

"Oslo, do you copy?"

"Yeah I hear you. Gimme a sec." Oslo hoisted his gun a little higher as he pressed on, the dragon trying and failing to suppress the uneasiness bubbling in his gut. This was supposed to be just a routine rescue - SOS call from an interplanetary hauler, something something reactor issues. Get everyone to safety, assess the ship, get paid. Easy money usually, but for whatever reason something about this was making him more wary than usual. Maybe it was the fact that they hadn't found a reason for the reactor to fail - fusion cores were famously stable, and issues like this were rare at the best of times, let alone without cause.

"What's the status on the reaction chamber?" He knew command would tell him to back off, he just wanted to buy some time to investigate nearby.

"No go, cells are ruptured. You go in there and death will be the mercy at the end of 2 weeks of radiation sickness."

"Copy." Oslo peeked round the corner, checking his suit readout as he did. There was a Geiger counter on his HUD slowly ticking away, measuring out his life in ominous clicks, slowly rising in tempo as he got closer to the reactor. He was on a balcony overlooking the cells, too far for the radiation to reach through the lead shielding but still closer than he would have liked. He didn't know what it was that was driving him here, somehow he just knew that there was something, something that was where it wasn't supposed to be.

CRASH

Oslo yelled as that something slammed into his back, toppling them both over the railing. For a brief few seconds he saw a whirl of grey metal as he fell, then a bone-shaking crunch as he hit the floor with enough force to break his arm.

"Gahhhh!" He yelled in pain, distinctly aware of the loud cascade of clicks from his HUD. Wincing he grabbed his rifle and engaged his jetpack, his first priority to get away from the fuel cells, and only when he was back on the balcony did he realise there was no sign of whatever hit him. The marks were all over his suit, claw marks and scratches here and there, but whatever it was had just gone. With one arm dangling uselessly at his side and the pain really starting to fire up, he checked his comms.

"Command? Do you read? It's Oslo, status injured, contact with hostile in the reactor room. Whatever it was it's gone now, don't know where. Gonna need a pickup."

"Copy Oslo, got an evac your way. You need medical?"

"Yeah, broken arm, big dose of radiation. Tell em to bring the good stuff."

"Always do. Sit tight."

It took more time than he would like for the team to arrive, made worse by the fact that he couldn't even see his teammates due to the radiation risk - the medics that arrived were wearing head to toe lead suits, although when they checked him they quickly realised the

level of radiation was far lower than expected. Nevertheless the last thing Oslo remembered was them giving him an injection to knock him out.

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"Should be right about now."

Oslo winced as the doctor's voice pierced through the haze of unconsciousness, dragging him back into reality and reminding him of what he'd been through. He was lying in a hospital bed, various machines hooked up and beeping all around him, but surprisingly he didn't feel too bad. He went to move his broken arm and it felt as good as new.

"You'll want to take it slow with that. Nanites might have fixed the bone but it'll still be fragile for a few weeks." The doctor was a slightly portly pigeon, sporting striking black and white feathers underneath the doctor's coat he was wearing. "That's the straightforward part."

Another wince as Oslo sat up, disconnecting a few of the machines as he did so. "And what about the radiation? That kind of dosage I should be puking up blood at the very least."

"Yeah, about that. By the time we got you here it was all but gone, something else had gotten to it first."

"Something...else?"

In lieu of responding the doctor tapped one of the monitors, directing his attention to it. It looked like a scan of his body, the bones dark shadows under the lighter veins and nerves, but there was something off. Looking closer it almost looked like something was superimposed over his body, something *alive*.

"The hell is that?"

"That, my friend, is the reason you're alive right now. As far as we can tell it's some sort of symbiote, and it feeds on substances that we would consider toxins, radiation being one of them." The doctor noticed Oslo's concerned expression. "Ah, yes, I can see this is uh... not quite the news you were expecting -"

"Get this fucking thing out of me!" Oslo felt invaded, like his body no longer belonged to him. In a way it didn't - he was sharing it now, albeit unwillingly.

"We can't, it's integrated with your central nervous system. We think it was using one of the crew members as a host, and when they died the radiation allowed it to survive long enough to find a new host, namely you." The doctor adjusted his glasses as Oslo sat up, disconnecting the rest of the machines as he did so.

"So what, I'm just supposed to go back to normal?" The dragon threw his arms in the air in exasperation. "There's absolutely nothing you can do?"

"Hey, it could be worse. This particular parasite feeds on your toxins, so your relationship is perfectly symbiotic. This could be a good thing for all you know."

"Sure. I'll remind you of those words when it's eating my brain or something." Oslo sighed as he walked towards the exit. "Thanks anyway doc, I owe you one."

"Not at all. And uh, visit back in the evening today. I'm eager to see some of the changes."

Oslo was about to question those changes but decided against it at the last second, changing his answer to a casual "Will do" as he waved over his shoulder.

His first stop was the canteen, intending to get the first meal he'd had in what felt like an eternity. That was the trouble with medical, you never knew exactly how long you'd been in for, it could be a few days or you could wake up in a new year. He was also not too keen on the healthy options: as a search and rescue he had to keep himself in shape, but that didn't mean he couldn't indulge every once in a while. The meal he ended up with was a heart attack on a plate, meat and fat and grease all combining into the best looking plate of food he'd seen in a long while. He damn near tore into it, devouring the plate like he hadn't eaten in weeks, ignoring the slightly amused looks from some of his co-workers - they knew exactly what it was like.

It took him only a few minutes to finish the whole thing, but when he sat back he realised he wasn't feeling full at all. Hell, after something like that he should have been bloated, but there was nothing. He was bigger, but not in the stomach - no, rather his entire body was larger, like he'd been resized in a photo editor. It took him a second to realise the cause.

"It eats toxins." He muttered under his breath - apparently grease and bacon fat counted. What was worrying was that he was starting to see some changes to his body, filling out his spacesuit in ways he wasn't used to. His body was already more muscular than it should be, strength that he wasn't used to cording his limbs and lending him a heaviness that felt strange to wield. It wasn't necessarily a bad thing - getting stronger by doing nothing wasn't a bad deal by any means - but nevertheless he felt a sense of uneasiness at the scale of the changes. It was as if his body wasn't his own anymore, as if he were little more than a vessel for something, a vessel currently being remodelled.

He went back for seconds, and this time the plate he returned with was so piled high with food that it made his co-workers wince. It looked like an entire breakfast and lunch buffet on a plate, all of it of course dripping with grease, and again he ripped into it with savage delight. The added strength made the task weirdly harder - wielding a knife and fork proved tricky considering that just by gripping the utensils he bent them into metal pringles, but besides that for some reason he didn't feel like using them. Eventually he just used his hands, and while at first it was awkward soon he didn't care, soon he was tearing into the food with feral ferocity, ripping it apart and stuffing it into his face, grease flying everywhere. The whole while his body was still swelling, clothes straining to contain growing bulk as he feasted, muscles rippling with more and more power. It was like fire coursing through his veins, like pure adrenaline - his world was a blur of excess and gluttony, of strength and *power and more and more AND MORE AND -*

Oslo looked up. The entire canteen was staring at him, and not just because he looked like he'd doused himself in grease. He was a foot and a half taller than before and far more muscular, his suit barely able to contain the strength that was surging through him. Being in shape was one thing, but the dragon looked like he'd spent at least 2 years nonstop in the gym, and all of it pumping absurd amounts of iron. He didn't even know what to say, he just grabbed a napkin in an attempt to wipe his face - something that ended up with him dropping a sopping wet napkin on the table, a loud *slop* echoing through the canteen - and walked out. The silence that followed him was deafening, it clawed at him. He couldn't even be discreet about it, it was quite hard to be unnoticeable when you were this size.

The moment the door closed behind him he let out a breath he hadn't realised he'd been holding. It felt like a bellows, his lungs larger than he was used to, and combined with the odd sense of vertigo that came from being so much taller in such a short time he felt almost ill.

"Why me. Why fucking me." Even his voice was deeper, something that he would have been pleased about had the circumstances been different. As it stood though he just felt...used. All of this, it was all in service to a parasite. His very biology, he was just being made bigger to allow said parasite to thrive. That being said... he flexed an arm, raising an eyebrow at the muscle there as it almost doubled in size, veins being forced to the top. Some extra strength was always welcome, but the thought that was worrying him was whether there was a limit to this. Being strong? Sure, why not. Being too big to fit through doorways however, not so much. Unfortunately there was only one way to test that - well two ways, but he wasn't going back to the canteen after all that.

It was getting late, which meant that the hangar was more or less empty as he sidled in. Good, because what he was about to do would definitely get him kicked out, but he saw no easier way to get hold of something that would definitely count as a toxin. The aircraft were all fueled and ready to go but the fuel truck was parked nearby, and didn't have nearly the same security as the actual aircraft. He definitely had some second thoughts as he unhooked the pump - here he was stealing jet fuel in an empty hangar to feed a symbiote inhabiting his body. Maybe it really was the symbiote driving him to do this, he couldn't tell anymore. With a lot of trepidation he put the nozzle into his mouth, winced at what he was about to do, and pulled the trigger.

He managed about two full seconds of jet fuel flowing down his throat before he gagged and had to drop the nozzle, shuddering and choking. Despite the parasite absorbing toxins that didn't change the taste, and chugging jet fuel was just as hideous an idea as it would normally be.

"MMMMMGH!" The disgust very quickly turned to pleasure as a loud moan was ripped from his lips, the conversion process beginning with gusto. Muscle swelled with surges of hot, wet electricity coursing through him, jolts of strength that stroked his nerves with growth, taking cords of muscle and thickening them as they wrapped around his limbs. Since this was almost entirely toxins the growth was far more aggressive, great slabs of power welding to his body with alarming speed, what felt like his whole skeleton creaking in protest at the obscene amounts of weight being added to his body. It was a brief moment, but one that felt like nothing he'd ever experienced before, a full-body orgasm that only increased as there

was more of his body to feel it. Alas it has to come to an end eventually, and as it did Oslo had the answer to his question: there was no limit, none that he could see anyway. His body was well past biological limits, 8ft and still going strong, and worse still there seemed to be no way to reverse the process.

The walk back to medical was a reminder that this was an issue, punctuated by the constant sharp pains every time he bumped into something on accident, which due to his size was practically everything.

"Doc, you gotta do something about this." Oslo said as he walked in. The doctor took one look at him and chuckled.

"You know, there's people who would kill for something like this to happen to them."

"Yeah well let them try and fit through doorways all the time."

"Touche." The doctor walked over to his desk, pulling out a pen and writing something down. After a few seconds of writing he picked up the paper and held it out towards Oslo.

"What is this, a prescription?"

"A transfer recommendation. I know more than a few places that could use someone of your stature now." He noticed Oslo's unsure expression and chuckled again. "Look, you're stuck with this thing whether you like it or not, might as well embrace your new life. Plus they have bigger doorways." He waved the paper enticingly.

"Alright, fine." Oslo took the paper, and with it a ticket to a new life. One he had whether he wanted it or not.