

Part 10- Naltag



From per's side, Naltag brought out a dull metal wristlet. It looked much like the one hanging off per's wrist. Naltag offered Jeremiah the strange jewelry.

He shook his head. "It's against ordinance."

"You can borrow it, and give it back a er."

Jeremiah considered this, and reached for the bracelet, slipping it on. He stared at it, turning it over on his arm. The metal was etched with small grooves.

"Ornamentation is for women."

Naltag didn't respond. The child was merely repeating what he had been conditioned to believe. If Naltag explained per's experiences with ornamentation, or with women, Jeremiah would be horrified.

"Put one finger on the ridges of the bracelet."

Jeremiah frowned. "Hurt much?"

Naltag smiled reassuringly. "Not a decent amount."

The child grinned at Naltag's use of the compound idiom. His finger stroked the ridges of the bracelet, and a slight hum sounded. From Jeremiah's face, he expected a change, but saw none, his all his limbs were still visible.

"Come."

Naltag edged into the main room.

Jeremiah whispered, "Wait!"

Naltag waited.

The child crept out, taking one step, and checking around. He took another step, and held up his hand, probably to see if it was still there. Finally, he held out his braceleted arm in Naltag's direction.

"The ornament defects."

"Hear a stir?"

Jeremiah told his head up, one hand brushing his ear. "Sounds like heavy tech."

Naltag gestured for the child to follow. "No fret. It's working. I see you, 'cause we're riding the same wave." Per tapped the bracelet.

Even a er such assurances, Jeremiah seemed undecided. His eyes remained glued to his parent's dorm. Naltag told the child not to worry; they wouldn't be exiting their dorm for a while. Jeremiah asked for further explanation, which Naltag gave.

"Mating?" The child repeated the word slowly, rolling it out syllable by syllable. "You mean requirements?"

The connotations of the word in relation to the act stopped per. They were in the outer hallways, moving towards the surface. No one was awake a er lights out. Ordinance forbids night-lingering, as Naltag had heard it called. However, that didn't stop per from seeing a head Councilman escorting a young girl from her domicile to his. Jeremiah had noticed, is he was too busy thinking about his own visibility.

"Requirements," Naltag parroted, walking slowly. "That's the name for to humans combining their bodies and passion?"

Jeremiah laughed. "You sound like ancient archives. Requirements are for men and women, to create life."

The stairs to the surface were in sight, but Naltag wished to finish their conversation. Per stopped a second time.

"Men and men don't make? Women and women?"

If Naltag had offered the child another gift, it would have been easier for Jeremiah to understand.

"Against ordinance. Even if, there'd be no creatin' that way. Men and men." Jeremiah wrinkled his nose. "Can't ken it."

Naltag dropped the subject. They climbed the stairs to the Outside, Jeremiah cautiously, Naltag confidently.

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