



Alien Boss. Human Pet

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Category: Fantasy

Description: One minute I was doing spreadsheets. The next, I was working for an alien who doesn't believe in personal space.

I thought I was just the math girl in the beige cubicle—quiet, forgettable, good at numbers.

Then I uncovered a seven-figure fraud.

Now I work for Raekon Keong: billionaire CEO, tactical genius, and not even remotely human.

He saved me from the fallout.

Then he brought me onboard—his ship, his schedule, his rules.

He says I'm his new assistant. That he's going to teach me focus. Structure. Obedience.

And every time I push back... he watches me a little closer.

I should be terrified.

But part of me wonders if this isn't a punishment.

It's a promotion.

Read on for: interspecies tension, cold alien logic, forced proximity, performance reviews with consequences, and a girl who's learning that not every job comes with an HR department. HEA guaranteed.

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WILLOW

The spreadsheet glows on my monitor like a neon billboard screaming “something’s wrong here.

” I lean back in my chair, the vinyl squeaking like a dying mouse, and run the numbers again in my head.

Same result. Someone’s either criminally incompetent or criminally motivated.

Either way, it’s not my fault, but it’s about to become my problem.

I mutter under my breath, “You wanted Manhattan, you wanted the big leagues. Congrats, Willow, you’re in the big leagues. Now stop being a coward and go tell Rader.”

My fingers tap a nervous rhythm on the edge of my desk. The office hums around me, a symphony of keyboard clicks, hushed chatter, and the occasional printer jam. My cubicle walls are beige, the carpet is beige, and honestly, my existence feels pretty beige right now. But this? This is neon.

I grab the printed spreadsheet and my notes, stuffing them into a folder like I’m hiding evidence. My palms are slick, and I wipe them on my skirt before standing. My heels click against the floor as I head toward Rader’s office, each step feeling heavier than the last.

The door is open, which is worse than closed. Closed implies privacy. Open feels like

a trap. Jim's sitting at his desk, his face twisted into that permanent grimace that makes him look like he's just smelled something rotten. He doesn't look up when I knock lightly on the doorframe.

"Uh, Mr. Rader? Got a minute?" My voice comes out too high, too squeaky.

He finally glances up, his eyes narrowing like he's already regretting this conversation. "What is it, Christian?"

"I found something. In the copy toner budget. It's... off." I step inside, holding out the folder like it's a ticking bomb.

He takes it, flipping through the pages with the speed of someone who's already decided this is a waste of his time. "Off how?"

"Someone's either terrible at math or actively stealing." I brace myself for his reaction.

He pauses, his face doing this thing where it gets even pinched-er, if that's possible. "You sure about this?"

"I've triple-checked it. The numbers don't add up. Someone's funneling money somewhere, and it's not going to copy toner." I cross my arms, then uncross them, then wonder what to do with my hands.

Jim leans back in his chair, the leather creaking under his weight. He stares at me like I've just accused him of being the culprit. "You realize what you're suggesting? Accusing someone of embezzlement? That's a big claim for someone who's been here, what, three months?"

"It's not personal. It's math." I clench my jaw, refusing to back down. "And I'm good

at math.”

He sighs, long and dramatic, like I’ve just ruined his day. “Fine. I’ll look into it. But if this is a mistake on your end, Christian, you’re going to regret it.”

“It’s not.” My voice is steadier now, though my stomach is churning.

He waves me off, already burying his nose in another file. “Close the door on your way out.”

I step back into the hallway, letting out a breath I didn’t realize I was holding. My hands are still trembling, but I feel a weird sense of relief. At least I did something. At least I didn’t just let it slide.

Now I just have to wait and see if I’m about to be the office hero or the office pariah. Or worse, both.

The clock on my desk ticks louder than it has any right to.

It’s like it’s mocking me, each click echoing in my ears.

I’ve been jumpy all day, my nerves frayed like old rope.

Every time someone walks by my cubicle, my head snaps up like a meerkat on alert.

But Jim hasn’t come back. No call. No email.

Just silence. And silence from Jim is never a good thing.

Five o’clock rolls around, and I can’t take it anymore.

My stomach is in knots, and my hands are ice-cold despite the thermostat being set to “sahara.” I grab my printed spreadsheets, my fingers trembling so much the papers shake like leaves in a storm.

I head to Jim’s office, my heels clicking faster than my heartbeat.

I raise my hand to knock, but then I hear his voice. It’s low, urgent, and dripping with something I can’t quite place. Fear? Anger? Both? I freeze, my knuckles hovering an inch from the door.

“Five Gs to end somebody?” Jim’s voice cuts through the wood like a knife. My breath catches in my throat. End somebody?

There’s a long pause, and then he laughs, but it’s not the kind of laugh that’s funny. It’s the kind that makes your skin crawl. “Relax, nobody’s tapping the phones. Old man Keong has no idea we’ve siphoned almost a cool million out from under his big nose.”

My heart hammers in my chest, and for a second, I think I might pass out. Are they talking about me? Would they really—? No. No, that’s insane. But then again, Jim’s voice doesn’t sound insane. It sounds calculated. Cold.

I back away from the door, my mind racing.

I can’t take the risk. I run back to my cubicle, my heels clacking against the floor like a frantic Morse code.

I print out another set of spreadsheets, my hands shaking so much I almost drop the papers.

I don’t bother with a folder. I just grab them and bolt for the elevator.

I'm halfway there when I slam into something solid. The papers fly out of my hands, scattering across the floor like confetti. I drop to my knees, scrambling to gather them, but a pair of polished black shoes steps into my line of sight.

"Let me help you with that," Jim says, his voice smooth as silk. He crouches down, his fingers brushing against mine as he picks up a sheet. He's silent for a long moment, then his eyes flicker over the numbers. His jaw tightens, and when he looks at me, his smile is gone.

"What's this, Christian? You taking a little trip upstairs?" His voice is quiet, but there's an edge to it that makes my blood run cold.

I swallow hard, my mouth suddenly dry. "Just... double-checking some numbers."

"Double-checking?" He straightens up, his eyes narrowing. "That's funny. Because it looks like you're stirring up trouble."

"I'm just doing my job," I say, my voice barely above a whisper.

The air between us thickens like concrete.

Jim's eyes narrow, the corners of his mouth twitching into something that's not quite a smile.

I glance around the empty hallway, my stomach twisting.

The office is a ghost town. Everyone's gone home, leaving me alone with the human equivalent of a bear trap.

"Give me the papers, Willow." His voice is low, calm, and utterly terrifying. He takes a step forward, his polished shoes clicking against the marble floor.

The elevator dings, its cheerful sound a cruel joke at this moment. I see my chance and take it. I point behind him, my voice pitched high with panic. “Help! I think he wants to hurt me!”

Jim’s face goes pale, his head snapping around to look behind him. It’s the split second I need. I bolt, my heels clacking like gunshots as I sprint down the hall. The damn buckles on my shoes jangle, slowing me down, but I don’t have time to stop and kick them off.

I dive into another elevator car, mashing the button for the top floor.

The doors start to close, and I see Jim charging toward me, his hand outstretched.

The doors slam shut just as he reaches them, and I sag against the wall, my chest heaving.

My finger must’ve slipped because the elevator lights up like a Christmas tree, stopping at every floor on the way up.

The ride feels like an eternity. Each ding of the elevator makes my heart jump. Finally, the doors open, and I step out—only to freeze. Jim’s already there, leaning casually against the door to Ray’s office, his arms crossed.

“If you’d stop running,” he drawls, his voice dripping with mockery, “you could hear my offer. This could be one hell of an opportunity for you, Christian. I can cut you into my little side gig. But only if you don’t spill the beans.”

I don’t wait for him to finish. I scream, “HELP!” and take off in the opposite direction. The elevator doors are closed, and I’m not sticking around to wait. I sprint for the only other door I can see—the Carpenter Boardroom.

I burst inside, slamming the door behind me and quickly tipping over chairs and a podium in a desperate attempt to slow him down. Jim laughs, the sound echoing through the room. He steps inside, his movements smooth and deliberate.

“You’re running out of places to go, Willow,” he taunts, his voice light, almost playful.

I back up until I feel the cool glass of the window pressing against my back. My legs give out, and I slide down to the floor, trembling. Jim stalks closer, his shadow looming over me.

“Please,” I whisper, my voice breaking. “Don’t hurt me. I won’t tell anyone, I swear.”

His face hardens, the mask of civility slipping away. “That’s right, bitch,” he hisses, his eyes gleaming with malice, “you won’t!”

Jim lunges forward, fingers curled like claws—then a massive hand slaps down on top of his greasy head with a sound like a watermelon dropped on pavement.

Jim’s scream cuts through the boardroom as his feet leave the floor.

The polished leather of his loafers dangles a solid foot above the carpet, kicking like a wind-up toy.

Raymond Keong— Jesus Christ, how does anyone move that fast or lift like that? —holds him aloft like a misbehaving kitten. His grip doesn’t even tremble.

Mr. Rader’s face purples. "Mr. Keong!" His voice cracks into a falsetto. "She’s stealing! Embezzling! Dozens of discrepancies?—"

"I’m not !" My voice shatters, raw and desperate. The tears are hot, my cheeks wet,

but I force the words through clenched teeth. "I ran the numbers. He's the one skimming. A million, he said it ?—"

Raymond's golden eyes snap to me. I freeze.

For a second, the world narrows to that stare. Not just a color— actual gold , molten and relentless. His nostrils flare, scenting the air like something hunting . Then, without breaking eye contact, he drops Jim.

The thud of Rader hitting the floor is deeply satisfying.

Raymond crouches beside me in one fluid motion, his tailored suit stretching over shoulders broad enough to block out the sun.

The scent of him—spice and something sharp-edged, like lightning—hits me full force.

His eyes rake over me, lingering on my throat, my collarbones, the frantic rise and fall of my chest.

"Innocent." The word rumbles out of him, gravel and velvet. His thumb brushes my cheekbone, smearing a tear. "Prove it."

I swallow. "The spreadsheets. His own voice ?—"

Jim scrambles to his knees. "Lies! That little pencil-pusher can't track her own lunch receipts, let alone?—"

Raymond's head turns just enough to pin him with a look. Jim's mouth clicks shut.

Then—

A shadow flickers over Raymond's face. Just for a second, his skin shimmers , scales flashing beneath human veneer. My breath catches.

He sees me see it. His lips curl. Not a smile. A threat.

"Well, Ms. Christian?" His thumb traces my bottom lip. "How deep does your honesty go?"

"I can't say that I did not see what I saw," I say, my voice steady despite the hurricane of thoughts spinning in my head.

The spreadsheets tremble in my hands, but my eyes lock onto his.

I'm not just talking about the embezzlement now.

I'm talking about him . The flash of gold scales, the inhuman ridge of his brow—I saw it. I didn't imagine it.

Raymond's golden eyes narrow, and for a second, I wonder if he's going to crush me like a tin can. "And who are you going to tell?" His voice is low, a growl that rumbles through the air like distant thunder.

"I've already told the only person who matters." My heart hammers in my chest, but I force my words to come out calm, measured. "You."

He studies me, his gaze piercing, like he's trying to see through every lie I've ever told. The tension in the room is so thick I could cut it with a knife. Then he raises an eyebrow, and I think I see a flicker of something—amusement? Respect?—in those molten gold eyes.

He plucks the spreadsheets from my hands, his movements fluid. His eyes scan the

numbers, and I can practically see the calculations clicking behind them. Across the room, Jim makes his move. He scrambles to his feet, his loafers squeaking against the polished floor, and bolts for the door.

Raymond doesn't even look up. He grabs the nearest office chair—a heavy, polished thing that probably costs more than my rent—and hurls it across the room like it's made of cardboard. The chair slams into Jim's back with a sickening thud, and he goes down in a heap, groaning.

“We have a problem, Rader,” Raymond says, his voice like a hammer striking steel. He strides toward Jim, the spreadsheets still in his hand. “The embezzlement would appear to go back almost a year—a full nine months before Ms. Christian joined our little retinue.”

Jim looks up, his face pale and sweaty. “Mr. Keong, I can explain?—”

“Shut up,” Raymond snaps, his voice cutting through the air like a blade. He crouches down, his massive frame looming over Jim like a storm cloud. “You've been stealing from me, Rader. Stealing from me. Do you have any idea what happens to people who cross me?”

Jim whimpers, his bravado completely shattered. I watch from the corner of the room, my heart still racing, but a strange sense of relief washes over me. I'm not the one in the crosshairs anymore.

Raymond stands, towering over both of us. “Ms. Christian,” he says, his gaze flicking to me. “You have my attention. Now, let's see if you're worth keeping it.”

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RAEKON

Her head tilts downward, the cascade of fiery hair shielding her face like a curtain.

Her breaths come quick and shallow, the sound of a small creature caught in the jaws of a predator and still deciding if it should play dead.

I can smell the fear on her, but there's something else too—something sharp, like the crackle of static before a storm. She's not just scared; she's furious.

"Look at me, little flower." My voice is low, a command wrapped in velvet.

Her shoulders tense, but she doesn't move.

Her fingers twist the edge of her blouse, knuckles whitening. I can see the battle waging inside her—the instinct to shrink, to disappear, warring with the need to face this head-on. She's not used to being seen, much less noticed. But I've noticed her. I've noticed everything.

I step closer, the weight of my presence filling the space between us. She flinches but doesn't back away. Brave, even if she doesn't realize it. My hand reaches out, fingers brushing against her chin. Her skin is warm, softer than I expected. I tilt her face up, forcing her to meet my gaze.

Her eyes are wide, the green of them almost swallowed by dilated pupils. She's trembling, but not from the cold. Her lips part, a faint gasp escaping as I hold her there, pinned by my stare.

"When I speak, you will obey." I let the words sink in, each one a weight she can't ignore. "Do you understand?"

She swallows hard, her throat working against the fear. But there's defiance there too, a spark she can't quite smother. "Y-yes, Mr. Keong," she whispers, her voice so small it's almost inaudible.

"Good." I release her chin but don't step back. She's still caught in the gravity of my presence, her chest rising and falling in quick, shallow breaths. "You've earned my attention, Willow. Don't waste it."

Her eyes flicker, confusion and something else—curiosity, maybe—dancing behind the fear. She's not used to being the center of anyone's focus, let alone mine. But she's here now, and I don't intend to let her slip back into the shadows.

I extend my hand, watching the flicker of hesitation in her eyes. She hesitates just a second too long—testing me, perhaps, or testing herself. Finally, her fingers brush against mine. Soft. Delicate. But there's strength there, hidden beneath the nervous tremor.

I pull her up in one smooth motion, and her balance gives—her body colliding with mine in a rush of warmth.

Her palms splay against my chest, fingers flexing against the fabric of my suit.

She makes a small noise, half gasp, half flustered curse, and I can feel her pulse hammering where her wrist presses against me.

"Ms. Christian." I keep my voice low, reprimanding, just loud enough for her to hear the amusement beneath it. "So forward." Her head snaps up, green eyes wide, and I let my smirk curl the corner of my mouth. "Do try to behave with some decorum in

the office."

I lean down, just enough for my breath to ghost over her ear.

"I'll give you what you need later."

She jerks back, her whole body flushing crimson from the roots of her hair to the exposed skin at her collar. The stain of embarrassment spreads fast, painting her freckles into constellations against the sudden heat of her skin. My gaze trails across them—copper dust against pale pink.

The thought is immediate, intrusive. Do they go all the way down?

Her mouth parts, stammering. "I—I didn't?—"

"Didn't you?" I arch a brow, watching her scramble for words. She's cute when she's flustered. Cuter still when she's trying—and failing—to hide that sharp little mind of hers.

She presses her lips together, swallowing whatever protest was forming. Smart girl.

I step back, letting the space between us return, though I don't release her wrist just yet. "Come. We have things to discuss."

Her pulse jumps under my fingers.

"With clothes on, Ms. Christian. For now."

She chokes, and I chuckle, guiding her toward the office before she combusts on the spot.

I glance down at Jim, sprawled on the floor like a broken marionette, and chuckle. "I forgot about our friend the felon here," I say, my voice dripping with amusement. Stepping over his groaning form, I press a button on my desk.

"Security," I bark into the intercom. "My office.

Now. Escort this piece of garbage out of the building and call the police.

Make sure they understand the charges—embezzlement, conspiracy to commit murder, and general incompetence.

" I pause, then add, "Oh, and tell them he tried to steal my stapler. That always gets them riled up."

Jim whimpers something incoherent, but I'm already turning away, my focus shifting to Willow. Her eyes dart between me and Jim, wide with a mix of fear and disbelief. I extend a hand toward her. "Ms. Christian, with me."

She hesitates, her fingers twitching at her sides, but finally takes my hand. Her touch is light, tentative, as if she's afraid I might break her. I lead her to my office, the weight of her unease palpable in the air. I gesture to the chair opposite my desk. "Sit."

She does, perching on the edge of the seat like a bird ready to take flight.

I settle into my chair, folding my hands on the polished surface of the desk.

With a flick of my wrist, I deactivate the image inducer.

The holographic disguise dissolves, revealing the golden scales and sharp ridges of my true form.

Willow gasps, shrinking back in her chair.

Her knuckles whiten as she grips the armrests, her chest rising and falling in quick, shallow breaths.

I lean forward, letting the light catch the sharp angles of my teeth as I smile.

"Relax, Ms. Christian. I don't bite... unless you would enjoy it if I did. "

Her face flushes crimson, and she presses her thighs together, a subtle movement that doesn't escape my notice. My nostrils flare—the scent of her arousal is faint but unmistakable. Her body betrays her, even if her mind is still reeling.

"How good are you with math?" I ask abruptly, shifting the tone.

She blinks, caught off guard. "I'm... proficient," she mutters, her voice barely above a whisper.

"Proficient," I repeat, my tone dry. "Let's see.

" I rattle off a series of equations, each more complex than the last. Her answers come without hesitation, quick and precise. I nod, satisfied. "Impressive. You have great potential, Ms. Christian. But you don't believe in yourself. Not yet. You will, though. I'm going to mold you into the perfect assistant—my right-hand woman. "

Her lips part, a flicker of defiance in her eyes. "Do I get a say in this?"

"No," I say, my tone leaving no room for argument.

Her brow furrows, and she tilts her chin up ever so slightly. "Do I get a raise?"

I laugh, the sound sharp and unexpected. "Indeed. A substantial one—but let me be clear." I rise from my seat, my towering frame casting a shadow over her as I loom above. She shrinks into the chair, her eyes darting to the door as if calculating her chances of escape.

"I will demand nothing but your best efforts—body, mind, and soul. You will be at my beck and call at all hours. You will work when I work, which means you won't be seeing your home very much.

Embrace the grind, and the rewards will be greater than you can possibly imagine.

" I gesture to my face. "You can see that there is more to this company than meets the eye. If you prove your loyalty, you'll step into something truly monumental. "

Her lips press together, and for a moment, she looks like she might cry. Her voice is barely a whisper when she speaks. "I don't want to help you destroy the world."

"Destroy the world?" I laugh, the sound rich and deep. "My mission isn't to destroy Earth. It's to protect it."

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WILLOW

The elevator hums as it descends, the polished metal walls reflecting my wide-eyed expression. I rub my hand absently, the memory of his scaled grip still lingering on my skin. It was... strange. Not unpleasant, but alien. Like holding hands with a dragon.

Ray stands beside me, his presence so enormous it feels like he's sucking all the air out of the confined space. My chest rises and falls faster than I'd like, and I can't seem to stop it. His red eyes flick down, lingering for a moment before meeting my gaze.

"Calm yourself," he says, smooth, like gravel polished by a river. "You act as if I'm taking you to your execution."

"Are you?" The words tumble out.

He tilts his head, his expression unreadable. "And if I were taking you to your execution, what would you do about it?"

I press myself against the elevator wall, my pulse thundering in my ears. "What can I do about it? You're stronger than me, faster. I can't get away from you."

He leans back slightly, crossing his arms over his massive chest. "Perhaps not. But is overpowering your adversary the only solution you see for your predicament?"

I blink, my mind racing. This isn't just a question. It's a test. My eyes dart around the

elevator, taking in the layout. “There’s an alarm button,” I say, pointing to the small red switch near the control panel. “It would instantly notify 911. But you’re standing between me and it.”

“Indeed.” He doesn’t move, just watches me with that same intense gaze. “Go on.”

I swallow, my mind scrambling. “I could distract you. Pretend to faint, maybe. Or fall to my knees and beg for my life while I brush my back against the button.”

His lips curl into a grin, sharp teeth flashing. “Good. Particularly the idea of begging for your life.”

The elevator dings, the doors sliding open to reveal the dimly lit parking garage. Neither of us moves.

“W-why is begging better than fainting?” I ask, my voice barely above a whisper.

His eyes gleam, and he steps closer, his voice dropping to a purr. “Because I find it most disarming when a woman falls to her knees before me.”

My mouth falls open, heat flooding my cheeks. He chuckles, a low, rumbling sound that sends a delightful pulse through my heart and soul, and gestures toward the open door. I step out, my legs shaky, my mind spinning.

The underground garage is dimly lit, the air thick with the faint scent of oil and concrete.

Ray strides ahead, his Christian Louboutins echoing against the floor, while I trail behind like a lost puppy.

My eyes lock onto the car parked in the corner—sleek, black, and undeniably vintage.

It looks like it rolled straight out of a 1940s noir film.

“This is your car?” I blurt out, my voice tinged with disbelief. It’s so... ordinary. Not that it isn’t beautiful, but it’s not what I expected from a seven-foot alien billionaire who probably owns a fleet of spaceships.

“Yes, this is Taylor,” he says, running a scaled hand over the polished hood like he’s caressing a lover.

“You named your car Taylor?” I wince, bracing myself for his reaction.

He straightens, his red eyes narrowing. “Yes, isn’t she a beauty?”

“But... it’s just a car,” I say, then immediately regret it when his expression darkens.

“Just a car?” His voice rises, his tone dripping with mock offense. He clutches his chest like I’ve stabbed him. “You wound me, Ms. Christian.”

“I didn’t mean—” I stumble over my words, my face heating up. “I just... you know, I expected something else.”

“A spaceship, perhaps?” He raises an eyebrow, his lips curling into a smirk. “I suppose you think all inner-city youth can play basketball and hotwire cars as well?”

“No!” I throw my hands up, my cheeks burning. “No, I’m not like that! I swear.”

He chuckles, the sound low and rumbling, and pops the hood.

My jaw drops as I peer inside. The engine compartment is a maze of glowing filaments, pulsing lights, and components that look like they’re from another galaxy.

I blink, trying to make sense of it, but it's like staring into the heart of a star.

"I'm having some fun at your expense, Ms. Christian," he says, his voice softening. "My apologies. I'm just trying to get you to relax a little."

I shoot him a glare, crossing my arms over my chest. "Would you be relaxed if you'd had the kind of day I've had?"

His smile fades, replaced by a thoughtful expression. He studies me for a long moment, his red eyes piercing. "No, I suppose I would not," he admits. "Hmm. Already, you're forcing me to be more flexible in my thinking. Perhaps Captain Pyke was right..."

"Who?" I ask, my curiosity piqued.

He moves so fast I don't even see it. One moment he's a few feet away; the next, his hand is over my mouth, his grip firm but not painful. My eyes widen as I try to pull back, but he's immovable.

"Hush now," he says, his voice dropping to a low, dangerous rumble. "No more questions until we get in the air."

I mumble, "In the air?" but his grip tightens, and the air around us feels heavier, suffocating. My question turns into a whimper.

"Ms. Christian," he says, his tone sharp and commanding, "I really am impressed with you. But when I tell you not to speak, be silent. When I tell you anything, obey me. Instantly, without question or hesitation. Your life might very well depend on your obedience."

I freeze, torn between terror and something else—something I don't want to

acknowledge. My heart pounds in my chest, and I can't tell if it's from fear or the sudden, irrational desire for him to shove me against the wall and claim me with a kiss.

His body heat radiates through the thin fabric of my blouse, and I'm suddenly hyper-aware of how flimsy it is.

His claws could shred it to ribbons in a heartbeat, peel me open like— stop it, Willow.

My thoughts are spiraling, and I can't seem to rein them in.

He's so close, so big, and I'm not sure if I'm terrified or. .. something else entirely.

Something shifts in his red eyes. They darken, the pupils dilating as his gaze rakes over me.

The vein in his temple pulses, and I swear I can hear his heartbeat—no, feel it—vibrating through the air between us.

He inhales deeply, his chest expanding, and for a split second, he closes his eyes, as if savoring the scent of me.

My face burns. What does he smell? Fear? Arousal? Both?

His breath catches, and when his eyes open again, there's no mistaking the hunger in them. My heart pounds so hard it feels like it might burst. He could take me right here, I think, my stomach twisting. He could do whatever he wanted, and I couldn't stop him.

But then... I don't want to stop him. The realization shocks me, and I go still, my

body relaxing in his grip. His scales gleam under the garage lights, golden and smooth, and before I can think better of it, I reach up, brushing my fingers against his forearm.

The moment my skin touches his, he flinches, snapping out of whatever trance he's in.

He releases me so quickly I stumble back, my hand dropping to my side.

He retreats a step, his expression hardening as he regains control.

The hunger in his eyes is gone, replaced by.

.. irritation? Embarrassment? I can't tell, but it's clear I've overstepped.

"Get in the car." His voice is sharp, clipped, and I feel a surge of frustration. Is he really going to pretend that didn't happen? That we didn't happen? I don't even know what we are, but it felt... significant. Primal.

He opens the passenger door, his hand firm but not unkind as he guides me inside.

His palm lingers on the small of my back for a heartbeat too long, and I swear I feel him tremble.

Then he leans in, his scent—earthy and metallic, like ozone after a storm—filling the space between us.

He buckles my seatbelt with a precision that borders on clinical, his claws barely grazing the strap.

By the time he's in the driver's seat, he's composed again, his face a mask of cool

detachment. But I saw it. For a moment, he let me see him, and now he's angry—not at me, but at himself.

The engine purrs to life, and I stare straight ahead, my thoughts a chaotic whirlwind. Whatever this is, it's just beginning.

The engine roars to life, a deep, throaty growl that vibrates through the seat and into my bones.

Raekon shifts the gear with a sharp click, and my stomach lurches as the car shoots forward, tires squealing against the concrete.

My hands grip the edge of the seat, knuckles white.

The parking garage blurs around us as he takes the sharp curves like he's auditioning for *The Fast and the Furious: Alien Edition*.

"Slow down!" I squeak, my voice barely audible over the engine's roar.

"Relax, Ms. Christian," he says, his tone annoyingly calm. "We're perfectly safe."

"Safe? We're going to hit the—" My words cut off in a scream as he accelerates toward a solid concrete wall. I throw my hands over my face, bracing for impact. My heart hammers so hard I'm sure it's going to burst out of my chest.

Then, nothing. No crash, no explosion, just the faint hum of the engine. I peek through my fingers just in time to see the wall retract, revealing a hidden tunnel.

"Fear is your enemy," Raekon growls, pulling my wrist down to force me to look. His grip is firm but not painful, his golden scales warm against my skin. "Do you really think I'd wreck Taylor into a wall?"

“Oh, sure, because alien cars regularly turn walls into secret tunnels,” I snap, my voice trembling. “Totally something I should’ve expected. My bad.”

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He chuckles, a low, rumbling sound that does nothing to calm my nerves.

The tunnel slopes upward, getting steeper and steeper until we're practically vertical.

My stomach bottoms out as I press back into the seat, my body screaming that this is all wrong.

Humans aren't supposed to go this fast, this high.

My breaths come in short, panicked gasps.

"Trust me to take care of you, Ms. Christian," he says, his voice steady, almost soothing.

"Trust you? You just tried to give me a heart attack!"

"Tried? I'd say I succeeded." He smirks, and I want to strangle him. My fingers itch to slap that smug look off his face, but I'm too busy trying not to hyperventilate.

The car levels out suddenly, and I dare to open my eyes. The sky stretches endlessly around us, painted in hues of pink, orange, and gold as the sun dips below the horizon. Clouds drift lazily below, and it feels like we're floating.

"Have you ever seen a sunset at 30,000 feet, Ms. Christian?" Raekon asks, his voice softer now.

"I can't say that I have," I mutter, still clutching the seat like it's the only thing

keeping me from falling into the abyss.

“Then open your eyes,” he says. “It’s something you won’t regret witnessing.”

“No, no, I’m good. No thanks,” I say, squeezing my eyes shut tighter. My heart is still racing, and my palms are slick with sweat. This is not how I imagined my evening going.

His fingers brush against my forehead, gently pushing my bangs aside. A breath comes out as a gasp when I feel his touch, warm and surprisingly gentle. I open my eyes, and there he is, his scaled face framed by the glowing sunset. His red eyes meet mine, and I forget to be scared.

“I won’t let anything bad happen to you,” he says.

I relax, just a little, until his fingers move down to cup my chin. He tilts my face toward his, his gaze intense, almost predatory.

“Except, perhaps, for me, ” he adds, a wicked grin spreading across his sharp features.

My stomach does another flip, but this time, it’s not from fear.

Oh no. This is something else entirely. My pulse quickens, and my cheeks burn as I realize just how dangerous this situation is.

Not because we’re flying in a car-turned-spaceship, but because of the man—no, the alien —sitting next to me.

I fear him, and I know I’m right to. And yet, I kind of want Raekon to happen to me. Maybe more than just kind of.

The car dives sharply, and my stomach lurches as we plummet toward the ocean.

I shriek, gripping the edge of my seat so hard my fingers go numb.

The water rushes up to meet us, and I brace for the impact, my breath caught in my throat.

But instead of a violent splash, there's just a faint shudder as Taylor glides smoothly beneath the waves.

I stare out the window, my mouth hanging open.

The ocean swirls around us, a living, breathing thing, but the car—no, the ship—moves effortlessly through it.

The water is so clear I can see schools of fish darting past, their scales shimmering in the dim light. And then, looming ahead, is the base.

"Veritas Base Alpha," Raekon says proudly.

It's massive, a sprawling, translucent dome that glows faintly from within. The structure looks like something out of a sci-fi movie, all sleek curves and glowing lines. My heart pounds as we approach, the sheer scale of it making me feel impossibly small.

"Welcome to the heart of Project Veritas," Raekon says, his voice brimming with pride. "This is where we safeguard the Sacred Timeline."

I blink, turning to him. "The what?" Then I clamp a hand over my mouth, my face heating up. "I'm sorry, Sir. I forgot I wasn't supposed to ask questions."

He arches a brow ridge, his red eyes narrowing slightly. I swallow hard, bracing for a reprimand. But then he smirks, a flash of sharp teeth.

“I think I can let this infraction go without disciplining you. This time.”

Is he joking? I can't tell. His tone is light, but there's an edge to it that makes my skin prickle.

We glide into a docking bay, the water parting as a force field engulfs us. My eyes dart to the shimmering barrier, my mind racing. What if it fails? What if it collapses and the ocean comes crashing in? My breath quickens, and I can feel panic rising in my chest.

Out of the corner of my eye, I see other Vakutan moving about. They're huge, their scales gleaming under the artificial light. One pauses to nod politely in our direction, and I swallow hard. There are more of them? How many aliens are walking around on Earth without anyone noticing?

“Oh yes, there are many Vakutan on Earth,” Raekon says, as if reading my thoughts. His calm tone does nothing to ease my nerves.

I turn to him, my voice trembling. “What if the force field fails?”

“It won't,” he replies simply, as if that's all the reassurance I need.

“But what if it does ?” I press, my hands clenching into fists.

He shifts in his seat, his gaze locking onto mine. His massive hand reaches out, cupping my cheek. His scales are warm against my skin, and I forget to breathe.

“It won't,” he says firmly. “There are sixteen layers of fields that can't even be seen

with the naked eye beyond those on the visual spectrum. But, in the case that the field did fail—which has lower odds than you growing a second head—I would save you.”

I stare at him, my heart pounding. His confidence is overwhelming. But then reality crashes back in, and I feel a surge of frustration. How can he be so calm about this? How can I trust him when I barely know him?

He releases my cheek and takes my hand, leading me out of the car.

My legs feel like jelly as I step onto the docking bay floor, the air cool and tinged with the faint scent of salt.

The other Vakutan barely glance at us, too busy with their tasks.

One of them looks up from the flying saucer he’s working on and nods.

“Welcome to Project Veritas,” he says, his voice deep and resonant.

I don’t respond. I can’t. My mind is spinning, trying to process everything I’m seeing. The base, the Vakutan, the sheer scale of it all. Raekon’s hand tightens around mine, pulling me forward, and I stumble after him, my thoughts a chaotic whirlwind.

What have I gotten myself into?

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RAEKON

I lead Willow down the sterile, glowing corridors of Veritas Base Alpha, her green eyes darting in every direction like a startled rabbit.

She's trying to take it all in—the sleek metallic walls embedded with pulsating veins of alien tech, the floating holographic displays buzzing with data, the occasional Vakutan or human walking past in jumpsuits.

She stumbles over her own feet more than once, and I have to tighten my grip on her wrist to keep her upright.

“You have Earthlings working for you too?” she asks, her voice pitching higher as she points at a human technician carrying a tablet. “I mean... us. Humans.”

“Of course we do.” I don't slow my pace. “It's your planet. It's your future. Doesn't make much sense to save it without involving a few of you, does it?”

She nods, though her expression suggests she's still processing the idea. “But... why me? I'm just... I'm just a girl who's good at math.”

“Because you're more than just a girl who's good at math,” I say, glancing down at her.

“You're a girl who figured out an embezzlement scheme that had been running for years.

You stood up to your boss, even when you thought it might get you killed.

That's potential, Willow. And potential is what Veritas needs. "

She doesn't answer, but I can feel her pulse fluttering under my fingers. Good. She's beginning to understand.

We reach Pyke's office, and the door slides open with a soft whoosh . Captain Pyke is at his desk, surrounded by floating holograms that cast a faint blue light on his red scales. He looks up, his brow ridges furrowing as he takes in the sight of Willow clinging to me like a lifeline.

"Who's the prisoner?" he asks, leaning back in his chair.

"P-prisoner?" Willow squeaks, her face paling.

"Relax," I tell her, giving her hand a reassuring squeeze before realizing I'm still holding it. I let go quickly. "You're not my prisoner. Captain Pyke, this is Willow Christian. She's a potential recruit."

Pyke studies her, his golden eyes narrowing. "Potential recruit? She looks like she's two seconds from fainting."

"She's had a... busy day," I say, crossing my arms. "But she's got a sharp mind and a strong will. I think she could be an asset to Veritas."

Pyke tilts his head, considering her. "And you brought her here because...?"

"Because she's already seen too much," I say, my voice firm. "She saw my true form when my image inducer malfunctioned. She knows about the embezzlement scheme at Keong Industries. And now she's seen Base Alpha. It's either recruit her or... well,

you know the alternative.”

Willow’s eyes widen, and she takes a step back. “Wait, what’s the alternative?”

“We keep you as our pleasure slave, forever,” I say, my voice low and deliberate, watching her face turn the color of a ripe Earth tomato. Willow’s mouth falls open, and for a moment, she looks like she’s about to either scream or pass out. Probably both.

Pyke lets out a deep, rumbling sigh and pinches the bridge of his nose. “Raekon, for the love of the Sacred Timeline, stop scaring the poor girl. We would never do such a thing.”

Willow exhales sharply, her shoulders sagging in relief. “Oh, that’s a relief.”

“We’d just wipe your memory of Veritas instead,” Pyke adds cheerfully, leaning back in his chair and gesturing toward her as if this is the most logical solution in the universe.

Her eyes widen again, and she looks between us like she’s trying to figure out if this is some kind of joke. “I—is there a third option?”

“No need for a third option,” I interject before Pyke can speak. “She IS valuable, Captain. She fought off a much larger male of her species in an attempt to bring me proof of his treachery. Tell me those aren’t qualities we need for Veritas.”

Pyke stares at her for a long moment, his golden eyes narrowing as he weighs my words. Finally, he presses a button on his desk, and a female Vakutan steps into the room. Minerva, one of our most trusted operatives, stands tall and composed in her sleek black uniform.

“Yes, Captain?” she says, her voice calm and professional.

“Minerva, would you please take Ms. Christian here to the commissary and get her something to eat?” Pyke requests, gesturing toward Willow.

Minerva nods and steps forward, gently placing a hand on Willow’s shoulder. Willow flinches slightly but allows herself to be guided toward the door. She hesitates in the doorway, glancing back at me with wide, fearful eyes—eyes I can’t help but find mesmerizing.

“It will be all right,” I assure her, my voice softer than I intended. “You are safe here.”

She gives a small nod, her red hair catching the light as she turns and follows Minerva out of the room. The door slides shut behind them, and I turn back to Pyke, who’s giving me a look that could melt steel.

“What?” I say, crossing my arms over my chest.

“You know damn well what ,” Pyke replies, leaning forward and resting his elbows on the desk. “What in the name of the Trident Alliance was that, Raekon? Scaring her like that? Talking about pleasure slaves? Do you want her to bolt the first chance she gets?”

I roll my eyes irritably. “She needed to understand the stakes. And she handled it better than you’re giving her credit for.”

Pyke raises a brow ridge, his lips curling into a skeptical smirk. “She looked like she was about to faint.”

“She’s stronger than she looks,” I counter, leaning against the edge of his desk.

“She’s got fire underneath all that fear. I saw it in the garage, and I saw it when she stood up to her boss. We need people like her.”

Pyke sighs again, rubbing a hand over his face. “Fine. But next time, try not to terrify her into compliance. She’s not one of your soldiers, Raekon. She’s a human, and a scared one at that.”

I nod, though I can’t help the slight smirk tugging at the corner of my mouth. “I’ll keep that in mind, Captain.”

Pyke shifts in his seat, his crimson scales catching the light from the holograms floating above his desk. He folds his arms across his chest, his golden eyes locking onto mine with that knowing look that always makes me feel like he’s reading my thoughts. It’s infuriating.

“You’re responsible for mentoring Willow,” he says, his voice firm but not unkind.

“Bring her up to speed. Turn her into a Veritas asset. But Raekon...” He leans forward, his tone dropping into something more serious.

“Don’t push her too far. She’s not a Vakutan warrior. She’s fragile. Remember that.”

“I’m not going to break her,” I say. The last thing I want is to drive her away. She’s too... fascinating for that.

Pyke arches a brow ridge, clearly unconvinced. “Can’t believe you never noticed her before. She’s been at Keong Industries for what, six months?”

“No one notices her,” I mutter, though that’s not entirely true. I didn’t notice her until today, and now I can’t stop. Her hair, that fiery red, is burned into my mind. Her green eyes, wide and nervous, yet sharp with intelligence. How did I miss her? “She’s

extraordinary.”

Pyke’s expression shifts, and I don’t like the look in his eyes. It’s that same knowing smirk he gets whenever he thinks he’s caught me in a lie. “Are you sure you’re thinking with your head and not another body part?”

My scales bristle, and I straighten up, my voice coming out sharper than I intend. “I have not slept with Ms. Christian, and I never announced any intention to do so.”

Pyke chuckles. “I meant your heart , brain trust. But now I’m really concerned.”

I glare at him, my jaw tightening. “I’m fine. I can handle this.”

“Can you?” Pyke’s tone is light, but there’s an edge to it. “Raekon, I trust you to take out an enemy encampment. I trust you to generate a windfall off the sale of a tech startup. But trust you not to break one of your toys? I’m not sure I’m comfortable with that idea.”

I clench my fists, my scales rippling with irritation. “I’m not going to break her. I’ll take the very best care of her.”

Pyke studies me for a long moment, his gaze piercing. Finally, he lets out a sigh and waves a hand dismissively. “That’ll have to be good enough for now. Go collect your charge.”

I nod sharply and turn on my heel, striding out of the office before Pyke can say anything else to rile me up.

The door slides shut behind me, and I take a moment to compose myself.

My thoughts keep circling back to Willow, her scent, her fear, her quiet strength.

Pyke's not wrong—she's fragile. But she's also stronger than she looks, stronger than she knows. And I'll make sure she realizes it.

I head toward the commissary, my footsteps echoing in the corridor. This is going to be interesting.

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WILLOW

I 'm in Raekon's office, but it's different—larger, darker, the air thick with the scent of leather and something metallic.

I'm naked, my skin prickling under the cold, sterile light pouring from the ceiling.

A leather collar hugs my neck, smooth and unyielding, and the leash attached to it dangles in Raekon's scaled hand.

He's towering over me, his red eyes glowing like embers, and there's that bulge in his trousers.

I can't stop staring at it, even as my face burns.

"You must grow acclimated to the fact you're my sex slave now, Ms. Christian," Dream Raekon says in an almost casual way.

"B-but I don't know anything about being a sex slave," I stammer. My voice sounds small, tinny, like it's coming from someone else.

He smirks, sharp teeth glinting. "I'll train you. I'm sure you'll be a natural." His free hand moves to his fly, and my blood rushes through my body like quicksilver. "Now, for your first lesson."

The zipper slides down with a metallic snick, and my heart is pounding so hard I'm half-convinced it's going to crack my ribs.

My clit throbs, a pulse of heat radiating outward, and I feel myself getting wet despite the fear clawing at my throat.

I don't want to look, but I can't look away.

He's fishing it out now, his hand moving deliberately, and I'm frozen, caught between terror and something far more dangerous.

"Keep your eyes on me," he commands, his voice cutting through the haze in my mind. I obey, dragging my gaze upward to meet his. His smirk deepens, and there's a glint of approval in those red eyes. "Good girl."

The word sends a throb through my core, and I feel my thighs clench involuntarily. He's pulling it out now, and I can't help it—my eyes flick downward just as it comes into view.

My heart is pounding, my skin damp with sweat, and my throat is dry as I bolt upright in bed.

The alarm on my phone is blaring—some obnoxious pop song I set months ago and never bothered to change.

I fumble for it, nearly knocking it off the nightstand.

The screen lights up my dark room, and for a split second, I'm disoriented.

Where am I? Who am I? What the hell was that dream?

I silence the alarm and slump back into my pillow, staring at the ceiling.

My pulse is still racing, and I can't tell if it's from the abrupt awakening or the

lingering...

intensity of the dream. My cheeks burn as I replay the details.

Raekon. The collar. That look in his eyes.

And then...my phone. My phone. I groan and bury my face in my hands.

“What is wrong with me?” I mutter into the darkness. My voice is hoarse, like I’ve been screaming in my sleep. Maybe I was. My neighbor probably thinks I’m being murdered over here.

I flop onto my side, tugging the blanket up to my chin. The room feels too quiet now, the silence pressing in on me. I can still feel the phantom weight of that collar, the way his voice had wrapped around me like a vice. Good girl. I shiver, and it’s not entirely unpleasant.

“It was just a dream,” I whisper, as if saying it out loud will make it true. “A stupid, ridiculous, mortifying dream.”

I glance at the clock. 4:03 a.m. Great. I have to be at Raekon's office in two hours, and now I’m wide awake, my brain spinning in frantic circles. I throw off the blanket and swing my legs over the side of the bed. My feet hit the cold floor, and I wince.

“Coffee,” I announce to the empty room. “Lots of coffee.”

As I pad to the kitchen, I can’t shake the image of Raekon’s smirk, the way his eyes had gleamed with that dangerous mix of authority and...something else. Something that makes my stomach flip. I fill the coffee machine with shaking hands and lean against the counter, waiting for the first drip.

“It’s just stress,” I mutter. “Stress and sleep deprivation and...whatever the hell is happening at work. Of course my brain would turn him into some kind of...of...”

I trail off, staring at the coffee pot like it holds the answers. It doesn’t. I’m on my own here.

The coffee pot gurgles its last drop, and I pour myself a mug, black and strong enough to strip paint.

I nibble on my avocado toast, the creamy green mash on whole-grain bread feeling indulgent in the pre-dawn hours.

My reflection in the kitchen window stares back at me, hair a mess of fiery tangles, eyes wide and shadowed.

I look like I’ve been awake all night. Which, technically, I have.

Showering is a blur of steam and soap, but even the scalding water can’t wash away the memory of that dream . I scrub harder, as if I can scrub the thoughts right out of my head. It doesn’t work.

Dressing is no better. I yank on my most conservative outfit—a navy blue pencil skirt that brushes my ankles and a long-sleeved white blouse buttoned all the way up to my collarbone.

The high neckline feels suffocating, but it’s better than the alternative.

I can’t risk Raekon getting any... ideas .

Not that my clothes seem to make a difference.

His gaze always finds a way to linger, a scalding brand on my skin no matter how much fabric I pile on.

I stand in front of the mirror, adjusting the waistband of my skirt. My reflection frowns back at me, a stern you're-being-ridiculous expression etched across my face.

“It’s never going to happen,” I tell her, my voice firm. “He’s a seven-foot alien hunk who also happens to be insanely wealthy. He can have whoever he wants—movie stars, pop musicians, supermodels. His whole staring at me thing is probably just another stupid test anyway.”

My reflection doesn’t argue. She just raises an eyebrow, like she knows I’m full of it. I glare back, but she’s got a point. Deep down, I know I’m not fooling anyone, least of all myself.

I grab my bag and head for the door. The taxi ride to 1 Keong Plaza is quiet, the city streets a blur of neon and headlights. My mind keeps drifting back to Raekon’s smirk, the way his eyes had gleamed in my dream. Good girl. The words echo in my head.

The cab pulls up to the curb, and I hand the driver a ten-dollar bill before stepping out.

The morning air is crisp, the kind of cold that makes you feel alive.

I tilt my head up, staring at the towering spire of Keong Plaza.

The saucer-shaped top house looms overhead, glowing faintly in the dawn light.

I square my shoulders. “You’ve got this,” I mutter under my breath.

The revolving doors spin me into the lobby, and I head for the elevators, my heels

clicking on the polished marble floor. The ride up to Raekon's office feels like an eternity, but when the doors finally open, I step out with my head held high.

He's already there, of course, sitting behind his desk with a stack of papers in front of him. His eyes flick up as I enter, and the corner of his mouth twitches in what might— might —be a smirk.

"Ms. Christian," he says, sending a thrill through me.

"Mr. Keong," I reply, my voice steady despite the way my heart is racing.

His gaze sweeps over me like he's trying to peel back the layers of my outfit. I fight the urge to fidget, to cross my arms or adjust my skirt. Instead, I stand tall, meeting his gaze head-on.

"Ready for another day of... training ?" he asks, the word dripping with double meaning.

"Always," I say, my voice just a little too breathless.

His smile widens, sharp and knowing. "Good."

And just like that, the day begins.

The headphones clamp over my ears like a vise, and the heavy metal music explodes into my skull.

It's not ear-splitting, but it's enough to make my thoughts scatter like leaves in a storm.

My fingers hover over the keyboard as I stare at the lines of Vakutan code on the

screen, my brain struggling to untangle the alien symbols.

“What are you doing?” I ask, my voice sharp with annoyance.

Raekon leans against the edge of my desk, arms crossed, his golden scales catching the light. “You must learn to deal with distractions,” he says, his tone as calm as if he’s discussing the weather. “I once had to disarm a plasma detonator in the middle of an exploding starbase. Adapt.”

I glare at him, but he just smirks and taps the side of the headphones. The music pulses louder, and I grit my teeth. Fine. If he wants me to work under pressure, I’ll work under pressure.

My fingers start moving again, typing out corrections and debugging the code.

It’s slow going, the music a constant thrum in my head, but I manage to focus—until I make a typo.

My hand freezes mid-air, and before I can hit the backspace key, Raekon’s fingers tangle in my hair.

He yanks my head back, forcing me to look up at him.

“Careful,” he says. He pulls one of the headphones away from my ear just enough to speak directly into it. “Mistakes are unacceptable.”

His breath is warm on my neck, and I swallow hard. His eyes dart down, lingering on my exposed throat, and I feel a flush of heat spread through me. My thighs press together instinctively, and I hate how aware I am of his proximity, of the way his fingers tighten slightly in my hair.

“Yes, Sir,” I whisper, my voice trembling despite my best efforts to keep it steady.

He releases the headphones, and they snap back into place, the music roaring in my ears again. But he doesn’t let go of my hair completely. His fingers stay tangled, a subtle reminder that he’s in control, that he can yank me back anytime he wants.

I try to focus on the code, but it’s impossible. My mind keeps drifting back to the feel of his hand in my hair, the way his voice had caressed my ear. My fingers hover over the keyboard, and I hesitate, my pulse quickening.

This time, the typo is intentional.

His grip tightens immediately, and he yanks my head back again. My breath catches as our eyes meet, and there’s a flicker of something dark and hungry in his gaze.

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“Again?” he says. “Do I need to teach you a lesson, Ms. Christian?”

"No, Sir," I whisper, my voice trembling as I stare up at him.

But my mind screams yes, Sir, teach me a lesson.

I force myself to turn back to the keyboard, my fingers trembling as they hover over the keys.

The music is still blaring in my ears, but I barely notice it now.

My focus is entirely on him, on the way his hand is still tangled in my hair, on the heat radiating from his body just inches away.

I start typing again, my movements deliberate and slow.

I can feel his eyes on me, watching my every move.

My cheeks burn, but I don't dare look up.

Not yet. I need to build up my nerve. I make the first typo, my fingers hesitating over the wrong key just long enough for him to notice.

His grip tightens in my hair, and I hear him growl low in his throat.

My breath catches, but I don't stop. I keep typing, waiting for the inevitable.

The second typo comes a few lines later. This time, he doesn't just tighten his grip—he yanks my head back, forcing me to look up at him. His red eyes are blazing, and there's a flicker of something dangerous in them. I swallow hard, my pulse quickening.

"Again?"

I open my mouth to respond, but he doesn't give me a chance. He drags me to my feet by my hair, his grip unrelenting, and I stumble after him as he pulls me across the office. My legs feel like jelly, and I can't tell if it's from fear or something else entirely.

He sits down on the couch in the lounge area and yanks me over his lap in one fluid motion.

I let out a yelp of surprise, my hands scrambling for something to hold onto, but there's nothing.

His hand comes down on my backside with a sharp smack , and I squeal, my face burning with embarrassment.

The pain is sharp and immediate, but it's quickly followed by a strange, tingling warmth that spreads through me.

He spans me again, and again, each smack harder than the last. My cries of indignation and pain slowly morph into something else—something that makes my cheeks burn even hotter.

My breath comes in ragged gasps, and I can feel my body reacting in ways I didn't expect.

The warmth between my thighs is impossible to ignore, and I hate how much I'm enjoying this.

After what feels like an eternity, he stops, his hand resting on my ass as if to emphasize his point.

He grabs a handful of my hair and pulls my face around to look up at him.

I'm sprawled awkwardly over his lap, my skirt rucked up around my waist, and I can feel the hard line of his cock pressing against my thigh.

My heart kicks into overdrive, and I can't seem to catch my breath.

"What kind of game are you playing, Ms. Christian?" he growls, his eyes searing into me. His voice is low and dangerous.

"I'm sorry," I whisper, my voice trembling with need. The sound of it makes me blush, but I can't help it. "I'll try not to make any more typos."

"Try not to?" he repeats, his tone dripping with sarcasm. "That would be a switch." He leans in close, his face inches from mine, and I can feel his breath on my skin. "You made those errors deliberately. Or at least, you did it on purpose the third time. Didn't you?"

"N-no," I lie, my voice feeble. My eyes dart away, unable to meet his piercing gaze.

"Now you're lying to me," he growls, his grip tightening in my hair. I can't deny it; the truth is written all over my face. "I'll fix it so you speak no more lies, Ms. Christian."

Raekon reaches under the sofa, and I feel his body shift against mine.

His thigh presses harder into my squished breasts, and the growing bulge beneath his trousers rubs into my belly.

I squirm, but his grip on me doesn't loosen.

He pulls out a sleek black leather briefcase, the kind that looks expensive and ominous.

My heart pounds as he sets it on the sofa beside us, flicking the latches open with practiced ease.

“What—?” I start to ask, but the words die in my throat as he pulls something out. I can't see what it is from this angle, but I hear the soft rattle of a leather strap, and I know—I just know—I'm in trouble.

“Open wide, Ms. Christian,” Raekon says, and his voice is low, commanding, with a hint of amusement that makes my stomach flip.

I shake my head, panic rising, but he's faster than I am.

His free hand grabs my chin, forcing my jaw down.

Before I can protest, he shoves something cold and rubbery into my mouth.

It's a ball gag. I've seen them in photos only, never up close...

and I've certainly never worn one before.

I gasp, or try to, but the gag is already deep, settling behind my teeth.

My tongue presses against it instinctively, but it doesn't budge.

The leather strap slides around my head, and Raekon tightens it with a smooth, decisive motion.

My hands fly up to my face, fingers brushing the gag, exploring its shape and size.

It's uncomfortable, but not unbearable—just enough to make me feel small, helpless, and entirely at his mercy.

“You picked the wrong Vakutan to play games with, Ms. Christian,” Raekon says.

His hands move to my hair, tilting my head back so I'm forced to look up at him.

His red eyes gleam with a mix of dominance and something darker, something that makes my body betray me with a shiver of anticipation.

“You'll find that as hard as I work, I play even harder. ”

I whimper, the sound muffled and pathetic, and he chuckles, the sound deep and dark.

His hand trails down my back, caressing my ass with a possessiveness that sends sparks through me.

My toes curl in my high heels, and my fingers clutch at his trousers, desperate for something to ground me.

Just as I feel his fingers inch toward the sensitive spot between my thighs, he pulls away and spans me—hard.

The sharp sting makes me yelp, the gag turning it into a muffled squeak. “Back to work,” he says, his tone casual, like we're not having the most surreal moment of my life. He practically drags me off his lap, propelling me toward the desk with a series

of firm swats that leave my cheeks burning.

I stumble forward, my legs wobbly, and he shoves me into the chair. My hands hover over the keyboard, trembling, as he leans over me, his massive frame crowding me in. He picks up the headphones, considers them for a moment, then tosses them aside with a dismissive shrug.

“I have a better idea for a distraction,” he says, and before I can process what that means, he grabs me by the hair and yanks me out of the chair.

I yelp again, but he doesn’t stop. He lifts me effortlessly, my legs dangling as he sits down in the chair and pulls me into his lap.

My back is pressed against his chest, his thighs bracketing mine, and his hands slide around to my front, fingers skimming my ribs.

“Now,” he says, “let’s see how well you can focus.” His fingers tweak my nipples through the fabric of my blouse, and I jump, a muffled gasp escaping me. The sensation is electric, a mix of pleasure and pain that has me squirming in his lap.

I try to type, but my fingers are clumsy, my mind scattered. The first typo happens almost immediately, and he pinches my nipple hard in response. I whimper into the gag, my body arching against him, and he growls low in my ear.

“Focus, Ms. Christian,” he says, his voice a dark purr. “Or this is going to be a very long day.”

I grit my teeth, or try to, and force myself to concentrate. But every time I make a mistake, his fingers punish me, and I’m starting to think his discipline methods are doing the exact opposite of what they’re supposed to.

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RAEKON

I drag her to her feet by the ball gag strap, the leather digging into her cheeks as she stumbles forward. Her wide green eyes lock onto mine, a mix of fear and defiance swimming in them. She's testing me, pushing me, and I'm done pretending I don't enjoy it.

"You think you can tease me and walk away unscathed?" I growl my voice low and rough. "You wanted to poke the bear, little flower. Consider me poked."

Her muffled whimper vibrates through the gag, her hands gripping my forearm as I hold her steady.

She's trembling, but I don't miss the way her hips shift, the way her body arches slightly toward mine.

She's scared, yes, but she's enjoying this.

I can smell it on her, the sharp tang of arousal mingling with her fear.

I yank her closer, her body flush against mine, and lean down until my lips brush the shell of her ear. "You've been playing with fire, Ms. Christian. You've been testing me, provoking me, and now you're going to learn what happens when you push too far."

She whimpers again, her fingers tightening on my arm.

I can feel her heart racing, the rapid thud of it echoing in my own chest. I drag her across the room to the large, sturdy desk, yanking her around until her back is pressed against the edge.

She's panting through her nose, her chest heaving, and I don't miss the way her eyes dart down to the bulge in my trousers.

"You're a clever little thing, aren't you?" I murmur, my fingers trailing down her cheek to the buckle of the gag. "You knew exactly what you were doing, making those mistakes, grinding against me like some siren trying to lure me into the rocks."

I yank Willow forward, her body bending over the polished surface of my desk.

Willow issues a deep moan, the sound muffled by the gag as I pull my tie loose and wrap it around her crossed wrists.

The silk slides smoothly, binding her tight, and I admire the way her shoulders tense, the way her back arches just slightly as I cinch the knot.

She doesn't fight me—not this time. Her head tilts, her fiery hair spilling over her shoulders as she looks back at me.

Those green eyes are wide, yes, but there's a spark in them I wasn't expecting.

Anticipation. She's not just playing the game; she's enjoying it.

Good. So am I.

I drag her back to her feet, her body brushing against mine as I turn her to face me.

Her chest rises and falls with rapid breaths, and I can see the flush creeping up her

neck.

She's scared, but she's waiting . I grip her hips, lifting her easily and setting her on the edge of the desk.

She wobbles for a moment, her balance thrown by the gag and the tie binding her wrists, but I steady her, my hands lingering on her waist.

“You always cover yourself up,” I murmur, my voice low and rough. My fingers trail down the side of her ankle-length skirt, tracing the line of buttons that run up the side. “Mocking me. Making me wonder what treasures you’re hiding. Not anymore.”

Her eyes widen further as I slide the first button free.

I’m deliberate, savoring the way her breath quickens with each one I undo.

The fabric parts, revealing the creamy skin of her thigh, and I can’t help the growl that rumbles in my chest. Her legs are perfect, smooth and soft, and the sight of them makes my cock twitch in my trousers.

My hand brushes over her skin, the warmth of her making my scales tingle. It’s better than I imagined—and I’ve imagined this a lot since she started working with me. Her body tenses, a soft whimper escaping through the gag as my fingers slide higher.

“Open for me,” I command, my voice firm but not unkind. Her thighs tighten instinctively, and I smirk. “Come on, little flower. You’ve been asking for this. Don’t stop now.”

She hesitates, her eyes searching mine, but then, slowly, she lets her legs part.

Just a little. Not enough. I press my hands against the inside of her thighs, pushing

them apart until the soft pink fabric of her panties comes into view.

She whimpers again, her body trembling, but she doesn't pull away.

"There we go," I murmur, my voice thick with approval. "That's my good girl."

I slide my hands along her inner thighs, my eyes locked on the translucent lace barely concealing her. A butterfly design. Of course. Even her panties are a contradiction—demure yet daring, just like her. I let out a low rumble of approval.

"Look at what you're hiding under your schoolmarm skirt," I say, my voice thick with admiration. My thumb brushes over the damp fabric, and her legs snap shut reflexively. I smack her thigh, the sharp sound echoing in the room. "Open. You are permitted no secrets from me."

Her eyes, wide and pleading, scream at me to touch her again.

But I'm not in the mood to rush. I unhook the skirt and slide it down her legs, letting it pool on the floor.

She wobbles as I help her step out of it, her balance thrown by the gag and her bound wrists.

I spin her around, and my breath catches.

A g-string. Of course it is. The thin ribbon cuts between her perfect ass cheeks, framing her in a way that makes my cock ache.

I grab the ribbon, pulling it aside to reveal her glistening pussy and tight, untouched asshole.

“Perfection,” I mutter, my voice strained.

Her eyes are half-lidded now, her pupils blown with lust. I slide the panties down her legs, letting her step out of them, and then lift her back onto the desk.

Her pussy is already swollen, her lips parted and glistening. I use my fingers to spread her wider, and she moans deeply, the sound muffled but unmistakable. Her clit quivers, begging for attention, but I’m not ready to give it to her yet. Not yet.

My fingers trace her outer lips, the soft skin slick with her arousal. I press against her inner lips, my thumbs brushing the hood of her clit but never quite touching it. She whimpers, her hips twitching, but I hold her still with a firm grip.

“Patience,” I command, my voice low and commanding. My fingers slide down to her entrance, circling but not penetrating. “You wanted this, didn’t you? You wanted me to see you like this. To feel you like this.”

Her response is a desperate moan, her body trembling as I bring her to the edge and then pull back. Again and again, I tease her, my touch relentless but never enough. Her hips buck, trying to chase my fingers, but I hold her down, my strength too much for her to fight.

“Not yet,” I murmur, my breath hot against her ear. “You’ll come when I say you can. Not a moment before.”

Her muffled whimpers are music to my ears, her body writhing under my touch but unable to find release. She’s mine now, completely and utterly, and I’m not ready to let her go. Not yet.

Willow’s green eyes lock onto mine, wide and glistening, her chest heaving as she teeters on the edge of desperation.

Her body trembles, her arousal thick in the air, and I can see it— the moment she realizes I'm done playing.

Her muffled squeal escapes the ball gag, a sound that's equal parts fear and delight, and it sends a jolt straight to my cock.

I grab her by the hips, my hands nearly spanning her entire waist, and lift her effortlessly into the air. Her legs flail for a moment before I settle them over my shoulders, her pussy now pressed against my face. Her gasp is muffled but unmistakable, her thighs tensing around me as I lean in.

"I won't let you fall, my little flower," I murmur against her damp heat, my voice low and reassuring.

Her scent is intoxicating, sweet and musky, and I can't resist diving in.

My tongue flicks over her slick folds, teasing her entrance before moving to her clit.

She jerks in my grasp, a high-pitched whine escaping the gag, and I tighten my hold, keeping her steady.

I carry her to the glass wall, her back pressing against the cool surface as I continue to devour her.

The city lights sparkle behind her, a backdrop to her trembling form, and I admire the sight.

My tongue works her clit in slow, deliberate circles, and her body arches, her hands tugging at the silk tie binding her wrists.

She's close—I can feel it in the way her pussy clenches around nothing, in the way

her thighs squeeze my shoulders.

Her muffled cries grow more frantic, and I pull back just enough to whisper against her skin. “Cum for me, Willow.”

She does, her body convulsing as she squirts all over my face, her juices glazing my scales.

I don’t stop. My tongue, prehensile and ridged, extends further than she expects, sliding deep inside her and curling against her walls.

Her eyes widen, a strangled scream escaping the gag, and I watch her face as I fuck her with it, her expression a mix of shock and overwhelming pleasure.

When I finally lower her to the ground, her legs buckle, and I catch her by the nipples, pinching them firmly to keep her upright. Her head lolls, her eyes hazy, and I give her a moment to catch her breath before speaking.

“You’re going to take my cock now, Ms. Christian.”

She nods rapidly, her muffled “Yes, Sir” barely intelligible around the gag but clear in her eager expression. Her body is still trembling, but there’s no hesitation in her now. She’s ready—and so am I.

I sit her back on the desk, her bare ass now pressed against the cool surface.

The puddle she left behind earlier glistens under the office lights, and I chuckle.

“Look at the mess you’ve made, Ms. Christian,” I say, my voice dripping with mock disapproval.

“What a dirty-minded little thing you are.”

My fingers trail up her stomach, brushing the fabric of her high-collared blouse. I frown, my claws catching on the stiff material. “You know, Willow,” I muse, my tone casual as if we’re discussing the weather, “there’s something I’ve been meaning to tell you.”

Her eyes dart to mine, wide and curious behind the ball gag. I keep one hand busy between her legs, my fingers teasing her pussy to keep her squirming. My other hand toys with the lapel of her blouse, my claws scraping lightly against the fabric.

“I hate the way you fucking dress,” I growl.

Without warning, I grip the front of her blouse and rip it clean off her body, the buttons scattering across the desk and floor like tiny, frightened creatures.

She screams behind the gag, her body jerking in shock, and I grab her by the throat, holding her steady.

“Let me make myself perfectly clear,” I say, my voice a low rumble that vibrates through her skin.

“I’m going home with you tonight. And I’m going to destroy every garment you own.

Every fucking hideous blouse, every wretched skirt, every pair of panties that does nothing to highlight this glorious body of yours. ”

Her eyes widen, a muffled whimper escaping the gag.

I lean in closer, my breath hot against her ear.

“Oh yes,” I murmur, my fingers still working her pussy, keeping her on edge.

“Maybe you should just come to work naked. But no... that’s not practical, is it?

So instead, I’ll take you shopping. We’ll pick out clothes that properly accentuate your many... assets.”

Her chest heaves as I let go of her throat, my hands moving to her bra.

I tear it off with one swift motion, the sound of snapping fabric filling the room.

Her magnificent breasts are finally free, their softness and weight a sight to behold.

I bury my face between them, my tongue flicking over her stiff nipples as she moans behind the gag.

“Beautiful,” I murmur against her skin, my claws lightly tracing the curve of her breasts. “But you’ll learn to dress the part, my little flower. You’ll learn to be everything I want you to be.”

Her body trembles, her arousal thick in the air, and I know she’s as desperate for me as I am for her. But this isn’t over. Not yet.

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WILLOW

K kneeling before him, the cold floor beneath my knees contrasts sharply with the heat radiating from Raekon's body.

My hands are still bound tightly behind my back with his necktie, the knot firm and unyielding.

The ball gag fills my mouth, muffling my whimpers as I stare up at him, trembling but eager.

His golden scales glint under the office lights, and the predatory gleam in his red eyes pins me in place.

"Do you want my cock, Ms. Christian?" Raekon's voice is low, rough, and utterly commanding. His hand grips the bulge in his trousers, and my eyes water he gives it a deliberate squeeze.

I moan around the gag, the sound vibrating deep in my throat.

My body feels like it's on fire, every nerve lit up with anticipation.

I nod frantically, my gaze locked on his crotch.

Yes, yes, yes—I want it. I've wanted it since the first time I saw him, since the first time he looked at me like I was something he could devour.

Raekon slowly unfastens his belt, the metallic clink echoing in the room like a countdown.

He pushes down his trousers, then his boxers, and his cock springs free.

My eyes widen as I take in the sight of it—thick, alien, and undeniably predatory.

The heart-shaped head is surrounded by a ridge of flexible scales, and the raised ridge along the top of the shaft looks like it's designed to ruin me in the best way possible.

"You want this?" he growls, his hand wrapping around the base of his cock and giving it a slow stroke.

I lunge forward, pressing my face against him. My lips brush the warm, smooth scales of his shaft, and I nuzzle into the softness of his balls, inhaling the intoxicating scent of his arousal. It's earthy, musky, and entirely him. I moan again, the sound desperate and pleading.

Raekon's free hand grips the buckle of the ball gag. With a quick motion, he undoes it and pulls the gag from my mouth. I gasp, my lips tingling as they regain their freedom. Without hesitation, I press my mouth to the underside of his cock, kissing it, worshipping it.

"Good girl," Raekon rasps, his voice trembling with barely restrained pleasure. His body tenses, and I can feel the power coiled in him, ready to be unleashed.

I take the tip of his cock into my mouth, savoring the taste of him—salty, metallic, and utterly addictive. My tongue swirls around the ridge of scales, and the ridges undulate slightly. I press further, taking more of him into my mouth, my lips stretching around his girth.

Raekon's hand tangles in my hair, guiding me gently but firmly. "That's it," he murmurs, his voice thick with approval. "Take it deeper."

I obey, letting him control the pace, my body humming with the thrill of submission. His cock fills my mouth, and I revel in the sensation of it pressing against the back of my throat. I blink up at him, my eyes teary but filled with determination.

Raekon's brow ridges lower as he watches me, his expression a mix of lust and something softer, something almost tender. "You're learning quickly," he says, his tone approving. "But we're just getting started, little flower."

His hand tightens in my hair, and he pulls me back slightly, just enough to let me breathe before guiding me down again.

The rhythm he sets is firm and commanding, and I surrender to it completely.

This is what I've wanted, what I've craved—to be his, to belong to him in every way possible.

And as I kneel there, bound and obedient, I know there's nowhere else I'd rather be.

"Enough," Raekon growls, his voice raw and strained, like he's been holding back for too long.

The sound of his frustration sends me giddy.

He flicks his claws—how does he even do that?

—and the necktie binding my wrists falls away, slack and useless.

Before I can even think about rubbing the feeling back into my arms, his hands are on

me, lifting me off the ground like I weigh nothing.

His mouth crashes into mine, and I swear the world tilts.

I gasp into the kiss, my body arching instinctively against his.

His tongue is demanding, insistent, and I melt into it, my hands flying up to grip his shoulders for balance.

His scales are smoother than I expected, warm and sleek under my fingers.

My leg hooks around his hip, and he adjusts me effortlessly, his cock sliding into me in one smooth, possessive motion.

"Raekon—" His name escapes me in a breathless moan, but he cuts me off with another kiss, deeper this time, rougher. His arm is hooked under my knee, pinning me against the wall, and he moves with a rhythm that's both brutal and precise.

I cling to him, my nails digging into his shoulders, my body trembling with every thrust.

I've never felt like this before—so completely consumed, so utterly owned.

His size, his strength, should terrify me, but instead, I feel...

safe. Protected. Like nothing in the world could touch me as long as he's here.

His red eyes bore into mine, and I realize, with a start, that this isn't just about lust for him.

There's something else there, something darker, more intense.

He cares . About me. About everything. And it's that care that makes him so gruff, so demanding.

"You think too much," he growls, his breath hot against my ear. His hand slides up to grip my throat, not tight enough to hurt but firm enough to make my pulse race. He pushes me away from the wall, and I stumble slightly, caught off guard, but he doesn't let me fall.

Instead, he guides me to the floor, his hands on my hips, forcing me onto my hands and knees.

"Raekon—" I start, but he doesn't let me finish. His fingers dig into my hips, and he slams into me, harder than before, driving the air from my lungs. I cry out, my hands scrambling for purchase on the carpet as he sets a pace that leaves me breathless.

"Focus," he commands, his voice low and rough. "Feel me. Only me."

And I do. Every thrust, every movement, every sound he makes—it's all I can think about. My body arches, my back pressing into his chest as he leans over me, his breath hot against my neck. His hand slides up my spine, tangling in my hair, pulling me back against him.

"Good girl," he murmurs, the words sending a thrill through me. "You're mine, Willow. Say it."

"I'm yours," I gasp. "Yours, Raekon— yours ."

His climax hits me like a tidal wave, and I can feel it—every pulse, every throb of his cock inside me, like a vibration that sets every nerve in my body alight.

My own orgasm crashes into me, hard and relentless, and I'm screaming, writhing,

clawing at the carpet beneath us as pleasure overtakes me.

And then—sharp teeth sink into my shoulder, not enough to break skin but enough to claim me, to mark me as his.

The pain melds with the pleasure, a delicious, intoxicating mix that I never want to end.

“ Mine ,” Raekon growls against my skin, the vibration of his voice sending shivers down my spine.

His arms tighten around me, holding me in place as his thrusts grow faster, more desperate.

I can't think, can't breathe, can't do anything but feel him—every inch of him, every movement, every sound he makes.

We collapse onto our sides, but neither of us stops. My body moves in sync with his, driven by some primal instinct I didn't know I had. His hands roam over my skin, possessive and demanding, and I press back against him, urging him on, needing more.

“Raekon,” I gasp, my voice trembling, “please?—”

“You're mine, Willow,” he murmurs. His rhythm falters for a moment, and then he's gripping my hips, pulling me back onto him with a force that makes me cry out. “Say it again.”

“I'm yours,” I whimper, the words spilling from my lips without hesitation. “Yours.”

He growls, low and deep, and I can feel it in my chest, in my bones.

His thrusts grow erratic, desperate, the tension building in him, coiling tighter and tighter until it snaps.

He buries himself deep inside me, his cock throbbing as he spills into me, and I'm right there with him, my body convulsing with wave after wave of pleasure.

He holds me close, his arms wrapping around me in a way that feels almost protective. My body trembles in his grasp, overwhelmed and spent, but he doesn't let go. Instead, he nuzzles into the crook of my neck, his lips brushing against the mark he left there, and a low, rumbling purr escapes him.

"Good girl," he murmurs, his voice soft, almost tender.

His hand strokes my arm, and I lean into his touch, too exhausted to do anything else.

His purr grows louder, a soothing rumble that feels almost...

affectionate. I close my eyes, letting myself sink into the warmth of his embrace, and for the first time in a long time, I feel safe. Perfectly, completely safe.

I trace the ridges of his scales with my fingers, the texture smooth and warm under my touch.

Raekon's heartbeat slows beneath me, the steady rhythm grounding me in the aftermath of what just happened.

The office is quiet now, the only sound his deep, even breathing and the occasional hum of the building's HVAC system.

My head rests on his bicep, and I find myself marveling at how perfectly my body fits against his, even with the size difference.

I'm small, delicate, and vulnerable—and he's...

well, he's Raekon. Massive, alien, and utterly in control.

"I can feel the tension growing in your body," he murmurs, his voice still thick with sleepiness. His hand moves to my hip, his fingers brushing against my skin in a way that makes me shiver. "And I can taste your fear. What's wrong?"

I swallow, my throat dry. I don't want to ask. I don't want to ruin this moment, but the question burns in my chest, demanding an answer. "Raekon, what are we?" I say, cringing at how cliché it sounds. But it's the only way I can think to ask it.

He's silent for a long time, and the longer he takes to answer, the tighter the knot in my stomach grows.

I feel exposed, vulnerable, like I've just handed him the power to crush me if he chooses to.

But then he shifts, pressing his lips to the back of my neck in a gesture that feels almost tender.

His hand slides up to cup my breast, his thumb brushing over my nipple in a way that makes me shudder.

"When I first met you, I wanted to claim you," he says, his breath warm against my skin. "At first, I thought perhaps it was simple desire. Now, however, I feel you may be my Jalshagar."

I freeze, my fingers stalling against his scales. "Your what?" I ask, my voice barely above a whisper. "Is that like an alien word for girlfriend?"

He hesitates, the tension in his body, the way he's choosing his words carefully. "Yes," he says finally. "Close enough."

I don't push. Not yet. I don't want to ruin this moment, not when his touch is so sure, so possessive, and so intoxicating.

His hand moves lower, his fingers teasing at the sensitive skin of my inner thigh, and I bite back a moan.

But the question lingers in my mind, a small, nagging doubt that refuses to be ignored.

"Raekon," I start, but he cuts me off with a growl, his hand tightening on my thigh.

"Enough questions," he says, his voice firm but not unkind. He shifts, rolling me onto my back so he's hovering over me, his red eyes locking onto mine. "You're mine, Willow. That's all you need to know right now."

I open my mouth to argue, but he silences me with a kiss, his lips claiming mine with a fierceness that leaves no room for doubt. His hands roam over my body, his touch possessive and demanding, and I melt into it. Maybe I don't need answers. Maybe, for now, this is enough.

RAEKON

The city sprawls below me, a glittering testament to human ingenuity and resilience.

Normally, the sight fills me with a sense of pride, knowing Veritas has played its part in safeguarding their timeline.

But tonight, the lights seem dimmer, the hum of the city muted.

My gaze drifts down to the woman curled against me, her red hair fanned across the sheets like a flame frozen in time. Willow. My little flower.

I brush a strand of hair from her face, my scaled fingers gentle against her soft skin. She stirs slightly but doesn't wake. Six months. Six months since she stumbled into my life, a trembling morsel with a sharp mind and a spine of steel. Six months since I claimed her as mine.

"Has it been six months already?" I murmur, my voice barely a whisper.

The words hang in the air, heavy with unspoken truths.

I've watched her grow, seen her confidence bloom under my guidance—and my discipline.

She's become more than my assistant. She's become.

.. something I didn't anticipate. Something I'm not sure I'm prepared for.

Worries gnaw at the edges of my mind, a sensation I'm unaccustomed to.

I'm Raekon, a Vakutan warrior, a protector of Earth's timeline.

Fear is a foreign concept to me. And yet, here I am, staring at the sleeping woman in my arms, terrified.

Not for my own safety—death in battle is an honor, a Vakutan's destiny.

But for hers. What if something happens to her?

What if I fail her? And worse, what if something happens to me?

The thought of her grieving, alone, cuts deeper than any blade.

A soft sigh escapes Willow's lips, and her body shifts, pressing closer to mine.

I tighten my arm around her, pulling her into the protective curve of my body.

She fits there, perfectly, as if she was made for me.

But can I be what she needs? Can I balance the demands of Veritas, the weight of my duty, with the vulnerability of caring for her?

I trace the line of her shoulder, my fingertips brushing the faint mark I left on her skin earlier.

My jalshagar. The word echoes in my mind, a truth I haven't spoken aloud.

It's more than a claim; it's a bond, a promise.

But is it fair to bind her to me, with all the danger that comes with my life?

Willow's eyes flutter open, green and luminous in the dim light. She blinks up at me, a sleepy smile spreading across her face. "Ray? What are you doing awake?"

I lean down, pressing a kiss to her forehead. "Watching you sleep, little flower. You're... breathtaking."

She chuckles softly, her hand coming up to rest against my chest. "You're such a sap sometimes. What's on your mind?"

I hesitate, the weight of my thoughts pressing down on me. But before I can answer, she sits up, her expression shifting from sleepy to concerned. "Wait, no. Don't lie to me. I've known you long enough to know when something's bothering you. Fess up, Vakutan."

I let out a low chuckle, despite the tension in my chest. "You've become far too perceptive for your own good, Ms. Christian."

Her eyebrows shoot up. "Ms. Christian? Oh no. This is serious. Out with it, Raekon Keong."

Her use of my full name makes me smile, despite myself. She's the only one who can pull that tone with me and get away with it. I trail my fingers down her arm. "I'm... concerned. About us. About the future."

Her eyes soften, and she shifts to sit cross-legged on the bed, facing me fully. "You? Concerned? The big, bad Vakutan warrior who once wrestled a Odex bare-handed is worried about the future?"

I smirk, despite the heaviness in my chest. "I didn't wrestle it. I merely subdued it.

Bare-handed, yes, but let's not exaggerate."

She rolls her eyes, but her smile falters as she studies my face. "What's really going on, Ray? Talk to me."

I look away, my gaze drifting back to the cityscape outside the window. "I've never had something to lose before. Not like this. You... complicate things, Willow. In the best way possible, but still. The thought of something happening to you—or to me, leaving you alone—it terrifies me."

She's silent for a moment, her fingers tracing patterns on the sheet. When she speaks, her voice is soft but steady. "You're not the only one who's scared, you know. I think about it too. All the time. But Ray, we can't let fear control us. We just... have to take it one day at a time. Together."

Her words settle over me like a warm blanket, easing the tension in my chest. I turn back to her, cupping her face in my hands. "When did you become so wise, little flower?"

She grins, a spark of mischief in her eyes. "I've been taking lessons from the master of wisdom himself. You, in case that wasn't clear."

I laugh, a deep rumble that vibrates through my chest. "Cheeky. Perhaps I've been too lenient with you lately."

Her smile softens, and she leans into my touch. "Or maybe you've just realized I'm worth keeping around."

I pull her into my lap, my arms wrapping around her. "Oh, I've known that for a while now, Willow. I just... needed to be reminded."

She rests her head against my chest, her fingers playing with the edge of my scales. “Then remind me, Ray. Every day. And I’ll do the same for you.”

I press a kiss to the top of her head, my heart swelling with emotions I’m still learning to name. “Deal, little flower. Now, let’s get some rest. Tomorrow’s another day.”

She nods, settling back against me, her breathing evening out as she drifts off to sleep. I hold her close, the weight of the world feeling just a little lighter with her in my arms.

The alarm blares, jolting me awake. I reach over and silence it with a tap, then turn to see Willow groaning into her pillow. I chuckle, the sound deep and rumbling. “Time for the daily grind.”

She mumbles something incoherent, her red hair a tangled mess against the sheets. I swing my legs over the side of the bed, standing to my full height and stretching. Scales ripple across my torso as I move, and I glance back at her. “You’re going to be late if you don’t get moving.”

Willow sighs dramatically, then pushes herself up, her green eyes narrowed in mock annoyance. “You’re far too chipper in the mornings. It’s unnatural.”

“It’s called discipline,” I reply, heading to the closet to pull out my suit. Tailored, sharp, and entirely human. The image inducer does the rest. “You should try it sometime.”

“I’ll stick to my eight hours of beauty sleep, thanks,” she says, swinging her legs over the edge of the bed. She’s wearing nothing but her underwear and pantyhose, and I take a moment to appreciate the view before she disappears into the walk-in closet.

I finish buttoning my shirt and fasten my cufflinks, my eyes flicking to the closet door. “Are you certain you don’t want me to hire you an assistant? Someone to manage your wardrobe, perhaps?”

Her head pops out, her expression incredulous. “Oh god no, I can pick out my own clothes.”

I lean against the doorframe, crossing my arms. “Apparently not.”

She steps out, hands on her hips, still clad in her undergarments. “We have a meeting at Alpha Base today, in case you’ve forgotten. I’d like to wear something that’s not too tight, too short, or shows too much cleavage. And you’ve made that impossible with the clothes you bought me.”

I raise a brow ridge, smirking. “Impossible? Willow, your new wardrobe is professional. It would pass muster in any office building in the West.”

She snorts, rolling her eyes. “Oh, come on. You were the one saying, ‘cut that side slit on the skirt a little bit higher’ and ‘I don’t care if the corset makes the skirt an inch too short, the look is perfect.’ Admit it, Ray. You’ve turned me into your personal dress-up doll.”

I laugh, the sound echoing through the room. “Guilty. But can you blame me? You’re a vision in everything you wear.”

She gives me a look, one that says she’s not buying it, but there’s a hint of amusement in her eyes. “You’re impossible.”

“And yet, you tolerate me,” I reply, stepping closer. My fingers brush her arm, and she shivers despite herself. “Now, pick something before I do it for you.”

She sighs dramatically again but turns back to the closet, muttering under her breath about “bossy aliens.” I watch her for a moment longer, my chest swelling with pride. She’s come so far since the day I found her cowering in that elevator. My little flower. My jalshagar.

“Hurry up,” I tease, heading toward the door. “We’ve got a timeline to protect.”

I guide Willow through the bustling corridors of Veritas Base Alpha, her hand gripped tightly in mine.

The air is filled with the hum of activity and the occasional whir of a passing hover-drone.

Her eyes dart around, taking in the high-tech marvels that surround us, but I keep my gaze fixed ahead, my mind racing.

As we approach Pyke's office, the door slides open with a soft hiss, revealing the circular desk and the holographic globe of Earth floating above it.

But it's not the familiar sight of Pyke's eccentric paintings that makes my heart pound like a war drum.

It's the group of Vakutan scientists, their scales glinting under the harsh office lights, and the equipment they hold—equipment I recognize all too well.

I lean down, my lips brushing Willow's ear as I whisper, "They're going to give you a test. And no matter what, you must not pass."

WILLOW

Pyke's office is as intimidating as the first time I stepped into it six months ago, though now the holographic globe above his desk feels more like a looming reminder of the stakes than a curiosity.

The scale of everything—the size of the desk, the height of the ceiling, the sheer presence of the Vakutans towering around me—makes me feel like I've been shrunk down to the size of a doll.

And then there's Raekon, standing beside me, his jaw clenched so tightly I can see the muscle twitching.

He's tense, which only makes me more nervous.

When Pyke steps around his desk and gestures for Raekon to follow him into the hall, I feel a jolt of panic.

"Wait—" I start, but Raekon's hand brushes mine, silencing me with a single touch.

"Stay here," he murmurs, his voice low and urgent. "Whatever they ask you to do, don't succeed." Then he's gone, leaving me with a room full of Vakutan scientists and a growing sense of dread.

I'm not alone for long. A tall, lanky Vakutan with a red glowing cybernetic eye steps forward, his movements slightly jerky, like an overgrown marionette.

He's wearing a tweed jacket that wouldn't look out of place on a Victorian professor, and the combination of his eccentric appearance and the way he's grinning at me makes me want to backpedal.

Instead, I stand my ground, folding my arms across my chest and trying to look less like a scared rabbit and more like someone who belongs here.

"Ah, Ms. Christian," he says, his voice brimming with enthusiasm. "I'm Doctor Professor Winn. Delighted to make your acquaintance! I've heard so much about you."

"All good things, I hope," I say, though it comes out more sarcastic than I intend.

Winn chuckles, a sound that's equal parts amusement and manic energy. "Oh, indeed! But let's not waste time with pleasantries. We have so much to discover about you."

"Discover? Like what?"

He ignores my question and holds up an iron bar, the metal gleaming under the harsh office lights. "Let's start with something simple. Can you bend this?"

He drops it on the floor in front of me with a clatter that makes me flinch. I stare at it, then up at him, blinking. "Uh... no? I don't go to the gym or whatever."

"With your mind," Winn clarifies, tapping his temple. "Focus. Move it."

"You're joking, right?"

He tilts his head, the red light of his cybernetic eye flickering as he studies me. "Not at all. The human mind is a powerful tool. We're here to determine just how powerful

yours is.”

I glance around the room, but the other scientists are watching me with expectant expressions, like I’m about to perform a magic trick. “Yeah, okay, sure. Let me just wiggle my nose like Samantha from *Bewitched* and—oh, wait, nothing’s happening. Must’ve left my telekinesis at home.”

Winn lets out a delighted laugh, clapping his hands together. “Oh, she’s feisty ! I like her.” He steps closer, crouching slightly so we’re eye level. “But perhaps we’re starting too advanced. Let’s try something simpler. Look into my mind and tell me what you see.”

I blink at him, then burst out laughing. “I’m terrified to look into your mind.”

The other scientists chuckle, and even Winn grins, though there’s a flash of something—disappointment? Frustration?—in his expression. “Fair enough,” he says, straightening up. “Perhaps we should begin with the most basic tests first. No need to overwhelm you.”

“Great,” I mutter under my breath. “Can’t wait.” But Winn’s already bustling over to a table cluttered with strange devices, muttering to himself as he prepares... whatever comes next. Don’t succeed. Whatever that means, I’m just hoping it doesn’t involve bending metal bars or reading minds.

Doctor Winn steps closer, holding a sleek compad in his hand. The device looks like something out of a sci-fi movie, all glowing edges and smooth, alien lines. He’s grinning at me like a kid about to reveal a magic trick.

“Ms. Christian, this compad has been programmed to display a series of random images,” he says, his voice dripping with theatricality. “I’ll hold it so only I can see the screen, and you’ll guess what’s displayed. Simple, yes?”

I shrug. “Sure. Whatever. But don’t blame me if I’m terrible at this. I’m not exactly the ‘guess the picture’ type.”

“We’ll see,” he says, his cybernetic eye whirring softly as it focuses on me. I’m half-convinced it’s going to pop out of his head and float around the room. He tilts the compad so I can’t see it and nods. “Begin.”

I snort internally. Raekon’s warning echoes in my head. Don’t succeed. Easy. I’m not psychic. This is going to be a cakewalk.

The first image pops into my head—a duck. Random, sure, but whatever. “Uh... a duck?” I say, dragging out the words like I’m not even trying.

Winn’s eye widens, and the glowing red light inside it flares brighter. “Correct,” he says, his tone somewhere between impressed and unnerved. “Proceed.”

Wait, what? I blink at him. “You’re joking.”

“Not at all.” He taps the compad, and the next image comes to me immediately—a toaster. No way. Aliens don’t have toasters. That’s too... human. Too mundane.

“A toaster,” I say with zero confidence.

His eye practically explodes with light. “Correct again.” He’s staring at me like I’ve just grown a second head.

My stomach drops. This can’t be happening. I’m guessing . There’s no way I’m actually seeing these images in my head. Right?

“Go again,” he says, his voice quieter now, almost wary.

The next image hits me—a guitar. I say it. Correct. Again. A tree. Correct. A spaceship. Correct.

My heart's pounding now. This isn't normal. This isn't possible . I'm not some psychic freak. I'm just... me. Willow. The girl who barely survived algebra.

“Are you toying with me, Ms. Christian?” Winn asks, his tone sharp, his cybernetic eye telescoping out slightly as if trying to get a better look at me. “Because if you’re intentionally failing now, I’d appreciate the candor.”

I freeze. “Failing? I’m not failing. I’m just... not very good at this.”

“You were flawless until a moment ago,” he snaps, his patience clearly wearing thin. “Now suddenly you’re wrong four times in a row? Unlikely.”

“Guess I’m just inconsistent,” I say, crossing my arms and trying to look as clueless as possible.

Winn leans in, his face too close for comfort. “Ms. Christian, if you’re holding back, you’re only delaying the inevitable. We’ll find out what you’re capable of, one way or another.”

Great. Just what I wanted—a creepy, oversized alien scientist breathing down my neck and threatening me with... what? More tests? Brain scans? I swallow hard, my mind racing. I need to figure out how to fail without looking like I’m failing. This is going to be harder than I thought.

Winn’s grin widens as he attaches the last electrode to my temple, his cybernetic eye whirring faintly like a camera focusing. The wires dangle around my face, and I resist the urge to swat them away. “Comfortable?” he asks, tilting his head as if he genuinely cares about my answer.

“Oh, absolutely,” I say, voice dripping with sarcasm. “This is how I always imagined spending my Tuesday. Hooked up to alien tech, playing Vakutan Tetris . Truly living the dream.”

He chuckles, a sound that’s half-amusement, half-mad-scientist glee. “Good, good! Now, let’s see what you can do.” He gestures to the holographic display hovering in front of me, the colorful blocks falling in slow, erratic patterns. “Control it with your mind. Just... think the blocks into place.”

I stare at him, then at the display. “You’re joking, right?”

“Not at all.”

I sigh and focus on the screen, trying to will the blocks to move. Nothing happens. The blocks keep falling, stacking haphazardly, and I’m pretty sure I’m losing even though there’s no score. “Yep,” I say after a full minute of glaring at the screen. “Still not a psychic. Shocking.”

Winn taps his chin, his cybernetic eye narrowing. “Hmm. Perhaps we’re approaching this wrong. Let’s try something else.” He rummages around in a drawer and pulls out what looks like a video game controller. “Here. Use this first. Learn the mechanics. Then we’ll try again with your mind.”

I take the controller, rolling my eyes. “So, what, I’m supposed to believe I’m going to suddenly develop telekinesis just because I’ve played a few rounds of this?”

“Just play,” he says, his tone annoyingly cheerful.

I shrug and start pressing buttons. The blocks respond immediately, snapping into place as I clear row after row. Despite myself, I grin. “Okay, this is kind of fun. I’m going to be sad when you take this away.”

Winn's grin turns downright predatory. "Oh, you mean this controller, Ms. Christian?" He holds up one end of a cable, and I freeze, my fingers still poised over the buttons. "The one that was never plugged into the console in the first place?"

I glance down at the controller in my hands, then follow the cable's path. It's not connected to anything. My stomach drops. "Wait. No. That's not?—"

"That's right," Winn says, leaning in so close I can see the faint red glow of his eye reflecting off my face. "We pulled a sneaky on you! You've been controlling the game with your mind the entire time."

My mouth goes dry. The controller slips from my hands and clatters to the floor. "Shit," I whisper, staring at the screen where the blocks are still falling, still moving—still responding to my thoughts.

Winn claps his hands together, his excitement palpable. "Fascinating! Absolutely fascinating! You've been suppressing this ability without even realizing it. Now, let's push further?—"

"No," I say, standing up so fast the electrodes yank at my scalp. "No more pushing. No more tests. I'm done."

Winn blinks, his grin faltering. "But Ms. Christian, we've barely scratched the surface of?—"

"I said no," I snap, my voice sharper than I intended. "I'm not some lab rat for you to prod and poke. I don't care what kind of alien freak show you're running here—I'm out."

He stares at me for a long moment, his cybernetic eye whirring softly. Then, to my surprise, he shrugs. "Very well. For now. But mark my words, Ms. Christian—this

isn't over.”

I yank the electrodes off my head, the adhesive pulling at my skin. “Yeah, well, mark my words—if you try to drag me back into this, I’m taking that stupid eye of yours with me.”

Winn chuckles, but there’s a glint in his eye—real eye, not the cybernetic one—that tells me he’s not intimidated. “Oh, Ms. Christian,” he says, amused. “I think you and I are going to have a lot of fun together.”

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Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 10:38 am

RAEKON

Pyke and I step into the observation lounge, the hum of the forcefields beyond the glass a constant reminder of where we are.

The ocean presses in on all sides, a dark, endless void that would swallow us whole if not for the sheer will of Veritas engineering.

I'm pacing before I even realize it, my scales bristling under my tailored suit.

Pyke, ever the calm center of the storm, leans against the glass, arms crossed, watching me with that infuriatingly neutral expression.

"You didn't tell me," I snap, my voice cutting through the low hum of the room. "You didn't even give me a heads-up. You just brought her in and tossed her to Winn like she was some lab rat."

Pyke's gaze doesn't waver. "Would you have let me test her if I'd asked?"

"That's not the point," I growl, stopping in front of him. My claws flex, itching to tear into something. "You don't get to make decisions about her without me. Not her. Not Willow."

"You're too close to this, Raekon." His tone is calm, but there's an edge to it, a warning. "Too invested. I couldn't risk you sabotaging the results."

"Sabotage?" My laugh is sharp, bitter. "You think I'd sabotage her? I'm trying to

protect her. Veritas doesn't have the best track record with psykers, Pyke. Or have you forgotten what happened to the last one?"

His jaw tightens, and, I think I've struck a nerve. But then he straightens, his posture rigid. "That was thirty years ago. We've learned. Winn's research is solid. We can do this safely."

"Safely?" I step closer, my shadow engulfing him. "You think you can control this? She's not just some random human you pulled off the street. She's... important."

Pyke's eyes narrow, and for the first time, I see a flicker of something—doubt, maybe, or guilt. He looks away, out at the endless black of the ocean. "There's more to this than you know."

I freeze, my senses sharpening. "What are you not telling me?"

He hesitates, then turns and walks away without a word. My claws dig into my palms, the sting grounding me. "Pyke. Don't you walk away from me."

He stops at the door, his back to me. "Follow me."

I don't move. "Not until you start talking."

He glances over his shoulder, his expression unreadable. "You want answers? Then follow."

I'm torn between the urge to strangle him and the need to know what he's hiding. In the end, curiosity wins. I stride after him, my steps heavy, my mind racing. Whatever's going on, it's bigger than Willow. Bigger than me. And I don't like it one bit.

Pyke leads me down a narrow corridor, the lights dimming as we go. The air grows colder, the hum of the base fading into silence. My scales tighten against the chill, my instincts screaming that we're heading somewhere I'm not supposed to be.

"Where are we going?" I demand.

He doesn't answer. Instead, he stops in front of a door I've never seen before, its surface etched with symbols I don't recognize. He presses his hand to a hidden panel, and the door hisses open, revealing a room bathed in soft, blue light.

Inside, the walls are lined with screens, each displaying data streams in alien languages. In the center of the room lies a cryo-chamber, and inside is something I would have preferred to forget.

The cryo-chamber hums, its glass dome reflecting a sickly greenish light across the floor.

Inside, Malkus floats—an obscene, twisted thing curled in stasis.

His shell pulses like an exposed heart, wrinkled brain matter throbbing with stolen knowledge.

The sight hits me like a plasma round to the gut.

"I thought we incinerated this monstrosity," I snarl, my voice scraping raw.

Pyke's expression doesn't flicker. "He has information on a Grolgath human trafficking ring—locations, routes, buyers. Everything we need to dismantle it. Conventional methods got us nothing."

"So you kept him?" My claws gouge into my palms. "After what he did, after the

lives he took?—"

"Because of what he did." Pyke steps closer, his words measured. "We have protocols now. Containment. Safeguards."

I snort. "Bullshit. You think your protocols can cage that?" I jerk my chin toward Malkus. "I was there when he tore through the extraction team. You weren't."

Pyke's jaw tightens. "Which is why I'm not suggesting we wake him."

The quiet dread in his tone sets off alarms. I don't want to ask. But I do. "Then what are you suggesting?"

He exhales. "We don't need him awake. We just need someone to dive in and extract the data."

For a second, the room tilts. I've misheard. I have to have. "You can't mean Willow."

"The psycho-dive is the only way?—"

"No." The word tears out of me, sharp as shattered glass. "You send her into that thing's mind, and it eats her alive. You understand? Not a chance. Not her."

Pyke's gaze doesn't waver. "She's stronger than you think."

"Strength doesn't fucking matter against a krither!" My fist slams into the nearest console, sparks flying. The room smells of scorched metal now, ozone and anger. "Malkus isn't just dangerous—he's rotten. His dementia makes his mind a labyrinth of traps. She's untrained?—"

"And you think I'd throw her in blind?" Pyke cuts in, acidic. "Winn's built fail-safes."

Pulse tethers to pull her out if her vitals drop. A direct neural feed so we can monitor?—"

"Fail-safes?" I'm laughing now, a jagged, ugly sound. "You think a tether stops a krither from shredding a psyche? You weren't there for Kael. You didn't hear his screams when Malkus got inside his—" I choke it off before I vomit.

Pyke moves, sudden, gripping my shoulder. "I'm not dismissing the risk. But this ring? They're abducting kids, Raekon. Torturing them into sleeper agents. Every day we wait, more lives burn."

My claws flick out. Just once. "Then wake Malkus and force the answers out of him."

His grip tightens. "You know damn well that's worse."

Silence. He's right—awakening Malkus guarantees slaughter. But so does sending Willow.

Pyke exhales. "It's not your call."

I go still. "What?"

"Winn's already briefing her." He steps back, merciless. "The decision will be hers."

"Willow is mine," I snarl, the words tearing out of me like a primal roar. My claws flex, itching to sink into something—anything—to release the storm boiling in my chest. "You have no right to turn her into your instrument."

Pyke doesn't flinch. He never does. Instead, his brow ridges lift, his expression a mix of irritation and something far more dangerous: pity.

“And you have no right to keep her in a gilded cage like some pet canary,” he snaps back, his voice cutting through the tension like a blade.

“You brought Willow into Veritas, Raekon. I told you to train her. I never ordered you to fall in love with her.”

The accusation slams into me like a gravity pulse. My jaw tightens, my throat locking up as I try to deny it—because it’s absurd, isn’t it? Vakutan don’t love. Not like humans do. Not with their messy, fragile hearts. But the words don’t come. My silence is damning.

Pyke’s eyes narrow, his lips curling into a grim smile. “I see. So it’s worse than I thought. Is she your jalshagar?”

The word hangs in the air like a detonator waiting to go off. My scales bristle, my chest tightening. “I don’t know,” I admit, the words grinding out like gravel. “But I suspect she might be.”

Pyke exhales sharply, rubbing the bridge of his nose.

“Then this will be even harder for you to do.” His voice is softer now, but no less commanding.

“Raekon, I’m ordering you to convince Willow to undertake this mission.

If she doesn’t, there’s no telling how many more humans will suffer—or how much damage will be done to the sacred timeline.”

The weight of his words presses down on me, but I shove it aside. “No,” I growl, feral. “I won’t do it. I won’t let her?—”

“You don’t get to let her do anything!” Pyke’s roar cuts me off, his eyes blazing with a fury I haven’t seen in years.

“She’s not your pet, Raekon. She’s not your possession.

She’s a woman—a human—with her own mind, her own choices.

And if you care about her as much as you claim, you’ll respect that. ”

I step back, his words hitting like a plasma round to the gut. My claws dig into my palms, the sting grounding me. “You don’t understand,” I growl. “Malkus isn’t just dangerous—he’s insane. His mind is a labyrinth of traps. Even with fail-safes, the risk?—”

“Is worth taking,” Pyke interrupts, his tone final.

“The Grolgath are abducting children, Raekon. Turning them into sleeper agents. Every day we wait, more lives are destroyed. Willow is the only psyker we have who stands a chance of surviving the dive. And if you don’t convince her to do it, I’ll have no choice but to wake Malkus. You know what that means.”

I do. The thought alone makes my scales crawl. Waking Malkus would be a massacre. But sending Willow into his mind? That’s a death sentence. And I can’t—I won’t —condemn her to that.

Without another word, I turn on my heel and storm out of the room.

My claws scrape against the walls as I stride down the corridor, my mind racing.

I need to find Willow. I need to get her out of here—away from Pyke, away from Veritas, away from the damn war.

She doesn't belong in this. She never did.

I see Willow stride out of Pyke's office, Winn trailing behind her like an overeager shadow. Her red hair catches the dim light of the base, and for a moment, the sight of her knocks the wind out of me. But then I remember why she's here, what Pyke's asking of her, and my scales bristle.

I cross the corridor in three strides, grabbing her hand and pulling her toward the hangar bay. "We're leaving," I growl.

She digs her heels in almost instantly. "Raekon! What?—?"

I stop, turning to face her. Behind her, the thick glass wall reveals the endless black of the ocean, fish darting past in flashes of silver and blue. Her green eyes lock onto mine, and I can already see the defiance brewing there.

"Drop the act. You know what Pyke's planning," I snap. "And it's not happening."

She yanks her hand free, crossing her arms over her chest. "And you think dragging me out of here is going to solve anything?"

"Yes." I step closer, looming over her. "Because you don't understand what you're getting into. Psycho-diving into Malkus's mind isn't like fixing a spreadsheet."

"I'm not an idiot," she fires back, chin lifting. "I know it's dangerous. But those kids—Raekon, they're being sold . Tortured. Someone has to help them, and I'm the only psyker Veritas has."

"You're not ready for this," I snarl. "Malkus isn't just dangerous—he's insane . His mind is a labyrinth of traps, and you'd be walking in blind. I won't let you?—"

“You won’t let me?” Her voice cuts through the corridor like a blade, sharp and unyielding.

“Raekon, you’re my boss, my mentor, and my Dom—and you’re great at all of those things.

But never forget that I choose to submit to your authority.

This time, I’m choosing to do this because it needs to be done.”

I freeze, my claws flexing at my sides. She’s standing there, five-foot-nothing of fire and fury, and I’m the one who feels small. Her words hit me like a plasma blast, and I’m speechless.

“You don’t understand,” I finally manage, my voice rough. “Malkus will tear you apart.”

“Then I’ll fight back,” she says, her gaze unwavering. “I’m not helpless, Raekon. And I’m not scared.”

“You should be,” I growl, my chest tightening. “Because I am.”

The admission slips out before I can stop it, and her expression softens. She steps closer, her hand brushing my arm. “I know you’re worried. But I can do this. Trust me.”

I exhale sharply, my scales prickling. “Fine. I won’t stop you.”

Her eyes widen. “Really?”

“Really.” I lean down, catching her lips in a kiss that’s equal parts possessive and

desperate. She melts into me for a moment, her hands curling against my chest. Then I pull away, turning on my heel before she can see the storm in my eyes.

“Raekon?” she calls after me.

I don’t answer. Let her think I’m walking away in defeat. Let her think I’ve finally accepted her decision. Because I haven’t. If she’s going to dive into Malkus’s mind, she’ll find nothing but a smoking ruin when she gets there—because I’m going to kill the bastard first.

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Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 10:38 am

WILLOW

I spin on my heel the moment Raekon storms off, but by the time I reach the corridor, he's already gone.

The hallways of Veritas Base Alpha are a labyrinth of glass walls and glowing panels, and I have no idea which way he went.

My heart pounds in my chest as I fumble for my compad, my fingers trembling as I pull it from my pocket.

"Captain Pyke," I say the moment the call connects, my voice shaky but urgent. "I think Raekon's about to do something stupid."

Pyke's deep, gravelly voice comes through, calm but tinged with tension. "Where are you, Willow?"

"I'm... I'm lost." I glance around, helpless. "I don't know where Raekon went, but he's got a laser blaster, and he's furious. I think he's going to kill Malkus."

"Stay where you are." Pyke's tone shifts, commanding now. "I'll have the base guide you to the psycho-dive lab. Don't try to stop Raekon yourself, understood?"

"Understood." I nod, even though he can't see me. The call ends, and a moment later, a soft chime echoes through the corridor. Holographic arrows appear on the floor, glowing a faint blue. I don't hesitate. I take off at a run, following the arrows as they twist and turn through the maze-like base.

My lungs burn, and my side aches like someone's driven a knife into it, but I don't slow down. The arrows lead me deeper into the base, past startled Vakutan who step aside as I barrel past them. Finally, I burst into the psycho-dive lab, skidding to a halt just inside the doorway.

The scene before me is chaos. Raekon stands in the center of the room, his laser blaster aimed squarely at the cryo tank holding Malkus. Pyke and Winn are on either side of him, their voices raised as they try to reason with him.

"Raekon, think about what you're doing!" Pyke's voice booms, his red scales flushed darker with frustration. "You'll destroy any chance we have of stopping the Grolgath!"

"He's a monster!" Raekon snarls, his golden scales gleaming under the harsh lab lights. "Letting Willow dive into his mind is suicide. I won't allow it!"

"And what if she's stronger than you think?" Winn interjects, his cybernetic eye whirring as he adjusts its focus. "What if she's the key we've been waiting for?"

Raekon's grip on the blaster tightens, his knuckles white against the golden scales. "I said no."

I don't wait for them to notice me. My eyes land on the chair beside the cryo tank, the one Winn must have set up for the psycho-dive.

The skullcap with its web of electrodes sits on the seat, waiting.

I move quietly, slipping past the arguing Vakutan and sliding into the chair.

My hands are shaking as I fit the skullcap onto my head, the electrodes cold against my scalp.

“Willow, don’t!” Winn’s sharp cry cuts through the room as he spots me. “The failsafes aren’t active yet! You’re not ready!”

“Turn it on,” I say, my voice steady despite the fear clawing at my chest. “I’m doing this.”

“Willow, stop!” Raekon’s roar is filled with desperation, but I don’t look at him. My fingers hover over the control panel on the armrest.

“I’m sorry, Raekon,” I whisper, and I press the button.

The machine hums to life, the sound low and resonant, like a plucked bass string.

The electrodes buzz against my skin, and suddenly, the world around me dissolves.

The lab, the Vakutan, the cryo tank—it all fades away, replaced by a swirling void of color and sound.

I feel myself being pulled, like a leaf caught in a whirlpool, and then I’m falling, tumbling, diving into the darkness.

“Willow!” Raekon’s voice echoes in the distance, but it’s too late.

I’m in.

The air smells like burnt plastic and despair.

I take a step back, my boots crunching on shattered glass.

The wailing grows louder, and I realize it’s not the wind—it’s them .

Dozens of alien figures, their bodies nailed to the sides of crumbling skyscrapers.

Some of them are so high up they're just specks, their cries echoing down like some sick symphony.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" The voice comes from behind me, smooth and mocking.

I spin around, my heart slamming against my ribs. Malkus stands there, his grin stretching unnaturally wide, like a predator who's already tasted blood. His eyes gleam with a malice that makes my skin crawl.

"Not real," I mutter, more to myself than to him. "This is a mindscape. None of this is real."

"Not real, is it?" Malkus echoes, his laugh a low, guttural rumble. He steps closer, his shadow looming over me. "Yes, I can read your mind, what there is of it, puny insect. Tell me, if this isn't real, then why do you feel... pain?"

Before I can react, a shard of glass rises from the ground, spinning in the air like some macabre ballet. It flies straight for my calf, embedding itself deep. I scream, the pain sharp and immediate, blood soaking through my pants. I stagger back, clutching at the wound.

"It's not real," I chant, my voice trembling but defiant. "It's not real."

"I am god here," Malkus says, spreading his arms wide. More shards of glass lift from the debris, glinting in the sickly green light. They hover in the air, aimed directly at me. My stomach churns.

I turn and run, limping as the pain radiates up my leg. The streets are a maze of twisted metal and shattered buildings, and I have no idea where I'm going. My breath

comes in ragged gasps, my heart pounding in my ears.

“You can hide, but you can’t run,” Malkus calls after me, his voice dripping with amusement. The sound echoes off the walls, bouncing around me like a predator toying with its prey.

I duck behind a crumbling wall, pressing my back against it as I try to catch my breath. My leg throbs, l the warm stickiness of blood soaking through my boot.

“Shall I give you a... what do you humans call it?” Malkus’s voice is closer now, and I can hear the crunch of his footsteps. “Ah yes, a head start. Shall we say thirty seconds?”

I don’t wait. I’m already moving, forcing myself to ignore the pain as I push off the wall and stumble down the street. The glass shards whiz past me, one grazing my arm and drawing another cry of pain.

“Twenty-nine, twenty-eight...” Malkus’s voice follows me, taunting. I don’t look back. I can’t. I just run, my mind racing as I search for a way out, a way to fight back.

But in Malkus’s mindscape, I’m just a mouse caught in a maze with no escape.

The dilapidated house looms ahead, its sagging roof and shattered windows like a beacon of desperation. My lungs burn as I scramble toward it, the crunch of glass under my boots grating against my nerves. Malkus’s voice echoes behind me, low and mocking, but I don’t look back. I can’t.

I dive through a busted window, shards of glass scraping my arms as I tuck and roll onto a dusty hardwood floor. The air inside is thick with the smell of mildew and decay, but something about it feels... familiar. Too familiar.

“Wait a minute,” I whisper, my voice trembling. I push myself up, my eyes darting around the room. The cracked wallpaper. The threadbare couch. The old recliner that always smelled like cigars.

“No, this can’t be right.”

But it is. I’m standing in my childhood living room, down to the chipped coffee table and the outdated TV in the corner.

A cold laugh cuts through the silence. “Where have you been, Willow?”

My stomach twists as I turn to face the voice. There he is, sitting in his recliner, puffing on a cigar like he never left. My father. His face is exactly how I remember it—sharp, disapproving, and utterly indifferent.

“Out whoring around like your mother?” His voice is bored, almost casual, like he’s commenting on the weather instead of eviscerating me.

“You’re not real,” I say, my voice shaking. “You died five years ago.”

He leans forward, the chair creaking under his weight. “I’m real, Willow.” He takes a long drag, exhaling a cloud of smoke that curls toward the ceiling. “I just faked my death because I was so ashamed to have you for a daughter.”

The words hit me like a punch to the gut. I stumble back, my hands trembling.

“At least you could have been pretty like your mother.” He waves the cigar dismissively. “Smart girls are worthless.”

“Shut up!” My scream echoes through the room, raw and guttural. I spin around, my heart pounding as I bolt down the hallway. The walls seem to stretch and warp

around me, the familiar corridors twisting into something darker, more oppressive.

I don't look back. I can't.

The hallway morphs as I run, the faded wallpaper peeling away to reveal cracked lockers and scuffed floors. My old high school. The fluorescent lights buzz overhead, flickering in time with my racing heartbeat.

The hallway stretches into a warped corridor of memories, the walls closing in as I run.

My breath comes in ragged gasps, my legs aching, but I don't stop.

I can't. Up ahead, the doors to the school cafeteria burst open, and there they are: Jeanette McGurdy and her coven of mean girls.

They're exactly how I remember them—perfectly coiffed hair, designer handbags, and smiles sharp enough to cut glass.

“Well, well, well,” Jeanette drawls, her voice dripping with faux sweetness. “Look who decided to show up. Trashy Willow, the town drunk's daughter.”

The girls giggle, their laughter echoing with a cruelty that's all too familiar. My stomach churns, but I force myself to stand straighter, to meet Jeanette's icy stare.

“Go to hell, Jeanette,” I snap, my voice trembling but loud enough to make her smirk falter for a second.

“Oh, honey,” she says, stepping closer. Her perfume is overpowering, a sickly sweet cloud that makes my nose wrinkle. “We're already in hell. And you? You're the entertainment.”

The girls circle me like vultures, their mocking voices overlapping.

“No mommy to wipe away your tears?” one sneers.

“No wonder your dad drank himself to death,” another cackles.

“Ugly and stupid. What a combo,” Jeanette says with a pitying cluck of her tongue.

“Let’s make it official, shall we?”

Before I can react, they’re shoving me forward, dragging me toward a makeshift courtroom set up in the middle of the cafeteria. A folding chair serves as the judge’s bench, and Jeanette climbs onto it, gaveling a pencil against a textbook.

“All rise for the honorable Judge McGurdy!” one of the girls announces, and they all burst into laughter.

“Willow Christian,” Jeanette begins, her voice mock-serious. “You stand accused of the crimes of ugliness and stupidity. How do you plead?”

“This is insane,” I say, my voice shaking. “You’re not real. None of this is real.”

“Guilty!” the girls shout in unison.

Jeanette slams her pencil down. “Sentenced to death.”

They’re on me before I can move, their manicured nails digging into my arms as they drag me toward the basement stairs. I try to fight, kicking and thrashing, but there are too many of them. My heart pounds in my ears as the fluorescent lights flicker above, casting the hallway in sickly shadows.

“Dad!” I scream, the word ripping from my throat as I spot him at the bottom of the

stairs. He's just standing there, puffing on his cigar, watching as they drag me toward the roaring boiler.

"Should've been prettier, Willow," he mutters, tossing the cigar to the ground and joining the girls in grabbing me.

The boiler looms ahead, its flames licking the air like hungry tongues. The metal face of it twists into a grotesque, demonic grin, the heat scorching my skin even from feet away.

"Let me go!" I scream, clawing at the hands holding me. But they're too strong—Jeanette, my father, the girls, all of them laughing as they drag me closer to the inferno.

"Time to burn, little trash girl," Jeanette whispers in my ear, her breath hot against my neck.

I catch a glimpse of the janitor leaning against the wall, his mop in hand. But his face—oh God, his face. It's Malkus, his grin wide and cruel as he watches me struggle.

"Enjoy the show," he says, his voice a guttural rasp.

I don't know what's worse: the heat of the flames or the cold, merciless laughter of my tormentors.

RAEKON

I grab Winn by the lapels of his absurdly outdated jacket, my scales scraping against the fabric as I shake him. His cybernetic eye glows brighter, whirring as it adjusts to the sudden movement.

“Get her out of there,” I growl. “Now.”

Winn’s hands flutter like frightened birds, his face a mix of fear and exasperation. “I can’t! Only Willow has the power to extract herself from Malkus’s mind. My failsafes—they weren’t enacted before she dove in. I had no time!”

I tighten my grip, the fabric of his jacket protesting under the strain. “Then put me in there with her.”

“Are you mad?” Winn sputters, his cybernetic eye telescoping outward as if to emphasize his disbelief. “You’re not a psyker. Without the proper psychic protections, you’ll blow your own brain out the moment you enter Malkus’s mind!”

Pyke steps forward, his voice calm but firm. “Raekon and Willow may be jalshagar. If they are, his bond with her could provide enough psychic shielding to get in, find her, and get out.”

Winn’s brow ridges furrow, and he adjusts his glasses with a trembling hand. “That’s... speculative at best. If I’m wrong, you’ll both be lost in there, and Malkus will have two more souls to torment.”

“Do it,” I snap. “If you don’t, I’ll find a way in myself—and it won’t be pleasant.”

Winn sighs, his shoulders slumping in defeat. “Fine. But if this works, I’m writing a paper on it.”

He motions for me to sit in the cryo pod beside Malkus, his hands moving quickly as he attaches electrodes to my temples. The cold metal bites into my skin, and I suppress a shiver.

“How do I know when it starts to work—” I begin, but my words are cut off as a searing pain rips through my skull.

The world fractures, colors and shapes blurring together in a dizzying whirl. I’m falling, or maybe flying, my body weightless as I’m pulled into the void.

When my senses return, I’m standing in the ruins of Ritus City, the acrid smell of smoke and burning flesh filling my nostrils. The massacre of Horus IV—I recognize it instantly. The bloodstained streets, the shattered buildings, the bodies piled high in the square.

I clench my fists, my scales glinting under the harsh glow of the double suns. Malkus did this. I always suspected, but now I know.

The distant sound of Willow’s scream splits the air, and I take off at a run, my claws digging into the cracked pavement.

“Hold on, little flower,” I mutter under my breath. “I’m coming for you.”

The scream cuts through the chaos, sharp and raw, and my chest tightens.

Willow. I round the corner of a crumbling building, and there she is, pinned to the

ground by three twisted figures—demons wearing the faces of humans.

Their laughter is jagged, their claws digging into her flesh as they force her face toward the furnace.

The flames lick hungrily at her skin, and I feel it too, a phantom burn searing across my own soul.

"Get your hands off her!" I roar, charging forward. But before I can reach her, a shadow steps into my path. Malkus. His form flickers, his eyes glowing with a sickly yellow light. I don't need to see his face to know it's him. The stench of his cruelty is unmistakable.

"You're not supposed to be here," he snarls, his voice guttural, like gravel grinding against steel. He spreads his arms, blocking my way. "This is my domain, Vakutan. You can't save her."

I don't bother with a reply. I lunge at him, my fist aimed for his jaw, but he catches it with ease.

His strength here is unnatural, his grip like iron.

I strain against him, my muscles burning, but he doesn't budge.

Behind him, Willow's cries grow more desperate, the flames inching closer to her face.

"Stop!" I snarl, slamming my free hand into his chest. It's like hitting a wall. He laughs, a sound that makes my scales crawl. "You can't win here, Raekon. This is my mind. My rules."

My gaze darts past him to Willow. Her hair is singed, the smell of burning flesh filling the air. The pain in my chest intensifies, a searing agony that's more than physical. If she dies here, will she die in the real world? I can't take that chance.

Malkus leans in, his breath hot against my face. "You're too late. Watch her burn."

Something inside me snaps. The bond—the jalshagar bond—pulses like a live wire, flooding me with strength I didn't know I had. I grab Malkus by the throat, my claws digging into his flesh. His eyes widen, and for the first time, there's fear in them.

"This isn't just your mind anymore," I growl, lifting him off the ground. His legs kick uselessly, his hands clawing at my arm, but I don't let go. "And nothing, nothing is impossible when you're in love."

With a roar, I hurl him toward the furnace. He screams, a sound of pure terror, as the flames engulf him. The demonic figures holding Willow vanish in a puff of smoke, and she collapses to the ground, coughing and trembling. I'm at her side in an instant, pulling her into my arms.

"Willow," I murmur, brushing the singed hair from her face. Her green eyes meet mine, wide and filled with tears. "Are you hurt?"

She shakes her head, her voice shaky. "I—I thought you weren't coming."

"I'll always come for you," I promise, my voice firm. "Always."

The landscape around us begins to dissolve, the ruins of Ritus City fading into nothingness. I hold her tighter, my heart pounding in my chest. Whatever comes next, we'll face it together.

My eyes snap open, the sterile white ceiling of the lab coming into focus as I gasp for

air.

Beside me, Willow jolts awake, her chest heaving like she's just run a marathon.

Her small hand flies to her throat, fingers trembling as she tries to ground herself.

I'm out of the cryo pod before I can think, my scales scraping against the cold metal as I kneel beside her.

"Willow," I say, my voice rough but steady. Her green eyes lock onto mine, wide and haunted. "You're safe. I've got you."

She nods, but her breathing doesn't slow. I press my hand to her cheek, the warmth of her skin a stark contrast to the cold sweat beading on her forehead. "Focus on me. You're back. It's over."

Pyke's voice cuts through the room like a knife. "Did you get the intel?"

I turn to glare at him. "She just woke up. Give her a moment."

"We don't have moments, Raekon," Pyke snaps, his scales shimmering with frustration. "The Grolgath trafficking ring is still out there, and we're no closer to stopping them."

Willow sits up, her voice shaky but firm. "I... I think I know where the base is."

Pyke's head snaps toward her, his brow ridges lifting. "Explain."

She swallows hard, her fingers twisting in the fabric of her shirt. "Malkus... he was so focused on keeping me out of his thoughts that he drew my attention to what he was hiding. It's like... he circled it in his mind. I saw it. I know where it is."

Pyke's eyes narrow, but there's a flicker of hope in them. "Talk."

She nods, and Pyke motions for us to follow him to his office. I help Willow to her feet, her hand small and warm in mine. She leans into me as we walk, her body still trembling from the ordeal. I don't let go.

The holographic globe in Pyke's office hums to life as we step inside, the Earth rotating slowly above the desk. Willow steps forward, her eyes scanning the surface. She points to a remote area in the Andes. "There. It's underground, shielded. But it's there."

Pyke zooms in on the location, his fingers flying over the controls.

The image sharpens, revealing a series of unnatural formations hidden beneath the mountain range.

He lets out a low whistle. "Clever bastards. We've been scanning the surface for months, but they've been under our noses the whole time. "

I fold my arms across my chest. "Now what?"

Pyke sighs, rubbing the ridges on his forehead. "Now, we plan. But first—" He looks at me, then at Willow, his expression softening slightly. "I should reprimand both of you for your recklessness. But I suppose, to borrow a phrase from my human wife, all's well that ends well."

Willow lets out a shaky laugh, leaning into me. "I'll take that as a win."

I squeeze her hand, my scales brushing against her skin. "So will I."

Pyke shakes his head, muttering something about insubordinate agents and Jalshagar

bonds, but I'm too focused on Willow to care. She's safe. That's all that matters.

WILLOW

The limo glides through the streets of New York, the city's skyline a blur of steel and glass outside the tinted windows.

I fidget with the delicate beading on the cuffs of my wedding gown, the fabric whispering against my skin.

The dress is perfect—elegant, timeless, and just a little bit daring with its low V-back.

But it's hard to focus on how I look when my stomach is doing somersaults.

Captain Pyke sits across from me, his massive frame taking up most of the seat.

His red scales gleam under the soft interior lighting, and his sharp, ridged features are softened by the smile he's wearing.

He's dressed in a tailored suit that somehow manages to make him look both imposing and refined.

"You look beautiful, Willow," he says, his deep voice warm and steady. "When Raekon sees you, it's going to be game over."

I glance up at him, my fingers stalling on the beadwork. "You think so?"

"I know so." He leans forward slightly, his eyes crinkling at the corners. "That man's been head over heels for you since the moment you walked into his office. And

today? He's going to be completely undone."

I feel a blush creep up my neck, and I duck my head, smoothing the fabric of my skirt. "Thank you, Captain. That means a lot coming from you."

He waves a hand dismissively, but there's a softness in his expression that makes my chest tighten. "It's an honor to be here, Willow. Truly. Though I'm sorry your father couldn't be the one to give you away."

I stiffen at the mention of my father, my hands clenching in the fabric of my dress. "I'm not," I say, my voice sharper than I intend. "I'm not sad at all."

Pyke tilts his head, his brow ridges furrowing. "No?"

I shake my head, my gaze fixed on the city outside. "He always blamed me for my mother drinking herself to death. When he passed on, it was more of a relief than anything else. Sometimes I feel like a terrible person."

There's a long pause, and then Pyke clears his throat. "I'm sorry, Willow. I didn't mean to?—"

"You don't have to apologize," I interrupt, turning back to him with a small smile. "You've been more of a father to me than my real dad in the year we've known each other. I can't think of anyone who deserves to give me away at my wedding more than you."

Pyke blinks rapidly, his eyes suspiciously bright. He turns his head away, pretending to adjust his cufflinks. "Damn allergies," he mutters, his voice gruff. "They're terrible this time of year. My eyes are watering like crazy."

I laugh softly, the tension in my chest easing. "Sure, Captain. Allergies."

He shoots me a look, but there's no real heat in it. "Watch it, or I'll tell Raekon you're already giving me lip on your wedding day."

"He'd probably just say it's about time I started standing up for myself," I reply, grinning.

Pyke chuckles, shaking his head. "You're probably right. That man's got it bad for you."

I lean back against the plush seat, my fingers tracing the intricate lace of my dress. The limo slows as we approach the venue, and I take a deep breath, trying to steady my nerves. Today's the day. Today, I become Willow Keong. And I couldn't be happier.

The limo pulls up to Penthouse 45, and I'm immediately hit with the surreal realization that this is it.

My wedding day. Pyke steps out first, his massive frame towering over the doorman, who barely manages to keep his composure.

He offers me his hand, and I take it, the coolness of his scales grounding me as I step onto the curb.

"Ready?" Pyke asks, his voice low and steady.

"As I'll ever be," I reply, smoothing my dress with my free hand.

Inside, the wedding planner, a man named Julian, descends on us like a tornado in a sequined blazer. "There you are!" he exclaims, flapping his hands like a distressed bird. "We're already behind schedule. Come, come, we need to get started on the photos."

I shoot Pyke a look, but he just shrugs, his lips twitching in amusement. “You’re the star of the show, Willow. Better get used to it.”

Julian herds me toward the photographer, a wiry man with a camera slung around his neck and a perpetually harried expression.

“Stand here,” Julian instructs, positioning me in front of a floor-to-ceiling window with the Manhattan skyline as the backdrop.

“Chin up, shoulders back, and smile like you’re about to marry the man of your dreams.”

I oblige, but after the first dozen shots, my patience starts to wear thin. The photographer keeps adjusting the lighting, the angle, the position of my hands. I’m starting to feel like a mannequin.

“Okay, one more,” the photographer says, crouching down for a low-angle shot.

I stick my tongue out.

He lowers the camera, blinking at me. “Uh... could you not do that?”

“Do what?” I ask innocently, giving him the middle finger this time.

Julian gasps, clutching his chest like I’ve just committed a cardinal sin. “Willow, darling, this is your wedding . These photos will be cherished for generations!”

“Then they’ll be cherished with my personality intact,” I shoot back, grinning.

Pyke chuckles from the sidelines, his deep laugh rumbling through the room. “She’s got a point, Julian. Let her have some fun.”

Julian throws up his hands. “Fine, fine. But one more shot, please. With Captain Pyke. The father of the bride.”

I glance at Pyke, who’s already striding over. The photographer frowns, looking between us. “Uh, the height difference is... a bit extreme.”

Before I can respond, Pyke scoops me up like I weigh nothing, cradling me in one arm like a child. I burst out laughing, and Pyke joins in, his deep chuckle vibrating through me. The photographer snaps a few shots, capturing the moment perfectly.

“There,” Julian says, clapping his hands. “Now, it’s time to get ready for the march. Willow, follow me.”

I glance out at the gathered guests as Julian leads me away.

Most of them are Vakutan, their human disguises flawless but their sheer size giving them away.

A handful of Keong Industries employees are scattered among them, looking slightly out of place but no less excited.

I make a mental note to introduce myself properly after the ceremony.

As the music begins to play, Julian fusses with my veil, his hands trembling slightly. “You’re going to be stunning,” he says, his voice softer now. “Raekon’s a lucky man.”

I smile, my heart swelling with anticipation. “I’m the lucky one.”

Julian steps back, giving me one last appraising look. “Ready?”

I nod. “Let’s do this.”

The music swells, and I’m ready, my arm looped through Pyke’s.

The aisle stretches before me, lined with towering Vakutan guests, their human disguises flickering slightly under the weight of their excitement.

They’re loud—cheering, clapping, and shouting in a mix of Vakutan and English.

One of them, a burly guy with a voice like a foghorn, bellows, “Raekon, you’re the luckiest Vakutan in the galaxy! ”

I blush furiously, my cheeks burning as Pyke chuckles beside me. “They’re not wrong,” he murmurs, his voice low and warm. “But don’t let it go to your head.”

“Too late,” I whisper back, grinning despite myself. My heart is pounding so hard I’m surprised it doesn’t echo through the room.

And then I see him.

Raekon stands at the altar, his human disguise flawless—broad shoulders, sharp jaw, that clean-shaven head I’ve come to love.

But it’s his eyes that undo me. Those deep, crimson eyes, the one part of him the image inducer can’t hide.

They’re fixed on me, burning with a intensity that makes my knees weak.

His lips curve into a smile, wide and unrestrained, and I feel like I’m the only person in the room.

Pyke gives my arm a reassuring squeeze as we reach the altar. “Take care of her,” he says to Raekon, his voice thick with emotion. “Or you’ll answer to me.”

“Always,” Raekon replies, his gaze never leaving mine. He takes my hand, his grip firm and warm, and I swear I can feel the faint texture of his scales beneath the hologram.

The Vakutan priest steps forward, his human disguise flickering slightly as he begins the ceremony.

He talks about the Precursors, about souls and Jalshagar, but I’m not really listening.

I’m too busy staring at Raekon, memorizing the way his eyes crinkle when he smiles, the way his thumb strokes the back of my hand.

“Willow,” Raekon says, his voice steady and sure. “I vow to protect you, cherish you, and love you, for as long as I live. You are my Jalshagar, my soul, my everything.”

My throat tightens, and I blink back tears. “Raekon,” I begin, my voice trembling. “I vow to protect you, cherish you, and love you, for as long as I live.” I pause, a mischievous smile tugging at my lips. “And I just want to say—you’re the bravest man in the galaxy, marrying me.”

The room erupts in laughter, and Raekon’s grin widens. “Brave, maybe,” he says, teasing. “But also the luckiest.”

I laugh, the sound bubbling up from somewhere deep inside me, and it’s just the two of us, lost in each other’s eyes.

The priest says something about rings, but I barely hear him.

All I can think about is how much I love this man—this alien, this warrior, this impossible, wonderful, infuriating Vakutan who's about to become my husband.

RAEKON

"This has been the longest week in the history of ever," she murmurs, her voice a soft hum against my chest.

"It was you who introduced me to the human concept of keeping separate for several days before the wedding," I remind her, my voice low and teasing.

She tilts her head back, her emerald eyes sparkling with mischief. "Yes, I did. And why did you listen to me?"

Her question catches me off guard, and I let out a rumble of laughter that vibrates through her. "Because," I say, leaning down to brush my lips against her ear, "I thought it would make the moment I finally claimed you all the sweeter."

I feel her shiver against me. She reaches up, her fingers grazing my cheek, and I know she's searching for the scales beneath the holographic illusion. "I can't wait until we're alone and you can take this off," she whispers, her voice tinged with longing.

"I can't wait," I growl, my eyes burning into hers as my fingers trail down the delicate fabric of her dress, "until we're alone and I can take this off."

She laughs, a soft, musical sound that makes my scales itch with impatience. "Remember, I want to preserve the dress," she says, her grin widening. "No ripping it off of me."

I let out a mock growl, pulling her even closer until there's no space left between us. "You're no fun."

Her lips curve into a playful smirk. "Aww, my poor horny Vakutan husband," she coos, leaning up to kiss the tip of my nose. "Tell you what, you can dress me up however you want when you get me alone—as long as you don't tear my dress."

My brows arch, and I can't help the predatory smile that spreads across my face. "Deal."

She laughs again, shaking her head. "What have I gotten myself into?"

I dip her suddenly, one hand supporting her back, the other still pressed firmly against her.

Her eyes widen in surprise, and then she's laughing again, her red hair cascading over my arm.

"Into a lifetime of this, little flower," I command with an earthquake-like rumble.

"And you wouldn't have it any other way. "

She's still laughing as I pull her back up, her arms looping around my neck. "You're right," she says, her grin softening into something deeper, more intimate. "I wouldn't."

The music swells around us, but I barely hear it. All I can focus on is the woman in my arms, the way her body moves with mine, the way her eyes hold mine as if she's trying to memorize this moment. I don't need the city lights or the grandeur of Penthouse 45. All I need is her.

My fingers tighten on her waist, and I lean down, my lips brushing against hers. "Soon," I promise, my voice a hoarse whisper. "Soon, I'll have you exactly where I want you."

She shivers again, her eyes darkening with desire. "I'm holding you to that, Raekon."

I smile, a slow, predatory grin that makes her breath catch. "Good."

The applause swells as we finish our dance, Willow's cheeks flushed, her smile radiant. I don't think I've ever seen her look more beautiful. She's mine. Officially. Unquestionably. And I'm hers—though I suspect she hasn't fully grasped what that means yet.

Pyke's voice cuts through the crowd's murmurs. I've never trusted him entirely, but tonight, he's Willow's father figure, and I'll play along. "Time to cut the cake!" he announces, his booming voice carrying across the room.

Willow beams, her hand slipping into mine as we make our way to the towering confection.

It's a monstrosity of sugary perfection, a human custom I still find bizarre but amusing.

She takes the knife, her delicate fingers dwarfed by my massive hand when I wrap mine around hers.

The crowd coos, snapping pictures, and Willow giggles as we slice into the cake together.

"Do it! Do it!" The chant starts, and I know what they're asking for. Willow shoots me a mischievous glance, her eyes narrowing as she picks up a piece of cake. I smirk,

towering over her by nearly two feet.

"You're going to have to work for it, little flower," I say, leaning back, my face just out of her reach. She hops, stretching as high as she can, her lips pursed in mock frustration, but I'm immovable.

"Raekon," she whines, her voice dripping with playful indignation. "Don't be a spoilsport."

"Never," I reply, grinning down at her. "But I'm not about to make it easy for you."

Before I can react, Pyke's foot kicks a chair behind my knees. I drop into it with a thud, the chair groaning under my weight. Willow doesn't waste a second. She lunges, cake in hand, and smashes it into my face with a triumphant squeal.

The crowd erupts into laughter, and I am compelled to join in, even as frosting drips down my chin. But then, the chair gives out with a loud crack, and I hit the floor, cake and all. The laughter grows louder, and I'm laughing harder than anyone, my chest shaking with the force of it.

Willow is doubled over, clutching her sides, tears streaming down her face from laughter. Pyke claps me on the shoulder, grinning like a madman. "Well, I'd say that's a wedding moment to remember."

I sit up, wiping cake from my face with one hand and pulling Willow into my lap with the other. "You're lucky I love you," I growl, nuzzling her neck.

"And you're lucky I didn't smash the whole cake," she shoots back, her voice light and teasing.

I tighten my arms around her, letting the sound of laughter and joy wash over us.

Tonight, I'm not a Vakutan warrior or a Veritas agent. I'm just a husband, married to the woman who changed everything.

Pyke's hand lands heavily on my shoulder, his grip firm and fatherly.

"Raekon, a moment of your time," he says, steering me away from the dancing crowd and over to a quieter corner of the room.

His voice is low, serious, the kind of tone that makes me straighten up instinctively, even in my wedding suit.

"You better not be giving me some cliché speech about how I need to cherish Willow or some nonsense," I say, arching a brow ridge at him. "Because I'm pretty sure I've got that covered."

Pyke chuckles, shaking his head. "No, no, nothing so sentimental. Though, for the record, I'm glad you're finally admitting how soft you've gotten for her."

I glare at him, but the effect is ruined by the cake still smeared across my face. "Get to the point, Captain."

"I hope you understand the enormous responsibility you've undertaken," he says, his tone turning serious again.

I sigh, crossing my arms over my chest. "Pyke, I'm a Vakutan warrior. Responsibility is my middle name. Marriage doesn't change that. I've sworn to protect Willow with my life, to guide her, to challenge her, to?—"

Pyke holds up a hand, cutting me off. "Not that, Raekon. I know you'll do fine with all the husbandly duties."

I'm talking about the other responsibility you've taken on.

The one where you agreed to watch Veritas Base Alpha while I'm on vacation with my wife—after you get back from your own honeymoon, of course. ”

I blink at him, momentarily thrown. “Oh. That.”

“Yes, that,” he says, his lips twitching with amusement. “You do remember, don't you? The entire base? The hundreds of agents, the experiments, the security protocols, the ocean we're sitting under?”

I wave a hand dismissively. “You have nothing to fear, Captain. I will take good care of my wife, and then after I return to work at Veritas, I will take good care of your seat until you get back.”

Pyke's eyes narrow, but there's a glint of humor in them.

“I'll hold you to that,” he says, thumping me on the chest with enough force to make a lesser man stagger.

Not me, though. I'm Vakutan. “Now, enough talk about work. I think it's high time you took that pretty little wife of yours out of here, don't you? ”

My gaze drifts across the room to where Willow is laughing with a group of Veritas agents, her red hair catching the light like flame.

The sight of her hits me all over again, like a plasma bolt to the chest. Every time I think I've grown used to how much I love her, she does something—smiles, laughs, breathes —and it knocks the wind out of me all over again.

“Yes, Captain,” I say, my voice softening despite myself. “I believe you are correct.”

Pyke claps me on the shoulder once more, a knowing smile on his face. “Go on, then. Don’t keep her waiting.”

I don’t need to be told twice. I stride across the room, my focus solely on Willow. She looks up as I approach, her green eyes lighting up when she sees me. “Hey, you,” she says, her voice warm and teasing. “Finished getting scolded by Pyke?”

I reach for her hand, pulling her close. “Not scolded. Just reminded of a few things.”

Her brows arch, and she grins up at me. “Like how lucky you are to have me?”

I chuckle, leaning down to press a kiss to her forehead. “Among other things. But right now, I’m more interested in getting you out of here.”

She laughs, the sound lighting up the room. “Finally. I thought you’d never ask.”

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WILLOW

The limo door closes with a quiet thud , sealing us off from the world.

Before I can even adjust my dress, Raekon's hands are on me, pulling me into his lap.

His lips crash into mine, fierce and demanding, his tongue claiming me with a hunger that makes my head spin.

I gasp, my fingers clutching at his broad shoulders as he devours me, his scales warm and smooth under my touch.

"Mine," he growls against my mouth. His voice vibrates through me. "Every inch of you, Willow. Mine."

I melt into him, my body responding instantly.

His hands slide down my back, fingers slipping under the straps of my dress.

He pulls away just enough to look at me, his red eyes blazing with possessive desire.

The dress slides down my shoulders, inch by agonizing inch, until it pools around my waist. His gaze roams over my exposed skin, and I shiver under the intensity of it.

"Impeccable self-control," I manage to say with a breathless laugh, my lips tingling from the force of his kiss. "I thought you'd have ripped this dress to shreds the second we were alone."

He hums, his hands sliding up my sides, fingers tracing the curve of my ribs. “My self-control as a Vakutan warrior is legendary,” he says with smug satisfaction. “I’ve denied myself pleasure for the last week we’ve been apart.”

My eyes widen. “You haven’t...?” I trail off, my cheeks heating as I realize what he’s implying.

“Of course not,” he says, his tone firm. “And you, my dear, should have done the same.”

I bite my lip, my fingers playing with the hem of his suit jacket. “Well... I may have, um, been bad last night.”

Raekon freezes, his eyes narrowing. “You disobeyed me?”

I squirm under his gaze, feeling both guilty and absurdly turned on. “It was just once! And it was your fault for being so far away.”

He lets out a low growl, his hands tightening on my hips. “We’ve only been married a few minutes, and already it seems I must discipline my new bride.”

I bite back a grin, my eyes sparkling with mischief. “Oh no, please. Not that. Anything but being tied up and spanked. I would hate it.”

His lips twitch in a barely suppressed smile, his hands sliding down to grip my thighs. “You’re a little menace, aren’t you?”

“Only for you,” I whisper, leaning in to kiss him again.

He catches my chin, holding me just out of reach.

“I’ve had plans for you, my dear,” he says, his voice dark and promising.

He reaches for the storage console beside him, his fingers flipping the latch with a quiet click.

The door slides open, revealing a neat array of items that make me blush redder than a sunset.

I lean back, my eyes wide. “Raekon... what’s all this?”

Raekon holds up the ball gag, his red eyes locking onto mine with an intensity that makes my knees weak.

“Open,” he commands, his voice low and firm, leaving no room for hesitation.

My clit throbs in response, a sharp, electric pulse that sends heat flooding through me.

I part my lips, obedient and eager, as he works the gag into place.

The ball settles deep, pressing against my tongue, and the leather straps tighten around my head with a soft, final click.

I feel it immediately—the weight of it, the restriction, the way it silences me and makes my breath quicken.

He steps back, his gaze raking over me like I’m a prize he’s about to claim. “Good girl,” he murmurs, his voice rough with approval. My heart skips a beat, and I shift on my knees, already aching for his touch.

Next comes the harness. He slides it over my shoulders, the leather cool and smooth

against my skin.

He works methodically, adjusting each strap, tightening each buckle until the harness hugs my body like a second skin.

I feel exposed, vulnerable, and utterly irresistible.

My breasts are fully on display, the leather framing them perfectly, and the harness leaves my pussy bare, heightening every sensation.

I arch my back slightly, trying to catch his gaze, to seduce him with my body since I can't speak.

Raekon's hands pause on my hips, and he lets out a low growl.

"You're so beautiful," he says, his voice thick with desire.

His hands grip my shoulders, and he spins me around, forcing me to face away from him.

I drop to my knees on the floor of the limo, the leather of the seat cool beneath them.

He takes the single glove, sliding it over my arms, and I'm helpless, bound, completely at his mercy.

He grabs me, pulling me back against his chest, and I feel the heat of his body, the strength in his arms as he holds me tightly.

His lips find my neck, trailing hot kisses along my skin, and I moan softly into the gag, the sound muffled but unmistakable.

His hands roam over my body, cupping my breasts, pinching and teasing my nipples until they're hard and sensitive.

I squirm, trying to press against him, but he holds me firmly in place.

Then his hand slides between my thighs, and I gasp, my body arching instinctively.

His fingers brush against my clit, just enough to make me whimper, and then he pulls away, leaving me desperate for more.

He repeats the motion, teasing me, edging me closer and closer to the brink.

I'm trembling, my body taut with need, but he doesn't give me what I want—not yet.

“You're mine,” he growls against my ear, his voice a deep rumble that makes my stomach twist with desire. “And I'm going to take my time with you.”

The moment Raekon pulls the nipple clamps from the case, I'm instantly enthralled.

They're sleek, black, and menacing, with a small button on the side that I know will make them hum with life.

He holds them up, his red eyes glinting with mischief as he explains their function, his voice low and deliberate.

“These,” he says, his thumb brushing over the button, “vibrate. And they'll warm up to a temperature that's... just right.” His lips curl into a wicked smile, and I squirm in anticipation, my nipples already hard and aching for his touch.

He leans in, his breath hot against my ear. “You're going to feel every second of this, little flower.”

I nod eagerly, my body trembling as he brings the first clamp to my left nipple.

The cold metal makes me gasp, and then he tightens it, the pressure sharp and delicious.

I whimper into the gag, my back arching as he repeats the process on the other side.

The sensation is overwhelming—pain and pleasure tangled together in a way that makes my head spin.

Raekon's fingers linger on the clamps, adjusting them just enough to make me squirm.

Then he presses the button, and the world explodes.

The vibrations start low, a steady hum that sends shivers through my entire body.

My nipples are on fire, the clamps pulling and teasing in a rhythm that's maddening.

I try to press myself against him, desperate for more, but he pushes me away with a firm hand on my chest.

"Not yet," he growls, his voice thick with authority. "You must be punished for touching my pussy while you were supposed to be celibate for the week before our nuptials."

I nod frantically, trying to say yes, sir around the gag, but all that comes out is a muffled moan and a trickle of drool that lands on his tuxedo. He glances down at the wet spot, his lips twitching in amusement.

"It never ends with your disobedience," he says, his tone a mix of exasperation and

affection.

He drags me onto his lap, his hand coming down hard on my ass.

The sharp sting makes me cry out, but it's nothing compared to the way his fingers slide between my cheeks after each strike, teasing my pussy with just enough pressure to drive me wild.

I'm a mess, writhing in his lap, the vibrations from the clamps making it impossible to think. But he's relentless, his hand moving with precision, spanking me until my skin is hot and sensitive, his fingers brushing against my clit just enough to keep me on the edge but never letting me fall.

"You're mine," he growls. My body twists like burning match curling in on itself, inflamed by desire. "And I'm going to make sure you never forget it."

Raekon pulls an exotic sex toy from the case, and my breath catches at the sight of it.

It's sleek and alien, the tip curved in a way that promises to hit all the right spots.

He holds it up, his red eyes gleaming with dark amusement as he powers it on.

The low hum of the motor sends a shiver through me.

"Look at this, little flower," he says, his voice a deep rumble that makes my stomach twist. "It's going to make you scream. Or at least, it would if I hadn't gagged you."

I whimper around the ball gag, my body already trembling in anticipation. He pushes me onto my back, the leather seat cool against my skin. His hand smacks my inner thigh sharply, the sting making me gasp.

“Spread,” he commands, his tone leaving no room for hesitation. I hasten to obey, my legs parting as wide as the restraints allow. The sting from his slap lingers, but I don’t mind. It only adds to the storm of sensations he’s orchestrating.

His fingers brush against my pussy, spreading me open with deliberate precision. I feel exposed, vulnerable, and utterly at his mercy. His thumb circles my clit, teasing a moan from me that’s muffled by the gag.

“My pussy is so cute,” he says with possessive affection. “I’ve missed it this past week.”

Before I can process the warmth spreading through me at his words, he’s lining up the vibe.

He works it inside me slowly, the cool, smooth surface sliding in with surprising ease.

I’m already so wet, so ready, that it’s almost effortless.

I whimper around the gag, my hips twitching as the vibe settles deep.

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“There we go,” he murmurs, his thumb brushing against my clit again. “Let’s see how long you can last.”

He starts slow, the vibrations gentle and teasing.

I squirm, trying to press against him for more, but he holds me in place with one hand on my hip.

The intensity increases gradually, the vibrations shifting from a gentle hum to a more insistent thrum.

My back arches, my breaths coming in shallow gasps as he teases me mercilessly.

He changes the pattern, the vibe rotating and pulsing in ways that make my toes curl. My clit throbs, the sensations building to a fever pitch, but just as I’m on the edge, he pulls back, reducing the intensity. I groan in frustration, my body trembling with the need for release.

“Not yet,” he says, his voice firm but tinged with amusement. “You’re not ready.”

I whine around the gag, my hips jerking instinctively, but he holds me still. He’s in complete control, and he knows it. The vibrations shift again, this time a steady, maddening pulse that keeps me teetering on the edge but never lets me fall.

I’m a mess, writhing under his touch, my body aching for release. But he’s relentless, his gaze locked on mine as he watches me unravel. He knows every inch of my body, every reaction, every tell. I’m not going to cum until he says so, and he’s clearly not

ready yet.

All I can do is ride the wave of sensations, my body trembling under his expert touch. He's in control, and I'm powerless to do anything but obey.

The vibrations on the vibe and clamps shift to a low, erratic hum, enough to keep me simmering but not enough to push me over.

I whimper into the gag, confused and restless, as Raekon slides a knee-length overcoat over my shoulders.

The fabric brushes against my bare skin, and I shiver, both from the sensation and from the knowledge that he's about to take me out in public like this.

The coat hides the harness, the restraints, my nakedness—but not the way my body trembles with every step.

He adjusts a cotton face mask over my nose and mouth, the straps of the ball gag still faintly visible beneath it. My heart pounds, my cheeks flushing with heat as the reality of this situation sinks in. He's really going to do this.

The limo pulls to a stop outside a 24-hour grocery store, the fluorescent lights spilling onto the pavement.

Raekon helps me out, his arm draped over my shoulders with casual possession.

His hand slips into his pocket, and I feel the vibrations on the clamps and vibe notch up just enough to make my knees wobble.

I bite down on the gag, muffling a moan as he guides me inside.

The store is quiet, the late hour leaving only a few scattered patrons.

A sleepy cashier leans against the counter, but her eyes flick up as we enter.

She zeroes in on my empty coat sleeves, the way I walk stiffly with my arms pinned behind my back.

Her brow arches, but she says nothing, and I'm both relieved and mortified.

Raekon grabs a handheld basket and steers me down the aisles, the vibrations humming softly, teasingly.

I'm hyper-aware of every step, every brush of the coat against my thighs.

He pauses in the produce section, and I freeze as he cranks the vibrations up a notch.

I freeze, my body tensing, as an Asian woman browsing apples glances over at us.

I clamp my jaw down on the gag, my legs trembling as I fight to stay silent.

The woman's eyes narrow in curiosity, her gaze flicking to the way I bend at the waist, my coat riding up to expose flashes of bare skin.

Her cheeks flush, but she doesn't look away.

I can't tell if she's scandalized or fascinated.

Raekon smirks, shifting the basket to his other hand as he leads me out of the aisle. Once we're alone in the international foods section, he turns the vibrations up to their highest setting. My knees buckle, but he catches me, his arm a solid band around my waist.

“Cum for me, little flower,” he commands, his voice low and dark in my ear.

I can’t hold back anymore. The orgasm crashes over me like a tidal wave, my body thrashing as I suck in ragged breaths through the mask and gag.

My moans are deep, guttural, muffled but unmistakable.

I bump into a shelf, sending packages of rice tumbling to the floor, some of them bursting open.

Raekon holds me steady, his grip firm as I ride out the waves of pleasure.

The cashier pokes her head around the corner, her eyes wide. “Everything okay?”

“All good,” Raekon replies cheerfully, his tone light and unconcerned. I’m still shivering in his arms, my body pulsing with aftershocks, and the cashier gives me a small, knowing smile before disappearing again.

Raekon brushes a stray strand of hair from my face, his expression a mix of smug satisfaction and something softer.

“You’re exquisite when you fall apart for me,” he murmurs, his thumb tracing my cheekbone.

I can’t respond, but I don’t need to. The look in his eyes says it all. I’m his, and he’s never letting me go.

Raekon’s fingers brush against a bottle of warming KY jelly in the aisle, and he tosses it into the basket with a smirk.

My eyes widen behind the mask, a muffled protest caught in my throat.

Next comes a box of condoms, the shiny packaging glaring under the fluorescent lights.

My cheeks burn. He's not even going to use them—he's just doing this to humiliate me further.

He adds a bottle of massage oil, a set of silk restraints, and something called "Euphoric Climax Serum" to the growing pile. My stomach twists with a mix of embarrassment and anticipation. The cashier is going to see all of this. Everyone in the store is going to see it.

Raekon turns to me, his red eyes gleaming. "Ready to check out, little flower?"

I try to shake my head, but he just chuckles and steers me toward the register.

The cashier, a bored-looking woman with a neon pink streak in her hair, scans the items without comment—until she gets to the condoms. Her brow quirks, and she glances at Raekon, then at me.

I'm hunched over, my arms bound behind me, the coat barely hiding my nakedness.

"Busy night?" she asks, her tone dry but not unkind.

"Just getting started," Raekon replies, his voice smooth and unbothered.

As she bags the items, he casually turns the vibe in my pussy and the clamps on my nipples to their highest setting. My legs nearly buckle, a soft whimper escaping around the gag. The cashier's eyes flick to me, her lips twitching in amusement.

"Something wrong, honey?" she asks, though her tone suggests she knows exactly what's wrong.

Before I can react, Raekon cranks the vibrations up to max. My knees give out, and I crash into the counter, the clamps buzzing furiously, the vibe a relentless rhythm inside me. The cashier's eyes widen, her cheeks flushing as she realizes what's happening.

"Have a nice night," Raekon says, his tone cheerful as he scoops me up with one arm and grabs the bag with the other.

The cashier stares, her mouth hanging open, as Raekon carries me out of the store. My legs dangle, the coat flapping open to reveal my bare ass and the vibe still humming away. A man in the parking lot nearly drops his cart as he sees us.

Raekon tosses me into the back of the limo, the door slamming shut behind us. He grabs the lapels of the coat and rips it open, buttons flying like shrapnel. My body is exposed, trembling, the clamps still buzzing, the vibe still working its magic.

"Now," he growls, his voice low and dangerous, "you will give ME pleasure."

WILLOW

The limo's leather seats are cool against my knees as I kneel before Raekon, my body still humming from the vibrations of the clamps and the vibe.

The harness digs into my skin, leaving me exposed and vulnerable, but I'm not thinking about that right now.

All I can focus on is the throbbing, scaled length of his cock, inches from my face.

Even restrained, even gagged, I'm determined to please him—and maybe, just maybe, remind him who's really in control here.

I lean forward, rubbing my gagged face against the length of him, the ridges of his cock catching on the rubber ball in my mouth. His hand tangles in my hair, pulling me closer, the heat radiating from him, the way his body tenses with need.

“Good girl,” he murmurs, his voice thick with approval. He reaches behind my head, unbuckling the gag and pulling it free. I gasp as the ball slips out, my jaw aching but my mouth already watering at the thought of what's next.

I don't waste a second. My tongue darts out, tracing the underside of his cock from the base to the tip, savoring the way his scales shift and ripple under my touch.

The ridges around the crown undulate, and I moan, the sound low and throaty.

I'm supposed to be the one in control here, but damn, he's intoxicating.

“That’s it,” he growls, his fingers tightening in my hair. “Show me what you can do, little flower.”

I take the tip of his cock into my mouth, my lips closing around the heart-shaped head.

I suckle gently at first, teasing him, but when he lets out a low groan, I can’t resist pushing further.

My tongue swirls around the ridges, and I feel him twitch in my mouth, his hips bucking slightly.

I pull back, then take him deeper, my throat relaxing as I work him with a rhythm that’s as much for my pleasure as his.

He’s close—I can feel it in the way his body tenses, the way his breath comes in short, sharp gasps.

I redouble my efforts, my mouth working him with a fervor that leaves me lightheaded.

And then he’s there, his cock pulsing as he spills into my mouth.

I swallow eagerly, the taste of him sweet and rich, like strawberries and something uniquely him .

It’s always been my favorite part of this—the way he tastes, the way he feels when he loses control.

When he finally stills, I pull back, licking my lips and looking up at him with a smug grin. “Well, that was quick,” I say, my voice teasing. “Guess I’m better at this than I

thought.”

His eyes narrow, and I see the flicker of something dangerous in his gaze. “You’re looking a bit too pleased with yourself,” he says, his tone low and warning.

“Well, I did make you cum in record time,” I reply, unable to keep the smugness out of my voice.

“After I had not touched myself in a week,” he growls, his hand tightening in my hair again. “You need to be reminded who you belong to, little flower.”

I swallow hard, the smugness fading as I realize I might have pushed him too far. But before I can say anything, he’s pulling me up, his hands rough and demanding as he positions me exactly where he wants me. And I know, without a doubt, that I’m about to get exactly what I asked for.

His hand tangles in my hair, yanking me forward until my face is level with his cock. The ridges along his length glisten, and I can already feel my mouth watering. “Take it,” he growls, his voice low and commanding. “All of it.”

I don’t hesitate. My lips part, and I take the tip of him into my mouth, my tongue swirling around the heart-shaped crown.

He groans, his fingers tightening in my hair as I push further, taking him deeper.

The ridges catch on my tongue, and I make all kinds of sounds around him, the vibrations making him twitch in my mouth.

“Deeper,” he commands, and I obey, my throat relaxing as I take him in.

He doesn’t stop until I’m gagging, my nose pressed against the base of his cock.

I can't breathe, my lungs burning, but I don't pull away.

I know better. His grip on my hair is ironclad, holding me in place as I struggle to take him.

Finally, he lets me up, and I gasp for air, my chest heaving.

But before I can catch my breath, he's pushing me back down, his cock sliding into my throat again.

I choke, tears pricking at the corners of my eyes, but I don't fight him.

Instead, I focus on pleasing him, my lips and tongue working in tandem to drive him wild.

He groans, his hips bucking as he thrusts into my mouth. "That's it, little flower," he growls, his voice thick with need. "Take it all."

I do, my mouth working him with a fervor that leaves me lightheaded.

And then he's there, his cock pulsing as he spills into my mouth.

I swallow eagerly, the taste of him sweet and rich, like strawberries and something uniquely him .

It's always been my favorite part of this—the way he tastes, the way he feels when he loses control.

When he finally stills, I pull back, licking my lips and looking up at him with a smug grin. "That was even faster than last time," I say sweetly, my voice teasing.

His eyes narrow, and I see the flicker of something dangerous in his gaze. “You’re looking a bit too pleased with yourself,” he says, his tone low and warning.

Before I can respond, he’s shoving the ball gag back into my mouth, the rubber ball pressing against my tongue.

He buckles it tight, the leather straps digging into my cheeks.

Then he grabs the straps from my harness, using them to bind my legs in a kneeling position, my thighs strapped to my ankles.

I’m completely at his mercy now, and I shiver with anticipation.

He pushes me onto my back on the floor of the limo, his huge body looming over me.

His mouth envelops one of my breasts, his tongue swirling around the nipple clamp still attached to it.

The vibrations send a jolt of pleasure through me, and I moan around the gag.

Then he pulls the vakutan vibe out of my pussy, and I whimper at the sudden emptiness. “Now you’re going to take every inch of my cock,” he growls, his hand squeezing my throat until I can’t even squeak.

Oh god, yes, finally! I think to myself. A week without Raekon’s cock inside me is a week too long.

Raekon’s cock slides into me with a slow, deliberate rhythm, each thrust sending waves of pleasure crashing through my body.

His red eyes burn with a primal hunger that makes my heart race, and I groan around

the gag, the sound muffled but desperate.

I love this—the way he looks at me like I’m his, like I’m the only thing in the universe that matters.

His scales catch the dim light of the limo, glinting like gold, and I’m mesmerized by the sight of him, by the feel of him inside me.

The ridges of his cock drag against my walls, teasing and stretching me in ways that make my toes curl.

It’s better than the vibe, better than anything I’ve ever felt.

He’s warm and hard, yet there’s a flexibility to him that makes every movement feel like a revelation.

I’m so close, teetering on the edge, and I whimper, my body trembling as I beg for permission to let go.

“Cum,” he growls, his voice sharp and commanding, and I shatter. My scream is muffled by the gag, but it doesn’t matter—he knows. He always knows. My body convulses beneath him, my pussy clenching around his cock as I ride out the waves of my orgasm. But he’s not done with me yet.

Before I can catch my breath, he’s pulling out, and I whine at the sudden emptiness.

He grabs the heating KY jelly, and I watch as he coats his cock with it, the slick warmth making my pussy ache for him all over again.

Then he’s lifting me, positioning me on his lap in reverse cowgirl, and I gasp as he slides back inside me.

The warmth of the jelly amplifies every sensation, and I'm already trembling again.

His hands grip the straps of my harness, the single glove, and the gag, using them like reins to control me.

Even though I'm on top, he's still in charge, and I love it.

I try to move, to pump my hips and give him as much pleasure as he's giving me, but I'm so restrained, so helpless, that all I can manage are small, desperate movements.

Still, I clench around him, my pussy milking his cock as I try to show him how much I want this, how much I want him.

"Good girl," he murmurs, his voice low and approving, and I feel a surge of pride.

His grip tightens on the straps, and he thrusts up into me, his cock hitting all the right spots.

I'm so close again, my body trembling with the need to cum, and then he's there, his cock throbbing inside me as he spills.

The feeling of him pulsing, of his warmth filling me, sends me over the edge again, and I scream, my body writhing helplessly in his arms.

He holds me close, his breath hot against my neck as we both come down from the high. "You're mine," he growls, his voice possessive and fierce, and I nod, my body still trembling with the aftershocks of my orgasm. I'm his. Period.

Before I can even catch my breath, Raekon flips me onto my belly, his massive weight pressing me into the leather seat of the limo.

I squeal into the gag, the sound muffled but unmistakably needy.

His hands grip my hips, holding me in place as his tongue drags across my asshole, slow and deliberate.

I jerk against him, my body trembling with a mix of shock and anticipation.

“Mmm,” he growls, the vibration of his voice sending a shiver down my spine. “So responsive, little flower. You’re going to take everything I give you tonight, aren’t you?”

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I can't answer, not with the gag in my mouth, but I don't need to.

My body does the talking for me, arching into his touch, my hips hitching as his tongue teases me.

He's relentless, his tongue circling, probing, driving me wild.

I'm helpless, my arms bound in the single glove, my legs strapped together, but I don't care.

I'm his, completely and utterly, and I am in heaven.

His fingers slide between my thighs, finding my pussy with unerring accuracy. I moan into the gag as he teases my clit, his touch light but insistent. The combination of his tongue on my ass and his fingers on my clit is overwhelming, and I'm already teetering on the edge.

"That's it," he murmurs, his voice low and approving. "Let go, little flower. Cum for me."

I do, my body convulsing as the orgasm crashes over me. I scream into the gag, the sound muffled but no less intense. My pussy clenches around his fingers, my asshole tightening against his tongue, and I'm lost in the waves of pleasure.

But he's not done with me yet. Before I can even catch my breath, I feel the head of his cock press against my asshole.

I whimper, the sound high and desperate, but I'm not afraid.

I want this, more than I've ever wanted anything.

I'm so turned on, so desperate for him, that I instinctively thrust my hips back, trying to take him in.

"Eager, are we?" he growls, his voice thick with amusement. He grabs the heating KY jelly, and I feel the warm slickness as he coats his cock. Then he's pushing into me, slow and deliberate, and I moan into the gag as he stretches me open.

It's intense, the feeling of him filling me, but it's not painful. The warmth of the jelly and the way he takes his time make it almost unbearably pleasurable. I'm panting, my body trembling as he slides deeper, and then he's fully inside me, his cock buried in my ass.

"Oh god, yes," I think to myself, my mind hazy with pleasure. "Use me, Raekon. Use ALL of my body. Fill me up all over. I'm yours..."

He starts to move, his thrusts slow and deep, and I'm lost in the sensation. The ridges of his cock drag against my walls, the raised ridge along the top of his shaft pressing against my clit with every thrust. It's too much, and yet not enough, and I'm already teetering on the edge again.

"That's it," he growls, his voice low and approving. "Take it, little flower. Take every inch of me."

I do, my body trembling as he fucks me, his cock filling me completely. I'm his, completely and utterly.

Raekon pulls me up into his lap, his massive hands surprisingly gentle as he strokes

my hair. His fingers tangle in the damp strands, the warmth of his touch spreading through me like a balm after the intensity of what just happened. His voice is soft, almost reverent, as he speaks.

“You’re mine, Willow. My jalshagar. My soul. And I’ll always, always be here to take care of you. No matter what.”

His words wrap around me, and for a moment, I forget how to breathe. Not just because he’s holding me like I’m something precious, but because of the weight of what he’s saying.

I blink up at him, my brain struggling to catch up. “Wait, what? Jalshagar? Are you serious?”

He smirks, his red eyes glinting with mischief, and I immediately realize I’ve walked right into his trap. “All right, if you insist,” he says, his voice dripping with mock solemnity. Before I can protest, he slides two thick fingers into my pussy, curling them just right to make me gasp.

“Where was I?” he continues, his tone light, like he’s discussing the weather and not whatever cosmic nonsense he’s about to drop on me. “Oh yes, as my jalshagar, your lifespan is now linked to mine. You’ll live for centuries, Willow. And you won’t age beyond maturity.”

I choke on my own saliva, my body arching into his touch even as my mind reels. “Centuries? Are you—what—how?—”

He hums, his fingers moving in slow, deliberate circles that make it impossible to form a coherent thought. “Mmm, and your cellular regeneration rate is much higher now. You don’t have to worry about disease, or even significant injuries. Not that I’d ever let anything hurt you.”

My head spins, and I clamp down on the ball gag still in my mouth, a muffled groan escaping me as his fingers tease me toward another orgasm.

“Indeed,” he adds, his voice dropping into that low, possessive growl that sends a wild thrill pulsing through me. “I can fuck my pussy all night long, and you’ll never get overwhelmed or experience pain.”

He pinches my nipple then, the clamp still in place sending a jolt of pleasure-pain through me, and I squeal around the gag.

“Well, perhaps some pain,” he teases, his lips quirking into a wicked grin. “But only because I know how much my little flower enjoys it.”

Before I can process that, he’s unbuckling the gag and pulling it from my mouth. His lips find mine in a kiss so tender it makes my chest ache.

“I love you, Ms. Christian,” he murmurs against my mouth, his voice soft but absolute.

I swallow, my throat tight, and manage to whisper back, “And I love you, Mr. Keong.”

His smile is radiant, like I’ve just handed him the stars, and I forget how to breathe again.

Centuries, I think dazedly, my mind still catching up. He’s serious. I’m going to live for centuries.

Raekon’s fingers twist inside me, dragging me back to the present, and I gasp, my body trembling as he leans in to whisper, “Now, where were we?”

WILLOW

The hollow ping of holographic rings materializing across Taylor's panoramic windshield makes my knuckles whiten around the steering yoke. Atlantic waves glitter two thousand feet below us through wisps of cloud, their gentle beauty doing nothing to calm the acid churn in my stomach.

"Eyes forward, little flower," Raekon rumbles from the passenger seat, claws tapping an idle rhythm against his thigh. His crimson eyes don't even glance at the altitude readout flashing amber warnings. "The third ring drifts starboard. Adjust your vector by three degrees."

I bite my lower lip and nudge the yoke. Taylor's modified Vakutan grav-plates hum as we bank smoothly through the luminous circle. Three more rings follow in quick succession - diving, climbing, a tight corkscrew that has my ponytail whipping across my cheeks.

"See?" Raekon's scaled fingers brush my knee. "Just like threading Aunt Mabel's?—"

The engines die mid-sentence.

All sound vanishes. The holograms flicker out. My stomach lurches into my throat as Taylor becomes a six-ton paperweight hurtling toward the ocean. Warning glyphs erupt across every display, bathing the cabin in apocalyptic red.

"You killed the engines!" I scream, already slamming both palms against the restart sequence. The backup power whines to life, but we're still dropping fast enough to

make the loose change in the cup holder float.

Raekon doesn't move to help. His smile shows entirely too many teeth. "And?"

"Are you insane? " My fingers dance across the dash, rerouting power through secondary conduits. The ocean fills the windshield, close enough now to count whitecaps. Some detached part of my brain notes we're at exactly 437 meters when the thrusters roar back to life.

Inertial dampeners whine in protest as Taylor's nose jerks upward mere heartbeats from impact. Spray kisses the undercarriage as we peel away from the waves, acceleration pinning me to the leather seat.

Sweat stings my eyes when I finally dare to breathe. "I guess that's a fail."

Raekon's laughter shakes the entire cabin.

He unfastens his harness just to lean over and bite my earlobe - sharp enough to sting, gentle enough to make my thighs press together.

"Perfect score. Did you truly believe I'd test you on rings ?

" His tongue flicks the tiny hurt. "Next time I'll cut life support during re-entry. "

I'm still shaking when he programs the autopilot, but his claws tracing possessive circles on my thigh tell me all I need to know about how proud he is. The bastard.

The ocean swallows Taylor whole, the shimmering surface closing over us like liquid glass. I guide the shuttle through the depths, marveling at the bioluminescent fish that dart past the windows. Their scales catch the light, painting the cabin in rippling hues of blue and green.

"Beautiful, aren't they?" Raekon murmurs, his clawed hand resting on my thigh. "Reminds me of the coral reefs on Vakuta's southern hemisphere."

I glance at him, my heart swelling with affection. "I still can't believe I get to see things like this. And that I get to share it with you."

He grunts, but I catch the way his scales flush a deeper gold. "Focus on your piloting, little flower. Those fish won't distract me from docking procedures."

I stick my tongue out at him but obey, guiding Taylor into the hangar bay with practiced ease. The forcefield shimmers as we pass through, and I set the shuttle down with barely a bump.

Raekon is out of his seat before the engines fully power down, his long strides carrying him to my side. He helps me out of the cockpit, his claws brushing against my waist in a way that makes my breath catch.

Pyke's office is as imposing as ever, the holographic globe casting shifting patterns of light across the walls. The captain himself rises from his desk as we enter, his smile warm but his eyes sharp.

"Willow, Raekon. Please, sit." He gestures to the hover chairs, and I sink into one gratefully. Raekon remains standing, his arms crossed over his chest.

Pyke ignores his posturing and slides a sleek, chromatic box across the desk toward me. "As you're both aware, it's time for Willow's final assessment before formally joining Project Veritas."

Raekon's growl is low and menacing. "She's already proven herself. This is unnecessary."

"Raekon," I say softly, placing a hand on his arm. "It's okay."

Pyke nods, his expression patient. "It's just a formality. Willow's intelligence and psyker power pale in comparison to the other attributes she offers to Project Veritas."

Raekon's eyes narrow, and I can practically see the steam coming out of his ears. "If you're implying?—"

"I meant her decency and strength of character, Raekon," Pyke interrupts, his tone firm but not unkind. "She's an asset to this organization in more ways than one."

Raekon subsides, though he still looks like he wants to punch something. I turn my attention to the box, my curiosity piqued. "What's this? Graduation gift?"

"If you like," Pyke says with a chuckle. "Though it's actually just the standard issue gear given to Project Veritas agents."

I open the box, my eyes widening at the contents. A sleek red bodysuit, a compad, an image inducer, and a plasma pistol gleam up at me. I immediately grab the image inducer, turning it over in my hands.

"I've always wanted to play around with one of these," I say, my excitement bubbling over. "Do I get to keep it?"

Pyke's smile is indulgent. "It's yours, Willow. Welcome to Project Veritas."

The moment the image inducer is in my hands, I can't resist testing its limits.

I flick the tiny dial on the side, and my reflection in Pyke's desk shifts from my own red hair and freckles to Raekon's chiseled jawline and golden scales.

I smirk at my newly broad shoulders and ridges, mimicking Raekon's usual scowl.

"Hmm. Needs more brooding," I say, deepening my voice into a gravelly baritone that's almost convincing. Almost.

Raekon crosses his arms, his scales rippling with irritation. "Willow, you're going to overload it."

I roll my eyes—his eyes now—and cycle through a few more looks. Pyke's military buzz cut, complete with his signature frown. A random stranger with neon pink hair and a nose ring. Finally, I settle back into my own face and turn the device off. "All right, all right. Party pooper."

I step closer to Raekon, tugging at his sleeve. "Bend over, you grump. I'm going to give you a kiss."

He raises a brow ridge but obliges, leaning down with a sigh that's more theatrical than annoyed. I smirk, my finger hovering over the inducer's dial. Just before our lips meet, I flick it on and feel the subtle shift as my features morph into Jim Rader's pinched, greasy face.

Raekon's eyes snap open, and he jerks back with a growl that's half-amused, half-horrified. "Willow!"

Pyke, meanwhile, loses it. He slaps his desk, wheezing with laughter, his face turning a shade of crimson that matches the holographic globe above us. "That's—that's priceless," he manages between gasps for air.

I deactivate the inducer, my own laughter bubbling up as Raekon glares at me. "From now on," I say, wiping a tear from my eye, "you'll never know if the person you're talking to is really me in disguise."

Raekon straightens up, his scales shimmering as he regains his dignity. “It doesn’t matter if you’re standing right next to me,” he says, his voice smug. “I’ll always know it’s you.”

My heart skips a beat, and I clasp my hands over my chest. “Awww, because I’m your jalshagar?”

His expression doesn’t change. “No. Because Vakutan olfactory senses are keen enough to identify you by scent alone.”

Pyke facepalms so hard I’m surprised he doesn’t leave a dent in his forehead. “Raekon, you just stepped on a land mine.”

Raekon blinks, clearly confused. “How so?”

“You just told your wife,” Pyke says, his voice dripping with exasperation, “in as many words, that no, it’s not true love and soul mates that lets you know it’s her. It’s her body odor. ”

The realization dawns on Raekon’s face, and I pat him on the shoulder with a mock-sympathetic sigh. “You can make it up to me with ice cream. And lots of assurances I don’t smell.”

Pyke mutters something under his breath about Vakutan being brilliant warriors but clueless husbands, and I laugh. Raekon glares at both of us, but there’s a flicker of amusement in his crimson eyes. “Fine. Ice cream it is.”

I grin, already planning my next disguise. Something tells me Raekon’s going to regret underestimating my sense of humor—and his own sense of smell.

Pyke’s laughter echoes through the office as he waves us off. “Go on, Raekon. Your

mission awaits. And remember, ice cream is a sacred human tradition. Treat it with the respect it deserves.”

Raekon grumbles under his breath as he leads me out of the office. “I used to be sent to destroy entire enemy armadas. Now I’m being ordered to take my wife for ice cream.”

I loop my arm through his, my fingers brushing the smooth, warm scales of his forearm. “And? Do you really think it’s a downgrade?”

He pauses, his crimson eyes softening as he looks down at me. “No,” he says, his voice low and sincere. “I’ve never been happier than to take my lovely wife for ice cream.”

“You’re learning!” Pyke calls after us, his voice tinged with amusement.

Raekon rolls his eyes but doesn’t respond, guiding me toward Taylor with a firm hand on the small of my back.

The shuttlecraft hums to life as we climb in, and Raekon takes the controls.

I’m still mastering the art of landing Taylor seamlessly in crowded areas without drawing attention, so he handles the flight back to New York.

The moment we near the coastline, he activates the cloaking device, and the world outside the windshield shimmers as we become invisible to the naked eye.

He finds an abandoned stretch of road near the harbor district to land, the transition from air to ground so smooth I barely feel it. Taylor’s tires hit the pavement with a soft thud, and Raekon shifts into drive, the car purring like a contented beast.

Sweet Dynasty Ice Cream is a quaint little shop tucked between a bookstore and a vintage clothing store.

The bell above the door jingles as we step inside, and the scent of waffle cones and fresh cream hits me like a warm hug.

Raekon's nose wrinkles slightly, his scales shimmering as he adjusts to the overwhelming sweetness in the air.

"What'll it be?" the cheerful teenager behind the counter asks, her eyes flicking curiously between Raekon's towering frame and my much smaller one.

"Double scoop of salted caramel in a waffle cone," I say without hesitation. Raekon hesitates, scanning the menu with a furrowed brow.

"I'll have... the same," he says finally, though he sounds unsure.

The teenager grins and gets to work, scooping generous portions of ice cream into crisp waffle cones. Raekon pays, his claws carefully handling the cash, and we take our treats to a small table by the window.

I take a bite of my ice cream, the sweet and salty flavors exploding on my tongue. Raekon watches me for a moment before tentatively licking his own cone. His eyes widen in surprise, and he takes another, more confident lick.

"This is... acceptable," he says, though the way he's devouring it suggests it's more than just acceptable.

I smirk, leaning forward on my elbows. "So, about my scent..."

He freezes mid-lick, his crimson eyes narrowing. "Willow..."

“No, no, I’m just curious,” I say, feigning innocence. “You said it’s not unpleasant. So what is it, then? Flowers? Jasmine? Sunshine?”

He sets his cone down, his scales flushing a deeper gold. “It’s... unique. Like... like the first breath of air after a storm. Clean, fresh, and... intoxicating.”

I raise an eyebrow, fighting back a grin. “Intoxicating, huh?”

He growls softly, clearly embarrassed. “You’re enjoying this far too much.”

“Maybe,” I admit, taking another bite of my ice cream. “But I’ll let you off the hook. For now.”

He reaches across the table, his clawed hand enveloping mine. He brings my fingers to his lips, pressing a kiss to my knuckles. “You’re impossible.”

I laugh, the sound light and carefree. “Next time you say something about how I smell, I’m going to ask for a baby instead of ice cream.”

His jaw drops, his crimson eyes widening in shock. “B-baby?”

I just smile, taking another bite of my ice cream as he stares at me, utterly speechless.

RAEKON

I lean back in my chair, the leather creaking under my weight, and let my gaze travel over her.

The latex clings to her like a second skin, the translucent material leaving little to the imagination.

Her nipples are already hard, pressing against the fabric, and the curve of her hips is accentuated by the tight skirt. She's testing me, and she knows it.

"Apropos, you say?" I arch a brow ridge, my voice low and deliberate. "And what, pray tell, are these duties you're so eager to perform?"

She steps closer, her heels clicking against the marble floor, and places a hand on the edge of my desk. Her fingers tap lightly, a rhythm that feels like a challenge. "Well, Mr. Keong, I thought I'd start by helping you with these spreadsheets. You seem to be struggling."

I glance at the mess of numbers on the screen, then back at her. "Struggling is a strong word. I'm merely... recalibrating."

"Recalibrating," she repeats, her lips curving into a smirk. "Is that what we're calling it now?"

I narrow my eyes, but there's no real heat in it. She's too clever for her own good, and it's one of the things I admire most about her. Still, she's pushing her luck.

“Ms. Christian,” I say, my tone sharp enough to make her straighten slightly, “you seem to have forgotten your place.”

“Have I?” She tilts her head, her red hair catching the light. “Or have you forgotten that I’m not just your assistant anymore? I’m your wife. Your partner. Your equal.”

I stand, my height dwarfing her, and she doesn’t flinch. Instead, she looks up at me with those green eyes, daring me to make the next move. I reach out and trail a clawed finger along the edge of her latex blazer, feeling the smooth material and the warmth of her skin beneath it.

“Equal, perhaps,” I murmur, leaning down so my breath brushes her ear. “But never in charge.”

She shivers, but her smirk doesn’t falter. “We’ll see about that.”

I grip her chin, forcing her to meet my gaze. “You’re playing a dangerous game, Little Flower.”

“And you’re enjoying it,” she counters, her voice steady despite the way her pulse quickens under my touch.

I can’t deny it. She’s always been able to see through me, to push my buttons in ways no one else can. It’s infuriating. It’s exhilarating.

“Very well,” I say, releasing her and stepping back. “If you’re so eager to assist, let’s see how well you handle these spreadsheets. But remember, Ms. Christian, if you make a single error, there will be consequences.”

She grins, clearly undeterred, and slides into the chair beside me. “Bring it on, Mr. Keong.”

I watch her for a moment, the way her fingers fly over the keyboard, the way her brow furrows in concentration. She's a force to be reckoned with, and I wouldn't have it any other way. But she's also mine, and I'll be damned if I let her forget it.

"Don't get too comfortable," my voice comes out as a growling command. "This isn't over."

She glances up at me, her smirk returning. "I wouldn't dream of it."

This assignment is clearly too simple for her talents. A smirk crosses my face as I decide to make things more... interesting.

"You're finding this too easy," I say, not a question but a statement of fact.

I step behind her chair and slowly open her latex blazer, exposing her flesh to the cool air of my office.

My scaled hands cup her breasts, kneading the soft flesh with deliberate pressure.

She moans softly, the sound triggering a primal response deep within me.

I increase the pressure, letting my claws graze her skin—not enough to break it, but enough to remind her of their sharpness, of what I am.

I roll her nipples between my fingers, feeling them harden instantly. The contrast of my golden scales against her pale skin is mesmerizing.

"Your mind is not on business, Ms. Christian," I rumble. "Get back to work."

Her head falls back against me, her red hair spilling over my forearm. Her small hands clutch at my wrist, not to push me away but to keep me there.

"Please, Mr. Keong," she whimpers, her voice thick with need. "I need it so bad I can't stand it."

I release her abruptly and spin her chair around to face me. Placing my hands on the armrests, I lean down until my face is inches from hers, dominating her field of vision.

"You need what, precisely, so bad you can't stand it?" I challenge, watching her squirm under my gaze.

Her eyes dart away, unable to meet mine, and her cheeks flush a delightful shade of crimson.

"Do I have to spell it out for you?" she growls with unexpected defiance, grabbing my hand and pressing it between her thighs. The heat emanating from her core is scorching, even through the latex. It takes every ounce of my self-control not to rip the material away and claim what's mine.

"That didn't sound very respectful, Ms. Christian," I say, keeping my voice steady despite the fire in my veins. "And that's the second time you've tried to move my hand where you wanted it to be...as if you were in charge. What should I do about this situation?"

"Well," she replies with a sarcastic lilt that makes my blood simmer, "maybe if you tied my hands to the armrests, I couldn't touch you anymore?"

I click my tongue against my teeth, feeling my control slipping. Her bratty behavior is deliberately provocative—she knows exactly what she's doing, pushing me to take control, to dominate her completely.

I yank open my desk drawer, the contents neatly organized but no less intimidating

for their order.

Bundles of silk rope, each a different color, lie coiled like waiting serpents.

My fingers brush over them before I select a bright red one, its color as bold as her defiance.

I place it on her lap, the silken length pooling there as I roll up my sleeves, my scales catching the light.

“Is that supposed to intimidate me, SIR?” Willow asks, her voice dripping with cheek. She glances down at the rope, her lips curling into a smirk. “Putting the rope in my lap so I can ponder how I’m about to be restrained with it?”

I let out a sharp exhale, my gaze narrowing. Her insolence is as infuriating as it is exhilarating. She tilts her head, her green eyes locking with mine, and the look she gives me is pure challenge. Oh yeah, what are you going to do about it? The unspoken words hang in the air between us.

I don’t bother responding. Instead, I open another drawer, my claws clicking against the polished wood.

Inside lies a ring gag, its design as unyielding as my resolve.

I grab it, the cold metal biting into my palm, and without ceremony, I shove it between her teeth.

She flinches but doesn’t resist as I buckle it tightly behind her head, the leather straps digging into her skin.

Her mouth is forced open wide, her lips stretched around the unforgiving metal. Her

breathing quickens, and I can see the flicker of unease in her eyes, though she doesn't let it show in her expression. Not yet.

I loop the red rope around her neck, the silk sliding effortlessly against her skin.

I tie it off into a choke leash, the knot firm but not cruel, and use it to pull her to her feet.

She stumbles slightly, her balance thrown off by the sudden movement, but I don't give her time to adjust. I grab the other end of the leash and secure it to a beam in the ceiling, forcing her to remain standing unless she wants to choke herself.

Her arms go behind her back without prompting, and I pull them into a right angle, lasering the rope around her wrists and welding them to her torso with meticulous precision.

The latex protects her skin from rope burn, so I pull the ropes extra tight, savoring the way her breathing quickens with each tug.

Her chest heaves, the ropes constricting her torso, and her eyes widen as I pull out yet more rope.

"I'll bet you're regretting that smart mouth now," I say, my voice low and triumphant.

"Fuck you," she mumbles—or at least, I think that's what she says. It's hard to tell with the ring gag stretching her mouth wide open. Drool pools at the corners of her lips, and her chest rises and falls rapidly, her breaths shallow and labored.

"Very well, if you insist on firmer discipline, I can oblige you, Ms. Christian," I say, my voice calm but laced with menace. I grab another length of rope, my claws

flexing as I prepare to tighten her bindings further.

I chuckle darkly as I find the zippers hidden in the seams of her latex blazer.

With a sharp tug, I pull them open, baring her breasts to the cool air of the office.

Her nipples harden instantly, dark and pebbled against her pale skin.

I don't waste time—I grab the red silk rope and begin winding it around her chest, binding her breasts into swollen, taut balloons.

The ropes dig into her flesh, making her gasp behind the ring gag, and I can't resist dragging a clawed finger across one nipple.

She squeals, her body jerking in the bindings, and I smirk.

“Are you ready to behave yet, Little Flower?” I ask, my voice dripping with mock innocence.

Her response? She lifts her leg and kicks me lightly in the shin. I burst into laughter, the sound echoing in the room. “You are really putting me through my paces today, you know that? Very well.”

I grab another length of rope and kneel in front of her.

She's still balancing precariously on one leg, her body trembling with effort and arousal.

I wrap the rope around her right thigh, pulling it tight before looping it down to her ankle, effectively immobilizing her leg.

She wobbles, her breath coming in short, shallow gasps, but she doesn't fall. Good girl.

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“Let’s see how you handle this,” I mutter, adding more ropes around her torso until she’s practically mummified from the neck down to her waist. Only her swollen, rope-bound breasts protrude from the intricate coil of silk. I step back to admire my handiwork, my cock throbbing with anticipation.

“Have you been tamed yet?” I ask, my voice teasing.

She doesn’t answer with words. Instead, she whimpers, her hips thrusting forward as much as the ropes allow, her pussy desperate for attention. I laugh again, the sound low and dangerous.

“Still defiant, I see. Let’s fix that.”

I grab another length of rope, doubling it over, and she lets out a sound somewhere between a scream and a laugh. Her eyes are wide, but there’s a spark of excitement in them that I can’t ignore. She’s enjoying this, even as she squirms against the bindings.

I thread the rope between her pussy lips, pulling it taut until it presses firmly against her swollen clit. She moans, her body jerking, and I tie it off with a sharp tug. I can see the desperation in her eyes as she tries to grind against the rope.

“Now, now,” I chide, untying the leash from the ceiling beam. “Let’s get you back to work.”

I lead her toward the desk, and she has to hop on one leg, her face flushed, sweat rolling down her temples. She stumbles a little, but I catch her, my hand firm on her

shoulder. Her muffled moans and the sound of the ropes creaking fill the room as I guide her forward.

“Careful,” I murmur, my voice dark with amusement. “We wouldn’t want you to fall, would we?”

She glares at me, but there’s no real heat in it. Instead, there’s a hunger, a need that matches my own. I tighten my grip on the leash, pulling her closer until she’s standing—or rather, hopping—right in front of my desk.

The comm unit on my desk chimes, sharp and insistent, cutting through the tension between us.

Pyke’s face flashes on the screen, and I move faster than I thought possible.

I grab Willow by the rope leash, her body still bound and quivering, and shove her under the desk.

She doesn’t resist, but the muffled sound of her gagged protest makes me smirk.

I straighten up, folding my hands neatly on the desktop, and activate the comms.

“Raekon,” Pyke’s voice is clipped, all business. “Did you have a chance to look over those folio projections for the second quarter last year?”

“I’m on it right now, Sir,” I say, gesturing to the spreadsheets Willow had been working on. “See, I’ve done most of the work already.”

I hear a low, indignant groan from under the desk. My eyes flick down for a fraction of a second before I force them back to the screen.

“What was that?” Pyke asks, his brow furrowing.

“My paper shredder,” I reply without missing a beat. “Let me fix the jam.”

I lean down, pretending to fiddle with something under the desk, and in one swift motion, I shove my cock through the ring gag in Willow’s mouth.

Her eyes widen, but she doesn’t pull away.

If anything, her tongue starts working instantly, and I have to bite back a groan as I sit back up, trying to keep my expression neutral.

Pyke drones on about quarterly projections, and I nod along, doing my best to focus.

But Willow isn’t making it easy. Her tongue is relentless, swirling and teasing, the heat building in my gut with every flick.

My claws dig into the desk, leaving faint marks in the wood, and I force myself to keep my breathing steady.

“Raekon?” Pyke’s voice snaps me back to attention. “Are you still with me?”

“Yes, Sir,” I manage, my voice tight. “Just... reviewing the data here.”

I glance down, and Willow’s eyes meet mine, glinting with mischief. She’s enjoying this, the little minx. Her tongue strokes the underside of my cock, and my vision blurs for a moment. I tighten my grip on the leash, refusing to let her pull away, and she takes the hint, sucking harder.

Pyke finally wraps up the call, and I barely have the presence of mind to say my goodbyes before the screen goes dark.

The moment it does, I’m undone. My orgasm crashes over me like a tidal wave, and I roar as I spill into Willow’s mouth.

She sputters, choking slightly on the sheer volume, but she doesn't pull away.

I drag her out from under the desk by the leash, her face flushed, her eyes watering, but somehow, she's still grinning around the gag.

"You play the game well," I say, my voice rough cum drips from her lips, and I wipe it away with my thumb, savoring the sight of her like this—bound, messy, and utterly mine.

I grab another length of rope, the silk cool and smooth against my scales, and loop it around Willow's bound breasts.

She whimpers, her body trembling as I pull it taut, the ropes digging into her flesh.

Her nipples are swollen and dark, begging for attention, but I resist the urge to touch them—for now.

Instead, I tie the rope off and secure it to the beam above us, creating a crude pulley system.

Her eyes widen as she realizes what I'm about to do, and she lets out a muffled moan behind the ring gag.

"Let's see how well you can handle this, Little Flower," I say, my voice low and teasing.

I kneel in front of her and bind her left leg just like her right, the ropes tight and unyielding.

She's completely immobilized now, her body a canvas of silk and tension, and I can't help but admire my handiwork.

She's beautiful like this—bound, helpless, and utterly mine.

I settle her onto my cock, her body sliding down with a wet, slick sound that makes my breath hitch.

She's so tight, so warm, and I groan as I feel her clench around me.

Her eyes lock with mine, and I can see the desperation in them, the need for release that I'm denying her.

I grab the rope tied to her breasts and pull, lifting her up until only the tip of my cock remains inside her.

She whimpers, her body trembling, and I can see the way her pussy clenches, trying to keep me inside.

“Beg,” I command, my voice rough with need. “Beg for it, Little Flower.”

She shakes her head, her defiance only fueling my desire.

I pull the rope again, lifting her higher, and she lets out a muffled scream, her body thrashing as much as the ropes allow.

I lower her slowly, savoring the way her body stretches to accommodate me, and she moans, her eyes rolling back in her head.

“Who's in charge?” I growl, pulling her up again.

She nods frantically, her body trembling, and I can see the tears in her eyes.

I lower her once more, my cock sliding deep inside her, and she lets out a muffled sob.

I repeat the motion, lifting her up and down, using the rope like a puppet string, and she's completely at my mercy.

Her body is a live wire, every nerve on fire, and I can feel her getting closer and closer to the edge.

"Cum for me," I growl. She shakes her head, her body trembling, and I pull the rope harder, lifting her higher.

She lets out a muffled scream, her body convulsing as she cums, her pussy clenching around me like a vice.

I groan, my own orgasm crashing over me, and I spill inside her, my seed filling her to the brim.

I loosen the gag, letting it fall from her mouth, and she gasps for air, her body still trembling. "Who's in charge?" I ask, my voice soft but firm.

"You are, Sir," she purrs, her voice thick with post-orgasmic bliss. I untie her, the ropes falling away, and she curls up in my lap, her body warm and pliant. I stroke her hair, savoring the feel of her against me, and she looks up at me with those big green eyes.

"Do you like the name Kevin?" she asks suddenly, her voice soft and tentative.

I frown, confused. "I don't know, why?"

She looks me in the eye, her gaze steady, and it takes me a moment to understand. My hand moves to her belly, and I feel a surge of emotion so strong it nearly knocks me over. I laugh, the sound deep and joyful, and I pull her close, kissing her deeply.

"Forever," I whisper against her lips. "I'll love you forever, until the stars lose their

shine.”