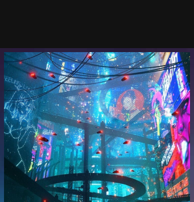

Nineteen - New Vegas

Every interaction with Dhare was awkward the next day. Whenever they got too close, a noticeable sizzle fried the air.

Dhare, therefore wisely kept his distance, but Ashaki found the avoidance frustrating. Instead of dealing with it like civilized adults and talking it over, she made sure to touch him everytime he was nearby, a brush here, a graze there. Many times she coyly apologized with a smirk on her lips as she walked away. She could almost feel his returned glare as the air heated up around them and she accepted it as a victory in her favor.

It was the small things in life, after all, that were worth celebrating.

Like...messing with Dhare.

He totally deserved it, especially after leaving her wet and wanting in the shower. He had denied his obvious arousal. His huge dick had pressed into the crack of her ass, hungry to penetrate her soft folds, and yet didn't.

What the hell was his problem? Was he still caught up in her not being a female of his species?

Surely not...

He clearly had a hard-on. She had watched him get aroused by just looking at her nude! She also knew about his mother-in-law too. She was human and boning down with a silver-fox Yautja man. Dhare seemed fine with that arrangement.

This was so annoying!

Even when he cleaned up the dead Bad Blood, Ashaki slunk around the room getting in his way for the sake of attention. She would pretend to need something from a storage bin and bend at the waist in the effort of showing her ass off. One too many times he had gotten handsy in the past. He obviously liked her round ass, so surely that would shift his focus, right?

Nope! The asshole growled and cleaned faster!
By day three, she became so irritated that she gave up entirely.

Since he wanted to ignore her so badly then she wouldn't even attempt to flirt. What was the point in flirting if he obviously would just avoid her? Two could play in that game. Disappointment burned hollow in her chest.

All he did was lead her on!

She cloistered herself in the cockpit to study the Yautja glyphs again, but she was too unfocused to run through her practice routines. Instead, she muttered and gestured at the air like she was in conversation with another person. To an outsider, she might look like a real crazy person, and she was starting to feel like it too.

Remember, she told herself, Dhare is a player. He wanted her infatuated with him, so she'd be coiled around his little finger and behave, but she wasn't going to fall for it. No! She'd rather visit a brothel than continue to be yanked around by a giant asshole of an alien. Paying for sex would satisfy her itch immediately rather than playing this temptation tug of war game with the Yautja.

After all, he could easily have sex with one of his own kind...so why not her? Why was she so different?

Besides. Besides! Besides!! Even if they did end up finally fucking. There had already been enough grief and heartache in Ashaki's life, so why should she put herself through any more? Inevitably, her heart would be broken again. She pretty much lived with the Yautja space cop now. In a breakup, there would be nowhere she could escape. Everything about this was a terrible idea.

She was drawn from her thoughts as Dhare dropped into the pilot seat, his claws flying over the controls. In the viewscreen she saw them approaching a familiar planet. It had been many years since she had seen it in advertisements back on Mars.

Back then they were finishing construction on a new space hotel, and the ads were videos of the enormous structure planet-side. At the time, the planet looked to be made of endless gray, but nearly one-hundred years later, a lot had changed. Almost the entire planet was one large multi-level metropolis of neon and metal. It was a marvel of how far humanity had come. This planet had been the first outside of the Milky Way galaxy where an actual thriving city was built and maintained. On Dhare's screen, it really looked like something!

She had never seen it in person, so she couldn't resist the urge to stare as it grew bigger and bigger. Other ships arrived and left upon their approach. Many of them were personal ships like the Star Chaser. They were small, blocky, and obviously human in design. It flooded her with sudden longing for her own space.

"Can they not see us?" Ashaki asked, sitting up in her seat to get a closer look at a large, luxurious ship that passed. It was a long, sleek white ship shaped like an arrow, the flag of a colony emblazoned on the side.

"Mo. I engaged the cloaking prior to our exit of light speed."

Dhare spared a glance at her as he piloted through the traffic of ships. He precisely angled his way around the chaos until eventually they broke through the thick white clouds on the planet itself. Night descended around them as they dropped out of orbit.

Ashaki released her restraints and ran to the viewscreen to get a better view. A soft gasp left her lips as she took in the vast, never ending city of neon and towering buildings. Flying cars whizzed this way and that through the maze of multi-story skyscrapers. They passed through an artificial rainstorm, no doubt the upper levels of the city experiencing different weather than below, where the bottom was. It seemed to go on for miles!

"Been here before?" Dhare's voice broke her from her enthusiasm, enough for her to nod in response.

"No, but I've always wanted to. It's called New Vegas. All of the advertisements say it's the Las Vegas of space, a place of debauchery and gambling."

She could still remember the fake cheery voice of the man in the commercials she heard as a kid. Seeing it in person was an experience in itself. She was itching to get out and explore.

While Dhare found a place to hide his ship, she jogged away to grab her backpack and dig out a clean outfit. If he let her loose like she wanted, she could stock up on human clothes and other necessities. A visit to a nail and hair salon was also on the list! There was so much to see and do! Running wild around New Vegas would also help her clear her mind of Dhare and his stupid games.

By the time she was ready to go and returned to the cockpit, Dhare was fully armored, typing on his gauntlet's data pad. His mask was attached to his belt, so she could see him cast a curious look her way.

"You do know there is a criminal of my kind running loose in this city, yes?" His wide shoulders dropped in a sigh.

Ashaki stared up at him with a neutral face, "Yep. I want to explore. I've always wanted to visit New Vegas and I'm not going to be told no — That criminal can eat it." She set her fists on her hips and gave her sweetest smile.

His mandibles twitched, "I have one condition." He held up his index finger to her as he walked to the adjacent wall, popping open a hidden compartment with a tap. It closed after he took something small from inside.

"I want you to wear this." He came to kneel before her, holding out a small metal bracelet for her. "You can contact me in the case of an emergency. This will ping your location. I'll come to you."

She looked at it apprehensively.

The last thing he had her wear was a tether device that had electrocuted her when she went too far.

"Is it going to hurt like the last thing you had me wear?" Her eyes narrowed slightly as she observed the small silver band.

"Mo. The tether did not actually pierce your skin. It was designed to trigger a pain response in your body to discourage removal. This is not that but instead a simple tracker."

The device was lightweight in her palm. It was slender and nothing lept out at her as suspicious in its design. She slipped it on like a bracelet and it shrunk until it fit snugly but not tight. A little blue light blinked to life on the side as she rotated her wrist.

Dhare gently took hold of it and brought his other arm next to hers. He tapped a sequence of buttons on his gauntlet until the little blue light on her device blinked twice.

"There. All done." His yellow eyes slid up to hers as he dropped her wrist, the tips of his claws tickling the sensitive flesh of her inner wrist.

They maintained eye contact until Dhare broke it by standing up and walking to the bay door. Together they left the ship, stepping onto the planet for the first time. Ashaki was immediately filled with wonder as she stared at the never-ending skyscrapers all around them. It was the neatest sight she'd ever seen. She'd never seen such a city.

"Ashaki, what will you do?" Asked Dhare as she began to walk away.

Multiple responses flitted by in her mind; a few snarky, another was about his proclivity for fast, anonymous sex, but the final one was the best option.

The safest option.

"Fulfill a lifelong dream."

And with that, she set off on a well-lit path towards the neon.

...

Dhare crouched atop a ledge, surveying a potential lead with his infrared vision. A slight breeze blew his locs to the side, but his thermal netting compensated for the cool temperature. Light rain misted his visor but not enough to short circuit his system.

He had squatted here for some time after ensuring Ashaki had safely gotten to a crowded sidewalk. Then he stalked his way a few blocks down to where his prey had last been seen. Up from his vantage point, he watched as humans loaded containers inside a tower. None of them were aware of his presence. They all were armed, weapons strapped to their bodies. They took up guard postings in front of the doors. Any one of them could be claimed as a trophy if he was interested.

It was too bad he was working.

The less aware his quarry was of his presence, the easier it would be to bring him in.

He clenched his hands, quelling the instinct to pick these men off. Upon filtering through various spectra, he had found several of the humans sporting body modifications that enhanced them artificially. According to what had been stored in the clan database, humans had invented this technology to give them extra strength and agility. The humans who had them were nearly capable of going toe to toe with a Yautja in hand-to-hand combat.

This excited him; filled his veins with the lust for the hunt. Sitting here, merely observing and watching for a sign of Yautja, made it harder to suppress his instincts. However, at seven-hundred and forty-two, he could subdue such inclinations.

He sighed heavily, dragging his claws along the metal ledge he crouched on.

At least the view was nice. Around him was an endless sea of human innovation.

Paya, they had come so far in a short amount of time.

As a pup, humans hadn't yet invented space-faring vehicles. Back then, they were still planet bound, their personal transports couldn't leave orbit. They could only travel in their own atmosphere with things they called planes or helicopters. When he triumphed in his Chiva, the human race had finally set their kind on the surface of the planet they called Mars; the place where Ashaki had been born just a couple of hundred years later. It was impressive that their technology had rapidly advanced far beyond what he had thought it would.

At least they were mostly peaceful now. Their disagreements and squabbles kept to certain groups and planets. That was an appropriate step for intelligent lifeforms.

Dhare, for example, was a natural peacemaker, one of his Council jobs being a mediator between arguing mates and land disputes on Yautja Prime. He had been his sire's negotiator when it came to establishing treaties with newly allied clans, but he also maintained the old ones. The still lukewarm friendliness they kept with the Desert Clan on Saqqar was an easy example. That clan was nothing but a bunch of honorless swine in his eyes, but their resources were too precious to lose.

Movement in the corner of his eye caught his attention. He sent a mental query to magnify the disturbance.

The thermal mode was replaced with a X-ray vision; the skeletons of four humans surrounding a fifth on the ground came into a clearer view. This was on the highest level of the tower to his immediate side. He watched as the four skeletons attacked the prone one, all of them armed with pistols. Seeing the weapons got his thwei churning.

A quick glance back at the humans he had been watching showed nothing new. He had to make a decision on whether to save this human or not.

As he weighed the pros and cons, a sixth body entered the foray at his new point of focus. The seven and a half foot tall skeleton had four pincers of the mouth. Claws tipped its long fingers. It was either the worst timing or the best.

A Yautja.

And...according to his scans...this was his prey.

This tower was shorter and very close to the one he stood on, so he easily vaulted onto it where he landed with a quiet, catlike grace. He kept his weight forward to propel his momentum as he stealthily crossed the roof. Right above his prey was a glass skylight that was easily half the size of the room beneath. Varying colors of neon reflected across the glossy floor, the color scattering across dark furniture that lay hidden in shadow.

Dhare changed his field of vision to his thermal vision and searched for hidden contenders who could possibly be lying in wait. He wouldn't walk into an ambush.

He wondered what one of his kind was doing dealing with humans. Relations between Yautja and humans was hostile, and for good reason. Maybe the ic'jit was selling Yautja technology off to mercenaries. It had happened before and it would happen again. There were always those who forgot the lessons of the gods in favor of their own personal gain, thus betraying their own species and clan in the process. Five more minutes passed before Dhare was satisfied and chose a starting point for the breach.

The Arbitrator stood tall and lept, the weight of his body smashing the skylight into a thousand pieces. Glass rained down around him, a glittering shower that promised pain rather than relief.

He landed light on his feet and bullets began to fly as the humans shouted in surprise. Maintaining his cloak, Dhare impaled the first human, a male, on his wristblades as he extended them into their fleshy middle. Their scream was cut off in a gargle as he yanked the blades free, twisting around to use the fresh corpse as a shield. He spun on his heels to shoot a net at a human who ran to join another trying to escape through the frenzy.

The male screamed in agony as the netting tightened, restricting more and more until his body was sliced into cubed meat. Blood dripped freely and splattered as bodies hit the floor around Dhare. He dropped his cloaking; it was pointless when he was covered in blood.

Another male yelled a battle cry and wasted his entire magazine into Dhare's chest armor, throwing the emptied weapon at him before turning to run. Dhare dispatched of the third human gutting him with his wristblades. The body dropped to the floor, falling into the growing pool of blood beneath Dhare's feet. The final human was running toward his intended prey, the Yautja.

Throughout all of this, the Yautja had stood watching him fight his way through the humans and had done nothing. Dhare hissed at such a display of cowardice. To stand by while an unknown assailant had attacked and watch as his connections were slaughtered...what a disgrace!

Said prey caught the human as he slipped and fell to his knees in a slick of blood. He hauled the man to his feet, keeping a tight grip around the back of his neck, like a newborn kitten.

"P-please! Mercy! Mercy!" Cried the human, his trembling hands trying to pry the massive paw that held him hostage. He kicked and wiggled, his face covered in blood splatter and tears.

Dhare felt nothing for the human's plight. It only was inconvenient that this one wouldn't be a nice trophy for his wall...

While half cast in shadow, he took in his bounty from head to toe. He wore dull-gray armor that only covered one shoulder and thigh, as if he had lost the rest. The male's locs fell to brush against his shoulders. Despite his lean build, he could still be a worthy opponent in combat.

Rain fell through the open skylight behind him, the weather having worsened during the fight. Its patter couldn't drown out the human's whimpers. Dhare growled at the ic'jit holding the squirming man, and his prey had the conceit of chuffing back, inflating his chest like the superior contender.

"Ic'jit.." he addressed his prey.

"Arbitrator..."

"You are hereby ordered to come peacefully with me to Yautja Prime where you will be punished for your crimes. If you do not comply, then I will be forced to make you submit or die," Dhare growled, flinging his blades free of human viscera.

"Never. I would rather hunt with the gods than return with you," spat the ic'jit.

The human stopped his pathetic babbling as they talked, and fell limp, whimpering instead. He was forever silenced when the ic'jit crushed his neck without any effort. A sickening crunch filled the air, and his lifeless corpse was tossed aside to rest with his former companions, or whoever they were; Dhare didn't care.

Dhare's bio-mask scanners were picking up tidbits of information hacked from the ic'jit's wrist-computer that confirmed he was indeed selling Yautja technology to the highest bidder. These men had been his buyers. There was a whole network he would have to clean out to prevent the plans leaving the planet.

In the corner, trembling and afraid, crouched a naked female, sobbing softly. He could see her in his peripherals as he edged closer to his prey.

Dhare chuffed, turning his attention to his prey, "Considering the new evidence, your crime has been elevated to the degree of a death sentence."

"How are we to hunt oomans when their technology is laughable compared to ours? What kind of challenge is in that?"

It seemed honor mattered little to some.

"What you speak of is dishonor! Disgrace!" He hissed as he launched forward, swinging a meaty fist into his prey's jaw. His mask, formed after a fanged beast, fell to the floor with a clang. "You know that our technology will be used wrongly should it get in the hands of humans!"

Dhare evaded a retaliatory swipe at his chest and slid to the side to slice his blades through the exposed yellow flesh of his opponent's chest. A roar left the maw of the ic'jit and their fight evolved into claws swiping through skin and fists meeting muscle. They danced around the room.

Hisses and growls filled the space as Dhare and the ic'jit collided in a fight for dominance. He and his opponent were almost evenly matched, but it was Dhare who got the upper hand.

Catching his opponent by the arm, he snapped it at the elbow and kicked the yellow Bad Blood into a cooling puddle of crimson, fallen glass crunching beneath his body weight. Dhare treaded over the body fluids and debris, kicking aside a ravaged corpse in the way. He withdrew his combi-stick, extending it so the barbed tips popped open.

The ic'jit coughed, glowing green blood spurting from his mouth. "You have to bring me in alive!"

Dhare chuckled darkly and shook his head.
"Negative. I have the power to decide your fate based upon new evidence of selling our technology to the highest bidder."

"Lies! Deceit! You are a zabin!"

A wall shaking roar bellowed from Dhare's maw. The slander that spewed from the ic'jit's tongue snapped his resolve to drag out the fight. The smell of his prey's blood filtered through his bio-mask's filtration. A shudder of utter disgust rippled through his shoulders and down his spine.

"You are devoid of thar'n-da s'yin'tekai. Greet our gods in dhi'ki-de, ic'jit" Dhare spat.

The ic'jit closed his eyes in defeat, bloodied hands falling from his wounds.

With a final growl, Dhare drove the spear-tip through the forehead of his prey. The final death rattle was proof that it was done; the execution. Neon green blood spilled free as he yanked his spear out of the corpse, condensing the combi-stick to its small size and pocketing it. It was the small whimper of the sole survivor of the room that broke him from his reveling in victory.

Slowly, he spun on his heels and approached the shivering female in the corner. He couldn't make out her features due to the shadows cast over her but he could hear the rapid beating of her heart. Fear soured her floral scent that lay buried beneath the heavy reek of thwei.

Instinct kicked in and he purred, bringing up his hands in a placating manner, to show he meant no harm to her.

Using recordings he told her, "You are safe now. I will not harm you." He pulled a small device from the pants of a corpse, a mobile communication device—a cellphone. He offered it to her. "Call the authorities for help."

She gave no response, but snatched the device from his outstretched hand. Then she curled in on herself. He could see now that she was almost naked except for a silk, transparent robe wrapped tightly.

Seeing that she was calling for help, he got busy destroying evidence of the dead Yautja with blue acid. The liquid melted the corpse and burned away the glowing blood. He took the skull of the human who had charged him and quickly left the scene, jumping back through the roof. Engaging his cloak, he crouched to observe a projected map in his visor.

A course was set and into the sea of neon he lept.

...

Ashaki relaxed further into the cushy chair, letting the smell of mint fill her senses. The gentle fingers massaging her head threatened to lull her to sleep. Behind her she could hear one of the washing stations churning to life and bursting with the scent of vanilla.

The salon was small and clean, nestled snugly in a brightly lit fashion district she had found after stocking up on necessary supplies and clothes. Along the painted walls, ultraviolet lights shined down on framed UV reactive art of cocktail drinks, nail polish and makeup brushes. A floor to ceiling shelf lined the back wall, stocked full of hair and skin products and in the front, large picture windows showed passersby on the sidewalk outside what they could be enjoying. The multiple bags from Ashaki's shopping spree lay gathered by her feet.

It was so very pink inside, the lights, the floor, and the furniture, even the very seat she sat in was a worn, cracked pink leather that she could sink in—and sink in she did. There were women of various races either at work or being worked on by a pink-aproned stylist.

Her hairstylist, a slender black woman with wavy hair named Jeroné, worked a leave-in conditioner into her freshly washed hair. Skillfully, her fingers maneuvered through her tight curls. She briefly pulled her hands away, wiping them on a towel before running a paddle brush through the tangles.

It was wonderful to interact with her own species again, especially fellow women that she could relate to...and confide in.

"Okay, so he's tall, he's muscular, and attractive. Why don't you just give in?" Another stylist asked, pausing as she braided another customer's hair into box-braids. She could see their reflection in the mirror.

"Well...he's being difficult." Ashaki said, "He can have sex with random people just fine, but when it comes to me? It's suddenly a problem!" She scoffed, crossing her arms with a pout.

The tall Asian woman, Kalanda, gelling baby-hairs into swirls on a curvy woman piped up, "Maybe he's afraid of commitment. My ex-boyfriend Kris had a real problem with that! He kept playin' and now look at him! He's posting images of him with a new girl every night." She shook her head with pursed, sour lips.

"It could be..." Ashaki muttered, her heart squeezing in her chest. "When we're alone, together, it feels like neither of us can get close enough. He makes me feel so sexy and wanted, but then he pulls away...it hurts."

The women in the salon collectively nodded, but Jeroné said something that made Ashaki pause.

Her charcoal eyes met Ashaki's in the mirror with a smirk, "It sounds like you're in love."

Was she in love? It couldn't be love...

The longer she thought about it, the more it made sense. She craved Dhare's presence even now. His absence was noticeable, too noticeable. She tried to chalk it up to him being the main source of contact with another person, but that other part that she kept sheltered said otherwise. Only a few hours had passed and already she missed him. The Yautja was constantly on her mind.

Kalanda seemed to see the warring emotions on her face, "Honey, just tell him how you feel next time you see him. Confide in him that you wish to be intimate with him and that you'd like to..." she waved her hand towards Ashaki, urging her to complete the sentence.

"...to get closer with him? That I might be falling in love with him...or that I might already be in love with him?" She sat straighter in the chair as Jeroné began to braid her hair.

"Exactly! If he's not going to commit and lead you on some more...he's not worth the effort," explained Jeroné, her pink-lipped smile wide on her face.

"I mean..." Ashaki began, "He's a Bounty Hunter...a bit of a bad boy...but he takes my breath away when we touch..."

"You're so in love and you don't even know it! This is like...one of those romance novels!" exclaimed the woman getting her edges gelled, "Ahhh! It's so cute!"

The women giggled amongst themselves while Ashaki's face heated up, already working on a denial.

There was no way! They were friends and that was it! It would be too soon for love! Right?!

"So...what's this hunk's name?" Kalanda asked, her playful smile reflecting in the mirror that Ashaki stared into.

"Dhare."

"Ooo, a foreign name!" Purred the curvy woman, her honey eyes glittering in the lights of her stylist's mirror.

Ashaki snorted. Yeah, he was foreign alright! He was a god damn alien! A hunk of an alien with a nice ass and rocking body... ugh!

"He's got the finest ass I've ever seen on a man!" Ashaki remembered how muscled and tight Dhare's derriere was.

She could at least finally admit that she found him attractive. Out loud.

It felt good to finally say it.

A while later after she paid and wandered back out into the rainy city, huddled under her new umbrella to stay dry in the downpour, she headed to a hotel for the night. Ashaki paid for the best suite, at the top of the tower. She still had a lot of money in her bank account from when Weyland-Yutani paid her off, so the Hotel's cost was of little importance.

The room was large and spacious, with tall ceilings and a floor to ceiling view of the city on all sides thanks to the elevator being in the middle. There was a decked out chef's kitchen, a luxurious living space with plush couches, and outside on the massive balcony was a pool and lounge area. Rain continued to pour, dashing against the glass, so she stayed indoors and watched the city through the streaming windows. When she padded into the bedroom she noticed the bed was big enough for four people, easily, and the huge ensuite with a bathing pool and fancy shower could support that number of guests too.

In the bedroom, she finally set her bags down and unpacked everything onto the gray duvet.

Ashaki sorted the bags of clothing, a pile of colorful bras, panties, socks, shirts, pants, and a few shoes. Everything was bought for a variety of weather conditions and occasions since they seemed to visit any kind of planet for any kind of reason. A few items were intimate pieces that she hoped to seduce Dhare with; light lacy things and mesh teddies that left nothing to the imagination.

She made sure to get multiples of hair products, too, those were super important to snagging her an alien boyfriend; Dhare. Her hair would get matted and dried out if she didn't properly comb and condition it right, anyways. There was no way she'd be caught with such hair again, especially when she was trying to fuck her travel companion...the Yautja. These items hadn't been important before, but she was feeling the need to gussy up her appearance. Those items were stuffed into a duffel bag while her new clothes were neatly folded in a suitcase.

At last she changed into a cute pajama top and mini-shorts, heading to the kitchen that was apparently fully stocked.

With a full stomach and warm cup of tea, Ashaki left the balcony doors slightly ajar on the way to bed. She figured it would be an obvious invitation to Dhare if he decided to visit and needed a place to crash.

It would be the first time in a while that she would sleep alone.

Ashaki nestled under the covers and stared at the neon city outside, watching hover-cars fly by. The sound of the downpour outside was soothing. She could handle the slight humidity. It even smelled good. It was Dhare who haunted her, those golden eyes burned into her heart and mind, his soft purr echoing in her memories. She hoped wherever he was that he was safe.

Losing herself to sleep, her last thought was Dhare. She had fallen in love with him. Dhare, of all aliens.

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A/N: Sorry for the late update, y'all! I haven't had a stable internet connection to finish up the chapter. As always, thanks for the support and I hope ya like it!

Dictionary:

Thar'n-da s'yin'tekai - Strength & Honor
Dhi'ki-de - Death
Ic'jit - Bad Blood
Thwei - Blood
Zabin - Insect

Continue reading next part