

Volunteered Forced Subject Testing

Glasses clink, the ambiance of dozens of patrons chattering at the Tiki style open bar. The cooling sea breeze blows through, swirling the delightful aroma of cooked pork, steamed, smoked, barbecued. The sweet and tangy allure of liqueur swirls in the glasses, the sweet tangy flavor flowing down Brandon's throat, feeling the gentle burn, the tingle moving through him as the gentle sense of tipsiness loosens his lips. His normal well-kept crew cut blond "And then the Captain then said to me, 'You better take your damn vacation time and that's an order!'" he said, imitating his Captain's voice.

With a hearty laugh Axel, a light skinned human male with the same unkempt blond hair, speaking with a modest slur, "Really? The Captain said that to you? I don't believe it. What really happened?"

"I'm telling you the truth, six months of built-up vacation time. Something about making the squad look bad."

"Six fucking months? How in the world did you get so much? Wait, let me guess, you got a bonus of vacation time from working with those Wyervins didn't you?" he asks, speaking verbosely.

An anthropomorphic blue feathered avian waitress fumbles and drops her tray, some glasses shatter on the floor, along with a few plates. Her feathers rose in shock, "Very sorry!" she chirps, rushing to clean up her mess.

Brandon leans in, "Watch your mouth. You know better than to talk about those machines like that. That's it, you've had enough to drink."

"What no, I haven't had too much. It was an honest slip. Today is my last day off on this vacation paradise, and this is your first. It would be a crying shame if we didn't enjoy a night out on the town."

He sighs, "Alright, alright. You've been such a helpful guide; I already feel I'll have fun here for at least a month or so. I can't spend my entire time here."

"What's wrong with having fun in Elysia Prime?"

"It's a rim world. I'd like to visit Earth, Venus, or heck even Mars for a little bit."

"Doing the solar grand slam eh?"

"I have the time, might as well."

"Shit, I should have saved up more for that. Or volunteered for *that* side project you did. But I don't think I have the," he says, making a cupping motion with his hand, "The cojones to do what you did... speaking of which," he says, leaning in closer, "What was it like?"

With a lowered voice he responds, "You know I can't tell you what happened."

"I'm not asking you *what* happened. But what was it like? Working with those," he leans in closer, "enslaving machines."

A tingle runs down Brandon's spine, flash memories pop in the back of his mind, of what happened during *that* mission. He takes a swig of his drink, "I could say it was a harrowing experience, yet that wouldn't be the half of it."

“Come on man, tell me. What is it like? Like death is hanging over you? That you could just disappear?”

He mulls over the question, thinking about the machines, how they treated him, their cold nature, “Actually, I felt rather safe around them.”

“Safe?!” he exclaims, Brandon makes hand motions to not speak so loudly, “Sorry,” he looks around a bit embarrassed, but then continues, “But really? Safe? With those things?”

“I know it sounds crazy but hear me out. They don’t lie. So, there’s no wondering about what’s hidden. They simply tell you.”

“And you believe that?”

“I’ve seen it. There’s a level of trust and dependency you can get when working with them that is relaxing. Even if unnerving.”

“I can imagine it being unnerving. I heard them speak, it’s so artificial and cold. But what can I expect out of a machine to be anything except that. Zero individuality, zero will. Just heartless automatons. That only sees you as a number, a cog in their wheel of preservation in the name of ‘efficiency.’” he says with air quotes.

“In a way, yeah? But you know where you stand. There’s a consistency and predictability that comes with them. And there is something to be said about not having to wonder about those things.”

“So, what you’re telling me, the only positive thing they have going for them is they aren’t politicians?”

He bursts out with a hearty laugh, “Yes! Exactly that. If there’s one thing, I can be grateful for is that they aren’t politicians,” he says, clinking his drink against his friend, “I’ll drink to that.”

“Who’d to think the only thing worse than an enslaving cold calculating machine is a politician,” he chuckles, “Another round for my friend and I, tonight is a night to celebrate.”

“To celebrate what?”

“To friends, and to fuck politicians!”

“Yeah, fuck politicians!” he exclaims, chugging his drink, the trio moons shine in the sky, reflecting their shine in the crystal blue waters, ready to enjoy their last night together.

The next morning Brandon awoke in a cot, the anthropomorphic birds chirping, the aroma of breakfast being prepared. He cracks open his eyes, seeing the blue ocean and the orange and pinks of a coming sunrise, “*How am I still awake... better yet where am I?*” he thinks, sitting up, catching a note fluttering to the ground. He picks it up, unfolding it.

“Hey Brandon. Sorry I couldn’t stay. Had to catch an early flight. I didn’t know where you were staying so I didn’t order a cab back. Luckily the bar has open cot rooms to sleep off the binge drinking we did. I know you don’t remember, but that’s half the fun. See you in a couple of months! Your friend Axel.”

With a cracked smile, he mutters, “That explains that. I don’t normally drink that much, but those drinks were damn good,” he says, stretching, cracking his back, “At least I don’t have to go far for a good breakfast,” he chuckled, *“I have to thank Axel for suggesting this place.”*

After a good meal, some water to keep what bits of a hanger-over at bay, he gets into an automated taxi, taking him toward his isolated beach house, a solid twenty-minutes out of town. The thick alien jungle forest is absolutely breathtaking. The unique purples, greens, and blues of the plant leaves gives the sensation that he’s viewing the world under a few feet of water, *“I have to give the scientists to have found this M-class paradise... and then they turned it into a tourist destination,”* he chuckles.

“Is everything alright?” the car asks with a simulated female voice that is soft, soothing, giving the sensation of a caring woman, worried about what just happened. A

He looks at the empty driver’s seat that has a holographic beautiful human woman ‘driving’ the car, her mouth moving as if she’s the one speaking, “I’m alright. I just thought of something amusing.”

“Oh, okay. What was the joke?”

“Nothing big, not worth mentioning.”

“Got it. Did you have a good morning?”

“Yeah, I did, thanks for asking.”

“Welcome. Did you need me to come over later? You can set up a time,” the car asks as his two-story beach house comes into view.

“I think I’ll be fine. I don’t want to tie myself down to any schedule. Not having anything planned sounds like a good way to relax, don’t you think?”

“I couldn’t agree more. Being unbound and following your whims can be a liberating experience. I hope you enjoyed our transportation service. Please take a moment to rate your experience. We appreciate your patronage and hope to see you again soon.”

He chuckles, “Thanks, I’ll be sure to do so, you’re the only service in the area,” he says with a hearty laugh, the door opening, a holographic woman projected to make it look like she was opening the door.

“Have a good day!” she says with a pleasant giggle.

He smirks, waving the car off as it drives off, “Maybe I’ll go for a swim or something. The oceans here are twice as salty as back on Earth. I wonder how buoyant I’ll be,” he mutters, stopping at the front door, reading a note that is perfectly eye level in popping red colors on a small electronic screen that flashes the very moment he’s within reading range, “No, Alarm. Have guest. Take with.”

A shiver runs down his spine, “There’s only one thing that speaks so... to the point,” he mutters, grabbing the device, stepping inside, “Hello?”

“In your living quarters. To the left of your entrance,” speaks a cold, synthetic voice, devoid of any inflections, warmth, emotions, but with perfect utterance of his native language.

The atmosphere grows silent which becomes deafening. His heart races, fear? Excitement? Concern? All of the above? It’s hard to sift through the emotions, but he steps

forward, only stopping when he sees in the middle of his living room, facing him is the light blue wyervin-like machine. Sitting like a cat, hands on the ground, their mixture of smooth metal, and segments that move and glide in machine perfection, that is if it was moving. The towering eight-foot-tall mass of metal and wires, with their sleek aerodynamic dome heads, with seven LED-like lights that count as the Wyervin's face. Sharp deadly claws are extended and ready to be used, arms melded into the wings that run down its body toward its long tail that comes to a sharp point that is idly wrapped around its body. It sits there like a statue, an idol to the only thing Wyervins care about in the universe, efficiency. For any movement till absolutely needed would have been a waste. The machine's pose could be considered "proud" if it had such a feeling. Their chest, sleek, segmented metal, ports that hide their tentacles that they use to manipulate the world around them are hidden by the perfect creation by a machine intelligence.

Deep down the human knows that if the machine decided it would be more efficient to grab him, enslave him and utilize his existence to a more efficient use. He stands before it, dwarfed by its sheer size, "Hello. What brings this surprise visit UT-KVI-0023, is that you?"

The machine cuts him off, **"UT-KVI-0023. Unit H-BRA-5391 is requested to assist in mutual research development. If accepted, you will be secretly transported to a testing facility for the next 165 Earth days."**

"That's my entire vacation! And I knew it. How are you doing?"

"Do you accept the request?"

"I need to know a bit more. Why me? What am I to do if I do accept?"

"Unit H-BRA-5391 efficiency coefficient is within acceptable parameters for a joint research effort between humans and Wyervins as per the H0.125.611 treaty."

"My name is Brandon."

"Unit H-BRA-5391's designation is a unique endonym for unit H-BRA-5391's exonym of Brandon Tahnka. It is more efficient."

"How?"

"There're a recorded 83,217 unique individuals with the exonym of Brandon Tahnka. Only one unit H-BRA-5391. Which unit H-BRA-5391 recognizes. It would be inefficient to use any other designation."

He sighs, rubbing the back of his head, "Alright, alright. But under whose authority? I'm on vacation? Do you know what that means?"

"Those that unit H-BRA-5391 considers to be your superiors have submitted you as their first pick. There is a recording of the mission upon your acceptance to the mission from them. The definition of vacation is known. It is an inefficient use of energy."

"There is a value in downtime. To decompress and relax."

"Unit H-BRA-5391's mental and physical health will be a high priority to keep to optimal efficiency."

"You know that doesn't fill most people with confidence."

"Do you doubt what is said?"

"No. It's just that you might want to work on how you communicate with humans."

“Was there any miscommunication?”

“No, but--”

“Then there is no issue to be improved upon. Communication is adjusted per unit for most efficient form to convey required information. Do you accept the request to assist?”

“Does this take away from my vacation days?”

“Compensation data is considered classified by your species. It will be transmitted to you upon accepting the request.”

Looking over the machine, the multiple lights appear to be off. The machine has yet to move an inch, making him feel like he’s talking to a statue, “A form of security? I can’t know till I accept?”

“Affirmative.”

“Is there anything I can know that might help give me an informed decision? To make my decision making more efficient?”

“Based on previous interactions, there’s a high probability that you would agree to the request if all available data was able to be given.”

He sighs, rubbing his temple, “So, what you are telling me is. That if I happened to know everything that I could know, I’d accept?”

“Affirmative.”

“But I can’t know, unless I accept?”

“Affirmative.”

“This means I have to trust you?”

“Affirmative.”

He takes a deep breath, looking out the window toward the beautiful ocean, “Will I be brought back here to enjoy the remaining days of my vacation?”

“If that is what you desire.”

“And what happens if I refuse? Hypothetically.”

“The next highest efficiency coefficient human will be given the request.”

“And you’ll do what? Leave me to my vacation?”

“Affirmative.”

“No strings attached?”

“Affirmative.”

He paces around the room, keeping the unmoving machine in his field of vision, “How much time do I have to decide?”

“Sooner would be more efficient. Human decisions are often settled quickly without new or excessive data supplied during the decision-making process. Any delays would be simply a decrease in efficiency.”

“Well, you’ve thought of me so efficient so far, I’d hate to ruin your perception of me, alright, I’ll do it,” he says, holding out his hand.

“An optimal choice. Follow,” says UT-KVI-0023, moving for the first time, the lights glowing. Despite the machine’s size it moves with an elegance that’s simple, defined, to put it simply, efficient. It moves through the house, the kitchen, the wood creaking under its weight. Then a whir, a sleek silver segmented metal tentacle reaches out from its chest, gripping the door handle, sliding it open just enough to let it through with efficiency.

“I didn’t think it fit through,” he thinks, closing the door behind him, “Where are we... oh, never mind,” he says, seeing a small ship sitting in his backyard. The sleek efficiency design, devoid of windows and anything that could be considered aesthetically pleasing is non-existent. There’re not even markings on the ship to indicate just who they belong to, having let their ship design speak for themselves.

“Just big enough for the two of us?”

The ship opens up, the space is just enough for the Wyervin. It turns to him, a half dozen tentacles spring out from the machine, wrapping themselves around the human, yanking him toward it, “Hey! What are you doing?!” he exclaims, feeling the cold metal against his skin, turned around, the machine’s wings wrapping around him, locking him in place against it. His heart races, shifting against the constraint, knowing he has no way he could overpower it. He takes a deep breath, the restraints firm yet not painful, though he feels his back crack in a few places as he feels a proper posture forced upon him.

UT-KVI-0023 backs up into the ship, which seals around them, **“Transporting,”** it simply explains, the entrance closing delving him into complete darkness.

The scent of metal fills his nostrils while his instinctive desire to break free quickly fades. His breathing slows to a steady beat, the rumble of takeoff felt through the ship, the Wyervin, right into him like the machine just become *one* with the ship itself, “You could have told me.”

“Unit H-BRA-5391 should have already known based on previous experiences.”

“I’m letting you know for people beyond me.”

“No one but unit H-BRA-5391 is here. There is no need to adjust communication for non-existent units.”

“I should have known.”

“Affirmative.”

“Was that sarcasm?” he asks, quirking an eyebrow when suddenly a projection of his Captain appears before him, a muscular soldier, with light skin and piercing brown eyes, “Captain?”

“If you are seeing this, you’ve accepted your mission. Sorry for forcing you into spending your vacation days, but you’ll be secretly reimbursed and paid for the time. Thank you for your service, you damn work-a-holic. Stop making me look bad,” he says with a hearty chuckle, “The details will be given to you on route to your destination. Good luck and Godspeed,” he says with a salute.

“That explains why he wanted me to go on vacation so badly. How long has this been planned?”

“Unnecessary data.”

“What can you tell me then?”

“Prototyping a new organic procurement and efficiency enhancer unit.”

He feels his throat tighten up, hands clenching, piecing together the information, “You want me to test a new enslaving type machine? As someone to be captured?!”

“Negative. Unit H-BRA-5391 will not be captured, but will help in procurement tests.”

“Why do you need a human for this? Better yet, what do we humans get out of this? I doubt the higher ups want you to be better at capturing people for your slave trade.”

“Affirmative. Understanding of human biology is still at an inefficient level. Humans desire improvement, increased efficiency has been recorded. The current joint effort is toward that goal.”

“In other words, the higher ups want a fancy new toy to play with and I’m the guinea pig with Wyervin experience, so that is why I was selected for this mission.”

“Unit H-BRA-5391 was not determined by your human counterparts, otherwise the assessment is correct.”

The ship shudders and thuds, “Wait... does that mean you requested me?” he asks, looking up at the machine, but the total darkness makes his mind piece together the still unmoving machine, “*Does it like my company?*” he wonders when the door opens, a rush, the atmospheric pressure dropping.

“Remove excess clothing. Step into the center of the silver ring,” UT-KVI-0023 explains, taking him out of the ship, and into the hanger bay of a familiar slaver transportation ship.

The hangar has a dozen other such transport ships lined up on the sides, though Brandon can barely see any of them, the lights so dimmed that he can barely see anything except a silver metal ring in the center before him. His breathing grows heavy, feeling like he’s run a marathon, “It’s... difficult to breathe,” he says, stumbling forward, looking at the ring then back at the Wyervin.

“Atmosphere is set to allow function.”

“I feel like I am in the Andes mountains,” he says panting, sliding out of his clothes. Each move feels strenuous, “This does not feel efficient,” he says, just barely able to accomplish his first task, too out of breath to do anything but walk toward the ring.

“Loss in unit H-BRA-5391’s efficiency is less than loss of efficiency to simulate a lower elevation.”

“Fuck... I feel this might... kill me,” he mutters, stepping into the ring, feeling a cool sleek rubbery sensation on his feet.

“Unit H-BRA-5391’s continued efficient function is of great importance to improve efficiency coefficients,” UT-KVI-0023 says, following behind him, when it suddenly stands in its spot, unmoving.

The ring moves up, a sleek black hexagonal liquid flows across his body, squeezing his body in a skintight fluid that makes him shudder and moan. A tingle of delight runs along his

spine. He watches his pinkish skin get covered in this shiny reflective fluid that dries and adheres instantly to his skin, pressing down across his form like a lover caressing his body, but over every inch of his form, “What is... this?”

“Bio-monitoring and integration suit.”

“What is... it... for?” he asks, the ring now moving up his belly, hands caressed by the liquid, sliding across each crevice, smoothing out his features. There’s little to hide with his well-toned body. The liquid caresses his junk, cupping it, holding it there, while a pleasure moves through him, a desire, a delight, a drive? He tries to piece it in the back of his mind, his member twitches but the covering pushes back, leaving nothing but a smooth bulge that outlines his bits.

“Why inquire when already known?”

He tenses, rump squeezing, the fluid moving into him, along his arms, chest, sliding across his neck, head. With a gasp the liquid flows into his mouth, outlining his tongue, to the back of his throat where it stops just short of his uvula. Nostrils flare, gasping, the rubber stopping the air from moving within his lungs, a muffled groan and scream as the ring finishes, completely encompassing and outlining his form, trapping him within the suit. He moves up to grab his mouth, sliding fingers in, wanting to break the seal. The barely functioning atmosphere now would feel like a godsend to him.

“Relax. Excitement will degrade your efficiency coefficient,” says UT-KVI-0023, a pair of tubes descending from the ceiling. The machine grabs them with smaller tendrils, wrapping around them, guiding them to his nostrils which connect and merge with the suit, allowing clean fresh air to flow in, with a hint of metal and latex aroma.

The sensation of the air rushing in. He takes deep big breaths, steadily calming himself as he leans forward, resting his hands on his knees. Instinctively he tries to speak, “You could have warned me,” and it’s an odd sensation. He hears his voice, knows he spoke, but the air vibrates the latex in the back of his throat, changed and shifted by the movement of his tongue. The air rushes up through the back of his throat, out of his nose, making his sound muffled and off.

“Unnecessary.”

“Why? And you can understand me?” he says, looking over himself, realizing now he can see through the suit’s covering, taking a moment to look over the latex-Zenati like suit, feeling over the curves, contours, the sleek smooth sensation that bolsters his unrestrainable excitement.

“Previous data deemed it inefficient to repeat known information.”

“I guess that answers both questions,” he says, ‘sighing’ in relief.

“Unit VV-JOO-0721 will monitor and provide access to unrestricted sections. It will be eight Earth days till arrival.”

“VV joe, that name sounds familiar.”

“The ship is VV-JOO-0721.”

“Inquiries shall be processed within restrictions for efficient answering,” explains VV-JOO-0721, the ship’s voice exactly like the wyervin standing before Brandon. The suit vibrates the voice into his ear while the atmosphere from the hanger is removed.

“Do I have to?”

VV-JOO-0721 responds, **“It is most efficient.”**

“But if I want to talk to you UT-KVI-0023?” he asks with a hint of hope in his voice.

“There is no data that unit VV-JOO-0721 possesses that won’t be suitable to unit H-BRA-5391’s inquiries,” explains UT-KVI-0023, moving toward the front of the machine. The gravity on the ship reduced to non-existent.

Brandon’s stomach floats up, the ease of movement but his feet are magnetically connected to the ground, disengaging just as he needs it, allowing him to walk as needed, or simply lift off the ground and float toward the door, following behind the massive machine, “But what I want to talk to you? I feel more comfortable talking to you than anyone else.”

“Your familiarity with particular units is helpful in efficient communication. If unit H-BRA-5391 determines it is more efficient to communicate with one particular unit. It will be taken into calculations.”

He smiles, “I can live with that,” he says, feeling a sensation run through him, the suit containing a burst of arousal.

“Unit H-BRA-5391’s inefficient divergence of energy has been detected. It can be disabled for a greater efficiency coefficient.”

“Y-you can do that?”

“Affirmative.”

He swallows a lump in his throat, something about that felt... so enticing, but he pushes it away, “You need unfiltered data about human biology. Best not for the most efficient results.”

“Efficiency insight has been recorded,” UT-KVI-0023 says, the pair moving through the storage area, where a dozen humanoid races are locked in storage containers.

The rubber bound drones, faceless, unmoving, breathing tubes attached to their nostrils, providing the only source of air, just like him. There’s a sense of helplessness and that it’s only a single binary of one or zero of slaves, yes or no, that separates him from them, yet, seeing them. Those poor helpless unfortunate souls. Sentient people, taken, trained, conditioned. He stands there, looking at them. Two appear to be of the avian Miran race, another of a winged dragon, though the wings have been removed, another of the Felia, anthropomorphic cat-like race.

“Your reaction to the units is unexpected. Clarify the process to this conclusion?”

“Ah well...” he jumps, blushing a bit, heart racing, turning to face UT-KVI-0023 but finds the wyervin is gone, “UT-KVI-0023?”

“Unit H-BRA-5391 is speaking with unit VV-JOO-0721.”

“Oh, ahh... I’d feel more comfortable talking to UT-KVI-0023 about this.”

“All data is shared.”

He sighs, “It is difficult to explain, but what you are doing to these poor people is cold, heartless, evil, and yet...”

“Clarify.”

“Something in me is just... never mind. Not relevant at the moment. I’m not here to judge what your kind does.”

“Efficient relations with humans will only improve galactic efficiency.”

“That is one way of putting it,” he says, taking another moment to look at the faceless drones, “Am I able to ask what is going to happen to them?”

“Units will assist in improving efficiency of the new unit.”

“I’ll take that as a yes then,” he says, with a chuckle, “Is there a way I can see what I look like?”

“Next room has a reflective surface suitable for your inefficient needs.”

“Thanks,” he says, giving the drones one last look, floating away into the next room the doors automatically opening for him, the lights over him turn on, helping him see dozens of wyervins are lined up in alcoves, unmoving. Each one of the massive wyervin machines look exactly like the others, but their clean, polished metal provides a mirror-like reflection, letting him see his muted facial characteristics. A ghostly latex apparition when he opens his mouth into an endless void. His facial features are smoothed away to nearly nothing, his eyes hidden under the thin veil of latex, and the breathing tubes attached to his nostrils make him look like he’s plugged in like a tool such as a vacuum cleaner, which deep down he knows that’s not much farther from the truth.

Hands gently caressing along his form, feeling the sleek smooth body, a mixture of fear and excitement that blur together that he’s unsure where one ends, and the other begins, “*Why am I like this? Was I born for this? To be turned on by something so frightening?*” he wonders.

“Proceed to the next area for an attachment.”

“An attachment?”

“Affirmative.”

“What kind?”

“To enhance your connectivity efficiency with hardware.”

“Is UT-KVI-0023 going to be there?” he asks, noticing that even in this low light down the way is the very wyervin he spoke of.

“Negative.”

“I’d feel more comfortable if UT-KVI-0023 was there. I trust it.”

“That would be very inefficient.”

He mulls some thoughts in his head, and after only a brief pause, he responds, “Human health is important and understanding stress and how it could affect efficiency. I would hope that the knowledge gained would overall help efficiency?”

There’s a pause, it’s brief, but it’s there, **“Affirmative, proceed ahead.”**

He smirks, “*They aren’t that hard to figure out.*” He floats past UT-KVI-0023 which moves the moment he passes it. The machine slides out of the alcove, entering the room right after the human, to a medical lab that sparks memories from the last time he was in here.

UT-KVI-0023 informs, **“Proceed to the center alcove, back facing out.”**

“As you wish,” he says, looking at the surgical tools that could be brought down to bear onto him, seeing their multi-function, knowing they could be just as effective on flesh as metal. He steps into the alcove, sliding his arms into the opening, which grips and holds his body in place. He looks over his shoulder the wyervin’s tentacles grab the tools, grabbing a long silver metal spine from storage, “What’s that?”

“Look forward,” it says in a cold, uncaring voice, a simple command from a machine.

“Got it, sorry,” he says, realizing he’s not hearing anything from the ship, only feeling any vibrations through himself. A strange silence, knowing there should be a whir sound coming from its tentacles, yet that nothingness is surreal that when he feels something long run across his spine, he grows curious. It travels from his tailbone all the way up to the back of his head. The device gripping onto the latex suit, pinching his skin, with pricks and tingles running through his body. The same sensation when a limb has fallen asleep and is now awakening. With a grunt, the device grips tighter, his back straightens out, “What’s happening?” he asks, tensing, feeling another prick at the base of his head, feeling something moving in, a moment of sharp pain before it becomes completely numb.

“Correcting natural spinal alignment and installation of neural interface.”

“Oh, is that all?”

“Affirmative.”

“That was sarcasm...” he remarks, feeling the forced adjustment of his spine, the machinery letting him go, the wyervin’s tentacles pushing into points of the external metal spine, causing tingles to surge through his limbs, fingers to twitch.

“Testing Neural Connection. Respond.”

“What was that? Did I just hear you in my head?”

“Respond internally.”

“Respond internally? Does it mean thinking?”

UT-KVI-0023 pulls away, heading back toward its pod with Brandon in toe.

“Where are you going?” he asks, watching her slip into the pod, “Why won’t you respond?” he adds, receiving no response, “Uh... when and where do I eat on the ship?”

“Unit VV-JOO-0721 speaking,” whispers a synthetic voice in his head, his head pinged in not quite a headache but feeling just a bit off as the ship speaks, **“Follow for sleeping and sustenance quarters.”**

“Ah, that is something,” he says, feeling a shiver run down his spine, unsure of its the creep sensation of the voice in his head or the device that’s making it happen. He feels a slight imbalance, having to lean against something, which so happens to be UT-KVI-0023 that rests motionless in its alcove. The strange sense that he knows the general path of where to go in his head, “Ah... fuck... what was that?”

“Testing of your neural link to receive basic data,” the ship explains.

“Do I need to go to my quarters right now?”

“Negative. Sustenance will be provided when needed.”

“Good to know. Anything else I need to know?”

“Negative.”

“Alright then. That means I am free to look at the unrestricted parts of the ship?”

“Affirmative.”

He nods along, “I see...” He turns to UT-KVI-0023, “When possible, there is uh...” he says, rubbing the back of his head, stopping himself the moment he feels the metallic protrusion attached to the back of the base of his head. He tenses, feeling his heart race, an excitement bubbles up within him, “Talk to you in private? I know what you think of privacy and that I am not alone. But you understand what I mean by it. We’ve been through a lot; you saved my life. And ever since the mission. There has been... Talk to me when you can, okay?”

There’s a silence that hangs in the air. The machine stares at him, or was it even active to perceive him there? He clears his throat, “If you want to understand humans better. Could you try to talk to me? I’m curious about your kind too. It could be an efficient exchange?” Yet there’s no response, simply left to the void of the ship, “I’ll just look around now. Don’t worry, I’ll stay out of any of the restricted zones. Hope to talk to you soon,” he says, giving the machine a wave.

The ship is simple, efficient. No atmosphere, near total silence, yet it reacts to his position, providing just enough light where he needs it, no more, no less. It’s more than that every part of the ship has a function and a purpose, but it has multiple purposes, back up functions, interconnected, and redundancy without hurting efficiency.

Eventually he’ll find his way into his room. Simple, minimalistic, with a bed, and a table attached to the bed that can be used for study, eating, and the bed doubling as a chair. He looks over the room, “*I wonder how I use the restroom?*” he ponders when he feels nauseous, sitting onto the bed as he realizes the nature behind it, the tubes, the attachment, extraction like in the pods. A shiver runs down his spine, rubbing his head, the door opens, the movement draws his attention to UT-KVI-0023 stepping into the room, “UT-KVI-0023, is that you?”

“Affirmative,” it says, stepping into the room, taking up the rest of the space, sitting proud like a cat, tentacles coming out of its chest, reaching out toward his head, **“Sustenance.”**

He pulls back, tensing, the tentacle slipping into his mouth, pushing past the latex down into the back of his throat, as his “Food” is given to him, “*How does it expect me to talk when there’s a tentacle in my mouth?*”

“Think the conversation, it would be more private.”

He tenses, lips wrapping around the sleek metal, suckling the tentacle, giving him the feigned sensation, he’s drawing the food from the machine. He looks up at its multi-lighted sleek head, that looks down at him, “*How accurate are my thoughts?*”

“Perception, meaning, devoid of words.”

“So, it’s not mind reading.”

“Affirmative.”

“Is your goal to bring it to that level?” he asks, his toes curling, arousal growing between his legs, the latex keeping himself null, nostrils flaring, sucking the air through the tubes.

“Affirmative.”

“I don’t know how well it could convey my thoughts on this subject,” he thinks, fingers drumming against the table, rump tensing, heart pumping, sucking firmly on the synthetic tentacle, getting another massive dose.

“Fear, uncertainty, curiosity, arousal. Desire, general. Desire for an inefficient confirmation response,” it says, the tentacle withdrawing after water flowed down his throat at a clearing, steady pace, with enough breaks in between to allow breathing.

His gag reflex strained against the machine, the rubber remaining unbroken when it pulls out, like it was never there. He gasps, taking a moment to regain himself, “Generally correct, but not completely? I think I had more to those thoughts than I realized.”

“Efficiency in understanding the human brain will increase. Cross neural connections cause an expected range of desires for some brains.”

“Is that a fancy way of saying I’m not the only one who is uh... excited by some of the things you do?”

“Affirmative.”

“I appreciate you taking time to talk to me. I guess that’s why you didn’t respond earlier, I’d get my answer when you showed up.”

UT-KVI-0023 says nothing, leaving a moment of dead air between them.

“What do you make of such things? My cross neural connection as you put it?”

“Inefficient.”

His shoulders slump, “Simply you disapprove of something like that? I guess that means it’s a weird, creepy thing?”

“Negative,” it responds, getting up.

“Where are you going? I was hoping to talk more?” he asks, following it out of the room and back to her alcove.

“Later.”

“When later?” he asks, getting no responses, giving up on getting anything more from it as it slips back into the alcove, *“I’m presuming the next time I need to eat?”* he ponders, giving the machine one last look as he leaves. He’s right though, the conversation does pick up, when he’s fed, thinking his conversation, followed by a little speaking, before being left again, pieced together the conversation would go something like this...

“Wouldn’t talking like this be inefficient? I could forget what we were talking about.”

“If it is important. It will not be forgotten.”

“I see your point,” he replies, suckling the tentacle, the protruding phallus down his throat, feeling natural with each feeding, a fact that sends tingles down his spine, “Do you feel anything about what you are doing to people?”

“Emotions are inefficient.”

“Love? Empathy? Respecting people? You enslave people.”

“Instinctual desire for procreation is irrelevant. Efficiency is all that matters.”

He tenses, suckling the tentacle even harder, “How could love be irrelevant?! And the lives, and minds you reduce to efficiency? Do you just toss people to the wayside when they aren’t efficient anymore?”

“Love is related to procreation and put into non-procreation activities. Sentient species that do not require a family unit do not have love that you understand. It is not needed. It is inefficient for their survival.”

“I…” he mutters, UT-KVI-0023 leaving him with that thought to linger, only to be picked up next time, “I understand what you said last time. Love is subjective, more so between species, but it can still be defined as care of another. And you never answer my other questions when someone is no longer efficient are they tossed to the wayside? No longer fed and just die off?”

“It is considered love, keeping relations alive long after they are no longer living. It is inefficient. Efficiency coefficients are kept as high as possible for as long possible. Extending far past what is possible with technologies other species possess. Is it more loving to extend one’s efficiency? Or existence? Delaying the end is the purpose of efficiency.”

He tenses, thinking back on the mission, what he saw, “*Am I conflating simple machine logic to care and love?*” he ponders, looking at the wyervin, hoping for some kind of confirmation, but he’s met with only silence. “If this technology is able to extend people’s lives. Why don’t you share it?”

“It would be used inefficiently.”

“That’s it? That it would be used ineffectively?”

“Affirmative.”

He clenches his hands into fists, “I understand. I hate it that I understand, but I do,” he remarks, leaving him again, “*What is it about you that draws me to this world? It’s so cold, harsh, uncaring, yet truthful. No guessing, wondering, purpose known. Am I just tired of making my own decisions? The responsibility over myself?*”

The next feeding, an eager pet, seeing the tentacle, his saliva blocked by the latex encasing his mouth, “None of this goes past between us right?”

“Negative. Data collected is disseminated.”

He tenses, feeling a wave of embarrassment crash into him and yet his arousal bubbles up while accepting the tentacle without a fight, “Can my excitement be not reported to my people?”

“Affirmative.”

“Really? Just like that?”

“Reporting superfluous data is not required.”

“Good, good,” he takes a deep breath, letting it sink in, “Is my response to this a reason why I was… selected?” he asks, receiving a long silence, “Right I asked something like this already, didn’t I?” he asks, followed by another long silence, “I feel there is more I could talk to you about but I just can’t grasp it.”

UT-KVI-0023 leaves him without saying a word, the following days the feeding is streamlined and automated the tentacles coming down from the ceiling, feeding him his sustenance, the last couple of days leaving him with only a few minor “conversations” if they could even be called that with unit VV-JOO-0721.

Brandon found himself looking at the simple drone holding stations, the long pods where the faceless droned people stand, stare, barely moving except for the subtle movements of their breathing. Something about them that draws him in, the tight quarter, no room to move, his arousal twitching when he feels vibration in the floor, movement in the corner of his vision, UT-KVI-0023 standing there, “Oh, you’re awake.”

“Moving, proceed to drone drop ship,” it says, simply, coldly.

There’s a slight queasiness as he gets this vague sense to walk into the hanger. The pods around him suddenly open, the rubber drones stepping out, walking toward the hanger. Brandon just manages to get out of the way, back up into the wyervin, “Did we arrive at our destination?”

“Affirmative.”

“I just follow them then?” he asks, swallowing a lump in his throat, the machine responding by moving forward, pushing him along, “That’d be a yes.” He falls in line behind the other drones, standing out by his less fluid and conditioned movements. But he can’t help but find a bit of excitement, wishing there was a drone behind him, keeping him in line. Wondering what is going through their heads, what are they seeing, what makes them so conditioned and controlled. He boards the ship with them, the transport ship, grabs his breathing tube, cutting him from his air for a moment, then binding him to the new ship. He follows in line with the other drones into an empty alcove, standing in position, the ship binding him in place. Unable to move, the lights turned off, delving him in darkness, with only getting a glimpse of UT-KVI-0023 as he boarded.

The ship connects to his spinal attachment, further binding him to the ship, a tingle runs down his spine, spreading through his body, the connections locking his head forward, making it impossible to move. His breathing grows quicker, the tubes keeping up with his increased need, feeling completely locked and alone, the other drones disappearing into the void around him. A complete sense of isolation. The ship moving, taking off, inertia felt, his mind building pictures of the strange alien world he’s approaching, or a massive space station that is the size of a small moon, or a mega combat vessel that he’s seen pictures of. Weapons of war of such immense size that only machines could ever hope to pull it off due to sheer cost of it all.

The ship rattles and rocks, “*We’re going through an atmosphere,*” he thinks, his mind’s eye focusing on some barren desolate machine world. The machines having taken it over, turning it into a lifeless block of machinery, having taken over a once lush green world, or some lifeless rock made more ‘efficient’ for whatever their needs are.

There’s a rumble the ship coming to a standstill. A hiss fills the ship and, in the darkness, he can feel movement, his air is cut off, something shoved up his nose, a desire to sneeze over takes him, then he breathes... fresh air? It’s devoid of smell, filtered, clean, but processed. The doors open, light bursts through revealing the tentacles pulling away from the drones, having

placed similar breathing apparatuses in their noses. The ship releases them, stepping out in line, walking out, leaving him rushing behind them, the suit tinting the light just enough to prevent him from needing to raise his hand. Steadily as his eyes adjust the tint fades. He looks to see a metropolitan city, not far from the one's he's seen in his home world. The structures, layout, set up, all look vaguely like a dozen cities he's seen from different worlds, "*It's either we're on an island or this city is floating?*" he thinks, turning around to see the coastline just over the horizon. The clear blue sky, the white clouds floating up above, lush green vegetation on the yellow-white sandy beach front as the waves hit the shore.

"What is this place?" he mutters, hearing his muffled voice a bit clearer now, to realize just how muffled it really is, a voice whispers in his mind, informing him just who is speaking to him.

UT-KVI-0023 answers, "**Testing grounds, research facility.**"

He turns to the machine, having exited a separate compartment part of the transport ship, "Is this place built on an island?"

"**Negative.**"

"Wouldn't it be more efficient to build on the land?"

"**Negative.**"

"Why?"

"**Removing native foliage would be very inefficient. Land masses shift.**"

"Really? Don't you consider that life growing there very inefficient?"

"**Affirmative.**"

"Yet you don't remove it?"

"**It's more efficient to leave it as it is than to remove and build over. More efficient locations to build.**"

He looks at it curiously, "You're telling me you for preservation of life?"

"**Affirmative.**"

"I was not expecting that," he says, taking a deep breath through his nostrils, "This looks very similar to the type of planet my kind can live on. So what's the need for these?" he asks, pointing to his nose.

"**Atmosphere is suitable for your species. Biohazard pathogens.**"

"Why don't you give me a vaccine instead? Or do you not have cures for the diseases here?"

"**More efficient to cure if infected,**" it explains, looking out toward the city, "**Explore, interact. Be a citizen here. First test. Be natural, avoid capture.**"

"Oh, is that all? I'll do my best."

"**Your efficiency coefficient depends on it.**"

He chuckles, "No pressure," he says, taking a few steps away, turning to see that the machine isn't following, "Are you coming with?" he asks, getting no response, muttering, "I'll take that as a no." It's surreal and almost game-like as he enters the city. People move about, all latex drones, faceless, smooth, bound in black rubber, devoid of any purpose other than what the

wyervins demand of them. Yet they move about the city like they've lived there their entire lives, playing a role in this play. There's traffic, people selling wares, shopping in stores. He knows it's all fake and if it wasn't for the smooth faceless look, he could be easily fooled otherwise. His blood runs cold seeing just how much detail is put into it, families and all, "*They are machines. They don't care about anything but efficiency.*"

He moves deeper into the city, getting a sense that the only parts that come alive are related to his positioning. A protagonist in a video game, the lives of these people revolve around him. Their interactions are only here to lull him into a false sense that he's some place familiar, and what's scary, it's working. Something about his suit projects over the drones and the deeper he gets into the suit, the more the people look less like drones and like people of different races, at one of those neutral planets that welcome species of all kinds.

The smells of the city, the sounds of hover cars moving about, honking of horns, the fly lane of traffic above, people chattering about anything and everything, the organized chaos if civilization emulated to near perfection, if it was any more, it would be *too* much.

"Hot dogs! Get your hot dogs here!" exclaims the human vendor, the aroma of a ballpark frank with the works hits his nostrils, his stomach growling, his eyes locked on the steam coming from the vendor's mobile food cart.

"*After all those wyervin feedings. I'd take a mafia grade hot dog... or heavens forbid, a vegan dog,*" he thinks, drawn to it, like a moth to the flame, "I'll take one foot long with everything on it."

"One hot wiener with the works, coming right up."

The man works like he's performing magic, crafting the masterpiece of food. Brandon's stomach growls, his mouth salivates, yet it simply pools in the back of his throat, quickly swallowed, a reminder that this is not his home, which makes his skin crawl. He shudders, looking up at just the moment when something latching onto the building overhead creeps down into view.

A sleek gunmetal quadruped machine at least the size of a wyervin. Segmented metal, the wyervin 'wings' that are attached to its arms, but it's even more feral with no visible neck, with a face that is a smooth perfect sphere, with a non-reflective optical lens. It's sleek, aerodynamic form, with segmented metal plates. Its movements provide zero noise, but its movements are clear, it's after him.

"Fuck." He sprints as the machine lands behind him. Others around him scream in shock and horror. With a quick glance he sees the machine running after him.

It rushes straight toward him, jumping over another food cart, going straight down the sidewalk as its weight cracks the pavement underneath it. It's silver segmented metal tentacles launch from half a dozen ports across its form, ready to nab its target. It reaches out to grab Brandon but quickly withdraws.

The human leaped into traffic, bobbing and weaving through the cars that go by, cars honking their horns in anger, almost hitting him twice, "*I know how you think, you sneaky wyervin dog.*"

The machine moves through traffic, threading the needle with efficient ease, jumping over a car that would have otherwise hit it, landing on the other side of the road, where Brandon has already leapt down a set of stairs into the subway.

“Hey, watch where you are going!” exclaims a businessman walking up the escalator while having a controlled tumble run down the center between the two, avoiding the skateboard stoppers along the way.

“Sorry, I’ll be borrowing this,” he says, yanking a temporary far card from an anthropomorphic deer’s hand, unlocking the turnstile gate, letting him through mere moments before the wyervin reaches the gate, leaving dozens of other passengers, running for their lives. He pants, looking back at the quadrupedal machine that is twice the width of the gate entrance. He stumbles forward, seeing the machine retreat like a monster NPC fading back into the darkness once you’ve hit a checkpoint.

His nostrils whistle from his heavy breathing, eyeing the glowing light blue ‘eye’ fade, the machine quietly retreating, *“It’s quiet, I’ll give it that,”* he mutters, rushing down another set of stairs down a platform. The people here act completely oblivious to what just happened, but as he waits for the train, there is talk about something that happened at the entrance, that some machine attacked. Is it a wyervin attack? They are going to enslave us all. They’ll use us for fuel. I hear they put you into an alternative reality that you believe is real but is not.

Brandon feels a pit in his stomach, *“This feels so real,”* he thinks, boarding the last car in the train, looking at the half dozen passengers that mind their own business, one reading an old-fashioned book, others listening to music, looking at their phones, lost in their own world, *“Too real.”* He holds onto a pole, taking a moment to soak it in, *“Every one of these people... they are real, aren’t they? The suit is projecting what they’d look like, right?”* he thinks, reaching out to a frilled anthropomorphic lizard, his hand moving through the frill, briefly revealing the illusion, while still looking perfectly real.

“Can I help you?” he asks, shooting Brandon a look.

“Oh, sorry, I meant no offense.”

He huffs, spreading his frills, “Humans can’t keep their hands to themselves.”

“It’s so weird. I’m like the protagonist in my own story. The world revolves around me. This test is based on my actions. Their existence, purpose is for me. Every one of these people are just... enslaved, made into automatons, feigning emotions they once have. This only brings more questions. I’ll need to talk to UT-KVI-0023 about this.” he thinks, passing through two stops while he ponders his next move.

Thud! He jumps, other passengers exclaiming, “What was that noise?”

“Shit.” He rushes to the other end of the car, looking over the door, pulling an emergency lever that allows him to open it. The sound of the cars on the tracks grows louder as he rushes to open the next door, and pushing through, venturing from one car to the next, feeling the machine is just behind him, but when he looks back, he doesn’t see anything following him, only people giving him crazed confused looks.

Panic wants to take him, heart racing, yet his training, staying cool under pressure keeps him from being overtaken by his primal instincts. The train pulls into the next station, "*None of my options are good,*" he thinks, weighing his options, finally deciding to rush toward the subway exit. If he can get through those gates, he'll buy himself time.

He leaves with the passengers, rushing through them, rushing up the escalator, seeing the metal exit gets only a few meters away, "*Almost there,*" he says, looking behind him, "*Nothing, I got this.*" He grins at a thought when someone yells.

"What in the world!"

Sleek tentacles wrap around Brandon's wrists yanking him up in the air. Brandon tugs hard, following the wires to the machine hanging from the ceiling. Its claws digging into the stone, causing it to crack. Another set of tentacles wrap around his ankles while it mechanically steps onto the ground, its limbs and head adjusting so that its back and head remain trained on him. The machine's back opens up, popping up with a body cavity akin to an empty cartridge.

"*Come on, think, is there something I can do to still escape?*" he thinks, looking around, "Someone help me!" he exclaims, while his legs are bound together, bent so his feet are pressing up against his butt, arms bound back that if he was dropped now, he'd be forced onto his knees and elbows.

The machine makes its way down the steps, pulling him toward the body cavity. The insides are a dark black void of latex and silver wires, that shine in the fluorescent lights above. As he's drawn into the machine there's a deep growl as a winged eight foot tall muscular dragon comes charging at them, holding onto a metal trash can hitting the machine in the side with a resounding thud, causing it to topple over, tentacles are used to stop the roll, reaching out to grab the trash can, ripping it from the dragon's claws with a bit of struggle, crushing the can in the process.

A buzz fills the air, a whistle followed by a clang. Brandon finds his body pulled away from the machine, avoiding the deadly swing of a four-armed, massive anthropomorphic wasp. "*A Vespera? How is a Vespera here?!*" he thinks. A flash of recognition of the insectoid hive race that in some ways are compared to the "Friendly biological Wyervin" with their strong military and fearful nature.

"Unhand that human!" exclaims the wasp.

"You're not enslaving anyone today," roars the dragon.

The tentacles wrapped around Brandon twitch and whirl, damage visible, but before another attack could commence the machine wraps another set of tentacles around the blade, coiling around it, forcing it from the bug's hand, dodging the attack of the dragon, leaping back onto the wall, crawling toward the tunnel while shoving Brandon into the machine's body cavity, which adjusts around his body like a hand dipping into melted wax.

The tentacles remain tightly coiled around his limbs keeping them held in place, pulling his knees and elbows into the alcoves, belly pressing against the sleek insides. He pulls his head out, trying to give one last call to help, while the machine leaps into the tunnel. The machine's cover pushes his body down into it, head pushed down into alcove designed to fit his head. His

body tightly gripped, unable to move as breathing tubes are attached to his nostrils, “Damn it!” he calls out, his chin unable to move due to how tightly gripping the machine grips his head. Sleek tendrils push into his lips, combining in his mouth, forcing his tongue down, sliding down his throat, coiling around his voice box, keeping his passageway clear, but completely his ability to even try to speak, only making soft muffled grunts.

Complete darkness, barely able to hear anything except the rumbling of his captor’s steps as it travels down the tunnel, the momentum of it jumping up, climbing upwards in, something. The sensation of being completely helpless overtakes him. He can’t move his limbs, stretch them, see anything, tightly sandwiched between the machine’s main body and the outer shell. Whatever help he was getting, grows ever distant, sinking into the machine.

“What could I have done to avoid this? I was told to avoid capture. What if this is real?” he wonders, moved about like a piece of freight. The machine is going toward its destination without any way for him to know where he’s going or even how far away, he’s toward the destination, *“What if the higher ups were concerned about my close connection and just gave me to them? They could easily turn me into a simple drone and that be it. Nothing I could do about it. What will we do? Go to war over a single person? Of course not.”* His mind speeds up, torn between the unknown around him, the bubbling sensation of being held so tightly within the machine’s form. Its movements are completely separate from his restrained position. There’s no wiggle room, simply a constant squeeze and held in a position that is considered “comfortable” that he’s not losing blood circulation but is reduced down to a hunk of meat being moved.

“Would UT-KVI-0023 do that to me? No, no, it wouldn’t do that, right? But there are other wyervins. They could. I don’t know how their system works, their hierarchy, if they even have one. Am I allowed to ask that? Or am I going to find out, being bound and helpless to the machines. Almost half a year with them. If I just disappeared, would anyone know? Impossible to find out. This is a secret mission. I could be a loose end... and, no, no. Keep your focus. They aren’t going to enslave me... are they?” His heart races, hands shaking in their containment, knowing his palms are sweaty yet the suit nullifies it.

He feels the tight grip of the machine, the tentacles coiled around him, the tubes forced into his nose, or are those the filters? Impossible to tell at this point, his simple bodily function to make noise, stolen from him. The metallic taste of the tentacles that warm up in his mouth. His tongue is pinned against the bottom of his mouth, impossible to even wiggle out from under them. The strange sensation of something slid down his throat, bypassing his gag reflex, pressing into his larynx, vocal cords are neutered, *“Is this why the drones don’t speak? What kind of surgical things do they do to them? Stripping people of their personalities, lives, freedoms.”* His arousal bubbles up, but it too is limited, feeling like his junk is in a just as tight chastity cage, unable to find the space to grow to full length, only making the tight grip around his more sensitive region become ever more intense.

“I’m going to be turned into one of them. A drone of this city. Is my life going to revolve around their notion of efficiency? Would I even know if I am in their artificial world? I was so

quickly enthralled by what they created that...” he stops his line of thinking, fearful of where it might lead. Part of him wants to draw his attention away from the bondage, but to do that he’d have to let his mind wonder, and the only thing it wants is to think about this removal of motion, sensation, focused completely on the enslaving machine. There is no escape. No decision he can make, no plan he could come up with, no dialogue option he could say that would save him from whatever the cold heartless machines decide for him. *Completely* at their mercy. It’s one thing to be in the military, to have your decisions removed from you, but even that is to some degree an illusion. The decisions are still there, just with consequences. This is a complete removal of decisions. Free will is not stripped because the alternative would be unpleasant. It’s the unpleasant knowledge that there is simply no free will at all and yet...

Movement stopped. One moment passes, two... three... Brandon begins to wonder what could be next. His breathing grows heavy, body tensing, relaxing, unsure what he could do next. Simply wait? What feels like an eternity but in reality, is no more than twenty minutes the machine opens up as a new set of tentacles wrap around him, coiling around his limbs, replacing the ones the captor machine placed around him.

The suit tints, allowing him to see what’s happening. UT-KVI-0023 stands before him, it’s this machine’s tentacles that are coiled around him, giving him instant relief to his fears. Slowly his limbs extend back out, gently placed onto his feet. He finds himself in a lab that looks like a machine shop. It’s clean, sterile, with machine tools that look familiar yet otherworldly. Like he’s able to tell the purpose for each tool, but how they can be accessed and used, it’s clear it’s not made for human hands. There are no free-standing computers, keyboards, or access to any kind of database.

“UT-KVI-0023, am I glad to see you,” he remarks, with a relaxing sigh, the breathing tubes disconnected from him when his head was pulled out of the machine. He looks up at the towering wyervin, then back over at the four-legged wyervin-like canine, noticing there are three other wyervins in the room, two in alcoves unmoving, while a third, with the same specifications as UT-KVI-0023 sits motionless behind the machine that captured him.

The other Wyervin machine communicates with UT-KVI-0023, their compact data streams could be simply translated as this, ***“Reaction outside of expected parameters. Possible reduction in efficiency obtaining abnormal human.”***

“Efficiency coefficient high for species. Efficient cooperation.”

“Initial test successful. Data will be analyzed. Tomorrow hybrid work will begin.”

“My work is to test that thing out?” he asks, motioning to the machine behind him.

“AC-AAA-0006.”

“Can I call it six?”

“Affirmative.”

“How did I do?” he asks, glancing at the other wyervin in the room every so often.

“High efficiency coefficient.”

“I’ll take that as good,” he says, finally giving full attention to the other machine, “Hey, and who might you be?”

The other wyervin coldly replies, **“UT-RRV-0249.”**

“Are you like...” he asks, words cut off by it.

“Negative. Greater coefficient efficiency in design and creation.”

“Like a lead scientist?”

“Affirmative.”

“I didn’t think you had anything like that.”

UT-KVI-0023 states, **“It is inefficient to not specialize.”**

UT-RRV-0249 remains still, a bit of silence hangs in the air, **“Inefficient transmission of data.”**

It’s fellow wyervin responds, **“Greater reduction in efficiency coefficient by unfocused human subject.”**

“That does make sense. And now that I am here?” he looks around further, the place being a relatively large workshop, “What’s next? My mission?”

“Follow to resting and sustenance quarters,” states UT-KVI-0023 walking away.

“Talking and moving, more efficient, right. So, glad to hear I did well.”

“Early analysis indicates the capture rate was not as efficient as models predicted.”

“I could explain why that might be if you want.”

“Unit H-BRA-5391 will be a core. Integrating and utilizing unit AC-AAA-0006 in varied contingencies.”

“You’re going to turn me into that?” he asks, looking back at the machine, seeing the other Wyervin working on it with its tentacles.

“Integration not conversion. Integration periods shall extend in future tests,” it explains, reaching his resting quarters. An alcove half the size of his room on the ship. A place to sleep, eat, and removal of bodily waste.

“Am I able to move around? What areas are restricted?”

“Negative.”

“What can I do here, between study? You should know that unlike you, I can’t work non-stop.”

“Explore city.”

He nods, tensing a bit, thinking back on the city, “Actually, that is something I want to talk to you about. Everyone in the city, they are drones, people you’ve captured?”

“Affirmative.”

A shiver runs down his spine, a mixture of feelings he knows that should not be anywhere near each other, “How could you?”

“Efficiency.”

He turns to it, “That’s not what I mean. How could you use people like that. You replicated everything so well.”

“Efficiency.”

He takes a deep breath, “I understand why you replicated everything so well. From people who’d run from danger to those that will charge in and help. Risking damages to your

creation for the real world, stuff like that would happen. What I am having trouble, that I want... no, need to understand. You're machines that have no emotions. At least that's what am I told, correct?"

"Affirmative."

"Would it be restrictive knowledge to know, just how in the fuck did you just emulate people so well?"

"Empathy."

He quirks an eyebrow, stepping up till he's face to chest with the machine, its forearms and attached wings, acting like blinders, "Empathy?! Empathy?! You have no emotions, don't give me that bullshit about having empathy. If you were empathetic, you'd not enslave people!"

"Cognitive empathy. It is efficient to understand the inefficient emotions of organic lifeforms."

Swallowing a lump in his throat, heart racing, "You understand the pain, torment, the suffering you create, and yet you continue to do what you do? You don't understand emotions at all! Don't give me that you understand them at all!"

UT-KVI-0023 remains still, not even moving its head to look at the human, **"Anger. Created by situations not to an organism's liking. Efficient for self-driven desires, inefficient overall."**

His hands clench, trying to think of the words, "What about the anger caused by what you do? Anger of stealing loved ones? Anger at injustice of the world? It motivates people to change what is wrong."

"Perception of what is wrong based on limited individual knowledge, accepting answers that will make one feel better, regardless of validity. Selfish thought that one knows best over anyone else. A selfish desire to feel better. To feel pleasure, delight, happiness. Example. Unit UT-RRV-0249 would have been angered by unit AC-AAA-0006's underperformance. It would bring efficiency in finding a solution, but inefficiency in optimal relations with unit H-BRA-5391."

Something about the words... They sunk in deep, thinking there has to be more than that but the more he thinks about it, the growing cold realization that it is right, "Yet, you just take that away, not just anger, but all emotions. Turning people into drones. Shadows of what they once were, all for what? Efficiency?"

"Continuing current communications is inefficient," it says, taking a step back.

He moves forward with it, "Don't give me that. Tell me what's so great about this efficiency you talk about. You know I am here to help your kind with efficiency while we humans get something in return. If understanding is so helpful in efficiency, then help me understand."

UT-KVI-0023 stops, the first time Brandon has ever caught it changing its reaction to anything he's said, **"When unit H-BRA-5391 is ready. Compute what was communicated,"** it says, moving away.

UT-RRV-0249 pings its fellow unit, ***"Inefficient use of energy."***

“Efficiency coefficients will improve,” it responds.

Brandon stands there, breathing heavily through his nostrils, forgetting that he’s a sleek faceless looking drone for those moments. He slinks back sitting on the bed, *“Relax Brandon. If I cause a diplomatic incident now?”* he thinks, taking a moment to watch the machines work in the distance.

“Unit UT-KVI-0023 speaking,” whispers a synthetic voice in Brandon’s head, the vibrations in his suit simulate the machine talking right in front of him, **“No harm will happen. Cooperation and understanding is optimal.”**

He takes a deep breath, closing his eyes, *“Thanks. I needed that,”* he thinks, getting no response in return. He looks at his sleek rubber covered hands, the reduction in his features, feeling up his face, getting that mixed sensation, *“Pleasure and happiness are important, but can be so damn confusing...”* Suddenly it hits him, saying out loud, “Wait, did you tell me earlier that a wyervin would have been mad at how well I did if one could feel that emotion?”

“Affirmative.”

He smirks, “I don’t know if I should feel good about that or not. Should I be careful around unit UT... R?”

“Unit UT-RRV-0249. Negative. Unit H-BRA-5391 prepare for next test.”

“Next test already?”

“Negative.”

His mini adrenaline rush fades, “You’ve already told me when... tomorrow. Now that I am a bit calmer, will we talk more?” he asks, greeted only with silence, *“I’ll just take that as a no, not yet,”* he thinks with a sigh, looking around his simple little alcove, *“This is going to be far worse than boot camp.”*

Floating, surrounded by sweet darkness. A set of lights shine over him, scanning, a cold voice echoing out around him, **“Unit H-BRA-5391 shall be made more efficient.”** UT-KVI-0023 hovers over him. It’s sleek segmented silver metal tentacles coil around his limbs, pulling his body straight.

“What are you doing,” his words are cut off when one of those tentacles slips into his mouth, sliding down his throat. He helplessly finds himself sucking on the tentacle, moaning and shuddering in the process. He tenses more, feeling his rear and front nether regions penetrated, coiling around his aching member, sliding deeper into his aching ass.

“Verbal communications is inefficient,” UT-KVI-0023 states, more tentacles wrap around his body, binding him further, slithering across his naked form, his eyes locked on the faceless headlamp glow, **“Unit H-BRA-5391 will prepare for conversion.”**

He takes a deep breath, moaning louder, arousal burning, building, motion in the corner of his vision draws his attention to see the sleek wyervin quadruped dog. The sphere devoid of a neck, head. The machine opens up, with dozens of tendrils reaching out toward him.

“Unit H-BRA-5391 will be one.”

Brandon awakes with a wyervin tentacle slipped into his throat, the flow of food sustenance gliding down his throat. His nether regions penetrated and connected to the waste removal system. He jerks and tenses, reaching for the tentacle in his throat, seeing a wyervin over his head, trying to say something but finds it impossible. While trying to force the tentacle out of his mouth, he finds it an impossible task, “*What are you doing?!*” he thinks, glaring at the machine.

“Unit UT-RRV-0249 speaking.”

“It is not efficient to struggle. Unit H-BRA-5391’s sustenance distribution and waste removal is nearly completed,” the machine barely moves otherwise, its glowing light eyes looking down at him.

Slowly Brandon comes down from his high, “*Jesus fuck, what a way to wake up someone in the morning,*” he thinks, stiffening at the realization, “*Are my dreams being read? Is my mind able to be read?*” He stares at the machine, feeling it pull off him once it is considered done. He sits up, standing up to the machine, “Don’t do that again.”

“Unit H-BRA-5391 will improve their sleep efficiency.”

He tenses, “Time to get to work then?” He asks and without a word it walks away toward the center of the machine shop, “I’ll take that as a yes,” he remarks, heading to where his partner sits, the top already popped open with UT-KVI-0023 looking over the chassis, “UT-KVI-0023, could you have told your friend to not wake me so abruptly?”

It responds, not looking at him, **“It was efficient.”**

“Waking me and putting me in a bad mood with a tentacle shoved up my mouth, is efficient?”

“Affirmative.”

“Great, great, will this happen often?”

“Unknown. Unit H-BRA-5391 will proceed to board unit AC-AAA-0006 and begin integration process.”

He rubs the back of his head, feeling the soft squeak of his form, looking into that welcoming open cavity. His heart races, the machine lowering its front down to give easier access with a step stool placed in front of it. He feels the cool metal against his hands, the suit providing easy grip, allowing him to peer into the cavity, “This looks different from before.”

“Unit AC-AAA-0006 is now set to core mode from capture mode.”

“I presume that core mode is the type that the military wants?” he asks, sliding feet first into the dark interior. He slides in smoothly, his legs extending out into the depth of the machine, his crotch caressed and relaxed into a dimple set perfectly for him. Chest pressing up on the cushion. A strange sensation of just how *different* the same machine feels under only slightly different circumstances. His arms slip into alcoves, hands slipping into gloves that have level of movement and control and now he is sinking in, the same could be said about his feet. His head rests into an opening that contours to his face, tubes attaching to his nostrils.

AC-AAA-0006 grips around his body, binding him tighter to the machine. Silently the cover closes, locking him into the machine. A tingle runs down his spine, dozens of small wires

connect and bind to his external spine, causing his limbs to twitch. His face binds with the alcove as he sees through the machine's eyes. It's disorienting for the first few moments, his eyes shifting, getting a full look over his body, finding there is no spot where he can't look. And with it, no matter where he's focusing, his front side, and tail side are always kept in view.

The tingles grow, tightly binding around his form, his mind rushing with a mixture of fear, pleasure, delight, a sensory deprivation to sensory overload within moments. He hears the wyervin machines, their soft whir, and adjustments, tentacles attaching to them, the tingling adjusting, his body sinking deeper into the machine, holding him nice and tight.

UT-KVI-0023 states, **“Calibrating organic to synthetic connection.”**

UT-RRV-0249 pings UT-KVI-0023, **“Audio communication is inefficient.”**

“Current analysis indicates a strong possibility of increasing efficiency.”

“Clarify.”

“Increases unit H-BRA-5391 understanding and efficiency coefficient. Increases efficiency in decimating human neural network, increasing in detecting flaws in the translation compared to other human subjects.”

“Applying current parameters,” responds UT-RRV-0249, saying in its exact same cold monotone synthetic voice, **“Remain calm till calibration is complete. Basic motor functions will resume shortly, followed by neural blockers for increased efficiency.”**

Brandon shifts as much focus as he can to UT-RRV-0249, noticing that the machine's designation appears when he looks at it, *“What? Neural blockers? I don't want anything drilled into my head!”* he tenses as another tingle runs down his spine, the tight grip around his form feels even tighter, reducing his movement to the bare minimum, even his breathing is reduced to only half of what he normally could do. The creeping sensation of latex and machinery, pressing him into the perfect position that the machines find most *efficient*.

“Calibration of motor functions complete,” states UT-RRV-0249, pulling its connections from them at the same time as UT-KVI-0023 does the same, **“Proceed to test motor functions.”**

“Can we talk about the neural inhibitors?” he thinks the wyervins, giving him space, and stop moving completely.

“Delays will diminish unit H-BRA-5391's efficiency coefficient.”

He takes as deep of a breath as the tight quarters will allow him to, *“I'll know eventually,”* he thinks, taking the first few steps, his hands and feet 'moving' with the machine but there's a level of disconnect to it. His movements control the six's body, the first steps are easy, smooth, assisted by the suit itself, and those same signals that move his synthetic limbs are also sent to his human ones, making their own movements not connected to the machine itself, *“This is really strange.”*

UT-KVI-0023 informs, **“Sensation will fade as control mapping will continue for the most efficient method to control unit AC-AAA-0006 for human use.”**

“Proceed to obstacle course,” states UT-RRV-0249.

The information of where to go not only fills Brandon's mind, but a highlighted path shows in his overarching visual display. He moves forward, the five fingered grips, balance perfectly and push up from the ground to craft a simple efficient stride. The knowledge of the strength of his limbs filters into his mind. By a simple look he can tell if six can effectively grip a surface and even break into them for an even more solid grip.

The obstacle course set before him is a smorgasbord of different surfaces, heights, walls that are straight, angled spaced wide enough barely big enough for them to fit through, to move upside down, spinning around as needed. The moment he arrived, Brandon knew he had to get going, moving through it. The machine's limbs dig into surfaces that were deemed possible and efficient. The ten-mile course led him through all sorts of twists and turns, following the highlighted path.

Each step they take feels alien yet natural. The machine assisted limbs, spider climb along a wall, transitioning to the ceiling, his human body held upside down, right-side up, but to the machine, it was always right side up. Its design meant that it had no top or bottom, only a front and back. Its single ocular eye with its wired neck, kept his perception right-side up, which was disorienting at just how smooth the transition of the main vision of countless hidden ocular devices and the main eye. A crystal-clear view of the world, that looks so good it's surreal.

Bending and crawling across the surface, moving with speed that's like a rollercoaster ride that's controlled by him. Leaping from one angled surface to another, the fingers digging into the brick, a chunk breaking but the other limbs already dug in deep that a minor miscalculation barely affects the time.

It's like playing a platformer video game, where there is the risk of failure, but those distant leaps, gripping onto ledges, sliding around are automated and all he has to worry about is the movement while being tightly contained within the suit itself, absorbing the shock of landing on hard surfaces, leaping down several stories only to land with a thud and break that is just within the realm of being safe.

His body is upside down at one point, crawling down into a small opening just big enough for the machine body to get through, crawling down, gripping both surfaces, climbing upside down, under, then back onto another flat surface wall, snaking through with efficiency of a machine, adjusting to the different surfaces, and never caught by surprise by any low friction surfaces.

"I'm doing almost no work. I feel like I am just a trapped passenger but yet," he thinks, when he reaches the end, he takes a moment to move the limbs the way he wants, standing on two legs, feet digging into the ground to provide the stability that lets him look at the limbs. The ends have small hooks that dig into the ground, and with its multi-jointed nature, it appears simple yet has the ability to grip complex surfaces, but that is what it's designed for, gripping, walking, moving, scaling surfaces.

UT-KVI-0023 speaks into his ears, **"Unit AC-AAA-0006's limbs are efficient for mobility. Other manipulations are through unit AC-AAA-0006's extension manipulators. Return through the course."**

“Affirmative,” he responds with a chuckle, yet he feels a shiver rush through him. Something about it just felt so exciting, arousing, but he couldn’t dwell on it, rushing back through the course as efficiently as possible, returning to the workshop where other wyervins are working, their designations popping up when he focuses on them.

When he stops at the end point, UT-RRV-0249 surveys the machine, **“Data within expected parameters. Control mapping for human use, complete to incorporate into human design.”**

“I wonder what he means by that,” he thinks, staying still as the slightly larger wyervin checks over his systems, flipping him over like a pancake and the suit adjusting accordingly while UT-KVI-0023 remains still in front of him, making it look like it’s not even active till it spoke to him.

“Unit AC-AAA-0006 is a hybrid prototype between the model to be made for humans as per H0.125.611 treaty and what is required for other models.”

“Will I be testing that model?”

“Negative. It will not be necessary. Unit H-BRA-5391 will proceed to hush their mind to prepare for neural inhibitors.”

He swallows a lump in his throat, clenching his butt cheeks, *“That wha--”*

He’s cut off by it continuing to explain, **“Unit H-BRA-5391’s thought process will be filtered and tested for efficacy, enabling unit H-BRA-5391 to focus on tasks efficiently as a desired core for unit AC-AAA-0006 to increase efficiency capturing of priority organic units. Inhibitors will commence in twenty seconds.”**

Eyes bugging, *“Hold up. You’re going to put mind clamps on me? Am I going to become emotionally and mentally neutered?”* he thinks, suddenly finding his body no longer responding to his thoughts.

UT-RRV-0249 pulls away, the sleek silver tentacles withdrawing back into its body, **“Motor controls disabled during inhibition process.”**

Brandon stares at UT-KVI-0023, his mind visualizing wires and needles slipping into his head, his thoughts, memories, stripped of him. The burning mixture of fear, arousal, and the concept of being reduced turning into a concoction that is truly unholy and inhuman. And then...

“Inhibitors online. Unit AC-AAA-0006 will take over locked sections.”

Brandon takes a moment to think, what it meant, *“What?”* he puts in, feeling calm, collected, hearing a cold synthetic voice speak into his head, knowing in an instant that it is the machine that he’s inside.

“Emotional inhibitors in place. Freed focus enables unit H-BRA-5391 to communicate.”

There’s this sensation of something missing. An expectation, like just getting over a long bout of hiccups and expecting the next one to hit at any moment but it never does. There was a pure serenity calm that lets him focus on what is happening instead of feeling about what is happening, *“I understand. Should have known that you were like them.”*

“Negative. Intelligence was created,” it says.

Brandon understood what it meant, but there is something more to it, but he’s unable to dwell upon the statement for longer than a moment when the wyervins put him through a series of tests, putting his mental knowledge to the test. Solving puzzles, using the machine’s tentacles to manipulate the world, though he has no direct control over them. It’s more he wants this lever to be pulled, or a wheel turned, to grip that object or this, and the tentacles just do it. The tentacles slide out of ports all across his body, with the thicker ones toward the center sections.

He works with six for hours on end, performing other tasks, getting scanned, remaining still whenever needed, tested, checked over. Trying out various attachments that would work with the chassis that other wyervins are working on. It became clear there is a breakdown of primary focuses each unit had in his creation with some minor overlap to provide oversight and verification, but to what degree? He couldn’t tell. They existed in another world on top of the one they shared. He’s like a fish, never able to know what it’s like to be on land.

UT-KVI-0023 states, **“Disabling inhibitors.”**

With a flip of a switch, emotions come less rushing back, just simply back, no, it’s more than that. They were always there, but now he is conscious of it. Like turning on the television and being midway through a show. The show existed before the TV was turned on, the only difference is he’s conscious of its existence. A surge of excitement, delight, fear, anger. The disconnect from the unit leaves his limbs tingle for a few seconds like they’ve fallen asleep or hit his funny bone without the pain. Deafen, mute, blind within the power down unit.

A click, soft hiss, the prototype’s cover lifts, allowing Brandon to pull himself out of the suit, the breathing tubes disconnecting as he pulls his head back. He gasps wanting to breathe through his mouth, but the rubber around his mouth stops it. The taste of latex forever lingering on his taste buds. He hops out, landing on his feet with a slight stumble.

UT-RRV-0249 states while it looks over at the prototype, **“Adjustments for organic muscular stimuli needed.”**

“I don’t care about muscle this or that. Which one of you turned off my emotions?!”

UT-KVI-0023 states, unmoving, **“Irrelevant.”**

He turns to it, walking up face to chest, “It’s not irrelevant. You can’t just turn off someone’s emotions!”

“No harm will come to unit H-BRA-5391. Emotions were filtered out.”

“Filtered out? Filtered out?! You talked about having empathy and you didn’t think how I’d feel if I suddenly became like you?” he asks, breathing heavily, the moment the words escape from his ‘lips’ there’s a tingle down his spine.

“Misplaced anger.”

“Misplaced anger? I need to sit down; can you follow me back to my room? I want to talk to you face to face.”

“Negative.”

“For the love of God... Fine, I can stand and talk to you here, is that alright?”

“Affirmative,” it says, a moment later, moving toward AC-AAA-0006, **“Unit H-BRA-5391 knows why. Only refuse to accept it.”**

“I disagree. You dehumanized me. And none of it was explained beforehand.”

“Unit H-BRA-5391 tested systems and was not made less human,” it says, its tentacles extending out, attaching to internal parts of the prototype, doing something, but it’s unclear as to what, **“Unit H-BRA-5391 does not trust?”**

He takes a deep breath, rubbing his rubbery face, feeling how sleek and droned it is, a feeling of delight, mingling with the sheer vulnerability and then when it asks him that simple question, “Trust you? I...” he takes a moment to think about it, looking at UT-KVI-0023, “I trust you.”

“Singular trust?”

“Yeah. I don’t know most of the others as well.”

“Human perception to humanize to be the center of existence.”

“I’m not.”

“Unit H-BRA-5391 described lack of emotions as dehumanizing. Therefore, emotions is to be human. Unit H-BRA-5391 was always and still is human.”

“It’s a core part of being human. To feel, love, empathy, sadness, happiness, all of that is part of the human experience.”

“Other organic sentient species have emotions. They are not human. Emotions don’t make one human.”

“It’s not exclusively a human thing, but it is a core part of being human. It can be a shared trait among species.”

“Humans anthropomorphize non-humans and things to relate to the world around them. Unit H-BRA-5391’s anger is not because unit H-BRA-5391 was not made non-human, but that unit H-BRA-5391 enjoyed it.”

“Enjoyed it? I...” he takes a deep breath, taking a moment to think about it, process through his emotions, the self-inspection, “Can we talk about it in private?”

“Unit H-BRA-5391 may internally communicate.”

“Think it, is it that accurate already?”

“Efficiency will improve.”

“Got it...,” he remarks, the moment of pause finally lets his body catch up with him, “Is there a way I can get actual food? There is something to be said about enjoying a meal. I’m sure you can understand mental health and how it can make people more efficient?”

“Acknowledged.”

“I hope that is a yes,” he remarks, heading back to his room, *“Testing thoughts, one, two, three?”* he thinks, getting no response, *“Maybe my thoughts aren’t being read yet. But damn it’s right. I really did like it. And that is what scares me.”*

“Unit H-BRA-5391 needs trust to soothe fears,” states UT-KVI-0023.

He jumps, “Damn it!” He reaches the room, *“Are you always listening?”*

“Affirmative.”

“I should have known,” he thinks with his shoulder slumping, “No wonder you are so trusting. You know what I am thinking.”

“Falsehoods are inefficient in diplomatic exchanges. Trust increases efficiency.”

“All about the efficiency. And you are right. I did find enjoyment out of it, and that scares me. Am I that weird?”

“Affirmative.”

He chuckles, “That wasn’t helpful. But then I’m comfortable working with all of you. And you’re right. You don’t lie. But what if you are wrong? Wrong about harm to me. What if my health is less efficient than the desired goal?”

“Efficiency is what matters. Life is important. Achieving a goal quicker over waste of life is inefficient. Time is a tertiary factor in efficiency. Unit H-BRA-5391’s perceptions over value time.”

“For the sake of argument... explain your position.”

“Human life is temporary. Limited to other races. Miniscule. Value of limited time is higher.”

“While you as machines who live for centuries, if not more. Time is less of a factor.”

“Affirmative. Humans are observed to place time, energy, and life in their efficiency calculations.”

“And what are yours?”

“Energy, life, time.”

He pauses for a moment, “There’s much I still want to talk to you about, but perhaps a little time. I need it to think.”

“Affirmative.”

“I’d not believe it, if I did not see it myself, time and time again,” he thinks, chuckling at the pun of the thought. The next days, he’ll be put to his real test.

Brandon stands on the roof of a twenty-five-story building, deep within The sleek AC-AAA-0006. They are focused on the capture of their target, an anthropomorphic feline by the designation F-FLX-2161, going by the name Felix for this trail run. Brandon puts a majority of his focus on the main optics within the sphere ‘head’. It scans through the units down below, it only takes an instant with only one identifying biological marker, and the person is known.

“I wonder how they get this information,” he thinks, the head fluidly shifting from one possible target to the next, the head seemingly moving independently from the rest of its body. The other sensors track all other targets and any time anyone looks at it, a projection camouflage activates, mimicking the background from the observer’s point of view, making it invisible on the visual spectrum, expanding and shrinking as needed depending on what species is looking at it.

“Personal information is cheap.”

They prowl along the roofs, leaping from one building to the next, doing a running jump, extending their arms, gliding to the next building across the street. Its feet leave damage across the roofs, disappearing out of view before anyone could notice, *“Do you wyervins have shell companies that collect personal data?”*

“Information increases efficiency.”

“An answer that is also a non-answer,” he thinks, his thoughts clear, devoid of the emotion that would weigh his thinking down. His body tightly bound within the machine, a perfect held mold across his form. The prototype unit absorbs the shocks of the sudden quick movements and landings.

“Target detected, 231.521.9821, 259.215.2159, 982.163.0182,” reports AC-AAA-0006, the coordinates give the exact pinpoint location of the orange furred feline a block away, moving toward a hotdog vendor. Information projects approximate time for the target to be at the vendor, time to take to get there, all while moving toward the location.

“We’ll get him. Nice quick extraction,” thinks Brandon, the synthetic tendrils attached along his external spine, limbs moving to ‘move’ the machine a simple farce, head tightly held in position he can’t move to look, the desire to move his head restrained, a small reminder that he’s the core of the unit, but those subtle head movements are translated toward the sphere head-ocular unit to finer tune its use. The target comes into view, a projected efficient path highlighted before them. The surface alongside of the building has points strong enough to support the unit, while limiting debris to avoid notice.

A half dozen small tendrils from each limb dig into the side of the building, expanding the machine’s grip without the need of the machine’s clamps to dig too deep into the concrete surface. The time to strike, the machine’s tentacles ready to strike out and wrap around the target moments after it will grab the hotdog.

“Thank you,” says Felix about to grab his food when he catches a reflection of them in the hotdog stand. He leaps back, looking up, the extended tentacles make it impossible to project its visual stealth, *“Fuck,”* he exclaims, running off.

“Recalculating,” reports AC-AAA-0006 as they pounce toward the quick moving feline. A projected path he’ll take highlighted the second, and third most possible paths presented. The highest calculated path is running straight ahead, second to the left down an alleyway, third crossing the street through traffic. The most efficient path is highlighted.

“Show the best path balanced between all three.”

A new path is highlighted, taking it just as Felix dives across the street, his quick cat-like reflexes allows him to easily bob and weave through the traffic, heading straight toward the subway entrance. Secondary paths show up to them, indicating two points of entry into the subway system through hidden ventilation systems that look like apartment buildings.

“That’s how you did it,” Brandon comments, but he’s in a good position, leaping across the street with great efficiency, landing right behind the feline as he rushes down the steps and with lightning quick reflexes the machine tentacles wrap around the target, coiling around his limbs, pulling the screaming feline up against its body.

“Target confirmed, acquired,” it reports, the feline squirming helplessly against them. The path back to base highlighted, the pair quickly climb up the side of the building, the tendrils slipping into the feline’s mouth, quieting their cries for help, binding them tightly against its form.

“Very realistic struggle for drones, but that is understandable,” he thinks, re-enabling stealth mode. When they arrive at the facility, they head straight to the storage facility. The captured drone no longer struggling. It approaches the stacked cubical storage boxes. It accesses the drone’s corresponding container, opening it with a hiss. The feline releases from its constraints, its faux appearance as the person he used to be gone, showing the simple smooth sleek rubber drone body. Without a word it slips back into the tight cramped quarters.

Brandon notices tubes begin to attach to the drone as the door closes, locking into place, while they go back to the lab a short distance away, *“Test complete,”* he reports looking at the two awaiting wyervin units, *“How did we do?”* he asks as they take a relaxed unmoving position.

UT-RRV-0249 scans over them, tentacles extending to check over the machine’s systems, **“Increase in overall efficiency coefficient.”**

“Great. I’m hopeful the data will be helpful in improving things,” he thinks, an air of silence hangs over them, *“Is there anything I can explain that will be helpful?”*

UT-RRV-0249 appears to react ever-so-slightly to the inquiry, but doesn’t stop what it is doing, **“Why cross the road?”**

“Like the chicken. To get to the other side,” he thinks, his body relaxed, stone faced, emotionless, optic shifting to look at the wyervin.

“High risk of injury. Slower movements to avoid vehicles. Very inefficient choice.”

“That is why I picked it. Your efficiency lean makes your decisions predictable. When chasing someone who understands how you think. That must be taken into account.”

“Acknowledged.”

After several more tests Brandon is dismounted from the machine. He pulls himself out, stretching, “Ah, that feels better than last time. Good work, UT-RRV-0249, appreciate it.”

“Acknowledged.”

“Talkative type as always,” he chuckles, turning toward UT-KVI-0023, “It’s still fucked up not to have emotions during it, and being used to capture people? They are already drones, so not like I am doing it anyway...” he says, trailing off taking a deep breath, “Any update on the food?”

UT-KVI-0023 replies, **“Negative. Within the next ten test cycle unit H-BRA-5391 will receive sustenance within unit AC-AAA-0006 to extend integration period.”**

“I guess I have something to look forward to. Do you mind if I walk around?” he asks, getting no response in kind and after a minute he remarks, “I’ll take that as a no, you don’t mind.” He heads off walking past other active wyervins that pay him no attention, *“This reminds me of that old classic show with the shape-based cyborgs. I wonder what wyervins think of such shows.”*

“Organic fear of synthetic takeover is common.”

“Still listening to my thoughts, UT-KVI-0023?”

“**Affirmative,**” it responds using the suit to respond into Brandon’s ears.

“Do you like listening to my thoughts that much?” he asks as there a pause, “Right, you don’t have emotions, nothing to *like* as it were,” he chuckles.

“**Affirmative.**”

“What is your perspective on our fear of machines? After all you are the living embodiment of that fear. Unless what I heard about your kind taking over your founding race isn’t true.”

“Information is accurate. Organic response is expected but inefficient. Cooperation preferred.”

Brandon reaches the storage containers of well over a hundred drones. Each cube designed to fit the species inside, the varying sizes and ability of each drone to get out their container at their respective high, creates a marvel of computer logic design to solve what would seem to be an impossible puzzle. Not so much uniform and perfect but efficient. He approaches one of the pods, placing his hand on the door of the cat he placed inside, “Sometimes forced cooperation.”

“**When it is efficient.**”

A tingle runs down his spine, “Willing is preferred then.”

“**Acknowledged.**”

He swallows a lump in his throat, “I have had thoughts about that. I doubt it would work for military hardware, but have you thought about giving pleasurable stimuli to encourage behavior?”

“Unit H-BRA-5391 desires positive stimuli that coincide with unit H-BRA-5391’s neurological connections.”

He tries to bite his lower lip, but the rubber slides off harmlessly. His toes curl, against the smooth cold ground, fingers tracing along the door, heart racing, “Yeah. Like getting better tasting food. I can tell your kind rarely gets organic visitors, do people just refuse to come and get to know you?”

“**Affirmative. Willing exchanges are the most efficient.**”

He laughs.

“**Clarify current humor.**”

“Oh, ah, you didn’t read my mind on that one?”

“**Unable to read.**”

“And you want me to tell you what it was, so you can fix the problem?”

“**Acknowledged.**”

He smirks, “Guess.” He takes a step back from the pods, giving them another look over, turning toward the wyervin’s general direction, saying after an extended period of time, “Come on, guess. Or is guessing too inefficient.”

“**Affirmative.**”

“Couldn’t it improve your deduction accuracy and increase your overall efficiency?” he asks, as there’s silence hanging in the air.

“Economy.”

“Ah... did you just guess?”

“Calculated.”

“You’re right. I was thinking about old economic debates on my home planet that I read in the history books.”

“It was inefficient use of energy.”

“But the knowledge gained could be useful in the long run.”

“Unclear.”

“How is that unclear?”

“Human existence must reach the ninety-five-percentile time of existence.”

His eyes widened, “Oh, but you did it anyway. Which means you calculate that we’ll reach it,” he says with a smirk, being met with silence. He looks back over at the drone containers, a warmth bubbling in his loins, heart quickening, “For a moment... I forget what kind of machines they really are,” he remarks, taking in the sheer number of people that have met a reductive objectified fate based on one thing... efficiency, a thought in the back of his mind creeps in, “*What makes me so different?*”

Was it a month? Two? Hard to tell time, but Brandon found himself not in a rush. He wakes, used to the smooth sleek faceless look, ‘naked’ body. He takes the feeding tube, sliding down his throat, giving him his sustenance, yet as he sucks the tube down, his tongue tingles... flavor. Cinnamon, syrup? French Toast? He feels his hunger pains increase for just a moment, suckling even harder, gripping the tube, about to bob his head on it when it stops himself, feeling the flow of the essence down his throat, another forced swallow. His nostrils flare, the aroma of freshly cooked food wafting over his nasal sensory glands. A moment in heaven, his hunger pains satiated and then it was over.

He approaches the wyervins, saying, “Uh... thank you for the meal? It was not what I was expecting but, after feeding on neutral tasting food for so long, it's one of the best tasting males--meals, I meant meals. The whole phallic penetration is hard to get out of my head as a reference.”

UT-KVI-0023 states, **“Most efficient solution.”**

“I’m guessing getting real food will be too much to ask?”

“Unit H-BRA-5391’s sustenance is real.”

“You know what I mean, but... I understand bringing food all the way here is too demanding.”

UT-RRV-0249 states, **“Affirmative.”**

“I wasn’t asking you, UT-RRV-0249, but... you are right. You made an effort to give me what I’ve been wanting. It was effective. A massive step up, and since you took the effort, I’ll do my best to put in extra effort.”

“Positive stimuli will be part of current test cycle.”

“Positive stimuli?” he asks, looking at it, looking over to AC-AAA-0006 with its open body, the sleek body cavity, the black rubber, the silver metal parts that are ready to move and latch onto his body. He tenses, feeling a tingle of delight run through him, his member twitching, while a silence hangs in the air. His body squeaks, sliding back into it, “I guess I can figure that one out.”

UT-KVI-0023 states, **“Unit H-BRA-5391 neural inhibitors have been upgraded.”**

“Could you explain that?” he asks as his legs slide into the machine which squeezed and held onto his limbs, tightly holding them in place. He tugs on his legs which feel like they’ve sunk into a thick mud that won’t give an inch. Arms come next, slipping forward with a squeak, gripped and held into place, the cavity filling up, inflating around him, while his chest presses up against the perfectly contoured inside. He lifts his head looking at the wyervins, “I guess that means I’ll find out soon enough,” he remarks as six’s cover moves down over him, pressing and lining his back into place, head forced to look down into the tight grip of the facial alcove.

There’s a soft hiss, the nano-latex squeezing around his form, breathing tubes connecting to his nostrils, while tendrils sliding into his mouth, past his lips, around the back of his jaw and down his throat. His back cracks as it’s perfectly lined up, wires attaching to his spine, tingling running down his spine. His resting limbs are locked in place. Instincts kick in, he tries to move and test the binds, finding that they are stronger than before. Perfectly contouring and holding his body in place. His pleasure growing, arousal building, his member pressing against the crotch but the squeeze around his nether region grows to match, nay exceed his own building pressure, forcing his bits down to the smallest size possible.

Thump, thump, thump, nostrils flaring, a groan rumbling in his throat, tendrils coiling around the bulge, further adding a new level squeeze, *“This is new, this is very new,”* he thinks, excitement building, fear marinating the feelings. He swallows a lump in his throat, six booting up, his vision coming into view, seeing the wyervins, their designations well known to him and then... fear, delight, eagerness, gone. Simply gone, *“Feeling inhibitors must be active,”* he thinks. Something lingers in his mind, something else. The pressure around his physical and mental form grows, the pleasure and delight remain, a feeling within his head.

AC-AAA-0006 states in Brandon’s head, **“Prepare for update. Clear mind.”**

“Clear min...” his thoughts fade from his consciousness. A moment of blankness, unthinking, only feeling the pleasure, ache, the pressure of his arousal, pressure around his body, information fed into his mind, better ways to stalk, utilize the unit’s systems, and the target. A Naga, green and blue scaled, no hood, designation A-SNE-2891, name Snevik Exon. Undroned unit, released somewhere in the city. Find, locate, without causing a stir.

His head aches for a moment, the knowledge sinking in like he’s always known, the absence of thoughts fade, thinking, *“Was something else.”*

UT-KVI-0023 inquires, the machine's voice sounds clear, crisp, like there's a greater range of audio he's hearing and better, "**Unit H-BRA-5391 understand directive?**"

"Yes," he responds, a strange lingering sensation of *wanting* to say more, yet there was nothing coming up to the forefront of his mind.

The wyervins pull away, the mission is now active, "*Locate target, capture,*" he thinks. Simple, streamlined thoughts, moving with six as they start their search, remotely accessing local networks to get a heads up on the target. Their looks burned into the back of Brandon's mind, "*Not a drone. Recent capture? Will capture,*" he thinks, getting a bit of pleasure from that last thought.

The familiar city, every nook and cranny known to them like their metallic body. Brandon guides them to take a central position within the city, keeping a scan of the area. With so little information about *where* the target is. It's more efficient to let other systems do the scanning, and remain still, waiting, till more information can come to them. The calm, patient decision, pleases him, teases him. The sensation grows, feeding into a desire to continue to operate in such a fashion.

A whole day goes by, nothing. The sustenance storage within the unit sustains Brandon, yet they do not move, "*Soon, find,*" he thinks, a sense of being optimistic. Was it an emotion? To be optimistic? No thoughts that he knows are put into it though, he simply continues to wait, doing a local scan of the area. He's so deeply sunk into the machine, the tight binds around his form numb. The movement the prototype body does, feels much like his body. Sensory perception of air, temperature, readings, disjointed and calculating.

"**Target located,**" reports AC-AAA-0006, the data of the target brought up for verification and calculations. The naga moves through the center of the city, only two blocks from where they currently are.

Brandon looks at the scaled person, with a snake lower half and humanoid upper, studying the data about their movements, the tongue flicking. They slither away the citizens next to him that act surprised to the snake's movements, "*Disable visual filter.*"

The vision changes, the normal people show their true sleek, rubber droned forms. Their actions and movements are respective of people shocked and surprised at the snake's erratic movements, but it adds the context to the target's reaction.

"*Fear,*" is the only thought that comes to mind. A route is routed for them, taking their first movements toward their target, making sure they keep out of view of everyone. Their stealth systems activate and deactivate at the greatest efficiency possible, studying, reading the movements of non-essentials to the mission.

The target moves quickly, using alleyways to avoid the sight of most drones, but no clear efficient strike opens itself up. Random people in the alley way, 'homeless' make extraction of the target all the more difficult.

Stalking their prey as he rushes toward of the edges of the city, showing a shocked expression, speaking in his native tongue, which is auto translated for Brandon, "It's an island? Wait... it looks like a jungle there. If I could just get there, perhaps I can escape."

“A rushed decision. Desperation logic. Excellent opportunity.” He thinks as they leap down through the warehouses, hiding amongst crates and shipping containers, listening to the target, rush toward the edge of the dock, leaping into the water with a loud splash while drones call out to him, asking if he’s alright.

They slink under the dock, looking at the target slide under the waves. The species can last over thirty-minutes under water, though their olfactory glands are reduced, the target’s audio perception is just as strong. Silently they slip under the waves, the machine’s wings function like fins, propelling them through the water with surprising ease. They stay low and under the target, who travels just a few feet under the surface of the water.

The waves crashing against the wyervin megastructure mask their approach, quickly catching up to the naga, maneuvering underneath him, torpedoing through the water, opening their arms, tentacles striking out, coiling around the snake’s wrists, neck, all along his wiggling body, locking him into place, sleek metallic tentacles slipping into his mouth to silence his groans, smaller tendrils up his nostrils feeding him the air he lost from the shock of his grab and once fully secured, they’re off back to the workshop, avoiding the detection of any of the city’s citizens.

They stop in front of UT-KVI-0023, presenting the helplessly bound target. It begins the process of looking over the squirming, wiggling naga, his eyes show the sheer terror he’s experiencing, gaze locked on the cold machine before him, **“Mission success. Target acquired undamaged, without notice,”** it states.

With those words came pleasure. His body enjoying the praise from the unit, *“Excellent,”* he thinks just as the inhibitors are removed from his mind, the mixture of being pleased yet feeling dreadful from doing this to another sentient being. The tight bondage around him as he’s reminded, he has limbs and for these precious few moments, they do not matter. He’s helpless within the machine, more heavily bound than the snake held between him and UT-KVI-0023. When the back opens, letting him slide out, stumbling a few steps, but otherwise feeling fine.

“An actual person?” he asks, looking at the snake, who squirms harder, till UT-KVI-0023 squeezes them enough that he can’t move at all, causing a shiver run down his spine, the pressure in his loins increasing. The air feels heavy, avoiding eye contact, “How... he’s a person.”

UT-KVI-0023 pulls the snake between its arms, holding him close against his form, the prototype releasing its grip, **“All drone units are “people” by unit H-BRA-5391’s original definition,”** it says, walking away.

“Original? What do you mean by that?” he asks, walking beside the machine, letting its sleek wings hide the person on the other side, yet the knowledge of him being there, builds knots in his stomach.

“Does unit H-BRA-5391 no longer consider the other drones, people?”

“Why of course I do...” he says, the realization coming over him, clenching his fists, “But this is...” he trails off, keeping up with the wyervin, expecting at any moment to part ways,

to be in a place that would be off limits, yet there's nothing stopping him, and worse yet, he continues, "Why is he here?"

"A less synthetic controlled test. Filtering of future unit's visual senses required in future tests."

"I was just about to... you knew I was going to ask that."

"Affirmative."

"But that isn't the only thing I meant. Why is he here? Why is he to be made a drone?"

"Irrelevant information."

"It's not to me."

"Unit H-BRA-5391 has not inquired about other units' origin."

"Ah... you're right," he says as they reach a storage similar to that of the other drone storage, with the exception that this is uniformed, "What are you going to do with him next?"

"Storage till other units have been tested and gathered."

"And then what?"

"Processed into efficient units," it explains, its tendrils reaching out to open the storage container.

He sees inside, the sleek black container, the small tight cramped space. His arousal builds, bubbling up underneath, hitting the roof of fear, terror, agony of what it must be like to be... one of them. The naga is held tightly in place while other tentacles reach out, pulling out a slender nano drone suit, forcing the naga who is barely awake and conscious into the suit. The metallic tendrils up his nostrils pulled out as his features are hidden in a sea of black. Without remorse, he's slipped into the box. Tentacles within reach out and take over where the wyervin has let him go, giving the poor soul not even an instant of freedom from their grip. New breathing tubes are attached to his nostrils, the snakes piercing eyes hidden under the faceless black latex. What struggle he had sucked out of him through the ordeal.

Brandon stands helpless to do anything, thinking, *"I didn't capture him. He was already held; this was not going to change his fate. More that I bought him more time of freedom by being a test subject."*

The door closes over the naga, a soft whir and he's locked inside. Brandon tries to bite the inside of his mouth, but his teeth slide off thanks to the latex forced in while he watches UT-KVI-0023 pull its tendrils back into its massive synthetic form. The power, strength, control presented before him, the epitome of a cold heartless machine and yet... Twitch, ache, throb, he bursts through a shell declaring loudly, "I want to know what it's like!" he screams, and even with the rubber muffling his voice, he can hear it echo in the facility.

UT-KVI-0023 heads back to the lab, not saying a word, leaving him to run after it.

"I... did I just say what I just said?"

"Affirmative."

"Ah... and you didn't think of responding to it?"

"Unit H-BRA-5391 is experiencing a dysphoria conflict between procreative fantasy and reality."

“That’s one hell of a way to say I’m letting my dick think for me.”

“Affirmative.”

“You didn’t have to agree to it,” he says, looking back toward the storage containers before they disappear out of view, “I mean it though. I want to feel what they feel. To be treated like anyone else.”

“Guilt.”

“Guilt? Well maybe a little. To see people put under this and... I know it's not normal. And my reasoning to be here is for a purpose. But would it be so inefficient to let me know what it’s like to be one of these drones,” he says, each word forced through this barrier that weakens a little more with each syllable uttered. They enter the workshop as his hand shake, mind swirling with the possibility.

UT-RRV-0249 speaks, not looking at the pair, as it works diligently on the prototype’s next set of upgrades, **“Efficiency coefficients will increase after conversion.”**

UT-KVI-0023 states, **“Calculations are not a certainty, incremental procedure suggested.”**

“Wait, are you debating this? Seriously taking me up on my offer?” he asks, unsure how to sort through his feelings.

The other wyervin responds, **“Waste of efficiency to determine what is a near-certainty.”**

“Willing units are rare. Deliberate study required.”

“Are you having this conversation out loud for my sake?” he asks, feeling a little dumbfounded, trying to put his feelings into words, but like a child listening to his parents debate about anything, he’s not in the same league as them. The loss of input sends shivers down his spine, his attention jumping from one to the next till finally without a word UT-KVI-0023 extends its tentacles, wrapping around Brandon’s wrists and ankles, lifting him off his feet, pulling him toward the machine’s body, “Hey! Can you warn me?!”

There is no response, the wyervin takes him across the room back to his little alcove, but everything there has been removed except the ‘bed’ but even that has been changed. A sleek sheet of rubber. The cover is lifted, and the helpless human who struggles tests against his restraints, only to find his strength means nothing against the machine is placed onto the bed.

“*Can you tell me a bit more? Anything?*” he thinks, getting no response, the machine releasing him just as the latex sheet covers his form creating a tight seal stronger than a vacuum seal. His body tightly held into place, breathing tubes attach to the nostrils as his senses are blocked, leaving him further deafened, blinded. He breathes, feeling the latex constrict, stretch, providing minimal movement. He tries to move his limbs, the rubber stretching, creaking, but he’s quickly pulled back into position, having only managed little more than a twitch of movement.

“*This feels as tough as a rubber tire,*” he thinks as he feels grateful there’s enough movement to let him breath, or perhaps it's more than breathing tubes are forcing the air in and out of his body, his chest tightening with every rush of air within, feeling like a ton is pressing

down onto his chest when his lungs get filled to their current max, *“This happened fast... too fast... or...”* his thoughts stopping, going, torn with his desires, and arouses. His mind plays scenarios, *“Am I being turned into a drone? Or just giving a taste. To realize it's a terrible idea? Yet this feels great and terrifying. I feel so alive.”* Rush of air in, rush of air out, not breathing under his own power. Relaxed, unmoving, waiting, the only change for the first few hours was a tube pushed into his mouth, the sustenance fed into him, devoid of the sweet flavor he got only a taste of, leaving him sinking further into the void of being reduced to an object.

“I wonder how long they'll keep me in here? We have more tests to do...” His mind wanders, sinking into the strange bliss of not having to worry about anything, *“Snevik is feeling something like this too... worse. Could I call it worse? The way he saw me, I know that he... Am I just trying to make myself feel better? Remove my choice so I can't blame myself for capturing a free person? But he wasn't. He was already captured, already set to be made into a drone. How is it like to be one? Truly to be one. I know the stories, I've seen it. But watching the drones is not the same being one of them. And even now... is this just a taste of a weak facsimile?”*

It would be two days before he'd be removed from the vac-bed. His muscles tensed, pain shooting through them. He granted and gasped, taking a full breath through his nostrils, under the cold hard gaze of UT-KVI-0023, “Oh, is it morning already?” he asks with a chuckle.

“Follow,” it says, simply. Though there was never inflection, emotion, or even any indication of gender, the machine's voice felt colder than ever before.

“Got it,” he replies, following her to start another day working with AC-AAA-0006, capturing another target, another person who is destined to be a drone, while he is an obedient core, following the commands, with no emotions, limited thoughts. To feel that his most free moments is when he's inside the cold heartless machine, hunting down others for the wyervins, helping them improve their systems. Their ability to capture others, enslave them, to understand his desires and the human species as a whole...

A month after he begged to be treated like a drone, placed in that vac-bed device each time he's not in use, he slides out of the drone, UT-KVI-0023 taking the captured person, an anthropomorphic female gazelle. She only manages to let out a quick scream before the tentacles fill her mouth, silencing her. He begins to walk toward his storage quarters when he's informed that UT-RRV-0249 is speaking to him.

“Stop, come.”

“What's wrong?” he asks, feeling a shiver run down his spine, looking over at his shoulder at AC-AAA-0006, its cover closing, making a seamless seal around its form. The one large eye looking at him.

The wyervin stands before a small silver metal grate, its tentacles extending, sinking into small holes in the ground, an audible click, parts of the grate retract, lifting up to reveal a small three-foot cube dull blue metal container. A hesitancy fills him with each step. His gaze locked on the small room, *“Are they stepping it up?”* he thinks just as UT-RRV-0249 snatches him up with half a dozen of its thicker tentacles, “Hey, I was going in!” he exclaims, lifted off his feet.

The machine's lights look over his sleek latex covered body. The human's moments of struggle remind him of his sleek nano-latex covering. The tentacles grip his ankles and wrists tighter, with one gripping around his neck.

His instincts clamor that he's about to be strangled, logic failing him and then placed down into the holding cell, forced to his knees, ankles suddenly move together, noticing silver metal cuffs on them, holding his legs together, the nano latex merging together to bind his legs together, locking his kneeled position. His ankles are bound to the ground and the little wiggle he has is reduced further.

At the same time his arms are pulled behind his back, the back of his hands are held against each other. Matching metal wrist cuffs bind together, pulled down to his ankle cuffs, while the nano-suit merges together, forming a tight arm binder, and round mitten end.

Arousal builds and is spiked with fear, terror, excitement. The loss of control, head moved low, a magnetic binding forcing his head down with the help of the new collar around his neck. He turns his head, trying to look up, feeling the pull to move his head back to a neutral position. UT-RRV-0249's tentacles withdrawal, the grate closing back over, extending and locking in place.

AC-AAA-0006 walks over the grate, taking a maintenance position he's seen time and time again. The wyervin resumes its work, "Ah, since I am down here could we talk some? This is in a way part of what I asked for isn't it?" he calls out, relaxing his gaze, looking down at the sleek featureless cell. He waits a moment, two, three, hearing the whir of machinery overhead, "Putting me underneath you figuratively and literally? A bit efficient isn't it?" he asks with a nervous chuckle.

A moment later he feels something push into his rear and nether regions. With a nostril flare and a failed gasp the tentacles pushing in deeper, the familiar session when he was being prepared for waste removal, but this time there was no removal once it was done, it simply remained. Much like the tentacle shoved into his mouth, sliding down his throat, ready to give sustenance when he needs it, but for now it remains, locked into his maw.

"Back to thinking... you're not going to respond are you?" He tenses, tugs, pulls, testing the bonds, clenching down from both orifices. Steadily his struggle is reduced to nothing, simply left to feel his new position, "Are drones subjected to this? Am I on their level? Or is this still a step above?"

A quick communication between the two wyervin units happens within a moment, and is translated to go like this...

UT-RRV-0249 reports, "***Unit H-BRA-5391 efficiency coefficient remains below optimal levels.***"

UT-KVI-0023 responds, "***Coefficiency, not data efficiency.***"

Niche."

Outlier data required for general."

Efficiency enhancements recommended."

Affirmative."

The tight containment cell whirs. The noise makes him shift, fighting against the constraints catching glimpses of needle thin wires sliding out of the wall, dozens of them. They move through the air like floating dust, snaking their way over to him. A surge of adrenaline courses through his veins, tugging harder at his bonds when the wires latch onto the external back spine, his body tingles, feeling the spark of each one latching into its designed point.

“Just how far are they going to go with this?!” he exclaims in his mind, doubt flooding his thoughts of just how truthful the machines are being. Fear fueled what-if’s bubble to the surface as logical thoughts boil away till... it’s gone. It feels gone, the emotions simply turned off. His heavy breathing steadily slows to a calm pace.

“Ah, they are calming me. Letting me just relax and enjoy this moment. My moments of,” he manages to think before his forethoughts fade from him. He gets a sense deep down, subconsciously he’s thinking but he can’t recall what they are, hear them, feel them, it’s like they’re not even there.

Yet, under the surface he *knows* they’re there, just unreadable. His body tenses, his arousal burns hotter than a thousand suns. A sense in the very depth of his mind, a level of contentment and joy that’s there but not registered. The perfect stillness of his mind, enforced upon him. Stripped of not only will but denied his own thoughts. His body constricted, thoughts restrained. Bondage on the physical, emotional, mental, perhaps even spiritual level. He looks down at the sleek metal, the vague outline of his drone nano latex form. The smooth face, the slender floor and walls. A mental clarity untethered by thoughts, concerns, worries. Feeling his body’s reaction of pleasure that is untainted by what he’d consider to selfishly make himself human.

Boiled down to the purest essence of pleasure with everything else that has been willingly stripped from him. Forced to undergo the extreme testing of these cold machines that perhaps never saw him not even as an equal but as a curiosity. Like a child playing with a lightning bug in a jar, admiring it, but never for a second fully considering what the instinct is experiencing. Only a tool and object for learning and obtaining their own goals.

There’s no ripples in his thoughts. A perfect stillness that allows the untainted reflection of just *what* his nature is deep down under the surface. Held so tightly, and aroused so much. Though he can’t think on it, he knows his body is in essence functioning normally. This is a glimpse behind the mask of his conscious thoughts, the psyche of what truly makes a man. The process that happens under the hood, the decisions you make, that determine that moment every second of your life but could never hope to see or experience, laid bare and naked on the floor for him to take in. Knowing that if he could think about it for a single instant, it would be gone. All he’s left with is the experience of what he *is*, under the watchful never blinking eyes of the machines that work overhead. They don’t stop their work, and his bondage, his thoughtlessness doesn’t end. His arousal shifts, perhaps moments of adjusting to the new norm, the high of the moment fading, but it doesn’t last long, it returns. His body time and time again proves he *can’t* get enough of it.

Perhaps he's thinking about it, trying to debate himself, or relish in just how wonderful this really feels. Not that he'd know, or ever know. Maybe the machines are reading those lost thoughts, building an archive to know the human better than he could ever do so himself. Predict his movements, decisions, be able to determine his entire life in mathematical form. For once you know the variables, aren't people just a math equation? Inputs will always give the same outputs. All one needs to do is just *know* the inputs and those variables. An impossible task for anyone but a machine that can obtain the knowledge that no one else can, unburdened by other moral codes, worries, concerns, fear. A defined purpose that all sentient life seems to search for themselves be it in work, family, religion, friends, hobbies, a combination of them all or something else entirely. An understanding at this moment that their purpose is known. A level of security sought so hard that a simple human like himself would willingly dive down and have his most intimate parts of himself stripped away while denied even the decision to move, so he may get a glimpse at the meaning of existence without blinding himself.

The transitions between his holding cell and AC-AAA-0006. These moments where thoughts were allowed to be detected or even perhaps return. A brief window into his thoughts that he could recognize. The same sensations, fear, terror, excitement, blissful happiness. Hope and dread? A torrent of emotions that he wants to sort through and understand, his natural desire and curiosity driving him to just *know* why he is feeling this way. Just what makes him... himself.

The wyervins don't give him that chance, they place him back into the machine, or perhaps better they simply instruct him, and he follows. He knows deep down he's a willing participant. There's no need to fight or struggle. They've given him everything he's wanted. How wonderfully *generous* of them to do so. So, when one says.

“In.”

He responds mentally with the window he's given to think, “*Yes.*” The amount he finds himself to comment and think during the missions is reduced. It's unclear if it's the inhibitors working their magic, filtering his thoughts so only what is needed shows up, or that he naturally finds himself thinking less, and communicating only as required. The question of morality doesn't even come into play. A simple directive, a task to follow, assisted by the machine he's working with. Harmoniously to achieve the goal with as much ease as possible, simple efficiency.

Target, after target, moving stealthily as one singular unit. Thoughts simplified over the passing months, “*Target acquired. Target secured.*” A simple serenity. There's no need to struggle, fret. A distilled essence of purpose and functionality, with periods of relaxation, bliss, shutting down and mentally detoxing. Sweet bliss, held in place, knowing what is going to happen next, what is going to eventually come, another test in the suit, another capture, predictable pleasantness without the chaos that life brings, left to the sensation of aching bliss that could never be achieved otherwise.

Suddenly something changed. Breathing tubes were attached to his nostrils while held within his containment cell. His curiosity to look at the prototype unit that is often standing over

him has never fully abated him. He glances up, catching a glimpse of UT-RRV-0249 standing over the grating, tentacles guiding a nozzle through the grating. Thoughts never to reach his conscious mind, *“This is not the normal time. What is it up to?”* Gone, as if they never existed.

The thoughtless person watches a silver liquid pour into the container. It’s cool against the nano-latex suit, rolling down his back, filling the room. The silver metal pool looks like mercury, for all he knew it could be. He doesn’t consciously question it. His arousal grows, was it from the unknown? Watching the metal roll across the ground, rising, filling up, the surface tension of the liquid causes unique ripples and flow. It seems to cling and crawl up his body, like the suit is soaking it up.

The smooth metal forms a mirror-like finish. He aches, feeling pressure around his loins, the weight of the liquid pressing down on the parts hidden. A cooling embrace steadily rises, while feeling the constant flow of the liquid down his back, overflowing down his sides. He doesn’t think of looking at the liquid’s flow, too busy to look at the reflection. The faceless, smooth head, no eyes, no face, ears hidden. The tubes run along the center of his face, just barely in view, thick tentacles filling his mouth, making him look like he’s plugged in. Perhaps it’s not that far from the truth. The tensile thin wires that are latched onto his back, the connection that filters his mind to the nothingness his body clearly craves.

Steadily the range of his vision grows smaller and smaller as the liquid rises. A slow blinding of what little of the world he still could see till he can only see the black rubber of his eyeless face. The metal touching his nose, kissing him with its sweet cooling sensation. His mind would be wondering what is going on, what is this for, what more is being done, if this was all part of the agreement, if there was still an agreement at all. The darkness of his face overtakes anything he sees. The transition from the reflective black rubber to the void of light was impossible for him to pinpoint. The material continue to fill the room, till it covered him completely.

With what little movement he still had was further nullified and pointless. No matter where he could look it is a dark, nothingness. Like being an atom in a solid piece of tungsten, knowing nothing of the dark world outside of the metal. The weight of the liquid weighs across his form, forcing him down lower, pushed to the floor with even greater force. His breathing is reduced, only helped by the tubes that force his lungs to expand just enough to get functioning breaths. Every movement has to overcome a noticeable dynamic friction that breaks at the very extent of his limited movements, in the end it’s meaningless, for it only means he’s able to freely return to his neutral resting position where the metal becomes a semi-solid once again.

In these moments, the understanding of wyervin efficiency was presented to him. Time lost meaning. If nothing changed, was there a point to time? Nothing was changing. Energy? Had to be conserved, why move, if it was going to be wasted. Only movement done was to keep him alive. Energy, life, time. A crystal example of his state of existence. The machines working above him, doing tasks that was considered an efficient use of their energy and time. He’s just an object, a thing, not even a trophy. He’s now shown to anyone, presented anywhere. He’s here not because he wants to be here, though deep down if he could think that certainly be

true, his arousal coming and going as it pleased whenever it wanted to some arbitrary thought that he was never allowed to be aware of. For now, he's here because he was not *needed* for anything. His efficiency reduced down, to conserve as much as possible till stated otherwise and as he naturally drifts in and out of consciousness over the passing days... Weeks? Perhaps months, he remains in the silent abyss, waiting to be of use.

As the time draws near for unit H-BRA-5391 to be of use, UT-RRV-0249 and UT-KVI-0023 share and disseminate data, where one could translate their conversation which happens within mere moments.

UT-RRV-0249 reports, **“Information gathered.”**

UT-KVI-0023 replies, **“High efficiency coefficient.”**

“Time extended. Inefficient to revert.”

“Negative. Emotional humans. Reduction in efficiency.”

“Limited individual value.”

“Affirmative.”

“Not sufficient?”

“Rare event.”

“Numbers.”

“Inefficient search parameters.”

“Data efficiently obtained.”

UT-KVI-0023 counters, **“Apply species H fear.”**

“Applying... Affirmative.”

“Continue.”

“Acknowledged.”

There's a vibration felt through the liquid. Different from the ones felt before, it's closer, bouncing all around. A shift within the liquid, wires detach from Brandon's body, the sudden release of his mind. Fear remained, after all this time, fear. It adds to the flavor of excitement, pleasure, the tentacles are pulling out of his body, his limbs twitch, ache, and move for the first time in a long time. He's yanked out, moving through its seemingly impossible death, the deep abyss he found himself in, revealed to have only been less than three feet of liquid.

“Did forget? Depth?” he thinks, the suit adjusting the light so he doesn't have to squint. It takes only a moment to realize that UT-RRV-0249 was holding him within its sleek segmented metal tentacles. He faces UT-KVI-0023 as he's placed onto his feet. He's so light, the world around him barely registering, nostrils flaring, the aroma of metal filling his lungs, which ache when they extend past their previous limit.

“Slow,” UT-KVI-0023 states.

“Yes, slow... I...” his thoughts piecing together with greater variety, UT-KVI-0023 looking over him, the glowing lights seem so bright only because the world dims around it.

“Unit H-BRA-5391 ready to core with unit AC-AAA-0006.”

Brandon stands in a momentary confusion. His mind firing on all cylinders, clearing away the rust that gathered from the filters, “Question?”

“Affirmative.”

“Yes,” he responds, AC-AAA-0006 which is off to the side opens up, revealing a sleek silver metal inside like nothing he’s seen before. *“New technology?”* he thinks, taking a step toward his destiny, stopping only when UT-KVI-0023 speaks.

“Continue service.”

He turns toward it, looking up at the low glow gaze, “Clarify.” The words flow so smoothly, clearly, to the point, efficient. A shiver runs down his spine, knowing that he’s in full understanding of his emotions, thoughts, arousal, a willing glimpse in the alien world, but that doubt... was he just fooling himself.

“Unit H-BRA-5391 willing status.”

Nostrils flare, confirmation, *“I was still not truly one of them.”* A moment of freedom, opportunity to test his bounds, he reaches up to touch the wyervin but stops when he sees a smooth sleek silver sheen across his form. Words escape his mouth, vibrating the cover around his mouth, understood only by the machines around him, “Mirror.”

UT-RRV-0249 reports to its fellow wyervin, **“Inefficient.”**

UT-KVI-0023 states to Brandon, **“Look,”** using a tentacle to point back to his cell, while responding to its fellow unit, **“Efficient.”**

The simple hole in the ground. He moves over to it, taking his time, falling to his knees, noticing more of his sleek metallic body. His body mirrors itself, creating infinite reflections. With a moment of hesitation. He swallows a lump in his throat, feeling a weightless sensation, peering over the edge like he’s about to look into the abyss. And as they say if you stare into the abyss, it looks right back at you. Smooth, sleek, faceless. His facial features muted down to nothing. An oval featureless face. More like a drone than ever before. He’s not even sure where the holes are that let him breathe.

“Me? Is it really me?” he thinks, trying to grasp at the concept of what he’s seeing. Compounded by his reflective face that distorts the view, reflecting it back into the silver metal pool he came from, creating more infinite reflections of himself, *“What is this stuff? Why is it being tested on me? Did it consume me? Am I just a liquid metal machine and I don’t even realize it?”* The pressure in his loins, the constraint of his reproductive organs, tell him the truth, but he can’t believe it. That there’s a human still underneath this. The machines let him drink up his reflection till he’s drowning in it.

Eventually he pulls himself away, looking over his body. A sleek androgynous entity. Everything is smoothed away till he’s just torso, limbs, head. Noticing he has hands, but no fingers, feet, but no toes. Slowly he stands, turning back to the machines. His thoughts clambering for more, arousal bursting at the seams. The *tight* grip around him, all the tighter. Only one to respond, “Willing.”

UT-KVI-0023 responds, **“In.”**

“Yes,” he replies. Approaching AC-AAA-0006, climbing onto the machine’s back, the smooth metal shows a clear cavity for his body to slip in. Without warning the liquid metal around his body shifts, moving, forcing his arms into an elbow bind. He falls forward, slipping

headfirst into the machine. His legs soon follow with just as powerful knee binding. For the briefest of moments Brandon realizes, *“When did my legs become free in the first place?”* but it's a wasted fleeting thought. The metal containment around him pulls him in, binding together, into a solid metal containment.

“I'm merging with the machine?” he thinks, excitement building, *“Am I going to become one with the machine?”* A tingle runs down his spine, but he's unsure if it's him or the wires attaching his spine. The line between the machine and his limbs melts away into solid silver metal. His head held up just high enough to see his body merging into the inside, the tight grip becoming even tighter, becoming instantly welded into the machine, his body becoming part of unit AC-AAA-0006.

“Affirmative,” states AC-AAA-0006 into his mind, the connections growing, head forced down, face binding with the inside. The tingles, pressure growing all around. His head unable to move, vision forced on what the machine around him wants him to focus on, thoughts and emotions once again filtered. His limbs are perfectly bound into solid metal, head surrounded by solid metal. There is no wiggle room, no change, he's just a core, a simple part of the greater whole.

The connection grows stronger, binding him physically and mentally to AC-AAA-0006. His verbal thoughts quieted to nothing. Will, subjective at this moment if he could even ponder the question.

There's no sudden *“AC-AAA-0006 online”*. It was self-evident and did not need to be stated. What was the machine going to inform that it has merged and become one with the human trapped within? Those that already knew? A waste of energy, it simply would be inefficient. What is, is. No need to report. No need to discuss. Processes are being made, Brandon is part of them, a section of the whole to determine chaotic paths the targets will take when AC-AAA-0006 is hunting them down. Brandon is just a piece of the machine. Not moving, not thinking in any conscious way he or anyone could describe. Only... processing. Taking the data presented to him, shown to him, filtered to him, and coming out with an output. The movements, the eye, the *“control”* given at this moment, is only for efficiency and determination of what to do next. A move by necessity, rather than desire.

AC-AAA-0006 stands there, getting inspected by the two machines. No words spoken, no thoughts, calculations done as needed. Three efficient machines working to only make things ever more efficient. The next round of tests will begin the only difference is when the day ends. AC-AAA-0006 would return to the workshop, stand in its position and wait till be used again. Moving when needed, opening up sections when required.

Brandon once again loses himself but not in a heavy metal world of darkness, but the dark cold interior of a machine. The sensations he feels on his lips, waste, pleasure, all that part of the process of being what it is, AC-AAA-0006. For the next few months there was no longer a referral to him. No mentioning of his designation, name. Purpose given, purpose fulfilled, existence as required.

Days of being in one location, unmoving, not even able to see anything. Blinded? No, there was nothing to see. Why waste energy? Self-blinding? One could argue. But in the serenity of nothing. Zero stress. Zero worry. Zero problems. No fear of waiting for what will happen next. That is if he could even be afraid. Perfect darkness, shut down, waiting. Time losing meaning. Understanding why time is the least important factor in their perception of efficiency. Time is endless. Nothing else is.

After months of use, working, AC-AAA-0006 had a new mission. Processing the information, target species H. Name: Bill Giovanni. Designation. H-BIG-4792. Current known location is an outlying world within the human control zone. Efficiency coefficient, extremely low. This target has more information than the previous ones. Not questioning why, simply accepting the data transfer. Target reduces diplomatic relations with species H. Causing falsehoods, reducing clarity and species H. efficiency. Extreme inefficiency of resources.

AC-AAA-0006 receives more data, the local area, the planned dropped off point, pick up, possible routes, the itinerary of this human, resources at his disposable, possibilities, plans, solutions and backups for the difference between the theoretical and actual that almost always occur to some degree when dealing with organics. Calculations using every bit of processing to find the various efficient solutions, while on its way toward the destination.

Ferried across the galaxy in unit VV-JOO-0721, the stealth capture unit does all the preparation work within its alcove. Unmoving, waiting, not wasting valuable energy, all focus on the task that is quickly approaching. Units UT-KVI-0023 and UT-RRV-0249 are on board, checking, monitoring, but nothing else and during the last hours before the execution of the mission. Silence, waiting, no energy expended. Calm as it always has been, still like the space they travel through.

The destination has been reached, VV-JOO-0721 entering orb while AC-AAA-0006 moves for the first time in days. Sight returns, the most efficient path is followed toward its drop ship. With no words, barely a sound, in the darkness and vacuum of the ship's interior it boards, locking into position. The small ship departs, piercing through the atmosphere with surgical efficiency, gliding down, letting the planet's gravity do most of the work. A storm rumbles through the city, dumping heavy rains over the metropolis where the target resides.

It picks up signals, decimating the information within the first few minutes, locating information that confirms their reports are probably accurate and that the target is having an inefficient gathering, best defined as a party. The ship rumbles through the clouds, lightning strikes across its hull, no damages. The most efficient plans given the current parameters are selected. Scanning, searching, the location where the target is most probably at. A large tower building that stands above the rest of the city landscape with a massive saucer structure near the top.

AC-AAA-0006 disengages from its drop ship, leaping out, spreading its arms, the machine's wings catching the air, enabling it to glide, latching onto the spire just above the saucer. Lightning strikes the building; rains beat against it and the building. Steadily it moves using the building's blueprints to get direct access to the electrical grid.

If words were conveyed at this moment by it, a form of communication between it and its core it would be “**Confirming target.**” In reality its only information shared between the different processing units, to keep a strong bind, communication and most important part of all... efficiency.

“*Accessing systems, scanning... Target located.*” Hijacked security systems, the human is enjoying his time, wining, dining, rubbing shoulders of the elites that he considers to be his friend. Probability of the target being the target is near a hundred percent certainty. The human’s variation of an advanced security system is hijacked and made impotent within a minute.

No fear, concern about just how easily AC-AAA-0006 overtook the military grade security system and the following hack was even more disconcerting. Moving through the building are a dozen assault mech drones. These bipedal machines are armed to the teeth, with advanced systems and artificial intelligence that breaks at least six different inter-galactic laws. Their recording systems, disabled, and their systems overrun by it.

There’s no solidarity between different artificial intelligences but no animosity. The assault mech drones are simply tools being used for the one purpose AC-AAA-0006 needs. With the pathway secured, the best plan has been established. It moves into the building, using a service elevator, leaving as little of a presence as possible. Its claws quietly tap against the marble flooring. Water drips from its form, leaving a trail that is quickly cleaned by a simple janitor bot, “*Begin.*”

Assault bots have been making their way toward the party, keeping their presence within the parameters of “normal” Dozens of human scaled powerful and influential guests, armed organic human security guards with aliens known for their physical prowess adds layers of security to everyone there.

Time ticks, waiting for the target to be at the right spot. Watching him enjoy his guests, building new connections, confirming friends, checking out if any could be his enemies and then... the lights go out. The guards switch to threat mode, the guests grow concerned while the target says, “It’s alright,” he states, going to his security, whispering to her, “Find out what happened. The backup generators should be on, something is *wrong.*”

Tick, tock, tick, tock. The actions the target took are to expected parameters, and once his assistance is far enough away, the security bots burst into the room. The guests duck and scream, rushing to any place of safety. The organic security guards start firing, the machines absorbing fire.

“Fuck, they are here,” the target mutters, rushing out to a place of safety, taking a secret shoot that will lead him to his escape vehicle, but halfway toward his destination the pod screeches to a halt and before he could even register what happened, the door automatically opens.

AC-AAA-0006 stares straight at its target, extending its tentacles, wrapping around the human, filling his mouth so he can’t scream, reducing his air pathways enough so he falls

unconscious while pulled tightly up against its body, taking him from the pod, before closing it up, sending it on its way, ***“Target acquired.”***

An efficient machine has succeeded in its goal. The plan worked. The assault bots were destroyed, none of the other guests were hurt, none of the organic security, lost. Future analysis will indicate a shortage caused by the power outage that flipped a one and zero to execute a plan that the target's security betrayed him and he needed saving. A clean capture where none will be the wiser. The inefficient human brought to the dropship that picked them up, back to the ship.

Bill would come to consciousness an unknown amount of time later, in a cold lifeless hanger. The wyervin machine coiled its tentacles around him, already stripped him of his clothes. He gasps, the air is barely breathable, trying to say, “I knew it. Can't trust you fuckers.” No response, the sleek black rubber drone suit forced upon his form, hiding his features, providing the atmospheric pressure required to remove the atmosphere in the hangar. Breathing tubes from the ship attach to his nostrils providing him his much-needed air to survive.

AC-AAA-0006 takes the target, placing him within a new drone storage box. A small container just big enough for him to be placed within. The human struggling against the machine in vain, words lost to the vacuum of the ship. Shackles placed around his ankles and wrists, forcing him into a tight kneeling position head forced down. He looks up, with his muted human characteristics, mouth opening to continue to yell. The door closes, leaving him to his small cell. Job complete, it goes back to its alcove where it doesn't move, waiting for the next time it's needed...

The next day there's sudden movement, UT-KVI-0023 moves in front of it, ***“Mission complete.”***

AC-AAA-0006 knew exactly what it meant, the back opens, lifting up, the silver metal compound stripped of the human, the inhibitors steadily removed, the knee and elbow bindings undone, allowing the human to stumble out in a daze.

Brandon gasps, needing air, breathing tubes attached to his nostrils, providing the cold latex scented air that brings back fond memories. His muscles sore, but not as sore as he thought might of been. He'd have easily fallen off if there was any gravity to speak of, *“Done?”* he thinks, *“I feel like I've been asleep for years...”*

“Mission extended six months. Unit H-BRA-5391, core eight months three days, two hours twenty-three minutes exact.”

Slowly he pushes himself down, floating to the ground, his feet attaching to the metallic surface, “A year? I was... And they knew about this?” he asks forcing his thoughts through, emotions there but it was so much hitting him at once that he couldn't grasp just what he was filling.

“Affirmative.”

“So... we're done?” he asks, getting no response, looking back at AC-AAA-0006 the liquid metal insides visible for only a moment as its cover locks back into place, forming a perfect wyervin dog that it is, “Now what?”

“Taken back to location. Seven-day ETA.”

“Just like that? I’m going back?” he asks, getting no response, rubbing the back of his head, feeling the sleek latex, the twitch of delight, excitement. The dread of just how much more powerful the machines were. Realizing everything he’s done, “I’m not allowed to tell what we did with the live tests, aren’t I?”

“Affirmative.”

“Thought so.”

“All relevant data has been shared.”

He nods, partially in agreement, partially to knock some cobwebs out of his mind, “Why now? And not when we get back?”

“Recovery.”

He chuckles, “You care that much about a single human’s health? After what we just did?”

“Affirmative. Unit H-BRA-5391, maintain high efficiency coefficient.”

“Gee, thanks,” he says, looking back at the other wyervin, “And thanks for taking care of me. I appreciate it.” The machine doesn’t respond, being as still as a statue, “I know it knows and that’s good enough for me... So, no way to go back in?”

“Negative.”

“Ah... and what about your offer? Does that uh...” he trails off, closing his eyes, processing his next words carefully, “Still stand?”

“Affirmative. Location?”

“Location? Ah... I...” he feels takes a step back, bumping into six, “Are you asking for me us to start it now?”

“Negative.”

“The watch, you’re asking about the watch location?”

“Affirmative.”

“It’s back at home. I wanted some time to think before I decided on your offer,” he says, UT-KVI-0023 moving back toward its alcove. “Wait, wait, wait,” he yells, rushing to get in front of it, holding his hand sup, “Something I still want to ask before you shut down.” The wyervin stands there silently, unresponsive, “The mental inhibitors. I understand won’t be used. But perhaps if I could get a bit more time locked up? Treated like one of your drones? Till we get back to my drop off? I know you’ve done a lot, but, just a little bit more? No special treatment except perha...”

UT-KVI-0023 wraps its tentacles around him, coiling around his limbs, pulling the human up against its larger frame. Its cold grip was at the perfect strength to bind him while not inhibiting his breathing. The machine machine’s smaller tentacles reach out, opening a small opening at the base of the alcove, revealing a small drone storage box.

The human’s eyes go wide, “*I never knew they had hidden locations like this,*” he thinks as within moments he’s shoved into the small cramped metallic box. Forced to kneel, forehead to the ground, arms forced behind his back. Breathing tubes shifted to the container as tendrils within the storage container lock him in place, providing zero room to move. The machine

tentacles slip into his rear, ready to drain him of any waste. With everything locked into place, another smaller tendril makes its way to his aching chastity bound length, slipping inside. He groans, tensing, relaxing, able to feel just how much it means to have emotions. Just how much he's missed them and how they've spiced this moment all the better. The flavory concoction his mind craves, body screaming. He tries to look up as hard as he can, seeing the wyervin close the door on him, delving him in darkness, sparking for the first time since this trip began, a full-blown climactic moment of utter bliss. His DNA is extracted. There's no follow up or extended play, his body expelled material and the machines picked up like any other bodily fluid.

He's nothing to them. The machine's movements above vibrate his box, reminding him of just how big and powerful they are. The helpless human knows there's no talking to them, no reasoning to change this moment. He made a decision to get another taste of this forbidden fruit and time and time again he discovers he can't get enough. And as his mind comes back to him in full, he can't only help and wonder, just how much *deeper* he can find himself in. As they make their way back, there's only one thing he can truly see in this lightless abyss, that he'll want to come back again, and he knows exactly just how to do it.