The nightmares have gotten bad. They've gotten… worse than she can handle, sometimes. At the start, Pixie had hidden in domains, behind the veil of other fears, but now? It just makes her sick, nausea flooding her until she leaves. For the past month, she's had no choice but to sleep in her bed, or sometimes the archive, and deal with it. She's sure The Archivist has noticed, by now. The way she zones out at certain statements, the way her hands shake as she files them. But she doesn't mention it, and neither does Pixie. She's certainly not going to risk losing the only thing that makes this bearable, the knowledge that she isn't alone.

Last night was… different. It wasn't the foreign body and mind experiencing unspeakable horrors that she's used to. It was… her? Her, in her old job. Sat in a meeting, half asleep from boredom as she took the minutes. She doesn't even process what Miranda and Marcus are arguing about at this point, just absentmindedly noting things down as topics change.

And then they mention something about the star, and she zones back in. They rarely mention it around her, anymore, speaking in hushed tones that she can't quite make out. They're arguing about how they'll convince… someone? Something? They don't say a name, just "it". They're talking about the change, about making society "better", "fixed". About… god. About killing over a billion people.

She doesn't even realise what she's done when she gasps, a hand slapping over their mouth. Both their heads move at once, eyes landing on her. She suddenly feels… so much dread. Like prey. Like a target.

It's not easy for those devoted to the extinction to feed, she knows that now. She knows that all too well. So when they start telling her their plans in detail, drinking in the way her fear eats at her, the way her heart races, she knows why. They tell her about the star, about the way it creates duplicates, and what they plan to use it for.

Duplicates of themselves. Thousands, millions, overtaking the earth, making it… "better", they say. As if they're the perfect examples of human. As if they have anything human left in them.

They tell her about their plan to use the Hephaestus crew for this. The last trial, they hope. Douglas Eiffel has made surprisingly good progress, they're closer than ever. They just need to… wait. And they'll travel up to the station that orbits the star, do to them what they've done to her for years. What do they mean by that? She opens her mouth to ask, but Dr Pryce hushes her, a smirk playing on her lips.

They tell her about the new world, about their plan for it. It all sounds… terrifying. Variants of themselves ruling the world, ruling over AI and other technology, leaving some "lesser" people behind, restraining bolts coming in handy to keep them in line. That technology… why does she know it? Why does the back of her neck hurt?

Why can she see the future they had planned? Envision it the same way they did? She can see exactly what they had designed. She knows the pain, the devastation they were going to cause. Before they-

She doesn't know the fate they'll face, yet. She doesn't know that she'll watch them fall into the star. She doesn't know the way she'll lie her way onto the escape ship, claiming to be as much of a victim as the crew was. Maybe she was. She doesn't know.

She's lost in thought when the hand closes around the back of her collar. Was Mr Cutter always this strong? He yanks her out of her seat, and her eyes land down on her notebook. The scribbled notes she took as they spoke, as if she couldn't stop herself from making a record. Dr Pryce takes it, head tilted as she reads them over. Her eyes land on Cutter, and he sighs, head shaking.

"I /told/ you. And you thought no, she's one of us. Didn't you? But I told you."

Pryce rolls her eyes, throwing it back on the table.

"Yes, yes. But she's still far from that point. It's a whisper in the back of her head. Speaking of…"

She gestures to the door.

"Get moving, Marcus. She's still in shock, she'll start fighting soon."

Pixie glances between them. Her eyes are wet, her hands are shaking. She reaches up, trying to pull at Cutter's hand.

"No- please. Please. Let me- I won't tell anyone. I swear. Please-"

Her words come out jumbled, panicked. She can't stop thinking, piecing things together. She knew they had plans, global plans. But this- this is beyond that. This is beyond anything she had been prepared to accept. To /work for/. Cutter sighs, shaking his head.

"You have /no/ idea how good that felt. Come along now."

He's pulling her to the door. As he opens it, his grip on her collar relaxes to a stern hand on the back of her neck, pointer finger resting on that scar she's never quite been able to place. It's a reminder, that should she run, he'll only make this worse. So her hands drop to her side, she swallows the tears, and walks.

He leads her to the elevator, and Dr Pryce swipes her keycard. Pixie knows what that means, where she's being taken. The heavy weight of fear in her stomach only grows.

"Dr Pryce- you know I'm good at secrets. Always have been. You know I- am I in trouble? You know I wouldn't say a word to anyone-"

“Oh, I know, Dr Nash. All too well. But this isn’t about that. No… you’d want in. And we can’t have that kind of meddling.”

Pixie breathes in sharply, eyes wide. She would. Of course she would. She can’t help it. She opens her mouth to speak again, but Cutter’s grip tightens once more, and she quiets.

The elevator doors open to Pryce’s lab. She’s led to the heavy metal chair, the one she’s been working on fixing for weeks. She knows what it’s for. She knows that it’s helped them control many an unruly crew. But she doesn’t know… how.

Or she did. And she forgot. Was made to forget. She’s shoved down, and the pain in the back of her neck is sharp, instant. She screams, and Mr Cutter puts a hand on her shoulder to hold her in place. Dr Pryce turns to a screen, typing quickly, too fast. Her mind becomes foggy, becomes distant. And then… it’s gone. It’s gone, and she’s sat there, blinking up at the two of them. Cutter smiles, that award-winning one he does at his meetings.

“Pixie. You got quite dizzy while working. Do you feel better now?”

She doesn’t remember this. Wasn’t she… upstairs? Somewhere? She can’t place the thought. So she just nods, glancing around.

“Much better… thank you, Mr Cutter.”

“You’re /very/ welcome. Now, I’ll leave you two to it.”

He grins at Miranda, who just rolls her eyes and walks away to her desk. Pixie blinks again, and she’s…

Back in her bathroom? The flat in London? Her hand slides to the back of her neck, feeling that scar. She blinks once more, looks up to the mirror, and /screams/.