



Thirteen - Nursery

Dhare woke the next day to something on top of him. It was warm and small. He explored with his hands, finding pliable flesh. The flesh was squishy; pyode

Without opening his eyes, he knew it was Ashaki. Her braided mane was pressed against his chin. Her scent that drove him crazy surrounded him as she slept atop him.

The conclusion of his familiar wanderings was her generously plush rump. He liked how it curved up into his large hands, so pyodand round—very round. Such a thing was alien and he hated to admit that he found it pleasing.

Ashaki stirred in her sleep. Her hips rocked into his abdomen as she shifted. A soft moan hummed in her chest and she pushed her backside into his grasp while very much still asleep. He worried that she was waking up but her breathing remained slow and steady. So he pressed his warm breath sent chills across his bare skin. His body reacted exactly how it would if a Yautja partner ground against him—his cock grew hard as a rock. It tented his groin-covering and pressed into her.

What had possessed her to react to his touch like this? Was she...what had his step-bearer called it...dreaming A... wet dream?

He had only picked up so much common lingo between humans. This word was new for him so he struggled to figure out if what Ashaki was doing to his leg was what humans called a wet dream. A wet dream was where a human would get turned on by a dream and either cum in their sleep or wake up needy.

Oh Paya, he hoped Ashaki wouldn't wake up wanting any attention from him. He'd pauka kianneamedhabefore this little pest and they were a damn hive mind! They were barely sentient, and yet, it would be better than touching this female!

His mind wanted his crawling arousal to stop but his body wanted more; it wanted the full mating dance. A growl rumbled in his throat when the human woman slowly and agonizingly gyrated her hips against his erection. His grip on her ass tightened and instinct instructed that he return it with a grind of his own. He couldn't help it. No matter how much he knew it was wrong. Many rotations had passed since he last took someone to his nest for a nice rutting.

Unfortunately, this was the worst place for some fun. A dark cave during a snowstorm with only a single pelt was hardly a nest. Besides, she was much too small to be a decent partner. What he really needed to do, beyond the thoughts of his traitorous body, was to claim the skull of his trophy and return to the ship for proper medical treatment. Being careful not to wake her, he wrapped his arms around her and rolled over. Now freed, he laid her on the canvas that had been sharing, setting her head gently down.

He draped the pelt over her slumbering body and tilted his head, dressed himself in his avian tunic. A sting in his side reminded him of the near fatal wound. The scarred skin pulsed taut with his movements.

The pain was bearable. He had suffered worse. It was the damn weather that had nearly killed him. Yautja had wonderful healing abilities thanks to having evolved in a harsh environment. If it weren't for the cold, he would've easily survived. Despite this fact of superiority, he wasn't about to diminish Ashaki's role in his survival.

Securing trap mines at the entrance to the cave gave him some peace of mind to her safety before he took off in the direction of his trophy, following the trail his mask set out before him.

The blizzard had stopped so the world was white and quiet before him. Fresh sparkling snow covered the landscape in a downy blanket. The sunlight refracted off the crests of hills causing the pixels to glitter in some places like diamonds. The cold wicked at his skin where his netting was ripped, but it wasn't enough to hinder him as he carved his way through the thick snow.

He eventually found the corpse of the beast and got to work removing the head with his Dah' nagara the short-bladed sword sliced through the neck bone with ease. Then, pulling out his can of acid, Dhare melted the flesh and fur away to reveal yellow-ish bone. He tied the enormous skull to his back before skinning the beast. The giant pelt was rolled up and set aside. Finally, for the last piece to take with him, he sawed off a sharp talon, chattering to himself as he observed the dark curved talon shine in the sunlight.

The claw would be Ashaki's gift. It was the least he could do to thank her.

In the eyes of other clans, it was cowardice and failure to accept help. Doing so admitted weakness and proved a hunter wasn't worthy of respect. In the Blue Spear clan however, it was different. His status would not be affected but he would definitely have people jest with him about it. Being helped wasn't weakness, it was simply seen as you needed more training to compensate for your failure to rely on yourself. The teasing was the only lighthearted punishment.

Dhare began his trek back to the cave with the new trophy, fur pelt, and talon. He disabled the traps upon entering and walked in to find his human captive still asleep. Her soft breaths clouded in the cool morning air; this was his sign he needed to wake her and get them moving.

"Ashaki, wake yourself." He shook her with his sandaled foot, being careful with how much pressure he applied.

She mumbled sofly, "It's too early..." She rolled away from him and nuzzled the canvas beneath her.

Dhare grunted and shook her again, shaking her twice before she finally opened her eyes and sat upright. Through squinting eyes she glared at him, her braids wild around her head. He held back a smirk when she growled at him. The sound was so and pup-like.

"Get up. We must return to the ship. I am tired of this paikingplanet." Dhare complained, stamping out the last few embers of the fire.

The cold wasn't a friend to the Yautja.

He wanted the comforting heat of his ship's life support system. This wasn't exactly the planet to bake in the sun.

"Don't you need more rest, Dhare? You almost died!" Ashaki clumsily rose to her feet and stretched her arms above her head. The Elite Yautja looked away from the sight of her body on display. She drew her many braids into a messy bun atop her head and began to dress, gathering various items as she went.

Dhare grunted in response, "Mo Yautja heal quickly."

"Oh..." A frown appeared on her face, "I—"

"I am grateful for you saving my life, Ashaki. This does not diminish the great risk you took." He patted her head. The human woman's eyes blinked in surprise.

He liked how small she was compared to him. The look on her face was priceless—one of annoyance—when he treated her like a hound pup. Annoying her had become a fun hobby of his.

"Good. It was hard dragging your heavy lizard ass. You're lucky I have been hiking a lot to build up my leg muscles." She turned her broad nose up to the air and turned away from him to pack the last of her items away into her back.

The Yautja chuckled, "I am not a lizard. I am Yautja."

"Yautja schmautja. Blah blah." She mimicked his deep voice, her voice much too feminine to replicate it well. Dhare shook his head with a chu and walked to the entrance of the cave with Ashaki hot on his heels, wrapping the pelt around her body.

Together they made their way back to the ship. It was a long walk but it was good exercise. The distance was just enough to get his three pumping through his veins. Dhare kept himself aware of his surroundings in the case of any beast deciding to attack or investigate.

There were quite a few worthy creatures here to hunt, each of them a challenge, but Dhare didn't care to hunt here anymore—on this visit anyway.

Walking in silence, he thought of where he would visit next. There were many planets he liked to hunt; he knew of too many to count. However, given his condition, he needed more time to heal before hunting again. One such planet could provide that. Ashaki would be able to see more of his people and he could give her more freedom.

She would like their next destination much better. They both shared the same distaste for the cold, at least. That thought had him glancing back at the human woman following him. Ashaki had proven her worth to him.

Whatever she asked, he would give.

Well, he wouldn't give her the freedom to be rid of him, but anything else was hers.

He could see she was cold. Her limbs were shaking.

"Come. We both could use heat." Dhare said, gesturing for Ashaki to hurry up.

"You don't have to tell me twice."

Ashaki felt renewed after taking a nice, long shower. The heat of Dhare's ship was a welcome reprieve from the biting cold of the planet. She washed her clothes in the shower and a reward, ate some strange vegetable that Dhare had in his kitchen to fill her empty stomach.

The meal wasn't even finished when Dhare piloted the ship back into orbit. The ice planet grew smaller and smaller until it was gone from view, another shrinking dot in the black expanse of space. It was his ground, Dhare's movements were steady and slow but he was less grumpy than usual.

The massive space cop was quiet.

He was already quiet, yes, but more so now that they had left that stupid ice planet. The silence wasn't the weird part. Unlike before his mission was heavy and glowering, but now it felt light, pensive, and almost happy!

His change in mood was confusing for Ashaki. She had saved his life, and it was absolutely the right thing to do, but their relationship had been altered in some inexplicable way. It weighed on her for the next few hours of space travel as she turned over the notable changes in her mind, slowly, like a discovered artifact. If she was a bad person, she could have killed Dhare while he was vulnerable, and she'd be free now. But was that what she wanted? To commit murder for her freedom? That wasn't her. She wasn't heartless. It was, these last few days, she felt more heartfelt, more heart-exists-a-lot-and-it-burts.

Her anger about her ship had diminished greatly over the night she had tended to his wounds. When he had looked at her, his eyes shining like liquid gold in the firelight, there was something new. It was a subtle flutter in her belly. A fluttering sensation she understood but didn't want to accept.

It was wrong, of course, to have this silly crush. He was an alien of a different species. Reminding herself of that fact allowed her to quell those embers that threatened to burn hotter.

"Ashaki."

His deep alien voice roused her from her thoughts. She sat on the floor with her back to the wall and her chin on her knees. The muse of her thoughts crouched next to her. Those intelligent yellow eyes watched her with his forearms hanging over his own bent knees. That big head of his was cocked to the side, sending his long locks to the wayside and making his hair jewelry tinkle together in a strange symphony of metal, bone, and synthetic material. Twitching ever so slightly, his mandibles spread a little when her eyes met his.

"Yes?" She asked, suddenly feeling claustrophobic.

"Are you... okay?" He struggled a little with that last word, sounding it out slowly.

Am I okay? Am I not okay? What am I? I don't even know what to think...

She released a breath she didn't realize she had been holding and shook her head. Sitting here letting her thoughts ruminate allowed the past to creep into the present, dragging her down into that black abyss of hurt and fear of the dark.

Rumbling sofly in his throat, Dhare sat beside her with his back to the wall with a pained groan. His hand held his hip, his fingers pressed into the healing skin there. The wounds were looking better than they had last night but they were still very visible.

He rummaged in his waist pouch with his free hand and pulled out a curved talon. It was smooth, a dark brown-black that shined dully in the low lighting of the ship.

"For you," Dhare stated, holding it out for her to take.

She took it from him and turned it over and over, inspecting it. It was roughly the size of her hand, and insanely sharp. It drew blood from her fingertip even as she casually handled it. A tiny droplet appeared at the apex of her index. Still, the talon was smooth and hard, almost like steel but with the density of bone. This was the coldest thing she'd ever seen.

Dhare was giving her a talon from the beast that nearly killed him.

"So this is what almost killed you." It was more of a statement than a question.

The Yautja grunted, "Sei'til hurt. A lot."

"And here I thought that nothing could best you."

He crossed his thick arms, shaking his head with a cocky chu. "I had it until it began to snow. My healing isn't as good in the cold. The pauji had an environmental advantage."

Still, it was clear he wasn't pleased that he got his ass handed to him by an animal. Seeing him so grumpy about it made her chuckle, the light laughter soothing her melancholy.

"I am so thrilled that you find my incompetence so humorous." The alien grumbled, bumping her leg with his knee gently.

She smiled, "It's the most entertainment I've had in days. Just don't nearly die on me again next time, okay?" Some of her previous worries bled into her words as she thought of what would've happened had he died.

Dhare noticed her thoughts turn sour again and leaned his heavy bulk against her. The big alien's body immediately made her topple to the side, yelping at the sudden dead weight. She tried to push him off but to no avail. He only sat up again when he clicked his tusks together in amusement.

"You bastard! You weigh about five hundred pounds or something! Don't crush me like that!" Ashaki hissed, shoving at Dhare's beefy arm.

The Yautja chuckled. The deep rumbling noise resonated even in her chest. She couldn't stay annoyed for long, since his childish game had pushed those negative thoughts out of her mind.

"What is this? Weight training? For the next time I have to carry your ass through a blizzard? I'll pass." She added with a cowl.

Dhare rubbed at his side again as she quieted down, simply enjoying the pleasant camaraderie.

"Where are we headed next, Captain, in this expanse of black sea? To where, dost our compass point our sails?" Ashaki nudged Dhare with her elbow, looking up at his face.

He met her gaze and stated, "I would like to make a special visit to a good friend. My pup should be in training by now. From time to time, I like to visit my o spring and check in on their progress. No pup of mine shall fail their chivav"

"You have kids?"

She couldn't believe that someone would fuck him, much less have kids with him, but maybe that was just her human sensibilities and shorter lifetime talking. It was childish of her to get flustered about it, because obviously she shouldn't care. At his age, of course he had 'o spring'. He was almost seven hundred years old! What else do you get up to in seven hundred years but make a bunch of rugrats?

"Many." He clarified.

"So...how do Yautja raise their young? Do y'all have eggs? Like lizards?" It was her turn to cock her head in question.

Her companion turned her on the head lightly, "No, we do not have eggs." He watched as Ashaki began twirling the claw in her fingers, careful to avoid the tip. "It is the females who raise our sucklings. Males have little to no involvement, though there are the rare lifemates who raise their pup together. This is far less popular."

Interesting. It answered questions she didn't know she had. The fact that he was spending time to talk with her was an enigma in itself. Secretly, she found herself enjoying his company as he explained in detail about family units and crèches where females of his species communally raised Yautja babies. When he wasn't being a rude grump, he was quite enjoyable to be around.

It was just another concept that she'd have to accept.

The air on this new planet was humid. The moisture clung to her skin and hair, but she loved it. It reminded Ashaki of the jungles back on Earth, and their lush, dark canopies speckled with dozens of thick with life. Avian creatures squawked in the trees, a myriad of vibrant colors that stood out among the green.

Dhare and Ashaki made their way down a wooden path that wound its way through the jungle. Heavy boughs of vegetation hung over them, dripping and vibrant, as they leaped the ship. The dappled sunlight speckled the dark shadows. Below the platform was slow moving water; the depths of which were murky. It wasn't long before they entered a settlement with large yurt-like huts. The yurts surrounded a central communal area where a large fire burned away in a stone enclosure. A pair of Yautja added more wood. Everything was built from wood, leather, stone, and leaves. The alien village reminded her of indigenous settlements that still remained untouched on Earth.

The village was built to blend with the environment as if it had always existed as one with the jungle. It was primal and magnificent.

Other Yautja looked curiously at her as Dhare led her through the maze of yurts. To her surprise, she didn't see the same animosity she had seen when they were on the Cracked Skull's ship. Everyone they passed gave a respectful bow to Dhare, of course, but only glanced at her. Even when they eventually entered one of the largest huts, the creatures were cordial to her despite the obvious reasons to be nervous of outsiders. She had to remember they were visiting Dhare's child, so this must be...the crèche.

Once through the worn wooden door, her heart was instantly warmed. Everywhere she looked were little versions of Yautja. Some waddled around on chubby unsteady legs while some played together, wrestling or playing with a toy. A few tiny infants were being cuddled by a Yautja female while others suckled from the breast of another female. The room was large and oval shaped with warm ambient lighting, creating a calming atmosphere, with many mats, pillows, and places to sleep.

A few of the females cast suspicious glances towards Dhare and her, surprise in a few others. She ignored their stares to try and get a better look at the children at various stages of growth. Some didn't have claws or tusks while others had little nubs where these appendages were starting to sprout. Their locks were all very short. However, the little tendrils lacked the rings Ashaki had grown used to seeing on adult Yautja. They made kitten-like trills and cries. The two that wrestled were working on their roars, but unfortunately sounded really squeaky instead.

No matter their size, they were fucking adorable! Ashaki especially wanted to cuddle a fat infant that teethed on a triangular toy. Dhare had to grab her by the arm when she slowed to get a better look. He shook his head no and led a disappointed Ashaki through an archway and into an even larger room where an obstacle course was set up.

The walls of the hut were simple. A large fur pelt covered the floor. A door led to what must've been a bathroom to the far side. Against the wall directly ahead was a massive black mattress with dozens of fur pelts piled in the center, ready to be used as cover. The room was similar to the one on the ship, but more earthen and simple. Smaller. Much smaller. Seeing how the bed filled nearly the entire room, Ashaki felt a pang of annoyance.

There was very little floor space for her to sleep. It would be another uncomfortable night.

She leaned against the wall as Dhare scattered the pelts around the bed. The big green grump collapsed on the bed, spreading his limbs like a starfish. A pang of jealousy burned in her belly as she slid to the floor and rifled through her backpack for a snack. It was comfortably quiet between them as she went through the last of her trail mix, purposefully avoiding the sight of a mostly naked Dhare. He hadn't worn his usual armor, instead opting for a simple waist pouch and loincloth.

From her spot on the floor she could see his legs as they hung over the edge of the bed. It also gave her a full view of his crotch with the usual codpiece missing. His loincloth lay...fluttering...outline of what lay hidden underneath. She ignored the guttering in her stomach and kept eating.

While Dhare slept, she tried to plan the best spot to make her palette for the night, since it seemed they were staying. The bed was clearly out of the question. She had done enough close contact for life with the Yautja. His answer would obviously be no, anyways.

At the far side near the door seemed like the perfect spot since he usually seemed to favor the opposite side of his bed, the bathroom parallel to him. This way, she determined, she'd be out of his way.

With that decided, she set her backpack to the side and leaned her head against the wall. She would only rest her eyes for a few minutes.