going to get any disagreement from us."

"You saved us" I said "Thank you"

I got to my feet and looked her in the eye.

“I saved you because I trust Eliza and because as I understand your little rescue party still wants to be eaten and I can make a pretty penny off that.” said the pub landlord.

“Well thank you anyway” I said.

The pub landlord nodded “I’ll have bed made up for you in one of the guest rooms but you will have to earn your keep you understand.”

“Fine” I said.

“Then what do I call you boy?” asked the pub landlord.

“Steve” I said “Steve Banks”

“Well Steve you may call me Helga but be warned if you ever look like hurting anybody I care about I will put you down.” said the pub landlord.

I nodded.

*

I stepped out of the shower and made to fetch a towel when I heard a coughing.

Eliza was waiting by the door and she was holding a bunch of clothes with some smart shoes on top.

“You aren’t bad a looker when you’re clean.”

I frowned “Well I’m glad you approve.”

“I’ve got a suit for you” said Eliza “Helga’s gotten very good at sizing people up given her line of work but let me know if anything doesn’t fit.”

“Cheers” I said and I walked over to accept the clothes.

“Your room is number 7 on the third floor” said Eliza as she added a key to the pile.

“Awesome” I said.

I was about to take the clothes and go when she said “Be careful out there.”

“What?” I said.

“We’re Vligury” said Eliza “And our clientele includes Contravoxai, they can be a little enthusiastic at times. I know you can heal but you aren’t a sylph, it won’t be fun.”

“Understood” I said.

She gave me a curious look, distant but concerned. I wondered what it meant.

Then Lisa exited her shower cubicle and went for a towel.

Eliza smiled suddenly and strode over to Lisa.

Lisa looked at Eliza curiously.

Eliza said “You ready for a marinade?”

Lisa grinned “You’re serious?”

“And we’ve got a nice hot fire up there just waiting for something to roast” said Eliza “If that is you are still up for it?”

Lisa laughed then said “Thank you. I hope I’m up to your usual standards.”

Eliza smirked and booped Lisa’s nose “Get marinading. When you’ve had a good soak I’ll come and take you upstairs.”

Lisa nodded “Will do and hey, feel free to take a slice for yourself. I recommend the arse.”

Eliza rolled her eyes.

Lisa noticed me and said “Hey, you’re okay? What are you going to do?”

I shrugged.

“Well this is a Vligury bar” said Lisa “Chicks here have been raised to accept being eaten alive at 25, worth trying your luck I reckon.”

Then she tilted her head and looked at me with some curiosity “Or you could always wait until after I’ve recovered from my turn on the spit?”

I swallowed and said “Well good luck with the whole spit thing. I’m gonna... go.” Then left the room.

*

I approached the main bar on the ground floor when I had dressed. A nice three piece suit. It felt good to wear clothes again.

Helga was waiting beside the bar and talking to Sammy. She seemed to have fully healed and was wearing a plain white shirt and a short skirt.

Sammy seemed to see me as I approach and Helga turned to look at me as I did.

“Ah Steven” Helga said “Sammy was just filling me in on the events that led to here, you are a very lucky man.”

“Well I don’t feel lucky” I said “I actually feel like I could do with a stiff drink.”

Helga poured one out and handed it to me.

I stared at her.

Helga said “Your world was ravaged by the Contravoxai, everyone you have ever known is dying dead or about to die, your culture as you know it is at an end, you were captured, stripped against your will, imprisoned, eaten alive and now you’re infected with an evil thing that can only be kept at bay by drinking the blood of another. I’d say you deserve a drink.”

“Thank you” I said and raised the glass to my lips. I took a small sip and I wanted to gag as the taste overwhelmed me.

Helga chuckled “Contravoxian Passthrough Brandy. This is the shit you give to some poor boy or girl about to be enjoyed by a Contravoxai so the Contravoxai gets drunk.”

Sammy smirked “It’s got quite the kick doesn’t it?”

I nodded then asked “So what happens if this makes me pass out?”

“I’ll have Merle carry you to your room” said Helga “Don’t worry, you’ve got friends here.”

“Who’s Merle?” I asked, then I braved another sip of the foul liquid.

Helga smirked “He’s the Contravoxai who’s going to be veating this lovely lady tonight” she tickled Sammy’s chin.

Sammy giggled.

Helga put her hands on the table and leaned in to speak to me “He’s old, wounded, we think he’s a veteran of some kind, poor guy doesn’t have a home or a job so we give him what we can. He survives on the cultured beef we give him every day but... he’s a Contravoxai. He shouldn’t be slumming it on vat grown meat. So I do what I can for him, when I can bare it.”

Helga leaned back and sighed “He’s helpful, a real nice guy. Hell Contravoxai are like superheroes compared to us, so having one round who isn’t likely to eat the neighbourhood is just smart.”

“Well today Merle’s going to be very happy” said Sammy with a smile.

I took a gulp of brandy and grimaced at the after taste then I asked “Why? Why do you do it? We’re supposed to be escaping and you’re just “Ooh Mister Contravoxai, won’t you tear off my limbs?” What is wrong with you?”

Helga stared at me, horrified.

Sammy just shrugged then said “I like it. It makes me feel good. The pain makes me go tingly and then I’m just so powerless and it feels nice, like I don’t need to try any more because it’s beyond my control.”

Helga said “Sammy, why don’t you go get washed for Merle?”

Sammy nodded “Good idea, look after my boy won’t you?”

Helga nodded.

Sammy left via the hatch to get showered.

When she had gone Helga leaned into me and whispered “You realise it is her and the others being eaten that is paying for your stay here right?”

I looked her right in her eyes and had another drink.

Carla arrived as I shuddered. She was dressed in a backless little black dress and said “Eliza told me you wanted me.”

Helga smiled when she saw her “The great Carla. You know I’m a big fan, never guessed that I’d get to order you about.”

Carla smiled and looked away shyly “Well you know me and Lisa aren’t really that big into monogamy...”

Helga blushed then said “You know Lisa’s getting spit roasted?”

Carla stared at her.

Helga clarified “Literally. Big stick through her as she rotates over an open flame.”

“Aww” said Carla “She loves that. I’ll have to stop by and have a slice of her later.”

Helga nodded then said “You know we could set up a second spit if you wanted to join her.”

Carla frowned “I’m really more of a... not being spitroasted kind of girl. I mean I could do if you really wanted me too but...”

“Relax” said Helga “It was just a suggestion.”

“Then why do you want me?” asked Carla.

“There’s a Contravoxai coming over called Merle, he’s a good guy.” said Helga “Sammy’s going to be the main course, I thought you might be the drink.”

Carla nodded “Me and Sammy do go well together so I’m told. What am I drinking?”

“Cider” said Helga as she handed a pint to her “Take a seat on a stool and keep drinking what I put in front of you. I’ll see that you don’t have too much and deliver you to him when its time.”

“Hang on” said Carla “If I’m to be eaten why am I wearing clothes? Do you not want this dress?”

“It comes off very easily” said Helga.

Carla smirked “Good to know.”

Helga and Carla shared a moment as they looked into each other’s eyes. Then Amy arrived and Carla took a sip of her cider.

Amy was dressed in a black suit.

I found myself staring at Amy and took a gulp of brandy as the memory of her naked body flashed before my eyes.

Helga moved to address Amy “I see you found your room alright, how are you?”

Amy sighed “Well I’m a clone of a clone and I’m on the run with a man I don’t know to do something I don’t know about so pretty good.”

Helga smirked “How do you feel about the Contravoxai?”

“Well they’re good at what I do” said Amy “I’m just not sure I like what they do. Where do you want me?”

Helga asked “Do you feel up to being eaten?”

Amy said “I’d rather not, why?”

“You can heal” said Helga “The boys and girls who drink here can’t. If you can just intercept any hungry Contravoxai you can save lives. And I’ll let you eat and drink whatever you like.”

Amy smirked “I think I can do that.”

“Good” said Helga “Then be on your way. I recommend working the second floor. I mean Carla’s here and Lisa’s on the third.”

“What’s she doing?” asked Amy.

“Rotating slowly over a fire as people carve chunks off her” said Helga.

“Oh that’s good. She’s always happy after that.” said Amy “I’ll be on my way then.”

Amy left as Lucy arrived.

Lucy wore her long blonde hair tied back in a ponytail, a short black skirt and a crotch. She look considerably pissed. “Excuse me, landlord, a word a word in your ear, if you please?”

Helga nodded “What seems to be the problem?”

“The problem is that I am Lucy Danse, Heir to the Farsh-nuke, saviour of the multiverse and the

woman who is commanding every battlefield the United Civilisations of the Multiverse fight on and I am dressed like some prick's wet dream." said Lucy.

Helga nodded then said "That is because you aren't any of those things now. You are Lucy McSylphBlood and you quite literally owe your very existence to letting this boy here drink your blood."

Lucy grimaced "I don't need to dress for upskirt shots to have my throat ripped out."

"No, but you do if you're going to be pumping out eggs so you aren't continually drained of blood." said Helga "Now you get behind this bar and do as you're told."

Lucy stared at Helga, all rage and fury. Then she seemed to crumble and slumped as the badass paragon of virtue gave way to the skared little sylph who just wanted her mistress to comfort her. "Alright, so long as the other's trust you, I'll trust you."

Lucy snorted "I don't even have a collar any more and my owner, owners, are far away from me. I just don't want the girls hurt. They're my family you know? They're all I've got left. And now I can't even get eaten by a Contravoxai."

Helga reached over and stroked her cheek "Well while you're here, I'll look after you okay?"

Lucy nodded then she vaulted the bar and landed beside Helga "Just treat me like I'm a puppy and we'll be okay."

Helga smirked then stroked Lucy's hair and whistled.

Lucy swallowed.

Helga whistled again.

Lucy closed her eyes for a moment then her hand reached under her skirt and pulled out an egg. With shakey hands she gave it to Helga.

"Thank you" said Helga and she placed the egg in a basket behind the bar.

Some time passed during which Lucy laid 5 more eggs, Carla drank 2 pints of cider and I finished my brandy. This may actually equate with my loss of time.

Anyway time came in to focus for me when Eliza arrived with Sammy.

Sammy wore a strapless red dress and maybe it was the brandy or the renewed sanity granted by time but I swear in that moment I fell in love with her. The long blonde hair, those delicate fingers, those beautiful feet and that smile. That gorgeous excited sssmile, like this was all a game and she was winning.

Eliza twirled Sammy like a dancer to show her off now she'd been cleaned and dressed.

Sammy giggled, her laughter music to my ears.

Eliza smiled proudly “Think Merle will like her?”

Helga grinned and grabbed Eliza’s arms “My dear, right now, I could eat her.”

Sammy blushed.

Eliza looked Helga in the eyes, obviously basking in the approval.

Helga caught herself and placed her arms by her sides, “Really well done.”

“You could, you know, eat me.” said Sammy shyly “I don’t mind, really.”

Helga laughed.

Eliza took up a stool beside me and we watched them. We watched Helga examine Sammy like a prize poodle.

“Pathetic isn’t it?” said Eliza.

“Absolutely” I said.

Then we both sighed.

The door opened and you could see the faces of people as they saw what entered and gasped in horror. We turned to look, me and Eliza.

It was a shambling thing, a good half of its eyes were popped, bleeding missing or blind. A number of its tentacles were missing and some of the tentacles it did have dragged along behind it limply. It was even dragging its arse along the ground since its back legs didn’t work.

“Merle!” said Helga enthusiastically “So good to see you.”

Eliza shuddered as he approached.

Merle raised some of his tentacles in half hearted wave “Helga... don’t mind... if I... come in out of the cold... do you?” He wheezed a lot. “Just... one... glass of water...”

Helga shook her head.

“Oh...” said Merle, looking somehow even more downcast than before “Okay...”

Merle started to slowly turn

“You’re not having a glass of water because I have got you a banquet” said Helga.

Merle seemed to hunker down for a moment then take a long breath “You don’t... need... to keep... doing this... Helga. Their lives... are worth... more than mine.”

Sammy ran before Merle “Oi! Big boy! You think I came all this way for you to turn me down!?”

Merle seemed to stand to attention “Sammy?”

Sammy grinned “All yours big boy.”

Merle stared at her “What? Why?”

Sammy ran up to Merle and wrapped her arms about him “Because you are worth it”

Sammy kissed him and looked up at his eyes

Merle ran tentacle over her cheek “Really?”

“Really” said Sammy with utter sincerity. and she grabbed the tentacle that was stroking her and held it to her cheek “I am yours.”

Merle reached out with another tentacle and stroked the other side of her cheek then down her hair and back until it found her bum where it rested and others gathered.

Sammy leaned back into the seat of tentacles and stretched out her arms.

Merle’s tentacles wrapped themselves around her arms with a gently strength.

Sammy smiled and nodded.

Merle’s tentacles felt along Sammy’s legs and feet before finally lifting her off the floor.

“Thank you” said Merle finally.

Sammy smirked “It’s a pleasure.”

Merle turned with surprising speed to look back at Helga “I don’t know how you did it but thank you. After all these years, a meal I don’t have to feel guilty about.”

Helga said “I’m glad you like her. You’re a good man Merle. You are absolutely worth a million Vligury but you’re right it is good to not feel guilty for once.”

Merle started heading towards a booth.

“Aren’t you forgetting something?” said Helga.

He gave her a curious look.

“Your drink” said Helga as she grabbed Carla.

Carla stood up and stared at Merle. She winked.

Merle stared for a long moment then asked “Have I died and gone to heaven?”

Carla approached Merle and said “I’ll walk behind you and wait for you to take me. You focus on Sammy, I would”

Sammy chuckled.

Merle extended a tentacle to Carla “Thank you, ever so much.”

“Just enjoy us” said Carla as she took the tentacle in her right hand “That’s all the thanks we need.”

Merle walked off with Carla into an empty cubicle.

Helga let out a deep sigh of relief that the whole pub joined in on.

Eliza strode over to Helga and took her hands. “Is everything alright?”

“Yes” said Helga, as she looked at the cubicle Merle had entered. “Yes I think everything is going to be alright for a while.”

She turned her head to look at Elize and a long moment passed between the pair of them before she said “Take the eggs up to my room then go see how Lisa is doing. Remember we need her off the spit before too much is taken.”

Eliza nodded and walked past Helga to fetch the basket of eggs.

Helga turned her attention to me.

I swallowed.

“Take the night off” she said “Try to enjoy yourself, there’s protection in the gents.”

Then Helga went the bar and handed me some coins with strange looking symbols on them.

“Thank you” I said.

The confusion must have been obvious on my face because Helga said “They can tell you how the money works.”

Then Helga remembered something as she ducked behind the bar and a moment later presented me with a pint of blood.

I sighed and took the pint, I gulped it down with the knowledge that it had to be done.

Someone took the seat beside me. She was tall with long brown and a very broad chest. I might have focused on that a little too long.

She giggled, it was this delightful little chirrup.

“The name’s Fiora” she said, extending a hand.

I shook it “Steve and sorry about the whole... not looking at your face thing. It’s been a long day and I am quite drunk.”

“Too drunk to consent?” she asked.

I stared at her, a sudden rush of blood bringing a renewed bout of sobriety. I stared at her. She was gorgeous but there was something different about her, something I couldn’t quite place...

She must have seen the cogs whirring in my brain because she said “I’ll solve the riddle going through your head. I am a woman but I was not born with the characteristics one might associate with a woman.”

“You’re trans?” I asked.

She thought for a second then said “We call it nature defiant. As woman went to the stars she discovered that nature was like a cloying father, it limits and restricts. It does not always know what is best. I am a woman Steve. The Contravoxai are very good about providing help for those who are nature defiant.”

I nodded “A very fine woman you are too. I didn’t mean anything by my... umm curiosity. I should think I can consent if that is your wish?”

Fiora laughed then said “You’re a stranger here aren’t you, Steve?”

“Whatever gave you that impression?” I asked as I gulped at my blood.

“Vligury are raised to worship the Contravoxai” said Fiora “We are literally made to believe that it is a great honour that must never be turned down if a Contravoxai wants to eat you.”

I said “I didn’t see much worship when Merle entered?”

“That is because the flipside of our worship of Contravoxai is the instinctual revulsion and fear of that which can destroy you.” said Fiora “I have lost a lot of good friends to Merle over the years.”

I stared at her “Oh my god, I’m so sorry.”

“Oh it’s okay, they went willingly as I will.” said Fiora “My point is that you reacted with neither worship or fear, you reacted with confusion and curiosity.”

I nodded “So... why are you talking to me?”

“My best friend thinks you’re really hot and exotic” said Fiora “Sorry if that comes across as racist.”

I shook my head “Rather refreshing actually, where is this friend?”

Fiora grinned and got up from her stool. “Follow me.”

I nodded then downed my blood before I got up and followed her.

It was now that I noticed her dress it was blue, backless and strapless and I felt like a terrible voyeur looking at it but I had to admit, it was a good look. Stiletto heels clicked on the floor as she walked.

We approached the table where a short slender dark skinned woman in a fluffy jacket and jeans sat reading a book.

Fiora said “Steve, may I present Roxy, my best friend from back when I was Fred.”

Roxy looked up at me and blushed “I’m terribly sorry, it must be such an inconvenience.”

I shook my head “Why would it be an inconvenience to meet two such beautiful ladies?”

She looked at me like I was a puppy “Aww”

Fiora “Well sit down.”

I smirked and took a seat opposite Roxy as Fiora took a seat beside me.

Roxy stared at me and grinned. She sighed.

I chuckled “So what do you girls do around here? What’s it like being a Vligury?”

“We read, we play computer games, we have sex.” said Roxy.

I smirked “Yes, we do those things where I come from.” then I caught myself, remembering the sack of Tipton “Came from.”

Roxy took my hands and squeezed them compassionately “Oh I am sorry, Steve, if there was anything I could do...?”

I sighed “Something is being done. I live because someone decided I was worth saving. Billions of people on planet Earth. Physicists, Doctors, Teachers, Firefighters, Diplomats... and she saved me.”

Roxy looked me in the eyes and I could see she was on the verge of tears for me, for my world and people.

Fiora patted me on the back.

I forced a laugh “Look at me, bringing the mood down? I’m alive, I’m alive and with two very beautiful women.”

“We should tell him.” said Fiora.

“We can’t” said Roxy “He’s lost so much already.”

Fiora said “It’s not fair to lie to someone about something like this. I know because I was there remember?”

Roxy was silent for a moment then she said “You are with Sammy and Carla aren’t you?”

I nodded “They saved my life.”

“Well I assume Helga told you that Merle’s a regular right?” said Roxy.

I nodded “Helga gives him a couple of Vligury ever so often...”

I swallowed and looked from Roxy to Fiora then I put my head in my hands.

“Helga’s been giving us free drinks and food for a few months now.” said Fiora.

“And we’re nearly twenty five.” said Roxy.

I stared at Roxy, flabbergasted “So leave? Go to a different pub? Run? Hide? Do something...”

“It’s not the Vligury way” said Fiora.

Roxy shrugged “We’ve known Helga and Merle since we were 16. They’re good people. We’re not about to abandon them.”

“But you’ll die” I said “I’ve been eaten alive, it’s not nice.”

Roxy frowned and stared at me.

Fiora said “We’ve been raised for this, we are destined for this. If not Merle it’ll be somebody else.”

“And Merle’s nice” said Roxy “He helps out with the maintenance of the pub and frequently helps out people who are endangered at night. Thanks to him the streets are safe to walk.”

“Until your number comes up” I said “Are you really going to go willingly?”

Roxy shrugged.

“Helga won’t make us, if that’s what you’re wondering?” said Fiora “We could say no and Helga would ask somebody else.”

“But we won’t say no” said Roxy “I’m actually kind of looking forward to it.”

I stared at her.

Fiora nodded in agreement “To feel those strong tentacles embrace me. Gonna be quite the experience.”

I shook my head in disbelief.

Roxy sighed “Anyway this is why we want you, because we don’t have long.”

I swallowed. This was all too much to take in.

Roxy cleared the hair from my face and asked “You do like us don’t you?”

“Yes” I said.

She leaned in and kissed me on the lips “Well I want you to join me and Fiora.”

Fiora seemed surprised “You want me as well?”

Roxy chuckled “I always have.”

Fiora leaned in “Just tell me if don’t want me in and I won’t mind?”

I put my right arm around Fiora and whispered in her ear “You are a very beautiful woman and I am not going to say no to you.”

She giggled and put her left arm around me, she kissed my ear then whispered “So do you want Roxy involved? Because I kind of do.”

I grinned and kissed Roxy on the lips “Never had a threesome before. Still interested?”

Roxy grinned and kissed first me then Fiora.

I said “I’ve got a room on the third floor but I need to go get protection. Guest room number 7 okay?”

I got up from my seat and left Roxy and Fiora snogging each other.

When I returned from the gents I found them making out outside my room. I unlocked the door and they led me to the bed.

*

I woke early the next morning and left Fiora and Roxy embracing each other in their sleep as I got a shower.

When I got out of the shower I put the kettle on and got dressed. As I made myself a mug of tea Fiora stirred. I smirked and wafted the steam over to them.

Fiora opened her eyes and smiled at me “Milk, two sugars, if you please.”

I nodded and made her a mug.

Fiora sat up in bed and Roxy stirred.

Fiora pulled her close and said “You’re beautiful you know that?”

Roxy laughed and booped Fiora on the nose then asked “Any chance of a Frappachino?”

I said glibly “The options are tea, coffee, decaff coffee water, white or brown sugar or artificial sweetner, milk or nor milk.”

Roxy stared at me then said “Coffee, black. Now.”

Fiora gave Roxy a curious look “But you hate black coffee?”

Roxy said “If I’m going to drink something that tastes like arse then I’m going hardcore.”

I smirked and presented Fiora and Roxy their beverages then said “Listen, I better go but you two stay as long as you like. You make a cute couple.”

Fiora laughed.

Roxy gave Fiora a curious look.

I finished my tea and left them in my bed. It wasn’t like I had anything they could steal.

Helga was walking down the hall with Lucy at the end of a leash.

I stared at them and frowned.

Helga said “She misses her owner so I have decided to take over the role.”

Lucy had a stupid grin on her face.

I gave her a concerned look then followed her.

Helga knocked on the door of room number 6 and Lisa answered the door, wearing a crop top and short skirt.

Lisa looked really happy.

Helga said “I hear you had a good night, made a lot of money for me.”

Lisa nodded “I love the spit, so peaceful, so warm and so much love.”

Helga said “Apparently by the time Eliza arrived your skull had been split open and half your brain was taken.”

Lisa grinned “Never had my brain eaten before, that’s a first.”

Helga asked “Feel like going again tonight?”

Lisa threw her arms around Helga in excitement and gratitude “Yes, absolutely”

Then she said “Maybe we can add a little spice this time? Not full Jalfrezi but maybe a Tikka Masala.”

“I’ll have a talk with the chef” said Helga.

Lisa approached me and said “Promise you’ll come see me tonight?”

I nodded.

Then Sammy exited the room dressed in a low cut shirt and lounge trousers. “You left me with Lisa last night, you know that?”

Helga frowned “Merle didn’t exactly leave us with much to identify you by.”

Sammy smirked “I’m not complaining, I got to enjoy Lisa after her happy little turn on the spit.”

Lisa blushed.

“Actually I’m thinking of seeing Merle again tonight” said Sammy “That man may have not been handed the best set of cards by fate but he knows his way around a woman.”

Sammy shut her eyes and a look of ecstasy came across her face.

I smiled at her look of happiness then she opened her eyes and caught me looking, I could feel my ears burn as my face went red.

Sammy took my hand and asked “What’ll you be doing?”

“Cleaning glasses” said Helga.

“Cleaning glasses” I said.

Sammy smirked.

Helga knocked on room number 5.

Carla answered the door.

Lisa glared at her “You didn’t eat me last night.”

Carla glared at Helga “I was busy, Merle is not a quick eater.”

Sammy said “I found him to be quite spry.”

Carla said “But he talks so much. He always wants to make sure you’re calm and enjoying it. Like Bucko I’m missing an arm and a leg and you’ve eaten my liver and kidneys, maybe we can skip the pleasantries and skip to me becoming offal yeah.”

Helga snorted.

Sammy said “It’s sweet and heck that’s why you eat people right? The only meal you can have a conversation with.”

Lisa said “Well make you join me tonight yeah.”

Carla said “You’re going on the spit again?”

Lisa nodded “Apparently I’m really popular.”

Carla looked to Helga.

Helga looked completely innocent, so naturally Carla decided to stay behind and speak with her when everyone had gone.

Amy exited the room dressed in a suit. “Good nights, everyone?”

*

I was cleaning glasses in the kitchen at about mid day when Helga came to see me.

“I’ve been hearing rumours” she said.

“Right...” I said.

Helga lead back against the wall beside me and folded her arms “You and two girls.”

“And that is your business, why?” I asked.

“Roxy and Fiora” said Helga “I’ve been watching them for a long time, been taking good care of them too. They’re lovely girls and they’re my girls and they’re destined for the pot.”

I gritted my teeth “Right...”

“They didn’t tell you?” said Helga “That’s not like them.”

I tried to leave things be... “Well that’s your business, I don’t see what that’s got to do with me?”

Helga snorted “You tried to talk Sammy out of going with Merle yesterday and Sammy can heal...”

I tried again... “Look, what do you want me to say?”

“The truth” said Helga “You just watched your whole planet fall to the Contravoxai and you think I’m stupid enough to see nothing dangerous in you having a threesome with two girls who, if not for Sammy and Carla turning up yesterday, would be dead?”

Now I stopped cleaning glasses. I turned to Helga, fire in my eyes. “How many have you killed? How many have died because you feel pity for that thing?”

Helga was calm “I lost count a long time ago but two every three months over lets say 25 years, I dunno maybe more, some days there’d be a really important Contravoxai dignitary or something and I’d have to ask for someone else to...”

I stared at her “200 people. Over 200 people have died because of your pity?”

Helga nodded “Sounds about right but they all had good lives and they all had good deaths and they all went willingly.”

“How does your society even function?” I asked beyond outraged and disgusted.

“We have a lot of kids on a regular basis, we have very good medical technology and we all honestly believe that dying for the Contravoxai is a profound honour.” said Helga.

I shook my head “And I thought my world had problems. This is monstrous. I should kill you. I should kill you right now. I mean you’ve openly stated that you’ll kill again, I could save them.”

Helga shook her head “You think this is just me? That I’m some lone mass murderer? You’ve seen the dining halls, you were eaten at one. I am kind. I am sparing. I am compassionate. I only ask for two a month. There are places that take 200 a day. You kill me and Roxy and Fiora will still die. They are destined for the pot. What are you going to do lead a revolution? Well good luck because we don’t want one.”

I closed my eyes and caught me reflection in the washing up water then I stared at Helga “No, I don’t need to. I can save them and save all the others who would die after them.”

“No. You can’t.” said Helga.

“Then why am I still alive?” I asked.

Helga stared at “No, you haven’t have you? It’s bad enough having one wereshark, let alone three...”

I shook my head “Sammy’s a wereshark, Carla’s a wereshark, Amy’s a wereshark, heck even Lisa and Lucy are weresharks.”

Helga shook her head “You’re chasing dreams.”

“If I can be cured then Roxy and Fiora can be saved” I said.

“And you would condemn them to an immortality of being eaten alive?” asked Helga “I mean I could but as we’ve established I’m a mass murderer. Could you live with yourself?”

“Well Sammy and the others seem pretty fine with it” I said “And besides the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few.”

Helga said “They’re for the pot, Steve, let it go and forget about them.”

I made to leave the kitchen and then I paused and leaned in close to Helga “I am going to save Roxy and Fiora and if something happens to them I will hold you responsible and you really don’t want that because nevermind being a wereshark I am a man who has lost so very much and just been told that the small joy I have just found is something you plan to take away from me as well. Roxy and Fiora are under my protection you understand?”

Helga nodded “Well with Sammy taking a shine to Merle I won’t be needing Roxy and Fiora for a while anyway.”

I left to find Roxy and Fiora.

*

I arrived on the third floor and saw an open fire with a brick facade hiding some kind of advanced smoke extractor and there, rotating slowly on a metal shaft over the fire, was Lisa.

I approached her and saw that, though the charring from the fire and spice marinade made it hard to tell from a distance, she was completely naked. Her head had been shaved. The shaft entered her mouth, continued down her throat and roughly through her mid section until it exited via her arsehole and pierced the palms of her hands before continuing on a while and finally piercing the soles of her feet. Her arms and legs were also bound tightly with string.

“Quite the sight isn’t she?” said a wise upper class sounding woman beside me “Amazing to think she’s still alive.”

I nodded and added “Amazing to think that she actually enjoys this”

The woman beside me smirked “Oh does she? Then I won’t feel bad about taking a slice or two”

Then, as I watched, two tentacles whipped out to halt the turning of Lisa on the spit, two brought over a plate and held it steady beside Lisa’s left arse cheek and a fifth and sixth carved Lisa’s roasted flesh from her arse and placed it on a plate.

I stared then turned to look at this upperclass woman. She was a Contravoxai wearing what I can only describe as some alien form of stylish scarf, waistcoat, skirt and high heels. It was an absurd sight. Like seeing Cthulu in drag to play Juliet at some all boys school.

“Oh, where are my manners? You want a plate too?” said the sharp dressed Contravoxai and she brought up a different plate with two more tentacles then she carved off some more of Lisa’s flesh and presented the plate to me.

She looked at me expectantly and presented me with the plate of flesh.

I took it and said “Umm... thank you.”

“Charlotte Kensington” said the sharp dressed Contravoxai and she stretched out a tentacle.

I shook it “Steve Banks.”

She regarded me for a moment then said “You’re English aren’t you? Properly English?”

“Well yes...” I said and then I twigged “I am not hearing a translation am I, you’re genuinely speaking English”

She bowed her head to show off a toothy grin. "My ship got shot down by a Grafilod cruiser when I was but a sporeling and I was raised by one Edmund Kensington. He taught me manners and morality. You need not fear me Steve, I am not like the brutes that razed your world."

I regarded her for a moment then said "You know I'm an escapee?"

She nodded, an absurdly human gesture "If you ever need help these are my coordinates"

She handed me a note of paper with a long string of numbers on it.

I put it in my pocket. "Thank you"

"You have friends here Steve, not every Contravoxai believes a Vligury's life should be so easily discarded now if you excuse me there's a drunk over there about to try his luck with two Vligury girls?" said Charlotte before walking away.

I stared after her then remembered where I was standing and approached Lisa's head.

I stopped the spit spinning with my left hand and booped her nose with my right. She opened her eyes and the corners of her mouth turned upwards. I held my plate where she could see and watched her recognise and try to squee in excitement.

"Lisa" I said "You are an utterly weird individual but I can see why Carla likes you."

Lisa blushed so I stroked her bald head then I left her to rotate on the spit.

I scanned the crowd and saw Fiora sitting with Roxy and some other guy. I approached.

They were wearing what they had been wearing yesterday and clearly hadn't been home. The man looked tall, skinny and nervous. He seemed to be very young and wore a suit jacket over trackies and a tshirt with some contravoxai slogan on it that my wereshark understanding told me meant "My sausage brings all the Contravoxai to the pub"

"You're eating Lisa?" asked Roxy "Isn't that against your whole "Thou shalt not eat people!" thing?"

I said "Hey, you can have it if you want, this nice Contravoxai carved it for me."

"Ooh cheers" said Roxy.

I handed over the plate and asked "So who's this guy?"

Fiora snorted "We've known him for years."

I shrugged.

He stretched out a hand "Glenn. Glenn Johnson. I'm er unemployed."

I shook his hand "Steve Banks. Wereshark on the run from the Contravoxai."

He stared me “Really?”

“Yuh” I said “What’s it to you?”

“He wants to go on the spit.” said Fiora.

“But chicken little doesn’t want to die.” said Roxy.

He frowned and shrugged “I know its cowardly of me, I mean I really wanna do it, to just lie back and let others take from me but I just - I want to live.”

I grinned. “I can help you.”

“What?” said Fiora.

Roxy glared at me “Give it up man, we’re gonna get eaten by Merle and Glenn’s gonna get on that spit. That’s how it’s gonna go.”

“How?” asked Glenn.

“I think you know how” I said “I’m a wereshark and I am going to get cured of the whole angry rage thing and when I do well I’ll be like Sammy and Carla and yes, even Lisa. This is actually why I came to find you.”

Fiora sighed “Roxy’s right, Steve. You don’t need to save us. We’re going to be eaten by Merle and we’re okay with that. He’s a nice guy.”

“Except I learned from Helga that just by coming here I’ve saved you two.” I said.

Roxy stared at me.

Fiora said “What?”

“If I hadn’t shown up here, if Sammy and Carla hadn’t come with me, you would have been fed to him last night.” I said.

Fiora shuddered.

Roxy said very quietly “Shit.”

Glenn said “Yeah, giving your life nobly to be a nice meal for a Contravoxai is all very well when it’s some abstract future destination. Almost nice in a way when you’ve just graduated university and have no idea what you’re going to do with your life. I don’t need to worry about my student debt or children or a pension because some nice Contravoxai is going to sweep me off my feet and make sure none of those worries ever happen. And then the day arrives and you think you know what I actually quite like life.”

Roxy said “But Merle’s so nice and I’ve known for so long, I’ve dreamed about it... Those strong tentacles taking me...” she shook her head “Glenn’s right I do want to live but Merle’s been my

destination for so long I can't imagine anything else."

"I don't think that's the problem" said Fiora "You aren't saving us from Merle are you, you're saving us from death?"

I closed my eyes, swallowed then nodded.

Roxy asked "But what does that even mean?"

"It means you're going to remain under Helga's charge and probably under Eliza's charge and whoever inherits the business after that too. It means you are going to get eaten alive every day until the end of time or the Contravoxai change their ways." I said. "It means you're going to be cattle."

Fiora shrugged "We already are."

Roxy smiled "I'm going to get eaten alive forever?"

"It's the best I can do" I said with a shrug.

Glenn grinned "I could take the spit everyday."

Fiora said "There's just one problem with your plan. I'm nature defiant, my dna is not who I am, I'm not going to be healed everyday I'm going to be put back to that which was a nightmare for me."

Roxy said "No, Fiora, you've got to come with me. You're best friend, I love you. I don't want to lose you."

"I can't condemn myself to an eternity in a body that makes me sick." said Fiora.

"You don't have to" I said "I'm not immortal, no wereshark is. We can die. We're hard to kill but we can die."

Fiora looked me in the eyes and said "Then what's the point? Why go on any longer than I need to? I've known all my life that I would die to a Contravoxai and I've known for at least 5 years that the Contravoxai would be Merle. Why not die in the embrace of the woman I love?"

Roxy was silently looking at her old friend as tears started to roll down her face.

Glenn was looking away awkwardly.

I looked Fiora in the eyes and said "You still can. I know Merle's old and frail but from what I gather if he wanted he could finish even a wereshark. I'm not expecting a happy ending but I gave you one more day to be with Roxy, one more day to be with the woman you love. Let me give you an eternity of one more days. You never need to feel trapped. And I am telling you that if I find the cure I'm not just dosing us lot up, I am giving Helga and Eliza enough to get as many as they like and to have plenty of replacements should you ever decide to leave for whatever reason. Please, just let me give you the chance for one more day."

Fiora looked me in the eyes for a long moment then said "One more day, I think I can do that."

“Thank you” I said then I got up from the table and said “I better go take my sanity potion” then I looked at Fiora and Roxy and chucked them the key to my room “Stay with me until I get the cure won’t you, I don’t trust Helga not to feed you to someone while I’m sleeping.”

“Thank you” said Fiora.

Roxy nodded and went to hug Fiora.

Glenn said “You’re a good guy, you know. I’ll do my best to hold off Helga, if she comes for them.”

I nodded and left.

As I approached the stairs I saw Carla eating some meat from a plate as she watched Lisa turn.

Helga approached Carla from behind and whispered something in her ear then Carla walked off with Helga.

I headed downstairs quickly.

Arriving at the bar Eliza caught my eye then wordlessly slit Lucy’s throat so she could pour out a pint of her blood for me.

Eliza placed the pint on the table then wrapped a bandage round Lucy’s throat.

Lucy barely reacted.

“Helga’s been taming her all day” said Eliza by way of explanation “Says it’s kinder for the poor girl but I think Helga likes it, having a submissive who’ll obey her every whim.”

I drank the blood and studied Eliza’s face. I wondered what kind of woman would you have to be to send 200 girls and boys to their deaths and what might that kind of woman do with a subordinate like Eliza?

I shook my head and said “You know I just saw her heading off with Carla?”

Eliza nodded sadly “I don’t blame her.”

I took my pint and looked for somewhere to sit and drink it. As I walked I overheard someone say: “You don’t turn 25 for at least another 3 months, you’re fine.”

I turned to the sound, a short fat ginger man was trying placate a tall blonde woman. I decided to sit at their table.

“You don’t need to worry” I said “I know who’s next for the chop and it’s not you.”

“And who are you?” asked the man.

“Steve Banks” I said “You?”

“Gerald” said the man.

“Emma” said the woman.

“How do you know?” asked Gerald.

“Because I just had a threesome with the two lovely ladies who are next for the chop.” I said “Fiora and Roxy.”

Emma said “But what if they’re just paranoid like Gerald thinks I am, it could still be me?”

I shook my head and said “They aren’t paranoid because the great Lady of the Manor, Mistress Helga Hufflepuff warned me not to mess with her soon to be slaughtered lambs.”

“What’s a hufflepuff?” asked Gerald.

“No idea” I said “The point is you are safe, trust me.”

Emma and Gerald both looked at me for a long moment then Emma hugged me “Oh thank you, thank you ever so much.”

I patted her back and sipped my drink.

Then Gerald announced “Here he is again, the great garbage can for our youth.”

I turned to look.

Merle entered carrying in her arms the bloodied remnants of Sammy’s head, spinal column and hearts. His tentacles stretched out and placed it on the bar and he muttered “Thank you” then left.

I extricated myself from Emma and approached the bar and wanted to vomit. It was a horrible sight.

“Thorough work” said Eliza, coldly dispassionate in the face of such horror. She must be used to the barbarity of the Contravoxai by now. “He’s left just enough of her in tact that she will heal completely without risking creating a clone.”

I stared at Sammy’s remains and thought of the woman whose beauty had so stolen my heart last night. I downed the pint of blood.

Eliza stared at me, aghast. “How can you drink blood having seen this?”

I slammed the empty glass on the table and burped “Because I need to have a word with Mister Merle.”

“Be careful” said Eliza.

I laughed bitterly.

*

The thing about Contravoxai is they've got eyes on the back of their head and tentacles on the back of their body. It is impossible to jump one from behind. Merle should be easier to take on though what with his missing eyes and lame tentacles. Except now I looked at him, his eyes seemed to have grown back and...

His lame tentacles shot up my trouser legs and gently cupped by cock and balls as Merle came to a stop hissed "You so much as squeal and I'll start applying pressure and we both know you can heal. What is your deal, kid?"

"You ate my friend." I said.

"She consented and she lives." said Merle.

"And the others?" I said.

Merle was silent for a long time then he asked "What do you hope to achieve?"

"I want to stop the deaths." I said "Helga won't stop feeding people to you but you might stop killing them."

His tentacles released me.

"You seem like a smart kid." he said "But before I enlighten you, I want you to show me you're as smart as I think you are so tell me, why is it that I am not as lame as I was yesterday?"

"Sammy's dna" I said "The sylph blood is what keeps my wereshark madness at bay. You ate Carla and Sammy last night? That's a whole lot of Sylph dna in your system, supercharging it with left over power."

"Good..." said Merle "You really are smart, hopefully smart enough to avoid trying to kill me. Now come, Helga thinks I'm homeless but that's not exactly true..."

I nodded "Lead on Macduff."

Merle snapped bitterly "Lay on. It's: Lay on, Macduff. What do they teach you in school these days?"

Then Merle picked a direction and started walking on his eight great spider like legs.

I followed.

A short slender Contravoxai approached and curtsied towards us "How was the pub, honey?"

"Oh it was quite agreeable and I've bought a friend to visit, if that's alright?" said Merle warmly.

The Contravoxai seemed to nod and said "Enjoy your stay."

"Right..." I said.

“Read any Harry Potter?” asked Merle.

“Uhh... yes...” I said.

“Pretend she’s platform nine and three quarters.” said Merle before charging heading into the small contravoxai and phazing out of existence.

I shrugged and cried “Slytherin rules!” as I charged at the Contravoxai.

*

I ran though the automatic double doors of a large atrium. There were plants in trees and pots everywhere and mounted weapons, suits of armor and various treasures. Ornate wooden doors led off left, right and onwards.

Merle was standing beside me looking rather bored.

“Where the fuck are we?” I asked.

Merle seemed to consider for a moment then said “Inside a very old friend...”

“The Contravoxai outside?” I asked.

“My first love.” said Merle “She was dying of what you would know as cancer and I found a way to extend her life, to give her near immortality.”

“How?” I asked.

Merle started walking.

I followed.

“The world as you know it, as you have always known it, is an artificial construction of a nearly sentient force. Some call it the quantum flux, the net of life or the dream weave but the people currently running the multiverse call it logic.” said Merle “I found a way to harness the natural logic found in living creatures and focus it into glass spheres. The logic would suffuse the glass turning it green and it could then be expelled and directed at a target by shining a lazer through the glass.”

“So you filled your love with logic?” I said “How does that make her immortal?”

“It doesn’t” said Merle “But she always was a smart girl and with the logic of several small villages inside her she transcended biology and matter to become a sentient being composed entirely of logic. I had helped her become a god and she became this for me, she reached into my mind and made her interior my dream home.”

He snorted in remembered amazement “You know she can travel in time? She can voyage the entire multiverse and she lets me travel with her, pilot her.”

“Pilot her?” I asked.

The Contravoxai appeared beside me “Yes, I have no desire to be a god, no desire to wonder alone, I go where my love wants to and I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

I stared at her, quite taken a back.

“Oh sorry” said the Contravoxai and her image flickered to be replaced with the image of Sammy in a short shirt and skirt “Would this be more to your tastes?”

I swallowed “Okay, so this is some kind of holographic projection?”

“Real enough” said the image as her hands reached out for me and started to delve down my pants.

“Hey! Hey!” I said backing way and trying to stop her.

Merle said “Verity, please don’t play with him.”

The image stopped and rather sulkily withdrew her hands “You get to eat girls, why can’t I enjoy one boy?”

Merle groaned.

I said “Tell me, how many girls has he eaten?”

“At least three million” said the image.

I turned to Merle, furious “Explain.”

Merle shrugged “I’m a Contravoxai and nearly 2000 years old.”

I nodded then said firmly “It needs to end.”

“I know” said Merle “And it already has. If you’ll just be patient I’ll show you.”

I sighed and waved him on.

Merle led me through a labyrinth of corridors, including a patch of open sky where it was snowing, to a room deep in the bowels of the place.

He paused outside a set of double doors and said “What I have to show you now may be disturbing but I assure no one is in any pain.”

Then he opened the doors and we walked through.

The first thing I noticed was the sound of artificial lungs and a series of regular bleeps.

Merle stood in the centre of the room and spread his arms wide “Take a look around, let me know if you have any questions.”

So I looked.

There were the remains of eight different people hooked up to machines. They were in various states of conditions. Some almost had an intact head and torso but other were little more than a heart and skull, kept alive by complex machinery.

“Eight people” I said “Or the remains of them. Helga said she sent you two every three months...?”

Merle nodded “The moment Sammy turned up I knew it wasn’t a fluke. People could be eaten and recover.”

“Or they could not be eaten?” I said.

Merle sighed “This is a world full of predators, boy, do you think that if I let one go they will skip off merrily to their happy ending? No. It is kinder to take and enjoy the lambs that throw themselves upon your mercy. These all belong to me now and when you bring me cure I shall feast like a king and they will be glad of it.”

“So what? You eat a person then put them here and you think that means you own them?” I asked.

“They gave themselves to me.” said Merle “And I keep them safely sedated in artificial comas so they may sleep until you bring me the cure.”

“And why shouldn’t I kill you?” I asked “You’ve killed so many?”

“Because I am worth more alive as an ally” said Merle “Your people are not yet lost, they can still be saved. If you can kill the emperor, our great leader, then I can start a revolution and free your people.”

I stared at him.

“Yes” said Merle “I see you recognise the magnitude of what I am saying. I will help you get home in whatever way I can but we must keep this place as our little secret, I do not want Verity involved in this, you understand? She is too precious to me.”

I nodded “But if you ever take another...?”

“Then my life will be forfeit.” said Merle.

*

I made it back to the pub and Sammy was waiting for me at the bar, wearing a fitted tshirt and short skirt. She was chatting idly to Eliza and petting Lucy like she was a puppy.

Eliza spotted me and grabbed a glass, within a minute a fresh bandage had been applied round Lucy’s neck and I had a fresh pint of blood to drink.

Sammy cooed over Lucy and said “Eliza tells me you had a little word with Merle?”

“Yes” I said “I did.”

“Feeling jealous?” she asked without looking at me.

“Well I don’t want to eat you” I said.

Eliza smirked.

Sammy looked me in the eyes “Then why did you see him?”

“Because you saved my life and he eats you and I don’t like that.” I said.

Sammy sighed “But I like being eaten. I like the sense of loss and powerlessness, of being insignificant and subservient.”

I sighed and approached her and all I wanted to do was take her in my arms and show her how she could feel that way with a partner who respected her as a person but I stopped myself, sipped my drink, stroked Lucy and said “He’s eaten others, if I hadn’t spoken to him he would have eaten more.”

“Would have?” asked Eliza, arching an eyebrow.

“He’s going to help us” I said.

“He is?” asked Sammy “How did you manage that?”

“I didn’t” I said “You did. His eating you transferred a small amount of regenerative potential like drinking from Lucy transfers the necessary subservience to stay sane.”

Sammy smirked “Eating me made him better, that’s awesome.”

A tentacle whipped past us and tentatively tapped on the table for attention.

Eliza looked up “Yes?”

“Umm, I think you might want to take your girl off the spit, her rib cage is showing and people have started cracking open her bones for the marrow.” said a familiar voice.

“Yikes!” said Eliza and she ran off.

Sammy was staring in awe.

I coughed.

The stylish Contravoxai regarded me for a moment then hugged me with her tentacles with such force and excitement that I was lifted up into the air. “Steven, how nice to see you again?”

Sammy looked to me “You know this Contravoxai?”

I nodded and said “Sammy, may I introduce Miss Charlotte Kensington.”

Charlotte stepped back and studied Sammy, her tentacles hovering around Sammy.

Sammy grinned “You’re English aren’t you?”

“Yes and I never eat a girl who can’t recover.” said Charlotte “May I make a closer examination?”

Sammy smirked and her cheeks flushed with colour. She nodded.

Charlotte’s tentacles darted around Sammy and under her clothes. Within a moment Sammy was lifted off the ground and as tentacles checked the weight mass and strength of very bone and muscle in her body.

“How do you feel about things being inside you?” asked Charlotte.

I stared at Charlotte “What kind of a question is that?”

Charlotte shrugged “I don’t get to do this very often, I want to be thorough.”

Sammy was laughing her head off. Finally she calmed down enough to say “Yes, yes Charlotte I am fine with things inside me, though I must admit that it’s something of a novelty to have a lady put things inside me.”

Charlotte chuckled then said “Well open wide for me girl, I’ll know when I’ve overstepped my bounds.

Sammy opened her mouth and said “Ahhh” as if at a dentist.

A tentacle darted inside her mouth and started making a thorough examination.

Then rather abruptly Charlotte laid Sammy back, standing, on the floor.

“Sorry” said Charlotte.

“Ask me out on a date first before going there yeah?” said Sammy, her face flushed completely red.

“Understood” said Charlotte.

“You can still eat me though” said Sammy with a smirk.

Charlotte was obviously taken aback “What? Why?”

Sammy chuckled “You asked, I just didn’t quite understand what you meant and you did save Lisa so... bite me.”

Charlotte was silent for a long moment.

I sighed and said “Charlotte, you’re a good egg, you saved two people earlier today. I like you. I know that Sammy isn’t mine to give away but she wants to be eaten by you and this is me saying that if Sammy is going to be eaten by a Contravoxai I would rather it was you.”

Sammy turned to look at me “You’re serious? You’re fine with me going with her?”

“I like her” I said “She only eats those who like it and can recover. Enjoy each other.”

Sammy kissed me on the lips and threw her arms around me then said “Pick a cubicle Charlotte, you’re getting a free lunch.”

Charlotte shook her head “What? I don’t understand.”

“Pick me up, carry me into a cubicle strip me naked and tear the flesh from my bones until only my hearts and brain are left” said Sammy.

“Oh” said Charlotte “Thank you”

Then she enveloped Sammy in her tentacles and carried her off.

Eliza arrived and said “Lisa’s been taken to her room, she’ll live. Where’s Sammy?”

“Making a Contravoxai very happy” I said.

Eliza smirked “You too, huh?”

“What?” I asked, not understanding.

Eliza placed two tumblers on the table and poured out measures of Pass-Through Brandy “I haven’t seen Helga all day and neither have I seen Carla.” She raised her tumbler in a toast “To absent crushes.”

I chuckled and raised my tumbler “To absent crushes.”

*

The next morning I left my room, clean shaven and showered, in a new suit. Fiora and Roxy had taken up my offer and were going to spend the next week slowly moving essentials from their homes into the room. Glenn was in no immediate danger and so he opted not to join the three of us but he was going to move some of his possessions there on the off-chance that I did get the cure and he could live full time at the pub.

As I past her room Lisa exited in a short pink skirt and crop top. It was a delightful change to see her looking so fresh faced and happy with long blonde hair again. She hugged me and I was glad of it. It felt good to check that she was really okay.

“You came to see me yesterday didn’t you?” said Lisa enthusiastically.

I nodded “Yes, it wasn’t the most usual sight I’ve ever seen but if it makes you happy...”

She grinned and said cheekily “You ate me, how did I taste?”

“Umm... good” I said “Very umm... meaty.”

She smirked.

Sammy exited her room in jeans and a blouse and stroked Lisa's hair idly as she talked to me. "So I had a very good time with Charlotte last night."

"Did you indeed?" I said, trying to sound nonplussed.

"She is a very kind and sensitive devourer" said Sammy "I can see why you like her."

Then Sammy looked to Lisa and booped her nose with her forefinger "You should visit her"

"Oh" said Lisa with considerable curiosity.

Sammy looked Lisa in the eyes and stroked her cheek "You would just melt in her mouth, it'll be fantastic."

Lisa smiled "Alright but I want you on the spit."

"Deal" said Sammy and she tickled her chin "I wish I could be there to witness your unraveling"

"I'll send you the security camera footage" said Eliza, behind us.

"Oh, thanks" said Sammy with a smile.

Eliza took my hand and whispered "We need to talk."

I smiled and let her take the lead.

We were soon at the bar downstairs and Eliza was giving me a pint of blood from Lucy.

"Look this may sound stange but do you have pets in your world?" asked Eliza.

"Yes" I said "Goldfish, Hamsters, Guinea Pigs, Cats, Dogs, Budgerigar... Some people keep lizards and spiders."

"Right... good" said Eliza "So this won't be an entirely alien concept to you."

"Okay..." I said "Explain away."

"Well you know how the girls are sylphs and that means they're submissive enough to not give into the madness of the wereshark and want to be eaten?" said Eliza.

"Well yeah, it's why drinking Lucy's blood keeps me sane" I said.

"Exactly" said Eliza "It also means she likes to be kept as a pet, well they all do but Lucy especially and well... look at her."

Lucy wore a shirt and skirt but she was hunched down on all 4s eating pet kibble from a bowl. Eliza stroked her back and scratched her under the chin and Lucy purred.

“Yeah, that’s not exactly typical of a person.” I said.

“But it is of a sylph.” said Eliza then she looked me in the eyes and said “I’m not letting her go with you and I don’t think Lucy would want to. After such a long time being eaten alive she’s finally getting the love and support she needs.”

I shrugged “Well I need her blood to stay alive...”

Eliza nodded “I know but Lucy is special she can asexually reproduce fast growing clones that inherit her memories by laying eggs.”

I stared at Eliza “Bullshit!”

Eliza reached behind the bar and held, squirming in her hands, a tiny naked blonde haired woman.

“The Fuck?” I said, incredulous.

Eliza tickled the tiny woman “We call them hatchlings and they aren’t sentient like people, not at first. This one has about as much intellect as a hamster and as she gets older she’ll scale up through cat and dog until finally when she’s nearly fullsize she’s gain human intellect and remember the memories of her mother. Take her.”

“What?” I said.

“Hold out your hands and take her” said Eliza.

I was kind of flabbergasted but I held out my hands and accepted the tiny squirming woman.

Eliza returned a moment later with a plastic cage and said “She’ll remember everything that you did when she was like this so if you look after your tiny hatchling pet, the full grown wereshark sylph with Lucy’s memories will regard you as her true owner and love and obey you.”

“I really don’t like this” I said “This is a person and we’re talking about giving her away so she’ll be my pet and I can drink her blood.”

Eliza shrugged “Mate, my crush is a mass murderer and your crush gets a kick out of being eaten alive. Just go with the flow, you’re in a different world now.”

I sighed and held the hatchling in my hands so I could look her in the eyes. She tried to bite my finger but her tiny teeth did no damage and she gummed me instead. I dropped her into her cage and muttered “Brave new world.”

“Oh and don’t forget to change the sawdust in her cage daily” said Eliza “I’ll have the supplies taken up there.”

I looked at her “Umm...”

Eliza smirked “Don’t worry Helga is rather too distracted by Carla to worry about you and I like you

and I quite agree that they should be protected and made immortal like Sammy. Wish I could have threesomes everynight though...”

I snorted.

“Oh so you’re a true gentleman, are you?” said Eliza, pointedly.

I frowned and could feel my ears burning so I said “Talk to Lisa, from what I gather, she can be rather free with her affections the morning after a spitroast.”

Eliza grinned “You know me and you could...?”

I swallowed “I do not want to mess with Helga’s territory, sorry.”

Eliza sighed “Probably a sound bit of reasoning that. Now away with you and give that hatchling lots of love and cuddles.”

I nodded and left with the hatchling in the cage and the pint of blood.

*

Weeks turned to months and I and Eliza became close friends as we pined for the women we so yearned to be with. Sammy and I became good friends as well but there was always a bit of weirdness between us as she kept disappearing off to be eaten by one Contravoxai or another and I never quite found the courage to tell her how I felt.

Fiora and Roxy became very close until I was politely asked if I could sleep elsewhere. I accepted because by this point my little hatchling had become rather large and boisterous so I needed the extra space anyway and Lisa so often spent the night alone and as a bowl of slowly healing soup that she didn’t mind me staying with her. She never showed it but I think Lisa missed Carla so she liked the companionship.

I actually became quite good friends with Charlotte, the English Contravoxai woman and it was not uncommon for us to spend the night together as she idly devoured Lisa, Sammy or Amy and I devoured a cultured beef burger and chips.

Carla was only seen very rarely on the end of Helga’s leash before being heavily intoxicated with Pass-Through Brandy and handed over to Merle and when Carla healed Helga would always intercept her before she saw Lisa.

Merle remained distant but he would occasionally pass me a book about some famous revolution or other so as to whet my appetite and warn me of the shitstorm we were about to bring down. He would still eat Sammy, Lisa, Amy or Carla when offered them but whenever he did so he would stare at me and carefully gesticulate to indicate he was doing so then hold my gaze until I gave him permission with a nod of the head. I tried shaking my head once and sure enough he said no to eating Sammy and Lisa, only for Charlotte to cough politely and eat them instead. He was very respectful about my hatchling though and in our moments of small talk he would ask after her and seemed genuinely interest in the progress of her development.

Amy was... an enigma. I didn't see her much. Bit distracted with my hatchling, my room mates, my crush and my work but from what I did see she seemed to be more refined than the others. Oh she could be eaten with the best of them but she belonged in conventional society more. Indeed it is perhaps worth noting that while Sammy or Lisa would be used either as a draw to pull in punters or a sold as dish, Amy was never an official part of pub business, rather she preferred to stalk the pub floors interposing herself between any Contravoxai on the hunt and their intended prey. Like if Batman decided to stop muggings by intercepting the muggers and handing them a suitcase full of cash.

*

I awoke to a smelly arsehole in my face. I coughed and proceeded to splutter and choke as I proceeded to knock my hatchling onto the floor from her sleeping position on top of me. She was almost fully grown now and I felt increasingly dodgy about her nakedness and the necessities of cleaning up after a pet animal with Cat like instincts and behaviour but a person's body.

She rolled onto her belly and stood on all 4s, her long blonde hair a mess on her head. She emitted a familiar inhuman keening sound.

I sat up in bed, swung my legs over the edge of the bed and stroked her head "Hey girl, I'm sorry, I just don't like having your arsehole in my face."

She looked at me, looked into my eyes and said "Master"

I stared at her "What?"

"Master" she repeated "You're my Master."

I frowned then shrugged "I guess I am and you-"

She closed her eyes and shuddered "Can remember everything."

Suddenly she was hugging me and said "Your whole world, I'm so sorry."

I patted her back and said "It's alright, I'm fine. Better now that you're thinking. Go have a shower and put some clothes on then we are heading to the bar."

She nodded and went for that shower.

*

I wore a suit and my hatchling had her hair pulled back in a ponytail as she sported one of Lisa's lace up bikinis, a blouse and shorts worn with a belt. We approached the bar and Eliza grinned when she saw us.

"Your little hatchling's remembered who she is, hasn't she?" said Eliza excitedly.

I nodded and patted my hatchling's back "Yeah, she's a good girl."

My hatchling closed her eyes and shuddered as something occurred to her then she turned to look at me "I was created so you could drink my blood wasn't I?"

I frown and scratched the back of my neck “Sorry but it’s just until I get the cure.”

My hatchling regarded me for a long moment then she nodded “Okay, I’ll do it but I’m still your baby girl understand? Just because you’re drinking from me and I can talk doesn’t change the fact that I’m your puppy.”

I nodded and booped her nose “I’m not abandoning you.”

My hatchling grinned then said “Eliza, make it quick yeah.”

Eliza reached over the bar, slit my hatchling’s throat, filled a pint glass then wrapped a bandage round her neck to heal the wound.

I caught my hatchling and held her for a long moment.

Finally she whispered “Take me to my room, let me recover.”

“I will” I said “Don’t worry.”

I picked up my pint.

Eliza said “You should let Merle know. Now you’re ready to move he can take Sammy to this Contravoxai contact she has”

I nodded.

*

I returned with Merle to find Eliza chatting with Sammy. The conversation stopped as we approached.

Sammy turned to look at me and she swallowed nervously. She was wearing a loose white dress and her hair cascaded down her back. “This is goodbye.” she said extending her hand to shake. I took bit and she pulled me into a hug and said “Start again and make a home, Steve. I want you to be happy, you understand? Forget about me and live your life the best way you can.”

Then she pulled back, looked me in the eyes and kissed me on the lips.

I was stunned and confused.

Sammy spoke to Merle and then he stripped her and lowered her whole inside his mouth.

I watched Merle walk away as Eliza took my hand and handed me a tumbler of Pass-Through Brandy.

*

Merle rang the doorbell of a plush apartment building, a video speaker system activated and an upperclass looking Contravoxai gent interrogated his would be guest “Who rings my doorbell at this hour? I’ve got company.”

Merle waved at the camera “David isn’t it? I was at your baptism. I must say you’ve done well for yourself?”

The gent on the screen quivered his tentacles excitedly “Merle isn’t it? Great Uncle Merle? Come on up.”

The door buzzed open and instead of taking the elevator Merle opted to fly up the ladder shaft to David’s floor. He then walked down a suitably spacious hallway until he found David’s door and knocked upon it.

David welcomed Merle with open tentacles and hugged him then patted his back “Come in, come in, I’ve just had the winner of Mr Contravoxai delivered you’re more than welcome to have first go.”

Merle held up his hands “I’m just here to make a delivery myself actually.”

David stared at him “What kind?”

Merle opened his mouth, reached inside with a few of his tentacles and pulled out Sammy.

Sammy stood, dripping acid on a rich shagpile carpet, and waved, blushing from embarrassment.

David stared at her “How?”

“She’s a copy” said Merle “Created to aid in someone’s escape.”

David nodded and extended a tentacle to clear the hair from Sammy’s face. “Shower’s the third door on the left, honey. Don’t worry about clothes.”

Sammy nodded and went to have a shower.

“You were in the great Grafilod War weren’t you?” asked David.

Merle nodded “I did my bit for the great Leader, Contravoxai and Vligury. Why do you ask?”

“They say you cast magic on the battlefield, that it’s how you survived and beat back the Grafilods.” said David, enquiringly.

Merle shrugged “Is it magic to drink refined alcohol, exude it from your suckers and set light to it? Is it magic to vent your stomach acid out those same suckers and dissolve the enemy alive?”

David laughed “They say you moved with impossible speed and would always turn up exactly when you needed to turn the tide of battle, that you had impossible foreknowledge?”

Merle chuckled “I was merely lucky and had good hunches.”

“Well either way, there’s a storm coming and I am glad to know that you are on the side of the oppressed.” said David.

Merle looked curiously at David “What storm?”

David shrugged “Ever since Father decided to let that planet go and declare surrender the might of the emperor has looked weak. The lower classes are getting restless, starvation is driving desperate Contravoxai to theft and riots have been breaking out more and more. Even among the higher orders doubt in the system is commonplace and many are talking in secret about the need for regime change. Those that are supportive are terrified and planning escape routes for when the shit hits the fan. And all father does is attend meetings where he and his trusted elite rub their infinite Vligury supply in the faces of the servants.”

Merle looked sombre “Can’t you talk to your father?”

“It’s too dangerous” said David “I am next in line to succeed him. If I even try to caution him to reason I might be seen as a traitor and if I make the necessary displays to appease the justifiable concerns then I risk painting an even larger target on myself. It is best remain neutral and see if I can’t keep my father alive and my society stable.”

Merle nodded sagely “Very wise. For what it’s worth the Vligury don’t seem to be revolting.”

“Of course not.” said David “Yes, we take from their populace but we also provide them with free healthcare, food, clothing, entertainment and homes. They go to slaughter but their lives are happy. It is only the Contravoxai who suffer inequality and artificial scarcity.”

Merle nodded then said “What might it mean if the Vligury were to join the revolution?”

“The mercy of a quick revolution.” said David “If the Vligury refuse to go willingly, if they shout and scream as they go then that will turn things quickly.” David snorted “The drawback of having meat that talks back. Plus the Vligury out number us by a massive scale. Alright we can easily dismember them but they have a society that is already set up to sustain massive casualties and if they can arm themselves enough to blind or disarm us we are entirely at their mercy regardless of their capacity to kill us.”

Merle nodded then said “Well I’m not going to be leading no revolution, I’m just a homeless war veteran who was given the courtesy of a lovely meal in return for delivering this one to you. Enjoy her David, she’s a very sweet young lady.”

David nodded and said “You could join me for dinner? I’m sure I could let you have an arm or a leg.”

Merle chuckled and said “Oh I’ve got quite the feast waiting for me when I get back. I’ll see you around.”

Then Merle left.

Sammy reentered the room and coughed lightly “Hi”

David turned so his legs were heading towards Sammy and he approached her with open tentacles. “Sammy, my dear, it’s been quite a while.”

Sammy chuckled awkwardly “Well I am here on business.”

“I know” said David with a curt nod of his head then he folded his tentacles around Sammy so they lightly brushed her skin “There will be time for that later. Shall we dance?”

Sammy shivered with excitement as she felt the tentacles enfold her, not trapping her, just ready to support her. She checked around for the tentacles that would take the weight of her feet and tentacles that had been positioned to act as support rails. She knew that taking hold of the rails and letting her feet touch tentacle instead of carpet would mean the dance would begin so she smirked and did just that.

Sammy gripped David’s long hard tentacles and felt him tighten his grip about her, strong tentacles hugging her waist and wrapping themselves around her arms. She lifted her left foot tentatively off the carpet and onto the waiting foot rest, tentacles snaked around her ankle and calf, holding her steady. Finally she lifted her right foot off the carpet and David held her tight.

“Thank you” said David and he stroked her hair, smoothing it down, as they talked. He turned on some Contravoxai classical music and proceeded to take Sammy in a kind of waltz as he asked “Do you remember how we met?”

Sammy chuckled as she looked into David’s ring of eye stalks “The great Leader was out on some kind of hunting trip for the anniversary of his ascension to the throne and he stopped for a picnic as one of his bards played the Caspraylas.”

David nodded and felt a tentacle down Sammy’s right arm until it reached her hand “He wanted to teach me about what it meant to rule.” David carefully snapped the little finger of Sammy’s right hand off and tossed it into the gaping mouth atop his head “Does that hurt?”

“No” said Sammy quizzically, there had been no sensation to that at all, just a sudden absence.

“Good” said David as he snapped off the right finger of her right hand.

Sammy mused on this but decided to continue the conversation. “The Great Leader pulled me out of his picnic hamper, as with the rest of his morsels and you decided to dance with me?”

David nodded “I did to to spite my father at first, playing with the Great Leader’s food.”

Sammy chuckled “I rather enjoyed it, you were very sweet.”

David pulled the last two fingers and thumb of her right hand from her body and tossed them into his mouth before he said “I enjoyed it too and I am rather afraid that I started to fall for you.”

Sammy blushed and wiggled the fingers of her left hand as an invitation “I am sorry, you were so young then, I do hope I didn’t turn you into a deviant?”

One of David’s tentacles grabbed Sammy’s left hand gently caressed her fingers as another booped her on the nose “My dear, you saved me that night, saved my soul, you opened my eyes to the obvious truth that Vligury have heart and soul.”

“But I’m not Vligury” said Sammy.

“No” said David as he tossed her remaining fingers and thumbs into his mouth “And that is why I can

love my you and eat you too. You are unique, my dear girl.”

Sammy smirked “Well I’m very flattered. I must admit I do rather- well that is to say that if - in another life - I was yours... I could be very happy.”

“Except this is another life.” said David and he stroked her cheek with a tentacle “You are a copy.”

Sammy blushed and said “Don’t play with your food.”

“I’m not playing” said David as Sammy’s toes disappeared into his mouth “We could be very happy together.”

“I’ll think about it.” said Sammy “But there is someone else.”

David nodded “I understand.” Then he changed subject and asked “What do you want to watch when I’m done with you?”

Sammy shrugged “I don’t normally get a choice, I just sort of get bunged somewhere while I recover.”

“Well that’s not happening this time.” said David “I’ll leave you with the tv, it’s voice operated so you’ll be fine. Just give me a shout if you need anything. I have plenty of alcohol.”

Sammy laughed “Thank you, that’s very kind. I just want us to talk business tomorrow.”

“And we will.” said David, then he felt a tentacle up Sammy’s right thigh until it lightly encircled the leg below the bum. “Now, my dear, before I properly eat I need to know that you are okay with this?”

Sammy chuckled “Of course, but let me feel it.”

David nodded “As you wish.”

Sammy gasped as her right leg was pulled and twisted with such ferocity and muscle and bone were shorn.

“It hurts doesn’t it? I’m so sorry” said David.

Sammy panted and watched him heave her leg inside the cavern of his mouth and longed to bathe in his stomach acid “I am a sylph, boy, I love the pain.”

David chuckled and stroked her cheek “Oh my dear, I did not know.”

Crack Her ankle was disconnected.

Sheeek! Her lower leg was ripped off at the knee.

Pla-Shpoom! Her left leg was torn from her bum.

Sammy panted in exquisite agony as she watched the three pieces of her leg ascend into David’s mouth.

“Thank you” breathed Sammy.

Then Sammy screamed in a delightful ecstasy of pain her arms were torn from her body.

David cradled Sammy in his tentacles and carried her into his living room and a waiting sofa and tv. He stroked her cheek and said “You were delicious as always my dear.”

*

Sammy woke up naked in a large expensively decorated luxurious double bed. She got up from it and studied the room, bookshelves lined with Romance, Fantasy, Crime and Scifi novels. A voice activated large smart TV. A fridge freezer and microwave oven. There was even an ensuite bathroom and shower.

Sammy was about to head into the shower when she noticed the large wooden wardrobe and the dress hanging over a full length mirror.

*

Sammy found David in the kitchen of the large apartment making a Contravoxai Fried Breakfast of various alien meat slabs and strange fruit and vegetables. “Room on your plate for me?” she asked.

David laughed “Oh I have a delightful little marinade planned for you later but for now, we have business to attend to. How did you find your room?”

“My room?” asked Sammy with a laugh “Don’t tell me, you knew I was coming?”

David seemed to think for a second as he focused on frying his breakfast, then he said “No, not as such. I did however suspect that sooner or later you would find the Great Leader’s plate a little dull and I guess I hoped you would come to me. That room has served as the guest room for any passing Vligury but it was designed in hope of you and it is yours if you want it?”

Sammy stared at David “You are kidding me? I knew we, well that there was something but I just thought it was hunger. That room is gorgeous.”

David nodded and plated up his food “Like you, especially in that dress. Do you like it?”

“Well yes” said Sammy, raising her arms and twirling to show off the blue satin dress “I love it but why? I’m just food.”

David shook his head and started shoveling his food into his mouth “You are delicious do not mistake me but you are far more than just another morsel, you are sweet and kind and funny and you have inspired revolution by showing the Contravoxai that Vligury are thoroughly lovable.”

Contravoxai chairs were strange alien things so Sammy took a seat on the table beside him “I’m just a girl who likes to have fun. I’m not intending to cause revolution.

“I know” said David “And that’s why you’re succeeding.” he reached out with a tentacle and stroked her cheek “You are just so... alive! So vibrant and full of passion and joy and fun that you become the reason people watch the great Leader.”

Sammy smiled and grabbed his tentacle. She rubbed her cheek against it.

David stiffened.

Sammy kissed the tip of the tentacle and said “Me and this other person, we’re not exactly exclusive you know.”

Sammy stared at the tentacle curiously and stroked it.

David shivered with excitement “Well I have done some... research. We could have an... experiment?”

Sammy grinned and tentatively licked the tip of the tentacle.

David muttered “I am going to rot in the annows with Mincham for this.”

He reached out with a tentacle and stroked her hair.

Sammy smirked “Oh I am going to have fun with you.”

David chuckled as his tentacle unzipped the back of her dress.

Sammy said “The safe word is kangaroo” then she placed her lips around David’s throbbing tentacle.

*

Sammy stepped out of the shower to find David on a Contravoxai couch and watching a tv show were two contravoxai were talking behind the cover of a sofa as a tall scary contravoxai approached with an axe.

A large metal tub, filled with steaming water, was between David’s legs as his many tentacles chopped and prepared various herbs and vegetables.

“That was an experience” said Sammy with a chuckle.

“Indeed it was” said David with wry amusement “I do hope I proved satisfactory.”

Sammy nodded and closed her eyes “You were... certainly that. But being doused by 36 tentacles? Not so fun.”

David blushed “Sorry.”

Sammy smirked “It’s fine” then she approached the tub “So what’s this? You still want to eat me after that?”

David shrugged “Just a little marinade while we attend to your business, think of it like a hot tub.”

Sammy laughed and climbed in.

David’s tentacles reached in with knives and started slashing at her beneath the water line.

Sammy gasped and asked “What are you doing? I mean, I’m fine with it but what?”

“You can heal” said David “So I am hoping to cut you up just enough that the herbs and spices will infuse with you and that you will have properly healed by the time you’re done marinading. The meat flakes and blood will aid the flavour. Plus I have removed most of your liver because I want you nice and boozy. Just for eating, nothing else, I swear.”

Sammy nodded and said with mock seriousness “Well just so long as you’re getting me boozy so you can eat me. Heaven forbid you buy me a drink before another bout of experimentation.”

David chuckled then said “So, now that you’re marinading, why are you here? What do you need me for?”

“There’s a man...” said Sammy.

David nodded “What kind? Contravoxai or Vligury?”

“Human” said Sammy “Like me. His whole world has been razed to the ground by your people. He would be dead if not for me.”

“So you want me to get him to safety?” said David.

“He’s safe now” said Sammy “More or less. I need you to contact someone who can take him to a world where humanity still lives and thrives. I want him freed from this madness to live as a normal person again.”

“You love him, don’t you?” said David.

Sammy fell silent and felt the sides of the tub. She may not be bathing in stomach acid but it was close enough to let her feel safe. “Yes.” she admitted.

David stroked her cheek compassionately “Except you aren’t real are you? You’re a copy. Sammy loves this man, Sammy wants him safe and would do anything for him but you aren’t her, not really?”

Sammy swallowed “She deserves him, not me. I’m just an asset to be thrown away and disposed of.”

“Well I love you” said David “Now what do you need?”

“A phone” said Sammy.

“You came all this way for a phone?” asked David.

“It needs to not be traceable.” said Sammy.

David nodded then he got up to fetch a phone.

Sammy stared at her reflection and said “Look after him, won’t you? I know I was just a means to an end but I love him just as much as you.”

David returned with a phone and handed it to Sammy.

Sammy dialed and a male voice answered:

“Hello, Frederick Hamish Pearson speaking. Seghat piloting, person taming and monster killing at an hourly rate, how may I help you?”

Sammy said “Frederick, it’s me Sammy. I don’t know if you remember Anthony’s wedding...”

“Oh yeah” said the voice at the other end enthusiastically “You are the cute little thing that volunteered to not only be my toy but also my pet. I had a lot of fun with you. Last I heard Anthony had decided to turn you into a statue in his hall of heroes after that Spranghurst job. What’s changed?”

“Well you recall how I had a copy of myself join the other Anthony at the Contravoxai banquet?” asked Sammy.

“Oh bless you” said Frederick “Staying with your Master, even if it means climbing into the frying pan. How’s that working out for you? I might pop round for dinner, see how you are.”

“Thanks, that’d be nice.” said Sammy “But I actually need to ask a favour. I need someone taken to Choice World and the care of Anthony.”

“And how are you going to pay me?” asked Frederick.

“Pay you?” asked Sammy, confused.

“Don’t get me wrong, you’re a lovely girl, Sammy” said Frederick “It’s just that I already own you. So I don’t... Well you’ve got nothing to offer me have you?”

Sammy stammered “I-I-I need help. Just help me, please?”

“Sammy, I’m a mercenary and you want me to smuggle someone out of a Contravoxai mothership, without payment, you are having a laugh.” said Frederick.

David took the phone from Sammy and said “You are distressing my marinade, explain yourself.”

Frederick laughed “Calling for help as she’s being marinated? God, I love that girl. Anyway my fine gentlemen the point of the matter is that you lot are scary and I don’t work for free.”

David nodded “I see”

Sammy mouthed “What’s he saying?”

David handed Sammy a glass of brown liquid.

Sammy reached out to grab the glass and David casually snapped off her little finger and dropped it into the marinade.

David said “What if I could make sure you were safe on the Comtravoxai ship?”

Frederick mused “How?”

“Well a little birdie tells me there’s going to be a revolution and one way or another I’m going to be in a position to influence the society that emerges. You help out my Sammy and I will see that you can hunt any Contravoxai, Vligury or human on this ship that you can convince to willingly go with with you and I will personally serve Sammy up to you by way of thanks.” said David.

Frederick thought for a long moment then said “That is a very big promise so I am not going to dick you about. I’ll do this one regardless but if ever you need me, so long as your end stands, I’m your man. Oh and break Sammy’s legs for me, cheek of her asking me to do something for nothing.”

“Deal” said David then he hung up the phone and tossed it onto the couch as he reached his tentacles under the water.

Sammy gasped “What was that for?”

“Your man is getting a lift to Choice World” said David then he topped up Sammy’s glass and said “Now drink my love and be oh so merry.”

Sammy grinned and knocked back the drink then she grimaced “Quite the kick”

David nodded “Because I want you to have quite the kick” then he leaned back and watched his tv show as Sammy marinated and got obscenely drunk.

*

I was at the bar drinking a pint of blood as Roxy and Fiora cooed over my hatchling.

Lisa had been forbidden from going of the spit in case word arrived about leaving so she compromised with Eliza and was being carefully carved up to provide the most meat without affecting her ability to walk run or think.

Amy had already let us know that she was staying and so she was on the spit instead.

Charlotte was taking advantage of Amy’s turn on the spit but was keeping an ear to the ground, in case it came time to say goodbye.

Eliza was busy serving punters but I saw her watching me carefully when she could. I suppose she worried for me. I knew she would be happy though, happy to have Helga to herself again.

David arrived and turned his legs to face in Fiora and Roxy’s direction “Well if this isn’t a delightful sight, a sweet little lesbian couple. I was feeling rather hungry.”

I reached behind the bar pulled out the plasma rifle and stood between David and my friends. “Oi! Fucko! These are not for eating!”

Fiora added “And we’re pansexual, not lesbian.”

“That too” I said.

I tried to stare down the creature. Not easy when it has more eyes than you can easily count or calculate, then again I always was bad at maths.

The creature chuckled “You’re Sammy’s boy, aren’t you?”

“What?” I said.

The creature elaborated “The one Sammy rescued and created a copy of herself to see escape, you are the man who is going to bring about revolution.”

I shook my head “I just want to live my life in peace.”

“Steven Banks, the man who lived” said the creature “Yes, I see now, why she chose you. A true hero aren’t you?”

I stared at him open mouthed in incomprehension then asked “Who are you?”

“I am David. Or at least that is what humans and Vligury call me. I am next in line for the throne and my uncle is the great Leader of the Contravoxai and I am also the man who has secured you safe passage out of here.” said the creature.

“It’s true!” said Merle, running in the pub then panting to catch his breath “I was at his naming, this is the man who is going to see that the revolution happens smoothly.”

“Right...” I said “And where’s Sammy?”

David froze, thinking desperately before finally exclaiming “Marinading!”

“She’s coming with me.” I said. “This whole thing was her idea.”

David nodded carefully, his tentacles waving carefully in the air to show his nervous supplication “It was but she’s mine now.”

“Uh-huh” I said and steadied the plasma rifle “And just why is that?”

David was looking around frantically, as if for some kind of advantage. “Because she’s a submissive woman. She likes the pain, likes the feeling of helplessness and being dominated by someone she trusts. She’s a fucking food animal. You think she’s going to settle down with you and have 2.4 children? You think she’s going to cook the turkey on Christmass day? She is the turkey and I love her for that.”

I lowered the rifle. “You love her?”

David nodded “I know it’s wrong. She’s a... humanoid. I’m supposed to find her disgusting, it’s supposed to be like bestiality to be with her. I eat her for Leader’s sake and I love the taste of her flesh but I also love her heart and soul. She is the sweetest, kindest, most adorable and delicious thing in existence. I can’t part with her. I just can’t.”

I stared at him.

Merle patted a compassionate tentacle against my shoulder and muttered something about star crossed lovers.

I swallowed and nodded “Look I’m not a Vligury and I’m not a Contravoxai, to me you are all fucking weird but you are right she does love it and that is a part of her I can’t share in but you can... Look after her for me and remember that no matter how much she may enjoy... what you do together, she is a person and deserves to be treated as an equal.”

Carla announced suddenly “Take me with you.”

Helga had Carla on the end of a tight leash in a gimp suit as she stopped by to check on the bar but Carla had spat out the ball gag to make the announcement.

Helga was stunned into silence.

Carla said “Sammy is my best friend, if you are going to eat her for all eternity, you’re taking me as well.”

David looked to Helga.

Helga reluctantly nodded.

In a few moments David had stripped Carla of the suit.

Lisa ran to join her.

Carla shook her head and kissed Lisa.

Lisa looked imploringly into Carla’s eyes “Where you go, I go.”

Carla looked into her eyes and said “I’m sorry but you’ll get over me, you need attention. Stay with Steve, I’m sure Anthony’s got a copy of me somewhere.”

I stared at Carla “Are you sure? You shouldn’t have to separate.”

Carla looked to me and said “I love her very much but she’s just a toy. There are so many of her out there, she doesn’t need me. You can give her what she needs I’m sure.”

Lisa looked to me, tears streaming down her face and I hugged her “It’ll be alright” I said, not really believing it myself.

I saw Eliza take Helga’s hand tentatively and watched the older woman shift her attention to her employee. Eliza winked at me.

Then reality seemed to rend in two as a great gale started up out of nowhere and with a great stammering “Sh!” a rickety wooden shed materialised into existence. in the center of the pub. A man in

a ridiculous mismatched suit stepped out.

“Who the fuck are you?” I asked.

“Frederick Hamish Pearson, at your service.” said the man as he surveyed the room “Now which onme of you is David and which one is Steven.”

“Steven” I said with a wave.

“David” said David as he quietly began dismembering Carla.

Charlotte charged down the stairs and said “I’m not too late am I?”

“And who might you be?” asked Frederick.

“Charlotte” she said between pants.

Frederick grinned “A lady contravoxai, I might have to remember you, always did like a challenge.”

Charlotte brushed psast him, sending him tumbling into Roxy and Fiora.

“So this is goodbye?” she said, extending a tentacle.

I shook it “Looks like it. Look after Amy won’t you? Make sure she has always a home to go to and a friend to turn to should this get a bit much for her.”

“Of course” she said “And I’ll make sure Eliza sees the occasional sunlight and the Lucys are well kept.”

I smirked.

She said “You look after your hatchling okay? And get a hobby, one that doesn’t involve drinking.”

I nodded then said “You know in a way, I almost regret that you never got a chance to taste me.”

She laughed and pulled me into a hug then she handed me a card “My multiversal coordinates, incase you fancy stopping by once you’ve got the cure...”

I laughed and patted what felt like her back.

Carla smiled at Charlotte then hugged me herself. “I better go” she said raising her fingerless left hand “David’s getting a little peckish.”

A tentacle lashed out and her hand disappeared.

Carla smirked then said “Remember plsay with Lisa everyday, she needs lots of attention and live a good life yeah, you deserve it.”

“You too” I said as a tentacle stole her left arm away entirely “Or at least whatever passes for a good

life by your standards.”

Carla laughed and she was lifted bodily into the air carefully dissected so she would heal and not accidentally create a clone then placed into some kind of plastic bag that was then sealed and placed inside David’s mouth.

“She’ll be perfectly fine.” said David “They both will and for what it’s worth I wish you the best of luck in finding love and happiness in the future.”

I nodded and went to get my hatchling.

Fiora said “See you around sometime yeah, make sure you get us that cure.”

I smirked and hugged her “Don’t worry Merle’s a good egg, you’re safe.”

Roxy tutted “Fiora, don’t put pressure on the lad. Just go forward in all your beliefs Steven and prove to us that we are not mistaken in ours though to tell you the truth I’m quite looking forward to being eaten now. Your girls have made it look such fun.”

I hugged her and said “Thank you, both of you, you gave me hope and friendship when I had so very little. Enjoy yourselves however things turn out.”

They smiled at me and Frederick caught my eye “Cute aren’t they?”

I smirked “Yes. Yes, they are, what of it?”

Frederick leaned between Roxy and Fiora, spreading his arms round the backs of each “How would you like to be my toys?”

Fiora said “We’ve um rather got a date with destiny.” and she pointed at Merle

“I can copy you” said Frederick “And I can even save the data in the memory buffer, should anything happen the yours as you are now could be printed out fresh.”

“And what would their being toys entail?” I asked, figuring that couple of girls heading merrily to the slaughter were unlikely to care to ask such a question.

“I will, with their consent, tame them to the point of complete and total subservience and submissiveness.” said Frederick “No agency whatsoever by the time I’m done but don’t worry they’ll be immortal with mental failsafes to prevent And I Must Scream scenarios and will utterly enjoy every moment of it.”

I stared at him.

Roxy giggled “Sounds fun.”

Fiora mused “Certainly would be an interesting experience.”

David said “You can’t actually stop him. he’s technically got a license to tame anybody including me.”

I sighed “Well I can’t stop you”

“Then lets enter the ship.” said Frederick as he led Fiora and Roxy inside.

My hatchling yawned and asked “Is it time to go?”

“Yes” I said and I gave her a friendly stroke then secured my leash to her collar.

Lisa took my hand and said “Lead on MacDuff.”

I stared at her “You know Shakespeare?”

She smirked “I was a university student before I was tamed.”

Eliza said “Hey”

I turned to look at her and she was handing me a fresh bottle of Passthrough Brandy “Takes a lot to get a wereshark drunk, especially if you don’t remove the liver. Take this.”

I smiled.

Lisa took the brandy for me as I currently had my hands full.

“Thank you” I said.

“No, thank you” said Eliza “And sorry about the whole leading you to your death thing but orders are orders.”

“Don’t mention it.” I said.

Helga gave me a curious look then said “You have challenged my authority, made my colleagues unreasonably chippy and been mean to my customers so I really do hope that you will go away for good but for what it’s worth I have had the most fantastic time since you’ve been here and business has boomed. Now go away and never ever return.”

I smirked and said “Look after Eliza, I think she’s missed you”

Then I turned and walked into the shed with my hatchling and Lisa.

*

The shed was much much bigger on the inside with a mushroom shaped center console and a general art deco appearance. A coffin sized trunk lay in one part of the room and a large cage containing several scantily clad women filled a large portion of the room.

“Remember that trunk” said Frederick to Fiora and Roxy “That’s where I’ll throw you when I get bored of you.”

They nodded appreciatively.

“Ah!” said Frederick, turning to look at me “I would recognise that look of disdain anywhere. Come on, I don’t want you getting lost in here.”

The five of us followed Frederick through many long corridors until at last we got to an area that looked much darker and more industrial. There were two sealed off chambers with glass walls and doors.

“Now, it works like Star Trek, person goes in booth one, is scanned and then materialises in booth two. The difference is that the original does not get destroyed, so Fiora, Roxy, into booth one please and close your eyes.” said Frederick.

Fiora and Roxy entered booth one and closed their eyes.

Frederick moved to a console situated between the doors to the two booths and started the sequence.

There was a sound like a klaxon and strobing lights as the doors to both booths were locked and the scanning commenced. After a minute Frederick’s hands danced across the console and a second Fiora and Roxy materialised from thin air in booth 2. The klaxon noise died down and the strobing stopped then the doors were unlocked.

Frederick moved to open the door to booth two and he touched Fiora and Roxy. They opened their eyes and turned to him.

“Which ones are we?” asked Fiora.

“Food or toys?” asked Roxy.

Frederick grinned ecstatically “Oh you are mine, my pretty little toys.”

Roxy blushed “This is going to be fun.”

Fiora asked “So what happens now?”

“You stay here and wait for me to do what I will with you, your real selves have to be escorted out along with that boy and his girls.” said Frederick “Tame you later.”

Fiora smirked.

Roxy looked to Fiora and said “I think I know how we can pass the time.”

Fiora grinned.

Frederick opened booth 1 and then led the real Fiora and Roxy with me, my hatchling and Lisa back to the control room.

We hugged then Fiora and Roxy left.

Frederick danced around the console, pulling levers and pushing buttons until at last with a flourish we landed and he strode out the door.

I followed with Lisa and the hatchling to find a tall man in a three piece suit reclining in an armchair as he smoked a pipe and read a copy of Doctor Who Magazine.

The seated man glared over the top of his magazine at Frederick “Freddy, do you recall the words I said when last we met?”

Frederick nodded “Leave now and never come back or so help me I will possess your body and force you to watch helpless as you skin yourself alive.”

“Did you think I was bluffing?” asked the seated man very calmly.

“No” said Frederick “But I’m being paid very well and this job comes from Sammy.”

“Sammy is dead” said the seated man with a finality that made my heart sink.

“You forget the copy she had join the contravoxai.” said Frederick.

“And how does a submissive woman who gets eaten alive every day have the ability to pay you?” asked the seated man.

“She doesn’t” said Frederick “But she knows someone who does and... well lets just say he has a very fine reason for wanting to help her out.”

“Oh?” asked the seated man.

Frederick coughed then announced with as much pomp and circumstance as he could muster “May I present Steven Banks, lone survivor of the Contravoxai and rival for the dear girl’s heart.”

“Ah” said the seated man, placing a bookmark in his Doctor Who magazine and rising to his seat. “She wants him gone because she loves him and your paymaster wants him gone for the exact same reason, I see now. Very well, you may leave with your skin in tact.”

“Thank you kindly” said Frederick before running inside the shed and leaving sharpish.

I stared at the tall man and swallowed “Can you really... do that?”

He nodded then said “I am Anthony Maxwell Jago. I used to be like you. Human, then things happened when I moved here to Choice World and I became harder, tougher. I was eaten alive trying to send a message to the Contravoxai, a message of peace, and then something happened, something bad and I had to sacrifice myself to the Contravoxai, you may have seen me there. I left my heart with someone I trusted and that was when I learned I had passed the test to become Sheriff of Choice World and I have power the likes of which you could scarcely imagine.”

“Then why didn’t you save yourself?” I asked.

Anthony shook his head “If I did that not only would I risk creating war where could be peace but I

would be saving one life in return for many. The me on the Contravoxai ship is practically immortal, countless Vligury are saved just by he being there to be eaten instead.”

My hatchling asked “Do you have a sylph pill?”

Anthony regarded her for a moment then tickled her chin “Lucy isn’t it? I swear I’ve got my own of you, I think Yrgritte is just playing with her now. Why do you need a sylph pill?”

“She doesn’t.” I said “Sammy saved me by turning me into a wereshark, I’ve been surviving, keeping my sanity, by drinking Lucy’s blood.”

“Oh! Oh, my poor baby, are you alright, Lucy?” said Anthony.

Lucy shrugged “It’s better than the war and being eaten alive by the Contravoxai every day.”

Lisa sniffed “Some of us like that okay?”

Anthony gazed off into the distance, as if remembering something, then said “You chose to stay with me didn’t you? You sacrificed yourself so I might have company. Oh, I am sorry.”

I said “Actually, she’s a hatchling. Obviously none of the girls could leave so they just gave me their hearts as clones to help me but the people who looked after me rather took a shine to the umm original clone and consider it helpful to have an egg layer I suppose, I raised this hatchling myself.”

“Aww” said Anthony and he stroked Lucy’s hair as one might the coat of a labrador “You’re properly imprinted on him now aren’t you?”

Lucy grinned.

“Right, well I can certainly find you a sylph pill but who are you going to imprint on?” asked Anthony.

I stared at him.

“Well we can make lab grown sylph blood so you’ve got time.” said Anthony “Meanwhile who is this little thing?”

Lisa laughed “You can’t recognise me because of the carvings can you? And I suppose we didn’t really meet much...”

Anthony smiled weakly “Well I was trying not to mention that.”

“It’s Lisa” said Lisa with a laugh “Remember your wedding?”

“Oh of course” said Anthony with a sudden grin “I was worried but you... did you say you like it?”

Lisa grinned “Very much. I know this seems like a long shot but is there anyway I might be eaten here?”

Anthony thought for a second then said “It’s possible, I’ll have a word with Yrgritte, see if she can’t

whip something up for you?”

Lisa beamed.

I said “Umm.. a bit of context please?”

“Oh, yes. Of course you weren’t there, were you?” said Anthony “When I got married it was sort of a big thing, the contravoxai visited as guests and so did the elder god Bam-Kursh. She technically owns all Lisa’s in existence. Literally patented her genome, look, mind and soul. This is largely so the Bam-Kursh can sell her toys but the upshot of which is that any universe with a naturally born Lisa in it that joins the United Civilizations of the Multiverse, that’s a peacekeeping thing like the EU, is then subject to its laws and patents and thus trillions of real naturally occurring Lisa’s are quietly apprehended. I believe the majority are now allowed to continue their lives but every now and again the Bam-Kursh decides to enforce her rights and on my wedding day not only did she give me a couple to use as I wished but she also gave one to the Contravoxai.”

“Right...” I said “And who’s Yrgritte and how can she help Lisa with her umm... desires.”

“She’s my wife” said Anthony “And a charicthy, a kind of sentient shark from a different universe. She is as we speak using our Lisa as target practise in her breaching pool. You’re kind of lucky you got me to be honest, my wife would have taken full advantage of you as it is I merely want you to be happy, as I wish all people. So take a seat, I will fetch your Lucy some kibble and see if I can’t help your Lisa end the day in someone’s belly.”

“Right...” I said, taking a seat in his armchair.

Lisa grinned and strode off with Anthony.

Lucy took a seat between my legs and said “Massage me.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Because I want to bliss out at your hands and I think you need the distraction.” said Lucy.

I sighed “I shall have to get used to having a pet that’s smarter than me, won’t I?”

Lucy shrugged “Not necessarily. If Frederick can tame Fiora and Roxy into being utterly obedient and passive toys, you can tame me into being a bit thick.”

“Would that be right?” I asked.

Lucy sighed “I don’t mind either way, I just want you to be happy and if your being happy means lowering my IQ score by a few points then so be it. I mean lets face it you’ve already drunk my blood, bit late to worry about morality.”

I laughed bitterly and started massaging her shoulders and neck.

Anthony arrived with my bottle of Passthrough Brandy and a large glass of something red and frothing. “Lisa is now in my wife’s very capable hands. I’ll see that she is cleaned and returned to you when she

recovers from Yrgritte's culinary experimentation. She had this on her person incidentally, said it was yours. I thought you might need it so I've made you a bloody mary with artificial sylph's blood, should keep you sane and ruin even a wereshark's sobriety but I can remove your liver as well if you think you need it."

I chuckled and waved away his offer "Thank you but I think my liver is fine just where it is thanks."

He nodded, smiling and plonked the boody mary and Passthrough Brandy on a table beside the armchair. He returned a moment later with a cat bowl full of pet food.

Lucy stared at it "Umm, I hope you don't really expect me to eat that?"

Anthony laughed and ruffled her hair before pulling up an armchair so he could sit opposite us "No, not yet anyway but it is the brand my Amy likes and like you she turns her nose up at it when lucid, only to prefer it to a steak when suitably tame."

Lucy mused "It would seem my stomach depends upon my Master's ability to bliss me out."

I snorted "I raised you from a tiny little thing, have faith."

Lucy nodded.

"So?" said Anthony "Tell me about yourself? Who did my Sammy fall for?"

I stared at him and took a large gulp of the bloody mary "I was... lucky. Smart kind in a poor part of town. I was good with numbers, made money doing things I'm not proud of. My parents could see the potential both, good and bad, so they sent me to a good college and university with what little they could save and I landed the dream job, hedgefund manager."

I snorted "Even after the recession I was free to wheel and deal and get proper minted. Then the world ended in fire and death."

"I'm sorry" said Anthony, quite sincerely.

I almost laughed at the madness of it all. "Aliens, fucking aliens. I thought it would be depression or drugs or an economic crash? A nuclear war or just a really bad third world war? And of course with Climate Change and the ever growing resource scarcity and growing inequality as a kind of ticking clock to the apocalypse but never ever aliens."

He looked me in the eyes "What was it like?"

"A nightmare." I said, closing my eyes as the images came to the fore of my mind "Great saucers dropping out of the sky and these things emerging like eldritch spiders. They have teeth in their arses you know? And they fly by vomiting up this bat like thing in their stomachs."

I looked him in the eyes. "They were merciless. Any sign of resistance and they ate you alive. Women, children, even pets. They wouldn't even chew the babies, just straight into their cavernous mouth/stomach/thing filled with acid. Digested alive."

Anthony shook his head “They told me they would stop harvesting worlds like that.”

“Oh did they?” I said “Because everyone who has ever shown me kindness has either died to them, is about to die to them or gets eaten alive by them for fun.”

“I’m sorry” said Anthony “I shall have to speak to them about this.”

“Speak to them?” I said “I want their great leader dead. I want him screaming for mercy, I want him begging for just one more chance at life and then I want to show him the mercy his kind has shown everyone I know, including you, I might add.”

Anthony glared at me “I understand that you are scared and angry, that you have lost a very great deal, but I will make this VERY clear. I will not help you commit an act of murder and retribution, I will not help you start a war or a revolution, I am a man of peace.”

I spat “A man of peace capable of possessing someone’s mind and making them flay their own skin?”

“Yes” said Anthony with eerie calmness “I have bad days Steve and you better hope you never meet me on one. I will take you wherever you want to go and allow you to use whatever resources are in my power to give you here but I will not go with you to commit murder.”

I nodded “Fine. I suppose the Doctor was right, pacifism is an entirely amiable position until there’s bunch genocidal megalomaniacs in your way.”

Anthony looked at me oddly “You know Who?”

I snorted “Had to do something with my money before the world ended didn’t I? It was either join a cult or find religion or become a nerd. I opted for the one marginally less likely to see me killing someone for their different beliefs.”

Anthony snorted “Clearly still a noob then.”

I smirked.

We fell silent and I sipped my bloody merry as I massaged Lucy. She started purring and I let her off her leash. She crawled over to the cat bowl rammed her face into the pet food as she started eating.

I watched her eat and felt a pang of nostalgia for my little sylph really had grown up and she was still my puppy. I muttered under my breath “My life is so fucked up.”

“I could make things easier for you?” said Anthony “I’m afraid you’re stuck with Lucy and umm... the awkwardness of keeping a grown woman as a pet. Believe me, I know that angst, had a toy that was someone from a universe I had experience as fiction. So much angst. Anyway she’s off travelling now, quite happy I believe, but mine never imprinted on me.”

I chuckled “No, I know, I wouldn’t want to get rid of her anyway, I love her. Even if I do wonder what the fuck my life is now.”

“Well you’re a hedgefund manager in a post scarcity society.” said Anthony “Things aren’t going to be

the same but I do have a spare house you can live in for a few weeks. I'll have Yrgritte see Lisa is properly - Shall we say 'taken care of'?- each day and we can meet up for drinks and to walk our sylphs. Maybe when the shock of all this has worn off a bit we can discuss Sammy."

I looked at him and I wanted to know so much, so very much, yet I was also tired so I said "I just want a bed, some crunchy nut, a good curry and netflix, is that possible?"

Anthony grinned "Oh I think we can manage that. Enjoy your stay here in Choice World, Steve."

I nodded and sipped my drink.

*

The house was a short walk away and looked like a cottage. So twee and chocolate boxy but inside was a large three floored house with dedicated bathrooms, shower rooms and toilet rooms. I found a large room with a double bed opposite a large tv, let Lucy off her leash again and threw myself onto the bed.

I woke up drenched in my own drool and sweat, aching all over.

Lucy entered the room dressed in jeans and a tshirt.

I groaned, brain still warming up after the night before.

Lucy laughed and said "If I were you I would get a shower pretty darn quick. Lisa's waiting downstairs and she nearly tried it on with me."

I laughed and ended up having coughing fit. Eventually, wheezing, I said "I think I'll have that shower."

"Yeah..." said Lucy smirking.

*

The shower woke me up and I found a suit to slip into. A tad formal but it was clean and it fit.

I headed downstairs and found Lisa lying stretched out on a large sofa in just a short pink skirt and crop top.

Lisa grinned when she saw me "You look yummy"

I stared at her "Coming from you, that's scary."

Lisa chuckled "Yrgritte is a very kind and sensitive devourer." then she added as an afterthought "Carla would love her" and her face darkened.

I took a seat on a stool beside her and said "Lucy says you tried it on with her."

Lisa smirked "She's the Farsh-nuke's favourite you know? I can see why. Those slender fingers..."

I looked at her pointedly "Lisa she's my puppy you understand, I don't want you playing games with

her.”

“But I’m your toy” said Lisa then she seemed to remember something and said “That’s why I’m dressed like this actually, apparently it’s my proper default clothing for being a toy. She said it should help me get into the mood, that I should wean myself off being eaten.”

I stared at her and sighed “A toy huh? And I thought my life couldn’t get any weirder.”

Lisa frowned then asked “Can we fuck?”

“Pardon?” I said.

“It doesn’t have to mean anything” said Lisa “And anyway me and Carla were never exclusive and you and Sammy never...”

“Okay, I’m not having this conversation anymore.” I said and I got up to leave.

Lisa sighed.

The doorbell rang and I went to answer it.

There standing in the doorway were Amy and Carla.

Amy was dressed in a plaid flannel shirt and jeans with shoulder length ginger hair and Carla was wearing a short skirt and a tank top with her blond hair tied back in a ponytail.

“Hi” I said.

Amy laughed “Yeah, versions of us were given to the Contravoxai on Anthony’s wedding day so I apologise if this is eerie. I am Amy Sullivan, or at least a copy that was made and given to Anthony when he arrived in Choice World as his welcome gift come tour guide. I’m a sylph, Anthony said me and your Lucy should get acquainted so you can go walking us together. This is the original Carla.”

Carla waved “Hi.”

“Tamed on a one night stand after his first run in with the Contravoxai, she’s a toy. Anthony hopes she can help your Lisa.” said Amy.

“Right...” I said “Word of warning, Lisa is very horny right now and Carla you look exactly like her recently ex-lover.”

“Awesome!” said Carla “Can we come in?”

“Oh and by the way she comes with an off switch.” said Amy pulling out something that looked like a tv remote and pressing a button.

Carla froze.

“She’s perfectly safe like this. Her conscious mind just isn’t on.” said Amy before turning Carla back

on.

Carla blinked, looked to Amy then grinned at me.

“Right...” I said and stood aside to let the women in.

Carla strode past and headed into the living room to meet with Lisa.

Amy stayed with me “Look, obviously I’m... a pet... and so kind of in a subservient position here but while I am lucid I am probably one of the most knowledgeable people about Choice World that you are going to meet so this is a memory gun and this is a quantum oscillator, the one will explain how to use the other. The Contravoxai are vile so if you want to take them down this will help.”

“Thank you.” I said.

“No problem” said Amy “Just make sure you have plenty of kibble and after, lets say, 3 hours come and bliss me and Lucy out so we can enjoy it.”

Amy looked to be about to go then she added “Oh and don’t freak out if you see me and Lucy rutting when we’re blissed out. We’re sylphs, even if we’re not lucid we’re still us, it’s only a problem if someone who is lucid gets involved.”

Then she disappeared upstairs.

I shook my head and went to find a computer, it looked and functioned reassuringly similar to computers from my world even though it was noticeably faster and more powerful. I researched the memory gun to feel certain it wouldn’t actually kill me then I pointed the barrel between my eyes and pulled the trigger. I now knew almost everything about the Quantum Oscillator and indeed I even knew what I did not know and that the reason I did not know it was because such knowledge would be too dangerous.

I practised doing cheap tricks with my quantum oscillator and had soon created a kind of pokeball to keep Lisa in. It was a modified infinite bag with a tennis ball sized hared spherical exterior that could absorb things into it at the push of a button and beam them out at the push of a different button. I had designed the inside to be like the inside of the house and added a hamster-esque exercise wheel just to see if I could then I got bored and noticed that had all 56 seasons of Doctor Who on Netflix so I started bingewatching my favourite Doctors.

3 hours later I went to my bedroom and found Amy and Lucy chatting over mugs of tea.

Amy smiled at me when I entered.

Lucy noticed me a moment later and said “Amy tells me you now own a Quantum Oscillator.”

I nodded “A very interesting device but if you don’t mind I have some Doctor Who to binge watch.”

“Don’t forget to drink your Sylph blood.” said Lucy.

I looked at her curiously, wondering if this was code for “Please slit my neck before this woman.”

Amy removed the need for an answer to the conundrum by saying “Oh I almost forgot, there should be a soft drink dispenser in one of the kitchens that’s been programmed to pump out artificial sylph blood.”

I nodded “Thanks, I’ll have to have a look into that.”

Then I approached Amy and gave her a preliminary neck massage so I could whisper “Still sure about this?”

Lucy was giving me a dirty look, clearly annoyed that I was clitblocking her. “Is there anything you particularly need Steven?”

Amy grinned and whispered “Yes, do it. I’m ready.”

I circled round to Lucy and whispered “Trust me, you’ll get what you want.”

Lucy blissed out in just a few minutes.

Amy watched the whole thing with Voyeuristic fascination and Lucy was certainly aware of this but seemed okay with it.

Amy herself took a little longer to bliss out owing to my lack of experience with her but it didn’t take too long so I left the blissed out puppies to get better acquainted while I routed out the artificial sylph blood. I decided to binge watch Doctor Who somewhere else to give them privacy.

Six hours later there came a ring on the doorbell and I answered it. A short powerful looking woman with flame red hair was holding a large bag between her clasped hands.

“Ah Steven, we meet at last.” she said “Allow me to introduce myself, I am Yrgritte and you... are very welcome to join my household in any subservient capacity you may wish. I could use a new footstall.”

I swallowed nervously “Umm.”

Yrgritte held up the carrier bag “One Chicken Tikka Masala with Pilau Rice, Saag Aloo, Naan Bread, chips and a large box of Kelloggs Crunchy Nut. As you wanted.”

“Thank you” I said with a large appreciative grin as I took the bag “But you aren’t just here to deliver my curry are you?”

Yrgritte shook her head and chuckled “I am here for my toy and my takeaway.”

I looked blankly at her until I realised what she meant “So you really eat her?”

Yrgritte shrugged “I’m a Charicthy, darling, and humans are such beastly creatures when it comes to my kind. Kind of nice to have them on the menu for a change and she is so very sweet about it. You know she even insists I take her internal organs after she’s recovered on the understanding that she’ll swiftly replace them? Of course Anthony thinks the entire thing is simply ghastly but he never got the hang of the idea that consent makes something okay.”

I nodded and I headed into the downstairs living room to find Lisa and Carla naked in a position that I would never even have thought possible before.

I blinked and said “You may need to wash her before you eat her.”

Yrgritte nodded then said loudly “Girls, I need you!”

The... activity... continued for a moment more then they sheepishly stood before Yrgritte.

“Shower, now.” said Yrgritte and they hurried off.

Then Yrgritte turned to me and said “Don’t worry about them, I know my way around girls, you just enjoy your curry dear and remember my door is always open to a submissive youngster.”

I nodded then decided to eat my curry before Doctor Who.

*

I slept in a bed that night and had sleep that was strangely untroubled. My world had collapsed over night in alien madness but my nightmares of very real vents blurred with memories of binge watching Doctor Who such that I didn’t feel afraid. There was screaming, there was suffering but through it all was hope, hope represented by a strange man in an odd suit saying “No More”

I woke to find Amy and Lucy either side of me, both thankfully fully dressed.

Lucy said “Amy explained about yesterday so I just wanted to say thank you. I was right to trust you.”

“Right...” I said

“I was thinking that Lucy could join me over at Anthony’s I mean I can’t stay away long, he’ll miss me but I... well I like her.” said Amy.

Lucy blushed asked “You won’t be lonely will you? You’ve been through a lot.”

“Go” I said “I have tv and I have food.”

And that’s how the week passed.

The sylphs blissing out at mine and Anthony’s on alternate days and Lisa exploring the fully value of the original Carla before Yrgritte explored the various ways in which to enjoy Lisa’s flesh and I - I binge watched tv series on netflix and ate curries everyday. I mean I’m a wereshark, I can heal fully from a single beating heart and I have three of them, fat does not scare me any more and it’s a post scarcity society where money and regulated capitalism exists as a kind of risk free incentive system to encourage people to follow their dreams and let a stable popular culture develop. If I wanted this to be my life until the end of time, I could.

Do you maybe see the flaw in the logic there? The fly in the proverbial oyster?

I was a smart kid from a rough part of town and I lost good friends even before the aliens came, it's how I remained so relatively calm. Then I got eaten alive, fell hopelessly in love, became a vampire to stave off the insanity of being a wereshark, became good friends with people who like to be eaten for kicks and aliens who liked to eat people, oh and I now had a pet woman and my saviour's wife looked at me like I was a slab of meat just waiting to be devoured.

How the fuck do you return to normality after that? I didn't even have a job any more, didn't have a government to hate, bigots to complain about or poor people to distance myself from. I mean Choice World wasn't perfect what with the vampires and wandering elder gods and logicios vanishing people but they all were only allowed to operate because their 'victims' utterly consented.

There were problems that in some sense made the problems of my world seem small. The Great Unending Septagonoid War for the safety of the multiverse. The Bam-Kursh's imperial conquest of universes into joining the United Civilisations of the Multiverse, the apparently civilised attempt at protecting the multiverse without recourse to the elder gods or their followers. The bigotry and sadism of the Logicios, the Great Farsh-nuke's massive army of superpowered supernerds who did by and large actually keep the multiverse safe but were all in all complete dicks about it.

Except that in my world the anger and fear was impotent and you could do nothing about it so instead it reminded you that life was worth living because it was all so fleeting and horrible for so many that you enjoyed what small wonders you could and were thankful.

Here I lived without fear, I was utterly protected, utterly free to live my life however I wished and if I got angry about the state of the multiverse I could become a Logicio or an Architect of Chaos even sign up to be a host for a dislocated eldergod who would know how to fight or I could just find a Seghat or buy one or find someone who was willing to let me turn them into one and then go off having adventures by myself without training or backup. I could even slowly build myself a multiverse travelling ship that wasn't powered by a sylph enlightened to the point of transcending into being logic and energy.

I had no strings to hold me down, no chains to bind me, I could leave the Platonic Cave and I had absolutely no fucking clue what to do with that infinite potential before me. Except for the knowledge that as a former hedgefund manager I was going to make damn certain I did not waste the potential presented to me.

I discussed this with Anthony when we went walking our sylphs together. Lucy and Amy were clearly quite close by now as even blissed out, walking as pups on all fours at the end of our leashes, they stuck close by each other and indeed I did accidentally find myself observing some quite canine rutting once or twice.

Anthony suggested I consider joining a vampire guild or finding a suitable person to imprint on and be a pet sylph to. He said that clearly my burdens were how I preferred to be directed in life and that my wereshark bloodlust and its mastery was one burden that both genuinely needed addressing and might be taken advantage of to provide direction.

Well after the sack of my worlds I was not about to become some monstrous vampire. Besides, it was too easy as I had in my possession a woman who regarded herself as my pet and happily let me drink from her and a woman who regarded herself as my toy and was driven to near sexual levels of excitement and joy by the thought and practise of being eaten alive. If you're going to pick a goal to

strive for pick every Everest over a quiet drink at the pub.

So I approached Yrgritte when she was waiting for Clara and Lisa to finish showering so she could take them with her to Chez Jago.

“You have quite the way with women?” I said by way of an opener.

Yrgritte smiled “Not women, just the young humans. In the ocean you have to be tough to survive, you have to be a little cold and ruthless inside. You humans are too pampered, you want and expect a guiding hand, even if that hand is guiding you into a toybox or a stew.”

I had to laugh at that “Yes, well, I think we have better survivability rates.”

“That’s because your opposable thumbs make you better at killing.” said Yrgritte.

I snorted and fell silent. How the fuck do you ask to be someone’s pet? Excuse me Mrs Terrifying, you seem like a very dominating personality, care to walk me on a leash and feed me some pedigree chum?

I coughed, trying to encourage myself to speak but the words wouldn’t come. What words could come?

“Well you make Lisa very happy” I managed at last.

“Thank you” said Yrgritte graciously “Tonight we’re having a stew with mashed potatoes. You’re welcome to join us, as either guest or entree.”

“Yes” I said with enthusiasm, causing Yrgritte to look at me curiously and me to add hurriedly “Being a guest would be just fine.”

Yrgritte grinned “So you will come ointo my parlor? Interesting.”

At that moment Lisa and Carla exited and Yrgritte handed them a bag each of clothes to put on.

“Steven will be joining us” said Yrgritte “I trust that won’t be a problem, Lisa?”

Lisa smirked “Never.”

“Good” said Yrgritte.

Carla studied me with obvious glee before dressing. “I have a feeling Lisa’s not the only one for the pot tonight.”

I swallowed.

Lisa chuckled and pulled on her clothes.

Yrgritte patted the small of my back and said “He’ll live, don’t worry.

Then we walked over to her house and Carla laid the table as Yrgritte led Lisa into the kitchen.

I found Anthony reading something called The Farscape Collective as the blissed out forms of Lucy and Amy rutted quietly on a sylph bed in a corner of the room. He was drinking some drown liquid from a glass and seemed deep into his reading. I also noticed three statues standing in an alcove. I had skipped over them before because I normally don't give two shits about interior design but seeing them in the same room as Amy and Lucy made me realise. One of the blonde women on the plinth was the spit of Lucy and the ginger on the opposite side was the spit of Amy.

"Interesting statues." I said.

"Yes" said Anthony "The original Amy and Lucy and in the center my first toy, Candi."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because Candi likes it and the others are safer that way." said Anthony "Lisa and Carla are allowed to be played with because I can trust them to be obedient. As for the Amy blissed out on the floor? Well... she lacks an off switch."

"What happened?" I asked.

"That is not a question to be answered today." said Anthony with a peculiar air of finality "Now, enjoy your food."

I turned as the smell reached my nose and exclaimed "That smells amazing."

"Thank you" said Lisa as Yrgritte brought a vast pot of stew into the room on a trolley.

Lisa's head and shoulders stuck out from the pot and she looked utterly exstatic.

"Hush" said Yrgritte "No talking at the dinner table."

Yrgritte pulled a rather large fork and knife from the trolley and stabbed into Lisa's flesh below the waterline, a moment later a gobbet of meat rose out of the stew at the end of the fork. Yrgritte nibbled at it then reached it across the table so Carla could sample it. "Think she's ready?"

Carla nodded and licked her lips as she swallowed the gobbet.

Yrgritte disappeared back into the kitchen and I approached Lisa, being careful not to get hurt by the steam coming off the stew. "Hey, are you okay?"

Lisa nodded then whispered "I'm only sorry I can't sample me."

Yrgritte returned with three plates filled with mashed potato, the potato had been sculpted so there was a hollow for the stewed meat and veg to sit in.

Yrgritte glared at me and said "Unless you want to join her, keep away from the meat."

I hurriedly backed off and watched in horrified fascination as Yrgritte carved meat from Lisa and placed it on our plates.

Finally Yrgritte reached a gloved hand into the stew, pulled out a still pulsing organ and proceeded to grate it as a garnish over our plates before tossing it back in the stew.

I stared at my plate of food and tentatively selected a goblet of stewed meat, saw that it was thoroughly covered with mashed potato and ate it. It tasted fantastic and I must not have been able to hide the surprised smile on my face because Lisa was looking at me meaningfully and smiling.

It is a matter of some personal shame as far as I am concerned that I cleaned my plate.

Then Yrgritte leaned over to me and whispered in my ear “We both know you didn’t come here to eat your friend.”

“No” I said “That’s quite true.”

“I understand that it must be difficult for you to admit.” said Yrgritte “So I won’t make you. Merely say no or stop if what I do displeases you.”

And that’s when she started massaging my back.

“Carla” commanded Yrgritte loudly “Do be a dear and roll the trolley into the pantry. I’ll finish with Lisa later. Then climb into the toybox, there’s a good girl.”

Carla set about her task swiftly and I watched as Lisa left the room. She saw though, saw Yrgritte’s hands working on my neck and she had to keep herself from laughing.

I let Yrgritte work, gave myself fully under her command and her instruction was as simple as it was perverse: Give into the impulses, let the beast free.

*

I woke up naked in a cage barely big enough to sit up in. There was a half eaten bowl of kibble to my right and I had clearly slept with my head in my waterbowl but thankfully spilt enough to avoid drowning. Then again, I am a wereshark, maybe I did drown but kept healing until it was all gone? It doesn’t really matter.

I groaned.

A familiar voice said “Has he woken?”

Then a pair of legs approached my cage and I said “Excuse me, would someone kindly explain what the fuck is going on?”

“Yeah” said a different familiar voice “Get Yrgritte”

Then footsteps and running.

The bars of my cage were rattled and the different familiar voice said “So, you’re a pet now huh? Well that makes things a bit complicated.”

Then more footsteps.

A loud voice that I knew incredibly well said “Get back, he needs space, he’ll be in shock.”

Footsteps again.

The door to my cage was opened and a firm hand gripped my neck and secured something there. “Steve, follow my lead, I will explain everything.”

The hand went away and I felt myself pulled so I crawled in the direction of the pulling.

“How much do you remember of last night?” asked the voice.

“Well, I remember I was going to ask you something then you invited me to dinner and I...” I trailed off and sighed “I ate Lisa, I ate Lisa and I liked it.”

“And?”

“And what?” I asked.

“What do you remember after that?”

I frowned, struggling to remember “You whispered something to me and I liked it, you started massaging me...”

I shot to my feet suddenly as realization dawned, I glared at Yrgritte “You drugged me.”

I saw now that Lucy and Amy were also in the room, fully dressed and looking nervously at me.

“No” said Yrgritte calmly.

“Then how?” I asked.

Lucy shrugged “Sylph blood.”

I looked to her.

Lucy said “It keeps you sane the way it keeps me and Lisa and the others sane, the third way cancels out the first, the submissiveness cancels out the desire to dominate. You’re not imprinted on anyone but that doesn’t mean you’re not going to respond to the same stimuli, that you’re not going to bliss out.”

“Oh” I said feeling rather foolish.

Yrgritte asked “What were you going to ask me?”

“If you would drug me.” I said with a laugh.

“Yes.” Yrgritte said “But for now get dressed and take your girls home. I will come for you.”

I did not say no.

*

Lisa and Carla naturally spent the day enjoying each other. Even Lucy and Amy spent the day in each other's company but I felt alone. I tried to ignore it. Tried to watch Netflix, to experiment with the Quantum Oscillator and memory gun but I just couldn't shake the feeling like part of my soul was missing.

Then Yrgritte came for me.

It was much like last time, only Yrgritte had actually removed Lisa's arms and legs before putting her in the stew and had put them in the temporal freezer so that she could remove Lisa's arms and legs again and deep fry them all at once. Lisa's ribs were removed to be barbecued and her lungs, kidneys and liver pureed with herbs and spices to make sausages. This approach was not as involved and painful as Lisa usually liked so Yrgritte sliced off one of her ears and that seemed to satisfy the masochistic girl.

I do not feel ashamed for liking the deep fry for two important reasons: 1. It tasted fantastic and unlike and regular deep fry the portion sizes were hilariously huge. 2. Deep fried fast food chains are famously atrocious when it comes to the breeding, rearing and slaughtering of their meat animals. True this was a post scarcity society where deep fry without the torture was possible but compared to all the deep fry I had eaten in the past I felt reasonably confident that this was by far the most ethically sourced as indeed I could be certain of seeing the meat donor in full health tomorrow.

Then Carla was put back in her toybox and Yrgritte returned with a small engagement ring box. She went down on one knee and opened the box to reveal a small what pill that looked not unlike a mint imperial "Will you, Steven Banks, please consented to be my lawfully recognised pet sylph?"

I laughed and lifted the pill then paused with it before my lips "This is legally recognised?"

Yrgritte nodded and got to her feet again "Helps the elder gods and their followers know you're taken. Legally speaking you will be treated as sentient pet under my and my husband's charge. You'll still have your human rights, you'll just have a whole load of extra sylph rights intended to protect you since you'll be so easily exploitable."

I glared at her "Nobody mentioned this?"

Yrgritte snorted "Be thankful you're just my pet. The toys quite literally surrender their rights and become legal property, hence how they can be bought and sold."

I stared at her for a long moment then shrugged and swallowed it. I looked her in the eyes and said "Yrgritte, I hereby give my consent to be your lawfully recognised pet sylph."

And then I felt weird.

I looked at Yrgritte and saw the mad dominating woman I considered an easy and experienced pick for mistress if I was to be a pet but I was also now seeing, no, feeling, Yrgritte, my protector, my commander, my mistress, my God. Then she stroked me.

It was like fireworks going off as electrochemical signals rushed through my body to let me know that this was a fucking fantastic sensation.

“Oh!” I said “That felt good.”

Yrgritte grinned and she tickled me under my chin.

I found myself marvelling at her as I felt a sudden overriding love for her.

“Follow me, there’s a good boy.” she said taking me by the hand.

*

I woke up naked in the cage again but this time I was fully aware of what was going on and had showered and dressed by the time Yrgritte arrived to check up on me.

“So how do you feel?” she asked.

I grinned and said “It’s hard to describe accurately but fucking fantastic will suffice.”

Yrgritte grinned and cleared the hair from my face “I know you’re my pet and I accept full responsibility for you in that regard but I also know that you only said yes because you need to be someone’s pet to counteract the wereshark madness so don’t feel like you owe me anything.”

I nodded “Thank you.”

She stroked the hair at the back of my head and I could see her weighing up her options. I was now hers in a most profound way and she was clearly tempted by the idea of reducing me to pup in her arms again but instead she tickled my chin and said “Go be with your girls, be a human again.”

So I did.

The wereshark blood gave me some measure of protection from the obedience of a sylph but when your Master or Mistress offers such a command while priming you with the gestures of friendly control, it is very hard not to do as they ask. Especially when that is what you’d really rather like to do anyway.

Lisa was noticeably interested in my new state as pet and rather implored me to join her and Carla in a threesome but I politely refused. I knew where my future lay now.

I studied up about Seghats and Quantum Oscillators. To the point where Lucy had to physically jostle me so I’d notice when she came to say goodbye as she and Amy went over to Anthony’s to bliss out.

It was odd looking at my dear pet and knowing exactly how she felt when my massaging caused her to become a less sentient creature of instinct. It made me love her more in a way since the doubts at the back of my mind vanished and I understood why this was a lifestyle she wished to indulge in. To her it must be like moving to heaven from hell.

Lucy's life had been war, the worst and highest stakes kind of war. The original Lucy had grown up fighting robots, spent an age walking the parallel Earths helping to lead the fightback on what would become the United Civilisations of the Multiverse, been burned alive by the Great Farsh-nuke and all so she would be physically and mentally able to command every battlefield in the war against the Septagonoids. A woman who had suffered her entire life and then turned into a weapon by one horrible man. Then she sacrificed herself to the Contravoxai for a different better man and endured being eaten alive day in day out for over a hundred years.

Now her life was friendship, puppy love and fucking with another sylph who did not share her scars and the euphoric surrender of pethood to a kind owner.

I envied her the simple joy and happiness this life seemed to bring her but of course that's why all broken men keep naive optimists about them. They are a light house in dark times, letting even the most jaded and cynical of people understand that there was truly something wrong.

You see I was safe now. I was cured. I had a kind of new family again. I even had the reassurance that my race was not dead. Humanity persists across the multiverse no matter what the Contravoxai do. My culture and civilisation lived on and I could start again. Start afresh. Become a citizen of Choice World. A refugee from alien lands come to make the world a brighter place.

Except that in Choice World, in the multiverse, one man really could make a difference and I had unfinished business to attend to so I started planning something, something big but before I acted on this plan I wanted to talk to Anthony, I wanted to get some answers.

*

"Does it feel weird?" asked Anthony when we began walking our Sylphs that weekend "Knowing that as part owner I could just as easily be walking you?"

I laughed and admired the beauty of Choice World then said "Anthony, if you want to walk me you have only to bliss me out but I am afraid I have long since passed the merely weird."

"Fair point." said Anthony "Well for what it's worth I'm glad you decided to become mine and Yrgritte's pet. You make her very happy and it seems Sammy went to a lot of effort to get you to me. It only feels right to have you under my care and welcome you into the family. Plus it makes me feel less of a sexist bigot."

I snorted and said "I have drunk the freshly spilled blood of a women I keep as a pet and eaten the flesh of another I call friend. I think I rather trump you on the pissing off feminists front."

Anthony chuckled "You actually ate Lisa, eh? Well I suppose it was only a matter of time. That girl's the chosen playing of the Bam-Kursh, you know even the toy you can buy in shops likes to have her head cut off and her internal organs dissected?"

"You ever entertain that whimsy of hers?" I asked.

"No" said Anthony pointedly "However Yrgritte will insist that we spend at least one day a month as sharks and on those occasions the toys are asked to strap vat grown steaks to their backs and frolic at the surface waiting for us to strike and pull them under. Lisa seems to take particular enjoyment so I

have noticed Yrgritte will often experiment with the most savage of attacks against her.”

I couldn't help laughing at that then said “We're going to hell aren't we?”

“Good thing we're immortal then...” said Anthony with a wry smile before adding more seriously “They like it Steven. It utterly baffles me and causes me no end of worry but they like it and gods help me but I think I like that they like it too.”

“Yeah...” I said as I watched Lucy pause to sniff a turd in the road that I prayed had been made by a dog. “I've noticed that too. It feels wrong in my bones but they look so happy how can you not find it adorable?”

Anthony chuckled.

I saw Amy try to take advantage of Lucy's distractedness and try to take her from behind. Lucy turned at this and started trying to kiss Amy. At this point Amy kissed Lucy then strode on, leaving Lucy to bound after her. The absurd display of puppy love reminded me of my purpose here today so I asked “What can you tell me of Sammy?”

Anthony thought for a moment then asked “Do you know how me and Yrgritte met?”

I shook my head.

“Well I was approached by a man. He called himself the Slick, I could swear he had stepped right out of my dreams. He said he founded Choice World, that he very carefully controlled the immigration so that there would be plenty of willing submissives for passing vampires, Elder Gods and Logicians to take advantage of. This whole place was intended as a honey pot to attract the great and powerful of the multiverse and convince them to settle down.” said Anthony “He explained in essence that Choice World was not intended as a utopia for its citizens it was intended as an ark for the great and the powerful.”

“An Ark? As in Noah? Why?” I asked.

“Because as he explained it: If and, god willing, when the Great Septagonoid War is over and the Logicians are given sufficient a bloody nose to stop being so sadistic, sexist and amoral and the Bam-Kursh's attempt at playing Napoleon is quashed and all the Lucys have been quietly rounded up and retired, someone, something, is going to have to rebuild multiversal civilisation.” said Anthony.

I nodded “So this is like the Library of Alexandria, a record of civilisation from before the world erupted in war?”

“No” said Anthony “It's more like the Vatican, a strange little nation state with pretensions to godlike power whose job is to keep civilisation going after the great empires fall by providing the necessary education the leaders of the new world will need to not completely fuck it up and keep it vaguely moving in the right direction.”

“Interesting” I said “But what does this have to do with Sammy, or indeed Yrgritte?”

Anthony smiled apologetically and explained “This man could do all this and keep control because he

had a power that let him be practically omnipotent and omniscient but like Rome the larger his little empire got, the harder it became to keep track of, so he had been looking for a junior partner to share the burden with. Someone who could make the hard choice and would do whatever it took to achieve the goals set to him and someone who no matter how often he crossed the line would still try to be moral.”

“He chose you?” I said.

“Indeed” said Anthony and he looked at his left hand as if remembering some long since faded scar. “I would be able to control the very subatomic particles and logic of my being. I am what is technically known as a liquidator because I can alter myself to become the four states of matter at will and I can become so at one with the matter of something that I can phase through it. I can make clones of myself at a whim, absorb entire planets into myself and yes even possess and absorb people’s minds so I can replicate them too.”

“Wow!” I said “Suddenly Superman looks pretty darn pedestrian.”

Anthony nodded “With great power comes great responsibility and I had one hell of a responsibility to consider. I would be Sheriff of Choice World. The protector of the core universes. Except I’m a smart man with a self loathing problem, I needed convincing and how do you pay a man to accept that much responsibility when he is living in a utopia? I had a small harem of toys around me, I was already as immortal as you and I had a seghat that I knew how to use. I did not need anything he could give me. So he offered to pay me with my heart’s greatest desire. He could scan my soul and mind for the woman who would be perfect for me and provide me with her location.”

“And that was Yrgritte?” I said.

“No...” said Anthony with a laugh “I wrote the coordinates down wrong. Ended up turning up at this Charicthy’s place, a great cyborg shark. And I was thinking well this is wrong, this can’t be. Only, when you move to Choice World its inhabitants are scanned as matches for you and things are narrowed down to a point where the prospective personalities can have their minds simulated by artificial intelligence and volunteers are asked for. The chosen volunteer mind is then incarnated from a scan taken when the person first immigrated to Choice World so this fresh copy might be given as a welcome gift to the new citizen of Choice World. This Charicthy had received a copy of me as a welcome gift.”

I chuckled at that “So you asked your future wife out because a copy of you was given to her as a pet?”

Anthony nodded “He was quite charming about the whole thing really, got himself scooped up by a down on his luck Logicio and let Yrgritte use his becoming a sylph to allow her to become a wereshark without the madness or submissiveness. I check on him every now and again. He seems very happy. Travelling the multiverse writing wrongs with his Master. I gather it’s a very loving relationship and as for me and Yrgritte? Well she loves me for the monstrous predator I have always feared I am or could be.”

“That’s very sweet, in a weird fucked up sort of way.” I said.

Anthony blushed “Of course when it came time for our wedding the Slick decided to clear up the confusion and while he was very happy for us he brought along my actual payment as a wedding gift.

She thought she was his plus one and was rather confused as to why this strange man had brought her along to this wedding.”

“That was Sammy?” I asked.

Anthony nodded “My perfect woman, perfect human woman anyway, was a girl who had a happy childhood, everjoyed her time at school college and university and even landed a good job and yet despit everything going so very well for her and her being so very happy with her life the Slick assured me that she would very much like it if I were to walk up her and make her mine and he was right. He was so right that she had my seghat clone her so her clone might climb onto the great Leader’s dinner plate, become that me’s pet sylph and wereshark and be eaten alive by the great Leader along with that me.”

“So that’s how?”

“That’s how the woman who saved your life came to be in such a position.” said Anthony “I am rather afraid I was worried for her so I found Carla that first night I had convinced her to be my toy, the night after I had first encountered and been eaten by the Contravoxai, I cloned her and explained the situation to the clone so she climbed up onto the great Leader’s dinnerplate as well. That was when the Bam-Kursh decided to send one of her still human Lisa’s up onto the stage.”

“And Amy?” I asked, out of curiosity.

Anthony smiled at the memory “Yrgritte revealed on our honeymoon that she had tracked down the original Amy and she intended for her to be our new toy so that, in her words, I would not be left wondering about the girl who had been chosen as my welcome gift. Amy was utterly on board with this amazingly and even consented when Yrgritte suggested we consecrate the sanctity and certainty of our marriage with a threesome. I did try to disagree. Then in the morning when Amy was skimming through the papers that would make her our legal property Yrgritte pulled Sammy out of storage so they could get acquainted and Sammy somehow talked Amy into having herself cloned so the clone could join Me, Sammy, Lucy, Lisa and Carla on the great Leader’s dinner plate.”

I chuckled “Sounds like a great if mad wedding.”

Anthony chuckled himself “Yes, for our honeymoon retreat she’d rented out a gorgeous desert island and had the local vampires recruit a small army’s worth of gorgeous women who were willing to fill out the necessary legal paperwork and get the necessary injections such that they would all be our toys and therefore functionally immortal. The women were instructed to get drunk, have sex and generally have as much fun as possible before enjoying the beautiful blue waters in which me and Yrgritte hunted. It was a kind of game, competing to see who could breach the highest and drag the most toys down to our chalet in a cave deep under water. We tried to let the survivors of our little game go but they were very resistent to the idea so into the packing crates they went.”

“What happened to them?” I asked.

“Oh I gave about half of them away to various friends and organisations and charity auctions over the years, always with their permission of course.” said Anthony “I think most of them are still on display somewhere, awaiting the day I need them but Yrgritte still has a few that she regularly uses for breaching practise. You’d have to ask her.”

I nodded “Fair enough.”

The conversation dried up and Anthony said “The girls are getting tired I think we should back, why don’t you come to mine? Yrgritte can bliss you out and you can enjoy the dubious delight’s of your friend’s flesh again.”

I snorted and followed Anthony’s suggestion.

We walked back in relative silence but there was one question hanging between us. How could it not? Things had been so happy for Anthony back in the day, this Yrgritte had clearly allowed him to enjoy things he would never otherwise have allowed himself to enjoy and all had seemed perfectly okay with this. So what changed? What made the man who casually accepted two women as gifts on his wedding day and hunted women as sport on his honeymoon suddenly decide to spend his days quietly reading and walking his sylphs while the majority of his toys were left frozen, their minds turned off?

Lisa today was stuffed one with onions and herbs then roasted before being presented to the table like a christmass turkey and carved up for the dinner plate. Again this proved a bit pedestrian for Lisa’s liking and when slicing off her ears and pan frying them didn’t satisfy her Yrgritte pulled out her eyes and ate them like brussell sprouts. This seemed to settle Lisa’s mind to rest that she was being suitably taken advantage of so the eating was allowed to begin.

However Yrgritte was so rattled by Lisa’s obstinacy with regards to her cooking that she started stroking and massaging me before I had even taken a single bite and I somewhat regretably blissed out before I could.

*

I woke next day naked besides Yrgritte as she watched a sharkploitation film.

Seeing that I was awake Yrgritte hurriedly turned the volume down on the TV. “Sorr, did I wake you?”

I shrugged.

Yrgritte stroked my cheek idly and said “Sorry about last night? I blissed yout too early didn’t I? No did dins.”

I smirked “Well I was rather interested how someone roasted alive tastes now that you mention it but it is probably a good idea that I stop with the canabalism.”

Yrgritte squeezed me and said “There’s some cold in the fridge if you’re still interested I just got so angry with her. My Lisa’s been properly tamed by the Bam-Kursh, this one is... very demanding and I just can’t make her happy anymore. She needs a Contravoxai.”

I nodded and nuzzled Yrgritte “I have been thinking about that actually?”

“Well don’t hold back on my account.” said Yrgritte “If you’ve got any ideas about how to help her, act on them.”

“Will you miss me?” I asked.

She smiled sadly “Oh Steve, I barely know you and I’ve got more than enough toys to keep me busy, if his royal highness would let me that is. Now go on, I’ve kept you long enough, your clothes are in the shower room.”

*

I stepped out of the shower in my suit and found Anthony talking with Yrgritte.

“Come on, boy” He said “I think I owe you an explanation.”

He led long corridors to a hidden door locked with 7 different keys.

Anthony placed his hand against the locks, arranged like the points on a septagon, and there was a click as the door sprang open.

I strode in and saw arranged along the left and right of the hallway a series of statues. There was one of Anthony, one of some gruff guy with a beard, one of some short blonde woman with spectacles and then one of Sammy.

“This is where I keep her.” explained Anthony “I call it my hall of heroes. To the casual observer it will just look like a fancy display of the more recent Bam-Kursh toys.”

“You’re a toy?” I asked incredulously.

“The Bam-Kursh cloned me before I joined Choice World when I had so little left to live for... and she’s good.” said Anthony simply.

I nodded, satisfied and went to examine Sammy. “This is really her?” I asked.

Anthony seemed to falter then said “Sammy... she died. She died Steven.”

“How?” I asked.

“Septagonoid logical void gun. Not even the elder gods can survive a direct hit from one of them.” said Anthony.

He stared at the statue of Sammy and stroked her cheek, it gave beneath his fingers like real flesh. “I always wondered why the Doctor travels alone. I suppose I watched too much of the Arrow. I thought fighting crime could be a team effort, despite how much more powerful I am compared to everybody else and bless her she was so keen, always running into danger by my side and most of the time she was fine. I mean I’ve had recover her body parts from the bottom of the ocean and deep space before but she could always be pieced back together and allowed to heal.”

“I’m sorry” I said “But I have to ask, what was a Septagonoid doing here?”

“Living.” he said sadly “Just living. Choice World is the one place in the entire multiverse where Septagonoids are allowed to be people, just so long as they keep the whole trying to end the multiverse

hobby on the backburner. It's why it's so safe, even the great enemies of the multiverse respect Choice World as a safe haven of peace and tranquility."

"Then what happened?" I asked.

"We were taking out an arms dealer who was kidnapping citizens of the street to turn them into biomechanical weapons. We needed the best weapon to counter it, we needed a Septagonoid. I was able to bring one round and convince it to work with us. Then Frederick tried his luck, nothing would please the sick fuck more than turning the great scourge of the muliverse into his little toy but the Septagonoid wasn't having it and things got heated so she lashed out and Frederick ducked. The bolt vaporised Sammy's heart, brain and soul." explained Anthony.

He turned to me, tears in his eyes "I tried to save her. I always back up every's memories before we go out on a trip anyway just incase and I always kept a spare of Sammy on the off chance so I was able to copy the spare's soul and fuse it with what was left of her body. In time she healed and I gave her the latest set of memories. She looked me in the eyes and was so fucking cheery, ready to go out to battle again. All "Oh well, my soul was vaporised and I'm a frankenstein's monster of soul, memories and flesh but still I live so no harm done, eh?" and I just couldn't take it. I had saved her yet I also knew I'd lost her and I didn't want to lose her ever again."

"So here she stands in perpetuity." I said.

He nodded.

"And the copy?" I asked.

"In the toy box." he said "Never to be woken. I just can't do it. I failed her. She was the most beautiful perfect woman and I am the reason that she's dead. If I'd only been smarter, if I'd only been quicker..."

"Could I have a moment alone, to pay my respects?" I asked.

"Of course" he said then he ran outside the hall and closed the door, I could hear him sobbing outside.

I removed my Quantum Oscillator from my jacket pocket and turned Sammy's mind on.

"Hello" she said cheerily "Who are you?"

"Remember Anthony's wedding and the Contravoxai?" I asked.

"How could I forget?" she said brightly "That was the day my life finally had meaning. And the Contravoxai? Yes, I left a copy of myself with them, which would make you that me's bit of rough. I saved your life didn't I?"

"How did you know?" I asked before adding awkwardly "And me and Sammy asren't really... umm..."

She laughed and kissed me on the cheek "Don't fret. You're exactly my type. She just probably hasn't told you because on top of being submissive old me she's also a sylph. Now why are you here?"

"To return the favour, save your life." I said.

Sammy shrugged “I don’t feel very dead.”

“That’s not what your owner thinks?” I said.

Sammy rolled her eyes and said “Blessed little idiot. By the time I was given to him he’d faced dying of a terminal illness, turning evil, losing his mind and being eaten alive but if I get caught in one little Septagonoid blast suddenly I must be hidden from view and kept safely switched off until the end of days left I get vaporised again. He’s got a spare anyway, wonder how that poor girl feels. The one time she might be expected a chance to be played with and still I’m hugging the limelight and all because I was here first.”

I smirked and bit my lip.

“What is it?” she asked.

“Just thinking about how much I miss you, is all...” I said.

“But I’m not - Oh! You mean the other me, the one back on the Contravoxai ship.” she said.

“There’s a Contravoxai by the name of David, claims to love her. I can’t compete with a man who can eat her alive, she really loves that.” I said.

Sammy laughed and hugged me “Oh you dear sweet naive fool, this isn’t a competition. This David fellow can eat her body and you can own her heart and soul. You’ve just got to have the confidence to ask for it, that’s all Anthony did with me.”

I nodded “Very wise.” then I said “Come with me.”

Sammy hopped off her little plinth and said “Well lead on, my brave prince charming.”

I chuckled and led the way outside.

Anthony was sobbing into a sodden handkerchief and blowing his nose every few minutes.

“Anthony, we need a word.” I said.

Anthony and turned to look at me then jumped in fright “Sammy!?! Oh my poor girl!?”

Sammy smiled sadly “I’m fine, Anthony.”

“Your soul was vaporised!” cried Anthony.

“And she’s better now, thanks to you.” I said “I know you’re scared and I understand exactly how you feel. My Sammy gets eaten alive for kicks. No one should have to look at their lovers internal organs, least of all on a regular basis but it is the life she chose and it is the life she loves. How do you think Ygritte feels knowing you’re going off to battle criminals everyday, criminals who could kill you?”

“That’s different?” said Anthony.

“How?” I asked.

“Because I am survivor and Yrgritte can trust that I will do whatever it takes to return home.” said Anthony.

“And you don’t trust me to do the same?” asked Sammy.

“No” said Anthony “I’m sorry but nothing about you has ever led me to believe you wouldn’t walk willingly into death’s welcoming arms.”

Sammy bit her lip “Okay, I suppose he’s kind of got a point there.”

Anthony nodded “See, she admits it.”

I turned to Sammy and looked her in the eyes. “Sammy you don’t know me but I know you, I know you very well and I have sa message I want you to deliver to me the next time you see me.”

“What sort of message?” asked Sammy.

I kissed her lightly on the lips, she kissed back so I snogged her passionately then broke off.

“Good message.” said Sammy, clearly a tad dazed by the experience.

I turned to Anthony and said “I swear to you if you get this Bam-Kursh to turn a version of me into a toy I will never ever abandon Sammy or let her come to unwanted harm ever again.”

“Are you serious?” asked Anthony.

I looked him in the eyes and said “You said you would take me somewhere? Well I am going back to the Contravoxai to be with my Sammy and save what is left of my people. If riding back into hell isn’t commitment, I don’t know what is?”

Anthony nodded “I believe you and I shall see what I can do to help you. I can’t do anything big. I’m not going to help you harm anyone but there may be some things I can give you.”

I nodded “Thank you. One last thing though, make sure Amy and Lucy, your toys I mean, make sure they are played with as well. For too long you have let your doubt and fear imprison your friends.”

“What?” said Sammy “He’s not even let Amy and Lucy free? Wow!”

“Alright, clearly I have to make amends for a lot of things but I need time, time to thjink and find things out.” said Anthony “Will you please just let me take you to Yrgritte?”

Sammy was flabbergasted “Why? Why should I go to Yrgritte?”

“He means me” I said.

“Oh!” said Sammy then she reached her hand through the buttons on my shirt and felt my chest

“Submissive with a six pack, oh you just keep getting more perfect.”

I could feel my ears burning and carefully pulled her hand free “Honey, how would you feel if I did that to you?”

She grinned “Care to find out.”

I looked to Anthony “You mentioned Yrgritte?”

Anthony snorted “Follow me, there’s good boy. We’ll have you blissed out in a jiffy.”

“And Sammy?” I asked.

Anthony smiled as tears died on his face “It’s been a while, we have catching up to do.”

So we walked to Yrgritte, she was looking up exotic seafood recipes involed fish bthat were cooked at eaten while still alive.

“Oh, sorry.” She said “I was just trying to find a recipe that would be suitably exploitative of Lisa.” then she noticed who was wiuth us and squealed “Sammy!?”

Sammy ran into her arms “Hey Yrgritte, did you miss me?”

Yrgritte kissed her forehead and said “You are going swimming with me, you understand? Then I am taking you clothes shopping.”

Sammy grinned “Should I take that as a yes?”

“Of course, I’ve missed you.” said Yrgritte, squeezing Sammy so tight she was struggling to breath. Yrgritte looked to Anthony “What made you change your mind?”

“Steve’s going to be joining her as a toy.” said Anthony “Well a version is, this one is going back to the Contravoxai to be with his Sammy.”

“Oh, bless.” said Yrgritte pulling me into the hug as well.

“I need time to work things out” said Anthony “I was wondering if you could ensure our little hero didn’t do anything rash.”

“Of course” said Yrgritte “It would be my pleasure.”

Anthony nodded and left.

“Can I watch?” asked Sammy.

“Of course” said Yrgritte, ruffling her hair.

Then Yrgritte’s hands stands stroking and massaging me and I transcended to a higher plane of bliss.

*

I woke naked in a cage. Lucy and Amy were lying the floor beside the cage quietly exploring their bodies.

I coughed.

Amy said "I think your owner wants us to stop."

Lucy sighed then kissed Amy's belly button before rolling onto her back to look at me in the cage
"You're going to make me leave Amy aren't you?"

"You could stay?" I suggested.

Amy laughed "He just doesn't understand does he?"

"Well he's only been a pet himself for a little bit." said Lucy "But no, you don't understand Steve, I'm your pet. I don't leave you. Friends fall out, couples divorce, children leave home and toys get left to rot in cupboards but pets are until death or something almost as tragic. I am not ever going to leave you."

"Sorry" I said "But I need to be with Sammy."

Lucy sighed "I know, she saved you and you saved her so now you're going to roll into town like a big damn hero."

"Are you going to tell him?" asked Amy.

"No." said Lucy.

"We should tell him." said Amy.

"But I don't want it influencing him." said Lucy.

"He has a right to know." said Amy.

"Fine." said Lucy "I'll tell him."

"Tell me what?" I asked.

"I'm pregnant." said Lucy.

"And so am I?" said Amy.

"Err... how?" I asked.

"Well we like each other." said Lucy "We've spent a lot of time together, enjoying each other's company, while naked and very very happy..."

“I mean, how do two eggs make one fertilised one?” I said.

Amy sighed “We’re sylphs and sylphs are technically speaking an artificially created super species of genetic packaging designed to help any species survive through being exploited. Females being able to reproduce without the need for men and properly reshuffle the genes is just more efficient and a better fall back for a species desperate to survive. I will have to give birth the traditional human way but lucky miss pure blood here can just lay a couple of eggs.”

“You mean you’re going to lay an egg that’s not just a clone but a proper child?” I said.

Lucy nodded.

Amy laughedly bitterly “I get nine months of blowing up like a balloon followed by twenty years supporting this child. She gets a quick sit down followed by a couple of months of raising then it will be fully mature.”

“You’re going to be a grand master” said Lucy. “How do you feel about that?”

“I feel like you are staying here, at least until it’s safe on the Contravoxai ship.” I said.

Lucy sighed “Fair enough but don’t get yourself killed.”

“Speaking of which.” said Amy “Here comes her benevolence.”

The cage door was opened and I crawled out then stood up.

Yrgritte looked gravely serious “He’s ready for you, go have a shower and get dressed.”

“Are you alright?” I asked.

“He’s just told me what you intend to do?” said Yrgritte “How would you feel if you found out Lucy was going to do that?”

“Point taken” I said and I left for my shower.

*

I exited the shower, wearing a tuxedo and found Yrgritte waiting for me.

“You look good.” she said.

“This isn’t my usual suit.” I said.

“No.” said Yrgritte “But one must always dress for the occasion.”

“Fair enough.” I said.

Yrgritte led me into the hall of heroes once more by the time where the strange blonde woman statue had been there was a fridge.

“Enter” said Yrgritte.

I nodded then I turned and said “I know I probably don’t need to ask this but can you look after Lucy and the hatchling, in case anything happens?”

“Of course” said Yrgritte then she threw her arms about me and said “You teach those Contravoxai the folly of invading Earth yeah?”

I nodded “I’ll do my best”

Then I turned and entered the fridge.

Inside was a dimly lit control room. There were cries of pain coming from the darkness so I ran towards it and found Lisa lying on a plastic sheeting covered table as Anthony stood over her. Her torso had been sliced open and the skin flaps were held back by metal clamps as Anthony placed objects inside of her.

“And we’re done.” said Anthony as he removed the clamps and folded the skin flaps back down where they healed almost instantly. “Sorry the anaesthetic wouldn’t work?”

“Are you kidding?” said Lisa “I haven’t felt is great in a long time.”

“What in the ever loving fuck were you just doing!?” I asked.

“Turning your delightful friend into a very useful storage device.” said Anthony. “Go have a shower Lisa, remember we want you to look completely unblemished and unmodified.”

Lisa nodded and got up off the table then disappeared into the darkness.

I stared at Anthony “An explanation, please?”

“You had a gun with you when you arrived, remember?” said Anthony.

“Yeah, what of it?” I asked.

“My analysis shows it can kill a Contravoxai if used at point blank range.” said Anthony “That means you need someway to get it close.”

“I thought I could just materialise before him.” I said.

Anthony laughed “The Bam-Kursh got to take me as her toy because the Contravoxai traded her knowledge of my genetic code in return for her ensuring such attacks were not possible. Didn’t want me double crossing them at the last minute. You will need to get to the great Leader, the same way you did, the first time. I’ve also seen to tightly pack a suit into her chest as well.”

“I thought you weren’t going to help me kill?” I said pointedly.

Anthony sighed “Utilitarian morality. I can’t just stand by and let you find a way to blow up the whole

damn ship if I can help you cleanly end one life instead.”

“Okay” I said “And what of Sammy? Is my end of the bargain being held up?”

“Yes.” said Anthony “But she will expect payment, you have to sacrifice a friend to join her toy range.”

“Right...” I said.

Then Anthony strode over to a different part of the central room his hands somehow becoming immaculately clean as he walked.

“This-” he said, indicating a glass bottle filled with blue liquid “will turn whoever you wish like me. They’ll know just enough to avoid doing anything dangerous with their powers at first but they must be taught by a mortal they trust with the knowledge contained in this memory gun round.” he indicated the round.

I nodded “Giving the rebels an edge?”

“I can’t turn against the Contravoxai, they have too many things that are precious to me.” said Anthony “This will give the rebels someone with no such restrictions, if that is talking can’t prevail first.”

Then Anthony walked over to a large crate and pulled out a small squirming creature. “This is an Albino Sylph Squirrel. It is a biological machine. It doesn’t need food and can reproduce asexually. With these and your own blood you can give the Contravoxai enough people like Lisa to avoid the need for anyone dying as part of their meals.”

Finally Anthony walked over to a different table “And this is so you don’t need me to give you any more lifts after this one.” he said hefting up a large futuristic gun.

“A logic lance!” I cried enthusiastically.

Anthony nodded “Just choose your ride carefully, they’ll technically be more powerful than even me.”

I grinned “You know I might not actually die.”

“Good luck.” said Anthony before heading to the controls.

*

Anthony materialised us at the coordinates listed on Charlotte’s business card and I strode out the meet her.

Charlotte said “You’re not going to believe this but you dropped someone and a logic lance off a while ago and insisted I disable the camouflage circuitry of the resultant Seghat and leave it disguised as a British post box.”

“Ah” I said “I precede myself, well that saves time.”

The supplies for the mission were moved aboard the new Seghat then we took off in it. The we being of

course: I, Lisa and Charlotte.

*

We materialised before the bar and I stepped out of the Seghat.

I was juggling three Albino Sylph Squirrels with my hands.

Helga greeted me with a cheshire cat smile “Steven, you’re back but I’m afraid you’re too late. Roxy and Fiora met their end in Merle’s stomach as I had planned.”

“Where’s Eliza?” I asked.

“Handcuffed to my bed.” said Helga with a smile. “She is a sweet girl.”

I nodded politely and scoured the bar, I found Emma and Gerald sitting at a table.

“We’re next.” said Gerald with a note of certainty in his voice.

Emma was more hopeful “Maybe not, she could favour somebody else.”

“Come with me if you want to live.” I said.

“Are you serious?” asked Gerald.

“Today is not a day for joking.” I said.

“Emma? Shall we?” asked Gerald.

“Lets” said Emma.

The man and woman rose from their seats to follow me. I tossed each of them an Albino Sylph Squirrel then headed to Helga’s room.

The Quantum Oscillator unlocked the door and freed Eliza from her bonds easily.

Eliza looked up from her rather compromised position muttered with bafflement “Steven?”

“Sorry to interrupt your umm... recreational activities but I need you.” I said “These two are the first of many new pets that you will have.”

Gerald stared at me “Pets?”

I nodded and hurriedly brewed up the requisite potions to turn Gerald and Emma into basic sylphs. “Look Eliza in the eyes and drink this” I instructed.

When they finally did as I instructed I sliced the palm of my hand open then sliced the palms of their hands open so I could mix my blood with theirs.

“Congratulations.” I said “You are now both sane weresharks and functionally immortal. Eliza, follow me.”

I snatched up the Albino Sylph Squirrels from Gerald and Emma and walked out the door.

Eliza followed but was clearly bewildered “Look, what is this about?”

“Revolution.” I said.

I stared Helga down silently as Eliza entered the Seghat.

Eliza stared around at the vast interior “It’s bigger on the inside!”

I nodded and started attending the controls.

Eliza saw Lisa and Charlotte and smiled “Lisa, you’re back?”

Lisa was wearing a short skirt and a blouse and grinned at Eliza “When this is over do you think I could have a spit roast?”

Eliza laughed and stroked her then asked “Charlotte, why haven’t you attended to her. The girl clearly needs a good eating.”

“Oh she’s going to get one” I said “But first we’re going to kill the Great Leader of the Contravoxai.”

Eliza stared at me “You’re not serious.”

“I absolutely am.” I said and strode out the open doors of the seghat.

Eliza followed and asked “Where is this place?”

“Merle’s dirty little secret.” I said, indicating the foyer of his seghat. Then I spotted him rushing in the door and asked “Isn’t that right?”

Merle nodded “It’s true Eliza, this ship is my Seghat and now I’m going to help Steve overthrow the government.”

“Show me Roxy and Fiora.” I said.

Merle nodded and led the way.

“But Roxy and Fiora are dead.” said Eliza “I saw you eat them.”

“Indeed I did.” said Merle “I knew they would not be safe until I had eaten them. Helga was so defiant that you would not show her up.”

I snorted.

“You tore them limb from limb!?” said Eliza incredulously.

“Absolutely.” said Merle.

“You ate their internal organs!?” said Eliza.

“Indeed, I did.” confirmed Merle.

“You lowered them screaming into your stomach acid until they fell silent!?” said Eliza.

“How right you are.” said Merle.

“Then how can Roxy and Fiora be still alive?” asked Eliza.

“Because I have had a lot of practise.” said Merle and we crashed through a set of double doors into Merle’s Intensive Care Unit.

Merle indicated Roxy and Fiora. I hurriedly mixed my blood with theirs and proceeded to do the same for all the survivors.

Merle had done a real expert job on Roy and Fiora they were barely scalps and hearts. No wonder Eliza had been so convinced they were dead.

Eliza was horrified.

“They’re alive” said Merle “And all sedated, they don’t feel any pain.”

Eliza didn’t care.

“Right...” I said “I am going to materialise my ship at the exact same place and more or less the same time but five feet to the left. I suggest you hide yours somewhere for twenty four hours then meet us there.”

“Smart plan.” said Merle.

I and Eliza strode back to my seghat and as we walked I explained how I knew this.

The planned dematerialise and rematerialise five feet to the left worked exactly as I hoped as Merle was waiting for us with Roxy, Fiora and the other Vligury he’d eaten the last year. They were all very naked.

Fiora smiled when she saw me.

Roxy threw her arms around me and said “I knew you’d comeback, I just knew.”

I laughed and ruffled her hair “We can talk later, yeah?”

Roxy nodded and went to stand with Fiora.

“Ladies and gentlemen, you are lucky, you have been saved from the pit of Oblivion!” I said “But it is

not without cost! You are Eliza's property now! You will be eaten by Merle and others until the end of time! Right now though you have a chance to stop others from suffering the fates you did! Obey Merle today and the harvest of your children will end!"

Fiora clapped then Roxy clapped then others.

As Eliza, Merle, Roxy, Fiora and the other survivors talked, I started brewing up basic sylph potions.

Roxy waved to Eliza "Hi."

Eliza was horrified "I sent you to your deaths."

"We forgive you" said Fiora "And I liked it actually."

Roxy nodded "It was a good death."

Eliza hugged them.

I handed her 2 glasses of an atrocious smelling liquid.

"These would be for you I believe." said Eliza "Your wereshark madness cure. Just remember to look me in the eyes as you drink them."

Fiora nodded and took her glass "On three, Roxy?"

"On three" agreed Roxy, taking her glass.

They counted down together:

"One."

"Two."

"Three."

Then they knocked back the noxious liquid and stared at Eliza.

"Congratulations" said Eliza "I now pronounce you my pet cattle."

Fiora snorted.

Roxy seemed quite enthusiastic about the idea "We could get spit roasted."

Fiora said wryly "I can think of funner ways to spitroast you."

Roxy snorted.

I handed Eliza another couple of potions and she imprinted herself on the next two survivors and so the process continued on and on until they were all cured of the wereshark madness and imprinted on

Eliza.

“Right...” I said “I am going to leave you with a huge crate of Albino Sylph Squirrels. Go out into the Vligury city and the great sorting pens and infect as many people as possible with the wereshark virus then cure them of its madness.”

Merle nodded “We will not let you down, Steven.”

“Good luck” said Roxy.

I nodded “Thank you.”

I headed back into my Seghat and Eliza followed.

Eliza asked “So what happens now?”

I started working the controls and explained “I will drop you and Lisa off because someone needs to ensure that Lisa is hung on the opposite side of the room from me and you are the best for the job. Then I will join one of the big harvest cages and Charlotte will park the seghat somewhere safe then head to the eating hall for the big kick off.”

We came to a rest and I said “One small thing first though?” I handed her the bottle of blue liquid “Drink this.”

Eliza stared at me then she rugged and drained the bottle “Come on, Lisa, lets get you strung up.”

Lisa giggled and followed Eliza out the door.

I started on the controls again.

Charlotte said “Look, Steve, I don’t know if I am ever going to get another chance to say this so I’m just going to say it and I’m really sorry. I have fantasized about eating you alive ever since we met and now you’re cured of your wereshark madness... Look, I just I want to eat you and I am so sorry because that is so weird but there we are. I want to eat you and I hope you want to be eaten by me.”

I finished materialising the ship and said “Charlotte, you’re very brave and I care a good deal about you but it’s show time. Park the ship, yeah?”

Charlotte nodded “I know, I’m sorry.”

I sighed and realised I was still wearing my tuxedo, I’d stick out like a sore thumb in this so I said “Tell you what, as time is of the essence, strip me.”

Charlotte perked up and, with a speed and finesse I would not have thought possible, she stripped me completely naked.

As I exited the Seghat I heard her say “One day, my love.”

I entered the cage for the damned waiting to die and I started infecting people with my blood. I let some know that I was giving them hope, that my blood would make them immortal, that they should infect others and spread the word. Others I just silently infected to be timebombs waiting to go off. A swift death in these cages was preferable to living to be eaten alive.

Then I saw him, tall, dark and muscley. He approached me silently with the rope and I came quietly. You see I'm not important. I'm not a hero. I am a piece of hay that became a needle and now was my time to strike. Nobody remembered me, nobody knew my face or my name, nobody knew I had already died.

I was led along and strung upside down, above the mouth of a contravoxai below.

I checked my surroundings. Lisa was armless, earless and eyeless as she hung above a dinner table opposite. Charlotte sat at the table beneath Lisa. The Great Leader was eating Anthony like one might sip a bitter from an independent brewery and I saw to my satisfaction that the Sammy, Lisa, Lucy and Carla who constituted his usual bouquet were patiently waiting their turn, I looked around for Amy and spotted a discarded torso lying by the floor of the great leader's throne, its head just a mess of ginger hair.

Merle entered.

The Great Leader stood up and cried "Mage! What brings you here at this time of dining!?"

Merle bowed his head then said hurriedly "My Lord, I really must recommend that you make some concessions to the Vligury. You cannot keep treating them like this and just expect them to lie down and take it."

The Great Leader laughed "My dear, Merle, the Vligury are treated far better than our own kin."

"Sir, you eat them alive." said Merle.

"They like it!" cried the Great Leader to the laughter of the Contravoxai present. "The poor things practically fall over themselves in their desire to enter our cooking pots."

"Then why are so many Contravoxai starving to the point of cannibalism?" asked Merle.

"They are lazy." said the Great Leader "There is plenty of food available, they merely have to work for it."

Merle was getting desperate "Then what of the Earths? Anthony told you, they were defended."

"Are they?" asked the Great Leader, to the guffawing of the Contravoxai present "Then where are these great heroes of which he spoke?"

Merle sighed.

I pulled myself free of my bonds and hurled a knife at the rope holding Lisa aloft. We fell at the same instant and I sprinted over to her fallen body, I sliced Lisa's chest open and pulled out the gun and a

strange pod with a single button on it. I pressed the button and the pod disappeared as I found I was instantly wearing a three piece suit with a bowtie.

I charged over to address the Great Leader as Charlotte hurriedly disposed of Lisa.

“You want heroes!?” I cried “You want to see that Earth is defended!? Well I have some fucking news for you sunshine!? I am Steven Arthur Banks and this is a plasma rifle! It can disintegrate a Contravoxai at a hundred yards and right now my contacts are flooding the undercity with these! Oh and something else! The Albino Sylph Squirrel and the blood of a wereshark! A potent combination, wouldn’t you agree!? After all, all you eat are weresharks!”

“Don’t shoot!” said the Great Leader “Don’t shoot! I don’t want to die!”

“Neither did I!” I cried “Neither did any member of my planet! The Vligury may accept a short life expectancy in return for a cushy lifestyle in the interim but humans are much more emotive creatures!!!”

I pressed the barrel of the plasma rifle against his skin, I couldn’t miss at this range, even if someone tried to knock it out of my hand or cut my hand off.

“Please!? Please!? Please, I don’t want to die!?” begged the Great Leader.

“Not so funny when you’re for the chop is it!?” I snarled “Do you know what we humans do to kings and emperors and dictators who get on the wrong side of their people!?”

“No!” screamed the Great Leader “No, I don’t!”

“Well either they retire and let democracy reign or they die!” I explained loudly “I am no hero, oh Great Leader! I am no martyr! I am not special! I am just one of oh so many people who does not like being eaten alive and will gladly pay the ultimate price to end that suffering!!!”

The Great Leader was a wreck now “I’m sorry! I’m sorry! I’m so so sorry! Please!? Just let me live!?”

“Okay” I said quietly “Do you abdicate?”

“What!?” screamed the Great Leader, not comprehending.

“You may live if you cease to be Leader!” I cried “Leave the throne and live!!!”

The Great Leader stared at me and understood now, really understood. Now he was brave. He swallowed and calmed his nerves then said loudly and calmly “No! No, I will not concede political power to avoid my death! What precedent would that set!? To have my species descend into a blood thirsty war for power is not worth my life!”

I shrugged “Viva la revolution!”

“No” said a voice beside me, a very familiar voice. Her hands grabbed my arms and she said “Look me in the eyes, Steven, look me in the eyes and know that I don’t want him and I especially don’t want you to kill him.”

Sammy was standing before me pleading with me not to kill the monstrous head of the Contravoxai machine.

“I fancy the fuck out of you, okay?” said Sammy “It’s why I saved your life. Maybe I was wrong, maybe I should have let you die. If you know anything about me, if you care the slightest iota about me, you won’t kill the man who makes me so very happy.”

“He eats you alive...” I said pointedly.

“And I like it.” she said “Please, just, don’t kill him. Let him live for me.”

The Great Leader wafted a gentle tentacle down to her shoulder “Oh Sammy. You don’t have to do this.”

“I wanted you to live.” said Sammy “I wanted you to love me, I never wanted you to kill anyone.”

“Fuck.” I said quietly “Sammy, I don’t get to get out of this alive you know? You just don’t recover from trying to assassinate a political leader.”

“I know” said Sammy “I saved your life and clearly I was wrong to. Will you die for me, now?”

I tried to ignore her, tried to focus on the Great Leader but how could I shoot dead a noble man who was willing to die for political stability, a man who was a wreck that had begged for mercy and a man that the love of my life would I was dead than that I hurt.

“Remember me.” I said then I cried it “Remember me!”

I lowered the gun, I lowered the gun and walked away and then I was torn apart by tentacles and felt myself suffocate in burning acid. Then I felt nothing and saw nothing until consciousness itself ceased to be.

*

I woke up to find myself naked on the floor of my seghat with Lisa beside me.

Charlotte was looking over us.

I laughed bitterly “Oh I cocked that up.”

Charlotte said with a rather embarrassed tone of voice “I had to eat you to save your life. I had to make it look authentic.”

I sighed “It’s fine” and then I said “Actually, this is a time machine so fuck it, eat me.”

Charlotte recoiled “Are you alright?”

“Sammy just told me she would rather I was dead than the Great Leader” I said “Bit of a bruised ego but fuck it if Lisa can do it, if Sammy can do it, if you want me to do it then fuck it lets do it.”

Charlotte squeed with excitement and her tentacles encircled then scooped me up and lifted me to the vertical.

“So?” I asked “How does this work?”

“You trust me and look pretty as I have my fun.” she said “But I’ll try to be quick as it’s your first time.”

“And then you have Lisa for dessert” I said.

Charlotte chuckled and I felt her tentacles tighten about me then... Pop!

Charlotte showed me my severed hands and feet “There, now that wasn’t so bad was it?”

She tipped my hands and feet into her mouth and moaned “Very nice. Now we’re going to the lower arms and lower legs. This will hurt, a lot but that’s... well the other’s seem to like it.”

So then the pressure started on my elbows, building quickly as I could feel bones cracking. I wanted to scream out because it was just so unbearable and then I understood... As the pain crossed some intangible threshold, I started to feel it as something sexual, a building erotic pressure. Painful yes, always painful but the pain was surpassed and muted. I started moaning with delight then... Snap!

Charlotte held my lower arms and lower legs before me and said “Now that reaction was certainly rather different.”

“Yes” I said “I’m rather afraid I liked that quite a lot.”

“Okay...” said Charlotte with carefully muted excitement before pouring my lower arms and lower legs into her mouth and savouring the taste “Oh yes, I certainly like you. This one I will try to make painful, seeing as you seem to like it.”

I swallowed then nodded. My arms and legs were wrenched from their sockets and torn from my flesh as I cried out in ecstasy.

Charlotte giggled “I think we may have a convert here.”

This time though she just ate what was left of my arms and legs with out comment or display.

“What happens next?” I asked.

“Dessert” she said with a chuckle.

I wondered what she meant then I understood as her tentacles swarmed me. My eyes were plucked out and my ears were torn off. My tongue, lower jaw and throat were ripped out. My liver, kidneys, lungs and appendix were pulled from my chest. Even my genitals were taken. It was an overwhelming experience and by a long way painful enough for my sylph brain to reinterpret the experience as a deeply pleasurable and erotic one.

I woke in a much similar position, on the floor of the seghat beside Lisa with Charlotte looking over us.

“How do you feel?” asked Charlotte.

“Like I wanna do that again.” with barely restrained excitement in my voice before adding “Just to check, you know?”

Charlotte chuckled “Alright, just to check, I think I might like to put her on a marinade and you in a soup.”

“Okay...” I said “Where are you going to find the facilities to do that?”

“My kitchen.” said Charlotte “We are in a seghat after all.”

So Charlotte led me and Lisa into her kitchen.

She instructed me to climb into a pot that she filled with water and left to boil on a suitably sized hob while she saw to Lisa.

I found myself laughing at how my left kept getting weirder and weirder until Charlotte came in the room and pulled out my tongue to silence me. She chopped strange fruit, veg and herbs to add to the soup then stabbed me a few times to get my blood flowing into the soup. She ate me in silence and it was one of the most surreal yet pleasurable experiences I had to that point experienced. Five minutes ago I was leading a revolution and now here I was in a pot of soup on a kitchen table, bleeding and being slowly eaten alive as Charlotte carved gobbets of meat from my legs, torso and arms.

Finally Charlotte finished eating what she could of me and left me to sit in the pot and recover as she went to devour the marinated Lisa.

It was all so... dull. Just sitting a pot of slowly cooling soup, waiting to heal.

Once Charlotte had finished devouring Lisa she curried the remains of us into the Seghat and disappeared into the bowels of the ship. She returned with a smart suit for me and a shirt skirt and shirt for Lisa.

Charlotte yawned and asked “So do you think you like being eaten then?”

My tongue had regrown so I said “Yeah, this bit’s a bit boring but the actual eating iss fun.”

“Okay” said Charlotte “Then maybe we can do this again sometime, only next time I’ll find us a show to watch while you heal.”

Hours passed until I and Lisa had finally recovered enough to have a shower and get dressed. Charlotte parked the Seghat and we got out.

*

I walked out the seghat to find David eating soup as Sammy sat beside him wearing a gorgeous dress.

Carla sat to his other side in a matching but different colored dress.

Lisa ran to Carla.

I approached Sammy.

Charlotte introduced herself to David.

“Sammy. Hi.” I said.

Sammy hugged me and whispered “Sh! Don’t speak, just hold me.”

So I held her and I felt overjoyed to have her so close, to know that she, my Sammy, still liked me.

Carla and Lisa were already making out.

Charlotte said “So, me and Steve, we’re sort of tight you know and Lisa is just adorable but they sort of need their other halves so I wondered how you felt about getting to know each other?”

David chuckled and shook tentacles with Charlotte “Tell you what? Things are kind of hairy right now, if you’ve got a seghat we could find somewhere nice to get away to then a nice a romantic meal of these couples you seem to care about?”

Charlotte chuckled “Sounds weirdly sweet that.” then she was hit by a bolt of realization “We could make it a tripple date? Let them each share a romantic meal together before, or even as we have a romantic meal of them.”

David smirked “That is one wicked sense of humor you’ve got there, you’re on.”

Helga came to gloat “Your revolution failed, Steve, and what’s more that girl and boy you thought you saved have just been eaten by David.”

“Nah” said David lifting Gerald and Emma’s heads torsos from his soup “They’re fine.”

“Why?” asked Helga “You didn’t know?”

“I did” said Sammy “I never gave up on you, Steve, I always knew that you would return for me. That you would bring the Vligury the cure.”

“Except you did give up on him.” said Helga “Your preference to see Steve dead instead of the Great Leader is why the Great Leader still lives.”

“Aww” said Sammy “You were willing to die and abandon revolution for that me.”

I nodded then said “Sort of discovered you’ve got a point too, since I like being eaten. Charlotte helped me find out.”

Sammy grinned “Oh we must get eaten together, we simply must.”

I laughed “Alright but first I have to tell you something, I think I love you.”

Sammy chuckled “I know and I love you, always have. You just didn’t ask.”

Eliza entered with Fiora and Roxy.

Helga stared at them “They’re dead. What are they doing alive?”

Eliza shrugged “What matters is that they belong to us now and they will gladly be eaten by any passing Contravoxai.”

“Really?” asked Helga.

“Really.” said Eliza before reaching out for Roxy by way of demonstration and casually cutting her arms and legs off in turn and placing them on the bar.

Roxy sighed.

Eliza said “Here, pluck out her eyes. She’s fine with.”

Helga tentatively reached out with a knife and removed Roxy’s eyes then said “Would you look at that, we’ll make a fortune off her.”

“And from Fiora, an Gerald and Emma and at least eight others.” said Eliza.

Helga grinned “We’re rich!”

Fiora approached us and said “Look, I know it didn’t go as well as we wanted but the Albino Sylph Squirrels and wereshark blood is in circulation now plus we owe you our lives so anytime you want us, just ask.”

“Actually...” said Charlotte “You and Roxy are a couple aren’t you? How do you feel about joining us for a romantic meal of couples having romantic meals?”

Roxy asked “Are you going to do anything with my arms and legs because I’m fairly certain they were reattach?”

Merle said “If there’s arms and legs going begging, I am feeling a bit peckish after all that exertion.”

Eliza chuckled “Of course” and chucked Merle Roxy’s arms and legs.

Merle eagerly snatched them up and devoured them before approaching the bar “And are those her eyes?”

Eliza nodded “Take them.”

“Why, thank you.” said Merle, snatching up Roxy’s eyes. He asked “Is there any chance you could put her in a broth for me? Seems a shame to waste the rest of her.”

“For you Merle, anything” said Helga as she scooped up Roxy.

Merle turned to address me.

“I know, I fucked up.” I said.

“Au Contraire, my dear boy, you’ve quite won us the revolution.” said Merle.

“How? I fucked it all up, nearly got Lisa killed, nearly got myself killed and the political structure continues.” I said.

Merle shook his head “If you had killed him, or even if he’d abdicated at the barrel of a gun, all you would have done is create a power vacuum which could well be filled by someone worse. Instead you showed that the Great Leader is not invulnerable, you showed that humans and Vligury are not without strength and you showed that is the morsels that have the power. The Great Sammy, the epitome of playing with your food and she saved the Great Leader’s life and not with violence but words. And I will continue the revolution itself by arming the populace with the immortality granted by being Sylph Weresharks and this too shall get the revolution among the lower Contravoxai classes going as the poor and the needy can have the food to eat and fight back. The structure will be reformed.”

Helga returned with a thick broth made from Roxy “Here you go, Merle.”

“Oh fantastic!” said Merle accepting the broth.

Fiora looked sadly at her best friend and lover.”

“Jealous?” asked Merle.

“Just a bit.” said Fiora “Don’t like not being with her you know?”

“Then I shall have to make sure I eat you afterwards” said Merle with a chuckle.

Charlotte sighed “Oh, you know I think we might have to cut our losses with Fiora and Roxy for now.”

David nodded then turned to Sammy and asked “Me and Charlotte here are thinking of having a romantic meal so we might get to know each other, wondered if you and Stevie boy would mind being the main.”

Sammy looked to me “What do you think?”

I shrugged.

A victorian adventures suddenly stood beside me and said “Yes, what do you think of being eaten alive with your dear precious Sammy? You’re so wretchedly cute together it makes me want to vomit. You know he elected to have himself made into a toy, so that all the little toy Sammys wouldn’t have to be alone. Despicable bastard.”

Sammy snorted then said “That is actually rather unbelievably sweet.”

I shrugged “You’re for your payment. aren’t you?”

The Bam-Kursh nodded “However could you guess? Of course I want my fucking payment so pay up fucker.”

“Here you are” I said, indicating Fiora and the broth. “Fiora and Roxy, perfect toys.”

The Bam-Kursh was taken aback “You’re paying me double?”

I shrugged “They’re cute together.”

The Bam-Kursh looked at them and sucked her teeth then said “Yes, they sort of are, aren’t they. Alright, I’ll have to owe you.”

I nodded “Fine by me”

Then she vanished.

“Actually that reminds me of something.” I said and I pulled a gun out of my pocket and shot Helga between the eyes.

Helga blink and shook her head then said “Thank you.”

Eliza looked at me nervously.

Helga looked into Eliza’s eyes and said “He’s just given me the most wonderous power over you dear, the knowledge to control your abilities.”

“Oh” said Eliza with nervous excitement “So what happens now?”

“You will have to be very obedient...” said Helga as she cleared the hair from Eliza’s face.

“Oh, I am sure” said Eliza “You might even have to discipline me if I get things wrong?”

Helga smiled.

Eliza returned the smile.

Then David and Charlotte led me, Sammy, Lisa and Carla away.

*

On a distant planet orbiting a binary star system, a table and chairs had been set out in an extension of the Seghat life support forcefield under the stars.

Lisa and Carla were appetisers and to accomodate their position they ate nouveau cuisine before David and Charlotte chowed down on them.

Me and Sammy had more time for our meal but as the main we had to conduct it while seated in

mashed potato and gravy and being slowly baked courtesy of a fancy hob. We ate pizza because fuck fancy, we had saved each other's lives.

When we woke the next day Charlotte informed me that there was still one task left to perform...

*

Tipton, West Midlands, Great Britain, Earth, five years before the Contravoxai invaded.

Steven Banks is having an argument with his best friend about him being a crazy loser conspiracy theorist scrounger. The losers name is Lucas Crichton.

Steven says "Look, why can't you just be normal?"

"Because I'm not." said Lucas.

"Then take your fucking meds." said Steven.

"I am" said Lucas "But you can't drug someone normal."

"Oh you're just not trying hard enough" said Steven and he walked off.

"Well fuck you then." said Lucas, giving his friend two middle fingers before ascending a fire escape outside a building.

He climbs to the top and I am there to meet him.

"How did you beat me, here?" he asked curiously.

"I time traveled." I said casually "Look, Lucas, I'm a dick yeah, a complete stonking tool. I'm a fucking Hedgefund Manager for christ sake! I am a class A bellend but you ain't. You don't have to do this. I'm sorry. You're you and I should never have tried to make you into anything different. I love you, man."

Lucas smirked "You're punking me ain't you? This is just like that time you pretended to come out to me so you could call me a faggot for not being a twat to you about it."

"Yeah, well if it's any consolation, I'm fairly certain I got my just desserts." I said.

"You know what's the worst thing?" said Lucas "You are my best friend and you are a complete dick to me. I don't get many options so I just smile and accept it. Good old Stevie and his funny funny japes. Like that time you made me believe I was dying of cancer, remember that? You actually kept it up five months after I was supposed to have died?"

I sighed "Yeah, sorry. Point is mate, I do actually sort of love you in a very real way. I'm just a right prick about it."

"Yeah, well... that's not good enough anymore." said Lucas "Fuck off!"

“Alright.” I said “I’m going. Can’t bare to watch this anyway.”

Then I got up and left.

Alone on the rooftop Lucas cried out “Listen, aliens and eldritch things and all you other zombies, I am not going to die! I am going to throw myself off this roof and then something truly amazing is going to happen because I am not suicidal! I’m perfectly sane! I’m perfectly normal! I am just going to leap off this roof and wake up somewhere magical!”

Then Lucas ran off the roof and fell... Right through the open door of a red British post box and into a pool large enough for a great white shark to comfortably roam. He drowned trying to find his way to air.

*

Lucas woke with a splutter on the floor of the central control room. I was holding Sammy for emotional support. David and Charlotte watched with nervous interest and Lisa and Carla watched with curiosity.

Lucas sat up and asked “Where am I?”

“Tell me, what do you know of Quantum Immortality?” I asked.

Lucas got to his feet and surmised “It’s the theory that states that since you can only experience universes in which you are alive, if you were to riddle yourself with nanotech that automatically killed you given any scenario less than ideal, you would only experience the ideal scenario.”

I nodded “Very good summary. That’s you.”

“Who are all these people?” asked Lucas.

“Well those two are polyamorous toys who love to be eaten alive.” I said of Lisa and Carla “This is the love of my life.” I said of Sammy “and those two are tentacled man eating aliens called Contravoxai.” I said of David and Charlotte.

Lucas nodded “May I see a demonstration?”

“Oh I think we can do that.” I said.

Lisa giggled and took Carla’s hand “Love you later, honey.”

Carla nodded “You too, sweetie.”

Then David lifted Carla up into the air and casually devoured her as Charlotte cheerily devoured Lisa.

“No kidding.” said Lucas, impressed “And they’re not dead?”

“We recover in a day or two” I said.

“We?” he asked.

“See you soon, sweetie.” said Sammy as David and Charlotte lifted her into the air and devoured her between the pair of them.

“Wow” said Lucas. “Okay, I believe you, so what now?”

I went to the controls and said “You are the smartest man I know and my best mate, well before all this happened and that makes you uniquely qualified to travel the stars.”

Lucas asked “Are you trippin’ mate?”

I shook my head “You’ll understand, I know you’ll understand because you already have” and then we landed and I stepped out with Lucas and the logic lance.

Charlotte greeted us. “Steve, you’re back and so soon?”

“Yes.” I said “But only to deliver this man into your care. He is to become a Seghat you understand, my Seghat. Disable his camouflage circuitry so his exterior remains that of a British Red Post Box. I will arrive when his ready to be piloted and I will know nothing of this, see that it stays that way.”

Lucas stared at me “You’re going to turn me into some kind of ship aren’t you?”

“Is that a problem?” I asked.

“I don’t know.” said Lucas.

“Then I think it’s probably not a problem.” I said

“Fair enough” said Lucas “Until we meet again old chum.”

I strode back into my Seghat and the welcoming tentacles of David and Charlotte.

*

I woke the next morning on the floor of the Seghat. I showered and got dressed in my suit then I reenabled the camouflage circuitry and installed the hologram software.

As soon as it had finished installing, a hologram of Lucas appeared beside me and said “One last stop friend then you can settle down for a bit.”

“I know.” I said “I just... She hurt me so much, you know?”

Lucas nodded “Not exactly a stranger to that concept, yeah, but you need to do it.”

*

The Great Leader had gone into hiding with her personal banquet in tow and that meant he was well clear of the no materialization zone.

Sammy lay awake as the others slept, just staring into space.

Then a trapdoor appeared before her.

I crawled out of it.

“You’re alive?” Sammy said, utterly surprised “But I watched you die?”

“My Contravoxai friend Charlotte is very skilled at making friendly munchings seem terrifyingly fatal.” I explained “And for what it’s worth I now understand why you want to stay with the Great Leader because I like being eaten too now.”

“Oh, aww” said Sammy, pulling me close “My poor baby. You should stay. I’m sure the Leader will forgive you, especially when you let him eat you.”

“Well that’s handy” I said exposing my chest “Sammy, I love you. Each and every version of you. Where you go, I go. This me can’t stay with you because this me has a different Sammy that he’s very fond of but I only have that Sammy because you decided to save my life and gave me your heart so this is me, returning the favour.”

I sliced open my chest and pulled out my human heart, I cut it free and handed the still beating heart to Sammy. “Look after him and he will look after you.”

Sammy held my heart in her hands and said “I will treasure him always. Enjoy your Sammy, Steve, she’s a very lucky girl.”

“I know” I said and I left through the trapdoor again.

My Sammy was waiting for me in the Seghat Control room with the hologram of Lucas.

“Is it done?” she asked “Will she have a version of you to love?”

I nodded.

Sammy flung her arms around me and kissed my neck.

“I think you should head to Anthony’s” said Lucas “Your baby’s having a baby.”

Sammy stared at him.

*

We materialised and exited the Seghat in time to watch Lucy’s egg hatch.

“It’s a girl!” announced Lucas “Congratulations.”

Yrgritte and Anthony were holding each other as Amy and Lucy watched the hatching together.

Lucy looked up at me and said “Thanks for making it.”

“What happened?” asked Yrgritte.

“Oh, that’s a long story.” I said “But you might want to get the deep fat fryer on, we’ve got two Contravoxai back there and it’s not just Lisa who likes a good eating anymore.”

Sammy grinned and squeezed my hand “You’re a grand master.”

Lisa and Carla exited.

“Right, I think I best get cooking.” said Yrgritte “Come on girls, lets get you deep fried as soon as possible.”

“Deep fried?” asked Carla.

“Oh, it’s fantastic” said Lisa, leading the way.

Sammy said “A deep fry does sound like fun. Do you think you’ll be okay on your own for a bit?”

“Of course.” I said “Go have fun.”

Sammy ran off after Lisa, Carla and Yrgritte.

I decided to stay with Lucy and Amy and the hatchling for a bit but I heard Lucas approach Anthony and ask “What do you do when the omniscience gets a bit squick, like say, for example, totally hypothetically, two Contravoxai were getting jiggy with it right in front of your sensors?”

Anthony chuckled “Oh I may have some particularly rare narcotics that can help, if you would like to follow me?”

Lucas followed Anthony.

I was left alone with Lucy and Amy so I asked “What happened to the toys?”

“You arrived.” said Amy “Your toy, I mean. You and Sammy go everywhere together and Lisa and Carla go with you. It’s quite sickening really. Only Lucy and Amy are free to actually be toys that are played with now. Everyone else is too full of life.”

I nodded “Interesting...”

Lucy asked “So how long are you going to stay here then?”

I shrugged “We’re got a ship that can travel in time and things that can freeze time. No reason we couldn’t continue the old system and still travel, I guess we’ll see how it goes.”

The End

This chronicle is dedicated to the memory of Earth that was and my small impact on Contravoxai/Vligury relations. I know some bits might seem a bit needlessly graphic for a chronicle of

events but it is the story of the events themselves that delivers the weight by which people's minds are charged. The facts on their own without the context of detail and emotion are meaningless or at least that's my perspective.

I am eighty now but I still look in my early thirties thanks to the whole wereshark thing.

The revolution succeeded, more or less as we now have an elected parliament with the Great Leader relegated to performing ceremonial function alone. All sentient cattle including Humans and Vligury now have the right to say no to an offer of being eaten and the further right to choose whether they wish to be eaten as a mortal or as a wereshark.

Eliza and Helga's little underground pub is now a world famous eating establishment with Lucy, Amy, Fiora, Roxy, Gerald and Emma among the top dishes, with new dishes being recruited all the time and they are now paid a wage per customer served, though they regularly offer themselves to homeless Contravoxai as an act of charity with Fiora and Roxy being regular servings at nearby soup kitchen.

Eliza is now nearly as powerful as Anthony but still plays the subservient to Helga's vampiricness.

Lisa and Carla are now married but remain as poly-amorous and keen to be devoured as ever.

Sammy and I have been married 40 years now and still enjoy being a good romantic meal together.

David and Charlotte do not believe in marriage but they have been together and devouring us almost every day since they began. On their anniversary every year they book tables for me and Sammy, Lisa and Carla, Fiora and Roxy and Gerald and Emma then have a long romantic dinner of us as the different courses.

The Bam-Kursh has started selling her toys here and is making a fortune.

My Pet Lucy's hatchling was named Jessica and she is a trained lawyer but fell for a Contravoxai ceo so now she works in a patent office. It is understood that Jessica's relationship with the ceo is not nearly as simply described as romantic partners or culinary partners but we love her regardless of her proclivities.

The human child of Amy was named Liara but he came out as nature defiant at ten and since goes by Liam. He's a politician pushing for the rights of the Contravoxai lower classes. Ten years ago he got a law passed requiring all Contravoxai to be given access to the same nature defiance treatment and help as Vligury when formally Contravoxai would have to pay to get treatment.

Lucas has spent a lot of his time searching for technologically advanced extra terrestrial life and slowly upgrading his abilities, Eliza and Anthony have both helped him a great deal in this capacity. It is understood that he has a somewhat physical relationship with Anthony's Seghat and certainly shares a deep spiritual connection with her.

Earth that was is now well and truly gone but enough people survived to impact the Vligury culture. Whether this is a good thing or bad thing has yet to be seen.

The Many Claras
I couldn't help myself..

My deepest apologies to everyone who has ever been involved with the show or ever will be.

Not Safe For Work
A Doctor Who Distraction Fic

By
Alexander Gordon Jahans

In the Earth year 2017, roughly 700,000 times the span of the observable universe away from Earth is a small unregarded trinary star system around which orbit 7 planets and orbiting one of them is a moon with a rather odd property. It's core is made of such a strange mix of chemicals as to sustain an open rift in fabric of space time, a rift beyond the void of logic divide the beautiful majesty of the Great Green Nothingness. About this rift has formed the noble trading city of Terrapoosh.

Clara is travelling on her own and has been for some time. She almost can't remember her brief time with the timelord known as the Doctor any more. The only reason she hasn't forgotten entirely is that she still has no pulse and that continual reminder that she is broken and caught in a catch in continuity before her inevitable death haunts her. The clock in San Dimas has been stopped and its pendulum held. The raven that could make a dalek scared enough to live in piece stays held in place, caught, waiting for her to accept her death. But the Doctor never accepted death when another option was on the table so why the hell should she?

She was wearing long coat over a three piece suit as she strode through the market and heard some mad Scottish woman regale the enraptured crowds. "Your very own toy woman. Tamed by my own fair hand, entirely consenting and perked up with a concoction of my own devising to ensure they will never spoil or suffer nor wreck your mood with any unwanted jibber jabber thanks to a handy dandy toggle switch for their minds!"

Clara sighed. She supposed she should intervene. Be a hero. But... fuck it, she just wanted a pasty and a sunset while the tardis recharged at the rift.

"For delectation and delight I present Lisa, Lucy, Amy, Carla, Fiora, Roxy, Felicity and the amazing Sammy! Yours for only the price of a small war ship!" said the trader.

A short green skinned person with vertically closing eyelids looked sideways and the dark skinned

Roxy and asked “To yu to kradeet?”

“Maybe...” said the trader with a twinkling smile “There are other other ways to pay. Take that lady for instance!”

Clara heard a loud intake of breath and froze.

“Yes you, madam in the long coat!” said the trader affirmatively “Come up on stage, there’s a good girl.”

Clara bit her lip. She wasn’t in the mood. She wasn’t the Doctor. She had made no promises. She wanted to walk away. To get some noms then get to fuck... but that charlatan had just decided to patronise her...

Clara turned, smiling, all sweetness and light. “Me?”

“Yes!” said the trader, waving eagerly “Now come along, I don’t bite. Not until the ink’s dried on the contracts anyway.”

Fine. Time to tear down this woman’s world.

Clara walked over to the trader and tried to look curious, innocent and naive with just enough fight to make it look believable. Her mind meanwhile had been honed by centuries of adventures.

The trader had curly ginger hair worn in a bun under an askew hat with a feather in it. She wore a long victorian era ballgown dress with a corset that flared outwards to hide her legs. She seemed genuinely interested in Clara, at least in so far as how she could aid her business, but was undeniably playing up to the crowd and had clearly given this speech many times before.

The trader took Clara’s hand and welcomed her up on stage “Thank you. Now, my dear, what is your name?”

“Clara” said Clara, with a nervous smile like a gameshow contestant.

“Clara, thank you.” said the trader, pausing briefly to address the crowd.

Clara took the opportunity to scan her surroundings. They were on a short stage with a microphone before them and behind them the toys were arrayed. 8 women, 6 blonde haired and light skinned, though one looked rather broad chested to fit typical mold, one pale skinned ginger woman and one dark skinned brunette. Well at least Clara would add some variety to the collection she supposed.

“There is one way to pay for my goods if you are rather short on cash.” said the trader “Lend me a volunteer, such as this fair lady. The larger my product range, the greater the chance that someone will buy.”

Clara had to chuckle at that.

“Something funny, my dear?” asked the trader.

“Yeah, you could say that.” said Clara deciding she was done playing along “You do realise that this is fucking slavery and you will be stopped.”

The trader chuckled and laid a comforting hand on the nape of Clara’s neck, that exerted just enough pressure to inform her that shutting up and not moving would be wise. “Okay, why don’t you take a little time out and we can talk about this later. What I am doing is entirely above board and legal under the United Civilisations of the Multiverse. I can assure you that consent is king.”

An ood raised its forebrain and said “The human has a point. Selling sentient creatures is wrong.”

The trader smiled at the ood “Oh but they aren’t sentient, not by the time I’m done with them. They can be sentient in time with love, care and affection but that is not the intention. They are meant to be used and abused and created for that purpose. Lisa, darling, would you come out here?”

Clara watched as a blonde woman in flipflops, a short skirt and a croptop walked out from behind the display of herself.

“This is my first.” said the trader with a wistful smile as she gestured to the woman, Lisa “I never understood how the Farsh-nuke managed to fall in love with his playthings but she showed me the answer.”

Lisa blushed and took the trader's hand.

"She was a student in architectural design and before my work was done she became a great architect and now, because of our work together, I can do this." The trader pulled an axe out of her jacket pocket and brought the cutting edge to bare on Lisa's neck.

Lisa's rolled before the feet of a Tivoli, a rat like race of humanoids whose home planet had been invaded so often they had adapted to survival through exploitability.

Lisa blinked and said "That was fun."

The Tivoli shivered and the crowd applauded.

The Tivoli raised up a hand and asked "Could I volunteer?"

The trader laughed then said "Well I'm not sure I would really sell you across the rest of the multiverse. From what I gather there maybe a few copyright issues with your species but I may be able to do a custom non profit job for someone so willing and speaking of which -"

Clara's world went dark.

*

Clara woke up, fully clothed sitting in an armchair in a library with the trader and Lisa sitting opposite her. Lisa was thankfully in one piece again.

"Are you okay?" asked the Lisa.

The trader was studying Clara somberly.

"What?" said Clara "Yes. No. What's going on?"

"You're safe." said the trader "For now."

Clara swallowed. Okay, the interrogation scene, probably going to be some torture now.

“It’s going to be okay.” said Lisa “Mistress can be scary but she won’t hurt you, not until she knows you can take it. She just wants to ask you some questions okay?”

Clara froze “Mistress? Missy? Oh god, it all makes sense! Look at you, tall, mad, charismatic, scary, using people.”

The trader sighed “I have no idea who this Missy is...” the trader leaned forward and looked Clara in the eyes “What I do know is that it is an awful coincidence that I, with my particular set of skills, should happen to stumble upon such a perfect doll with her time stopped.”

“Pardon?” said Clara.

The trader flashed a smile and leaned back. “Cute.”

“What is she talking about?” asked Clara of Lisa.

Lisa shrugged “I think she means that you’re special.”

The trader snorted.

Clara shrugged and looked wide eyed “Well, what can I say there’s nothing special about me?”

“You have no pulse.” said the trader.

Clara chuckled “Lots of planets have people with no pulses.”

The trader rolled her eyes.

Shit.

Clara smiled disarmingly. “I mean you don’t know, can’t have seen them all...”

“I don’t need to.” said the trader “I can read your soul like it’s a novel. Your time has been stopped. That is some very particular, high level logic manipulation. You are thinking, your brain is working. Your nerves are sending and receiving signals. Yet you don’t need to breathe and you have no pulse.

You are a woman out of time and without time, yet able to perceive it and affect it. It takes some serious technology to fuck up a person as thoroughly as you have been fucked up. What I want to know is why.”

The trader leaned forward “What are you? A trick? A trap? Who sends me an impossible girl?”

Clara stared at her and asked “Can you help me?”

“Yes.” said the trader “I should think I can guarantee that but why would you need my help.”

Clara bit her lip as she thought for a long moment then she said and said “There was a man. A brilliant man. An amazing man. A really strange man. We travelled time and space together, saving each other’s lives and those around us until one day I made a mistake and I died. To these strange raven things. I had a kind of magic tattoo counting down to my death.”

“So what happened?” asked the trader “I notice the tattoo is still there.”

“I got myself killed during some scheme to get this man into a place where he could be interrogated about a prophecy. The prophecy is bullshit but the point is that this scheme really really pissed my man off and they had just happened to deliver him into the one place where he could bring me back on the brink of death. Apparently it had been done to him once before.” said Clara “I’ve been travelling without him ever since.”

The trader nodded “Well I think I can help you, help your friend too. What was this place?”

“Hold on...” said Clara, showing the palms of her hands “I’m not just going to tell nobody about the reason I am still alive.”

“Okay.” said the trader extending a hand towards Clara “I am the Bam-Kursh, I am cousin to the Farsh-nuke, champion of the United Civilizations of the Multiverse and the great Toy Maker.”

“Sooo... Not Missy then?” clarified Clara as she shook her hand.

“No, not Missy.” said the Bam-Kursh pulling a face.

Clara breathed a sigh of relief “His name is the Doctor, the place is Gallifrey and the people are the timelords.”

“Never heard of them.” said the Bam-Kursh “But thank you for telling me. I know what to look for now. Sleep tight, little one.”

Clara stared at the Bam-Kursh as she rose from her armchair, then sleep overcame Clara.

*

She woke to find the Bam-Kursh sitting before her once more in the library.

“Morning.” said the Bam-Kursh.

Clara blinked and wanted to stretch her legs “Oh, we’re still here.”

“Yes, but not for much longer.” said the Bam-Kursh. “I’ve done some researching on the topics of timelords, prophecies and time stopped individuals. I have good news and bad news.”

Clara stared at her. “Such as?”

“You need to die. You really need to die.” said the Bam-Kursh “Your death is key to the timeline of the complex space time event known as the Doctor. Unravel that timeline, even a little, and the whole universe goes phoom and takes out a few hundred either side for good measure. You are not worth that.”

Clara swallowed “Please tell me that wasn’t the good news?”

The Bam-Kursh snorted. “Of course not. The good news is that Clara Oswald can live on after you die but you have to trust me.”

Clara stared at her “Trust the woman who sells women as toys? You have to be kidding me?”

The Bam-Kursh shrugged “Fair enough. Sorry about the whole having to take you to your death thing but it seems like I’m the only person willing to brave the Doctor’s wrath for the sake of the universe -”

“Hold on!” cried Clara.

The Bam-Kursh paused and looked questioningly at Clara.

“If I am dead anyway, I guess I can trust you.” said Clara.

The Bam-Kursh smiled. “Thank you.”

“So what’s your plan?” asked Clara.

“I can turn your mind on and off remotely with my Quantum Oscillator.” Explained the Bam-Kursh “I can turn you off then create duplicates using an extrapolation of teleportation technology, when I turn on each duplicate they will think they are you. You will be delivered to die at the proper time but one copy will be allowed to fly off in her tardis free as a bird and the other, the other will stay with me.”

Clara swallowed then said “Your payment for services rendered I take it.”

“I am risking the wrath of a man who topples empires for fun.” said the Bam-Kursh “I fully intend to patent you and exploit the ever loving shit out of that patent.”

Then the Bam-Kursh softened and sighed “But I did mean what I said Clara. Consent is king. You will walk with me every step of the way. Even to the cooking pot.”

Clara regarded the Bam-Kursh for a long moment then sighed “Fine. Fine. Just. Just, lets get this over with shall we?”

The Bam-Kursh nodded then said “Come with me.” as she rose from her armchair.

*

Clara stood in the teleportation chamber, wearing replica clothes to what she had worn when she’d died. “So this is it? Now I die?”

The Bam-Kursh nodded “But now you will also begin many new lives.”

“Okay...” said Clara with a shrug “Geronimo, I guess.”

The Bam-Kursh nodded curtly.

Clara blacked out.

*

Clara woke, screaming as she died an agonising death, a death that would cause the lives she would also now lead.

*

Clara woke to find the Bam-Kursh grinning at her.

“Not dead.” said Clara “That’s good.”

The Bam-Kursh nodded.

“Okay getting slightly creeped out by how happy you are seeming.” said Clara “I take this means I’m your payment?”

The Bam-Kursh booped Clara’s nose “You, my precious, little, complex, space time event, are to be my toy. Come let us begin.”

The Bam-Kursh offered Clara her hand.

Clara looked first at the hand then at the Bam-Kursh’s gleeful face “You’ll stop if I don’t like it?”

“Of course.” said the Bam-Kursh.

Clara took her hand “Then lead on.”

*

Clara woke to find she was looking at herself. The copy of her wore an absurdly tiny amount of clothes and was smiling vacantly.

“I hope you approve.” said the Bam-Kursh “You took me a while but I got you remade in the end. Might give one to the Farsh-nuke, from what I recall, he seemed to like this Doctor character.”

“Am I that gift?” asked Clara irritated.

“Oh no” said the Bam-Kursh “Your clothes are where you left them. Keep adventuring.”

Clara nodded and walked past herself and the Bam-Kursh.

*

Clara woke to find herself looking at a strangely dressed man. “Doctor?”

“Frederick Hamish Pearson” said the man extending his hand.

Clara shook it “Clara Oswald, how may I be of service?”

Frederick said “The Bam-Kursh told me you were interested in becoming a sylph?”

“Umm...yes.” said Clara “There’s just one small thing. What’s a sylph?”

“Oh... Oh I am sorry. She keeps trying to set me up with women. I think she’s got the hots for me. I’ll be going now.” said Frederick as he made to leave.

Clara laid a hand on his arm. “No, I want to know. I’m interested. I just... want you to tell me?”

“Oh...” said Frederick with realisation “You’re playing dumb because this is your fantasy isn’t it?”

“Yes! Yes, exactly!” cried Clara with relief “I just really want this to feel real you know? So about that explanation...”

Frederick grinned and started to explain “Well you see there was this dying race...”

*

Clara woke to find the Bam-Kursh regarding her like an old friend. “Come on, Clara, I’ve just turned

the toy I made of you into a hat stand and quite frankly I'm rather bored of you now but there is one last thing you can do for me."

"Okay..." said Clara.

The Bam-Kursh turned and walked out the door of the teleportation chamber.

Clara followed and asked "What is it? What's this last thing?"

"The reason I first noticed you." said the Bam-Kursh wistfully "So strong, so powerful, such a don't give a fuck attitude. I saw that and I fought how funny it would be to see you in a cooking pot."

Clara was shocked "What?"

The Bam-Kursh laughed as she led Clara through her ship "Don't worry, you will enjoy it and you will heal. To you it will be an experience better than sex." the Bam-Kursh paused as she realised "I guess that makes me your pimp?" then she laughed "In any case where Prometheus had his liver eaten every day and called it hell, you will have everything bar your brain and three hearts eaten or removed every day and call it heaven."

Bam-Kursh pushed open the door of her ship and announced "Clara I give you the world of the Contravoxai and Vligury.

Clara walked out through the door and saw a great fancy restaurant where tentacled aliens and people dined together. Then she noticed the tentacled aliens eating people who were served to them by waiters and waitresses. People served up in soup bowls, roasted live or even skewered through with a spit and left to roast over an open flame and all alive and loving it.

The Bam-Kursh clapped a hand on Clara's shoulder "Are you alright?"

"Yeah..." lied Clara.

The Bam-Kursh introduced a slight brunette "This is Eliza, she's umm, she's quite powerful, got some neat tricks she can show you later. What matters is that she is going to be your owner. You come to her with troubles and she will sort you out okay?"

Clara stared at the Bam-Kursh “I thought you didn’t care.”

The Bam-Kursh shrugged “It’s only fun if you’re okay. Now, look her in the eyes and drink this.”

Clara nodded and looked Eliza in the eyes as she knocked back the foul smelling concoction. A stupid grin spread across her face as it took hold and imprinted Eliza upon her.

Eliza stroked Clara’s hair and said “Honey, I need you to remove your clothes for me okay?”

Clara nodded and did as she was told.

Eliza called a naked woman over and stabbed her in the hand then she sliced open the palm of Clara’s left hand with the bloodied knife.

“That’s mixing your blood with that of a wereshark, give you its healing factor. The desire to be exploited given to you by becoming a sylph will counteract the homicidal madness of the wereshark.” explained the Bam-Kursh.

Clara’s palm healed completely in moments.

Eliza smiled “You’re all ready to begin your life here. Just one thing remains.”

Clara asked “What?”

“Her payment.” said Eliza.

Clara giggled.

Eliza hugged Clara.

The Bam-Kursh sliced off Clara’s arms and legs.

Clara shrieked, not prepared for the sudden jolts of joy that prompted.

Eliza stowed Clara under the counter and shushed her then had her arms and legs deep fried for the Bam-Kursh.

The Bam-Kursh left without saying goodbye. She didn't need to. She knew now that this particular Clara would spend an eternity in the cooking pot for kicks and laughed long and hard about that.

The Shrinkening
A tribute to a great comic since lost to time.
By
Alexander Gordon Jahans

Daniella was the first in the coffee shop. She was 22, Caucasian, born in England and she had long blonde hair. She was studying The History Of Feminism And The Sociological Impact Of New Media at Wolverhampton University. She was dressed in jeans, ugg boots, a limited print run fitted shirt and a leather jacket.

Daniella ordered a Pumpkin Spice Latte from the barista a short Asian looking lady who spoke fluent English and whose name tag said: Riksu

Lisa arrived next. She was 21, Caucasian, born in England with shoulder length blonde hair. She was studying to become an architect at Wolverhampton University. She wore thigh high cowboy boots, black tights, a short pink skirt and a tight green fitted sleeveless top that left little to the imagination. She ordered a pumpkin spice latte from the barista, fishing the necessary change from out of her bra.

Daniella and Lisa started talking and the barista joined in when she overheard them discussing the importance of location and set dressing in film. Only slightly motivated by the prospect of tips.

Cassie, Amy and Alisha arrived together and ordered pumpkin spice lattes.

Cassie was 24, Caucasian, born in Texas with long hazel brown hair tied back in a ponytail. She was doing a masters in the field of Artificial Intelligence development at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She wore a tailored black suit.

Amy was 23, Caucasian, born in Scotland with long flame red hair. She was studying to become a lawyer at Harvard. She wore canvas shoes, tights, a short gray skirt and a large red jumper.

Alisha was 28, African American, born in Baltimore with short black hair. She was teaching at Harvard in the field of Quantum Mechanics and had invested early and well into Facebook, Twitter and Google. She wore stylish lace up flat leather shoes, red jeans, a tie dye tank top and a short leather jacket.

Emma was last to arrive. She was 25, Caucasian, born in Yorkshire with shoulder length bronze coloured hair tied back in pigtailed. She was doing a paid internship Teaching English as a Foreign Language. She wore imitation ugg boots, tights, jean shorts, a pink branded shirt with a picture of a cat on it, and a cagoule. She ordered an iced caramel latte.

They sat and talked for a while before they noticed it happening. This meet up had been arranged by Daniella because she and Lisa were spending a year at Harvard as part of their courses at Wolverhampton, had bumped into Emma and Amy and become instant friends owing to their shared experience of being Brits in Boston. Cassie and Alisha had been invited because Amy was already friends with them. The barista Riksu joined them and flirted with Daniella to the point of sitting on her lap because she understood just how much money stood to be made from white girls when pumpkin spice lattes were on sale.

As the spice flowed so the young women shrank. It was a slow process and as they were all engaged in

interesting conversations about complex ideas, and aware of the hallucinatory properties of coffee they dismissed the notion if it crossed their minds and besides almost everyone they were talking to was shrinking at the same rate so it was harder to notice and nobody else seemed concerned. Except for Emma.

Emma was from the north of England, where just enough immigrants and refugees settled to be noticeable but not enough to become a dull ordinary sight and her town in particular had a history of electing far right sorts like UKIP and the BNP so a part of her subconscious kept her looking in Alisha's direction. Her choice of iced lattes and comparative poverty prevented her from drinking so much coffee what with the risk of brain freeze and her unwillingness to ask for or accept a free drink. There was also a bit of a comprehension gap preventing her getting too ensnared by conversations.

So Emma was in a position to notice that Amy and Cassie were now noticeably shorter than Alisha and that their clothes were absurdly baggy while Alisha's clothes fit her like a glove. She recalled the stories her old friend from Wolverhampton wrote and felt a strange sense of foreboding. She noticed that her own clothes seemed to be hanging off her oddly and dug out her phone from her bag. Her phone seemed larger than she was used to.

Alisha disengaged from a conversation with Lisa about non-euclidean geometries, letting Cassie veer the conversation into the topic of algorithm controlled cities of the future. Alisha grew up in Baltimore and worked in Boston, she was no stranger to racism, to the small subtle ways even the most enlightened of white folk would dismiss her or belittle her. She had learned to use this knowledge to her advantage exploiting assumptions about her intelligence to get good deals on investments and courses. What kindly liberal white American would ever consider the possibility that Alisha had a rich extended family ready to bail her out and loan her the necessary finances, however dear, to get ahead? She knew racism but this was something more and Emma's glances seemed far too consistent and intrusive for the racism level it seemed like Daniella and Lisa would tolerate. Something different was going on here.

So Alisha studied Emma, studied her close enough that she would see the subtle micro expressions of body language and emotion. Emma might hide it well but if there was a mote of genuine fear, disgust or hatred within her Alisha would spot it. That's when Alisha noticed Emma shrinking. Everyone who was anyone knew how big an iphone was, even an old model i5, so the fact the i5 looked like a tablet pc in Emma's hands sent alarm bell's ringing.

Then Alisha looked back to Lisa. Alisha hadn't been able to notice the change happening consciously because it happened so slowly, particularly when locked deep in intellectual conversation. Now she saw what had happened to Lisa though, her once so tight top looked baggy and the straps were halfway down her arms. Alisha scanned her eyes over Daniella, Cassie and Amy. All looked to be wearing the clothes of much larger boyfriends, something that stood out particularly on Cassie given her fierce independence and insistence on respectability.

Riksu got up to fetch another round of Pumpkin spice lattes and tripped over her shoes, falling flat on her face. As Riksu struggled to get up Lisa, Daniella, Cassie and Amy stared in horror. Coffee could cause hallucinations, humidity and sweat could do weird things to fabrics and if you were watching a change happen it was too slow and subtle, never seeming out of place, but they all knew just how rigorously uniforms were tailored. Once the seed was planted by Riksu they looked at themselves and Alisha, now a giant in absurdly well fitting clothes, and started considering the impossible.

Emma was resting the phone on her seat beside her and was shouting into it. “William, I know it has been a long time and I swore I would never call but this is urgent. You will never believe me but you need to get to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT in Cambridge, Boston now. I will pay for the flight, transport, hotel and food. I’ll have someone there to greet you and explain the situation. Just get here now. I’ll even pay for you to bring along your entire gaming rig if it would make you feel better and I will pay you for your time. Just get here.”

Alisha stared at Emma. “You weren’t looking at me because of the colour of my skin were you?”

Emma shook her head. “I have a friend - Well he’s more than a friend and would like to be far more than that. Point is he writes things, strange things. You’d like him. I think I know what’s happening to us and if I am right then he is the best person to help.”

Alisha swallowed, her mouth suddenly dry. “If you’re right, what should I do since I am clearly not affected?”

“Get a container, gather us up, gather our things up and take us home with you then meet William when he arrives and show him us.” said Emma. “I’ll try to keep them calm.”

Daniella had gotten off her seat and was trying to help Riksu up when she was tripped up by her own absurdly large clothes.

Cassie and Amy were hurriedly phoning round their friends and family, all lines were busy.

Lisa sipped her latte, apparently unconcerned by the vagaries they now faced, even if she she was now holding the coffee mug in both hands.

Alisha started gathering up the group’s bags and sized them up. Daniella had the biggest bag so Alisha emptied it then started refilling it with tampons, condoms, and packs of tissues from other bags, anything that might provide a relatively soft and springy bedding.

A young white woman with long chocolate brown hair ran in the coffee shop barefoot, holding overly large clothes about herself and glasses several sizes too big for her. She was shouting desperately “Is there a land line phone I can use!?! Please!?! I need to call my sister!”

Alisha sprang forwards and enveloped the young woman’s field of vision with an approach honed by years of experience dealing with flustered white idiots. It was calming professional but friendly manner. “Hi, I’m Alisha, I can get the landline for you if you like?”

“Oh thank God!” cried the young woman with obvious relief. “I’m Jody, Jody Madison! Some... thing is happening to me and shit, I don’t know what to do. If I can phone my twin, hopefully she can help me. The number’s in my phone. If there is somewhere I can sit?”

Alisha nodded and smiled warmly. “You’re safe now. There are chairs just over there.”

Jody nodded and walked towards the seats, clothes dragging on the ground as she walked.

Riksu was sobbing. “Shit, shit, shit. What the fuck is happening?”

Daniella shook her head. "I have no idea but I promise you, you are not alone. I'm going to be right here by your side until we fix this."

Riksu asked. "Are you sure? Aren't I just the barista?"

Daniella grabbed Riksu by the shoulders and looked deep into her eyes. "You were never just the barista. You are a beautiful, magnificent, talented, young woman and it is my honour and privilege to help you now."

Riksu kissed Daniella on the lips then pulled back. "I'm sorry. That was – That was wrong. You are my customer."

Daniella stared at Riksu and spread her arms wide, they were standing on the floor being swamped by their own clothes. "I think that stopped being relevant a while ago."

Riksu smiled.

Daniella shot Riksu a questioning look.

Riksu grinned wickedly and drew her arms in tight about herself, letting her uniform fall off her so she was standing naked before Daniella.

"Oh?" said Daniella with a grin. She shrugged off her own clothes then embraced Riksu.

Riksu blushed.

Lisa had abandoned her latte know and was instead wriggling free of her clothes to lie on her seat.

Jody had decided to sit next to Cassie, there wouldn't actually have been room to do so were they normal size but as they were shrinking it had seemed like most logical place and now Jody and Cassie were talking animatedly about what they expected to happen next.

Amy lay on her chair, hidden beneath her clothes, desperately trying to use her phone but the network had crashed in the local area due to traffic.

Emma was eerily calm as she lay beside her phone.

Alisha arrived with a roll of black plastic bin bags from behind the counter and started putting all the bags and clothes into the bin bags. Leaving just her own and Daniella's bag out.

Riksu and Daniella were mid-coitus when Alisha scooped up their clothes.

Alisha frowned. "Don't mind me."

As Daniella looked up at Alisha it suddenly became all too real. "What the fuck is happening?"

"You're going to be alright." said Alisha. "I'll look after you and there's an expert coming."

Daniella breathed a sigh of relief. "So, what now?"

Alisha lowered her palms to the floor. "Climb on and trust me."

Daniella groaned. "If this is a trick..."

Alisha glared at Daniella.

Riksu was already reclining in Alisha's hands and looked back at Daniella with come-to-bed eyes.

Daniella sighed and shrugged then she climbed onto Alisha's palms.

Alisha lifted the pair of women up then lowered them gently into Daniella's backpack.

Riksu crawled off Alisha's hands and Daniella followed.

Amy was glad to be freed from her clothes but nervous about trusting Alisha.

Cassie and Jody weren't exactly keen but they weren't about to turn down their best hope of survival.

Lisa was practically giddy with enthusiasm as Alisha carried her to the bag and lowered her inside.

Finally Alisha approached Emma. "This friend of yours, you made a lot of promises to him, can you keep them?"

Emma smiled innocently, crossed her hands behind her back and stared at her feet.

Alisha sighed and rolled her eyes. "Lucky, I have money then isn't it?"

Emma nodded. "He'll know how to look after us and certainly if I am to be this way I can think of no one I'd rather entrust myself to. Though you will have to do for now."

"Thanks." said Alisha somewhat bitterly then she caught herself, bit her lip and looked away.

"Think hamster." said Emma. "That's the best advice I can give you."

Alisha nodded then unzipped the front pocket of her jacket meant for phones.

"I'm not going in the bag?" asked Emma, confused.

"You're the closest we have to an expert and our only connection to a real expert, I want you where you can advise me." said Alisha, laying down her palms. "Now come on, we've got to find a pet shop."

Emma giggled and climbed onto Alisha's hands.

"Do you like this?" asked Alisha, as Emma climbed down into her pocket.

"Why do you think I know so much?" said Emma with a chuckle.

As Alisha drove to the pet shop, Daniella's backpack worn about her chest, she heard a broadcast on the

radio about unconfirmed reports of shrinking happening across town. Apparently someone was willing to sell one of these “creatures”. Others were calling them “demon spawn” and “the work of the devil”. Alisha decided it was perhaps best not to let anyone know what had happened for now.

Once a large hamster cage, travel cage, saw dust, bedding, hamster food and human multi-vitamins had been bought Alisha drove home to her loft apartment. She carried everything inside stealthily then bolted the doors and windows, closed the blinds and put the TV on loud. She removed Daniella’s backpack and rested it on her bed then she coaxed Emma out of her pocket and lowered her into the backpack, so Alisha was then free to prepare the cage for its new occupants.

Once the cage was ready Alisha placed the travel cage on the bed with the side hatch open, then she opened the backpack and leaned it against a pile of pillows that would act as an off ramp onto the bed. She explained the situation and within a few moments Emma was leading the other girls out of the backpack and into the travel cage. Then Alisha closed the hatch, lifted the travel cage up, placed it inside the large hamster cage reopened the hatch and closed the large hamster cage’s roof access. She found a whole load of hair ties and clips in the bag where evidently the girls had extracted the last hair accessories still clinging on despite their different forms.

The phone lines, mobile network and internet were all basically out of commission due to demand and the media was still refusing to acknowledge how big a deal this event was, preferring to focus on the latest political hot potato instead. So Alisha focused on sorting out whose belongings belonged to who and finding out who to contact the next day while Emma educated the girls on what they could expect from their new lives. Something the girls listened to with horror.

The next day the news story was if not on the shrinking itself then on the apparent mass hysteria that was gripping the country. Emma and Alisha convinced the girls to notify their next of kin and explain that they were perfectly fine but that due to the chaos they might not be able to be in contact for a while. Jody and Lisa had the rather disquieting news that their sisters still hadn’t been heard from but managed to maintain the illusion that they were perfectly fine. They needed the time away from scrutiny so that Emma’s expert friend could arrive.

By the next day the shrinkings were themselves a political hot potato, with various ministers, senators, congressmen, attorneys and TV experts being asked to give their perspectives on the “creatures” who were fast being associated with the term “Sylph”. The Sylph was a mythical air spirit that was said to lure vain young girls into becoming ever young and beautiful. The men who were also shrunk were ignored or had the term applied to them because of the confusion over gender and sexuality certain newscasters had and the way others would assume shrinking was itself an indicator of femininity. Of course some outlets just preferred to use the shrinking phenomenon as an excuse to talk about vulnerable naked women and thereby attract more views and clicks.

By the third day since the shrinkings started, documents were circulating about how to train a “Sylph” and the President announced that measures would be taken to tag all “Sylphs” and check them against the missing persons records with hefty payouts per “returned Sylph”. This was ostensibly a measure to help with the ongoing investigation and prevent mistreatment, regardless of what the Sylphs actually turned out to be. As a result it was tentatively suggested that Sylphs might be allowed to stay with their new “owners” if the Sylphs could give enthusiastic consent. This was largely a ploy to encourage people to come forward but it set the tone for how the rest of the civilized world would deal with the bizarre situation.

Meanwhile Emma was helping the girls adjust to life as Sylphs by explaining the necessities of their new lives, such as what they ate, how they went to the loo and how they cleaned themselves. Riksu and Daniella stayed sane by fucking each other while, Amy and Cassie found solace in an old friendship and Lisa and Jody found comfort in each other over the ambiguous fates of their sisters.

On the fourth day since the shrinking, Emma's phone rang. Alisha answered it then placed the phone inside the cage so Emma could speak. Emma arranged to have Alisha pick up her friend from the airport and said she'd send a selfie so he'd know it was legit. Forced perspective can do amazing things, especially when the viewer is primed to expect a certain scale to things.

So Alisha met Emma's friend, a 24 year old, Caucasian Englishman called William Dickson Wright, at the airport. Then William was led inside her flat and shown to the hamster cage. At first he wondered what a bunch of dolls were doing inside a hamster cage. Then he saw the dolls were waving and one that looked and sounded an awful lot like one of his best friends was saying "William, this is not what I wanted to happen but you know how to look after us. I know you do, so consider us your early Christmas presents."

William near fell onto the bed and simply said. "Shit."

Alisha left the room and reappeared with a whiskey and coke. "Drink?"

"I never normally drink." said William, taking the glass then draining it glass with a grimace.

Alisha nodded her understanding then returned with the bottles and a chair to sit on.

William was staring at the shrunken women in the cage. He hardly dared to believe what he was seeing. He had spent many a late night explaining his desire for a pet woman to Emma and his shame at that desire. Now here his friend was, naked in a cage, having called him here for the express purpose of owning her, and she was not alone in the cage. He drained the glass Alisha handed to him. At the same time though he knew why his fantasy was impossible, that there were limits to how small things could get. These girls were utterly impossible or in very great danger, probably both. "How long have they been like this?"

"Four days." said Alisha simply.

"Then if the shrinking was going to kill them they would be dead by now." said William. "And there is no way shrinking from 5foot to 5inches wouldn't kill them or at least cause massive problems such as hypoxia and brain damage."

Alisha stared at him. "How are you such an expert?"

"Misspent youth." said William glibly. "How were they when they shrunk?"

"Normal." said Alisha with a shrug. "There was no switch that I could see, just shrinking while cognitive reasoning remained in tact. If you take being lowered into a backpack and kept as pets in a hamster cage as sanity I suppose?"

"And Emma?" asked William, as he watched his shrunken friend.

“She was a star.” said Alisha. “Told me what to do to keep them all safe.”

William nodded and said sincerely. “I love her with all my heart and I think maybe I can look after her, but the others?”

Alisha nodded. “It’s a lot to take in and a big responsibility I know but I know these girls, or at least I know enough about them. They need someone who know what they’re doing to care for them.”

William frowned. “I’m a mad fetishist, hardly an expert, and besides I can barely feed myself let along six others.”

“Then let me hire you to look after them. I don’t think I want to be in America if it’s legal to own people again and I hear Britain is working on its own tagging program.” said Alisha. “I will buy a house for me near where I can get a job and gift you a flat within it and set up trust funds for you that I won’t be able to touch so you will always have money to look after them.”

“Why?” said William looking at Alisha earnestly. “Why do I deserve this?”

“Because those girls are scared, as are many others, and I am prepared to throw money at the slightest chance you can help them feel better about their lives.” said Alisha then she smiled. “Also I am rich enough to afford it.”

William nodded. “And I suppose the more you give away now the less tax you have to pay later? Can you get Emma out of the cage for me? I don’t want to risk hurting her.”

Alisha smiled, opened the hamster cage and laid her hand inside, palm up. Emma climbed on and Alisha carried her out.

William swallowed nervously.

Emma grinned. “William! I am so glad you came. We are going to have so much fun, and I’ve been working at teaching the others the protocol. Oh you will love Daniella and Lisa, they are so your type and so adorable. And there’s Amy, I know how you like them ginger.”

William stared at Emma stunned.

“Well what are you waiting for? Pet me already.” said Emma cheerily. “After all that’s what I am now.”

William tentatively reached out a finger and brushed his old friend’s hair.

“That’s it.” said Emma with a smile. “Baby steps, we’ll have you properly stroking us in no time.”

William nodded then passed out from jet lag, shock and the alcohol.

The next day Alisha took William out to breakfast at a waffle house to set his mind at ease before returning to the loft apartment and introducing him to the girls properly and getting him used to holding them. While William was bonding with the girls, Alisha was booking flights, renting out a house and getting in contact with her estate agent.

The day after Alisha explained that the girls would have to be smuggled through customs. William had never broken a law in his life, so even under such strained circumstances he was conflicted and clueless. Alisha thus took charge of that little operation. They would use ribbon as gags over the girls' mouths and tie their hair into position, then they would use cable ties to fasten their ankles together and their wrists behind the backs, at which point the girls would each be placed inside the hollow of a dildo.

The girls were not exactly pleased with the ordeal, even Emma, but they understood the need for discretion and went along willingly. Once the flight was over and they had left the airport Alisha and William freed the girls from their confines and let them lounge in a travel cage for the rest of the journey.

Most of the Alisha's stuff would be packed up and shipped over later but she had a suitcase full of clothes, her ipad pro, iphone and smart watch. William had insisted on taking his gaming rig with him though and focused on setting that up while Alisha tended to the girls and welcomed them into their new home.

On the seventh day since the shrinking William and Alisha were finally in a position to get the girls tagged. Each was examined, lightly questioned, given the option of signing a consent form to become the legal property of William Dickson Wright then sedated, tattooed, micro-chipped and given collars and leashes.

Lisa and Daniella were eager to become William's pets as they knew from Emma that he wasn't going to mistreat them and would allow them to continue studying. Even if they couldn't actually get qualifications. This meant Amy and Riksu said yes to be with, retrospectively, their friends and romantic partners. Cassie and Jody were less certain about what they wanted but Jody found out that her twin Jamie was registered as a Sylph belonging to a friend of hers at college called Robert so she decided she may as well throw her lot in with her new friends. Cassie didn't have anyone else to go to and had been pinning her hopes on joining Jody at her new owners so when they didn't work out she gave her consent. William and Alisha took the opportunity to ask after their families and found out that Lisa's younger sister was now in the ownership her girlfriend with a clean bill of health.

Months passed as Alisha negotiated buying a house and tried to get a job. It wasn't that she needed the money, it was that she liked to work and to inspire future generations. William chronicled his experiences with his new pet sylphs as he got to know and understand them both as people and as pets. What amazed him was how entirely human they still were. Society treated them like exotic pets but everything was the same as normal only smaller. That started to bother him over time and he started to get headaches. To feel a deep hunger that seemed entirely alien to him.

Once Alisha had got the job teaching Quantum Mechanics at the actual Cambridge University in England and they were set to move into the new house in a week William decided it was safe recording a tour of the rented accommodation to give context as to his research and care of the Sylphs. Unfortunately landmarks were visible through windows he walked past. The next day a stranger was ringing his doorbell.

The stranger was tall, broad chested, wearing a three piece suit, Caucasian, had long blonde hair tied back in a ponytail and was astoundingly beautiful. "I'm Lucy Danse, pleased to make your acquaintance." She said extending a hand. "I'm a big fan of your work."

William warily shook her hand. "Right... Of course... The house tour..."

“Yeah...” said Lucy, ever so slightly cringing at the knowledge she was technically stalking this man. “Look, I know this is rude but I need your help. Or rather I need the help of your girls.”

William shot her a questioning look.

Lucy reached her right hand down her trousers and pulled out a 6 inch high blonde male Adonis. “This is Arthur.” She explained. “I was fucking him the night of the shrinkening, poor guy was riding me when he shrank. Damn nearly got swallowed up he got me so loose. I think he could do with some company his own size.”

William made a concerted effort to look Lucy in the face, no matter how many times he found his gaze drifting to Arthur’s tiny cock and balls. “So you want to put your boy out to stud with my girls, is that it?”

Lucy shrugged. “I promised to look after him, how would you feel if you couldn't have sex for a week.”

William shot Lucy a death glare. “My best friend knew that I would know what to do and would gladly accept her and her friends as my responsibility when they started shrinking. What does that tell you?”

“That you’re a nice guy?” said Lucy hopefully.

William shot her a sarcastic smile and started to close the door.

“Wait!” cried Arthur.

William reopened the door and stared at the little man.

“Do you ever think about what the girls want?” asked Arthur. “They’re red blooded females, they might actually want some cock for a change.”

William groaned. “I am insane.” He opened the door wide and walked inside, letting Lucy follow.

Lucy and William found the girls lying on astroturf beneath a skylight in a kind of courtyard part of their cage.

“If you hurt them or engage non-consensually with them I will burn your tiny cock off, is that clear?” said William.

“Crystal.” said Arthur.

Lucy looked to William.

William nodded.

Lucy lowered Arthur onto the astroturf.

It was a matter of minutes before Arthur was fucking Lisa and from then on it only took an hour for the girls to learn how to share. Even Daniella and Riksu found themselves wanting a piece of the new man

in the cage.

When Alisha arrived she was a little crestfallen to see William with a woman but she was clearly happy for the couple as well and very helpful, offering Lucy a room and an allowance, no matter how many times William and Lucy made clear that they were just friends, if that. So Lucy moved in with them. Even when they moved to the proper house there were more than enough rooms for Lucy to have her own.

William's mind seemed to tighten its focus and increase in speed now Lucy was with him, though he also got more headaches and had the most terrible nightmares about mechanical octopuses shooting lasers from their suckers. Then after months of hard work and study he came up with a thesis.

"Shrinking is impossible." He explained to Lucy and Alisha in the dining room. "Literally biologically impossible. The quantum level is a fundamental limit on how far things can be shrunk safely without affecting cognition or blood pressure."

"And yet we have the proof that it is possible." said Lucy. "Once you have eliminated the impossible whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth. Sherlock Holmes."

"Exactly." said William. "Once you eliminate the impossible whatever remains must be the truth. So what is happening instead? Well put these on."

William presented Lucy and Alisha each with a VR headset that had a camera pointed at their faces.

Once Lucy and Alisha had strapped on the headsets, William ran into his bedroom and checked the video feeds before patching them through and heading into the living room. 3d webcams had been rigged up to computer controlled movement sensors that would more or less sync up the movements of the VR headset wearers with the movements of the cameras and small high def screens below the cameras displayed the video feeds of the corresponding headset wearer's facial expressions. Cassie, Emma and Jody stood on the table, their heads at about the heights of the cameras while William loomed over the table.

"Now I'm not saying this shrinking is just virtual reality and drones." said William. "There's too much evidence against a switch taking place but I am saying that you don't literally need to shrink a person to convince them, and the world, they have actually shrunken."

Lucy and Alisha looked up through the VR and asked as one. "How then?"

"Fuck if I know." said William. "Maybe they found a way to teleport exotic matter beneath the skin evenly and burn away the excess matter in a way no one noticed? It's more possible than actual shrinking at any rate."

William wrote up his thesis and continued his study of the Sylphs, trying to determine any more clues but he always had to stop before hunger overwhelmed him. Alisha and Lucy started to become close after that experience of being shrunk and eventually Lucy managed to convince Alisha she was entirely free to make the moves on William.

After a month of shy flirting William kissed Alisha and soon they were snogging and tearing each other's clothes off. Then police stormed the premises before any actual penetration could occur.

William woke up in the dark, naked and shackled to a wall. His head hurt like hell. Then he remembered the police bursting in.

“The Tower of London.” said a young looking Caucasian brunette in a three piece suite cheerily. “You know in the olden days they would just lock people up in here and leave them to die?”

William stared at her. “You shot me in the head.”

“No, I didn’t. Someone else did.” said the cheery brunette.

William rolled his eyes and groaned. “A fucking pedant!”

“Yeah, you really don’t like pedants do you?” said the cheery brunette. “Can you remember why?”

“Because they are really fucking annoying.” said William. “Why the hell am I here? What have I done?”

And then a flash of vision. The metal octopuses chanting “The equation must be solved! You will be eradicated!”

“Nah, it’s not just that.” said the cheery brunette. “And ooh lets see rape, murder, cannibalism, genocide and the attempted destruction of the entirety of reality. That’s my favourite. And then there’s the manipulation, gas lighting and founding reprehensible guardian empires...”

“What on Earth are you talking about!?” said William as a flash of vision showed him slaughtering a woman, eating a different woman alive and finishing the bomb that could destroy all reality.

“Look me in the eyes, old friend, and tell me my name.” said the cheery brunette.

William stared at the woman and a flash of vision appeared before his eyes. A young cheery brunette serving drinks for great tentacled monstrosities with spider legs and eyes on stalks 5 rows deep. An austere cruel lady watching over her and – Was that Lisa? Being put on a spit?

“Eliza?” asked William at last, the memories from a trillion other lives flooding back to him.

The cheery brunette grinned. “As you live and breathe, good Sir.”

“But how?” asked William. “Your ship was sent to the front line.”

“You saved me remember? One of you anyway.” said the cheery brunette.

William nodded. “I told you to watch over the multiverse for me. Make sure the Logicians didn’t get too big for their boots again.”

“And so I did, Sir!” said Eliza, saluting now.

William grinned. “The Great Slick survives, that’s fantastic!” Then he frowned. “Suppose I’ll die now.”

“Why do you think we shot you in the head?” said Eliza with a smile.

William chuckled as he remembered. “The loop hole?”

Eliza nodded. “The loop hole, Sir.”

“And Lucy?” asked William.

“Galla Placidia is debriefing her now.” said Eliza.

William nodded and whistled. “So MI5 were watching my back the entire time?”

“We had a number of possible targets.” said Eliza. “Thank you for helping to narrow it down for us with the blogs.”

William frowned. “The shrinking?”

“Not us, Sir. A Bam-Kursh got bored, decided to build a device capable of turning any random citizen into a toy then modified it further.” said Eliza.

“Toy? As in people who can only be destroyed by black holes, stellar cores and logical void fire? Beings who don’t need to eat, sleep, breathe or excrete? Who can be completely dismembered and have the body parts continue to function as if whole and so have a cognitive off switch in the name of mercy?” said William, surprised by the words coming out of his mouth.

Eliza nodded. “Thems the ones. She just created an appropriately scaled infinite bag under the skins of the toys.”

“Genius!” said William amazed, recalling vaguely that infinite bags were folds in space time where the inside was not limited by the outside.

Eliza smirked.

“I mean completely evil but genius none-the-less.” said William correcting himself.

Eliza clicked her fingers and the shackles disappeared and William was dressed in a three piece suit like her.

“We have a policy of non-interference unless reality or a valuable asset is under threat. Now that you and Lucy are safe we will be going. There is nothing in our guidelines about giving you supplies however.” said Eliza. She clicked her fingers and William was wearing a backpack. “In there you’ll find three Quantum Oscillators with shrinking and growing resonances programmed in, an Albino Sylph Squirrel, three memory gun pistols, each with 2 blank clips and 2 syringes filled with wereshark blood.”

“Only two?” asked William, confused. He called that Weresharks were creatures born to survive and conquer, able to re4grow entirely from a single beating heart and they had three.

Eliza grinned and held up what looked like a mint imperial. “This will create a proper shrinking Sylph.

Use it wisely. The Logicios will be in touch. I am sure they will be eager to recruit you three. And of course, pets are allowed. If they choose to stay with you.”

William nodded and saluted. “General!”

“Admiral!” saluted Eliza.

William walked out, blinking in the midday sun and bumped into Lucy, dressed similarly but without a backpack. They smiled when they recognized each other and headed home together.

William and Lucy explained everything. The elder gods, the nothingness, the great Septagonoid war and what real sylphs were compared to what these “Sylphs” were. Emma, Lisa, Amy, Daniella, Riksu, Jody, Cassie and Arthur sat listening on the table while Alisha sat on a chair behind said table. It took most of the night but at the end of it Daniella asked. “So does this mean you can turn us back to normal?”

“Ish.” said William. “We can make you your old sizes but you’re ageless immortals with off switches capable of spending millennia trapped, dismembered and very much alive. And you legally belong to me, not that I’m going use that against you.”

Daniella swallowed then said. “I think I’m good as I am. Though maybe some clothes might be nice now we know it won’t kill us?”

Riksu squeezed Daniella’s hand and nodded. “We belong to you. That isn’t changing now.”

“Aww... Thank you.” said William, scooping Daniella and Riksu up in his hands then positioning them on his left palm so he could stroke them with his right hand.

Lisa and Amy held hands then looked up at William and nodded. “Master, forever.”

Lucy chuckled and scooped up Lisa and Amy into her hands so she could stroke them.

Arthur squirmed then looked up at Lucy. “I am as my fairest of maidens wishes.”

Lucy blushed leaned close to him then whispered. “Alright, we’ll try it again but you are still my pet and I still own your little tushy.”

Arthur smirked then kissed Lucy on the chin and said. “As you wish, Mistress.”

Jody shrugged. “My home town is across the other side of the world. My family with it. I don’t belong here.” Then Jody laughed and strode forwards before William and Lucy. “Except this is my home now and it isn’t a home of student debt, saving for my pension, health insurance and working as a waitress. You are my new family now and I love you.”

Alisha scooped Jody up in her hands and kissed her on the forehead. “Though I never knew you as you were I am glad to have found you.”

Jody blushed and smiled.

Alisha stroked her idly.

William looked down at Emma. "I know you called me because you had no other choice. I am not expecting you to stay. You are not my pet, you are my very great friend."

Emma sighed. "Face it you've got the girl of your dreams, William..."

William's lip wobbled and he looked away.

"And I don't plan on going anywhere." said Emma with a smirk.

William stared at her.

"I'm your pet Sylph, William, you better get used to it because I don't want to lead any other kind of life now." said Emma. "And anyway someone has got to be cuddled by you while this lot are off boning each other or boning up on knowledge."

William snorted.

Cassie shrugged. "I like you, I like this life, I like these people. Though you are going to have to teach me how to use all that new tech so I can work on developing better AI. Maybe we can work out a schedule or something to let me do that. I mean that way I can keep an eye on the others if you plan on going out as well?"

William nodded. "I think we can work something out."

Cassie grinned. "Thank you."

Alisha asked. "So what happens now? I mean if they're immortal and we're not?"

William put Daniella and Riksu back on the table then he pulled the backpack off his pack, pulled out a memory gun pistol and ammo clip and gave them to Lucy. "Back up your memories."

Lucy nodded, set down Amy and Lisa on the table then placed her right hand firmly on the grip of the pistol, loaded in the ammo clip and pressed record on the fold out touch screen.

"What is that?" asked Alisha.

"A necessary part of my plans." said William. "You see I was given two samples of wereshark blood. Now weresharks are vicious unstoppable killing machines with amazing regenerative abilities. Injecting a sample of wereshark blood will thus make a person immortal. It will however send them mad, turn them into hungry, lustful berzerkers bent on domination."

Alisha stared at him in horror.

"Fortunately there is a cure. The blood of a sylph as known in the wider multiverse can counteract the desire to dominate with the desire to be dominated." said William. "Now I have an Albino Sylph Squirrel, a kind of biological machine, so I could brew up potions for us all that would not affect us yet would counter act the ill effects of being a wereshark and once you have one sane and nice wereshark

getting hold of more wereshark blood is obviously much easier. Except for one thing.”

William held up the thing that looked like a mint imperial. “Do you know what this is?”

Lucy grinned. “You know damned well I do.”

“And you know damned well I don’t.” said Alisha, irritated by how scared she now was.

William pat Lucy on the back and kissed her cheek then looked to Alisha. “Lucy and I, our souls are linked but it’s not like you think. I was a cloud of fuzzy proto-logic drifting through the multiverse and she was a distraught mother reincarnated in the green nothingness as a ghost wanting her existence to end. I granted her that mercy and she granted me knowledge and wisdom. I absorbed her soul into mine and became obsessed with humanity and women for eons afterwards. Now to me she is my morality, my greatest creation and my pet.”

Lucy nodded. “I know what that pill does because he gave it to me before in another life only this time it isn’t so he can turn me into some kind of super weapon it’s so you will understand that I am yours and his. “

“Why?” asked Alisha. “You’re a strong woman in your own right and you are so much more his type. Leggy, blonde and beautiful.”

William frowned. “Alisha. You are right I do have a type. A type of pet to be precise. You however are a woman I can see as my equal and out sit eternity with. You owe me nothing, you understand? It is I who is indebted to you. Lucy shall belong to us and her blood shall keep us both sane. You are a good woman and I do not deserve to know you.”

Alisha looked to Lucy.

Lucy smiled then put the memory gun on the stable and started stripping. “I’m not going to remember any of this so good luck with things, take good care of me and maybe we’ll speak again later.”

Alisha swallowed then nodded. “Okay then, do it.”

William gave the pill to Lucy and watched as she swallowed it. “Honey, get us a bucket of water won’t you? Lucy’s gonna start heating up fast.”

Alisha nodded and placed Jody back on the table.

Smoke started wafting off from Lucy. “You might want to pack away the pets. This is not going to be quiet.”

Daniella, Riksu, Lisa, Amy, Jody, Emma, Cassie and Arthur were ferried back to their cage in the living room as Lucy headed down to the basement of the house where she could scream without bothering anyone. Her excess biomass was being burned away moment by moment, with what was left continuously trying to repair itself with less and less matter. It was a long, slow, excruciatingly painful process, the only upside of which was that it erased the memory of the shrinking along with everything else. Finally Alisha brought in the bucket of water and Lucy climbed inside to cool off as the last of her senses were burned away to leave her nothing more than a tiny thing that looked more or less human

but had the mind of a rodent.

The weeks passed, Alisha and William raised Lucy up from the tiny thing back to being a fully grown woman again, then they shot her with the memory gun to give her her memories and personality back. Then finally William and Alisha injected themselves with the wereshark blood so they might live long enough to reach graduation as Logicians.

Things changed with the expectation that this was how things would be forever. A correctly scaled set of showers and flushing toilets were installed in the cage, no more burying their poo like animals. Smart watches were set up in the cage to function as media centers with an allowance for internet purchases should they decide to purchase new music, films or TV series.

The pets were each made a selection of clothes to wear if they felt like it. Daniella was given light flowing summer dresses. Riksu was given shorts and tshirts, Lisa was given short skirts and tight sleeveless shirts. Amy was given button down shirts and jeans. Cassie was given low cut suits that showed off her ankles and midriff. Emma was given a selection of everybody's styles in her size to wear at her leisure and she was also given selection of cat ears and tails to wear with them. Jody was given a selection of tight tube tops, shorts and short skirts. Arthur was given shining plate armor, chain-mail armor, a three piece suit and a selection of shorts. They were all given a selection of bikinis, except for Arthur who had to make do with a selection of jock straps.

Alisha and William started dating, Arthur was allowed out every Wednesday so Lucy could enjoy him. Daniella and Riksu made plans to have a wedding and let their families know of the turn their lives had gone down. Amy and Lisa had become friends with benefits. Cassie and Jody had entered into a BDSM relationship with Jody being the submissive to Cassie's dominant. Emma was revered as the grand matriarch of the cage and the girls all supplicated themselves before her, often choosing to approach her before hand and offer her the opportunity to watch or get involved in their own activities. Emma was however relatively unsatisfied and could often be found trawling the internet in search of shrunken boys to buy.

Daniella continued her studies of feminism and analysis of the new media. She listened to audiobooks and read through papers, magazines and books using the smart watches in the cages. She planned an investigation into the impact of the shrinking on representation in the media.

Riksu had been working as a barista that day because her family wanted her to understand what it meant to be poor and there was still a media empire out there waiting for her involvement in it so Riksu helped Daniella in her studies as part of her own desire to familiarize herself with the business. To continue the education her parents had been trying to instill about the plight of the working class, she approached Emma and asked to be treated as an unpaid intern. She didn't exactly imagine her parents would hold her shrinking against her, or see it as a shirking of her duties, but it was a matter of personal pride for Riksu that she would continue her studies.

Lisa continued her studies in architecture and project management with her own smart watch that she bought with money earned by making and selling digital art of building designs. She would curate the adding of new modules to their vast cage complex and started designing her own range of cages specifically for sylphs to live in. So many cages were just bird or hamster cages, often with barely any additions or originality to account for the different occupants. Even the designs that looked original and designed specifically for sylphs seemed to have been designed for the convenience and aesthetic value to the owners.

Amy continued her studies to be a lawyer, exploiting Alisha's contacts at Harvard to hire her lecturer to continue teaching Amy via the internet. Course documents and reading would be shared and Amy would submit her own work to be graded. Of course no law firm would actually hire Amy. Even if she could wrangle a degree as part of online learning with the permission of her owners, no law firm would take the degree seriously and certainly would never hire a sylph. That wasn't her plan though she kept hearing horror stories from her favorite new podcasts: Victims of abuse sold to their abusers after shrinking. Live sylphs used as unwilling sex toys. Sylphs who were being abused and gaslit under the guise of "training". Even the odd case of sylphs being bought by cannibals or simply snatched away when given the opportunity, some sylphs even reportedly lived through the experience and were clearly traumatized.

Cassie continued following Artificial Intelligence development and kept up to date with the latest code and logic theory. She would pester Lucy and William for details about Artificial Intelligence in the multiverse, learning about the Plasticlones who chased the Paragon of Virtue's civilization deep into space, and of her own alternate self's role in the development of Omega, the first sapient super computer. Once she learned of how an alternate toy Lisa had her brain removed without harm so it could be sliced up and continuously scanned to help the learning algorithm simulate a brain she decided she had to try developing sapient AI herself in this universe. She studied a memory gun and Quantum Oscillator, resolving to make her own variants to help her understanding of how the seemingly psychically operated devices worked. Cassie would make apps and sell her services as a programmer to fund the purchase of equipment and supplies and had plans to buy a high resolution brain scanner, to build a device capable of continuously scanning a sliced up yet still active and functional brain, to plant a ton of sensors in at least one of her friends and build a prototype, human inspired, drone.

Alisha taught Quantum Mechanics at Cambridge and built a little fame for herself as a wielder of a Quantum Oscillator and memory gun. She was a woman who knew of things beyond this reality and she could restore sylphs to full size or shrink them. Desperate family members would ask to have their loved ones restored. Others would come asking Alisha to shrink people they knew, sometimes just so a loving dominant could properly satisfy their submissive, other times they made the request because they felt their crushes or friends were in vulnerable positions and deserved to be taken care of. Sometimes people would ask to be shrank, either for cosmetic purposes to fit in, tall women asking to be reduced by a few inches for example, or out of a genuine desire to live a life as a pet. Alisha almost always said yes to those cases and made sure they were sold to loving owners who would treat them right. At the same time Alisha was working on a paper about the science of the multiverse following William and Lucy's experiences.

Emma took up art again, using photography and digital painting to create a graphic novel about what it meant to be a sylph.

Jody had less of a plan when she went to college, choosing to study Revolutionary History as it seemed an interesting enough degree to get but she had no great love for it so instead she focused on improving herself. She took up online courses on learning French, Latin, Esperanto and Klingon. She also decided to take up gymnastic, yoga and pole dancing. That last one was for Cassie's benefit.

William took up meditation and started writing a book series about his adventures in the multiverse and how that could inform upon this universe. At the same time he tried to remember and figure out how to use the Quantum Oscillator and kept reporting on the progress of his sylphs. Particularly his taming of Lucy.

Arthur took up fencing and archery to better resemble the knight Lucy wanted him to be. It fit with his degree in military history anyway.

Lucy had been training to join the police force before the shrinking started, now she had her eyes set on a higher prize. Becoming a Logicio policing the multiverse. At the same time she didn't want to push herself too hard or commit to anything too important as she knew William was trying to tame her and wanted him to succeed. She was aware however that the taming couldn't properly take place unless Lucy was trying to still be independent. So she started work curating a safe space online for sylphs to talk with other sylphs and try to find friends or romance. She also included a trading service where sylphs could put themselves up for sale in the hopes others users might buy them for company. She made sure William and Alisha knew how to maintain, shut down or sell the website in case Lucy was no longer able to do so herself.

A message arrived in William's public email:

Hi William,

I've been following your blog for a while and always marvel at your unique perspective on the world, even before the shrinkening. I have been paying particular attention to your blog since then because of your insights into sylphs and your revelations regarding to the science behind it. I don't normally like getting in contact with people I follow online as I know how frustrating it can feel to be overloaded by messages, even positive ones. And I can particularly appreciate your reclusive nature given the trouble you've had with doxxers and trolls. Still now your latest lives at the end of your leash hopefully they'll be dissuaded from attacking in future. Anyway I'm not writing to you for me but for my pet.

The National Sylph Registry contacted me just recently to inform me that my own Sylph's missing family had been found and was in your possession. Now obviously when I saw your pictures of Jody I noticed the similarity immediately to my own Sylph but dismissed it as a coincidence and possibly evidence that I was a little sylphist. To have it confirmed then by the government no less that my pet and yours were twins was surprisingly mind blowing. As I understand it your life span extends far longer than mine so I have written into my will that Jamie is to become your property upon my death. I hope this is not an imposition and I can change it if you wish but I think Jamie deserves to be with her family in the long term.

When I told Jamie about the letter from the registry she insisted I write to you now to tell you about a new restaurant opening in Soho. You will want to book months in advance as I know to my cost. It was a couple of months after I got Jamie registered that me and this girl started dating. Jamie was real supportive and keen to make a good impression but she was worried that her mere existence might cause tensions in my new relationship and wanted to make very clear that she would not be coming between us. So she talked some of my colleagues into helping her plan the meeting. Which was how I found out about the Spit Sylph, Jamie had printed up a full breakdown of travel times, menus, suggested outfits, what to drink, even subjects to bring up and avoid to make the best impression. So the date was made, the plans adhered to – And that's when I learned about the waiting list. The whole night would have been ruined if not for a kind couple who had to head off early and let us order deserts on their tab. It was a surreal dining experience but I have never seen Jamie so happy (see included picture) and it certainly set my date's mind at ease about Jamie.

Anyway if you do go, take Jody along and make sure you blog about it later. Jamie may most want to see what her sister makes of the experience but I am far more interested in yours. Oh and make sure you give Jody lots of care and attention afterwards. Even if she likes it.

Sincerely,
Robert

William showed the message to Alisha then read it to Jody. Alisha and Jody agreed the Spit Sylph seemed like an interesting dining experience so William booked a table and was surprised to get one as early as a week later.

Lucy, Arthur and Cassie were left to watch over the sylphs as William and Alisha arrived for their romantic meal with Jody and Lisa in tow. William and Alisha each wore their fanciest clothes, which meant a tuxedo for William and a backless dress for Alisha. Jody was dressed in a green boob tube and green skirt to match William's eyes. Lisa wore a pink sleeveless crop top and pink skirt to match Alisha's shade of lipstick.

William and Alisha were shown to their table by a waitress who took their drinks order then went away.

"It's a nice place." said Alisha, observing the gentrified nature of the restaurant. Pretty young men and women on minimum wage showing rich couples to tables, bringing them champagne and wine.

William sniffed and looked about the place nervously. "I subsist of a diet of fried chicken, mountain dew and vitamin pills. This place is alien to me."

Alisha looked at him oddly and smiled. "I would have thought this would be right up your street. I half expect James Bond to walk past seducing a woman young enough to be his daughter."

William shifted uncomfortably in his seat and cleared his throat. "Yes, well, I must admit part of my discomfort is how well this fits with lives I have lived in the past. I keep looking at these girls and my mind starts calculating their bone strength, metabolism and cooking times."

Alisha smirked and grabbed William's hand. "I think we're going to have to drain Lucy when we get back, don't you?"

William glared at her. "it's not like that. There's no hunger or lust there. Just habit. Habits formed from lives this me never experienced."

Alisha nodded. "So tell me. That couple over there for example? What can you tell me about her?"

William glanced in the direction indicated then proceeded to read off his almost instinctual deductions.

Lisa and Jody sat on the table, Lisa before Alisha and Jody before William.

"The food smells fantastic." said Lisa as a waiter walked past with a couple of plates. Lisa couldn't see what was on it from her position on the table. "Can't wait to try it."

Jody chuckled then said. "Lisa, we're the food."

Lisa stared at Jody in horror then grinned. "You're pulling my leg. They love us, they wouldn't eat us."

Jody stared at Lisa. "If we were brought along because of how much we matter to them then William would have bought Emma and Alisha would have bought Amy."

"But that doesn't automatically mean they're going to kill us?" said Lisa pointedly.

Jody paused mid thought at then frowned then nodded. "You are probably right about that but still, I wouldn't get your hopes up about ordering off the menu."

The waitress arrived with a bottle of Prosecco and two glasses as William was explaining how he'd make sausages from a woman to Alisha.

"Are you ready to order?" asked the waitress.

William was hurriedly scanning the menu.

Alisha asked. "How exactly does it work when you order Sylph? I mean I assume you aren't actually killing them?"

The waitress smiled reassuringly. "Oh of course not. We love Sylphs here at the Spit Sylph. I've got a boy myself, adorable idiot he is."

Alisha smiled with good humour. "You ever thought of taking him here?"

The waitress snorted. "As if I could afford these prices."

Alisha laughed politely.

"Look, it's really very simple." said the waitress. "Shrinking is just virtual reality with telepresence right? They think they're small but really they're big in a pocket of space time. Well thanks to our engineers it is possible to put Sylphs into VR devices that will let them control 3d printed bodies. The cooking is in the make up of the 3d printed bodies but the Sylphs drive the bodies and live through the experience of being eaten. I see you've got a couple of Sylphs here but if you didn't you could always hire one of the restaurant's Sylphs to drive the body you intend to eat."

Alisha nodded. "Well that's reassuring, thank you. In that case I think I would like Lisa here served up as Lasagna with a side salad if that's okay?"

"Perfectly." said the waitress making a note on her tablet PC.

"How exactly does the Hunter's Chicken work?" asked William. "I mean how do you turn chicken, bacon and cheese into something that looks like a Sylph?"

"Well I obviously can't go into specifics about how the telepresence works but the edible sylph body will have bacon taking the place of bones, cheese taking the place of internal organs and chicken breast taking the place of muscle and fat. Finally the hair will be mashed potato and the blood barbecue

sauce.” said the waitress. “Do bare in mind that regardless of what you order the telepresence mechanism ensures the exterior of the sylph body will always look like the sylph you intend to eat.”

“Okay then, I’ll take Jody as a Hunter’s Chicken with a side order of chips and onion rings.” said William.

“Excellent choice, sir.” said the waitress, making a note on her tablet then she gathered up the menus. “I’ll just get the chefs working on your order then I’ll bring the telepresence devices to your table.”

The waitress smiled and left.

“See, I told you we were the food.” said Jody.

“And I told you they weren’t going to kill us.” said Lisa.

William scooped Jody up in his hands and stroked her hair. “I do hope this isn’t a problem but your sister insisted.”

Jody snorted. “Well of course she did. Just be gentle with me, yeah? No need to cut me up all at once.”

William smiled. “I’ll be gentle.”

Alisha had scooped Lisa up and was stroking her. “It’ll be fine. Worst comes to the worst it’ll be over quickly. I mean there’s not very much of you.”

“But what if I decide I like it?” asked Lisa.

“Then I shall have to eat slowly and book another table here,” said Alisha with a smile.

The waitress came over with two large gray boxes and put them on the table. She smiled when she saw William and Alisha stroking Jody and Lisa. “Aww, they’re adorable and you actually dress them? I bet they love you.”

William and Alisha looked up from their charges, met each others gaze then looked to the waitress.

The waitress tapped the boxes. “Telepresence machines. You put your sylphs inside, their bodies will be paralyzed and the signals sent to the bodies our chefs are making up for them now and then we bring them over and you enjoy your meal in the knowledge that your sylphs are safe in the boxes.”

William nodded. “Thank you.”

“You will have to strip them first though, the clothing interferes with the mechanism.” said the waitress.

Jody pulled off her top and pulled down her skirt.

Lisa looked Alisha in the eyes then smirked.

Alisha sighed and stripped Lisa of her top and skirt.

The waitress accepted Jody and placed her inside one of the boxes before receiving Lisa and placing her in the other box. Then the waitress left the table.

Alisha poured herself a glass of Prosecco. “So we’re actually going to be eating them alive I wasn’t expecting that.”

William poured himself a glass of Prosecco then raised his glass in a toast. “To Sylphs, the most useful of creatures.”

Alisha smiled and raised her glass. “To Sylphs.”

William and Alisha sipped their Prosecco.

William grimaced. “Prosecco is distinctly overrated.”

Alisha chuckled.

Half an hour later the waitress returned with two plates. On one was a portion of salad and a naked Lisa, on the other was a portion of chips and a naked Jody. The girls were sleeping.

The waitress returned a moment later with Parmesan cheese to grate over Lisa, a bowl of onion rings and a bottle of barbecue sauce. Before she left she pressed buttons on the boxes, causing the girls to wake up.

“Hey...” said Jody as she wake up atop the chips.

“Hey.” said William as he picked up his knife and fork. “How do you feel?”

“Normal.” said Jody. “Like I fell asleep in the box and woke up here. I’m not actually certain this isn’t my real body.”

“Well I am.” said William, patting the box Jody was actually lying in.

“Good...” said Jody, fear washing over her now like a wave.

“Are you sure about this?” asked William.

Jody picked up a chip and nibbled the end of it hungrily then she looked up at William and nodded. She held up her left hand and asked. “What do you think?”

William slid the tines of his fork about Jody’s wrist, ran his knife along the bottom of his fork, slicing through her wrist easily and pulled her hand off his fork with his teeth. He moaned with joy at how good the hand tasted.

Jody grinned, losing her hand had felt amazing.

William looked at Jody hungrily.

Jody blushed. "I think I am very glad that we came here."

William nodded and licked his lips.

Jody said. "Well go on then. Eat up. Don't want me to get cold do you?"

William devoured Jody in seconds, slicing piece after piece from her until there was nothing left of her and he started on the chips.

Alisha played with Lisa, slowly cutting her up and eating the pieces, grinning at Lisa's obvious pleasure.

The waitress arrived when they had cleaned their plates and asked. "Would you like to see the desserts?"

William nodded, a half smile on his face.

Alisha grinned. "Oh yeah, I've got a hell of a sweet tooth right now."

The waitress smiled. "And I take it there were no objections from your meals."

"Surprisingly not." said William.

Alisha chuckled. "Well maybe we did rather stack the decks but they certainly seemed to enjoy themselves, while they lasted."

The waitress chuckled and left with the plates.

"We need to come back here again." said Alisha. "I think it would be so romantic to take Daniella and Riksu here. And Amy does have one hell of a bite-able bum."

William snorted, despite himself. "This is so wrong."

The waitress returned with the dessert menus then left.

"Ooh, tiramisu!" said Alisha enthusiastically.

William wrinkled his nose. "Spotted dick? Who the fuck looks at their dear pet sylph and thinks. "I want to eat a version of you made of spotted dick?"

"I know, the strawberries and cream sell so much better." said a familiar voice that sent a chill down William's spine.

A tall Caucasian woman dressed like a steampunk Mary Poppins pulled up a seat.

William locked eyes with her.

Alisha looked at the strange woman nervously. "William, do you know this woman?"

William nodded slowly. His hand reaching for the Quantum Oscillator in his pocket. “This is my oldest friend and most consistent adversary, the Bam-Kursh.”

“And I believe you’ve already met my toy.” said the Bam-Kursh with a gesture to the young blonde woman in flip flops, a short pink skirt and white sleeveless crop top, pulling up a chair opposite.

“Lisa?” asked Alisha. “How?”

“We live in a multiverse.” said the Bam-Kursh. “I met this young woman a very long time ago with the intent to turn her into a willing toy for mass market sale. I did not count on coming to care for her but there we are.”

The young woman smiled.

“What are you doing here?” asked William icily.

“I own this place.” said the Bam-Kursh cheerily.

William glared at the Bam-Kursh and closed his hand around his Quantum Oscillator.

“Don’t be so stupid, friend.” said the Bam-Kursh meaningfully. “I am quicker on the draw, my girl is loyal and I am not as mortal as you or your lovely lady friend here.”

Alisha stared William.

William hissed. “You shrank the world.”

The Bam-Kursh shook her head. “Not me, Darling. That was a different Bam-Kursh. All I’ve done is create an effective counter to the cannibalism plaguing this world, a safe space to play out fantasy and explore new ways to interact.”

William glared at the Bam-Kursh. “Why? Why be nice?”

The waitress arrived to take their orders.

Alisha swallowed nervously.

The Bam-Kursh said. “She’ll have the tiramisu and he’ll have the toffee sponge cake atop three scoops of mint choc chip ice cream. Same sylphs as last time.”

The waitress nodded, noted down the orders on her tablet pc and left.

William stared at the Bam-Kursh, incredulous. “What do you want? What’s your angle here? What do you have to gain?”

“Money?” suggested the Bam-Kursh.

“At too small a scale to mean anything to you.” said William dismissively.

The Bam-Kursh nodded. “You’re right. It doesn’t make sense from your past experiences with me. But

damn it man you died for me, died for everyone. You know there's a new Queen of the Multiverse because of you? Daniella Hopkins. A young feminist weresylph. By the Multiverse I want copy of her to have as my own she's so sweet. She's out there now, ruling in your stead, because even though you're cheating death again you have turned your concerns inwards to the politics of your own universes. Daniella sent me out into the multiverse to do your job for you."

William frowned. "And you're actually doing it?"

"I'm trying." said the Bam-Kursh. "I got here after Eliza had got you back up to speed and I couldn't resist the urge to settle down for a bit, do some good, make some money, make some new toys."

William stared at her. "But you're the Napoleon of the Multiverse? You do everything out of selfish pragmatism?"

"And you're the champion of the sylphs and spirit of chaos yet you created the Logicios and the United Civilisations of the Multiverse." said the Bam-Kursh. "We're neither one as polarized as the other thinks."

William fell silent, unsure what to say.

The Bam-Kursh looked to the young woman and grinned. "Besides, I fell in love."

The young woman blushed and reached her hands across the table.

"She may be a daft thing, but she's my daft thing." said the Bam-Kursh. "I don't want to be a monster any more. You were my best friend in the whole nothingness and now you're back from the dead I wanted to thank you. Anything you need, anything you want, I'll get it for you. If I can."

The waitress arrived with two bowls. In one slept a tiny naked Lisa beside a spoon, in the other a tiny naked Jody slept atop three scoops of mint choc chip ice cream beside a spoon. The waitress pressed buttons atop the boxes then left.

The girls woke up.

The Bam-Kursh stared at Jody. "She's a brunette?"

"Yes, she is..." said William slowly.

"But you never fall for brunettes." said the Bam-Kursh.

"I didn't fall for her. I just happen to own her." said William.

Jody smiled awkwardly at the Bam-Kursh. "Hi, should I know you?"

William groaned then said. "Jody, honey, this is the Bam-Kursh. A very old friend."

Jody smiled warmly. "Well hi then. Feel free to have a morsel. I rather like this."

"Aww..." said the Bam-Kursh in delight. "I want one."

Jody grinned. “Well I do have a twin...” Then Jody realized what she had just said and looked to William excitedly. “Oh my god, we have got to meet up with Jamie and Bobby. It’s been so long since we last spoke and you could eat us when we start to get on your nerves.”

The Bam-Kursh looked to William pleadingly.

William glared at the Bam-Kursh.

Alisha burped suddenly and stuck her used spoon in the mint choc chip ice cream.

“Two spoons...” said Jody with a smile.

William looked warily at the Bam-Kursh.

The Bam-Kursh grinned.

William shrugged then said. “Jody, why don’t you eat some of the ice cream while we work things out.”

Jody grinned and started scooping ice cream into her mouth with her hand.

William picked up Alisha’s used spoon.

The Bam-Kursh picked up the unused spoon in the ice cream.

The waitress stopped by to pick up Alisha’s empty bowl. “Everything alright, gentlemen?”

Jody was rolling in the ice cream and lapping it up with her tongue.

The Bam-Kursh was quite distracted by the sight.

“Got any chocolate sauce?” asked William.

The waitress nodded and left the table, she returned a moment later with the sauce and left again.

“Say when.” said William as he began pouring the chocolate sauce over Jody.

Jody felt the sauce cascade down her back and leaned back with her mouth open to try and catch the sauce in her mouth.

The Bam-Kursh was apparently mesmerized by the sight as she said nothing.

William snapped the lid of the chocolate sauce bottle closed with a sigh when Jody was completely drenched in the sauce.

William stared at the Bam-Kursh.

The Bam-Kursh frowned and shrugged. “I can’t. She’s too lovely.”

William shrugged and slammed his spoon through Jody's left wrist, scooping up some ice cream along with her hand.

When the Bam-Kursh saw the look on William's face as he ate Jody's left hand, she shrugged and thunked her spoon through Jody's other wrist.

As William and the Bam-Kursh devoured Jody and the ice cream, Alisha did some research on her iphone.

Finally William and the Bam-Kursh sat back contentedly before a clean bowl. When the waitress arrived to take it away she asked if they wanted anything else before removing Lisa and Jody from the gray boxes so she might back the boxes away.

Alisha scooped Lisa up in her hands and started stroking her.

Jody looked up at William and grinned. "That was awesome! Please can we do this again? Please? Please? Please?"

William chuckled and stroked Jody. "Get dressed, little one."

The Bam-Kursh said. "You know I have been thinking of drawing up a domestic version? I could always send you the prototype."

Jody pulled her top on and said. "If you're going to do that then you simply must give my sister the same. She would love it so much."

William looked to the Bam-Kursh questioningly. "You did say anything I needed?"

The Bam-Kursh smiled. "That I did."

Jody pulled on her skirt then looked up curiously.

"May I?" asked the Bam-Kursh.

William nodded.

The Bam-Kursh scooped Jody up in her hands and stroked her. "Aren't you just the most adorable little thing?"

Jody blushed.

Alisha placed her iphone before the Bam-Kursh and said. "Make a note of that time and place. You'll want to intercept Jody before she enters the coffee shop, say you'll help her contact her sister then lead her to somewhere warm and safe and be there for her as she shrinks. If you take good care of her give her lots of affection she'll gladly belong to you like ours does. And once you have her, finding a way to get her sister shouldn't be much too difficult."

The Bam-Kursh stared at Alisha. "You would do this for me?"

Alisha nodded. "Lisa seems to like you and you clearly have some affection for Jody so you can have her. Just don't try and take her from me now."

The Bam-Kursh nodded and gently sat Jody down before picking up Alisha's iPhone so she could make a note of the time and place she had to travel to. "Don't worry about the bill. My treat."

A year passed happily and then at Christmas there was a knock at the door.

Robert was standing on the door step with a rather large box. "So a strange woman gifts me a machine capable of 3d printing edible bodies for Jamie to possess. She asks me everything I know about how Jamie shrunk then she gives me a folder filled with tickets, money and an itinerary. I think this huge box is for you."

William laughed and welcomed Robert inside, fetching the package in himself.

THE END

The Final Solution
A Farsh-nuke Story
By
Alexander Gordon Jahans

Professor Logicity was in his library. He was sat comfortably in an Elizabethan armchair with a wooden frame, his feet crossed on a footstool from the Edwardian era made from vintage teak. He was dressed in brown leather brogues, black and green chequered trousers, a brown paisley waistcoat interwoven with question marks and septagons, a pale pink dress shirt, a brown paisley tie tied in a half windsor and brown horn rimmed spectacles attached by chains to a lined face backed with a dark brown hair going from grey to silver at the top. He was reading a red leather bound book called The Assassination Of Donald Trump by Mary Kelley when there was a knocking sound.

Professor Logicity looked up from his reading to see a haggard looking white man in his forties with light brown hair, emerald green eyes and a green three piece suit that looked a size too large for him.

“Who calls at this hour? Who dares disturb a grand wizard such as I in his own personal library?” cried out Professor Logicity irritably.

“You know damn well who, old man.” came the haggard figure’s reply. “Nice book, not sure I know it.”

“Well you wouldn’t.” said the Professor with much annoyance. He placed a bookmark on the page he was on then rose from his chair and rested the book upon his seat. “Mary Kelly was a fat Senegalese follower of a variant of the Islamic faith.” Professor Logicity glared at the haggard man. “And she was born without arms or legs.”

The haggard man nodded in appreciation. “A talented woman.”

Professor Logicity approached the haggard man, shook his right hand and a long cane topped by a jade septagon fell from his sleeve. “I should have known the great Farsh-nuke would want to pay me a visit sooner or later. I had hoped it would be later.”

The haggard man sighed. “Well I’m sorry to say I’m not the great Farsh-nuke, nor indeed anyone of significance. I’m just the one they felt could be spared.”

Professor Logicity strode past the Farsh-nuke and said. “Well I suppose you’ll be wanting a drink then.”

“That would be lovely, thanks.” said the Farsh-nuke as he walked after the old man.

Professor Logicity unlocked a drinks cabinet serving as a stand for an array of signed manuscripts including The Communist Manifesto by Karl Marx, On the Origin of Species by Charles Darwin and The Fourth Wave by Emma Watson. He removed two glasses from the cabinet and poured out a measure of whiskey in each.

“Whiskey’s okay I hope.” said Professor Logicity as he handed the Farsh-nuke his glass. “Though my grand daughter is staying round, she recently graduated university and is having a gap year before

interning so if you really needed a drink-”

The Farsh-nuke raised his hand and interrupted the Professor. “Whiskey is fine.”

The Professor smiled and took his glass and the bottle over to where two armchairs sat either side of a roaring fireplace, a coffee table between them. “You know the funny thing is she does actually want to meet you and the more I insist upon the dangers the keener she sounds.”

The Farsh-nuke chuckled and took a seat in an armchair with a view of a door. “Well maybe later then. I am surprised she doesn’t have a load of sharpened stakes ready for me.”

The Professor snorted. “Well that was her mother.”

The Farsh-nuke smiled and sipped his whiskey.

“Thank you for returning her by the way.” said the Professor. “So to what do I owe this pleasure.”

“I’m going to die.” said the Farsh-nuke simply.

The Professor froze.

“Every incarnation of me, every thing that has my soul will die.” said the Farsh-nuke.

The Professor was visibly shaken. “But Lucy-?”

The Farsh-nuke nodded sadly. “There hasn’t been time to tell everyone but by midnight tomorrow every living Farsh-nuke and every living Lucy will vanish in an instant all across the multiverse and forever more.”

The Professor was stunned. “But the Bam-Kursh? Lucy’s a key part of the range.”

The Farsh-nuke sipped his whiskey. “The Bam-Kurshes have been notified and all unsold stock is being sent the front lines for the final push tomorrow.”

The Professor nodded, was silent for a moment and he sipped his whiskey bitterly. “You know I still remember when we met the last time you were going to die.”

The Farsh-nuke smiled sadly, caressing his whiskey glass fondly. “You saved my life. Gave me a second chance.”

“I was your executioner.” said the Professor, lost in the fog of memories. “I had to offer you one last drink.”

The Professor stiffened and he looked to the Farsh-nuke coldly. “Is that why you’re here now? To beg for my mercy.”

The Farsh-nuke shook his head. “This death I’m heading for, it’s not exactly an end so much as a point of rebirth.”

The Professor stared at the Farsh-nuke. “What are you saying?”

“I’m saying that the final solution, my final solution, to this endless bloody war isn’t genocide, it’s exile.” said the Farsh-nuke, then he looked into the Professor’s eyes. “Killing septagonoids is easy. We’ve been doing it for nearly half the life of the multiverse. The trouble is that every time we kill them the nothingness creates more. There is one hope and that is to set up an automated system to eradicate septagonoids the instant the nothingness generates them.”

“And you’re going to be that system?” asked the Professor.

The Farsh-nuke nodded and drained the last of his whiskey. “When I absorbed the soul of the first Lucy Danse I bonded her to me, made it so that every time I incarnated she would incarnate as well.” The Farsh-nuke put his glass down and stared into space, clearly picturing what he was describing. “If I can absorb the soul of a septagonoid and cause me and the souls I am connected with to be transported to a shadow dimension where our actions won’t effect reality then every instant I incarnate septagonoids will be transported to that shadow dimension.”

The Professor was silent for a moment then he said. “You’ll be condemning every incarnation of you to a very literal hell.”

The Farsh-nuke snorted. “Well I deserve it, don’t I?”

The Professor noticed the Farsh-nuke’s empty glass and his hand brushed over the handle of his cane as a storm of emotions raged inside him. Then he felt a warm comforting hand over his own and looked up at the face of his granddaughter. His eyes welled up and he bit his lip.

His granddaughter was tall and slim with silky smooth brown hair down to her waist. She was dressed in jeans and a tshirt. She kissed her granddad on the cheek and whispered. “This is my choice, you understand. My choice.”

The Professor nodded.

The Farsh-nuke rose and extended a hand by way of greeting, a forced smile on his face.

“You are going to sit your arse right back down and wait for your drink.” said the Professor’s granddaughter as she poured out another measure of whiskey into the empty glass then topped up her father’s.

The Farsh-nuke sat down in the armchair again but protested. “Look, I’ve got a long day tomorrow and I’m going to need a clear head.”

“Who said the whiskey was for you?” said the Professor’s granddaughter as she took a seat on the Farsh-nuke’s knee, pulled what looked like a mint imperial out of her pocket, placed it in her mouth and followed it down with a sip of whiskey. She looked into the Farsh-nuke’s eyes and said. “Hi, I’m Abby and for tonight, at least, you are my master.”

The Farsh-nuke smiled awkwardly. “You don’t need to do this.”

“No, you’re right.” said Abby moments before she kissed the Farsh-nuke on the cheek. “I want to do

this. My whole life I have listened to stories of the great Farsh-nuke, the McGuffin Man and the man who makes the impossible probable. Of William Dickson Wright, the Butcher of Britain and the great Unleasher. Of the champion of sylphs who became a man when he took pity on a desperate woman and absorbed her soul. Of the man who knows what women want and craves their subservience.”

Abby stared in wonder at the Farsh-nuke. “My mother wanted to kill you and fell in love but I have always known that I wanted your hands about my neck and your will overriding mine.”

The Farsh-nuke smiled sadly and ran a hand through her hair. “Don’t think I’m not grateful but you deserve a proper owner.”

Abby shook her head sadly. “I heard you talking. I know you’re going to sacrifice yourself tomorrow. Even if we only have one night, I want us to have it. Fuck the future, fuck the age gap. I’m old and wise enough to know that I want this and I assume you are too. Besides you look like you could use the drink.”

The Farsh-nuke bit his lip and removed something from his pocket. “Do you know what this is?” he asked.

Abby shrugged. “Does it have a vibrate setting?”

The Farsh-nuke snorted.

The Professor quietly topped up his glass.

Abby chuckled. “Of course I know what it is. That’s a Quantum Oscillator, Gramps designed the prototype.”

The Farsh-nuke smiled and he held it before Abby. “And do you know what I am going to do with this?”

Abby bit her lip, looked to her granddad then back to the Farsh-nuke. She sighed. “You’re going to use it to advance the speed of my localised time field so you can start drinking me.”

The Farsh-nuke grinned and kissed Abby on the lips. “You would have made such a delightful pet, you know.”

Abby blushed and buried her face in the Farsh-nuke’s chest.

The Farsh-nuke pointed the quantum oscillator at Abby and fired. “Do you have a straw on you by any chance?”

Abby handed the Farsh-nuke a straw wordlessly.

The Farsh-nuke switched off the quantum oscillator and stowed it.

Abby raised her face and looked up into the Farsh-nuke’s emerald green eyes. She whimpered. “Master...”

The Farsh-nuke gave Abby a kiss on the forehead and ran a hand through her hair. “Yes, my pretty little thing I am your master. Now be a good girl and remain silent while I drink the life out of you.”

Abby nodded wordlessly then gasped as the Farsh-nuke rammed the sharpened tip of the long straw inside her jugular vein.

The Farsh-nuke took a good long sip of Abby’s blood then stroked the young woman lovingly. “I am sorry about this, Professor.”

The Professor was silent for a moment as he stared into space then he shrugged. “She’s twenty five and she makes her own decisions. I can’t say I’m overly happy with this one but at the same time I think that were it within my power to offer you myself that I just might.”

The Farsh-nuke was surprised and glared at the Professor. “You?”

Abby looked sharply at her grandfather.

The Professor looked at the Farsh-nuke and scowled. “Damn it, man! You’re going to sacrifice yourself tomorrow to a fate worse than death! I’d be tempted to offer you my first born if you hadn’t already eaten her.”

The Farsh-nuke looked to Abby and noticed her shock.

Abby looked uncertainly at the Farsh-nuke.

The Farsh-nuke stroked Abby’s cheek and whispered. “You know you can stop this at any time?”

Abby smiled warmly and gave the Farsh-nuke a peck on the lips. “Never.”

The Farsh-nuke kissed Abby back and hugged her then took another sip of her blood.

Abby whimpered.

The Farsh-nuke looked to the Professor and said. “You’re something I have never really been able to be. A good man. That’s why I came to see you.”

“You want me there tomorrow, don’t you?” asked the Professor. “You want me there for the big push to get you to the septagonoids? I mean I told Lucy no so she sends you and brings me back to that night so long ago when I decided to exile you instead of executing you.”

The Farsh-nuke shook his head. “Do you think I’d be drinking your granddaughter if I wanted you to die for me?”

The Professor stared at the Farsh-nuke.

The Farsh-nuke sighed.

Abby giggled

The Farsh-nuke glared at her.

Abby tried to stop laughing and failed spectacularly.

The Farsh-nuke took a good long drag on the straw in Abby's neck.

Abby whimpered and fell silent.

The Farsh-nuke looked to the Professor and said. "Okay, so I'm a shit head but as we've established I'm going to hell tomorrow so that's okay. I don't want you to die for me. I want you to protect the multiverse for me."

The Professor stared at the Farsh-nuke. "But you're going to end the threat of the Septagonoids. What's there to protect it from?"

"Humanity." said the Farsh-nuke. "For the past fuck knows how long there has been relative peace because the Logicio empire has ruled the multiverse with an iron fist thanks to their knowledge and use of me. Anyone who opposed them and could potentially topple them from the critics within the empire to organizations like the Sylph Liberation Front and the United Civilisations of the Multiverse have avoided doing so on the understanding that so long as the septagonoids are around the might of the Logicios are needed."

The Professor nodded. "So tomorrow you vanish, the teeth of the Logicios vanish with you and so do the reason for their being tolerated. Sylphs revolt, the Sylph Liberation Front attacks, critics within the empire mobilize in what they believe is a desperate attempt to reform the organization and thereby keep some vestige of it around. The United Civilisations of the Multiverse will attack as they were formed in response to the Logicios, an action only stopped because of the threat of the septagonoids who are no longer around."

The Farsh-nuke nodded and took another sip of his drink.

Abby whimpered.

The Farsh-nuke stroked her as he explained. "The Lucy's will vanish as well of course but they were only needed to provide coordination and maintain unity. As the Logicios are weakened from within, the United Civilisations will attack but without their usual predictability. Plus while the Logicios have been draining their territories of recruits throughout the duration of the war, with their recruits taking centuries to train, the United Civilisations have had their territories expanded by the Bam-Kurshes and their soldiers take a maximum of two decades to train, much less with memory guns and logicular replication."

The Professor nodded. "The Logicios won't stand a chance but equally in the long term neither will the United Civilisations. Without the threat of a bigger bad to unify them all those civilisations will drift apart from one another and turn their attentions inward. Which leaves the multiverse undefended."

"Not quite." said the Farsh-nuke. "I mean there's still Gfaxxy's Architects of Chaos, the Bam-Kurshes will want to keep their trade empire going and so they'll act to defend it. Galla Placidia has resolved to incarnate herself across as many universes as possible and try to guard them from extra-universal terrors. Plus I've got a loophole in mind to let me do my bit and there's still going to be some leftover

element of Logicio strength hopefully.”

“But who gets the multiverse?” asked the Professor. “I mean you must have some idea.”

“My money’s on the SLF.” said the Farsh-nuke. “I mean the Architects of Chaos will take over patrolling the multiverse as the largest power left and because they are motivated by their own reasons, unreliant on an external power structure. The Logicios will be reforming and growing their might quietly in the background with a policy of non-interference until they can take a punch. They’ll try to recruit what new gods they can and sap off the strength of the United Civilisations as it fades. The United Civilisations and the Bam-Kursh will mostly be pre-occupied with trying to hold their trade connections together and will demobilize their military industrial complexes.”

Abby looked curiously at the Farsh-nuke.

“What?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

“Well America didn’t exactly disengage its military industrial complex did it?” asked Abby.

The Farsh-nuke chuckled and stroked Abby on the cheek. “Honey, America was founded on revolution and the idea that taxes were bad. Their military industrial complex hasn’t disbanded because it is the only way to make anyone support the idea of the government paying money to keep people alive. The wars they fight are wars they win and generally speaking quickly with a comparatively tiny amount of casualties. The United Civilisations by contrast was formed in response to invasion and forced into a meat grinder war that has lasted for thousands and thousands of years, decimating whole civilisations and this after they discovered a society with the technology to rewrite reality, grow guilt free meat in a machine and has such advanced healing technology that predators often get into relationships with prey animals as the prey can be eaten day after day, gladly, to no ill effect.”

“Ah.” said Abby. “Bit of a difference. I probably shouldn’t assume I know more than a man older than my universe.”

The Farsh-nuke chuckled and hugged Abby. “It’s alright. Your adorableness more than makes up for any issues you may think you have.”

Abby blushed and buried her face in the Farsh-nuke’s chest.

The Farsh-nuke looked to the Professor and asked. “Where was I?”

“You were explaining why the smart money is on the SLF to inherit the multiverse after you’re gone.” said the Professor.

“Ah yes.” said the Farsh-nuke, smiling as he took another sip of his drink.

Abby whimpered.

The Farsh-nuke ran a hand through Abby’s long luscious hair and explained. “The SLF will gain a whole load of free sylphs from the disbanded Logicio empire and will be able to milk the fading might of the United Civilisations for disaffected Sylphs and those citizens who aren’t content with cutting themselves off from the multiverse or joining their former enemies. Accepting sylphs under law was

always a burden forced on the United Civilisations as part of peace terms with the Logicios after all and the cell like structure of the SLF means it isn't as likely to suffer institutional collapse."

The Professor sipped at his whiskey and nodded. "Make sense I suppose. The only power to expand in strength when you and the Logicios go. You want me to stop them I take it?"

"No." said the Farsh-nuke. "I want you to help them."

"But they hate you so much." said the Professor. "You are their devil. Their entire organization was formed in opposition to you."

The Farsh-nuke nodded. "I know and they're right to hate me. I've done a lot of terrible things and besides the multiverse doesn't need white men ruling it anymore. The SLF will have the power to take the multiverse when I'm gone and I want you to help them. This one too if she's up to it."

Abby looked up into the eyes of the Farsh-nuke and said. "I'll do anything for you, Master."

"Hush..." insisted the Farsh-nuke as he stroked Abby.

Abby frowned but fell silent.

The Farsh-nuke looked to the Professor. "You give her the cure tomorrow then you give her a few weeks with her friends to remember her old life and you ask her if she wants to join you, okay?"

The Professor smiled. "Thank you, I'll do that but it won't change a thing."

The Farsh-nuke smiled and kissed Abby on the forehead. "She's a good girl. I wish I had more time with her."

The Professor said. "Well if she's safe I don't see the harm in you taking her with her for what time you have left."

The Farsh-nuke grinned at his old friend. "Thank you. I won't forget this."

"You're welcome." said Abby and she kissed the Farsh-nuke on the lips.

"So what do I do then?" asked the Professor. "When you're gone, what am I supposed to do for the SLF?"

"You help them find a replacement for my place in the pantheon." said the Farsh-nuke. "You know how I came to be incarnated across the multiverse. You can do it again with someone the SLF approves of. Someone with the sadism, hunger and brutality needed to conquer the multiverse but with the morals to avoid going darkside fighting monsters. Someone who can be a true champion for sylphs by respecting their right to choose how they want to live their life even if it is at the end of a leash or cooking on a spit. Someone better than me. Someone you'd be happy your granddaughter gave herself to."

"And what about you?" asked the Professor. "You said you'd find a way around the death sentence so what are you going to do while I'm training your successor? Assuming you do survive of course."

“Do you know why Donald Trump got elected?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

The Professor shrugged. “Neoliberalism made people hate the political establishment and only the right were mad enough to exploit that?”

“Because he’s right.” said the Farsh-nuke. “Except the immigrants aren’t Mexicans or Muslims, they’re Logicios and Charicthy and blasted Arachnoforms. We have sent the brave man and women of humanity to die while Logicios kidnap their women, alien soldiers from other civilisations have stalked the streets on shore leave and the Bam-Kursh has kept the fat cats fat to milk them for resources in the war while selling them people as playthings. This war has devastated local politics and the rise of Trump is just a reflection of how putting the multiverse first has let local dissatisfaction reach toxic levels. If any Farsh-nukes can survive what happens tomorrow then they are going to go home and wipe every last nazi from the multiverse, one planet at a time.”

“It’s a multiverse.” said the Professor. “You can’t defeat all nazis, the multiverse doesn’t work like that.”

“Maybe.” said the Farsh-nuke. “But I can sure as shit stop them having such an easy time of it.”

The Professor smiled. “Who would have thought, all those years ago, that the elder god with the sylph addiction would end up sentencing himself to hell to save the multiverse and, if he survived, to hunting nazis?”

“I don’t know.” said the Farsh-nuke sadly. “But you saw something in me all those years ago. Thank you.”

The Professor frowned and sipped his drink.

The Farsh-nuke looked fondly at Abby and pulled a collar from his pocket then secured it round her neck.

Abby smiled.

The Farsh-nuke kissed her on the lips then pulled a leash from his pocket and secured it to her collar. “Come on, walkies. I want to enjoy the rest of you before I finish you off.”

Abby giggled and dropped to the floor.

The Farsh-nuke sealed the end of the straw and looped it through Abby’s collar to stop it flailing about. He rose from his armchair.

The Professor rose from his chair and said. “I’ll look after her for you, don’t worry.”

“And the multiverse?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

“I was talking about the multiverse.” said the Professor with a smile. “Abby looks after herself.”

The Farsh-nuke smiled then he reached out to shake the Professors hand. “Thank you, for everything. It’s been a blast.”

The Professor shook the Farsh-nuke's hand. "It really has."

The Farsh-nuke chuckled. "Oh who am I kidding?" He pulled the Professor into a bear hug and quietly admitted. "I'm scared Professor, damn scared. The war doesn't end tomorrow. It's just I'll be the only one fighting the Septagonoids."

"All seven trillion of you." said the Professor as he patted the Farsh-nuke on the back. "And you'll have all those Lucys and Unleashers. Just think of all those lovely fresh toygirls who'll be on the front lines tomorrow. They'll be begging for someone strong to command them."

The Farsh-nuke broke off the hug, grinning like a loon. "Yeah, I forgot about that. An eternity of Lucys, not so bad when you put it like that."

The Professor grinned. "Maybe I'll have a word with the Bam-Kursh, see if we can't print off a few more every now and again just to keep up the supply of fresh naive submissive Lucys."

The Farsh-nuke laughed but there were tears in his eyes. "Yeah it's going to be brilliant. I'll have a harem."

"Exactly. That's the spirit." said the Professor. "Now you go enjoy my granddaughter. You've got one night so I want you to make the most of her. If she can still walk right tomorrow morning..."

The Farsh-nuke cackled and strode out with Abby following behind him on her hands and knees.

When he was gone the Professor poured himself another drink and went to look out the window the magnificent verdant splendor of the Great Green Nothingness. He raised his glass sadly, tears in his eyes. "To the bravest, most talented man I ever knew and the best decision I ever made." He downed his whisky and scowled from the kick. He set his glass upon the windowsill, his voice suddenly hoarse. "Have a great night Farsh-nuke. All of you, wherever you are, whatever you've done. Have a really fantastic night." He turned from the window and started to cry. "Nobody deserves an eternity of war."

*

Abby was naked save for her collar and the straw in her neck. She lay on the double bed of the spaceship as it cruised towards the rallying point for the final push. The Farsh-nuke's head was buried between her thighs.

Abby shrieked elatedly.

The Farsh-nuke raised his head, panting. He licked his lips and grinned.

"So how would you like to enjoy me next?" asked Abby.

"Well first I think I want a drink." said the Farsh-nuke.

Abby giggled and handed him the free end of the straw still in her neck.

The Farsh-nuke took several long drags at the straw as he tried to regain his strength and watched with

a guilty glee Abby losing hers.

Abby whimpered with a muted glee at the sensation.

The Farsh-nuke stopped drinking and lay down on the bed, still clothed in his shirt and waistcoat, beside Abby. He stroked her and marvelled at how beautiful the young woman was. "Are you alright?" He asked.

Abby nodded. "I think so. I can certainly feel myself losing it a little, mind. Coordination and... Words and stuff... But this is what you like and I like that you like it so, bleghhh..."

The Farsh-nuke snorted. "Blegh?"

Abby grinned and looked across lovingly at the middle aged man lying beside her. "Yeah, blegh."

The Farsh-nuke reached out to stroke her face and said. "I could stop. Would you like me to? I mean we could just hug? Just not being alone would be a help."

Abby smiled sadly and stroked the face of her master. "No. No, I don't want you to stop. I want you to finish me. To drink me dry then eat what parts of me as you can and want to without my dying."

The Farsh-nuke chuckled. "I'm not a vampire."

"No, you're sadistic misogynist who loves the taste of sylph meat." said Abby gleefully. "Well here I am, bon appetite."

The Farsh-nuke kissed Abby on the lips lovingly and laughed "I'm going to hell." Then he frowned and lay back, staring at the ceiling.

"What's your name?" asked Abby.

"I'm the Farsh-nuke, the Butcher of Britain and all that other bollocks." said the Farsh-nuke. "You know that."

Abby smiled sadly. "I know and I love him but I also think I love you, the host, and when the Farsh-nuke is gone tomorrow I think I should like to find the man this Farsh-nuke inhabits and give myself to him. So who are you?"

"Robert Gordon Banks." said the haggard man laying beside her. "Before I discovered I was an incarnation of the Farsh-nuke I was an autistic nerd with Kallman's Syndrome and Growth Hormone Deficiency. I was a wreck, a complete and utter wreck with no hope of a good life because who the fuck would take me. So I watched Doctor Who and dreamed of better days, of women who could save the universe and men who could keep going despite how much they despised themselves. The truth is I have always been in hell."

"Well I'll find you." said Abby. "I'll find you and I will fix you. The Farsh-nuke may die tomorrow but I will always belong to Robert Gordon Banks."

The Farsh-nuke chuckled. "Well find me me when I was younger, yeah? Before I became so bitter and

cynical.”

“I promise.” said Abby then she pressed her straw into his hand. “Now do the job that’s in front of you and finish me, for tomorrow night you dine in hell.”

The Farsh-nuke looked at Abby and smiled sadly. “I don’t deserve you.”

“In my opinion you don’t deserve half the shit life has thrown at you.” said Abby. “But I’m glad you get to at least enjoy me.”

The Farsh-nuke burst out laughing. “You have some wit for a girl so close to the cooking pot.”

Abby giggled. “They say a common or garden sylph can survive complete loss of blood, the loss of all her limbs. her liver, stomach, bladder, intestinal tract, ribs and most of the skin around her body.”

“You have a very strange way of talking dirty.” said the Farsh-nuke.

“I’m talking to a very strange man.” said Abby with a grin. “Now what’s say we start with my feet and work our way up to my ribs? Just keep my hair intact, took me ages to grow that.”

The Farsh-nuke chuckled. “You know these ships are designed to accommodate Contravoxai, I’m certain there’s a pot big enough to boil you in.”

“Fantastic.” said Abby. “You go get it set up and I will wait here for you harvest me.”

The Farsh-nuke left the bed laughing as he went off searching for a contravoxain cooking set.

Abby rolled over to the edge of the bed and found a notepad.

*

The next morning the Farsh-nuke left what remained of Abby to recover in his ship and went to the rallying point for his platoon. There were something like two hundred men and women of various different species. There were great sharks in rebreathers with cybernetic limbs, car sized spiders in combat fatigues, cat people with assault rifles, great green lizards with plasma blasters, great feathery bird things who trilled in understanding of their orders and dragons, huge dragons with great leathery wings. All soldiers. All here to fight for the safety of the multiverse. Then she arrived.

The Lucys were the coordinators. Each one a hatching or clone of the same Lucy Danse, Paragon of Virtue, who had walked the hundred million universes the United Civilisations started from. She was the defacto empress of the multiverse, dictating where resources and troops were deployed, every military unit was commanded by one. She was tall, blonde, slim and utterly gorgeous, like the original, but wore the combat fatigues of a soldier.

As she arrived she turned and seemed to look right at the Farsh-nuke, despite everyone between them. Then she approached an impromptu stage and gave out the orders. The Farsh-nuke tried to listen but he couldn’t keep focus on what she was saying. Everybody around him was going to die today.

“Except me and you.” said Lucy, suddenly before him. Her emerald green eyes, ruby lipgloss, lightly

tanned skin and golden locks seeming to radiate and dazzle him like an Andy Warhol Painting created in flashing neon.

“Huh?” asked the Farsh-nuke.

“The talk ended fifteen minutes ago but you’ve been lost since it begun because you know that me and you alone will survive this.” said Lucy. “Now tell me, what’s your name soldier.”

“I’m-” the Farsh-nuke stopped himself, noticing Lucy’s expression. “Robert Gordon Banks, Maam”

Lucy smiled, it was a smile you could get lost in. “Look, Robert, we’re all lost today because there’s only a few of us that actually have any power over how this goes down but the rest of us will be affected. That makes us weak and when we’re weak we can’t do our jobs. The fate of the multiverse is at stake and I need you with me, Robert.”

“I know, Maam, and I’m sorry.” said Robert. “It’s just that I can’t help thinking about what happens when this is over.”

Lucy nodded then she grabbed Robert by the lapels and looked deep into his eyes. “When this is over I will find you and I will fuck you and you will drink and eat me, do you understand?”

“But maam-” insisted Robert.

“Don’t Maam me, Robert.” said Lucy. “Once this day is over the Great Farsh-nuke will be back in charge, not the Paragon of Virtue. Us Lucys have fought long and hard for the good of the multiverse but this time tomorrow the Farsh-nukes will be back in charge because they have slept long and hard while we Lucys are dog tired from being strong for so long. I am superior until this day is over but once it ends you own me you understand. If you want to fuck me I am all for fucking, if you want to eat me I’ll climb in the cooking pot and if you’re gay I’ll be your gal pal and find you a young buck of a Farsh-nuke to fuck. Whatever you want to do you don’t do it alone because I will be by your side helping, obeying you and loving you.”

Robert saluted. “Yes Maam”

Lucy grinned and kissed Robert on the lips. Then she licked her lips and smiled. “You aren’t gay are you, Robert?”

“Not as such, no.” said Robert.

“You ate Professor Logicity’s grand daughter last night didn’t you, Robert?” asked Lucy wryly.

Robert grinned.

Lucy chuckled. “You lucky sod. Well that settles it. Tomorrow night I will be yours and you will tell me all about darling Abby over dinner.”

Robert nodded. “It would be pleasure, Maam.”

“Good.” said Lucy. “Now, we are a distraction force. That means our job will be to raid a primary

Septagonoid production facility. It makes the most sense therefore to spread our resources thin and impact the most septagonoids possible, at least to begin with. I want you to lead the forward unit. With a Farsh-nuke in the unit they should be more likely to hold out. I'll be in the rear ready to crush those you bring my way."

Robert nodded. "I'll do my best, Maam."

"Thank you." said Lucy and she turned to go, then she caught herself and looked back to Robert. "Oh and we better both start adapting to the fact that come tomorrow I will be calling you Master and you will be calling me whatever cutesy pet name you can think of. After all there'll be tons of Lucys and we don't have the benefit of host names to fall back on like you Farsh-nukes."

Robert smiled. "Alright, how about Lamb, since you're so eager to be slaughtered?"

Lucy grinned then let out a small bleat. She left Robert laughing as she went to see how the rest of her platoon were doing.

*

The actual battle wasn't much to talk about, at least from Robert's perspective. The plan was that troops would be deployed in waves from a carrier. First Robert's crew then a unit immediately after would follow them up followed by a middle unit whose job was to hold the opening while a fourth unit and fifth unit landed behind them. Lucy would be backing up this hammer and would surge forward to clear up what was left of the room. Well that was the plan anyway.

Robert used what powers he had to hand to stay alive as long as he could and keep his troops alive but the septagonoids knew how to fight Farsh-nukes and soon Robert was powerless as his unit was picked apart. The thing about a Septagonoid production facility after all was that it kept making reinforcements. Alright, the reinforcements were sometimes just computer controlled casings and towards the end were being rushed out and poorly made but when a septagonoid's casing is heavily armored, can turn on a sixpence and has great metal tentacles at every vertice, even a rushed out poorly made ai controlled septagonoid is a danger.

Robert could see his line disintegrating and that the better made Septagonoids with actual occupants controlling them were approaching the breach in the facility and Lucy so he ordered what was left of his unit to disperse and try to flank the more dangerous Septagonoids.

Robert actually managed to find a rushed out septagonoid unit with a side blasted off so he climbed inside, deactivated the ai and drove it into the back of a fully functional septagonoid that was attacking the breach. He kept it distracted long enough that the hammer blow of the combined third, fourth and fifth units were able to destroy it but the explosion set fire to his own septagonoid's casing. As Robert rushed out the side a passing septagonoid lifted him up in the air and tore him in two.

*

Robert woke up in a field. He got to his feet and stared at his surroundings. It looked like the Cotswolds. What the fuck was he doing in the Cotswolds? He was still in the clothes he was wearing in the battle but hadn't that Septagonoid-? He slapped himself and started walking. After all if this was a field then at some point there would be a fence and if there was a fence at some point there'd be a gate

and a road and a sign post.

He must have walked for hours but eventually he came to a farm house. He knocked on the door and a Lucy dressed in a check shirt, jeans and wellies answered the door. "Honey, we got another one!" she called back excitedly.

"Well invite him in then!" came a hoarse voice.

"Of course sweetie!" called the Lucy back then she looked at Robert sadly and said. "Lets get you some tea."

Robert followed the Lucy inside the farmhouse to a kitchen where she made a mug of tea by heating an iron kettle of water on a coal fired Aga.

As the kettle boiled Robert pulled up a stool and sat down. He watched the young blonde woman fetch milk from a fridge and a teabag from a box in one of the cupboards.

"Sugar?" asked the Lucy.

"Yes, please." said Robert. "Four scoops if you would, it's been that kind of day."

The Lucy chuckled and cheerily dumped 4 scoops of sugar into the mug with the tea bag. A moment later the kettle started whistling and the Lucy grabbed a cloth with which to safely grab the handle and pour water into the mug. She topped up the tea with milk and stirred it. She presented the mug to Robert then put the milk and sugar back. She topped up the kettle with cold water then placed it back on the hob.

She sat down opposite Robert and smiled.

Robert smirked then bit his lip.

"What?" asked the gorgeous woman before him.

"It's just- ah... Forget it." said Robert. "Thanks for the tea by the way."

"Enjoy it." said the Lucy brightly.

"I really am having the most weird day." said Robert after a moment.

"It's about to get weirder." said the Lucy with a smirk.

Robert stared at her.

"I think you better come meet my husband." said the Lucy as she rose from the stool opposite him.

Robert nodded, taking his tea with him as he followed the strange Lucy.

She led him into a living room with a fireplace and at least three sofas and four armchairs. There was a tall fat man, with a large bushy greasy beard, smoking a pipe as he played chess with a dark skinned

young man. There was a Lucy reclining on the sofa beside the young man. She was wearing a pink bikini and a collar.

Robert smiled and looked back to the Lucy that had greeted him at the door. “This is hell isn’t it and your husband is a Farsh-nuke?”

“The afterlife, not hell.” said the old man with the pipe. “Take a seat ,young lad, and I’ll explain.”

“Okay...” said Robert taking a seat beside the old man.

The old man explained. “We are all Farsh-nukes and Lucys here and we are all in our afterlife, it is true but we weren’t killed in the war. Not us four. And there’s more than just us who weren’t. We are the advance guard sent over to tame the wilderness and bring over supplies. An awful lot of Farsh-nukes and Lucys are going to show up in the days and weeks to come and they’re going to need feeding, housing and something to do. Plus some of us Farsh-nukes are right shit heads so we’re going to need police to keep the peace. And then there’s the looming threat of the Septagonoids. Technically speaking we only have to fear new septagonoids and those who weren’t dead the moment of the great sacrifice but that’s still a spectre we’ll need an army to take on at some point.”

“So you’re homesteaders?” asked Robert.

The young guy nodded and smiled. “We’ve got enough supplies in storage to get several large horse, cow, sheep, pig and chicken farms going. Plus all kinds of crops to feed them and us including wheat, corn, tea, mint and cocoa. We have supplies and we’ve got a certain amount of infrastructure but we are waiting for the man power. I mean we might be able to get a certain amount of industry going to build replacement machinery in time but we shouldn’t count on that.”

Robert nodded. “And what about the about the obvious?”

The Lucy lying on the couch chuckled. “I told you, Ben. You want to do it, I want you to do it and now he’s wandering why you aren’t doing it.”

The young lad frowned and glared at the Lucy on the couch.

The old man took a long puff on his pipe then said. “We are not barbarians, we are not going to start slaughtering the women when we don’t need to.”

“Unless they ask enthusiastically first.” called the Lucy from the doorway cheerfully.

The Lucy on the couch looked pointedly at her man.

The young man sighed then looked to the old man.

The old man looked to Robert and asked. “What’s your name, lad?”

Robert opened his mouth to speak.

The old man added. “And don’t say the Farsh-nuke, we’re all the Farsh-nuke here. What’s the name you went by before that?”

“Robert Gordon Banks.” said Robert.

“Cliff Barksdale.” said the old man. “The delightful little minx at the door is my wife Linda.”

“Linda?” asked Robert. “I mean I know that half the population is going to be Lucy Danse but Linda?”

The old man shrugged. “She makes lovely sausages.”

“Okay...” said Robert.

“I’m Benjamin.” said the young man. “Don’t bother with my last name, I mean you struggle with Linda. Anyway my Lucy is called Victoria. Have a guess why.”

“You dirty fucker.” said Robert with a grin.

“Actually, it’s because I am always victorious.” said the Lucy on the couch ruefully.

“I’m sure...” said Robert with a nod and a smirk.

The old man took a puff on his pipe then said. “Robert, you aren’t as young and impressionable as the others here. What do you think to the idea of harvesting Lucys?”

The Lucy on the couch looked lustfully at him and pouted.

“Well I think that the agency of a Lucy should always be respected.” said Robert, meeting her gaze. “So if she wants to be cut then we should not stand in the way of her desires.”

The Lucy on the couch mouthed thank you then kissed her man.

The old man nodded. “Alright. I shall for the time being be operating under the understanding that if a Lucy wants to be seen to and can see to it that she is seen to then it is not the place of the authoritative bodies to intervene, especially not if the Lucys being seen to should see to it that the fruits of their having been seen to make their way to communal stores.”

Robert pat the old man on the back. “Quite right too.”

The Lucy on the couch and her man shared a look then he said. “I think we might go see on the horses.”

“Alright, so.” said the old man.

Robert smiled as he watched the young couple get up and leave the room, particularly when he noticed the young man pick up a knife as they left through the kitchen.

“Do you know how to play chess, lad?” asked the old man.

“Can’t say I do, no.” said Robert.

“Care to learn?” asked the old man, gesturing to the board.

“Alright.” said Robert, taking a seat opposite the old man. “I think I died a while before my Lucy anyway so I have time to kill.”

*

An hour later the young man re-entered the room with a box filled with flesh and bone. He winked at Robert as he passed then started depositing the meat in the fridge.

He passed by Robert again and hissed “Psst...”

Robert excused himself then met up with Benjamin out of ear shot of the old man. “So you had a fruitful time I take it.”

Benjamin grinned. “It was glorious. The bitch came as I cut her.”

Robert smiled. “That’s awesome. I’m really happy for you both. You must let me stop by when she’s... better.”

“Oh you can count on it.” said Benjamin. “We both owe you so much. She wanted you to have this.”

Benjamin held up a fist sized sample of bloody beating flesh.

“Er... thanks but I’m not hungry.” said Robert, wrinkling his nose in disgust.

Benjamin rolled his eyes then said. “It’s her heart. Specifically her wolf one. She wanted you to have her, I quote as a ‘good little bitch’ hence the wolf heart. Just leave it in a cool dark place for 8 hours and you will have your very own Lucy, or Victoria I suppose.”

Robert smiled nervously. “Right... Only I’ve got my own Lucy.”

“She told me she doesn’t care and she’ll gladly fuck you and your Lucy if that’s what you want. That she will be a good girl and obey you if you just want her as a pet.” said Benjamin. “And besides I had the Bam-Kursh program an off switch into her a while ago. I’ll teach you the signal once I’ve put her bones and skin in to soak.”

“Okay, you’ve convinced me.” said Robert. “But do I really have to touch that thing?”

Benjamin laughed. “Nah, it’s okay. I’ll put it in your room.”

“I have a room?” asked Robert.

“Of course you do.” said Benjamin. “It’s the one with a wereshark heart in the bathtub.”

Robert chuckled. “Alright, thank you. I’ll get back to my game of chess.”

“I might join you later.” said Benjamin. “Might loan you my spare guitar. Teach you how to alter reality the ghetto way.”

Robert smiled. "I look forward to it."

*

11 hours later Robert and Benjamin were playing music on acoustic guitars as Cliff and Linda lay back on the couch and listened. There was a knock at the door.

Linda rose to answer.

Cliff shook his head and said. "You sit your arse back down. I'm getting this one."

Linda grinned and sat down.

Cliff rose and answered the door. After a moment, he said. "Rob, there's a Lamb here for you."

Benjamin looked to Robert.

Robert muttered incredulously "Lamb? What lamb?"

Then he heard her bleating, set down his guitar and ran to where his commanding officer stood in battle fatigues with a picnic hamper.

The Lucy smiled. "Hi honey, I'm home." She held up the hamper then said. "I promised you dinner."

Robert grinned. "Oh yes. Cliff, Ben, Linda, this is my Lamb."

She bleated cheerily and entered the farmhouse.

"Do you have a room?" asked the Lamb of Robert.

Robert looked to Ben.

"Third door on your left." said Ben.

Robert and his Lamb strode in the indicated direction.

Ben checked his watch then dashed after him.

Robert opened the door and cringed when he saw that lying naked on the bed was a Lucy.

"Hello honey..." crooned the Lucy on the bed.

The Lucy beside Robert glared at him. "Soldier?"

"Yeah, um, Maam, I can explain..." said Robert floundering.

Ben arrived, saw the open door and grimaced. "Yeah so I don't know what's the deal with you two but that - that is a cutting of my girlfriend given as a gift to Robert, sorry."

“Oh awesome.” said the Lamb cheerily.

“And her name’s Victoria.” added Ben.

“The second, logically.” added the Lamb then she turned to Ben and kissed him on the cheek. “Thank you for seeing that my master was well taken care of. I will have to repay you for letting him have a cutting of your girlfriend but for now there are things I must talk to him about in private.”

“Alright.” said Ben. “My Vicky should be ready now anyway.”

Ben strode off as Robert and the Lamb entered his quarters.

“Let me handle this, soldier.” hissed the Lamb as she set down the hamper then approached the naked woman on the bed.

“Hello honey, I’ve been waiting.” said the Lucy on the bed eagerly.

“And aren’t you a delightfully charming thing?” said the Lamb cheerfully.

The Lucy on the bed hurriedly pulled covers over herself and said. “I’m sorry, I didn’t know he had company.”

“It’s okay.” said the Lamb. “We accept your generous gift and we will look after you and love you.”

The Lucy on the bed smiled. “Well, thank you.”

“No. Thank you.” said the Lamb. “You are a delightful individual I am sure and we will love to get to know you but there are some things that need to be cleared up first. Number one, I am the Lamb of Robert. Number two. You are Victoria the second. Number three. You are our pet. That means you call us Master and Mistress, speak when spoken to and trust us to feed you and keep you safe.”

The Lucy on the bed grinned. “Yes, Mistress.”

“Now, I want you on all fours beside the bed.” said the Lamb with a wicked grin.

The Lucy on the bed obediently rolled off it and got her hands and knees. Swiggled her hips seductively

“Smile.” said the Lamb as she pulled her quantum oscillator out of a pocket in her fatigues. She froze the naked girl as she smiled then fetched the hamper and rested it on the naked girl’s back like it was a table.

“That was cold.” said Robert, leaning with his arms crossed against the door.

“I just watched hundred of good people die.” said the Lamb. “I am cold. That’s why I need you.”

The Lamb took a seat on the bed and Robert joined her.

“You took your time.” said Robert with some undisguised irritation.

“Well I lived through the battle.” said the Lamb. “I was one of very few survivors once we’d successfully destroyed the facility. I told the rest of the survivors to go home, buried your body and messaged my family. There was enough time to call a reclamation crew to give the fallen proper funerals. Also time enough for me to get ready for the big event.”

“Well I’m glad you survived.” said Robert. “And I’m glad I got to be a part in why you did.”

The Lamb smiled and pulled out a collar and an emerald green bikini.

Robert snorted then chuckled when she handed him the collar to examine. It had the following engraved in a tag the shape of a lamb.

Lamb
As in the lamb of...
Hatchling of Lucy Danse Paragon of Virtue
H8NF5VX
Property of Robert Gordon Banks

The Lamb pulled out a bottle of Prosecco. “I got us some bubbly...” She pulled out a multipack of 200 sylph straws, an albino sylph squirrel, a contravoxain cooking set, a recipe book that boasted 500 ways to cook sylph, a large dildo, a butt plug, what sold itself enthusiastically as a year’s supply of lube, a sturdy leather whip and a large sharp knife. “And I got us a good night for a good few nights to come.”

Robert stared at the lube, butt plug, dildo and whip nervously. “This is is all for you, yeah?”

“To be used on me, yes.” said the Lamb as she pulled out a set of knitting needles and a ball of yarn. “Though, by all means, use whatever takes your fancy. After all if I’m your property, my property is your property.”

Robert breathed a sign of relief then started chuckling.

“What?” asked the Lamb as she pulled out a barrel of whiskey.

“Well this isn’t feeling so much like hell as I thought it would.” said Robert.

The Lamb grinned. “You should know by now that the Farsh-nuke would only let himself get sent to hell if he could be sure he’d experience heaven there.”

The Lamb pulled out a barrel of diet coke then said. “I think we’ll get started on this lot first so fuck or fork? Which one are you wanting from me most urgently?”

“Hey, hey, hey...” said Robert. “I’m not the Farsh-nuke anymore, I’m Robert. That means I do not decide what a woman does with her body.”

“Okay then.” said the Lamb as she wrapped her arms about Robert. “Lets start with kissing and see where things go. If it gets to biting we’ll bung me in the pot and you can always ask Ben to revive your Vicky for you, if the need takes you.”

“Yes, Maam” said Robert, saluting.

The End

Epilogue

Three weeks after the end of the Great Septagonoid War, Abby and the Professor went to visit the site of Robert’s final battle, at the ruins of the septagonoid production facility. The Valkyrie had carried off the wounded and seen that the fallen were sent home to be given the send off the family of each wanted. All that remained now was a barren blast landscape, crumbling walls and a single solitary septagon standing like a gravestone in the ruins of the factory.

Abby was dressed in black. She crouched down to read what was etched in the septagon:

Here lies:
Robert Gordon Banks
Alias The Farsh-nuke
And his Lamb
Alias Lucy Danse Hatchling H8NF5VX

“What’s this code?” asked Abby as she rose.

“It’s the designation of his superior officer.” said the Professor, dressed in his usual suit but with a thick black coat. “She was in charge of the platoon that led this raid. Can’t have been hatched more than 3 months before this mission and she was relatively experienced.” He paused and looked down at the grave. “I spoke to the Valkyrie before we arrived. Apparently she won the battle, sent the survivors home, called in the Valkyrie to see to the dead, printed a load of stuff from the replicator in her ship and when they found her she was lying in this grave, holding hands with the deceased Farsh-nuke, cyanide capsule crushed between her teeth and a hamper filled with supplies for the underworld.”

Abby sniffed and covered her mouth then looked away from the grave. She took several deep breaths then said. “At least they got to be together, at the end.”

The Professor nodded. “Most likely.”

Abby took a few deep breaths then asked. “Did they have any idea what was in the hamper?”

“Yeah...” said the Professor and he walked away from the grave a few pieces. “They found a note attached to it. It explained that the hatchling only needed the hamper to be on her possession as she died, that it was to be given to someone she regarded as her successor.”

The Professor pulled the picnic hamper out of his pocket and placed it before Abby.

Abby started bawling her eyes out and her nostrils went into overdrive.

The Professor wordlessly handed Abby a box of tissues.

“She thought of me.” said Abby between her heaves. “Why did she think of me? Why would she even

know me?"

The Professor shrugged. "Because she was the Paragon and the man she had decided to spend eternity with had just been with a woman who would still live."

Abby cried for another minute then she dried her eyes, wiped her nose and took a couple of deep breaths to calm down. She fixed her eyes on the Professor then said. "We are finding him, you understand? We are finding Robert and we are making him into the new god. I don't if we have to find him when he's young or gay or black or... Look, I just don't care what we have to do. We are finding him and I am going to be his again."

"Alright." said the Professor. "But if we are going to do this we're going to need help."

Abby smiled and picked up her hamper. "Then lets go get it."

*

Abby followed the Professor backstage at an awards show where several avant-garde and bohemian types were dressed outlandishly in animal masks, bizarre make up and the kind of fashion that you could swear was culturally insensitive to somebody but was redressed in such neon blues and grays that you can't be quite sure.

The Professor cleared his throat loudly and deliberately.

A group in front of them that had been chatting away merrily fell silent.

The Professor said loudly. "Viorum Kaztif-tan, if I may be so bold."

And that's when the person wearing heels that looked like human penises, pinstriped trousers, a tight gold trimmed corset, bowtie and top hat turned around. Abby saw that the individual in question had considerable cleavage, a large adams apple mildly obscured by a neckbeard and sideburns, a squat little nose and thick black rimmed spectacles.

"Well don't you two just look the epitome of heteronormativity?" said the unusual individual. "Let me guess, you are a scifi writer and this is your young bride who is totally not in it for the money." The individual laughed as if they'd just told an anecdote about a man wearing sandals with socks and the group they were with laughed similarly.

Abby blushed.

The Professor smiled. He smiled coldly and insincerely. It was the smile of an English man told he would have to queue. "Oh, I am the oldest of old white men, I am the last surviving member of the seven great empires, I exiled the Farsh-nuke all those years ago and if you don't take back what you said to my granddaughter I will do what you would have liked me to do to him and kill an elder god."

Abby groaned and pulled at the Professor's arm. "Gramps!"

The individual froze.

The room seemed to chill in sympathy.

The Professor's smile turned into a grin. It was the grin of an English man when confronted by a right wing American. It was the kind of grin that said "I can and will end you any moment I like, in a heartbeat, but I'm going to take my time so come at me, I dare you."

The unusual individual cracked a smile. "Nah, you tried that once already." They broke out laughing with good humour, their friends following likewise. The unusual individual embraced the Professor in a hug and slapped him on the back. "Good to see you're still kicking old man. I do apologise to you and your lovely granddaughter, I didn't recognise you without the axe."

"Oh I don't need an axe, never have. That was just a mercy on my part." said the Professor genially.

"Then let me return the favor." said the unusual individual and they turned to their friends. "People of awesomeness, may I introduce the man who chopped my head off when I was still a boisterous deity and his positively delectable granddaughter."

The Professor chuckled with good humour.

Abby blushed. "You really think I'm delectable?"

The strange individual gave a deep booming laugh. "Of course, I could just see you spread over crackers." Their friends laughed like they'd just heard a very naughty joke.

Abby looked to the Professor, confused.

"That wasn't a compliment." said the Professor. "He's still antsy over my threatening to kill him and heteronormativity is offensive to him. You made the Farsh-nuke happy so you're heteronormative enough to be a walking slur."

"Oh..." said Abby wrinkling her nose then she noticed that the room was silent again.

"Was I not supposed to tell her?" asked the Professor, perplexed.

The strange individual turned to the Professor and said. "They. Not he or him. They and them."

"It was he when we last spoke." said the Professor.

"You cut my head off when we last spoke." said the strange individual. "Times change."

"Then I apologise." said the Professor, deciding that was probably a fair point.

"What are you doing here anyway?" asked the strange individual.

The Professor opened his mouth to speak. Abby put her hand over his mouth and said. "Gramps, I think I better have a try."

The Professor sighed.

Abby explained. “Well as you might be aware since you are, well, a god. The Farsh-nuke sacrificed himself to end the Great Septagonoid War and we wanted to talk to you about filling in the role he played in the multiverse.”

The unusual individual chuckled and shook their head. “My dear girl, I am Viorum Kaztif-tan, I maintain balance in the pantheon. I am not the champion of sylphs nor the ruler of the multiverse and I have no desire to be either.”

“Good.” said Abby sternly. “Because I am Abigail Lucille Logicity, I have a BA in the history and treatment of sylphs throughout the multiverse and a Masters in applied illogicity. That means if I wanted I could turn you inside out, cut you into strips and leave you to shrivel up in the desert as the moisture in your cells boil you alive. And I could be sure of your complicity, consent and enjoyment. I was with the Farsh-nuke the night before he died and I made a promise to him so no I’m not here to ask you to fill the Farsh-nuke’s place. I’m here to ask you whether you want to have any say in the development of his replacement because I will see that the Farsh-nuke’s place in the pantheon is filled and I will serve that individual regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, race or culture.”

Viorum smiled. “My apologies, young one, the Farsh-nuke picks his prey well but you are mighty, I see that now. I do however have two questions for you. Did the Farsh-nuke give you any advice about picking a successor? And what would you do if every attempt to follow that advice was shot down?”

“He asked us to find someone the SLF would approve of, someone they could work with. Someone who wouldn’t be quite such a sadistic misogynist but would still be able to call themselves the champion of sylphs and still be able to rule the multiverse.” said Abby. “And you’re an elder god, you don’t need me to tell you what the woman who spent her last night at the end of his leash would do if left to pick his replacement.”

“Do you have a name?” asked Viorum.

Abby nodded. “Robert Gordon Banks.”

“Very well.” said Viorum. “I’ll help you but you must listen to my guidance and advice. I’m no good to you if you refuse to listen to me.”

The Professor spoke up again. “Viorum, we came to you because we’re stuck. The Farsh-nuke entrusted me with the task of seeing the multiverse was protected and guided towards a better tomorrow. Abby’s along for her own reasons. We’re lost. We have the power, we don’t know how we should use it but you? You know better than anybody else in the pantheon what it means to have power and use it for the betterment of others. Hell I’m probably too old and thick to even know exactly what good you actually do but one thing I do know is that while the rest are off conquering universes or building power bases you are out among the people, helping them with your knowledge of logic. Teach the new god that rationale.”

Viorum looked to the old white man and nodded. “Alright. Alright, lets do this but first, Professor, you have simply got to try the wine.”

The Professor smiled and saluted as a glass was bought over.

Viorum looked to Abby and said. “Abby, there are some people I’d like you to meet. You don’t have to

do anything you don't want to do, though I think you might enjoy yourself considerably. The Farsh-nuke is a sadist who uses the idea of consent to make those he uses feel more comfortable with his actions. I think that if you are going to be with his successor that you at least should understand intimately just how safe, sane and truly consensual BDSM actually works.”

Abby smiled and nodded. “Alright but I’m not taking any pills.”

Viorum pat Abby on the back and said. “You have a lot to learn, my dear.”

Abby giggled.

*

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*

Robert Gordon Banks will return in:
The Girl Who Chose

The first in a series following The New God arc coming soon...

The Return A Nothingness Fic
By
Alexander Gordon Jahans

An old run down bar in the middle of the American south west. An old black man stands behind the counter cleaning pint glasses as punters chatter quietly among themselves. A trio of old southern gents sit sipping pints as they play cards in one corner of the bar as two young men knock back shots at the counter and 4 young women discuss their plans for the weekend at a table in the another corner of the bar.

A man enters. White slip on trainers, worn and muddied from use. Pin striped black trousers hanging from red braces about thick shoulders. A lime green long sleeved button down shirt is adorned with a brown paisley tie in a windsor knot, a tartan waistcoat, a lime green suit jacket and a dark brown duster coat that hangs down to shin level. His face is hangered with age and dark spectacles hide his eyes as long grey curly hair hides his ears. "Do you do Diet Coke? None of that Pepsi crap, do you have Diet Coke?"

The bar tender looks the stranger in the shades and nods.

The stranger nods back and smiles, visibly relaxing as he takes a seat. "One pint of Diet Coke and 2 shots of your strongest alcohol, if you please?"

The bar tender nods and fetches the drinks.

The stranger looks across the bar at the young women and licks his lips as he reaches inside his suit jacket for an old dusty leather wallet and pulls out a couple of ten dollar bills.

The bar tender places the Diet Coke and two shots of Tequila on the counter.

"Keep the change." says the stranger. "I know I'm an asshole."

The bar tender nods and takes the money.

The stranger knocks back the Tequila and winces. "That is some good shit. What is it?"

“Trump Brew.” Explains the bar tender with a smile. “The cartels make it from the cocks of any trump supporter stupid enough to go south of the wall.”

The stranger smirks. “So the fucker actually built the wall, did he?”

The bar tender smirks and shakes his head. “The cartels did when he reneged on his promise. Their economy has been booming ever since.”

The stranger nods “Because when America complains about immigrants the Mexicans shrug and climb through barbed wire to get there but when the cartels say no emigrants...”

The bar tender nods. “Every good Mexican knows not to mess with the cartels.”

They chuckle for a moment, then the bar tender asks “So where are you from then? I mean you don’t sound American...”

The stranger smirks. “That is a long story.”

The bar tender studies the stranger for a moment then pours out another shot of tequila. “I’m Earl and I own this fair establishment so if I say we've got time then we've got time. Who are you?”

The stranger sighs, takes a sip of his diet coke then starts to explain. “My name is Reginald Barklay and who I am is not important but what is is that I was part of a war.”

“What kind of war?” asked Earl.

“A mad one.” said Reginald. “You see our universe exists as part of a multiverse which lives in this place known as the nothingness. Beings known as the older gods used to watch over the multiverse and the nothingness but men tried and killed them. One of them escaped death and became reincarnated forever in the multiverse. That one became known as the Farsh-nuke and one of his number the Great Farsh-nuke founded the Logicios. The Logicios were empowered men. They were able to travel the multiverse and manipulate reality but they were founded by a lustful fool so they fell to the worst of temptations for a centralised powerful force for regulation. They became oppressive, arrogant and prejudiced, using slave labour just for sick kicks.”

“And they were the enemy?” said Earl.

Reginald shook his head and gulped back a glug of diet coke. “They fought the enemy while the good guys were getting ready. The Enemy were these beings of pure logic called the septagonoids who wanted to destroy all reality so that it would be more logical.”

Earl stared at Reginald for a moment then whistled. “I guess the good guys won then? Who were they?”

“The United Civilisations of the Multiverse.” said Reginald. “Led by one Lucy Dance, the Paragon of Virtue. She and the United Civilisations were the Great Farsh-nuke’s attempt to undo the damage he caused. And you’re right, they won but at a cost.”

Earl nodded. “War never changes.”

Reginald knocked back a second shot of whisky. “As the war went on the elder gods that had survived like the Farsh-nuke started to regain their old power. They didn't need technology anymore, they could warp reality with their minds, conquer whole armies with a look. Eventually the war took all but the strongest and wisest, which was when they saw what needed to be done.”

“Oh?” said Earl, a quizzical look on his face.”

“I said the Great Farsh-nuke was a lustful fool, I never said why.” said Reginald. “You see the Farsh-nuke wasn't a man to begin with. The Farsh-nuke was just a semi-sapient proto-universe wandering the nothingness until the soul of the original Lucy Dance appeared before it begging for an end to her existence. The Farsh-nuke became a man and gained a lust for women when it absorbed her soul to end her suffering.”

“And how does this information help anyone?” asked Earl.

“The Farsh-nuke didn't just gain a lust for women when he absorbed Lucy’s soul, he learned everything about her.” said Reginald. “He became the ultimate pickup artist. He knew how women thought, how they felt, what they wanted and just how easy it was to trick them.”

“He sounds like an asshole.” said Earl.

Reginald snorted with laughter. “Oh, he was. One of them met my sister at a party once, next time I saw her she was smiling blank faced as a living statue in his home.”

Earl stared at Reginald then shook his head sadly, “So I’m guessing the idea was that the Farsh-nuke absorb the soul of the Logicios and thereby know their weaknesses.”

“Not quite.” said Reginald. “Similar things had been tried before and the Farsh-nukes had sided with the septagonoids. The logic was too corrosive.”

“So what was the plan?” asked Earl.

“For every Farsh-nuke that existed there would be a matching Lucy.” said Reginald. “This is because at the moment of absorption the Farsh-nuke bonded her soul to his. If he is born again so will she be. The plan was to bond the logic of the Septagonoids to the Farsh-nukes then commit suicide in a very particular fashion so that all Septagonoids and Lucys would similarly be trapped beyond life.”

“But that’s horrible.” said Earl.

Reginald nodded. “You’re right but it was also the only way. All new Farsh-nukes, Lucys and Septagonoids generated by the multiverse would become similarly trapped if ever any of those they were bonded with realized their potential.”

“Shit.” said Earl. “So what are you doing here?”

Reginald placed the index finger of his right hand to his lips then pointed to where a young man with piercing green eyes was getting up from the bar to approach a beautiful young blond woman over in the corner of the bar.

“No...” breathed Earl quietly.

Reginald nodded.

“Is there anything we can do?” asked Earl. “They’re so young.”

“Not for them.” said Reginald. “But the Farsh-nuke escaped death once and he doesn’t like to lose.”

Reginald lifted the still mostly full pint of diet coke to his lips and drained it in five seconds.

“What are you going to do?” asked Earl.

“My duty” said Reginald simply as he rose from his seat.

The young man with the piercing green eyes wore a leather jacket and jeans. “The name’s William”

The beautiful young blond woman wore a short skirt and a leevless shirt. “Lucy, pleasure to meet you.”

“I was just wondering if you wanted me to buy you a drink?” said William.

Lucy smiled warmly. “Alright, I’ll have a JD and Coke if that’s okay?”

William nodded, a wide toothy grin upon his face. He turned to fetch the drink.

Reginald blocked his way, towering over him. “On your orders, Sir.”

“Orders?” said William.

Reginald pulled out a revolver and shot William between the eyes then he spun the barrel and shot Lucy between her eyes.

*

William woke up in darkness. There was a mattress beneath him, or what felt like one anyway. He wondered if he should call out but remembered the weirdo with the gun and thought better of it. Besides he was naked. He scabbled to his feet and felt around for a light switch on the walls.

When he found the light he found he was in a small room with a large double bed and a chest of draws but the draws were empty.

A short young blonde woman wearing a bikini entered the room carrying clothes.

William stared at her. “Who are you?”

“Lisa.” said the young woman brightly. “Master wanted me to give you these.”

William frowned but accepted the clothes then threw them on the bed. “Leave!”

“As you wish.” said Lisa. “I’ll just be outside.”

As William got dressed in the clothes he noticed something rather curious among the socks, handkerchiefs and boxer shorts. Some kind of remote control with strange commands had a piece of paper elasticated around it. When he had removed the elastic bands and unfolded the paper he saw that it read:

William, excuse the manner of our meeting, all will be explained, I assure you.

For now please accept the gracious gift of my toy girl Lisa.

She is a fully sapient and sentient human being but I have spent a lot of time and effort ensuring that she will respond to commands given to her either verbally or through this remote control.

Enjoy her, I certainly have.

William stared at the note for a long moment then swallowed and placed it and the remote in one of the draws. He did not want to even think about what that meant.

When William had dressed he exited the room into a long corridor and saw that indeed Lisa was standing patiently outside the door for him. She didn't even blink. She just stood smiling brightly into the middle distance.

William coughed. “Lisa, umm, could you... Umm... Could you take me...? To...? To your master?”

Lisa nodded “If you’ll follow me. I'm afraid lifting you might be tough.”

William rolled his eyes. “I’ll follow you.”

The place was a vast labyrinth of winding corridors but eventually Lisa led him into a seven sided room filled with complex instrumentation and screens. The man who had shot him was standing before a big screen and operating the controls.

“Apologies for shooting you but it had to be done.” said the strange man.

William glared at him. “You said on my orders? What orders? I've never met you before in my life.”

The strange man chuckled darkly. “It’s true William had never met me before but you did give me the orders, Farsh-nuke.”

William suddenly felt a ferocious pain in his head. It was like having a migraine while hungover as workmen dug up the road. “Oh god...”

“I did as you commanded, Sir.” explained the strange man. “I didn’t like it but I did as you commanded. I killed William and Lucy just before they were dragged to the null place. The Septagonoids were sent there upon their deaths as is normal and then I remade you, Sir.”

William closed his eyes as memories from lives not lived flashed before his eyes. “Oh god, I killed her, I killed that girl, Lucy.”

“Don’t start feeling guilty for those who have died because of you. We don’t have time for that.” said the strange man. “I have bought her back and implanted her with the same abilities as my own fair Lisa. Her body and her mind is yours to command if you wish.”

William nodded grimly and stiffened up, broadening his shoulders as he remembered the weight upon him. “I’m not that man anymore, not that monster. I will not command her. I did not use the loophole just to abuse some poor woman.”

“No...” said the strange man turning from the screen. His eyes visible without the glasses were revealed to be a bright yellow. “No, you never were content to just play were you. You always had to get concerned with the needs of the little people. The Logicians, The United Civilisations and now this? Why can’t we ever just have fun?”

William smirked bitterly. “The Bam-Kursh? After all this time?”

“Always.” said the Bam-Kursh. “Did you think I was just going to let you sacrifice yourself without so much as a goodbye?”

“You saved my life...” said William.

The Bam-Kursh shook his head. “I killed a young man and woman. There’s a difference. So what is it? What great need calls the Farsh-nuke out of sacrifice?”

William sucked his teeth then strode over to examine a monitor. “Do you know that old joke about going back in time to assassinate Hitler?”

The Bam-Kursh snorted. “Didn’t you eat him once?”

William sighed. “Obviously you can’t change time. We live in a multiverse but you can change the present. I have spent more than a quadrillion lifetimes saving humanity from aliens and logic monsters and anomalies but never have I actually stopped to look after the people I was with. If they wanted to vote in Hitler who was I to stop them?”

“You’d be fighting against democracy.” countered the Bam-Kursh.

“What’s democratic about genocide!?” snapped William.

The Bam-Kursh snorted. “You just committed genocide against the septagonoids.”

“I had no choice. The septagonoids are hard wired to want to destroy all of reality.” said William.

“Fairly certain Hitler felt the same way about the Jews.” said the Bam-Kursh.

William glared at the Bam-Kursh then went back to studying the screen. “People are being oppressed and they’re being lied to. Where is democracy when the populace is informed by the party with the biggest budget?”

“Point taken.” said the Bam-Kursh. “So what are you gonna do about it?”

“Counter-song.” said William idly.

“What?” said the Bam-Kursh.

“Counter-song. It’s a bardic power from Dungeons and Dragons. If someone is using an auditory power to screw over the party a Counter-song can let the party think clearly.” explained William. “The media can influence the world to vote for people who will screw them over so I will Counter-song with my own influence.”

The Bam-Kursh snorted. “And just what influence do you have exactly?”

William looked to Lisa and smiled. “The age of man is over, the patriarchy is dead and throughout most of the western countries in the multiverse feminism has all but won.”

The Bam-Kursh stared at him for a long moment then a smile spread slowly across his face. Her approached Lisa and kissed her on the forehead. “In the land of the blind the one eyed man is king.”

Lisa asked “What do you mean?”

William shrugged. “Feminism is a very powerful tool, like any ideology, to whoever is clever and wicked enough to exploit it. Which I think means me.”

The Bam-Kursh chuckled then looked serious. “You can’t do this alone.”

“Oh I know.” said William.

“But I can’t help you either...” said the Bam-Kursh.

William nodded. “Thank you for doing this for me old friend. I know how far along it is. You don’t need to explain.

“You’ll take good care of her won’t you?” said the Bam-Kursh pointedly.

William nodded. “And I’ll take care of the girls. Thank you.”

The Bam-Kursh nodded. “Thank you.”

The Bam-Kursh pulled the revolver out of his pocket, pointed the barrel under his chin and pulled the

trigger. His corpse fell lifeless to the floor.

William stared at the monitor for one last moment before he went to the controls of the ship. A thirty year old brunette was undressing a young ginger woman on the monitor as he left it.

*

Lucy woke. She was lying naked on cold metal. William was standing over her, he was dressed in some kind of strange tailored suit.

“Honey...” he said “We've got a lot to talk about.”

Lucy nodded. “Where am I?”

William smiled awkwardly and started helping out of the cold storage draw the bam-Kursh ha left her in.

*

The middle aged brunette led a young blonde woman in through the front door of her house then bolted the door shut behind her as the blonde woman giggled. Then she heard a polite cough.

William and Lucy were sitting on the bed in formal suits as Lisa admired the beautiful ginger woman in a bikini who was staring into the middle distance with a bright smile upon her face.

The brunette turned to run as the blonde woman looked confused.

“I'm not going to hurt you.” said William.

The brunette froze, staring at him.

The blonde looked to the older woman as if for guidance.

Lucy said “Lisa, make the girl a mug of tea why don't you?”

Lisa nodded and approached the blonde woman.

The blonde woman looked to the brunette.

The brunette nodded.

The blonde woman followed Lisa into the kitchen.

William said “I was just admiring your collection. Do you know their names?”

The brunette nodded.

“That one’s Amy and she’s Emma.” said the brunette. “They consented.”

“I’m sure they did. I’ve eaten many a consenting date.” said William.

“We aren’t here to stop you engaging in your activities as consenting adults.” said Lucy. “We want your help.”

The brunette staggered backwards. “With what?”

“Politics.” said William. “Pig fuckers, fox hunters, racists, narcissists and creeps. Reckon we’d fit right in with that lot don’t you Bam-Kursh?”

The Bam-Kursh stiffened. “What do you want me to do?”

“Work with me, help me start a movement, together we can be unstoppable.” said William.

“What’s the catch?” asked the Bam-Kursh.

“You can’t keep trying to kill me and we aren’t leaving this world, not until we’ve set enough organisations up to ensure its ongoing political stability.” said William.

“Okay...” said the Bam-Kursh “But if I don’t permanently harm them I can do what I like to your pets and I get to fuck you without her getting jealous.”

Lucy snorted. “Jealous? I’ll be involved.”

Bam-Kursh glared at Lucy. “Oh I could just carve you up like a christmass turkey.”

“Try it sometime.” said Lucy.

William sighed. “Deal but for heaven’s sake be gentle. I’ve not had this body long.”

Lisa led the blonde woman back into the room.

The Bam-Kursh smiled. “Honey, this is an old friend of mine and his girlfriend, they’re going to help us enjoy you.”

The blonde woman giggled.

The End

For Now

Seventy Seven Shades Of Red

Part 1

By

Alexander Gordon Jahans

Because sometimes you just need to write shit...

Our culture is obsessed with birth, death and rebirth. We build holidays and traditions around these events and the symbolism of the sacrifice is ridiculously prevalent even among the writing of Atheist writers. I'm looking at you, RTD. Every fucking season our science hero sacrifices himself and is reborn, but I digress...

So I'm standing on the rooftop and I drop my iPhone...

beat

beat

beat

shatter

I cringe. Fucker cost me a thousand pounds,

I spread my arms wide, Might as well go with tradition.

"Dear god, or goddess, or deity of indeterimate gender, I don't wanna judge. I mean you do the judging right? I can't be fucked with life anymore. I can't be fucked with the greed and misery and ignorance. I know the bastards have turned niceguy into something negative but I tried okay? I really fucking tried. And it wasn't enough. It was never ever enough. So fuck it. Take me! Take me and judge me! You fucking decide, because I can't! And if I'm not a nice guy I fucking deserve hell don't I!?"

"No!" A voice from below. "I've seen hell! Nobody deserves that! Step back from the ledge! Choose life!"

I shrug. "C'est la vie..."

I jump forward.

Shade 1

We think dying is painless. That the fall kills you before you hit the ground somehow or that it's over quickly. Except the brain reacts to trauma with meticulous high definition sensory recording. We all remember where we were on 9/11 right? Those flashbulb moments? Well your own death is one hell of a flash bulb moment.

My feet hit the ground first and I felt the tiny bones shatter on impact, my own splintered bones like

shrapnel.

Then my legs snapped like twiglets and stabbed into my flesh.

My brain is freaking out from the pain, every cell screaming regret and trying to somehow claw a way out of certain death a millisecond away.

Then my dick burst as my pelvis exploded. Shit went everywhere.

crack *crack* *crack* I felt my ribs break one by one.

My stomach ruptured, my appendix was liquidized and my liver failed nobly.

My heart and lungs exploded and as the last of my energy was sent to my brain I felt my neck snap, my teeth shatter and my nose erupt.

*

And then I wasn't dead any more,

The voice from before was talking to someone else. "I couldn't just leave him."

"He was dead and what's more he chose to die." said an older voice.

"But I wanted to help him."

"We don't help people, we're predators." said the older voice mockingly.

"Well if we're predators surely there's no law saying I can't save people if I want to."

"Fine!" cried the older voice angrily,

There were heavy footsteps then the sound of a door slamming.

"Umm?" that was me. But how? How could any of this?

"Oh, sorry" said the friendly voice.

And I could see. And instantly regretted it bright overwhelming light.

I think I must have cried out as suddenly it was much darker.

I felt a cold pressure against my cheek and could almost make something out in the darkness. A face, Pale and clear, Young and female, Thick black curly hair,

"Hi." she said brightly. "I'm Katherine. You can call me Kate. How do you feel?"

"Like I died..." I said. I gagged. "Ugh my mouth. I need to clean my teeth."

She chuckled. "Oh, you'll need to do a lot more than that. What else do you feel?"

So I wiggled my fingers and toes and took several deep breaths. Everything seemed to be in order. "I feel fine,"

She gave me an odd look.

I was fine wasn't I? Of course I was. Don't be ridiculous. But that's the point. In desperate times less urgent matters are ignored but now I was fine these matters could be attended to.

My stomach roared and I gasped in pain.

Kate smiled with understanding and brought a bowl of warm dark liquid to my lips. I drank it down greedily and the hunger subsided. It tasted sweet and meaty like liquid bacon of a good strong gravy.

I was practically salivating. "That was glorious, what was it?"

"The blood of a virgin." said Kate sweetly.

I laughed.

She gave me that strange look again.

I laughed harder.

It had to be a joke.

It had to be.

I mean the dying and the mention of predators and the hunger and the blood. It had to be a joke.

"So, you're vampires?" I said laughing. "You bought me back with blood magic?" So much laughter.

This was all completely impossible.

"Yes." she said sweetly. "Does that bother you?"

More laughter.

I started choking from the force of my laughs and bent double amid a coughing fit. Viscous liquid dripped from teeth onto my hands.

The laughter froze in me for a moment. "No. No, I am support science. Vampires are literally against the laws of physics. They're perpetual motion machines and there is no such thing as god or the devil."

"Then why did you pray to him?" asked Kate.

I stared into the past.

Into that desperation.

"Because if it means nothing where's the harm in hedging your bets?" I said.

She nodded then placed a hand on my right arm and said "Let me show you."

I followed her to a room full of young overweight men in gaming t-shirts hooking up to intravenous

drips as the blood was drained from them.

"Gamergaters." said Kate simply.

I laughed. I laughed harder and faster than I have ever laughed before.

A particularly obese man looked to me with anger and mouthed "cuck"

The laughter died in my throat and I went rigid with sudden overwhelming sobriety. "They don't deserve this. Noone does."

Kate shrugged. "We aren't vigilantes, just predators. Virgin blood just happens to be best at keeping the bloodlust at bay,"

So god had decided after all. Hell it was.

*

I was led to my own room with an ensuite. There were obviously power sockets, this was no gothic hovel. I had a shower and went to sleep.

Part 2 - Whiplash

I woke to find eyes looking back at me and damn nearly jumped out of bed. She was young and blonde and pretty and looking at me with such sweet innocent cheerfulness. The blood lust hit and I found myself lunging at her as I wore Edwardian pyjamas.

She laughed as I tackled her. A bubbly little giggle. That snapped me out of it. One expects people being attacked to react with fear or anger so this broke the circuits in my brain.

I threw myself against the nearest wall and roared through my pain. "Who are you!?"

"Lisa." she said, still giggling. "I'm a toy girl, Kate, gave me to you."

I stared at her. The insanity of that statement making me forget the blood lust for a moment. "What the fuck?"

Then the bloodlust overwhelmed me again and I doubled over in pain.

She stroked the back of my neck playfully and said. "I don't die. Well not easily. You could utterly butcher me and I'd be fine. I do belong to you but I'm also sort of a test and congratulations you passed."

"Well, fantastic." I snarled. I was pinching and slapping myself as I tried to think of tea, beautiful British tea and not... Now what the bloodlust makes you think of,

A different woman entered. I could smell her ovaries. How the fuck could I smell her ovaries? She tossed a bottle of red liquid to the ground.

I could smell the blood on it. I pulled myself up into a sitting position and hurriedly unscrewed the cap then downed the blood. The bloodlust settled and I sighed with relief. "Thank you."

An ancient voice said from above. "You showed restraint. Others of your kin would have savaged Lisa but you? You fought against the pain. Perhaps I can trust you with my protegee?"

I looked up at her. Lined features, grey patchy hair. This was a woman who clearly gave no fucks for ageing gracefully.

I stood to my feet. "I heard you before didn't I? You wanted me left for dead?"

She regarded me carefully for a moment then nodded. "Men who are turned have a habit for seeing the turn as an excuse to give in to their baser desires. I did not know you would be different."

I raised an eyebrow. "A feminist vampire?"

She chuckled. "My dear boy there are vampires that sparkle and vampires that eat emotions, Does it really surprise you that some of us may have read a good book or two in our long lives?"

"Fair point." I said then I waved at the young blonde woman. "And what about her? Under what definition of feminism is that allowed?"

"Lisa consented." said the old woman. "I helped out a powerful being some time ago and she gave me unlimited access to her stores. I explained the situation to this toy girl and she consented."

I stared at the old woman for a moment, failing to see how those two things lined up then I shrugged "So...?"

"So..." The old woman reached out the young woman and dismembered her as I watched;n "She is yours to do with as you wish."

I wanted to vomit.

The old woman held the young woman's head in her hands the rest of her littering the bedroom. She started to toss the young woman's head idly from hand to hand as she said. "Don't worry, she likes the pain."

The old woman tossed the young woman's head at me and I scrambled to catch it.

As the old woman left I called out. "What do I call you!?"

She paused with the door open and looked back to me. "You call me Artemis."

Then she was gone,

The head in my hands asked. "So what do you want to do?"

I screamed and tossed her head to the ground where she lay dismembered in a pool of her own blood.

Shade 2

Eventually I calmed down enough to put the toy young woman back together and had a shower while she searched out clothes for us both. I felt deeply uncomfortable in a dinner jacket and dark glasses while she was apparently overjoyed to find a dress that incorporated a corset. I went for a walk into town and she followed.

As I tried to adjust to my new life Lisa explained how she came to be a toy girl. Apparently an eldritch entity called the Bam-Kursh was waging some kind of imperial conquest of the multiverse for supposedly the greater good and was funding it by taking people and fashioning them into toys that the one percenters would pay a high price for.

First vampires, now living dolls and eldritch capitalists, Fantastic. What new weirdness would abound next?

I smelled something, something familiar. There were three familiar things and one different, tasty, thing. I had a look around following my nose and saw three extras from Buffy the Vampire Slayer zeroing in on a young blonde woman. Well fuck it, I was going to commit suicide yesterday anyway...

I broke into a run and dragged the smaller of them aside. "Oi, mush? What's with the fucking stalking?"

He stared at me for a long moment, sniffing like an Alsatian. "You're one of us. You know why. You must be able to smell her. She's a virgin."

I glared at him then punched him in the nose. "Thank you, you've been very helpful."

I ran after the woman,

She looked back and saw me sprinting towards her and started running herself. Excellent. Of course the other two could probably still outrun her but at least now she knew to be careful.

Lisa was at my side. "Got a plan?"

I stared at her then smiled. "Yes, you go after her, a different way. Be ready to defend her."

She nodded and ran off.

I felt a crack at the back of my head and the two vampires I had been tailing were pinning my arms behind my back as they loomed menacingly over me.

"You spooked our prey" said the tall thin one.

"Shouldn't have done that, milk drinker." said the shorter fatter one.

"Well, I'm sorry, tweedledum and tweedledee but I have these things called morals and manners so I'm going to count to ten and you're going to back the fuck off." I said. Then I started counting.

Don't try to bluff vampires. They can smell when you're lying.

They smiled at me.

"Well Alice, looks like your plan didn't work." said the tall one.

"But don't worry we know what to do with girls who lose their way." said the fat one.

I farted and felt ridiculously hot and then nauseas as something overwhelmed me.

After a long moment I was aware that I was not dead and my perspective had shifted. My arms were free, except they were no longer arms they were small leathery wings. Ofcourse.

I started flapping my arms and lifted up into the air. I flew after the scent of the woman as I left the tall one and the fat one behind, dumbfounded.

I saw Lisa talking to the woman and flew over to her. I buzzed around her for a moment looking for a landing place as quite frankly all this flapping was tiring but well I didn't want to miss my mark and end up squished against the paving, I knew how much that would hurt. So I aimed for Lisa's hair and grabbed on for dear life.

Lisa laughed and pulled me from her hair.

"A bat?" said the woman with the succulent scent, "What the fuck's a bat doing here?"

Lisa held me in her hands, stroking me like I was some pet animal. "Oh, people keep them as pets I hear and aren't you just the cutest."

I gave her a death glare.

She kissed my forehead and cooed as she rubbed my belly.

"Well you probably shouldn't keep it then." said the woman with the succulent scent,

Lisa nodded and held her arms and commanded. "Fly free little one."

I bit her hand angrily then took off, only to change in mid air. Thankfully my clothes seemed to have changed with me as I returned to human form in my dinner jacket and brogues.

The woman with the succulent scent stared at me.

"You should probably run home and fetch some garlic and crucifixes." I said.

She held my gaze for a moment then turned and ran screaming.

Lisa looked to me.

I gestured towards the fleeing woman. "Well get after her then."

Lisa nodded and ran.

There were people holding iphones and android smartphones in my direction. Gormless zombies of the internet age.

"You're all sheep!" I cried. "Sheep so fixated on your screens, none of you can see that predators lurk among you! Preying on you because of greed and hunger and lust!"

No response.

I shrugged and ran after Lisa and the woman with that scent.

I found Lisa waiting outside a door. She smiled at me when I approached. "No sign of the other vampires and she's safely inside."

"Is she indeed?" I said wearily and knocked on the door seven times.

A voice cried out. "Go away!"

"Maam, you are being hunted." I said. "Every vampire in a 5 mile radius is converging on your location as we speak."

"Vampires don't exist!" cried the voice.

"Then why don't you open the door?" I asked.

"Because rapists do!" came the reply.

Good point. Good point. Very good point.

"Maam, I assure you I am no rapist and even if I was there is a pretty young thing right here and she's fine." I said.

Lisa pipped up. "It's true. No funny business going on here.

The door was opened on the latch.

Lisa waved.

"Alright." said the woman. "So, you're like the good vampire."

"Now, she believes us..." I said groaning.

"Yes." said Lisa, patting me on the back. "Very good vampire. He's got a soul and everything."

I do not believe in souls but I let that pass.

She took the door off the latch. "Well, you'd better come in then."

"Thank you." I said with a polite smile as I strode through,

I sniffed the air. No vampires. I headed into the living room and Lisa joined me on a sofa as the woman made tea for us.

"So can you turn into a bat on command or what?" asked Lisa.

I shrugged. "I don't know. I just know it saved my life."

"You know you're rather cute as a bat?" said Lisa.

I glared at her. "Yeah... That is not going to happen again."

Lisa smirked.

The woman arrived with the tea. "So who are you?"

"Robert Troughton Marwood, at your service." I said. "Rob's fine."

The woman nodded then looked to Lisa.

"Lisa Barberella Watkins but you can call me whatever you like. I'm sort of his thrall." said Lisa.

My eyes widened and I gave her a curious look.

Lisa smirked. "More or less."

The woman nodded. "I'm Stephanie. Stephanie Wallis. Why are the vampires after me?"

"Because you're a virgin." I said. "That scent is like the finest wine."

"Then why aren't you affected?" asked Stephanie.

I shrugged. "Let's say I have a... very reasonable supplier."

"So what happens? Do we hold out the night or what?" asked Stephanie.

Lisa looked to me expectantly.

Well shit. I felt the same now as I had when we invaded Iraq. This sudden dread that things were going to go to shit the moment you left yet knowing you couldn't realistically stay to keep an eye on things forever. "Umm..."

Stephanie's face fell. "You don't know do you?"

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

"Uh, Law Of Effort Diminishing Likelihood. If we protect you tonight, you'll be fine because it'll be too much effort to keep tracking you." I said it as confidently as I could.

Lisa gave a reassuring smile but I could see in her eyes that this was a terrible plan.

Stephanie looked up. "You really think so?"

"Absolutely." I said, lying through my teeth.

*

We set to work boarding up the windows and barricading the entrances. Then Lisa and Stephanie started making crucifixes and garlic bombs as I made improvised stakes.

Then they came.

We could hear them trying to doors and windows. Lisa went with Stephanie to fetch the crucifixes and garlic bombs as I readied a stake. Nonone was going to get in to harm the girls on my watch.

Then my stomach stated rumbling.

I ate a biscuit and cried on.

The short one that I'd punched in the face had made it through the door and was tearing out Lisa's throat. The crucifixes and garlic did nothing. Stephanie was backed against the wall screaming.

I threw myself at the short guy and pierced his heart with the stake.

He laughed. "You think that can stop me?"

I could feel another heart beating. I stabbed at it. I felt another and stabbed at that too,

He laughed as he died.

I was horrified but I kept moving. There was work to be done. I moved the corpse off of Lisa and said "See to her."

Lisa nodded and saw to Stephanie as I took some salt from a cupboard and drew a pentagram on the floor. I hacked off the vampire's head and placed it in the centre of the pentagram as I muttered. "Requiescat in pace."

I tossed the vampire's body outside the break in the defences then restored them.

My body was on autopilot as I worked. I tried to focus on the present but I kept hearing his laughter and feeling blood on my hands I felt sick and then a cold dread came over me as in that state of mind my mind wondered how things could possibly get worse and then I knew. I was going to get hungry again.

Lisa was by my side suddenly. "You haven't moved for hours, what's up?"

"I killed." I said.

"You were protecting an innocent." said Lisa.

I nodded. "And for nothing."

"What?" asked Lisa.

"You saw how bad the hunger was this morning." I said. "If we stay all night I'm going to tear her apart."

"Oh..." said Lisa understanding.

"You have to kill me." I said. "Three hearts, make sure to get them all. After then you can be hers. You can protect her."

I stroked her face and smiled sadly. "Goodbye." Then I felt myself go. Felt my mind snap.

Lisa held my hand to her cheek and said. "I'll think of something. I'll find you a third way."

Then she was gone.

She returned with Stephanie.

Stephanie recoiled and cried out "My god, what's wrong with him?"

"He's worried that he's going to kill you." said Lisa.

Stephanie stared at her.

"He wants us to kill him before that happens." said Lisa "But I have another idea."

Stephanie nodded. "Tell me. He saved my life. We have to try."

Lisa nodded. "The vampires are going to come and they are going to keep coming but he can protect you if he can feed,"

Stephanie swallowed as she considered her words. "You mean if I let him feed on me?"

"You can be a thrall like me. No work, no rent, just him." said Lisa

"Then why can't he feed on you?" asked Stephanie.

"Because I'm not strictly human. My blood, my flesh, he can't digest it. It won't kill the hunger." said Lisa.

Stephanie nodded then she stared at me, "I reserve the right to change my mind about being a thrall later."

"Of course." said Lisa.

Stephanie shrugged. "So how do we do this?"

Lisa hugged her. "Got any first aid kits."

"Upstairs bathroom." said Stephanie.

Lisa left the room and returned a moment later with the first aid kit and an empty bottle from the kitchen. There was a syringe and a series of needles that Lisa used to extract blood from Stephanie and fill the bottle.

I could smell the blood despite my madness, it spoke to a deeply animal part of me. It woke my from the pits of self loathing. "What are you doing?"

"Saving your life." said Lisa as she withdrew more blood.

"The blood's going to bring them all here." I said.

"Good thing you're here to defend us then isn't it?" said Lisa.

Stephanie looked to me. "You saved my life. this is the least I can do."

"Except I don't want to live." I said.

"Tough." said Lisa.

I sighed and sat up.

"So what's going to happen then?" I asked.

"You are going to kill the remaining vampires, get some rest and then enjoy some sustainably sourced virgin blood for breakfast." said Lisa.

"Right..." I said and I got to my feet and went to the bathroom. It was as if everything had happened to somebody else but I had orders. I had a job to do.

The front door burst open as tweedledum and tweedledee emerged like monstrous badasses.

I lunged at the tall one and knocked him to the ground.

The fat one lifted me up and punched me in the face. I was sent flying into a chair and picked up two wooden chair legs as they approached Lisa and Stephanie. "Oi, fuckers!"

Tweedledum and tweedledee turned at the cry.

"The Milky bars are on me!" I roared as I lunged at them.

A punch to the chin sent me flying backwards against the barricade over the front window.

The tall one approached.

I tripped him up, rolled over him and stabbed at his hearts.

Stephanie cried at the fat one lifted her up into the air and sniffed her,

"Get away from her, you shit!" cried Lisa as she jabbed the used needles into his chest.

Stephanie squirmed free and it the kitchen where she grabbed a stake and impaled it.

I tossed a stake to Lisa and she finished the job.

*

The bodies of the vampires had their heads removed and placed in salted pentagrams just in case and the door was nailed shut then barricaded again.

When I awoke from my fitful sleep Lisa was watching over me with a bottle in her hand.

The blood lust overwhelmed me in a moment and Lisa had the bottle to my lips just as quickly. I drank greedily and it subsided.

Looked her in the eyes and smiled. "Thank you."

"Don't EVER ask me to kill you again." said Lisa furiously. "I'm a toy. I obey orders. Do not make me break another."

I nodded solemnly.

Her face soften and she smiled as she pulled me into a hug. "We did it. We saved the girl."

"And to the victor, the spoils." said Stephanie standing in the doorway, with her bags packed.

I was silent for a long moment then I muttered. "Lisa, anything you ant, anything, if I can do it or get it, you can have it."

Lisa giggled and whispered something in my ear that I shan't repeat and then we left to make our way to Artemis and Kate.

Part 3 - The Queen of The Vampire Lords

We staggered back to the old manor house that served as home. Lisa stuck close by Stephanie at my insistence but she kept watching me as though at any moment I might faint or take off madly into the distance. I was stuck in the moment, sniffing the air, watching all about us, listening for danger. It was almost comforting in a way, felt like I was playing through one of those annoying escort missions and I was just waiting for the moment I would have to fight people off while trying to keep Stephanie alive. Fortunately however the journey was uneventful.

Kate stood in the open doorway as we approached. She sniffed the air as we approached. "You bring livestock? I had not taken you for a hunter?"

She said it with an amused smile.

I am afraid I was not as polite as I could have been. I towered over her. "She is under my protection. My protection, you understand? If anything happens to her, anything, I will - I will -"

Kate smiled at me and laid a finger to my lips. "Under your protection? I understand. I'll take good care of her and rest assured I will run any major changes past you first."

I sighed and rubbed my brow. "She needs to be safe. I need her to be safe. no feeding from her."

"She will be safe, I assure you." said Kate, she seemed to be studying my features curiously, "Come in, I think you could do with a rest.."

We followed her inside, through a hallway and into a room with ancient sofas and armchairs opposite a large plasma screen tv. Me and Lisa sat protectively either side of Stephanie. My brain still expected sirens to sound and a boss monster to turn up unexpectedly before Stephanie would be properly safe.

Kate stood before and smiled welcomingly at us as we entered. She waited until we had sat down before she took to her seat. "So... who's your new friend then?"

I looked to Stephanie.

She coughed nervously. "Umm, I'm Stephanie, I'm umm... They saved my life. Who are you?"

"Stephanie?" said Kate feeling the syllables out in her mouth. "Nice name. Well Stephanie, my name is Kate and I'm a vampire."

Stephanie shifted nervously. "I, umm, gathered."

Kate chuckled lightly. "Funny story really. I turned Robert the other day. I'm quite proud of him, that he managed to capture such a rare specimen so soon after rebirth."

Stephanie swallowed and stared at me.

I glared at Kate. "Captured?"

Kate chuckled again. "Ah yes, I'm sorry. You are under Robert's protection. And yet I can smell your blood on his breath and here you are, in his parlour."

I thought the ultra sound on my testicles was awkward but sitting there in that room, with those people, at that moment, topped it.

Stephanie muttered "Shit." under her breath.

Lisa spoke up. "It's really not as simple as that. There were vampires coming after her, this was the only way to ensure she would be protected."

Kate smiled at Lisa. "So you fed her to a vampire and took her away from her life? Well what a clever plan to ensure her life wouldn't be taken by a vampire as her blood was drained from her body."

I grunted and glared at Kate but looked away.

Kate smiled at Stephanie warmly. "You are his you know? I shall endeavour to see that you are protected and safe and happy but you are his and you are cattle."

I growled. "She's human..."

"Yes..." said Kate cheerily. "And we are vampires. Stephanie, you are cattle. You are going to be eaten regularly."

I stared at Kate.

Kate ignored me. "You are food. That is your purpose here. that is your role. Now the good news is that as Robert's livestock you will enjoy certain rights and privileges that I can assure you no other livestock enjoys. I want you to be happy, to be healthy, to be vibrant and full of life, so Robert can take it from you as he has and will again."

Stephanie was horrified. "What's going to happen to me?"

Kate thought for a second then said "There is a bath upstairs, I suggest you use it. I'll find you some clothes and a room to call your own with internet access. There is food in the kitchen but if you need anything special just ask. Settle in, settle down and make yourself comfortable. When I am certain you are ready I will speak with Robert about certain procedures livestock such as yourself normally undergoes. There shall be no taking of your blood and flesh unless Robert is okay with it."

Stephanie stared at her. "But I - I don't want to -"

"Run a bath." said Kate firmly. "Relax."

Stephanie held Kate's gaze for a moment then got up to leave for the bathroom.

"Now..." said Kate warmly. "I have not seen a Lisa in quite sometime and I have to say I am impressed by how much confidence you have."

Lisa smiled. "Well I was there..."

Kate nodded. "You're Robert's little toy girl, right? How is he?"

"A gent." said Lisa, reaching out to pat my back. "He's a real gent,"

"Bet you hate that?" said Kate with a grin.

Lisa giggled and blushed.

"Do you know what I did to my Lisa?" said Kate.

Lisa leaned forward conspiratorially. "What did you do?"

"I carved the bones from her flesh and sewed her into a punching bag then turned her mind off." said Kate with the same tone someone might use for explaining to a friend about the hot date they had.

Lisa stared at Kate in silence for a moment.

Kate looked her up and down then patted her lap.

Lisa vaulted the coffee table and was on Kate's lap in a moment. "What did you do with the bones?"

"Whittled cutlery from them." said Kate with a smirk.

Lisa stared at her. "What about the healing factor?"

Kate chuckled and ran a hand through Lisa's hair as she looked mischievously at Lisa. "Keeps me stopped up on cutlery and the skulls make fantastic bowls."

Lisa giggled. "So what are you going to do to me?"

"Nothing." said Kate as she pulled Lisa close.

"Nothing?" said Lisa.

"Well you aren't my toy to destroy." said Kate.

Lisa frowned. "Aww..."

Kate smirked and took Lisa's head in her hands and she stroked her cheeks with her thumbs. "Well, alright, since you are so very willing and looks like you've had a bad day."

She snapped Lisa's neck and tossed the girl's lifeless body to the ground. "Robert, we need to talk, what the fuck happened out there?"

"There were vampires..." I said.

"Well no shit." said Kate.

"They were going after Stephanie and I- Well I couldn't just let her die could I?" I said.

Kate stared at me.

"We explained the situation and fortified the house but they came for her and...I killed them." I stared at Kate. "I killed them and then we realised the vampires were going to keep coming and she was dead without someone to protect her but I had no... food."

Kate groaned,

"It was Lisa's idea. I just- I wanted to die. I wanted her to kill me but then she didn't and now here we are." I said.

"Robert, she's a fucking toy girl. She literally comes with an off switch and if you play with her enough she literally stops thinking and starts obeying." said Kate with the tone someone might reserve for explaining how to use a computer to a particularly techno illiterate relative.

"Well I didn't fucking know that." I said. "Maybe you shouldn't have bought me back? I committed suicide. Past tense. I succeeded. I was dead."

Kate shook her head. "I can fix this. You can be happy, Stephanie can be happy and Lisa can be happy but you do realise you have a responsibility now? There are things that can be done to protect Stephanie but if you don't take ownership of her, if you don't feed from her, someone else will. That is prime beef just casually trotting about up there, someone is going to eat it if you don't and I have a feeling you'll go about it a damn sight more humanely."

"I know..." I said. "Shit, I know."

"And also you killed a vampire. You really shouldn't have fucking done that." said Kate. "Humans are prey. They die. It's what they do. Vampires do not kill vampires."

"They were going to kill her." I said.

"Yeah..." said Kate incredulously. "She's prime beef. I'm having to resist the urge to carve her up myself."

I stared at her.

Kate frowned then said. "You let them die, Robert, I know it's tough but you let them die. You are not a human. You are not on the side of the humans. You're a vampire."

I was flabbergasted. "But vampires are monsters."

"We're predators. There's a difference." said Kate. "The Human Race are farmers. They breed animals for size, quick growth and large litters. They breed animals on an industrial scale and slaughter billions but only after having a short miserable life. The Human Race treats its prey with ridiculous contempt then calls itself so much more noble and civilised but we, vampires, are the civilised creatures. Our prey is not horribly mutated by breeding programs, taken from its mother early and over fed so they develop quickly. Our prey takes 20 leisurely years to reach maturity and experience life. Our prey has

ipads and smart watches and democracy and our prey has degrees and popular culture. And then when our prey dies we use every last cut of them."

"Yes, but pigs aren't fucking sapient." I said. "Pigs aren't capable of writing Macbeth or programming a computer to play chess. Pigs don't write poems to their loved ones and vague blog when pissed off. Pigs can't fly in machines they've built."

Kate stared at me in disgust. "So it's fine to eat the thick then? Just have a nom on the comatose the brain dead and the elderly? Maybe open up a slaughter house for bigots and anti-vaxxers. Hell considering Stephanie was talked round to being your cattle by a toy girl she's surely thick enough to deserve death by your logic."

"But she's human!" I cried in frustration.

"And they were vampires!" cried Kate. "Like you, like me, like Artemis. You killed people for the sake of one thick human whose life you have destroyed anyway."

I stared at her then groaned. "God, I want to die."

I raked my hands across my face then stared at the floor.

I heard foot steps and the door slamming shut.

I find myself having flashbacks. Falling, the lurch in my stomach followed by the crunch of my bones. Then killing, stabbing over and over, just pounding it again and again until they stopped. The adrenaline and the fear and horrible sensation of life fading by my hands. The guilt. Oh god, the guilt.

I don't know how long I sat alone in that room trapped in the past but my torment was broken by the sound of the door swinging open followed by tutting and footsteps.

I looked up.

Artemis, the old vampire, was lifting Lisa to her feet. She looked the young woman up and down fondly, caressing her and stroking her hair. "Hey..." she said in a small quiet yet cheerful voice.

Lisa smiled at her "Hey."

Artemis ran her strong hand down Lisa's pert young legs and said in a raised voice "You know I have a Lisa of my own? Well, I have a few of them actually."

I grunted.

Artemis backed onto the sofa and Lisa followed, enthralled.

Artemis was treating the young woman as if she was a cat, I realised. There was the same awed attention and playful caressing. For her part Lisa seemed quite content and happy as the old woman ran her hands about her.

Artemis noticed me looking. "Beautiful isn't she? I don't really have time for mine. too busy hunting

but every birthday, mine and hers, I wake her from her slumber and make her happy."

I caught her gaze.

She nodded then paused to gaze at Lisa's gleaming smile. "She's so beautiful when she's happy. Well she's beautiful anyway, that's why she sells so well, but when she's happy she radiates it and I find it lifts my mood."

Artemis turned her attention to me and said "I think you could use a little happy."

"I killed someone." I said, the words dropping from my lips like anvils.

Artemis frowned, squeezed my shoulder and looked into my eyes. "You committed suicide, want to talk about it?"

I stared at her for a long moment and frowned. I wanted to say something. I really did but it was all so insane, so my mouth hung open like a goldfish,

Artemis nodded and turned her attention back to Lisa. "I didn't give you the full breakdown of what Lisa has to offer did I? You see she is a ridiculously smart woman if you let her use that brain of hers but she's also a toy so if you know what you're doing and you touch her just right..."

Artemis leaned back and smiled as she gazed at Lisa.

There was something different about Lisa actually, almost unnoticeable at first. Still that gleaming smile, that poise and beauty but there was something subtly off about her expression and her eyes. She wasn't looking at anyone or anything in particular just looking brightly at noone.

"Lay down on top of us." said Artemis quietly.

Lisa lay down across our laps, her dress trailing off the edge of the sofa. She gazed brightly up at nothing.

Artemis set her wrinkled fingers about the lace on Lisa's corset.

Lisa did not react.

"What are you -?" I began.

Artemis shushed me and muttered "As smart and kind and wonderful as Lisa is as a person, as a toy she is delightfully obedient and without will of her own."

Artemis loosened the corset about Lisa's waist then removed her dress as she lay passively on our laps.

I looked away in disgust then I heard giggling. Lisa was alert and attentive again and blushing as Artemis removed her underwear.

"Okay..." I said in horrified disgust.

"It's fine." said Lisa amused. "I like it."

"This is - Well this has got to be pretty close to rape, right? I mean she couldn't consent." I said, incredulous.

Lisa giggled.

Artemis chuckled. "Lisa's a toy. She likes to be dominated and humiliated."

Lisa nodded.

"Now say Cheese" said Artemis.

I looked at her like she was mad and heard Lisa practically squeal "Cheese!" then I saw Artemis remove a small cylinder from a pocket and press a button.

"This is her remote control." said Artemis. "I just turned off her mind. Feel free to turn it back on later."

She gave me the remote. "Enjoy her, Rob. If you want someone to lash out at, someone to awn over and care for or even just something retty to look at Lisa is yours to help you feel happy."

I stared at her.

Artemis sighed. "I can't solve your problems but I can be here if you want to talk and ensure you're not alone."

She held my gaze for a long moment and I sighed. "Look, my story isn't special or unique. Shit family, useless degree, health problems and the crushing quest to get a job in a fucked up world where the sadists have power."

Artemis smiled sadly then pulled me into a bear hug.

I croaked. "Umm, thanks..."

Artemis pulled back and looked me in the eyes. "I know that the scars may never fully heal but you are safe, practically immortal, you have a new family and you have the time to study whatever you want without fear of being held back by capitalism because you don't need a salary or a pension or an employment contract. You get out there, pick a target, drain them dry and take their stuff. We'll always have your back."

Then Artemis patted Lisa's rigid bare legs. "And she will always be waiting for you at home, ready to be whatever you need her to be."

Artemis studied me for a moment then said. "Feel better."

I nodded. "Thanks, I... I guess I just looked on this extra life as a curse."

"Well it isn't." said Artemis then she hugged me again before leaving.

I fumbled with the remote I had been given and Lisa frowned. "Aww, I liked her."

"She stripped you." I said pointedly.

"She also tore me limb from limb and both actions made me very happy." said Lisa, pouting.

I groaned.

"So what are we doing?" asked Lisa.

"Going home." I said.

"Where's that?" asked Lisa.

So I led her to my bedroom and she pulled out a more modern number from the wardrobe that showed off her body more.

There was a knock at the door and Lisa went to answer it.

Lisa led our guest into my view. It was Stephanie wearing a low cut top and a short skirt. She was visibly awkward and nervous. "So, umm, I didn't wanna disobey that woman because she's umm, she's scary but I'm hoping I mean umm..." she trailed off and stood awkwardly in the middle of the room, her arms folded across her chest looking at me pensively.

I paused the tv and sighed. "Stephanie, I just want you be happy and safe and if I knew another way-"

"I know." said Stephanie cutting me off. "But I still don't know how to be around you because I don't know what I am to you."

"You're a person." I said. "Things might have to happen which affect our relationship but you are a person so take a seat and chill the fuck out."

Stephanie nodded and fell back into an arm chair like she was retreating to a fortified position. "So me and you, we're...?"

"People." I said, looking her in the eyes. "We're all just people every one of us."

Lisa nodded and took a seat beside me on the sofa.

I found myself smiling as she rested her head on my shoulder and I hugged her tight.

Lisa looked up at me then smiled before nuzzling against me as she got comfortable.

"Lisa may be a very literal interpretation and you may technically be a prey animal that I feed upon but we are all just people." I said. "We're all equal in our own ways."

Stephanie sighed and almost melted into the armchair with relief. "Thank you, I promise you, I'll be worth it. I know it can't have been easy, killing those people."

I nodded. "I still see them when I close my eyes you know?"

Stephanie nodded. "My mind keeps replaying it over and over and I didn't even do anything."

"Well you're safe now." I said.

"I know." said Stephanie. "Thank you."

I smiled at her.

She smiled back.

I reached for the TV remote.

Stephanie said suddenly. "You can ask you know?"

I looked at her curiously.

"I'm not saying I'll say yes but you can ask." said Stephanie,

"Ask what?" I asked, baffled.

"Anything." said Stephanie. "I owe you my life. Anything you wanna know, anything you want me to do, ask."

I stared at her.

"I mean if you feel like it." said Stephanie with a shrug.

I turned on the TV.

*

They came at night.

I don't know how many.

I was asleep. Fuck, I was asleep.

My hands were bound behind my back and something was rammed up my arse as a gag was placed in my mouth.

Lisa and Stephanue were similarly restrained.

I thanked god I had decided to wear pyjamas to bed and then the clothes were torn from my body and I was carried with Stephanie and Lisa into a van as big vampires in body armor stood watch over us and salivated over Stephanie.

I couldn't think straight from fear.

After what felt like an age the van stopped and we were carried through into a large black building. We were carried through into a central courtyard lined with ash where a hundred or more holes had been drilled into cement and fitted with locking mechanisms. The purpose of which was soon made apparent as we were yoked to poles that were held aloft by those locking mechanisms.

I looked around. Lisa looked almost orgasmically excited while Stephanie's pole was visibly slick with a brown substance, indicative of just how much she was not enjoying the experience. The walls seemed to be made of mirrors that, yes, I could see myself in very well, thank you. Not that I'd want to look at the overweight shivering pink mess that I saw there.

We hung on our poles in silence for a few minutes. I tried humming the Journey of the Sorcerer to calm myself.

"Dah, da, da-da-dah, Dan-dan, dah-dah, Dah, da-da-dah..."

Lisa joined in cheerily.

Stephanie hesitantly caught on.

It was mournful, out of key and made by humming around ball gags but it worked. It meant we could have a distraction from the pain and humiliation. The air itself seemed to start to glow and I smelt something new, getting more powerful and closer all the time. I started to hear reinforcement to our humming. Gentle at first but getting fiercer and more bass as it got louder.

Then there were fireworks.

A man in an odd suit was strumming away at an electric guitar. He didn't smell like a vampire. He was playing the tune. The Journey of the Sorcerer.

I stopped and stared.

Stephanie and Lisa followed soon after.

Suddenly his face filled the mirrors, huge crooked teeth in a wicked grin. "Well hello my pretties!"

He jumped from the stage far above and hovered on jet boots. "Allow me to introduce myself, I am the Farsh-nuke!"

He grinned at me then flew over to Stephanie and started groping her. "I must say, you have good taste!"

"Enough!" boomed an authoritative woman's voice. A visibly old woman in ornate robes and a crown sat on a throne on a balcony way above that the screen mirrors were now allowing us to see.

The Farsh-nuke cried "Oh but I'm having so much fun!"

"We are here to try the defendant, not his dependants!" snapped the woman.

The Farsh-nuke flew back to his stage dejectedly.

"Forgive my Court Jester, he does not get out a lot." said the old woman. "I am Gaia, Queen of the Vampire Lords, you have been found guilty of murder of three of our kin and as such you and all your dependents are to be destroyed, how do you plead?"

I was going to try and croak something witty about the ball gags when mine vanished. "Don't kill them!" I cried instead.

"Why not? They will die without you anyway?" said the Queen.

I shook my head. "I have a friend. She can look after them, she can see that they are cared for."

"Why should they live?" asked the Queen. "You have been found guilty and by our laws that means death, for you, and for your dependants. that is the sentence. Why should they get lesser?"

"Because they did no wrong." I pleaded.

An old man in an uncomfortable looking chair came up on screen. "Perhaps he has a point your majesty. As you said so yourself. We are trying the defendant not his dependants."

The Queen looked to the old man shrewdly then sighed. "Perhaps you are right, Elias? I am still shaken by having to execute the children."

The old man nodded. "Whatever you think is best, my royal highness."

The Queen nodded thoughtfully for a moment then said. "Very well. I give you my word that your dependants shall be well looked after."

I breathed a sigh of relief.

The Queen added. "If you plead guilty."

I stared at the reflection in the mirror then sighed. "I am guilty, your royal highness. Now, look after them. they deserve better than me anyway."

The Queen smiled. "Thank you. you are lucky. there is a way your sentence might be reduced. If you agree to take on a mission for me you may avoid death."

I thought for a moment then cried. "I'll do it."

"Excellent." said the Queen.

Then the mirror screens went dark.

After an hour of being stuck on those poles the Farsh-nuke came over to whisper in my ear. "You know the Queen lied. She does not have the right to alter the ruling and could not spare your dependants."

"Then what was that about?" I asked.

"Convincing you to say yes to the mission." said the Farsh-nuke obliquely. "By the way, do you know why vampires don't like the sun or mirrors? Well you're about to..."

His laughter followed him into the distance as dawn broke and the sun's rays were caught by the mirror screens and angled up at us, focusing the sun's rays on our bare, bleeding, aching flesh.

As we burned in the concentrated light and heat of the sun I felt the hunger overwhelm me but there was nowhere to go and nothing to eat, just the intoxicating, maddening scent of Stephanie's slowly roasting flesh.

Seven hours. Seven hours of torment as my blood boiled and my skin burned and my stomach raged at the lack of food. Seven fucking hours of hell.

*

The guards arrived to retrieve us after sentencing and mercifully the first thing they did was inject me with virgin blood. The hunger died in an instant and I passed out from exhaustion.

I woke as we were being carried of the van into an army barracks. We were carried through the dorms to a luxurious suite at the back, then we were dropped and our restraints removed. It was as the thing up my arse was removed that I became aware of just how great a toll the ordeal had had on me.

Lisa was giggling with giddy elation.

I and Stephanie were groaning and trying not to look at each other.

"There's a bath round back, you're very free to use it." came a refined yet muddied voice from the corner.

I looked over,

A middle aged woman in full body armour was sharpening a stake.

I frowned,

"We'll save the introductions for later I think, don't you?" said the mysterious woman. "You'll find combat fatigues laid out for you after."

Lisa rose to her feet and strode off.

Me and Stephanie hurried after.

*

As soon as I was clean I left to find the combat fatigues. Sure enough there was a set of briefs, socks, trousers, shoes, a tshirt and a jacket. I got dressed then left the room.

The mysterious woman sat before a desk and a partially deconstructed harpoon rifle. "So how was the baking?"

"Not, pleasant," I said. "Who are you?"

"Hyacinth Emmanuel." said the woman. "They call me the Gardner."

"Right..." I said finding a seat and pulling it up to the desk so I could sit beside her.

"Very first mission, I was a grunt. It was my job to be the extra in the redshirt who gets offed so the officers could get away." said Hyacinth. "Only I knew my botany so I recognised when we were close to an underground cavern since there's a kind of plant that grows by wicking the water off the ceiling of a cavern with its roots. I fired at the ground and my commanding officer was about to issue me with a court-martial for wasting ammunition and giving away our position when thanks to my efforts and knowledge enemy fell into an underground cavern that opened up beneath them,"

I nodded,

She finished assembling the gun and holstered it then she looked me in the eyes. "And you would be Robert Marwood, the killer of his own kind?"

I swallowed. Oh, shit...

Just then Lisa coughed. "Umm there don't seem to be any clothes for us."

Hyacinth glanced in her direction and sniffed. then she pulled out two sets of bikinis and two collars from a desk drawer and threw them at Lisa.

Lisa coughed them then said warily. "Is that it?"

"Be thankful you're women, boys get less." said Hyacinth dismissively.

Lisa nodded and backed away.

I stared at Hyacinth.

Hyacinth raised an eyebrow. "She's a bloody toy girl."

"She's a person." I said.

She stared at me then chuckled. "You still feel that way? Blimey, you really are an odd'un. Most vamps have to be taught to be respectful of their prey. You might have to be taught the opposite."

I stared at her, incredulous.

Suddenly she yelled "Sofa and shut up or I'll lock you both in coffins."

I looked around to see Stephanie and Lisa hurriedly walking towards the sofa.

I glared at her.

"Don't challenge my authority." She muttered. "I respect that they're your property and you can treat them how you like but they need to obey me or they may not when our lives are in danger."

"What?" I asked.

"Oh, that's right. You won't have been briefed, will you?" said Hyacinth.

I stared blankly back at her.

Hyacinth removed a letter from her inside jacket pocket and handed it to me:

Hyacinth,

I believe I have found you a reaper man.

You are to use him to execute the current head of the Department of Work and Pensions so that we may install one of our own to see that the cows breed well and are fit and healthy for the harvest.

G,

I stared at the paper in dismay and felt my body go numb.

"What's the matter?" asked Hyacinth.

"I can't kill again." I said.

"But you must." said Hyacinth. "If you refuse they'll kill you and your girls."

I was shaking. "No more. No more. No more blood."

Hyacinth's hand went to her holster. "Robert, are you alright?"

I looked her in the eyes and cried as the idea came. "Hide them."

"What?" said Hyacinth, incredulous.

"Hide the girls. Say I devoured Stephanie out of hunger then destroyed Lisa out of anger before giving up and refusing the job out of grief." I said.

Hyacinth stared at me. "Are you insane?"

"I should be dead." I pleaded. "I wasn't meant to be a vampire. I committed suicide because the human world was too driven by greed. The vampire world makes me sick and I will not kill again. No more."

Hyacinth studied me.

I was losing it, I knew I was losing it.

"Write." she said. "Write it down. Write it all down. Figure your shit out. then we can talk."

"And Lisa and Stephanie?" I asked.

Hyacinth was silent for a long moment. "A Lisa is easy to hide and easy to explain but the other one? I... I can't promise anything but if she dies it will be quick."

"Shit." I said.

Hyacinth rose and planted a computer before me. "Write, figure your shit out and calm the fuck down. Your girls will still be alive by the time you're done."

So I wrote.

And I guess, I guess this is my note.

Well I suppose I got a second chance, a second chance to fuck it all up.

I'm sorry.

*

Robert rose from the desk and strode towards the sofa. He embraced Lisa and Stephanie then conformed with Hyacinth that he knew what he intended to do.

Robert was crucified. He was left in the baking sun with no rest or water or food for seven long days until Artemis arrived to put him out of his misery with a spear to the chest.

Shade 3
The End

Part 4 - Darkness

Darkness. All around him. He couldn't see, couldn't hear, couldn't feel, couldn't smell. He tried to move and was aware of dim sensation but little happened.

He lay in the dark for a long time, drifting in and out of consciousness.

Then the pain came. faintly at first then building an agonising intensity. He couldn't move from it, couldn't hide from it so he thought rhymes to himself and tried to ignore it.

He had died twice and suffered in the sun for what felt like an eternity. He was confident he'd be okay and didn't care if he was. Except this was worse pain. There was no context for it. No reason.

He wondered if this was hell? Was this punishment for his crimes? Eternal pain? No fire and brimstone? No devils with red hot pokers? Just void and pain? Sure felt like hell.

Every time he felt like a significant amount of time had passed he'd try to move. Gradually there was a

sense of more sensation, of moving more and then of hard limits. His imagination was building up a mental picture, though it seemed to make no sense.

The pain was worse, somehow it had doubled. How the fuck had it doubled?

And then, yes, yes. Yes! He felt. Not dimly in his bones this time, he really fucking felt. In his finger tips, in his toes, he could feel his hearts beating. He was alive!

Fuck. He was alive. Couldn't he fucking get anything right?

He felt with his hands. Old coarse bloody wood. It was cramped, barely wider than his shoulders and shallow enough that his hands couldn't reach out at 90 degrees from his elbows.

Then somehow he was aware that he was lying down and... Was that-? Was that breath he could hear? breath and something else? Something so persistent his brain filtered it out like static? Screaming? Screaming. Someone was screaming. Who the fuck was screaming? Why?

Then something. He could see something but it was so close and so dark. He tried to lift his head and swore as he bashed it.

The screaming stopped.

Oh.

It was him. His screams. The pain was so familiar and all pervading now he'd almost forgotten it.

Then he smelt. Sweat and testosterone and little bits of faecal matter. And blood. Old fatty blood pumping through thick cholesterol laden veins.

He forced himself to stop screaming, to stop breath and listen...

He could hear the man muttering over and over. "Oh, Father, Oh Lord, protect me. Oh father, Oh Lord, I do not want to die."

He forced himself to push past the muttering and focus on the blood, on the heartbeat...

Bah-poom. Bah-poom. Bah-poom.

The fucker was alive.

The fucker was a living breathing blood sack and right now that was all that mattered.

There wasn't room to manoeuvre but he didn't care. He bashed and kicked as best he could, breaking through first one wooden panel and then the other.

Bah-poom. Bah-poom. Bah-poom.

He burst from the coffin, following the smell and the sound.

Bah-poom. Bah-poom. Bah-poom.

He leapt upon his prey and clamped enlarged incisor's about the man's throat.

Bah-poom. Bah-poom. Bah-poom.

His tongue and teeth tore at flesh as his prey struggled vainly against him. The blood made him feel ecstatic and he hungered for more. Fingers like claws tore open the man's skin like a pair of cheap tights. His lips descended down the man's torso as he fed. After all what organ of a man's body is most synonymous with blood?

Shade 4

By the time Robert Marwood was finished with his prey even the marrow in the bones was gone.

He heard clapping and looked up from the last scraps of flesh.

It was Artemis, the old vampire who had objected to his being turned in the first place. There was an electric lamp by her feet so he could see that she was dressed in spurred Doc Martins, tights, a pencil skirt to just below the knees, a black cardigan and a long black cloak. Her fingernails were each an inch long and as white as the pearls on her necklace. She wore a wicked and devious smile on her face.

Robert stood up warily and grabbed a thigh bone that had been snapped in half, leaving a dangerous looking ragged edge.

Artemis stopped clapping and put her hands on her hips. "I didn't think you had it in you, boy."

Robert stared at her and was suddenly aware that he was naked. He covered himself with his hand and said "I just wanted the pain to stop."

Artemis laughed and patted him on the back. "It was a complement. Come on, lets get you a shower."

Robert followed her warily.

*

After a long hot shower Robert went to his indicated guest quarters. There was a four poster bed, a large storage trunk, several bookshelves and a wardrobe with a mirror but no plug sockets, just candles. He got dressed in a three piece suit then headed after Artemis.

It was a sumptuous Victorian mansion filled with grandfather clocks ornate mantle pieces and beautiful men and women who had been dressed then frozen into position, radiant smiles fixed upon their faces.

At first Robert had assumed men and women were just particularly lifelike statues given that some had been painted gold or bronze and many were caked with dust but as he reached out to catch himself from tripping down a particularly steep set of stairs he found to his shock that the statues were still very much alive, being warm to the touch with a clear pulse.

The worst part was the eyes. The statues all had very sincere enigmatic smiles, even the ones who had

been bent over and had holes drilled through them so work tops could be secured to their backs. That was horrifying and barbaric yet offered the comforting thought that they might not have suffered. Their eyes got to Robert the most because so many of them had been frozen in place with wide attentive gazes. His eyes watered in sympathy, especially when he saw that some statues had dust caked upon the top halves of their eyes.

The dust and statues clouded his sense of smell but there was something faint: Ancient, powerful. He followed it.

*

Robert came to a set of ancient dark wood doors and pushed them open only to be instantly hit with an overwhelmingly intoxicating scent. He ran through the doors, following his nose. His stomach was rumbling, he could feel the bloodlust taking him.

Young. Virgin. Blonde. Thin. Fit.

Bah-poom. Bah-poom. Bah-poom.

He closed his eyes and let his body guide him.

He leapt into the air, finger nails growing an inch into sharp claws as he fell upon her,

She was giggling as he fell upon her and his razor sharp claws tore into the tendons of her hands and feet making it impossible for her to fight back or run away as he stuck his long white teeth into her pale quivering flesh.

Then he sat back, coughing. "What the fuck are you!?"

His prey giggled then froze.

Artemis said. "Her name is Cassie and she is yours if you want her but I think we need to talk."

Robert came to his senses and looked about himself. He was straddling a young white woman who was wearing not much. Her hands and feet lay at odd angles to her body and her throat had been torn out yet she had a beautiful smile on her face. He recoiled and got to his feet.

They were in a large dining hall that looked like it could feed 5000 people.

Artemis was tapping her foot impatiently as she waited for him.

"Will she be alright?" asked Robert. "Should we get her medical attention?"

"Oh she'll be fine." said Artemis testily as she led him through a break in the tables. "She'll heal while we're gone and be right as rain by the time you turn her on again."

Robert thought for a second, piecing things together. "So she's a toy? Like Lisa? Like your statues?"

"Not exactly, but good reasoning." said Artemis as she pulled a large old fashioned key from her

pocket. "She was made by the same person who made the others."

"Made?" said Robert. "But these are people?"

Artemis nodded. "I think it will be easier if I show you..."

They came to the end of the large dining hall and Artemis turned the old fashioned key in an old lock. An old wooden door creaked open to reveal stainless steel and burnished chrome.

Robert froze on the threshold, staring. It looked so incongruous. A 21st century high class kitchen in a Victorian mansion. Electric induction hobs, multiple microwaves, several large fan ovens, a few dishwashers, several electric timers and even LCD screens so the kitchen staff could look up recipes and check on the diners in the hall.

"Well come in then." said Artemis irritably. "I give you permission, if that's what you're worried about?"

Robert blinked and followed Artemis into the kitchen. He could see now that there were several large chest freezers, walk in fridges, slushie machines, smoothie machines and even the odd liquid nitrogen dispenser. "Wow! You own this?"

Artemis nodded. Then she led him over to a strange part of the kitchen. There were two severe looking doors either side of a computer.

She turned to him and said "Robert, we are monsters. You realise that right? We have both eaten people alive."

Robert stared at her. "Yeah... And? What's your point?"

Artemis booted up the computer and started working away on it as she explained. "We like to think we're special. that we have free will and agency. That is sort of true. Most of the time thinking creatures do have a certain measure of choice and independent thought but to someone with the right skills, tools or abilities that limited ability to think clearly and independently can be modified to suit one's interest and once you have you can exploit that."

The door to Artemis's right started flashing and buzzing then it clicked open.

Artemis stood up from the controls and looked at Robert.

Robert approached the door cautiously and pushed it open.

A slim blonde woman in a pink skirt, a crop top and flip flops stood in the room.

Artemis handed him a remote control.

He approached the frozen woman nervously. It was Lisa, He aimed the remote at her and pushed the on button.

The frozen Lisa opened her eyes and stared at Robert for a moment then her expression softened. "Hi.

I'm Lisa."

"I know..." said Robert, distinctly weirded out. He looked to Artemis for advice.

"This is how Cassie was made, how your Lisa was made, how they're all made." said Artemis.

Robert looked back to Lisa with a gaze that suggested he expected her to lunge for his throat at any moment. "You're a toy?" said Robert nervously. "A mass produced toy?"

Lisa nodded and said cheerily. "Well of course. I assume that's why you're here? You're here to take me as your own."

Robert looked back to Artemis.

Artemis shrugged.

Robert looked back to Lisa and said "Sure."

Lisa grinned and ran up to hug him.

Robert resisted for a moment as his inner feminist squirmed then he embraced her and ran a hand through her hair, muttering "I am going to hell."

Artemis said "There is no hell as you well know, you've died enough times."

Robert glared back at Artemis then led Lisa out of the room. "Honey, I need to discuss somethings then I promise we'll do what you want okay?"

Lisa smiled. "Okay."

Robert turned to Artemis. "How did you do that?"

"Logicular Replication." said Artemis before expanding when she saw the blank look on his face. "This is what happens when teleportation technology is so efficient and reliable that it can be used as a 3d printer."

Robert stared at her. "You can print people?"

Artemis nodded. "The door on the left is the input terminal. Get someone to agree to do something and you can print them out as many times as you like."

"Ahhh..." said Robert understanding. "Consent on demand. Just need to make someone agree to do something once and you can have them doing it for the rest of eternity." He glared at her. "Still fucking wrong."

Artemis smirked. "That's why we're the bad guys. The Bam-Kursh generally does the hard work of convincing people and then she mass produces them for sale so she can fund her war fleets taking over the multiverse for the 'greater good'"

"Why did you use finger quotes around 'Greater Good'?" asked Robert.

"I'm a centuries old vampire who's eaten more people than you've ever known and she's an eldritch abomination who sells people to find imperial conquests. I don't tend to trust anyone who tries to use the phrase greater good seriously in that context." said Artemis. "But she pays well."

Robert nodded. "So what about Cassie?"

Artemis chuckled. "Oh I was so overjoyed when she was announced and added to the range."

"Oh?" said Robert raising an eyebrow.

Artemis nodded. "She was branded as the cattle girl. The woman who had consented to be eaten and would heal afterwards."

Robert looked suddenly hopeful.

Artemis laughed. "Yeah, that's how I felt."

Robert's face fell.

"And that." said Artemis cackling..

Robert sighed. "Get to the point."

Artemis sobered up in an instant and said sombrely. "She's a wereshark."

Robert looked blankly back at her. "Okay, what's that?"

"Take a seat in the dining hall." said Artemis. "This may take a while."

Robert sighed then trudged out of the kitchen with Lisa following behind.

Lisa asked. "Do you think my existence is wrong?"

Robert groaned.

Lisa said. "Only you said the process by which I was created was wrong and well that would make me wrong wouldn't it?"

"No..." said Robert, suddenly aware that he was doing the two things he sucked most at answering philosophical questions and talking to girls. "You aren't wrong. You're glorious and magnificent and a miracle but the purpose for which the thing that created you was designed is amoral."

"Oh..." said Lisa. "So you still like me then?"

"Of course I still like you." said Robert. "I just don't want to take advantage of you."

"But what if I want you to take advantage of me?" asked Lisa.

"Then I wouldn't be taking advantage of you, would I?" said Robert.

"Ah but I'm a toy who was remade by the Bam-Kursh then created to want to be taken advantage of." said Lisa.

"Then I..." Robert fell silent as he realised they'd walked needlessly far from the kitchen. Then he saw Cassie's body up ahead and pulled out his remote and pressed the on button. Nothing happened so he tried a different remote.

Cassie giggled then sat up and looked about her surroundings.

Robert nodded. "Hey!"

Cassie grinned and got to her feet then ran over to him. "Hey."

"Sorry about earlier..." said Robert awkwardly as he stuffed the remote into his pocket.

"Don't apologise, I exist to be eaten." said Cassie cheerily then she embraced Lisa and stroked her face. "Hey, you've got a Lisa. I used to have one of my own before..." she hugged Lisa and whispered "We are going to have so much fun." in her ear.

Robert sighed and took to a seat at the nearest table.

Cassie led Lisa to take seats to his right and the two started talking quietly to each other,

Robert stared at the table and thought about how thoroughly weird his life had gotten as he tried not to overhear their conversation.

Artemis approached after a while with a bottle of scotch and two glasses. "Ah, you've got her up and about, that's good."

Robert glared at her.

Artemis placed a glass before him and filled it before taking a seat to his left. "What I have to say now may shock you but vampires don't exist."

Robert snorted. "Well of course they don't. It's also impossible to bypass Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle without using Quantum Entanglement that would destroy the original. It is absolutely impossible to turn people's minds on and off. It is also impossible to recover from having your throat torn out in a matter of minutes. And it is completely impossible to come back from the dead, not just once, but twice."

He glared at her.

Artemis smiled. "You're angry, I like it."

"I'm annoyed." said Robert. "Damn annoyed, you'd know if I was angry."

Artemis smirked. "Yes, I think I would."

An awkward moment passed between them as she looked at him with pride and he glared with all the scorn he could muster.

"Vampires don't exist because demons don't exist. Demons don't exist because hell doesn't exist. Hell doesn't exist because there is no god or heaven. There is no god or heaven because the eldritch entities which pre-dated the multiverse would never countenance such threats to their power." said Artemis succinctly.

"Then what are we?" asked Robert.

"Werebats." said Artemis.

"You're shitting me?" said Robert. "Werebats? How?"

"The laws of physics are not immutable." said Artemis. "In any given reasonably large multiverse you are going to find universes where the physics is radically different from our own. The fundamental substrate of the multiverse must thus be able to support any possible variation of physics. You with me so far?"

"Well yeah..." said Robert.

"Beings from outside the multiverse like the Bam-Kursh can thus exploit this property to alter physics as they see fit at a very local level. This is how Lisa can function as if whole even when dissected." said Artemis.

Robert looked to Lisa.

Cassie was using a steak knife to remove Lisa's left hand as Lisa watched with rapt attention and delight.

Robert nodded then looked back to Artemis.

"If the Bam-Kursh can do it then a large enough multiverse beings can evolve with the power to manipulate physics in the same way." said Artemis. "One of these creatures was the wereshark. It was a parasitic viral organism mutating people's dna and logic to allow for quick spread amongst early man but as neanderthal genes became more and more dispersed the werewolves ceased to be able to infect people. They were hunted down and killed until eventually only one was left, an old bitch."

"And? What happened?" asked Robert.

"No one really knows but there is a legend." said Artemis. "She was old and dying. She had watched every litter of pups she'd ever had die. It was the end of her species so she made a pilgrimage to cradle of life, the home of newly evolved species, the Galapagos Islands. It was a fool's errand in the hope that something there might be so new her dna could bind with it and so secure the survival of the species. Something came to prey upon her and with her last breath she channelled all her strength and power into a desperate bid for her species' survival."

Robert swallowed. "And in one universe it was a bit whist in another it was a shark?"

"Exactly." said Artemis. "That's why we can't feed on Cassie, no matter how much she might want us to. The blood of the last great werewolf runs through her as it does us. The difference is of course that she is part sylph to balance out the murderous hunger of the wolf while we fight it by satisfying it in more controlled ways."

Robert nodded. "So why don't you just find someone you like and put them in the machine?"

"Because the Bam-Kursh would demand payment." said Artemis. "I am not going to bargain with someone who turns weresharks into cattle."

"But if you could then the bloodshed would end as the vampires wouldn't need to prey on the humans." said Robert.

Artemis nodded.

"Then what would be a suitable payment?" asked Robert.

"A vampire." said Artemis. "For her to do with as she wishes."

Robert shuddered and stared at her like a rabbit caught in the headlights.

Artemis frowned then chuckled with realization. "Oh relax, I'm not about to ask anyone to make that sacrifice but that's what Cassie is and that's why we hunt because if we don't, we become monsters. Think of it like a tax to maintain the peace."

Robert frowned. "I killed that man because of the hunger."

Artemis nodded. "We go for the neck so it's quick and painless. You didn't grant him that mercy."

Robert raked his face with his hands and groaned,

"If it makes you feel any better he was a tory who wanted the NHS privatised." said Artemis.

Robert looked sharply at her. "What do you fucking care about the NHS?"

Artemis looked at him like he was an imbecile "I've gotta look out for my food supply haven't I? More immigration, more free education, a better quality free health care system, all these things make for happier healthier cattle who are more likely to create new cattle. I don't want some over weight chain smoker who lives on the dole, give me a smoothie drinking yoga going graduate who volunteers to charities that feed children in Africa. Much tastier."

Robert stared at her then sighed. "Okay, I'm not dead and I've once again ended up with women I don't deserve. What the fuck do I do?"

"Your job." said Artemis. "Kill the tory minister for the department of work and pensions."

"How?" asked Robert. "I'm not a killer."

Artemis glared at him. "Well how do I get to him?"

"Use them." said Artemis, pointing to Lisa and Cassie. "I've got a costume for you to wear."

Robert sighed. "Then can I go home?"

"You can rejoin Stephanie, your other Lisa and Kate, yes." said Artemis.

Robert groaned. "This is a nightmare. This is an absolute nightmare."