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Descent into the Silence

CONTENT WARNINGS (Highlight to reveal): [REDACTED]

Notes: This is where an arc of very heavy content starts. If you're a queasy sort, or someone who feels deeply for the pain of others, this and the next few chapters might not be easy reads. This chapter was originally going to have much more content, but I decided to save it for future chapters.

...Vrrrrrrnnnn... *KTHUNK*. Though Silvia had only been in that elevator for about a minute, it felt like ten. The large bull with her alongside her luggage made the walls feel like they were closing in as they made their descent into darkness. How fast did it move? How deep were they now? More questions ran through her mind, but with a ding, the elevator opened, and the bull beckoned the snow leopard to follow him out. She quickly hurried along, not wishing to contend with the muscles rippling from underneath his plain white lab coat.

First impressions? Not good. The walls were made out of concrete and the air smelled like fear. Just faintly, but enough for the cat's sensitive nose to pick up. The rolling of her wheeled suitcase seemed so much louder in the tunnel's echo chamber, prickling the fur on the back of her neck as she heard the reverberations and naught else.

"We have more tests to run. This will determine your placement." The bull spoke with the same gruff, monotone voice as before, not turning his head at all towards the nervous leopard lagging behind.

...*What?* "Um... what do you mean by 'my placement'?" She felt like she had to ask. Was this in the small print she didn't try hard enough to read through? *Shit*.

An exasperated grunt left the alleged scientist, or... physician, or... what was he, exactly? "In our program. We run tests to determine what group to put you in, so you may do your tasks efficiently."

"...Right. Um... okay." *Is it just me, or is everything so... vague?* The question bounced around in her head, but failed to make it to her mouth as she was led down the quiet hallway to another examination room. This one looked a little more... decrepit. Full of advanced-looking tech, but something felt off about it. Silvia took the time to take a look around, noting the

strange scars on the walls, floors, and ceiling. Some looked like scorch marks... some like claw marks?

"Hey. Are you going to keep daydreaming? We have work to do." The sharp scolding jolted the snow leopard from said act, spine stiffening as she rounded on her paws to regard the bull.

"S-Sorry! Um... what are we doing?"

A quiet huff in response. "Blood work. Among a few other items. This will not take long. Do you faint when you have blood drawn?"

"Mmmnnhhhhh... no. I... no." Preemptively, Silvia seated herself at the chair in the corner of the room that had those weird L-shaped 'tables' on them. She then tugged at the corner of her hood, pulling her jacket off of her shoulders. She then gripped the wrist end of the sleeve, pulled her arm out to prepare her left elbow for the draw, and placed it on said rest. This, at least, she was familiar with.

"Good. And, tell me. Do you have any powers you know about?" With practiced motions, the bull once again addressed Silvia without sparing her a glance, preparing what looked like... six vials? *Oh, fuck.*

Powers? Like what heroes and Korps have? "...No."

"Any powers in your immediate family?"

"No...."

A grunt. That was it, apparently. The man approached with the vials, strapping on some latex gloves for your standard health safety. A blue elastic strap was in one hand, which he tied around Silvia's arm just above the elbow to get the vein to bulge more. "Try to relax. This will take a bit."

The snow leopard grit her teeth and turned her head away, squeezing her eyes shut. She could handle needles, just... not looking at them. She felt her fur be prised away, then.... *Owww!* These things were always so unpleasant... she only had a blood draw this big once before, and it was for a big metabolic panel. Maybe that's what they were doing? It would make sense, if she needed 'placements' or whatever.... Either way, it was hard to think about through the pain, ivory claws poking through the tips of her fingers as her other hand tensed.

...

Was he done yet? Silvia glanced over... nope! Seeing the needle still in her arm caused her breath to hitch, and she looked away again, vowing this time to be patient.

Eventually, the needle was withdrawn, wiped clean before the bull swabbed the injection side and applied a cute little bandage. He examined the six vials of dark red blood after, giving each one a unique labeling with a piece of tape and a marker. "Good. Results will be in tomorrow. For tonight, you will rest. Can you stand?"

"...Hhhhoofff... y-yeah."

"Are you sure?"

To prove her toughness, Silvia shakily got herself to her paws, pushing herself out of the chair. She wobbled for a bit, but after catching her balance, she looked triumphantly at the bull, who to her credit, raised one brow in mild... something.

"Mmh. Right. To your room, then."

...Oh. Right. She has to move now. Feeling weaker, the snow leopard put a hand on her luggage handle and moved after the bull, definitely more lazy about her posture and dragging this time. Thank the inventors for wheels, at least. Her arm ached and pinched dully, complaining with pain whenever she bent her arm too fast. Blood draws were always so unpleasant.

It was another walk through corridors, featuring almost exclusively closed doors. *Was this like an SCP containment zone or something?* The joke bounced off the inside of her head, once more failing to make it out as they walked.

Eventually, the two arrived in what appeared to be a mix between jail cell complexes from movies and dorm buildings in colleges. There were no bars, sure, but the place was made of concrete, and once the bull opened the door to show her her room's interior, it was...

"...This is where I'm staying?" She leaned forward to peek around the corner. Yup. Same stuff. It was a rectangular room that somewhat resembled a pop culture jail cell. A lame, flat-looking bed, a medium-sized dresser, a small desk with a chair, and from what she could tell... one outlet. *Wow... luxurious.*

"Yes. Leave your things here." The bull once again did not look at Silvia while addressing her, instead moving to the one curious object in the room. A full-sized mirror in the corner, with a ruler that extended its full height, up to eight feet. At 6'3", the man removed a pen from his

coat and made a mark on a blank strip of paper next to said ruler. Next to this mark, the letter 'M' was placed.

Silvia did not notice this until he was done, having went to just set her luggage by the desk for the time being, putting her bag on top of her suitcase. She noted the mark and the height, quickly realizing that that was her own current height. "...What's that for?"

"Measurement."

" "

" "

A quiet sigh escaped the snow leopard as she just gave up on that endeavor. These people weren't fans of talking much, were they? Whatever. "Okay. What's next?"

The bull turned to exit the room. "Amenities." He stood outside of the room, and after waiting for the snow leopard to join him, proceeded to walk her out of the dormitory and back into the hallway. "This section of the facility is for living." As if that wasn't obvious. "As such, there are more than just rooms. Down this way are the communal bathrooms."

Peering down that way, Silvia noted herself the lack of segregation. There were no signs for sexes. *Did we all share the same bathroom? I only see one door... huh.* "Are there... um... stalls, at least?"

Once again, the tall man looked down at the thought-herself-tall snow leopard as if she was an idiot. "Of course. We all need our privacy, yes?"

"...Right... um. Of course." Silvia's tail lowered behind her, ears pinning. *Am I just asking stupid questions?*

"Down this way is the cafeteria. When it is time for a meal, there will be an announcement over the intercom. Most of the time, you will only be attending dinners, as there is much to do during the day." The bull paused, and for once, looked down at Silvia with a hardened gaze. "In case you are wondering, you will still be eating during the day - just not there."

The snow leopard's ears pinned a little more. *Is he assuming I'm dumb now...?* "...Right. Um. I get it."

"Good. With that out of the way, I must go take care of paperwork and lab tests." A key was dispensed into Silvia's paws. "Your room key. Do not lose it. Do not wander. You will be

stopped." *Is... that what the guards posted through the hallways were for?* She didn't really acknowledge them before, but now they seemed strange. Who needed guards for a... well, this didn't seem like a clerical place, now that she thought about it. "You may return to your room and rest. Dinner will be called soon." The bull did not wait for a response, as he turned on his feet and tramped away, leaving Silvia standing in the hallway, confused.

She watched the man go all the way up until he turned out of view. She continued staring in that direction for several seconds, before a cocked brow from a nearby guard encouraged her to get moving. She turned and walked back towards her room, head buzzing with questions that she knows she either would be too afraid to ask, or would figure would be met with only vague answers. Just... what sort of thing had she signed up for? Was it really too late?

With a quiet sigh, she padded through the corridor into the dormitory, feeling the cold concrete underneath her paws even more now. Dropping her jaw slightly, she tasted the air, seeing if maybe scents could help her figure out what was going on. Unfortunately, the resultant sensation only made her anxieties worse. If anything, it smelled like... sorrow. Fear. Was that crying she was overhearing? It was difficult to tell. She figured she ought not idle about, lest she incur *someone's* wrath, so she made her way to her room, tail swaying behind her as she closed the door and locked it behind her, releasing a heavy sigh.

"...I... god. I... I just don't like this," she admitted aloud to herself, frowning at the ground in front of her. Another glance around the room confirmed that it was the same as it was minutes ago. With a defeated drop of her shoulders, Silvia walked to her bag and pulled out her phone charger, flopping onto the bed and wincing slightly at its stiffness. Great. Hotel leisure, this was. Plugging the charger into the outlet, she unlocked her phone only to find that there seemed to be no service down here. No data, no wifi. Just a big fat X in the corner. She even checked to see if there was anything to connect to, but... nothing even showed up, not even private networks.

Before she went down, she did get a notification, apparently. It was from her mom. "Good luck, kiddo! We love you!" For once... Silvia felt upset that she couldn't message back. Not only that, but down here, she couldn't talk to what friends she had online either. *I'm... I'm alone, aren't I? Well and truly alone? Fuck....*

The corners of her maw tugged downwards as she lazily tossed herself onto her back, staring up at the dull gray concrete ceiling as the back of her head felt a similarly stiff pillow. "...Shit... well... at least I have a few offline games installed... mmmrrnnnhhh...." She was still feeling tired, so she figured she'd just close her eyes and blow time that way until it was time to eat.

At least, that was the idea. It ended up being one of those times where one would attempt to nap, but keep opening their eyes every other minute, check their phone, and grow slowly more frustrated that not more time has passed. In this case, Silvia hoped that somehow she'd get a flicker of service and something would come through, but alas, nothing. Even on the tenth check, not even those annoying notifications about the weather that she never bothered to turn off was showing up.

Eventually, there was a buzz akin to feedback coming from a speaker near her door, and a few moments later, the voice of what she could only assume was a receptionist with better things to do. "Dinner is now being served for the next hour." The buzzing lasted for another few seconds, before a *krrrr-thnk* cut it short. *Mmmh. I am hungry...*

Silvia continued to lay on her back for another couple minutes before finally willing herself off of her bed, grunting and squeezing her eyes shut to try to coax the burning fatigue out of them. Somehow, laying down just made her tired, but she'd just have to deal with it. A re-equipping of her glasses and she rose again, walking lazily to her door and opening it.

Unlike before, there were actually people in the dormitory area now. She supposed she could consider it somewhat like a lounge - in the area between all the rooms was several seating and tabling arrangements, and some folk who were early to getting food were already sitting about and eating, or just talking. The snow leopard felt comforted by the sound of idle chatter. She didn't think it would be something that she'd miss, but gods, she didn't know she did already. A slight smile crossed her maw as she proceeded to walk through the massive room, heading towards the exit and filing behind an orange fox.

On the way, she did not open her maw, but watched the passersby, studying them. Lots of slouched shoulders, mild frowns... there generally was not too happy an air, which definitely added to Silvia's list of concerns.

With no fanfare, she reached the cafeteria, and upon entry, immediately noted how similar it looked to what she had in elementary school. Rudimentary long benched tables, a line on the perimeter of the space, and a long sort buffet area where you can go after receiving your tray.

At the very least, separating this scenario from that commonly seen in movie jails is that there was nobody serving you slop on a ladle. Instead, there was a sizable salad bar, and several distinct areas where different hot foods were being placed on a long metal slab, separating diners from cooks. Things like burgers, pizza... actually, squinting harder, there did seem to be some stations where you got stuff from the cooks. Like... pasta? *Hmm. Not bad... okay, I might be able to get beh--*

THUD! So immersed in her musings, Silvia didn't notice that she was walking a little too far without checking, and slammed into the orange fox in front of her.

"Oi! Watch where you're fuckin' goin', man!" Said fox whipped around and gave the snow leopard a glare, but upon seeing the way the cat poofed up, pinned her ears and tucked her tail, her own features softened. "...Oh. Never seen you 'round before. You new or somethin'?"

"A-Ahhh... mmrrr... yeah." Silvia bunched up her shoulders. "...You... not... new?" *What am I talking about?*

"...Eh. New enough. Hmmh. Good luck, dude." Turning back forwards, the fox cut the conversation short, leaving the snow leopard to awkwardly stand there.

...Huh? What do you mean, 'good luck'? She took a glance around to see if anyone was staring at her. Unfortunately, some were, but she tried to forget about that. It didn't seem like the fox was amenable to much more conversation, as they continued to stare ahead until they got their tray, and the snow leopard was far too anxious to try to inquire about it, so she just put the thought aside for now.

Silvia was next. The routine was simple - wait to be handed a tray by an attendant, then wander around the buffet area and pick up whatever you wanted. She wasn't sure how experimental she was feeling, but she did spot some spaghetti and meat sauce, so she made for that. Her interaction with the server was stiff - for whatever reason, the snow leopard struggled with basic politeness, as well as speaking up, so it took a few attempts to get what she wanted. A modest pile of spaghetti, some nice looking meat sauce, and a piece of garlic bread.

She walked away with this, feeling happy enough with her score, but continued to wander, just in case. Her patience did pay dividends, as she managed to find a parmesan shaker by the pizza stand that she doused generously over her meal, as well as some manner of other seasoning and red pepper flakes. She also found a chocolate chip cookie, and finally, a fountain drink area! Hooray! This was eerily like her college experience, but it wasn't *bad*, so maybe things would be alright? Silvia acquired for herself a glass with cola, and found a place alone to sit. For better or for worse, it was much easier to sit alone here - there was plenty of space, and not that many people. So, she slid into a space on the end of a table.

The food was... food. The sauce was bland and tasted a bit weird, the meat was fine, the pasta was undercooked, and the bread was overcooked, forcing Silvia to smash down on it to get it to break. The soda was... kind of flat, and the cookie? One bite, and she decided that was enough. Whoever baked that needed to be fired or trained better.

Not much to report, at the end of it. At the very least, the food was more filling than she expected, and so once she had finished, remaining unbothered the whole time, she picked up her tray and deposited it on a little conveyor belt leading back into the kitchen, where she assumed someone would deal with the trash and wash things.

...Huh. Well, that wasn't too bad. She let herself smile a little as she made her way back to her dorm. With how dreary this whole place was, she was honestly expecting to have to deal with mysterious gray sludge as sustenance, but thankfully, that was not the case! It was far from spectacular, but maybe she could live like this. It'd only be for a little while, while she was trained for her position, right?

Once she had gotten back and plopped back onto her bed, those encroaching bad thoughts started to creep back in. First of all, what did that girl mean by 'good luck'? Was training particularly hard? She had no idea what to expect, but being told that as a first interaction didn't bode well in her mind. That, and... what now? Was she meant to just sleep and wake up tomorrow?

...Fuck. Another check of her phone and, yep, nothing. Not even in other areas of the facility did she get even a beat of service. The corners of her maw quickly pulled down as she reckoned with the fact. No internet... that means no scrolling social media, no internet videos, no online games... no friends.

Fuck... fuck. No friends. Are they thinking about me...?

Silvia grunted, mounting stress throwing her down against the bed and pillow once more. Fuck it. She'll just try to sleep, wake up tomorrow, and hopefully there will be service, or at least maybe she'll be busy, or *something*. It wasn't even the first damn day of training yet and she was already stressing over crap like that. *Get yourself together! It'll be fine.*

At least, that's what she tried to tell herself. Judging by the time on her phone from the tens of times she checked over the course of the evening, Silvia ended up staying awake for another three and a half hours before finally falling unconscious, passing into a dreamless sleep.

~ ~ ~

She'd lost count of how many times she woke, restless, checked her phone, still noted a total lack of reception, and fell back asleep. The clock feature was the only thing letting her know what time it was - being an underground facility with no fake environs, she quickly started to wonder if she'd go crazy here. Her sleep schedule is absolutely doomed, that's for certain.

Either way, eventually her imperishable night did come to a close, as at 9 AM on the dot, the speaker in her room blared what she could only assume was an alarm jingle. It was an unpleasant and certainly piercing sound, leaving little doubts in the snow leopard's mind that should she manage to get some actual rest next time, she would be woken when she needed to be. Once the alarm had finished, what sounded like a pre-recorded voice with different pieces played.

PATIENT: SILVIA. Please report to room H26. PATIENT: SILVIA.
Please report to room H26.

"...Patient?" *What do you mean, 'patient'?* The word repeated over and over in her mind as she got herself sorted. She at the very least went to put on a new shirt, throwing the worn one on top of her dresser for now. Silvia hadn't gotten around to putting her clothes away, nor did she shower last night - items she does resolve to do tonight before she retires. With a huff and a stuffing of her phone into her right pocket, the snow leopard padded to her door and yanked it open.

To her mild surprise and dismay, she was greeted with a sight she hoped she wouldn't. A mass of people, all individuals staying in this section of the facility, trotting out of their rooms and down the halls. She supposed that she could appreciate the order of the place, at least, pushing her squarish glasses up her snout as she looked for a map. *Where's H26?*

Thankfully, on either side of the exit of the dormitory, was a dimly backlit map encased in thin glass, showing off the layout of this floor of the facility. She noted to herself the way it just kind of ended at points, veering into red boxes denoted 'RESTRICTED'. Probably guards posted up that way. As for where she was going... uhhh. Shit. Left, third right, keep going for a while, left at the end, fourth left. Great. Pulling her phone out of her pocket, she opened the notes app she thankfully already had installed and jotted down the directions, before padding off, herself.

The crowd started off thick, but dispersed in short order as she ventured further and further away from the dorms, watching people in front of her split off down different hallways or enter different rooms. That, of course, seemed normal to her. What didn't was the fact that she ran out of company a little over halfway on her journey. The snow leopard glanced behind her, long tail nearly brushing against the ground but hooking upwards just in time, but the only person she could see now was a distant guard.

...Hhhuuuuhhhh. I'm going deep in, or something...?

She had plenty of time to think about it, through rounding a corner and finally arriving at the room in question. She stared at the door for an extended period of time, trying to work up

her nerves to knock, to just enter, to press her ear against it, *anything*. Yet, her body refused to move, choked up by anxiety, or so she assumed. Even still, with a few deep and long breaths, she puffed up her chest, and reached for the doorknob.

"SIIIIILVIAAAAA!"

"Waaah!" The snow leopard jumped, tail poofing and paws rising a foot and half off the ground as she was scared by the sudden opening of the door and the chipper man inside. He was a tall, slender canine, complete with floppy ears, a wagging tail, and a big smile.

"I'm so glad to see you! Welcome to PAWS!" Reaching out, he firmly grasped one of Silvia's wrists that had made it up to her flat chest, yanking her into the room as she yelped again. "Oh, we're going to do great, I can *feel* it. Your test results are *in*, and Silvia, they are absolutely wonderful! Truly, you're just one of a kind!"

She barely had time to think, much less process, being pulled into the room and greeted with....

...*What the fuck?*

It looked like... an operation room. There was plenty of surgical equipment around, as well as a couple aides, plus of course, a central operation chair and table complete with lights and all; the whole entourage. "...Um... what am I doing here?"

The dog clasped his hands, releasing the snow leopard once he'd closed the door behind them. "I'm so glad you asked! This is very, very exciting. Oh, you'll be absolutely *perfect*! I've never seen a more compa-- aaahhh. Well, let's start with your results, hmmmm? Yes, your vitals are good. You have some physical ailments, but they won't be a problem. We detected traces of latent ability, but best of all, you have a rare genetic condition with your blood!" The scientist squealed, sides of his lab coat thrashing this way and that as his tail wagged vigorously, leaving little black hairs on the white apparel.

"...I-I do?" She felt her head spin, quickly feeling overwhelmed. *What was he going to say before he stopped? Genetic condition? Latent ability? What's going on?*

"Yes! See, we've been looking for someone like you... someone with your blood. Yes, yes-- you'll be consulting, certainly. Helping us test something! You'll be very valuable, and paid handsomely, mmm-hm. Straight wired to your bank account, that's how important you are to us!"

Fuckin'... more of this vague shit... why can't they just tell me anything? I really don't like how excited he is. It's just... something's not right....

"So. We can get started right away, if you'd please take a seat! Silvia, today's going to be the start of a brand new *you*."

She grunted softly, unable to untense her shoulders. She slowly approached the operation chair, but did not sit in it, instead turning around and tilting her head at the scientist with a frown. "What do you mean by that? Brand new me?"

The dog snapped his fingers. "Hormone. Replacement. Therapy. Sex reassignment. Good, yes? You wanted this, didn't you?"

The words ignited a fierce heat in the snow leopard's chest. *Wait. WHAT?!* Her ears pinned fully back, tail tucking as she brought her hands to her chest. Her eyes widened and breath shallowed, staring down the dog as he stared confidently back. "I-- I mean--"

"And before you aaaaaask~ no ma'am, we are not Korps. Just scientists trying to make the world a safer place... and you'll help us do it! All I need... is for you to sit there. Then, we'll get started. Oh, and, you'll have to take off your shirt."

Ffffuck... FUCK. This is it. I-- I... I could finally... but... why? Why are they doing it? If I sit there... Silvia felt it deep in her bosom. The last checkpoint. Crossing this threshold, she doubted she could ever go back. Gripping a sleeve on her shirt, she tugged gently, but hesitated. It's my chance... I couldn't go to the Korps. They've got their... mind control glasses... I can't do that. I'd be caught fuckin' dead coming out of there. And how would I explain it to others? You're not... you're not supposed to be trans! You're supposed to just bury these thoughts....

Taking a deep breath and swallowing, the snow leopard finally managed to squeak out the question on her mind. "Why?" she asked simply, starting to squeeze her arm with a vicegrip. "...You... this is-- is... isn't supposed to be a thing anyone but the... b-but the Korps does, right? So... why? What... what do you... g-get out of it?"

"Tsk tsk...." The dog tapped his head, clawed black hand touching a white spot on his forehead. "Scientific inquiry, for one. You're an exceedingly rare specimen, and I promise, you'll be very valuable and paid handsomely! And in a body you like better, to boot! I can't share the details *just yet*, kitten, as we have yet to see if this will work. You did see our insurance policies, yes? We can take care of anything that might happen.... The Korps aren't the only organization with high tech."

I can't... I can't stand these vague fucking answers. I just want to know what the hell I'm doing this for! Fuck, he's like my dad, except he talks more about nothing instead of just refusing to! Silvia's fur stood on end, prickling with emotion as she resisted the charms of the scientist. "Is that really it? You're... gonna turn me into a girl 'for science'? I mean, what'll I do when I get out of here? I..."

The black dog's eyes narrowed, the sway of his tail slowing. "You'd make a great scientist yourself. Very good at asking deeper questions. Silvia, we were right to pick you up as a consultant. You'll be helping us very directly - to get to the absolute heart of science, push the limits of what medicine can do, and you'll be rewarded. Do stay, won't you?" Another gesture was made to the waiting chair. At this point, the silent aides were staring at the scene as well, but made no noise.

"...Mrrnnf... I... I just... I'm scared."

"I know, dear. We'll take care of you, okay? Now. If you sit down, we can continue. I promise things will be okay."

With a deep breath, Silvia's anxiety about wasting people's time started to grow stronger than her ability for reason. She wanted to be a woman, right? Always wishing she was like those pieces of art she saw online? This was her chance. They'd take care of her... they'd make sure it was okay. It was just... new medicine. For science. Maybe her special condition made it easier to test? This... this wasn't what she signed up for. But she'd lived her whole life being too nervous to act, too scared to take that step forward into the abyss and hope she'd come out alright. That's what you did, right? Pull yourself up by the bootstraps, take a deep breath, and leap. Right. It'd be damn hard to get out of here now anyway, so...

Reluctantly, the snow leopard did ease herself into the chair.

"Gooood," the dog cooed, before the wagging of his tail picked up again. "Now, we can begin! Aides?" The scientist wandered off to the side of the room to start messing with some materials. Silvia tried to follow his motion and see what he was doing, but it was too small and covered up to see. In the interim, the pair of aides approached. "Oh, and Silvia, shirt off, please!"

With a grunt, the snow leopard reluctantly removed his shirt, placing it on his lap and looking down at his bare chest. Furred, to be sure, and flat. Rectangular. Uneventful. Boring. *Masculine.*

She squeezed her eyes shut, heaving another breath. In, out. In, out. She reopened her eyes to see the scientist on the approach, holding... *Oh, god.*

A large, thick needle, full of black fluid. *What the fuck is BLACK? What are they gonna do to me?!*

She immediately tensed right back up upon seeing that *thing*, beginning to scramble to get out of there. The aides were ready, though, and caught her arms, holding her down.

"Now, now, Silvia, it won't be that bad. Do relax, won't you? After all, you're about to embark on one of the most exciting scientific journeys on the planet!" The scientist placed a leg up on the chair, pinning down one of Silvia's legs and completing the three-point pin to the table. At the same time, he pointed the needle at her chest, slowly approaching it.

At this point, the thoughts racing through the snow leopard's head had no words. Just a primal fear. She thrashed violently, trying to escape, and managed to yank one arm free from an aide, shoving them aside. "G-Get away from me!"

The scientist drew a long sigh, shaking his head. "Lock her down and subdue her. We cannot waste too much time."

"Do what? He-hey! What the hell's going on?!" She struggled and fought, but a jab to her other arm sent a numbness coursing through it. *Shit... shit, shit! They're... fuck...!* Following that, another to her other arm. "C-Come on! Stop! I... what the fuck's in that?"

The dog didn't respond, and neither did the aides, who silently strapped her down, arms and legs and all, despite the continued writhing of the feline. Once she was successfully restrained, he got off of her, and approached with a jaded look in his eye. "Hold still. You read the contract, didn't you? Once you sat in that chair... you agreed to our terms and conditions."

Oh, fuck! God damn it! It's like that episode of North Park where he doesn't read the shit and ends up in all sorts of crap and-- She shuddered harshly, still squirming as the black needle approached. "H-Help! Help me! Please!"

In response, the aides pressed down on her shoulders, further restraining the struggling snow leopard. They stared at her, empty-eyed, with surprising strength.

All hope drained out of Silvia as the only thing left she could do was stare at the encroaching needle, eyes bulging out of her head as her breath caught, throat tightening. Here she was, numbed and restrained, on an operating table, awaiting her fate. *...What have I done?*

The pain was searing. The tip of the needle jammed deep into her chest, right below her sternum, and filled her with a cascading burning that caused a scream to erupt from her

once it reached there. She belted that deafening yowl as the black fluid drained into her body, unable to stop her vocal chords from ringing; at least, not until the snow leopard faded out of consciousness a mere second later, burning the image of the piercing needle into her mind.