

GELITECH

- SIDES -

EPISODE 3

OBSIDIAN

BY SHETIRA ANWAE

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OBSIDIAN

The tigress bit her lower lip and silently pondered the floating black slab. It seemed more like an altar to some dark god than a mechanism for the permanent relaxation of all genetic inclinations toward the myriad stresses of sapient civilized life. An obsidian edifice, glistening in the flickering candlelight, beckoning voluntary sacrifice upon its perfectly polished surface.

"Are you sure about this?" the finely figured feyli inquired with a soft, timid tone that exposed her own inner uncertainties. It hadn't been her idea, after all, and it was a pretty big leap to take for a woman who didn't really understand the point of it. All the same, she'd agreed to join her companion for the one-way trip. It had seemed appropriate at the time. Now, however...

"Not really," the pretty, violet skinned elf-eared ashiri replied with a nervous shift of her hips. Her companion may have been perfectly comfortable running around naked in public, but she was clearly far less than enthused. "So... which one of us goes first?"

The tigress shrugged. "It's your people's tradition, isn't it?" she asked with considerable hesitance.

It was their tradition indeed, and one so conceptually outrageous that there mere consideration of it probably ought to have been regarded as proof of insanity. There seemed to be no possible justification for it, save the philosophical platitudes about the wonders of abandoning one's very own self for a purely primal sort of bestial existence. An existence that hardly justified itself, utterly dependent on those who weren't crazy enough to seek it out for themselves. A horrifying transfiguration of incomprehensibly

alien origin. And it was a transfiguration of which thousands quite willingly partook of each and every day.

"I... I guess I'll go first then," the ashiri responded with visible anxiety. Clearly, she was having second thoughts.

The tigress was having quite a few second thoughts of her own, though she knew quite well that they were completely futile at this point. The floating obsidian table wasn't the only alien relic still active in this dark, damp ruin. The stone slab that served as a door had closed behind them, sealing them in until they had both accepted the full measure of their completely voluntary fate.

The ancient structure had been built by the tall, domineering, and extremely aloof alien race known only by the insulting epithet which the equally ancient and very much extinct key'vin'ta had typically spat in response to even the most passing mention of them, their most implacable

rivals in their efforts to conquer the stars: von'kir. The von'kir had long since given up on establishing a foothold in the Core, but their powerful, seemingly magical relics remained and ever-present reminder of their attempted conquest.

Their original purpose long since forgotten, the works of alien artifice had been reinterpreted several times over the ages. Punishment. Entertainment. Divinely prescribed ordeal for the attainment of true enlightenment. A genetic deep massage to soothe away all the cares of sapient life. It could apparently be any of those things and more, depending on the form of the relic, and the context in which it was used.

Exactly what this obsidian table was supposed to be at the moment was a complete mystery to the tigress. Her ashiri companion had been one of half a dozen men and women who, for whatever reason, had been ordained to enter this dark place and face the power within. Each had picked a non-ashiri companion, seemingly at random off the

street. Someone to share in their experience, as they played their part in what was, so far as she could tell, was a weekly celebration. Exactly what it was a celebration of, Goddess only knew, but she'd felt too obligated by their hospitality during her stay to refuse.

The ashiri ran her hand along the edge of the floating table's glossy black surface. The candles in the room seemed to glow brighter, and a subtle odor of jasmine filled the air.

The tigress fingered the cold, gray metal collar that had been locked around her neck when she'd agreed to join in the 'festivities'. It was far more comfortable to wear than it had any right to be. Indeed, it felt quite natural. Appropriate. Pleasant, even. Whether or not it was von'kir magic at work, or her own mind trying to justify the outrageous act she'd unwittingly committed to performing, she didn't know. Nor did she really want to know. It would just make things even more anxiety inducing than they already were.

"Well... there's no point in putting it off, is there?" the ashiri softly observed as she turned to rest her rump on the table's edge. Her long, pretty ears seemed to quiver as she boosted herself up onto the floating table with both arms. She paused, and looked at her companion with a nervous, uncertain smile. "That you for coming here with me. I... I hope you enjoy this as much as I will."

The tigress sincerely doubted the nervous ashiri was going to enjoy anything about what was about to happen to her. "I really don't understand what there is to enjoy about it. It's..."

"Extremely unpleasant," the ashiri responded with a deep sigh as she lifted her legs up onto the table's perfectly polished surface. "So unpleasant that it's pleasant, in some sort of horribly perverse way. That's just how it is."

"Why?" the tigress asked as her companion sat herself lengthwise on the floating table. "Why is this even a thing?"

"Because it's... kind of fun," the ashiri replied as she nervously shifted about in preparation to lay back onto the cold, hard surface. "You know. Forbidden knowledge. Finding out what it actually feels like, even if it means... you know. To change. And... and to exist in that way. Because... I mean... aren't you at least a little bit curious about what it's going to be like?"

"Not particularly," the tigress answered with an unsettled frown. She certainly was curious to know what it might feel like. In fact, she was curious to know what quite a few xenoexperiences might feel like. But she wasn't nearly curious enough to actually go out and try it for herself. Well, not that she had any choice in the matter at this point.

The ashiri shook her head. "Well... you don't have much choice now, do you? So you might as well be curious about it, right?"

The tigress shrugged. "I suppose."

"Well... no more words," the ashiri said softly as she closed her eyes and began to lay back. "It's not like they're going to matter to us anymore, right? Or anything else, really. So... no more words. Just watch me... as I feel... as I..."

"I don't even know your name," the tigress interjected.

"Names don't matter anymore," the ashiri responded, her voice sounding distant and almost cold. "Not now. Not ever. Now hush. Not another word."

The tigress reluctantly nodded as the ashiri let her back settle onto the table's surface. It seemed almost uncouth to not know the name of the one

with whom she was sharing this deeply unpleasant experience. Perhaps it was for the best. No name meant no familiarity. No attachment. No concern at any sort of personal level. No need to care what she felt as the alien power took her. What she cried out in desperation as she became fully aware of the truth of the experience on a very intimate level. What she became as a result of the horror inflicted upon her body. Or where she ended up once it was all done.

The thought of simply not caring what happened to the ashiri made the tigress feel wrong. Deeply wrong. One very small step short of evil, even. But everything that happened to the ashiri was going to be inflicted upon her own body before all was said and done. Did the ashiri care about that? Did she care about what the tigress was going to scream as the full measure of the horror came upon her? Did she care where the tigress was going to end up when the relic had finished its vile work?

Of course the ashiri didn't care. No one cared. If anyone actually cared, this 'celebration' wouldn't be a thing, would it? The tigress was just a disposable object to them. And so was her companion. All that mattered was that they entered the ruins and lay on the table and...

A strange, metallic sizzle filled the air as wisps of luminous white energy formed around the ashiri's wrists and ankles. Shackles made entirely of some exotic, alien energy, they were quickly attached to the table by ethereal chains. Two more chains rose up from either side to take hold of the half-ring on the front of her collar.

The ashiri's arms were pulled out from her sides as the ethereal chains pulled taut. So too were her legs spread slightly open. She could still move her neck to some degree, and flex her back and hips quite freely, but was otherwise quite firmly restrained.

The tigress bit her lip as she watched her companion squirm upon the table, completely helpless in the grasp of her ethereal bindings. For a brief moment, a twinge of sympathy tugged at her increasingly cold heart. Every passing moment was a moment closer to her own mounting of the table, however. An experience that, unlike the ashiri, she was going to have partake of alone. One would have thought she'd have shown a little more appreciation of that fact.

A new kind of harsh, almost greasy sizzle filled the chamber as a flat plane of nearly transparent yellowish energy formed at the foot of the table, rising up until it was just a bit taller than the ashiri's upturned chin. Its edges undulated in a highly unpredictable fashion, while every so often a little flare would part away and float off in a random direction. Most of the flares were tiny, and faded away quite quickly, but a few were much larger, and continued on until they struck the walls or ceiling.

The ashiri tensed as the little sheet of alien energy began to move up the table toward her feet. She flexed her toes and wiggled her hips in an abrupt, twitchy kind of way that made her extreme state of nervous anticipation quite clear. Closer and closer the energy came to her toes until, it seemed, she could actually feel it about to touch her. She inhaled sharply as her back tensed into a very uncomfortable looking arch.

The tigress cringed at the horrid noise that came when the energy finally made contact with the ashiri's flesh. It was a positively terrifying mix of spiky electric arcing and sparking, a soft hiss of hot steam, and something that sounded to her very much like meat sizzling on a griddle. The scent of it was all at odds with the sound, however. She could practically taste the magnificent combination of intense jasmine and a soft, subtle brine.

The tigress gasped as the energy moved past its initial contact and began to make its way up the

deeply huffing ashiri's feet. What it left behind was a shriveled gray mockery of what had once been. The woman's toes had become emaciated and leathery looking, far more like those of a mummified corpse than a living creature.

Goddess above! the tigress barely managed to stop herself from blurting aloud. *That's... that's...*

"Oh... oh... oh," the ashiri began to pant as her feet shriveled up into bony, distorted things. "Oh fuck. Oh fuck. Oh fuck."

The tigress kept her mouth shut. No matter how much she wanted to ask the ashiri how it felt, she'd been told to keep quiet, and quiet she was going to keep. All the same, there was an odd tone to the ashiri's voice that piqued the tigress' curiosity to the point where she felt almost compelled to speak. There was no expression of horror. No expression of pain. Or even serious discomfort. The ashiri didn't seem quite pleased with what was happening to her feet, but she didn't seem quite

displeased with it either. Perhaps there was something to her remark that it was all so unpleasant that it was actually pleasant. Whatever that was supposed to mean.

The energy field sizzled its way up the ashiri's quivering legs. The shriveled results were even more unpleasant to behold than her emaciated feet. There was some muscle left to give her calves shape, but hardly enough to allow her to stand. Or at least that was how it seemed. What had once been birthmarks on her smooth, violet skin became nasty looking little nodules. A few of these moles sprouted thick, dark hairs. Others were dark and twisted in shape.

The tigress could barely stomach the sight as the energy moved up the ashiri's thighs, leaving nothing but gray, emaciated nastiness in its wake. At the same time, she just couldn't force herself to look away. It was extremely unpleasant to behold, yet so perversely fascinating that she just had to watch every moment of it.

The energy made its way upward, toward its inevitable meeting with the ashiri's soft, puffy womanhood. She wiggled and tensed as it approached. "Oh... oh... ohhhhhh..."

The tigress held her breath as she watched through the energy field itself. As it approached closer. And closer. And...

"AAAAAH!" the ashiri called out as the energy pushed its way up between her legs, her tone expressing a combination surprise, confusion, and not just a little fascination. Her womanly folds went gray and wrinkled up to momentarily expose what lay hidden within. All that too turned gray, but it did not become an emaciated mockery of its former glory like everything else. Instead, her womanhood closed up and smoothed over until there was no sign that it had ever existed.

The tigress bit her lower lip as she found herself staring at that now barren place where the

ashiri's genitals had once been. It was gone. Just like that. Gone. And it wouldn't be very long before the same was going to happen to her.

The very thought of having her most intimate and sensitive of places wiped away and replaced by harsh gray nothing sent a sharp shudder down the tigress' spine. She couldn't even begin to imagine what it might feel like. She really didn't even want to try. But starting at that barren place, squirming back and forth upon the obsidian table... she just couldn't stop herself from thinking about what it might be like. What it *would* be like, when it came time to do it herself.

As the energy field moved upward into the fullness of the sonorously huffing ashiri's abdomen, more and more little flares of energy were cast off into the chamber. Most were still very tiny and equally short lived. Some, however, were getting to be quite large. They floated off in all directions, and a few began to pass quite close

to the tigress as she stared down at the ashiri's belly.

"Ohhh! Ohhh! Yeah," the ashiri huffed as her soft skin shriveled up and pulled taut over her hip bones. Her lower belly shrank inward to the point that it looked like no internal organs were left amid the horribly shrunken and misshapen muscles of her abdomen and lower back. More nasty looking moles appeared, always in places that seemed to accentuate the horrid nature of her new form in the most effective of fashions. "Oh yeah. Oh... oh. Yeah."

The tigress couldn't help but notice the change in the ashiri's voice. She didn't quite seem to actually be enjoying whatever sensations her progressive emaciation was imposing upon her. She did, however, seem to be quite 'into it', insofar as it was a thing one might get into, if only for the unusual feel of it. That, of course, made the tigress just a bit more curious about what it actually felt like. Was it as bad as it looked to the uninitiated

eye, or was it actually interesting enough to be palatable to the senses in some strange way?

Something in motion caught the very edge of the tigress' vision. A puff dust or something, floating toward head from the right. Purely out of instinct, she swatted the unwelcome distraction away with her right hand.

There was no mistaking the sizzle and snap. Nor was there any mistaking the wash of cool, leathery tightness down the length of her fingers. She yelped and recoiled away from the errant little sheet of pale yellow energy, but not before managing to put the rest of her hand through it.

The ashiri managed to stifle her huffing and moaning long enough for a brief giggle at the tigress.

The tigress didn't know what to think as she stared in blank wonder at her gray, emaciated hand, replete with a particularly knobby mole near

the base of her little finger. It all felt quite stiff and mildly unpleasant, in a strangely fascinating way. Like a leather glove one size too small, but that leather glove was actually her skin. It wrapped tightly around the bones, leaving little room for much in the way of muscle. It was noticeably weakened, but not nearly as much as she would have expected for such a drastic reduction.

The more she stared and wiggled her shriveled fingers, the less unpleasant and more fascinating the tigress' hand felt. The more she manipulated her transformed hand, the more she actually wanted to know what having other parts of her body similarly treated would feel like. Would it all feel similarly fascinating, in that same slightly unpleasant, unfamiliar, and thoroughly alien way?

The tigress turned back to her companion on the table and watched as the energy made its way to her tender chest. She wasn't quite sure what she wanted to do more. Should she watch the rest of her companion's transformation? Or should she

chase the cast off flares of energy, and see what it would feel like to let them wash over her own tender places?

The tigress decided to watch. Unless, of course, fate sent another flare in her direction. A nice big flare, at just the right height to...

The energy sizzled its way up the ashiri's ribcage, pulling the skin taut and her breasts down and flat along with it. The warm, inviting lumps sizzled away to nothing. Nothing, that is, save the long, dark, knobby nipples that would be the only surviving indicator of what she had been before her transformation.

The ashiri hardly seemed to notice the loss of her breasts. The energy was making its way upward, towards her chin, and the final act in her reduction from a thing of immeasurable beauty into something very much the opposite. She began to huff and pant in a very different tone. A higher tone, and one that came in shorter, sharper bursts.

The tigress ignored the flares as she moved forward along with the alien energy. Little sizzles flared on her body, as bits of fur vanished to reveal little spots of leathery gray flesh. It felt so strange. So unreal. And so... stimulating.

The ashiri inhaled sharply as the energy sizzled up her neck, drawing it all in to half its previous size. Up it went over her chin, leaving behind nothing but tight skin over her jaw bone. Her lush lips shriveled away as her mouth became nothing but a thin, wrinkly slit. Her nostrils opened wide in virtually skeletal appearance, as her cheeks shrunk and her cheek bones protruded. She closed her eyes as her long, pointy ears vanished into tiny wrinkles. Her eyes sunk in. Her forehead grayed and became covered with dark spots and a few unpleasant looking moles. She shuddered as the energy passed beyond her head. And then she let out a low, deeply unpleasant hiss.

The creature was little but a living, breathing corpse. A beast so horrid to look at that only the darkest of minds should have found it acceptable, let alone desirable. Dark minds like those of the long gone von'kir. And like the mind of the tigress who stared in confused fascination at the monster her companion had become.

She knew she should have been disgusted. Repulsed in every way imaginable. But she wasn't. Her hand just felt too... interesting for that. She wanted to feel more. She *needed* to feel more. To feel what her companion had felt. To partake of that forbidden knowledge and steep herself in it until...

The energy which had transformed the ashiri stopped at the head of the obsidian table and paused for a few short moments. Then it collapsed and washed over the whole obsidian table's finely polished surface. The creature's glowing bindings of pure alien energy pulled downward. The

squirming, hissing beast descended through the field. Through the portal. Into the alien unknown.

The tigress gasped as the glow faded. The chamber fell dark, illuminated only by the dim, flickering candles. "What... where... where did she go?"

For a few moments, the tigress stood in silence. Then she shrugged her shoulders. "Fuck it," she muttered, shaking her head as she flexed her leathery, emaciated fingers. They were actually starting to feel perfectly natural now. A bit nice, even, in a strange sort of way. "Does it even matter?"

The tigress knew well that it didn't matter. The only way out of the chamber was on the top of the obsidian table. To feel what the ashiri had felt. To become what she had become. Where she ended up after that was entirely irrelevant.

The tigress took a deep breath and rested her rump on the edge of the floating table. "Well," she sighed as she hoisted herself up with both hands, "here goes nothing..."

TO BE CONTINUED...