

# **Three - Prey**

## Three times.

Three times Ashaki had looked back to check that she was still being pursued.

The massive creature made no sound in its pursuit. As its feet hit the ground, it was somehow light-footed which was contradictory to what she saw, a huge alien barreling down on her through the undergrowth. Mighty tiger-like snarls reached her ears, piercing the otherwise silent forest. She sped up on a shot of fear, because what was worse than seeing the beast behind her was seeing the even biggerone in pursuit of them both

Whatever their species were, they were jacked to hell. From the glimpses of their bare torsos and thighs, their bodies consisted of muscle and muscle alone. There was no way she'd survive once her energy ran out. Already, a not too pleasant burn had traveled through her legs. Even with adrenaline pulsing through her veins, she could feel her body deplete its last reserves.

How could such a big ass creature be so fast and quiet?! How?! Ashaki couldn't comprehend it!

Any hope of making it to her ship was non-existent. The fucking Bob Marley alien would outrun her quickly, and when it caught up, its wicked claws would shred her to pieces before she could properly defend herself. It just wasn't possible to beat something like that.

There had to be a way to beat it since she couldn't outrun it for long. She had survived LV-318...somehow, so there had to be a way to survive this, too. While she wove her way through the dark forest, she remembered the lay of the land.

Not too far to her le would be a river that eventually connected to the spot where she had sketched a few hours ago. She discarded the idea of running there with a quick shake of her head. The distance was too far and endurance wasn't on her side.

Straight ahead the flat ground turned into a steep slope. She thought about dropping into a tuck and roll, like a fire drill, down the steep hill. The initial roll would definitely hurt but she was hopeful it would be a smooth tumble, free of sticks and stones. There were more choices. Options to the right; mountains, denser forests, lakes too, but none of them were any better than what was before her, this shitty tumble. Doing this would sure as fuck leave her battered but in this moment getting a little bruised was better than a seven foot brick house running her down and slicing her up.

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### This was her shot.

Her only shot.

Taking a few long seconds she pushed herself to go a little longer and a little harder. Her leg muscles screamed. It had to work. There wasn't another choice.

Ashaki dove forward, tucking her head into her arms as she brought her body to a roll down the slope. The impact of hitting the ground was rough and jarred her nerves, but the plunge was exactly as she had calculated; the slope was steep enough to keep the momentum going steadily. She heard the tiger-like roar of the pursuing creature, but more distant now.

She reached the bottom quicker than she would've thought. Willing her body to keep going she shakily rose to her legs, forcing her

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muscles to move. From behind, a force struck her back down.

"No!" A frustrated yell burst from Ashaki as a heavy weight settled on top of her. The heat of the large creature pressing her into the dirt sent shivers down her spine.

As she struggled, huge hands rolled her onto her back so she could stare up at the creature fearfully. The green one was nowhere to be seen as the claws of the tan alien raked across the ground by her head. The weight of it was like a stone on her spine. Her nose twitched, it reeked of carrion.

"Please! Please let me go!" She pleaded as it wrapped a giant hand around her thigh and leaned in towards her, a rapid clicking coming from its mask. Its black dreadlocks hung around her face as it inspected her.

The alien's claws dug painfully into the meat of her thigh. She hissed in pain as the claws dragged downwards towards her knee. A cry of pain escaped her lips as it took its other hand and raked its claws down her arm, creating deep trails of blood.

That was the catalyst to get her fighting against the massive alien. She began to struggle, clawing at the dirt and kicking the forest floor. Despite the pain, she flailed at whatever part of the beast she could reach with her feet and her fists, swinging at the metal mask it wore.

Immediately she hissed with regret when her knuckles cracked with a sharp pain. The hard metal mask was tougher than she had thought!

Her attacker roared in her face, making her scream back in horror. The beast prepared its final strike. It coiled its fist above her and with those muscles attached, she knew it would kill her, but right before it smashed her face into a pulp it was thrown o . A spurt of incandescent green fluid sprayed in her face as the massive creature grunted on last time. She scrambled away from it's sudden corpse.

Her chest rose and fell rapidly, matching her shock at seeing the bigger alien with dual serrated blades buried in her attacker's thick neck. She was able to take in the fact that it looked distinctly male, both of them, now that she got a clearer view. His body was massive, bulky, solid even — everything about him was scary. This one could easily kill her just as he had done his opponent. He was sawing the other's head clean o . She heaved for breath.

Her flight response kicked in and Ashaki tried to run as the alien wrapped the decapitated head in a net bag and attached it to his hip. Her leg wound had her moving very slowly, but instinct forced the retreat. Her leg bowed under her weakly while her arm was limp. She keened miserably even as she attempted to stand.

The beast spun on his heel, his chest-length locs flying in a curve with the speed. A woodpecker-like clicking came from the beast in a quick successive staccato as he towered above her. His angular metal mask angled down at her as he gracefully knelt before her.

His movement was like that of a dancer. Honed to perfection. Each flex of his musculature was with purpose, steel wrapped in a rough velvet. His greenish skin was dark in the shadows but bright in the dappled moonlight. The mask flashed. Her frightened eyes landed on his large biceps and widened. It would take two of her hands to touch fingertips around one. On the tips of each of his fingers was a sharp black claw that could easily pierce flesh. Dark brown gloves highlighted his dark flesh — they reminded her of biker gloves from earth, so malleable leather but fingerless, holes at the knuckle. Strange to see this style here, so far from the planet.

"P-please...I'll pretend I didn't see anything! Please understand me..." she pleaded, her voice cracking when the alien pulled a bracelet-like device from his waist belt.

It was big and a gunmetal gray. She tried to pull away but the alien was quicker. His giant hand caught her arm and snapped the band above her wrist. Properly trapped, the band blinked to a constant red before it stretched oddly into a cord. The red band of light looked like a tether, one end connected to the band on her arm and the other attached to a leash he held in his hand.

"Come with me. Or. Die here!"

The alien spoke to her using...recordings?...of other people talking to her. The words had come from his mask it seemed; each was clipped and said with di erent tones as if they were voice clippings in an AI program. It was utterly bizarre...and it made her realize that he could understand her.

"Fuck you! I don't have to do shit with you, asshole!" Ashaki spat as the alien brought her to her feet with a mighty paw around her upper arm. She yelped in pain as her torn up skin on her thigh was moved against her will. She nearly collapsed under the pain but the alien threw her over his shoulder unceremoniously without a grunt or groan.

"Ki'cte" The beast growled as she felt a sharp pain in her shoulder before everything turned to black.

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Dhare made it back to his ship in record time. His first order of business was to gently set the unconscious human in a stasis pod along the wall in the cockpit. Then, he stowed the Bad Blood's head in a storage box to be cleaned later before finally heading to the pilot seat for takeo. The plush seat beneath him was preheated and shaped for superior support for long restless journeys. His fingers flew across the projected keyboard as he initiated the thrusters.

It was time he got underway so he could figure out what to do with the human captive.

An a irming glance assured him she was still down for the count. Knots formed in his stomach as the low rumble of the engines surrounded him, the ship rising above the treeline outside. He set a course for the human's ship.

One shot of blue plasma made it nothing but a melting pile of metal where it had once stood. The smoke from its liquidating corpse lo ed into the atmosphere. This action might come back to haunt him, this decision making waves into the future, but he would deal with them when the time came. For now, he le the planet at last and jumped into hyperspace towards his next destination. While the ship traveled, he moved the human from the pod to the nesting chamber where he attached the cu to the wall, resting her body on the fur-adorned nest.

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While she slept, Dhare removed his awu'asa carefully returning each piece to his place in the wall before taking a much needed cleansing in the shower. He was grateful for a successful hunt, his superiority once again proven. He cleaned the filth and grime his body had accumulated while on Dto'erra until he was squeaky clean and ready for a much needed nap.

He stopped at the end of the nest, body still wet and dripping, little rivulets falling to the fur rug beneath his bare feet as he watched the human sleep.

A pang of regret ached in his chest.

He'd had to knock her unconscious with a well placed touch on a pressure point on her collarbone. There had been no other choice. She would've fought him the entire way back and he would've had to put up with that devilish tongue of hers.

Seeing her here now, before him, the weight of it hit like a well placed fist to the solar plexus. She looked so small on his massive nest. Her dark skin blended into the earthy tones of furs underneath her like an Earthen fawn in the shadows of a tree.

She smelled the same from years ago. That sage-like scent filled his scent receptors and le him breathless.

His golden eyes swept over her curled form taking her in as he circled the nest. She had a so profile with high cheekbones, arched eyebrows, a broad nose, plump pink lips, and a delicate pointed chin. Her cloud-like hair, a mass of tight twisted curls, framed her head. The sight of her wounded angered him, three diagonal slices through her thin shirt and flesh placed on her upper arm and the meaty part of her thigh.

He retrieved a bowl, a jug of water, and healing ointment before kneeling before her on the bed. He carefully stripped the bloodstained fabric around her wounds using his hands. With them exposed to the air, he washed, dried, and sealed each deep scratch into a slight raised scar.

He kept touching to a professional minimum, even though he ached to feel her skin again. He longed to ghost his claws over her so body and see how it reacted to his touch. Would the skin hairs pebble under his fingertips?

He would be a fool if he thought she wouldn't react poorly. A er all, she had been kidnapped by him. She was his prey, his to do with as he so pleased. She was powerless in this situation. There was no way she would react without fear or violence upon seeing him and seeing she was his prisoner.

Now that he had her with him...he had no idea what to do with her.

Killing her just wasn't an option. He simply wouldn't entertain it. Once again he found himself wondering just why had he saved her to begin with?

Was it that she truly was a test put forth by the goddess Kayana? Here to prove his patience and mental fortitude? For once he wished he knew the plans of the gods.

Dhare was significantly less religious than some Yautja, but he still wondered.

What forces were at play? What games were the gods playing with his

personal life? Truly he would never know. Personal destiny was always vague. The ball of life would keep rolling on past the time for his departure from this world to the next.

Keeping his hands to himself with great restraint, Dhare washed the bowl, tossed the bloody rags in the incinerator and set about making a makeshi nest nearby. His own was on a slightly raised platform covered in a mountain of di erent furs from beasts he had hunted. He gathered the thickest and warmest ones to line the nest for the human before topping it o with varying furs of thickness.

As he moved her from his nest to her own, he wondered if she liked to snuggle beneath furs like a burrowing animal or whether she slept with them haphazardly underneath her like he did. For now, he put it out of his mind as he made sure she was still asleep and that her lead was properly attached to the hook on the wall. It was for a makeshi purpose. The hook was normally for hanging extra furs or drying clothes. He didn't ordinarily tie up prey in his bedroom.

He clicked at himself, rethinking the tether. Not like there was anywhere to run. She was trapped on the spaceship, surrounded by cold empty airless vacuum. He would see how she behaved when she was conscious.

He removed the pack strapped to her back and dumped the contents onto the nest. Inside were a myriad of human items that he recognized, among them a notebook, pen, ration packs, a container with water still in it, tiny white pills, and a small pocket blade that he was notgoing to return. The blade retracted back into a metal housing and was made for cutting — it would do no damage to him given how small it was, but it may be e ective for other purposes if she knew how to use it. It was tiny in his own hand but he still didn't trust her with it.

She may try violence.

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The next day he would contact his step-bearer on advice with human females. He truly knew so little. If he was to keep her, he needed to both feed and care for her well-being. She wasn't an animal but a sentient being, and he had to respect that despite the specific purpose she was now in his custody.

Dhare scratched at an itch on his neck as he dumped her items back into the bag and set it beside her, keeping the knife on his person. The steady rhythm of her heart told him she was still asleep so he finally heaved a relieving sigh and laid down in his nest.

He spread on his back, limbs out, and sunk into sleep his body required a er such a lengthy hunt.

A/N: Let me know what you think of the chapter! 🗑

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