

# **Flipside Adventures: The Inflatable Life of Ayane Osborne**

## **Part 1**

**By Stravix**

*Disclaimer: This story contains sexually oriented adult themes, specifically female air inflation, breast expansion, masturbation, and perilous situations. If you aren't of legal age, then stop here.*



---

“There’s a conspiracy surrounding my order,” Ayane hissed. “The supplier has likely already vanished.”

Linda sighed. “Ayane, honestly.” She huffed as she opened another delivery box of this week’s stock. Each one had provided little but the comforting scent of fresh paper when she scrounged around for any sign of Ayane’s purchases. “If there was a conspiracy, or some government blackout, or anything of that tinfoil hat nonsense applied to your books, they’d likely not have been there to order in the first place.”

“That’s the point! They put them up there so people like you and me get put under surveillance for daring to tap into the unknown,” Ayane said dryly. “I could tell you more...”

“No, thank you,” Linda held up her hands in surrender before returning them to building a small pile of hardcovers. “You’ve told me enough that I’m fearing that I may actually believe you about those government lists. I’m sure Chris would be interested in some extra attention though.”

Chris, a young-faced teenager and newest hire of the bookstore, had been staring at a section of shelves looking bored when he jerked upright in response to his name being called. “Ah! Um, yeah!” he hastily blurted out. “I hear about conspiracies on the news all the time! It’s fun to imagine them being true.”

“Fun...” It was Ayane’s turn to sigh. “Just, tell me they are here today...”

Linda stood up and stretched her back with a pop. “Well, if they are, they aren’t in today’s delivery. But maybe they arrived over the weekend. Let me check.” And with that she turned and vanished into the stockroom door behind her.

Ayane had realized she been staring at that same stockroom door for the third time in a single month for her order. She had joked about the notion, but maybe there really was a connection to something. The thought soured her mood, as it meant she might have to frequent even more obscure sources like fairground fortune tellers or maybe even modern gypsies. An adventure she would dread to undertake.

She needed to take her mind off it. “Hey, mind if I change the radio station for a minute?” she said without turning her gaze.

Chris shrugged. “Sure. Something special you want to hear?”

“Something like that.” Ayane reached over and spun the dial. “Some days bring surprises.”

< “Hey listeners! Hope you are aren’t simmering on this sweltering summer day. This is your Midday Muse giving you the lowdown while the suns high! Hear this, a dairy farm might be checking the skies for UFOs again because an entire herd has vanished overnight from their barns. No signs of breaking or entering were found, but considering several staff have also been reported missing it is in my *humble* opinion that they had a sudden career change from farmhand to cattle rustlers... maybe the owners should be checking their working conditions rather than the skies, ya dig? Now back to the tunes!” >

“Why is it always cows,” Chris said. “You think aliens need the calcium?”

Ayane quirked an eyebrow in his direction and slumped down harder on the counter. “You should work on your jokes.”

His face broke into a grin. “Can’t blame a guy for trying.”

Several awkward moments passed between the two before he decided on another angle of approach. “You aren’t hot in all that?” he said, gesturing up and down at her.

With a thick long black sweater, long black pants, black boots, she knew she looked out of place in the middle of summer. Even the semi-rebellious Goth fashion of the area relented to the power of the sun and sought lighter garments. Despite that, Ayane didn’t have a bead of sweat on her.

“Nope. Father comes from a hot and humid country in the East. I got some of the tolerance.” Ayane replied.

“Oh...” he glanced at the stockroom door. “So what kind of books are you ordering anyway?”

Ayane finally shifted her gaze and locked her eyes with his. “Witchcraft, magic, curses and other paranormal things. Old books. *Ancient* books.”

“Oh. You interested in myths?”

She nodded. “Deeply interested.” Shifting to prop herself up on an elbow. “I have a personal stake in it.”

“Really?” He tilted his head. “So, like, do you act it out?”

She frowned. “Act?”

He nodded. “Yeah. Y’know, light candles, draw circles in chalk and all. I mean it’s all just playing around, right?”

Ayane sighed as she remembered a number of other similar conversations. “Magic *does* exist, and I don’t play around’.”

He quirked an eyebrow and grinned. Looking around as if trying to spy some hidden camera. “You aren’t serious. What do you do? Go to graveyards to talk to the dead or something? Have a séance?”

“No, for one I’m not a medium, and two I have no ghosts I want to hear from.” Ayane ceased to lean on the counter and folded her arms. “I try for practical spells. Divinations and curses.”

“Ohh, that’d be scaaaary.” Chris laughed while waving his hands about in mock fear. “Y’know if it actually existed.”

*Creeeek*

“I’m serious...” Ayane said, her voice rising. “It does exist.”

Chris’s voice rose to match it. “If it did exist, everyone would know though, right? We’d be covered in Harry Potters and Merlins by the day. There’d be magic shops around the corner!”

“It *exists*,” she growled and moved closer to him to jab a finger in his direction. “The only reason *you* don’t know about it is because *they* don’t want you to know!”

*Creeeeeeeek*

“They who? Some government conspiracy?” Chris’ expression grew concerned as Ayane approached. “An ancient cabal, magic school or some crap?”

Ayane sucked in a breath. Feeling her face grow hot. “Witches! The Government! Someone!” she hissed. “I know they are out there!”

*Creeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeek*

Chris shrank against the wall. “H-how? Did you see them?”

“Yes, and when I find them again I’ll drag them *all* out,” she said.

“All by yourself?” Chris muttered.

Ayane finally took note of how nervous the guy was. He had scrunched himself into the corner of a bookshelf and the wall in his attempt to create distance from her.

*CREEEEEAK!*

She also noticed the steadily growing noise. It was enough to yank her back out of her rising anger in a flash. Her emotions were awchirl and she realized she was panting heavily from the small argument. The front of her heavy sweater was stretching steadily in front of her out of time with her breathing.

Chris stared at her standing there in silence. “O-okay, sorry I asked...” He left his defensive corner and moved to look busy somewhere further away from her.

Ayane spun away from him and wrapped her arms around her chest, which had only continued to swell. “*Fuck fuck fuck!*”

“Hey, you two done?” Linda emerged from the stockroom. “Ayane, your books aren’t here.” She glanced at Chris who looked subdued. “And, I’m sorry, but if you are going to get into another of your tirades then could you just go home and calm down. We have another customer.”

Ayane looked up. Indeed, another customer had entered the shop during the small spat, a young man with strikingly bright red hair, who now glanced between the assembled sheepishly. His eyes fell on her as she covered her front.

That was her limit. “I’m going to use the restroom!” she blurted out. Standing up straight, she kept her arms folded across her chest and kept her gaze averted from all as she sped to the back of the store.

“Goddamn it!” she admonished herself as she burst into the cramped restroom. Locking the door behind her quickly she sped over to the mirror. Assured that nobody was within earshot, she started to undress. First came the sweater, then a black shirt underneath, a long sleeve shirt beneath that, then a singlet under that. After her several protective layers of black cloth lay on the floor, she stood before the mirror in nothing but her bra, staring at her upper body like she was examining a foreign object. It wasn’t that far from the truth.

“Goddamn it,” she muttered again as she reached up and cupped her chest.

*Squeeeek*

She winced at the small noise emanating from her breasts. An unnatural sound to come from any human. But as her fingers sank into her skin, it just kept reminding her that her body was far from normal. Her body shone strangely. The light above reflecting on her far too smooth skin with an unnatural sheen. If anyone happened to see her now, they would be forgiven for thinking she was merely wearing a skin-tight suit. But the reality was far weirder.

She was made of latex.

“Fuck,” Ayane slapped her chest in irritation. Even more annoyingly, it didn’t hurt. The impact merely making a hollow thump that seemed to reverb inside her body. Living with the curse had been a task. Every day having one more challenge to add to an ever-growing list of things Ayane had to deal with. One of the most eminent being the noise. Every mere brush of skin on skin emanated a harsh squeak or creak like balloons rubbing against one another. A fact that had forced her choice in out of season fashion in an attempt to muffle it.

The other challenge was now in the process of shrinking back down. She learned early on that her body could inflate itself, mostly because bouts of anger or panic usually resulted in her breasts taking in air from her mere breathing like a pair of balloons hooked up to a pump. Which only added to the stress and had resulted in an endless loop of panicked breathing and constant swelling until she could find a quiet place to hide.

Just like now. “He had to have noticed something, right?” she muttered as she leaned back against the far wall and watched her breasts slowly deflate back to normal size. A cursory inspection of her bra showed only a slight bit of of the fabric had begun to tear, to her small relief. “Or maybe he just thinks you are crazy.”

Once they were back to their average, inconspicuous size, she slowly replaced her layers. She emerged from the restroom to see the shop much the same as before. Chris had chosen another wall to stare at. Linda stood at the counter sorting through the boxes of stock, while the red-headed customer idly browsed a section of old cookbooks nearby.

She moved to leave, but stopped by Chris. “Hey, sorry. I get worked up about this sorta thing,” she said, “I get kind of stupid when I do.”

He let out a grunt. “Yeah, I was a bit of an ass about it too. Sorry.”

Linda, who had been watching the interaction from her stack of boxes, merely nodded quietly. Ayane forced her best smile as she moved past and exited out into the summer air.

“Fantastic,” she muttered. Her day was thoroughly soured, she wanted nothing more than to enclose herself behind comfortable walls and cheap rented movies. Getting there took a small hike across the dishevelled, near-abandoned surrounds of her neighbourhood, but some part of her looked forward to the quiet. Only two sorts of people lived in the area; The ones forced here by some unfortunate fate that required them to fall back to the lowest rung of society, or the other who enjoyed the lack of

questions, Ayane found herself among the latter. For the most part everyone kept to their own business, which suited her perfectly.

The quiet also made it easy to notice the set of footsteps matching her pace behind her.

The emaciated remains of a butcher shop were where she normally walked across the road in her path home from the bookstore, but as she passed it, she took a detour from her usual route and turned in another direction, allowing her a sneaking glance behind her as she rounded the corner. It was the young man from the shop. His red hair already becoming plastered to his head from the sweat that was steadily seeping down his white, long-sleeve office shirt.

The man's attire looked equally out of place for summer as her own, she thought. Which only served to increase her suspicion. Quickening her pace, she aimed for an alleyway that she knew looped back towards the bookstore. Another turn, this time around a well-protected cigarette shop with steel barred windows that marked where the alley sat beside. A glance back again told her that Red-head was still following her. He was still making a show of focusing on the surroundings rather than watching where he was walking. The smell of hot garbage and plastic assaulted her nose as she sped into the shadowed confines. Rusted pipes and old cables snaked around the walls and spanned above her, while an ancient air conditioner unit rattled loudly on its mounting. It was here Ayane suddenly shifted into a run.

She begrudgingly gave thanks to one particular aspect of her new physiology; she was very light. With a leap she clamped onto a pipe and started pulling herself up. Climbing up the spiderweb of plumbing was a breeze as she ascended to sit on a high windowsill looking over the narrow area. It was from here she had a perfect view of her red-headed stalker as he rounded the corner and stopped. She was close enough to see the frown on his face, which gave her a small bit of satisfaction, as well as confirmed her suspicions as he hurriedly moved further in.

*Click*

The telltale snap noise emanating from her phone's camera was apparently loud enough for him to hear as he stopped in place and looked about wildly.

Clear picture of his face in hand, she decided it was time. "Y'know, I always imagined stalkers to be more subtle."

Both eyes and eyebrows shot up to meet her on her perch. His mouth opened and closed a few times before he finally spoke. "Stalker? Well, I mean, I... Yes, I suppose you could see it like that."

She kicked her legs idly. "Could? You followed me from the bookstore without sharing a word. I've never seen your face before, and the amount of people who'd walk in a dingy, garbage filled alley willingly I could count on my fingers. Much less someone so well dressed." She gestured up and down at his clothes, which were soaked with sweat.

He coughed and rubbed the back of his head. "Okay, you aren't wrong in your observations, but if you could just hear me out... I was just struggling to think of a proper way to approach you"

"Take it from the top," she replied as she tapped her phone. "Oh, and I have the police on speed dial, in case you are wondering."

"Excuse me? From the top?" he stammered. "W-what."

"Like, start with 'Hello, my name is Suspicious Red-head, I am here to follow you back to your abode..." she offered.

He cleared his throat. "You are really putting me on the spot here uh... Ahem, hello! Uh... My name is... Rick... and I'm..."

"You don't look like a Rick," she quipped.

Whatever thought train the man had going derailed immediately. "Pardon?"

"I said you don't look like a Rick. More like a... Richard, or something."

Her pestering seemed to sink in and a frown descended on his pale features. "Well, whatever you consider my name is, I have very important information you will be interested in."

"If it was so important why not just greet me in the shop? Why follow me like some creep?" Ayane's fingers leapt across the phone's screen as she started recording. "Oh, and I'm recording this, just so you know."

"It's not the kind of thing to talk about with others around!" He held out his hands as if he could find a better answer in thin air. "Look, I know what it looks like, but I know you'd be very interested in what I have to say, if we could speak about it somewhere privately."

"Forget it," she said coldly.

He slumped. "As expected." He sucked in a breath through his teeth before letting it out slowly. "I'll tell you this then. It's about your *condition*."

That snapped Ayane out of her playfulness. She looked up from her phone at Rick like he had sprouted horns and wings.

"Yes, *that* condition. Now, will you listen?"

Ayane shook herself out of her confusion and stared pointedly at him. "What condition?"

He blinked, not expecting the reply. "What do you mean what condition!?"

"Could be many things."

"A-are you made *entirely* of suspicion?"

Ayane huffed. "A heaping of suspicion, pinch of cynicism, and a dash of bullshit detection."

He threw up his hands and paced around for a moment. "Okay! Okay. Subtlety out the window then if it suits you. It's about your curse! Your. *Magical*. Curse!"

Ayane felt her breath hitch in her throat.

Seeing that he finally had her full seriousness he continued. "You have a moon sigil on your right thigh that was placed there when you were changed."

He was interrupted when Ayane leapt from her windowsill seat and landed a few meters away.

"Well... Now that I have your attention, I know of a safe area where we... can..." Ayane was approaching him now. Her hand searching inside her bag for a moment before producing a black stun-gun, which crackled with electricity as she drew near with fury in her eyes.

Rick had begun to back away. "W-wait, I don't mean any harm! I want to help!"

"You seem to know a lot," she hissed. "Can you do magic?"

He gulped and held his hands up. "Y-yes, but..."

"Then prove it! Right now!" Her phone was in her other hand, filming still, as she raised it.

“What?! No, that would... Just wait!” he cried as she came close. “I would show you but that would cause problems!”

“I *have* a problem. Magic has given me nothing BUT problems!”

*Creeeeeeeeeeeeak*

Her chest began to swell again as she drew angry breaths. Her sweater rose before her as before, but she didn't care. “My life has been *hell* because of magic, and I have spent every day since trying to make it, find it, do anything with it!”

Rick placed himself up against a wall, his hands raised up in defence. His eyes looked at her with concern, but kept silent.

“I had to abandon my friends. I can't see my family!” she thrust her stun gun close enough to him that he could smell the burnt air as the power crackled through the prongs. “I didn't know who to ask for help. Everybody thinks magic is just *fake*! The government? They are probably in on this! I thought if I gave myself up that I'd just vanish!”

CREEEEEEEEEEA... SNAP

The bra gave its final farewell loudly as her sweater lurched outward with a sudden *fwoomp*. Her chest, free of one constraint, bounded forward and lifted her many layers of clothing up. Smooth roundness protruded out to the sides of her frame and expanded further as she continued to pant.

“So, show the world magic exists... right here and now!”

Rick kept his hands raised on the wall. “I'm sorry. For what you've gone through that is. And, sorry, I know this isn't the answer you want, but I can't. Not right now, and certainly not here. There are risks for both of us, but I promise...”

“Screw the risks!” She cried. “Just show the world that I am not crazy!”

He shook his head. “It won't matter! Trust me.”

“Shut up!” Ayane fought the urge to act on the anger she was feeling. “Then can you remove it. Make me normal again?!”

He closed his eyes and shook his head. “I can't... It's complicated.”

Ayane let out a cry of anger and frustration. “Can't remove curses. Can't do magic. Can only ask me to come to some quiet, secret area.”

She drew back. Lowering the stun gun as she lowered her gaze to her chest. Her breasts stretched out her top like two balloons strapped under a circus tent. Her many layers now swayed idly out in the open air, with her shiny navel now visible beneath the hanging clothes having had the covers lifted.

“De ja vu.” She sighed, and glanced at her phone. Strangely, the screen was now covered in a blur of black and white bars.

“What the hell...” Ayane muttered. Her fingers pressed every button, but still the screen showed nothing but a black and white noise like it was a retro TV. “What did you do to my phone?!”

“What?” Rick's eyes widened and he took a step around to see the screen for himself. “Oh no, no no.”

His sudden panic melded with Ayane's whirl of emotions. “What? What's wrong?”

“We can't let them see us together... See you!” He suddenly reached out and grasped Ayane's wrist and yanked her. Pulling her further into the alley. “We need to go!”

She attempted to free herself in vain. “Who? Wait!”

Even though Rick didn't look all that strong, she was powerless to resist. She was dragged like a child's toy behind the young man as he sped further into the alley. His gaze focused ahead he never noticed Ayane trying to uselessly dig her feet in to stop them. Twisting her wrist did little to free her from his grip.

“Let me go!” Panic surged in Ayane's mind. Her body was too light, too weak.

Rick's focus was elsewhere. “Not until we are somewhere safe. Then we can...”

*ZRRRRRAAAP*

The sound of an electric surge was mixed by Rick's short, sharp cry as he let go and collapsed. His muscles jerking uncontrollably as she kept the device jammed into his ribs.

“DON'T TOUCH ME!” she cried. Overcome by a need to just get away she stuffed her things back into her bag and ran to a wall. Her hands found a pipe and just quickly clambered up the side of the building

“W-wait!” Rick's pained voice followed her as she kept climbing. Heedless, her hands grabbed and pulled her until she found herself on the roof. Flopping down onto her back she felt herself breathing in rapidly.

*Creeeeeeeeak*

Her tops pulled taught over her ballooning tits. Round, thick cloth rose in front of her and shadowed her face against the setting sun in the distance. Her mind settled down a little bit and she dared to peer over the side. Rick had got back up to his feet and was leaning against a nearby wall as he clutched his side. His eyes weren't focused on her however, instead they looked down the alley towards an opening to another street.

Ayane followed his gaze. A black van had stopped at the mouth and was lurching to the side as a dark suited man stepped out and stood. Her eyes widened as the man's shoulders rose up higher than the van itself. Adjusting his tie, the giant moved down towards Rick with a visible smile.

“Well well well! What's an odd bird like you doin' in a dank hole like this?” he boomed. Ayane frowned as the man's accent reached her ears. He sounded like he stepped out of an old movie.

Rick smiled shakily towards him and stepped away from the wall. “Oh, I just finished an inventory run and was using the extra time to explore a tad.” He winced as he straightened himself and let go of his side. “It is all above board and approved in advance.”

The giant chuckled. “That right? Cause here we thought someone was steppin' outta line, and in an alley like this? You sure you ain't pullin' a caper under our noses? Cause that'd be real nasty on our record.”

Rick shrank as the man leaned his smile closer. The pair stared at one another for a moment before the giant laughed again. “Ah, I'm just razzing you, kid. Relax. But y'know, you do look like somethin' nasty just fell on you.” He finally leaned back and gave some space. “You need someone straightened out?”

Ayane felt a small bit of fury bubble inside her. For all the desperation he gave earlier he was familiar with them. Her gaze flicked between the giant man in black and the dark tinted windows of the car, which told her all she needed to know.

“*Abductors? Kidnappers?*” she thought to herself.

Rick waved the man off. “No, no, I just... just slipped and fell on something. Nothing serious.”

The big man reached down and wrapped one arm around Rick’s shoulders. Whether the young man wanted to or not, he was being pushed towards the van. “That so? Well, better come with us anyway. Can’t have one of ours get whacked when we out on patrol. It’d look bad.”

As the two moved away, Ayane realized she had an opportunity and a prime vantage point. Pulling out her phone again she quickly raised it past the roof to take a photo, only to groan in annoyance as the static remained scrolling across her screen.

“Oh come ooon...” she moaned. She peeked down at the pair again.

Only to find the giant had stopped and was glancing back. His head tilted upwards and Ayane quickly pulled herself out of sight.

Rick’s voice echoed upwards. “Something the matter?”

“Mm, something feels...off”

“Hardman!” cried a shrill voice. A woman’s voice. “We have places to *be!*”

The giants voice boomed back. “Yes, Ma’am!”

The sound of footsteps slowly shrank. Ayane found the courage to peek over the side again as the mysterious van pulled away and drove out of view. She waited a few moments as if expecting them to appear again, but the street remained empty. She was alone.

“What the fuck!” she cried and flopped down onto her ballooned chest and buried her face in the soft, airy mounds to scream out her frustration. The mix of anger and confusion gave her no shortage of muffled words to send into her cleavage.

A minute passed before she finally stopped and relative calm finally graced her mind. “I need to get home...” she sighed.

*Creeeeeek*

The slight noise as she shifted he weight off her bosom made her wince. “...After you two calm down”

---

The walk home was uneventful, but slow. Ayane kept a close watch on her surroundings as she made a chaotic zigzag path home to her apartment. Keeping watch for any other stalkers or conspicuous vans or giant men. But as the sun began to set the empty streets became even emptier of people, as those with any sense knew where better times were to be had somewhere far away towards the clubs and lights of more developed districts. Soon she found herself in front of the ‘Emerald City,’ a small apartment block that may have looked resplendent in the garish yellow paint that it was covered in, but time and weather had caused vast swaths of it to peel off. It now resembled a rotting block of cheese.

Ms Goldblum, the elderly landlord, spotted her from her balcony vantage point. A book in one hand and a slender pipe in the other, which she waved in her direction like a Queen shaking a sceptre. “Ayane! There you are, girl. I thought you said you were going to the bookstore, not read the whole damn collection while you were there!” she cackled. “It’s not like you to take so long.”

“I didn’t realize you became my foster grandmother while I was gone,” Ayane quipped. “I’m a bit old for curfews don’t you think?”

“Hah, you’d be so lucky if I was! And age and wisdom aren’t always a pair,” she adjusted her glasses and resumed reading her book. “You walk around this neighbourhood at night you’ll end up someone’s plaything before you know it.”

Ayane let out a laugh. “Oh, I know that much, thanks *granny*.”

Goldblum took a drag of her pipe before unleashing an impressive geyser of smoke. “Since you seem so cheery, I’ll remind you that rent is overdue.”

“*Crap*,” Ayane thought.

The old crone adjusted her glasses and leered down at her. “I take it from your face that you aren’t prepared to pay.”

Ayane put on her best pleading expression. “Look, I’ve had one hell of a rough day. Could I have just a *little* more time?”

Another plume of smoke erupted from the woman’s mouth as she sighed. “One day. Don’t have it by then and I’ll be forced to do something.” She returned her gaze to her book. “Can’t favour you too much or the others will get jealous.”

“Thank you for your magnanimity, Oh keeper of the keys,” Ayane bowed graciously. “And, what *others* do you mean? I’m not your sole guest?”

“The others being my old feet who’ll kick your arse. Generosity has limits.” she said, waving her pipe at her dismissively without looking.

Ayane let out a groan as one more pressing headache was given to her as she proceeded up to the second floor and entered her home. Her apartment was much like the Emerald City’s exterior. In that it may have been beautiful once, but time and several dozen attendants had worn down the inside into a chaotic mess that no landlord past or present had deigned to fix. Faux wooden wallpaper, sagging in parts, was slapped across the sides like cheap makeup. Several holes had already been punched through this façade and had bored into the plaster behind to expose the innards of the building for all to see. Some were large enough that Ayane used them as homes for small electric candle lights and other shining implements that were strung about the area. Smaller ones were used as places to hang whiteboards whose surface was now covered in pictures, notes and arcane symbols of various shapes and sizes, with many of them crossed out or half erased. Piles of obscure books and newspapers lay strewn around the floor to mingle with dirty clothes.

The only pristine thing visible in this chaotic maelstrom was a large bed in the centre of the storm, and it was here that Ayane flopped down on with a sigh. Her body bouncing lightly on the covers. She brought up her phone to her face and flipped through the photos of the day. She frowned at several static-filled images as she scrolled through, before finally resting on Rick. The feelings of the moment resurfaced, and she found herself struggling to process it. She certainly felt justified in her reaction to him, but at the same time she had been at the cusp of something.

“Just what did you want anyway?” She glanced around at her failed attempts at magic throughout her room, and she let out a huff of annoyance. “If he *could* do magic, why did he refuse at the time?” She thought back to the moment of her change, and remembered that it was something that *witch* did too.

Dropping the phone to her side she grasped her hair and growled. “Goddamn it, why can’t they just say it straight!”

*PING*

Her phone sounded out at her. She glanced at the screen to see a message from Goldblum splayed across it.

[ONE DAY!]

She laid staring at the message for a few moments before letting out a sigh. After today's events she wanted nothing more than to just process everything, but the thought of being thrown out of her home was something she couldn't ignore either.

"Come on Ayane, a short clip should be enough then you can get to worrying about it." she muttered.

*"And might help blow off some steam besides."*

Rolling off the bed she moved to clean herself up, pulling off her heavy clothes as she went and dumping them on the floor with the rest. A brief shower later and she emerged. Her face now matched the gleam of her latex body having removed the layers of concealer and makeup that allow her to appear normal. Reaching into a box she selected a bright pink set of latex lingerie; a thin pair of panties and a breast band with heart-shaped hole that gave a tantalizing view of her cleavage, complete with a pair of bands that wrapped around her thighs and squeezed them tight. A brief trip to a full-length mirror to examine herself and she quickly deem tonight's fashion sufficiently alluring.

Reaching up she pulled the band out experimentally. "Decent amount of give," she noted as she let go. The band snapped against her skin and sent a dull thud through her body. She then set about preparing her hair. Tucking her short black hair into a net, she covered it neatly with a bright pink wig that completed the task of hiding 'Ayane' from the world for one evening.

'Pink Bliss' now stood before the mirror. A name she hated inwardly, but the guise and associated change in personality was a requirement. And after so many months since the curse changed her life, she had learned to enjoy it. Alone in her room, she was free to exist as she was, however freakish she considered herself. There was no concern about the stuffiness of her clothes, the noise of her latex skin, and once she got going, even the days events and constant paranoia sank somewhere deep inside. Even just for a little while.

"Ready for a night to remember?" Lowering her volume and letting a soft rasp enter her usual voice in practice, as she then reached for an air pump and hose that sat beside her.

Her balloon physiology came with another addition. Adorning her thigh, in bright blue ink and forming a crescent moon, was a tattoo, and within the midst of its arc was a simple valve. Ordinary in design like many blowup dolls or pool toys, it's existence vexed her the most out of everything. She spent many months afraid of it, but in a mix of curiosity and during a low mood, slowly experimented with its use while fighting back the fear of what could occur if she was to be completely emptied. A fear that was apparently unfounded, for no matter how much she squeezed or pulled, no air would come out.

But she realized later she could put air *in*.

Sliding her hand down her thigh her fingers encircled her valve and popped it out. It still didn't feel like a true part of her, but the sensation of sliding in the nozzle of the hose was unmistakable, and she let out a soft, pleased sigh. Like it was 'right'.

Sitting down atop the bed she closed her eyes and allowed herself to focus on the feeling. The first press of the plunger always brought on a shiver as she felt the cold air flow into her hollow body in a way no living creature would ever experience. It always felt revolting at first, and yet, over time it always grew on her. Every press of the plunger slowly allowed her to surrender herself to her new

reality, as if she was pushing away the human side and giving in to the fact she was just a human-shaped balloon girl.

At first, she felt the resistance of her rubbery skin holding it all back, but as the pressure grew it soon yielded, and her body began to grow. Small tingling waves of pleasure shot across her skin, like the sort you would feel after stretching your muscles after a long day: pleasurable and warm. Ayane focused on whatever constituted these muscles in her body and forced the air to flow to where she needed it, and 'Pink Bliss' needed them lower. Her playful alter-ego had a much fuller lower half than herself.

Her thighs began to pulse larger with every gush of air. She felt her ass balloon beneath her on the bed; lifting her body higher with each push. Forcing herself to open her eyes, she watched herself fill out with idle interest. The pink bands wrapped around her legs sank ever so slowly into her body as her thighs swelled around the constricting material. She felt her panties pull tighter across her pussy as the straps pulled taut across her inflating body. Letting out another soft, pleased sigh, she reached down and gave her new limbs a squeeze. Her fingers sank into the soft, rubbery skin as she dragged them up her leg. Eliciting a high-pitched squeak and sending vibrations through her hollow form.

She lifted her new legs as she checked that her thighs were sufficiently round. "The stuff of boys dreams."

With a nod and a practiced smile, she was ready for her performance. A camera sat at the far end of her bed next to an old laptop. With remote in hand, she spread herself across her bed and took in one last breath to assert her persona over herself. Shoving 'Ayane' back behind a wall within her mind, she pressed a button and the small light on the camera began to blink rhythmically while the laptop whirred to life with a whine. A glance at the screen saw the string of comments begin to pour in as her pre-recorded introduction, a swelling bunch of pink balloons that gradually filled the screen, began to declare the stream was on.

[\*Bliss\* time!]

[EXCITED]

[Hey babe!]

"Hey guys. I know it's been a little while. Life came up and I wasn't really feeling it." She pushed out a soft rasp at the end of each word. "But I want to do a short stream anyway, because I'm feeling *awfully* empty, and *very* horny. I need someone to fill me up nice and *full*..."

*Squeeeeeeeak*

Her body sounded out as she drew her hand slowly up her inflated thighs. "Do you like my new outfit?"

"Mmgh... it's very tight." Curling fingers hooked teasingly beneath the straps on her panties and pulled them tighter. She spread her legs to the camera and allowed her audience a full view of her crotch as the material squeezed taught against her sex.

"But it could be tighter," she cooed as she slid her hands up to her modest chest. Tracing the underside of her breasts she cupped and lifted them. "Sooo much tighter."

Reaching behind her she pulled out her chosen toy for this evening's performance. "Think you all can help me with that?" The device was a simple hose with a dick-shaped rubber tip attached to a pump mechanism. Flicking a switch, the pride of a few weeks of boredom and practice shifted into life and thrust vigorously into the air. Each gyration coming with the unmistakable sound of air being released.

[New toy!]

[I bet I could do better babe!]

[EXCITED!!!]

She began sliding the tip of the dildo down across her breasts. “Fresh delivery of air tanks the other day. They are all backed up and ready to blow,” she said as the rubber toy descended past her belly button.

“Careful not to go too hard on me though. I haven’t had a good stretch in a while. I just might *explode* if you pump me too hard too fast,” she cooed. “Warm me up. Stretch me out, nice and slow.”

As the nozzle descended, she slowly raised her legs and spread them apart further. Sliding a finger slowly across the rubbery panties she hooked an edge and pulled it aside, exposing her bare pussy to her viewers. “I’m sure you’ll all control yourselves, right?”

*DING*

*PSSHHH!*

A donation chime sounded out and the toy jerked to life. It bounced in her hand roughly as the mechanism began to pump uselessly into nothing; blasting several gushes of air into her room and wasting her expensive investment. She shoved down the urge to roll her eyes, ‘Pink Bliss’ was an artful performer, and instead forced out a practiced giggle. “Well, someone couldn’t hold it in. Blowing your load too early there. Just wait a liiiittle more...”

“Not yet.” She teased herself with the very tip of the nozzle for a few more moments to warm it up. Sliding it across her folds as she slowly eased the toy inside.

“Mmng,” she let out a loud, exaggerated moan. She normally pleased herself quietly, and the feeling of the toy stretching her out was pleasurable enough, but she learned early on that the audience needed a bit of flair. Soon the dildo was firmly inside her. Holding it steady with one hand she reached up and squeezed her breasts in preparation.

Fully prepared and relaxed, she grinned to the camera. “Now. Blow up your balloon.”

*DING*

*DING DING*

*PSSHHH! PSSHHH! PSSHHH!*

Immediately the donations began to roll in, and the device surged to life. Cold, unfeeling air pushed into her body and began to fill her in a steady rhythm.

*Creeeeaak*

“Hhgh! That’s it. Pump this bitch up,” she cried as the first sounds emanated from her latex body. She tightened her belly and thighs to force the building pressure upwards towards her chest. The pink breast band began to dig into her skin as her tits began to swell.

Leaning her body forward she gave the viewers the full view of her cleavage past the heart-shaped hole as it deepened. Her breasts pulsing larger with every thrust of the mechanical dildo. She let out a gasp of pleasure as she felt the material dig into her two balloons as they pushed outwards. “Mmgh! Keep it up. I want to see this snap right off!”

*DING DING DING*

*PSSSSSSSHH!*

Another flurry of donations was the reaction she anticipated. Spreading her fingers across her ballooning assets she groped one expanding tit eagerly. Digging her nails into her skin and dragging them across in a chorus of groaning latex as it bulged out and over her straining top.

*Squeeeeeeak!*

*Crreeeeeeeak!*

“Mmmgh... You are making me so *big*. But you aren’t content with just this, right?” She pressed her chest and rubbed their swelling, pulsing masses together. Now the size of volleyballs, her new assets matched her thighs and together, granted her a curvy hourglass figure that drove her audience wild.

*CRREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAK!*

*DING DING DING*

*PSSSSSSSSHHH! PSSSSSSSSHHH!*

“How about you fill out down there a bit. I know there’s some ass men out there.” Turning over onto all fours she bent her back and thrust her butt towards the camera while using her inflated breasts as a rest. With her audience a full view the toy pumping away into her sex, she relaxed her body; the air flow shifted lower and bloated her thighs with two ass cheeks steadily filling the camera’s view. Large, pulsing round bubbles that swelled larger around her wet pussy.

The pleasurable stretching sensation surged across her body as the pressure grew inside. “MMMgh... more. Give me mooore.”

*DING!!*

A large chime sounded out in response to her pleading. Her toy increased in pace and force. The pump mechanism causing her body to gyrate uncontrollably. She dug her fingers into her bedsheets to steady herself.

“Oh! Ahhn!” A cry of both pleasure and surprise, she quickly clutched the dildo to keep it firmly inside her as it delivered its payload.

*PSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSHH PSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSHH!*

*CreeeeeeeeaK!*

“S-so generous! NNgh!” she cried. Ayane moaned loudly as the air rushed into her. She gritted her teeth to maintain some semblance of control as the pressure inside her built in time with her oncoming orgasm. She pushed back the desire to release it all. The longer the show the better, but she struggled to keep her eyes rolling back as her body began to vibrate with every thrust of the dildo. Every pump sending shockwaves to her core as it forced her body larger and larger.

*CRREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAK SNAP!*

Her panties were the first to blow. The straps cracking off her body and sending the poor garment off into one corner of the room. Her ass wobbled before her audience briefly before the pressure asserted itself and snapped it taught. Two firm round cheeks swelled together into a stretching, groaning heart-shaped expanse.

“Mmf... there’s o-one!” she cried.

*CRREEEAK ... SNAP SNAP*

The two thigh bands followed soon after. Her thighs were now two firm, round pillars that only inflated larger with every second.

“T-two!” she hissed through clenched teeth.

*CRREEEEEEAK!*

Her breast band protested but held firm. Rolling onto her back she allowed her audience a full view of her twin balloons as they pushed harder and harder against the pink latex strap that struggled to contain them. Basketball sized mounds creaked and groaned as they yearned for release. Her rubbery skin bulging from both sides of the tightening strap as it struggled to contain her.

“P-pump me bigger! I need them bigger! PUMP ME!”

*DING DING DING!*

*PPSSSSSSSSSSSH PSSSSSSH*

A chorus of donations sounded out as her audience granted her request. She felt heat grow from her toy as the slipshod mechanism struggled to maintain the speed and force. Her entire body rocked against it as it dutifully worked its function. Her chest surged in size, yet the band held together. Yearning for release from the tension she arched her back and thrust her ballooning tits towards the ceiling.

*CRREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAK!*

*BAMPH!*

The pink breast band blew off her chest like a rubber band. Her breasts rounded and bound outwards, now free of any constraints. Her nipples domed and sprung forth as the pressure rushed to fill in the added space. Now hidden behind her cleavage, her laptop became a distant memory as she succumbed to the growing pleasure that surged from her nethers and sent her mind into a blissful fog. Her audience were no longer a concern nor anything else, for she was finally there. She was just a balloon, begging to be filled to the brim.

There was only pressure.

*GROOOAN*

She pawed one of her rapidly inflating breasts like a toddler trying to catch a grip. Sucking in a breath, she revelled in the feeling of her chest pushing her hand away as she continued to stretch. “I’m nearly there... sooo tight! Sooo full!”

“I’m getting so big! I’m going to blow!” she yelled as her body trembled from the twin sensations mounting inside her; the growing pressure and the tingling that raced from her nethers.

The sensation pushed her to the edge, but sat teasingly at the brim. She needed more.

“BIIIIIGGGERR!” she pleaded, she wrapped her swollen thighs around the dildo and pushed it deeper. Needing to drink in every ounce of air it could give.

*PSSSSSSSSSSSH PSSSSSSH*

“Mmng...come...on,” she mouthed as her breasts stretched out like two beachballs attached to her front. The tension within her was driving her mad. She needed to release. Needed just one more push,



Something was wrong. Ripped out of the feeling of solace, she leaped to her feet and made to start putting her clothes on. Diving into her previously discarded piles she covered herself up in several layers of cloth once again. Hopping into her boots and snagging her bag she made for the door. Her panicked face went past her mirror, and she let out a hiss through her teeth. She needed to cover up the shine again.

Her expression scrunched itself as she fought the urge. “No, no, just go!”

Deciding on a half measure, she scooped up a hoodie and threw it on top of her already many layers. Looking much like a homeless person trying to bundle up for the winter, but fashion was far from Ayane’s mind as she ran for the door. Her fingers wrapped around the handle and pulled, but rather than the night sky, she herself face to face with a massive wall in place where the outside would be. It took a moment for her eyes to adjust and realize she was staring at a black suit.

“Jeez!” she cried in surprise and leapt back.

“Oh, good!” the wall boomed. A familiar deep voice that sent a chill down Ayane’s spine. The man’s shoulders spanned the threshold with his head hidden higher than the threshold of the frame, like a mountain obscured by clouds.

Ayane quickly pulled up her hood and covered her head as the man shifted. His face descended into view; A wave of curly black hair roiled down to his shoulders around what might have been a handsome face at one point, if not for a crooked nose that looked like it lost a fight with boulder several times over and was hastily hammered back into shape afterwards. A fedora sat upon his brow, while his eyes were obscured by thick, black sunglasses.

A wide smile spread across his features. “Good evenin’. Sorry t’bother you, but I *think* I was lookin’ for you.”

“O-kay?” Ayane did her best to keep the nervousness out of her voice. “Look, I got somewhere to be, and I’m not going buying whatever you are going to sell, so would you mind getting out of my way?”

“Just a sec.” His face ascended. “Hey! Boss! I think I found it!”

Ayane’s apprehension only grew. She crept forward and started to push the door closed while the man was distracted. She managed to get it halfway closed before the man’s massive shoe intercepted it.

“Hey, no need for the cold shoulder. Just want to have some words. I think you might be interested in what we got to say.” He smiled down at her again, but Ayane couldn’t feel any assurance from it. Instead, her thoughts drifted to her bag hanging from her shoulder. She did have a stun gun in case of emergencies in her bag, but looking at the hulk of a man she wondered if it would only tickle him.

Ayane hid behind the door all the same and continued shoving. “I can be just as interested if you get your foot out of my door.”

“I thought you had somewhere to be? Look, I’m just making sure you hear us out. ‘Sides, it won’t be the kind of topic you want anyone out here listening in to, y’know?”

“I changed my mind. Don’t feel like going out suddenly.” She continued to try and push the door, but she might as well have been trying to close it on a boulder. “And I’m not inviting you in, if that is what you are implying. Now get your fat foot out of the way or I’m going to call the police.”

The man simply chuckled. “With the phone in your bag there? I don’t think so. See, I got an little agreement with it. You ain’t callin’ nobody till we have words.”

Ayane frowned. “The heck does that mean? Are you saying you are from the mobile company?”

“Bureau of Paranormal Investigation and Containment., actually” A female voice approached from the side. “Hardman, back up and stop scaring the poor girl.”

“Yes ma’am.” The man shifted his shoe off the door and stepped back as a comparatively smaller, suited woman appeared to take his place before her. Her clothes cut a slender figure, but what struck Ayane most was her face. Her long blonde hair was tied into a long thin ponytail that swung well past her shoulders, and even in the dim lighting it shone unnaturally bright. Her sharp green eyes examined her from behind slender glasses. Ayane might have been struck at the sheer beauty, if not for the cold she felt from her gaze.

“Ayane Osborne?” the woman said flatly.

Ayane nodded.

“Told you I’d find it before you...” the man started.

The woman’s scowl shifted to her partner. “Hardman, what have I told you about running your mouth?” She snapped before gesturing to herself. “You may call me Kelly. The slab behind me is Hardman.”

Hardman doffed his cap at her with a grin.

Ayane kept hold of the door. “You said you were in a Bureau of...”

“...Paranormal Investigation and Containment, yes,” Kelly smiled at her in a way that never met her eyes. “I’ll get to the point. We know about your condition, and we are here to discuss how we can help. May we come in?”

Ayane became aware of her heart thundering in her chest. Everything felt off. “I’d rather you don’t.”

“That so? Well, all the same I suppose.” Kelly’s smile remained frozen on her face like it was an accessory she decided to wear this evening. “You’ve been afflicted by a curse. A hex. A voodoo charm. Someone in a big hat transmogrified your toes into silkworms, that sort of thing, yes?”

Ayane opened her mouth to respond by the woman plowed through. “The point is we know you’ve been in contact with *someone* of magical origin who then did *something* of magical nature, to *you*. And that is a problem for all of us.”

“So, a government agency really exists for this.” Ayane muttered.

The blonde woman’s eyebrows shot up. “Excuse me?” Kelly replied

Ayane opened the door wider. Her curiosity overcoming her anxiety. “I’ve been looking ever since that night. The rumours of the men in black were always related to aliens, but some asserted they’d be about the occult too! I always believed....”

Her thought train was interrupted as Kelly pushed into the door and walked into her apartment unbidden.

“Hey!” Ayane moved to block her but her path was blocked as Hardman stepped inside as well. His head brushing the ceiling as he peered around her room with interest. “I didn’t say you could come in!”

Kelly waved a hand dismissively behind her. Her ponytail flipped around as she went about examining the whiteboards and their rough scrawling. “Apologies, but I suddenly felt this conversation would be best behind...” her eyes fell on the various holes in the plaster. “Solid walls?”

Hardman let out a chuckle. “Man, looks like a bomb went off in here. Doesn’t a broad know how to clean?”

Kelly sighed. “Woman, Hardman, that’s ‘woman’, and you really shouldn’t judge like that” She chided, but went on examining Ayane’s collection of books strewn about.

Ayane’s felt her temper begin to rise as the pair went about invading her sanctuary. “Look, you said you wanted to help me, so if you could just stop invading my privacy for two seconds and get to the point of this visit?”

“Ah, right.” Kelly said as she unceremoniously dropped a book onto the floor. “What’s your condition?”

Ayane frowned. “I thought you knew my condition?”

“We know that you *have* a magical condition.” Kelly said as if explaining the most obvious thing in the world. “But there are a myriad of types out there, as I described. But, the *what* is important in magical problems, unfortunately.”

“Okay... Don’t you dare laugh,” Ayane said slowly. The two watched her closely as she reached up and lowered her hood, allowing her skin to reflect even the dim lighting of her apartment.

“Oho, well that’s a new one!” Hardman exclaimed and laughed, which drew a sharp look from Ayane. “A rubber chassis on a dame. Someone had some particular tastes!”

“Body, not ‘chassis’, and nobody calls girls ‘dames’ these days.” Kelly frowned as she leaned forward and tapped her chin. “Is it a complete conversion? Is all your body made of...”

“Latex, and yes...” Ayane focused on remaining calm under the scrutiny of the pair as she nodded. Having her cursed body under examination like some kind of alien in a movie was something she imagined happening in a far worse scenario that involved scientists and being strapped to a table. Instead, she had two government agents in her room, and she had yet to be drugged or had her mind erased by a bright light. It dawned on her that this was an opportunity.

“How did you two find me anyway?” Ayane asked.

Hardman was the one to reply. His face scrunched up in some bizarre attempt at focus as his eyes squinted at her. “Followed a weird feeling. Something real off about you, y’know? Like I’m starin’ at somethin’ that shouldn’t be there, but...”

“Hardman. Mouth.” Kelly snapped, and the large man clapped his mouth shut. “He’s a bit of a specialist in this, is what he is trying to say.”

“Right” Ayane said carefully, noting the look in the woman’s eye that told her to drop the subject. “So, can you remove the curse or not?”

Kelly tapped her cheek with a slender finger as she walked slowly over to her partner. “Mm, full body conversion. Definitely a D-Type, right?”

Hardman nodded. “Yep, Textbook D-Type. Subject must be brought to facility for proper treatment and documentation.”

“All the better.” Kelly reached into her pocket and brought out a gold pocket watch to click it open. Nodding with a smile before repocketing it. “Worry not Miss Osborne, you’ll won’t have to worry about that unusual condition for much longer. Hardman?”

“Excuse me? Type-D? Facility?” Ayane misgivings about the situation only rose further as Hardman stepped closer to her and reached into his suit. The man pulled out what looked like an orb of grey

clay. A simple face with large eyes and a wide grin was engraved on the otherwise perfectly smooth surface.

Ayane tried to step back but Hardman merely stepped closer and held the orb closer to her face. “Now I’m gonna need you to fix your peepers on this for just a bit.”

“What is that?” Ayane squeaked. Her eyes were drawn into the eyes engraved on the unusually grey surface. Its dull expression stared back at her with a dull expression as an itching sensation spread from the back of her head.

“Just someone to mind the place. Don’t want anyone casing the joint while you’re gone, and we can detect if your curse-giver comes back for you.” Hardman finally pulled the orb away from her eyes and placed it onto a cluttered table.

Kelly sighed, now standing by the doorway. “That’s ‘planning to rob her apartment’, Hardman. Now, Ayane, if you could please follow us to our vehicle and we can be underway.”

Thoroughly without any time to process the situation, Ayane’s eyes flicked between the two agents and the orb. “How long will I be gone?”

Kelly shrugged. “Every case is different. But fear not, even in the worst case, you will be walking out of here completely normal by tomorrow morning. That’s our business.”

Ayane pursed her lips. “Will I remember any of this?”

The blonde-haired woman laughed, because clearing her throat. “Pardon me, I forget you said you were a ‘fan’ of us. If everything goes as expected, and you behave, we won’t need to go *that* far. She performed a smile once more, again not reaching her eyes.

“Let’s get goin’” Hardman motioned for Ayane with one large, outstretched arm.

She searched her mind for any other option, and failed miserably. The alarm bells were still sounding off inside her head as she slowly stepped past the large man and approached Kelly, who nodded as she spun to leave. They three exited into the night air together and she was given a moment to lock her door. As they marched across the walkway to the stairs, Ayane saw their pitch-black van had parked near Ms Goldblum’s office. They had descended the stairs and crossed the parking lot when the office door slammed open ahead of them.

The elderly landlord stormed out in an aged, yellow nightgown and look of fury on her face, which changed to look of concern as it fell on Ayane who was sandwiched between the pair. “I called the police! They had no record of a ‘Residential Inspection Agency Division 6’ anywhere, especially one that did their checks at the dead of night!”

Kelly merely waved Hardman forward, who guided Ayane towards the van. “That must be a mistake by the local law enforcement, I assure you. And again, my apologies at the time of...”

“You must think I was born yesterday, you blonde harlot! They are on their way already.” Ms Goldblum marched so close to the woman that her hooked nose was squarely in the woman’s face. “Always respect the elderly, girl. I’ve experienced my share of cheats, liars and grifters in my life so you can consider me bullshit-proof. I smelled it on you the moment you walked in.”

The elderly lady moved towards Ayane. “I don’t know what they’ve told you girl, but it’s a farce. Come with me, and we’ll wait inside as the police deal with them.”

Kelly stepped directly into her path. “The police aren’t coming.”

Ms Goldblum frowned. “I just called them! They are...”

“And, I don’t appreciate the insult.” Her voice dropped any pretence of warmth. “You are interfering with my work, which I cannot tolerate.”

Ms Goldblum scowled and let out a short laugh. “And I’ll keep interfering! So shove off and…”

Any further tirades were silenced as all assembled watched Kelly lift a finger and drew a circle of golden light in the air. Her fingers danced in a mesmerizing display as the circle was filled with a swirling array of shapes that crisscrossed throughout and formed a pattern that hung in the air. A sight that the modern world would decry as fake and myth if they ever witnessed it on a photograph.

Ayane, however, was deeply familiar with it. She felt her breath hitch in her throat as the memories flooded back into her from the day. The invitation. The flashes of red hair and bright lipstick. The heat in the air and her curiosity as she agreed. Her excitement. The slender fingers as they traced beautiful colours of lights above her body. The indescribable sensation of her body being transformed into something unnatural, hollow and yet alive. The bright flash and the horror she felt afterwards as she woke up floating in a lake, with her body now a living, breathing latex doll.

It was magic.

Kelly tapped the hovering light and the glyph shot forward towards the old woman’s face. The night ceased to be in a flash of blinding light.

Ayane winced and rubbed her eyes. “Ms. Goldblum!”

There was no reply. Instead, Kelly’s voice cut through. “Respect your elders, indeed. But anymore delays and we will be risking our perfect record. Hardman, time to be messy.”

“Yes, Ma’am!” Hardman’s voice boomed as Ayane’s vision slowly returned to her. Perfectly in time to watch the large man’s arm wrap around her waist and her feet leave the ground.

“Hey! Hey! Don’t touch me! Ms Goldblum?!” she cried. Flailing her body uselessly as she was lugged over to the van. Her last glimpse of the elderly landlord was her face upturned towards the sky and a blank expression on her face. Her attention turned to the van as the side door was slid open to reveal an empty box bereft of any sort of comfort. The world flipped upside down as she was unceremoniously tossed in like a sack of refuse. She bounced against the wall of the vehicle and slid onto the floor.

“Just doin’ our job.” Hardman gave her a toothy smile as he slammed the door shut in Ayane’s face. The back of the van was indeed a bare box of metal with no chairs and tinted windows. The only source of light was a narrow window to the front that separated her from the front seats. The alarms in her head progressed into a full-blown panic. She grasped the door handle and pulled in vain. Already locked in.

“Fuck you both! You stupid motherfucking fucks!” She screamed at the top of her lungs as she pounded the walls. Her feet suddenly left her as the van lurched forward and she was sent tumbling to the floor. They were moving.

“I should’ve known you were part of the abduction conspiracies! People will *know* I’m gone! There’ll be searches! Inquiries!” she lied.

Heedless of the shifting vehicle she rolled to her feet and squished her face against the front window. She could see the two agents exchanged glances but remained silent. It was then Ayane realized she couldn’t hear them. Kelly’s mouth moved but there was no sound to be heard. She bounced her fist against the frontmost wall experimentally, and was rewarded by Kelly turning around to look at her through the window. Ayane mouthed the best insult she could imagine and gave a quick middle finger

before resuming her pounding on the wall. The fact it annoyed her captors was giving her a small amount of pleasure despite the uselessness of it.

Her small act of defiance stopped when Kelly raised a finger and started tracing in the air again. Ayane could only watch in nervous fascination as another glyph formed in the air above the woman's hand. Her thoughts turned to Ms Goldblum.

*"Is it the same? Am I going to just blank out?"* A tinge of doubt entered her thoughts as the golden lines latched together to form a different pattern than what she saw before. The spell apparently completed, Kelly gave the glyph a flick of her index finger.

*"What now?"* was all she managed to think before a humming ring of light materialized in front of her eyes with a flash that stung her eyes for the second time tonight. Startled, she fell onto her back, and was surprised to find the mysterious magical phenomenon followed her down. Attempting to swat it proved fruitless. Shifting to her elbow to close in on it only resulted in the thing hovering further away to sit just out of reach. Moving her head did little either, as it followed her vision like it was attached to the bridge of her nose. Mysterious at it was, she didn't feel much different. Certainly nothing like what she saw Ms Goldblum go through. The only thing she felt was a familiar buzzing in the back of her head.

A soft clack and Kelly's voice reverberate throughout her metal box. "You are quite thick-headed, I hope you know. Normally most would be out the moment their gaze fixed onto the light."

Ayane turned to see the woman peering through the solitary gap. Her temper flared. "In that I actually believe you both. I thought you might have been a decent people for a minute, so apologies for my thick-headedness. Where are you taking me?"

"We told you; to a facility for processing. We can't do much about that curse back in that sty you call an abode, especially with that irritating woman around."

"Ms Goldblum... What did you do to her?"

"Nothing serious. She'll come to in an hour or so depending on that wrinkled old brain, and everything will be back to normal and she won't have an inkling otherwise."

Ayane pointed at the floating ring. "Is that what this thing is meant to do to me?"

"No, we need your memories intact initially in order to get a profile of your cursemaker. This spell is merely my polite offer at giving you a pleasant journey. Afterwards though, that's another story, but rest assured you won't have to worry about anything. So, if you would stop resisting and *go to sleep...*"

"Mind erasure. I should've known." Ayane sighed. She pointed at the ring, which still sat between her vision and Kelly's face. "And if you mean this thing, then I don't know what to say. I'm not even trying to resist, so maybe you just suck!"

She felt a small bit of pleasure when Kelly's expression shifted into a frown. Lacking anything else to do, Ayane started to think about another mix of questions and insults when she felt the van descend.

"What!?" Kelly yelped as gravity soon went into effect. Ayane's feet left the floor momentarily as she rose to the ceiling as the vehicle dropped like a stone. It ended as quickly as it had started as the van landed squarely on a hard surface.

Suddenly light illuminated her from above. A circular hole was opening, no, *melting*, from the top of the van. It was like the metal was becoming a soft putty that quietly sank, and yet she couldn't feel

any heat. From within the moonlight a white-hooded figure landed in her van, their face obscured by the shadow of the cowl.

Ayane, thoroughly over any further unexplainable nonsense tonight, could only say the first thing on their mind. “What the fuck *now!*”

“Pardon, but I’m here to help,” said the figure. Their voice came out hollow and garbled like it was emitting from an old radio. They held out their hand. “If you want that... just take my hand.”

Dumbfounded, Ayane opened her mouth, but any planned response was cut short by Kelly’s shriek. “You are doing no such thing!” She was furiously trying to unbuckle her seatbelt and seemingly crawl through the small hole at the same time. “Interference with Sweeper business has consequences! Hardman!”

“Yes, Ma’am!” Hardman’s voice rumbled throughout the van, before Ayane was greeted by his fist punching through the wall separating them from the driver’s seat. Large fingers grasped the edge of the new opening and started peeling the metal aside like it was paper. “Apprehending the perp!”

“No! *I’ll* deal with them!” she growled as she continued to struggle with the latch. “Secure the girl and get me out of this stupid mechanism!”

“Sorry about this.” The hooded figure reached into their robes and produced a small glass jar filled with a thick blue substance. Ayane could have sworn the matter moved on its own as the container was raised and flung straight into the narrow window. The glass shattered and the blue gunk splatted messily around the opening.

For the first time tonight, Ayane watched Kelly’s expression shift from controlled into full-blown horror. “SLIME!?” was the one word she managed to shriek before the blob suddenly shifted into life and sucked itself into the gap with a loud, wet slurp before wrapping itself around her head. She twisted and flailed against it. Her fingers struggling to find purchase on the offending matter as her voice screamed out muffled words within.

“Hold on, boss! I’ll get it!” Soon Hardman’s hands joined Kelly’s in attempting to remove the creature, which left Ayane and the mysterious stranger ignored for the moment.

The hood turned to her again and held out a hand once more. “Look, I won’t force you to trust me, but I can take you away from here.”

Ayane’s glance flicked between the chaos in the front of the van and the offered hand. “This isn’t some kind of ritual where if I agree you just... I dunno... force me into servitude.”

Though she was unable to see their face, the figure quirked his hood sideways as if considering, or thinking, she wasn’t sure, before it shook side to side.

“N-no, nothing like that at all! If any event, please make a decision quickly!” they said.

“Okay! Okay! Look, I’ve been through a lot tonight!” she blurted out. Ayane wanted nothing more than to just run off on her own. She wanted more time to think and weight her options. Her internal alarm bells were screaming at her loudly, but taking a glance at the opening revealed the van had descended deep into some kind of smooth hole.

A hasty decision was made, and her hand was soon wrapped in the stranger’s own. “Fine, FINE! Just get me out of here and nothing else, okay?!”

The hooded figures grip tightened a little around her own before they bent down and scooped her up. “Grab on to my neck and hold tight.”

Ayane did as instructed, adjusting her bag to ensure it was still with her and wrapping her arms around their shoulders, while the figure stepped back and looked up towards the night sky. She took one more brief glimpse at the front of the van. Kelly was still wrestling feebly with the slime around her face. Hardman had managed to clear enough off it that her nose was free and she was furiously snorting out green coloured muck. Her eyes met with Ayane's in a fierce glare of pure rage past the translucent goo just as the hooded figure bent down and a small light flared at the base of their shoes.

Then everything was a blur.

“WhoooaAAAH!” Ayane let out a shriek as they ascended into the night sky. The road was far below them, with the van and its van-shaped hole growing smaller by the moment. Soon she had full view of the rooftops of even the tallest buildings in her dingy suburb, had risen to the height of the buildings around them. “We are flying?” WE ARE FLYING?!”

“Not quite, jumping. Keep holding tight, we are going to do this a few more times.”

They did exactly that as they alighted on top of a nearby roof. They barely touched the surface before another light flashed from the strangers' feet and propelled them skyward once again.

Ayane felt her nerves settle and the experience of their 'jumping' was not so worrisome. “Where are you taking me?”

The hooded mysterious figure kept their gaze forward, even as they spoke. “For now, just as far from those two as possible to escape the range of their perception.”

“And then?” Ayane asked.

“We can talk.”

“Is there a reason we can't talk now?”

Another rooftop, and another jump. “Well, to be honest, this is not as easy as it looks. Just a few minutes and...” he halted his speech as he repeated the process, this time angling their leap into another direction. “... then I won't have to focus so hard on the timing. So just, trust me until then, okay?”

Ayane resisted the urge to just reach up and yank the hood. “You are a complete stranger with no face. The only thing I trust so far is that you aren't a friend to those other two. I still don't know if you are the worse option! So, sorry for not wanting to wait.”

“You'll just have to bear it then...” Another jump. “Unless you want me to risk dropping you while I suffer a horrible, fatal landing somewhere.”

“All the same to me. I'd probably just bounce.”

“Well, good for you then.”

Ayane decided to keep quiet for the moment. Not wanting to watch the dizzying heights they were flying, or jumping above, she instead tried to focus on the face of her would-be saviour. But the hood was just pure black shadow, as if there wasn't a head or anything human at all filling the insides of the cloth. Another magical curiosity. She felt a small tinge of excitement amidst all her apprehension.

It was a few minutes until they spoke again. “Here we are. Now, hold tight, and let me concentrate!”

Ayane turned to look ahead. They had sailed over to where the city met the sea. Residential housing and hotels soon gave way to industrial parks, with their blackened smokestacks shadowing the night sky. They were in the middle of descending towards a brick warehouse.

Rather quickly.

Ayane's panic grew as they shifted their body forward and fell headfirst. Her arms tightened around their neck. "Hey, what are you doing?!"

"H-ey, to-o... tight!" The figure's voice, though garbled, came with the unmistakable shake of nervousness, along with their struggle to talk.

*Creeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeak*

Ayane felt her breathing quicken and her breasts began to inflate larger against the figure's chest.

"K-knock that off! I need to... focus!"

"We are going to crash into it!" Ayane shrieked.

"Not if... you.. let me focus!"

Their destination grew to meet them rapidly as they dove towards it like a missile. The figure extended their hand forward as if to catch them. A light began to shine from the palm of their hand as the sheet iron rooftop spread to encompass their vision.

Ayane braced herself for the crash.

*FLORMP!*

Rather than a calamitous bang as she was expecting, the roof sank in like it was made of water. It was as if the rusting metal was transformed into a soft batter as it absorbed the impact. It stretched out and surrounded them both as they sank deep, slowing down their momentum until;

*Pop!*

They burst through to the other side. Landing softly onto the concrete floor. The musty smell of boxes and crates assaulted her nose as the air rushed in to fill the space from their abrupt landing. Even in the dim light of moon through the high windows the warehouse was a sprawling maze of stored merchandise. Walls of stacked wooden crates piled high in orderly squares surrounded them, while further in was a labyrinthine array of even higher shelves. Cardboard boxes of all sizes were shoved this way and that along their heights. Some looking like they had been forgotten, with battered and squished outsides caused by long lengths of time sitting at the unfortunate bottom of a pile.

Her mysterious savior let out a giddy laugh. "Hah! See! Nothing to fear. I had it all planned..." Any further words were cut off as Ayane had reared back her hand and sank her fist into the hood. She was relieved to strike something solid even as her hand seemingly vanished into whatever magic covered their face. The stranger's head shot back from the impact and his hands slipped enough for her to roll free.

Scrambling to her feet she backed away. "You made me think I was going to *die!*"

She didn't imagine her rubbery fist did much, but the fact they were holding up one hand defensively while the other had vanished into the hood as they bent over gave her a little assurance that she could cause *some* pain if required. "Gods! You really have an odd way of showing gratitude. I thought you said you'd be fine if the worst happened!"

"Yeah, if you somehow dropped me! You made me think you'd use me as an inflatable cushion to land on!" she snapped.

They continued to massage what she assumed was their 'face'. "I'd never! And besides, if I told you we'd be fine because I was going to turn the metal roof into a softer substance, would you have believed me?"

"I might have!" Ayane snapped. "I've been lied to, abducted and tossed around in the back of a van like luggage by a pair of magical goons who stepped right out of a conspiracy paper! At this point I wouldn't be surprised about anything!"

"That's reassuring," he said as he reached up and pulled down his hood. Ayane's eyes widened as a shock of red hair revealed itself, along with a face that was all too familiar. Rick gave a weak smile and rubbed his nose again. "Because I assume you have a mountain of questions and I'd honestly prefer not to be punched or shocked again."

"You!" Ayane backed away. "But why? You were *real* chummy to those two before. Is this some kind of competition!?"

He held up his gloved hands, which allowed Ayane a good look at a pair of glyphs embedded into the white leather of their palms. Feeling dread set in as her eyes followed the now all-too-familiar swirling patterns she reached into her bag.

"Don't you *dare*," she growled as she gripped her stun gun and brandished it.

Rick blinked, and then looked at his hands as if he just realized they were attached to him. "Oh! Don't fret. This is only useful on non-living things, but if it helps." Without another word he reached over and yanked one glove off his hand, then the other, before tossing them over to her feet. "See, now I am completely disarmed, unless you are nervous about the ones on my shoes."

She looked down at the pair of innocuous clothing suspiciously, but kept her weapon pointed at him all the same. "How do I know you won't just... do the light stuff like *she* did. Draw one of those things in the air with some weird finger waving."

To her surprise, he let out a loud sigh and rubbed the back of his neck. "Because... I am entirely incapable of that. What she did is not very easy to do."

"Not easy, but not impossible! You could..."

"I said I am *incapable*. Completely, utterly incapable. Not that you'd believe me, but what she did is like... trying to paint a picture with air as a canvas while colouring it as you go simultaneously. It's beyond me. So, I use more mundane methods."

She looked down at the gloves by her feet. "You put it on things?"

He nodded. "Clothes, shoes, tools. Paper is a good medium in a pinch for basics, but you can't infuse much into it or it'll just burn. Metal is decent, but takes a lot of time to scribe, and then there's the problem of not singeing your fingers as you use..." he waved his now bare hand at her as he caught himself. "Look, all you need to know is I can't. In fact, all I can do right now is what you've seen."

Ayane looked up at the ceiling. The warped tube of metal that marked their descent still hung down low on the ceiling. It had resumed its regular solidness and now groaned ominously above them as the roof bent from the now uneven weight dangling down towards the floor.

"You jump real high and do... whatever that is?"

"*Bound* and *Flux*, yes. Turning non-living solids into, well, unsolid," he added. He shrugged towards her. "You may not know it, but both are basic as they come, which is exactly why I used them to run like a madman rather than try to fight."

She let out a laugh. “*This* is basic? I think it’s amazing.”

It was his turn to laugh. “You really think that?”

“I’ve tried to do magic for the longest time to fix…” she gestured to herself. “This. Even something as simple as light, and nothing. And you are telling me that leaping across a city and morphing metal into *this* is just basic?!”

“Yes. Now, unless you want the long breakdown of magical theory and potential, would you mind we move onto more important matters?” He gave her sheepish smile and cleared his throat. “Like, letting me redo my horrible first impression.”

Keeping her stun gun in his direction, Ayane realized she finally had time to think after everything, but realized she still had no clue at what was going on or what would the best course of action be. A part of her still urged her to just turn and run away from it all, resigned that all the magical world was just full of crazies.

But then, that would mean spending the rest of her life afraid of pins. And this guy had been more forthcoming than the other two. “You can’t do any worse than acting like a stalker. So… sure.”

“Appreciated.” He gave a gracious bow. “My real name is Ellerick Lapin. And yes, I know those two. We actually work for the same agency, but different departments.” At that, he gave a pause and watched her expression carefully.

“The Bureau of Paranormal… that isn’t it’s real name either is it?”

He shook his head. “No. Officially, we are part of Rimwatch, East Branch. What we are responsible for…”

Ayane reached down and picked up one of the gloves to inspect it closer. “Is hiding magical goings on and other things?”

“Catching rogues and criminals, controlling artifacts and the like. If someone so much as drops an alchemical concoction, we’d be there to clean up the mess, arrest the brewer and make up some reason as to why whatever chaos ensued was completely normal.”

“So, hiding any facts about magic,” she said. Rubbing her finger across the glyph inscribed on the touch leather idly. She felt a pang of frustration at the shape and lines. Their existence running counter to everything she had been struggling to grasp feebly at for months. She was so far off the mark. “So where do I fall in to your *work*.”

Rick, *Ellerick*, sucked in a breath in preparation for what was likely to be an awkward subject. “Well, you are an Altered. A cursed non-magic individual.”

“And that means…”

“You are kind like living evidence, and not to mention a walking affront to the rules about non-interference or advanced magic on this side.”

Ayane rolled the glove around in her fingers. “So, I was meant to be locked away in some container for a trial…”

“Not… quite. Eastwatch already have plenty of evidence against who cursed you, though they don’t know your connection to them as of yet, which means as soon as you would have arrived at the facility, you’d be just processed and documented.” Ellerick laced his fingers together. “Which brings me to why I intervened and pulled you out of that van.”

It was her turn to watch his expression quietly. He looked at her with a level gaze, but he shifted awkwardly from foot to foot as he waited for her response.

But it was the tone in his voice as he said ‘processed’ that told her enough. “I wasn’t going to be cured. Was I?”

He shook his head. “No. As a Type-D, you were to be ‘dusted.’ Essentially drained of whatever magical energy or curse is currently involved in your body and then disposed of, because the only one who can remove a curse like yours it is the original caster who could be Gods know where.”

Ayane felt a punch to her gut as the information confirmed her earlier misgivings. “Fuck... Goddamn it!” She tossed the glove at Ellerick in a fit of anger, which he caught deftly. “Goddamn magical bullshit! Is your whole world just full of assholes just wanting to screw me over?!”

Ellerick looked at her sadly and kept silent.

“I used to love the idea of magic, you know. Before all of this.” She yelled, heedless of how her voice echoed throughout the warehouse. “But fuck me for being curious, I guess. Get cursed by one magical bitch then just swept under a rug because I exist afterwards. What are we regular people to your kind? What am I to you?!”

“Someone who needs help.” He pulled the glove back over his hand. “And, if you are willing, a way to change how my organization works.”

“That’s why you saved me? To help with your workplace that regularly just removes people like me? *Thanks so much.*” Ayane scoffed, still simmering.

Ellerick took a step towards her. “I know how it looks, which is why I said it. I made the mistake of trying to dance around things earlier.” He reached down and massaged his side. “With your help, I think we can change how we deal with Altered like yourself.”

Ayane looked him firmly in the eye. “You think you can do that?”

His red hair bobbed as he nodded. “I have a completely revolutionary magical array, I think. But I couldn’t get approval for it.” He dug into his cloak and pulled out a book, which he immediately began flipping through. “See, it requires access to some special equipment and tapping into the mana reserves, and on top of things, it needs a proper subject, which are also underneath a whole lot of red tape. Approval for interaction with non-magic folk, that’s you, for the duration of the trial, along with finding proper lodgement for...”

“Wait, stop, please.” She held up her hands in surrender. “You are hurting me.”

Ellerick stopped immediately in shock. “Oh, sorry! I had no idea I did something...”

Ayane let out a sigh. “You just revealed the magical world is just regular bureaucracy, and it has shattered my image of it into a thousand pieces. But will this end up turning me back to normal or not?”

“Oh, of course.” He quickly flipped to a page that had the most complex glyph she had seen tonight. It made the ones on his gloves look like a child’s doodling. “This, if applied and provided with proper mana, along with you being present with that mark on your thigh, *should* reveal the exact location of the curse marker by following it’s connection.”

Ayane clapped her hands. “Great, why not do it here and now?”

“I can’t do it on my own.” Ellerick slumped and snapped the book shut. “It requires more mana than most individuals can provide. Maybe only the highest caste of elves could do it alone.”

The mention of elves lit Ayane's eyes up. "So, let's go find one!"

"Find an elf?" Ellerick's stared at her like she just suggested jumping off a cliff. "If you had any knowledge of how things worked you wouldn't even dare say such a thing. You do *not* want to meet one of them."

"What's wrong with elves?!" Ayane exclaimed. "They are always depicted as beautiful and majestic."

"Oh yes, very beautiful, very majestic, and *very* much the kind to emphasize those two points in particular and roll everything else up in a rug then set it on fire to hide the evidence," Ellerick folded his arms. "If you don't trust me on anything else, trust me on 'You don't want to meet one.'"

She sighed. "So, chalk one more thing to be disappointed about with magic. So, since you can't grab an elf, what do we need?"

"We need access to Rimwatches facilities."

"You saved me from Rimwatch... to take me to Rimwatch?"

Ellerick nodded. "Yes, well, there's a whole lot involved to get you in there. But I know if we can enact my formula we can prove we don't need to dust Altered, which includes you, and we'll be ensuring we can catch your cursemaker at the same time. You'll be back to normal. So, will you help?"

Ayane had a mountain of misgivings, but the night had already taught her that she couldn't rely on her own gut when it came to magic. She didn't know nearly enough to make any judgement about anything. She looked at Ellerick, who was standing quietly awaiting her decision. His bright blue eyes reminded her too much of a dog who had locked onto something.

"Ugh! I don't know!" She cried and rubbed her hands through her hair. "I barely know anything about you, but I barely know anything about magic apparently! And I'm supposed to just, trust you dragging me into a secret facility to *maybe*..."

"More than maybe! I'm sure of..."

"Yes! Yes. But still, it's not easy for me. And I ticks me off!"

She realized she could be her own personal little guidebook to the world, if he was being truly honest, but a part of her still doubted. His bright red hair reminded her too many of the Witch that screwed her life up.

"You said your group knew enough about my cursemaker. What was her name?"

He blinked. "Deydessa. Deydessa Moontide. Why? She didn't introduce herself?"

She shrugged. "Not by her full name. Look, it's nothing."

"So..."

"I.."

*Brrrrrrrrrrrrriiiiing! Brrrrrrrrrrrrriiiiing!*

Her answer was cut off but loud ringing emanating from her bag. The shrill noise filling the relative silence of the surroundings gave her all-too strained nerves another shock.

"Who the..." she dug into her bag. The phone screen was on but no number was displayed. "I swear if it's some kind of call-scam I'm going to scream."

She didn't get a chance to answer it, as Ellerick quickly yanked the phone off her hands and tossed into the shadows. He reached for her wrist but caught himself barely. His once pleading eyes now looked dead-serious.

"We need to hide, now!" He sped past her and ran behind a stack of crates, beckoning to her.

Remembering the event earlier in the day she followed and slide behind the cover along with him.

"What is it this time?!"

Ellerick was massaging his face with a hand. "I forgot you had a phone."

**BANG**

A sudden explosion of wood, metal and debris erupted from ahead of them. Dirt and dust from the surroundings soon enveloped them like a cloud from a bomb explosion. Ayane covered her head as bits and pieces bounced messily off her.

A groan emanated from the dust cloud. "Couldn't you have slowed down a tad, boss? I can feel my teeth ringing."

"Quiet. The entry point is unmistakable. You are sure they are here, Hardman?" said a familiar voice.

"Positive, boss. Gave her a bell a moment ago. In fact..." The large man stepped into view. "You still here, sweet thing?"

*Brrrrrrrrrrrrriiiiing! Brrrrrrrrrrrrriiiiing!*

Ayane's phone responded from some far corner of the warehouse like it had been waiting for him. A fact that gave her so many questions. She could hear heavy footsteps close in on it before the loud ringing silenced itself.

"Here she is."

"Laying on the ground forgotten and *alone*. Where is our quarry, Hardman..." Kelly hissed.

Hardman's laugh resounded around them. "Hah, don't you worry. I know one of em is in here somewheres. I gots that weird feelin' again like before."

"Somewhere? Can't you give anything more precise? Also fix the lights, will you?"

"Yes, Ma'am!"

Suddenly their surroundings were illuminated as the warehouse lights flicked on. Though old and dim, they helped the shadows of the now familiar pair of figures grow as they trudged through the dust and wreckage caused from their arrival. Kelly, her once neat hair now dishevelled and messy as if she had just stepped out of a dirty shower, her eyes narrowed into slits as she scanned the surroundings. Hardman was grinning the same as ever.

"To the bastard who interfered with Sweeper business, you have, of course, violated several known laws!" Kelly shouted. "Obstruction of Concealment Activities, Aiding an Altered or Cursed Dull, Damage of Sweeper Property..."

"Oh, the damage to the van from the fall wasn't that bad." Hardman chimed in. "If we talkin' damage, I did a number on the interior with my fist, y'know."

"Hardman, mouth." She snapped, her face twisting into fury. "And finally, unofficially, you royally messed up both my perfect service record and my hair you varlet!"

Ayane glanced at Ellerick, who was slowly pulling the obscuring hood back over head. His face held a perturbed look as it vanished into shadow. He bent low and beckoned as he slowly slid further back into the warehouse.

“The other violations may have resulted in a good few decades of incarceration, but the last one is unforgivable... unless you deign to show your face and return the Altered to our care right this moment.” She held out her palms and a pair of glyphs formed. Dust and particles began to slowly swirl around her as small balls of glowing wind formed above her head.

Creeping along behind him, Ayane kept her head as low as possible and concentrated on keeping her movements controlled, slow and above all free of friction. Her heart beat rapidly in her chest, but she kept a careful control of her breathing. She was *not* getting caught because her tits decided to mimic a blowup doll.

“Oh, and to the Altered girl, if you are willingly trying to escape with your mysterious helper, which I will presume from the silence, that is also a violation, which will be dealt within our current surrounds.

They had just managed to sneak behind another impressive stack of crates before the point ahead of them exploded. Wood, packing foam and the contents violently exploded outwards before hurling down the warehouse together in a wild storm. Ayane clapped the hands over her mouth and shoved down the urge to yell in surprise.

Ayane felt her ears ringing as she covered her head. “What the hell was that?!” she hissed.

“Wind magic,” Ellerick whispered back. “Applied forcefully.”

“Can’t you do something about her!? Blast them with a fireball or something!”

“Fireball?! Look, I *told* you you’ve seen everything I can do!” He held up his glyphed gloves and waved them at her. “We *need* to run. I never planned on fighting them! I can’t fight them!”

“Then let’s escape. Jump out!”

He shook his head. “They’ll follow us. She’s likely faster than me with wind magic!” He changed direction and started creeping further back into the warehouse away from the Sweepers. “If we keep out of sight, we could have a chance to...”

A ringing sound and another shockwave blew through the crates they had just passed. A circular hole bent shelves and cardboard boxes out of the way as another wild blast of wind rent through the warehouse like a cannonball. She resisted the urge the gag as a rain of shattered cans of rancid dogfood splatted down around them. Their cover was like an island in the middle of a storm.

Ayane let out a muffled growl and pulled out her stun gun. “If you aren’t going to do something, I will.”

Ellerick’s faceless hood snapped back to her. “What?! You’re insane! She’ll blast you to shreds before you even get close!”

“Better than being shot to pieces running!”

“Oh, there’s no need to go that far.” Hardman’s voice boomed. Ayane’s eyes widened in shock as Hardman’s arm erupted from the crates behind them and snagged her by her hood. Her feet left the ground as the rest of the large man stepped through the crates with the nonchalance of someone walking through rain. “Found ‘em, boss!”

“Ms Osborne!” Ellerick leapt up and swung his foot directly into the man’s groin to little effect.

Hardman merely smiled. “Now that’s just rude.”

Ellerick’s shoe flared with light. “I’m sure it was.”

The spell activated and Hardman bent forward as his pelvis was sent flying violently back, though he remained firmly standing. Similarly, Ellerick was also sent violently flying in the opposite direction. His cloaked body sliding across the concrete until he tumbled out of their cover and into plain view.

“E...” Ayane cried out before catching herself. “Rick!”

“There you are!” Kelly’s voice sounded out. “Hardman, they’re mine. You take the Altered!”

“Already got her!” he yelled.

Ayane lifted her arms up and slid out of the oversized hoodie with ease. As her feet landed on the hard ground she spun and planted her stun gun directly into the giant’s side. The electricity crackled noisily as she squeezed the button.

Rather than scream or hunch over, Hardman looked back even as the scent of electrically singed cloth wafted around the two. “Scratch that, I don’t got her.” He yelled before looking down at Ayane once more. “That feels nice and all, but I’m gonna need you to get back in my hand now.”

“Oh, come on!” Ayane cried as the man made to grab her again.

Ellerick’s voice cried out. “Run!”

She found her feet were already moving as she stuffed her useless means of protection back into a pocket. Speeding through one of the holes created by one of Kelly’s blasts of magic she ran further into the warehouse. Ayane silently hoping that whatever power gave the man the strength to shove through substance with ease did not make him faster on top of that. She sped past stacks of wooden crates until her surroundings were shelves upon shelves of saggy cardboard. Weaving and turning in a random zigzag with the simple hope to gain distance.

*CRASH CRASH CRASH*

As she turned into one more isle, a rhythmic symphony of destruction sounded out ahead of her. The contents of the shelf ahead shuddered briefly before exploding outwards as the giant man plowed through the contents to cut her off.

Ayane fell backward as she forced her momentum to change course. “Are you for real?!”

Brushing a small bit of wooden chips off his shoulders, though the rest of him was now covered in detritus. “No, I’m Hardman,” he said as he strode toward her with arms wide open. “Where do you think you goin’ anyways? I never forget a feelin’, see? Run wherever you like, cause there ain’t nowhere we can’t find you.”

“It took you six months to find a balloon girl walking around in broad daylight. If that’s your best then running sounds like a great option!” Deciding to follow through with that declaration as she turned and started sprinting the other way. “And hiding won’t matter if you and your crazy partner keep smashing up this place! Someone’s bound to notice!” she shouted back.

He chuckled at her as he lumbered into a run. His feet thudding on the concrete loudly. “You forget who we are already? We have ways, so why don’t you be smart and just give up.”

She clicked her tongue. She knew the man wasn’t lying to her. There was likely no help coming, at least for themselves. If this was how Sweepers usually operated there’d be news and evidence all over in the age of media. But for all her searching there was no evidence of even a bit of paranormal or

magical activity. Her mind raced for options as she continued running headlong through isle after isle. Their enormous shelving stretching up high above her head like walls of a labyrinth.

“An exit! I need an exit!” she panted. She was sure she could outrun him in a straight sprint. Then she could find help that didn’t need a phone and...

*BAM*

Hardman’s arm erupted from just ahead of her. Unable to slow down from her headlong sprint she sank down to her knees and slid. His enormous hand whipped down and snagged her by the front of her clothes. As the man lifted, Ayane repeated her earlier trick and raised her arms. She slid free of several layers of muffling protection and emerged in just a plain black tank top. She tumbled to the concrete as the rest of the man shoved his way through.

He waved her garments at her mockingly. “Running don’t seem to be workin’ for you.”

“Like I’m going to just sit down and get stuffed back into a van.” She pointed a finger at him. “I know everything now about being a ‘Type-D’ now. You seriously were just going to write me down and then erase me? If you are so good at chasing people why don’t you go find the bitch that did this in the first place?!” she yelled.

Hardman shrugged at her. “Hey, I don’t write the protocols, just enforce ‘em. ‘Sides, we are protecting a whole secret world here. Lotsa folks would be in trouble if *your* folks learned we all exist.” He resumed walking towards her. “So what if we got to snuff a few stray Altered?”

Ayane bit her lip as she struggled to come up with a sensible plan. She hated to admit it but he was right in that running wasn’t working. As the man’s heavy footfalls drew closer the thought of his grip encircling her again sent a shiver up her spine. Hopping to her feet she went with the first idea that came to mind.

Jumping to the side she latched onto the shelves and started climbing.

Hardman tipped his hat as he looked up at her. “Really? You goin’ that route?”

Ignoring him, Ayane clambered up till she was nearly at the very top of the enormous shelving. “Fuck you. I’m still thinking!”

“That right?” He said as he wound his arm up. “Well, good luck with that.”

And then he proceeded to give the entire shelf a haymaker. Dragging his arm through both metal and merchandise like a wrecking ball, Ayane felt her perch begin to shudder as the supports were ripped away by sheer force.

“You’re insane!” She screamed as her shelving lurched forwards. She quickly scrambled up to the summit of her makeshift highpoint just as it began to crumble. Not really thinking about it, she planted her feet squarely on a heavy box and pushed herself free. She sailed through the air briefly before onto with the opposite side of the isle as the previous one careened towards her.

“Climb climb climb!” Her mind screamed to her as she scabbled upwards. The sounds of twisting metal drew near as she felt the briefest brushes of weight against her shoe as she pulled herself clear. The two sets of overlaid shelves collided and the whole structure shook from the impact. Metal cracked and warped and her handhold bent forward. Ayane could only let out a gasp as the heavy containers slid towards her and shove her off to join their descent. As she fell, she had a brief glimpse of Hardman’s grinning face as it vanished under a pile of falling debris.

Now airborne, Ayane reflexively curled up into a ball. She felt her shoulder collide with something cold and wet as she then was sent tumbling across a new landscape in the process of being born. Her

world was filled with a cacophony of all manner of destruction as boxes of contents spilled as they crashed into the concrete. Liquids splatted onto concrete. Metal crashed on metal. Cardboard and paper were ripped apart as a domino effect took hold. She kept herself tucked up until the sounds and their promises of a swift end finally relented.

“I survived?” She opened her eyes tentatively and found herself at the foot of a chaotic mess that rose up in front of her. Letting out the breath she had been holding, she was assaulted by a pungent aroma that caused her to gag immediately.

“Ugh! What is this?!” She turned to find her shoulder now entirely red and dripping. She panicked briefly, before a quick wipe revealed it to be paint. “The smell...oil paint? Great...” she groaned, but was thankful it wasn’t something more serious.

She looked at the newly formed mountain formed where her pursuer had been just a moment before. The man was crazy, but Ayane couldn’t dismiss the thought of him smiling while digging his way out. She realized running alone wasn’t going to work if they could just plow through everything to get to her.

“*Stun gun won’t work on him. Can’t run from him.*” She let out a frustrated groan and smacked herself in the cheeks. “Why didn’t I just get an actual gun or something!” As her hand came away, she realized she had just given her cheek a new red handprint. “Goddamn it!” Another wave of the nauseating smell washed over her, and for a brief moment she saw a shudder from within the pile. Hardman was digging his way out already.

Whether it was the fact she was out of options, or the rancid smell now filling her nostrils, Ayane came upon a desperately stupid idea. She spied a pile of white containers smashed against the concrete, their rainbow of oily paints slowly emptying out across the area and filling the air with more of the fumes.

“Come on...” she groaned. She looked upwards at the remains of the once great shelving and was elated to find a whole row of containers still seated high above. The problem was that everything below was twisted wreckage with no handholds to speak of. She cursed whatever non-existent force was working against her luck tonight and looked for anything that could serve as a way up.

*Hisssssssssssssssssssssss*

She turned towards the faint sound; amongst the debris a pile of tanks lay strewn about the floor. One had ruptured and was busy gushing out its contents amongst its fellows. Her idea suddenly grew another desperately added addition that elicited a groan from her, but the thought of his grip closing around her once again stemmed any further forms of protest in her head as she sped over to pick up a gas canister. The cylinder lacked any sort of tube or attachment of any sort that could work with her cursed nozzle, but she felt herself understandably open to new experiments.

“*If breathing too quickly can blow me up...*” She thought to herself as she locked her lips onto the cold metal and twisted the valve.

*PSSSSSSSSSSSHHHHHHH*

Immediately a cool rush entered her body as the air began to fill her. To her surprise it felt entirely different than breathing. She felt her body drink from the cylinder like it was the most natural thing in the world.

“Mmph” Despite the circumstances she couldn’t help but let out a soft, muffled gasp as the pressure mounted and her body began to stretch. Tensing all her lower body tightly she urged the air to fill her chest alone. Her tank top begun to bulge as her breasts slowly filled the space within. Her toes curled as her bare nipples pressed up against the soft fabric and pushed the material outwards.

*Creeeeak*

She hated how good it felt at the present. Wanting nothing more than to focus on the immediate problems even as her mind filled with a pleasurable fog.

“So, you wizened up?” The mound before her shifted. Several battered crates tumbled off the top and were sent rolling haphazardly down the side as Hardman emerged. His suit now more suitable for a construction worker than some secret agent, it was encrusted from head to toe with woodchips, dust and several kinds of likely hazardous liquids. Both his hat and sunglasses were now gone, which allowed Ayane a clear view of his hard grey eyes.

“And here I was thinkin’ I’d have to...” He finally laid his stony eyes on her and her current plan in motion, and for the first time a frown descended on his features. “Uhh...”

Ayane was thankful for the momentary bewilderment. “*Too slow too slow too SLOW!*” Grunting, she twisted the valve as far as it would go, and was rewarded as her cheeks swelled around her mouth.

*PSSSSSSSSSSSSHHHHH*

*CRREEEAK*

Her tank top snapped snug to her body as her tits fought for space inside the rapidly tightening confines. She added inches to her bust in seconds. She never blew herself up this fast before, she never dared out of fear for losing control of the situation. Experiencing it for the first time the feeling was overwhelming. Fighting to stay upright as every part of her tingled with the growing pressure. Stretching, groaning, *creeeeeking*.

*CRREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAK*

Her rubbery skin bulged around every gap in her dwindling top. The straps sank into her body like the ropes on a hot air balloon now destined to move skyward. Already surpassing the size of basketballs; a widening valley of cleavage stretched out before her. Shifting her body elicited the groaning friction that she tried so hard to hide as her tightening skin brushed against itself. Such misgivings were thrown aside, as now her new body had a purpose.

And that it was very *very* light.

The sound of gas faded she finished sucking up the last of its contents. She dropped the now empty tank on the floor and focused on catching her breath. Her gaze shifted up to her adversary, who had been watching the proceedings with a confused expression.

Hardman reached up and scratched his head, sending bits of dirt and dust flying. “Well, this is a first.” He shifted into a slow, crunching walk down the pile. “Y’know, I’ve seen a lot of acts of desperation. Beggin’, fightin’, even had a guy try to ram me with a pickup once. But this? What are you even planning to do?”

Ayane shrugged and shifted into a crouch. “About to find that out myself!”

He lurched forward into a run, his arms outstretched.

Ayane jumped.

Time seemed to move slower. She locked eyes with Hardman as he lumbered towards her. His outstretched arms swinging open to encircle her. It wasn’t until bewilderment filled his expression that she realized how far above him she was. Ayane tucked her legs beneath her and the man slipped underneath her. Now past him, she planted her foot on his head and shoved, his sturdy body providing a boost.

She locked eyes onto her target still high above. *“Damn it, not enough. I’m too heavy!”* She landed ungracefully on broken crate a little further away.

Hardman had already spun around and was charging towards her. Ayane kicked her shoes off in his direction and bent down once more. Giving a silent prayer to whoever might be listening as the man’s bullrush bore down on her.

“Tryin’ to fly away now?!” he yelled as he batted the shoes away as they sailed towards his face, but she was already pushing off the ground once again.

Without her heavy leather boots holding her down, her inflated body soared. With hands outstretched she snagged onto the highest point on the shelf and seated herself down.

She let out a laugh. “Haha, it worked!”

“What worked?” Hardman had pulled up and now stood underneath her far below. “Nice trick and all, but you ain’t going anywhere fast.” His hand grasped one of the supports of her new perch and shook it once. “I don’t even need to knock it down. Once the boss is finished with your friend, she’ll shoot you off your perch.”

Ayane pushed down the great anxiety she felt as she pushed ahead with her plan. Flashing a grin she wiggled her body teasingly. “Is that what you think? I just wanted to buy some more time to get *bigger.*” With that, she inhaled deeply.

*CRREEEEEEEEAK*

Her chest rose and swelled briefly. “See... One more minute... and I’ll be big enough to float out of here.” She managed to squeak out while trying hard to hold her breath at the same time. “Think your boss will be done by then?”

*CRUNCH*

Hardman’s fist crunched the support like it was aluminium. “Maybe not, but you don’t got a minute!”

As his focus shifted to destroying the supports, Ayane began to move. The stacks of oil paint were wrapped in plastic. Grasping the one nearest to her she began tearing through the material even as the entire structure began to buckle beneath her. Once free of it’s constraints, she began yanking lids off the containers one by one from the very top. She had just finished when she felt her footing begin to slide.

*CRACK*

A final support gave way and she felt the now all-too familiar sensation of gravity taking hold. Looking down, she saw Hardman’s grinning face as she began to fall towards him.

But she ensured she wasn’t falling alone.

Like an oily, rainbow of a waterfall the paint splashed down along with her. Hardman vanished in an enormous crashing wave of the foul-smelling liquid as Ayane landed beside him. The first step of her plan complete, she quickly reached into her pocket.

“Well, that was fun.” Hardman turned to her, his entire body now drenched from head to toe in a sloughing, dripping array of colours. His eyes remained unnervingly open despite the liquid sliding across them. “You got anymore tricks, or are ya done?”

There was a crackle of electricity as Ayane brandished her stun gun. Hardman let out a laugh. “Haha! Gonna try that again? Felt real nice the first time.”

To his surprise, Ayane flipped the device upside down and jammed it the oil-soaked debris in front of her. Electricity sparked, and a flame was born.

The giant man only had a moment before the fire leapt across the distance and crept up his leg. “Oh...”

*FOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM*

Ayane leapt back quickly as both Hardman and the surrounding spill was engulfed in a blaze. Any signs of the large man vanished in acrid smelling conflagration that swiftly filled the area with smoke. She scrambled quickly to make distance as the flames began consuming the mountain they had been on in earnest.

Now at a comfortable distance, she stared at her work with a mix of pride and apprehension. “I might have killed someone... but they were trying to kill me... It’s only fair, right?”

As she watched the fire slowly spreading, she realized things were awfully quiet. If Ellerick and Kelly were having a magical duel, it was either very quiet or;

“Someone lost already,” she muttered, and between the two she didn’t much faith in one in particular. A pressing unknown that sent a chill up her spine and forced her feet to move away from her handiwork. She needed to find an exit.

“*Get out. Get help,*” she thought to herself. But as she turned to run, she found herself stop as the heat from the fire slowly warmed her. The reality of the situation slowly sunk into her mind. She had just barely escaped a man who could track her by some unknown means and talk to her phone, aided by a woman who could shoot wind out of her palms like bullets and fly. Half the warehouse was now destroyed and on fire, yet there were no sounds of distant fire engines coming to the rescue, nor even curious onlookers coming to investigate. The only one who *had* helped her out of a situation was now either searching for her, or dead, and she wasn’t even sure she could trust him to not use her for his own ends like every other magic user before him.

“Ugh! Why is everything so goddamn complicated,” she hissed to herself and pressed her knuckles to her temples as if she could squeeze the intrusive thought out.

Ellerick was odd, awkward and more than a little suspicious. But he had revealed more about the world that she had been dragged into than anyone before him. Her internal alarms that she had been trusting for so long hadn’t sounded out during their brief time together.

She also realized felt a little bad about shocking and punching him in retrospect. Slapping her cheeks, which only served to produce a hollow *thump*, she finally came to a decision. “Trust. One more time.”

“Where’s Hardman?” said a cold voice.

Ayane spun to see Kelly just past the growing bonfire. Her features flickering with a cold malice. Her eyes flicked at the fire and then back to Ayane.

Without thinking, Ayane reached into her pocket to pull out her stun gun. Kelly raised a finger.

*CRACK*

Ayane winced as her tool disintegrated into pieces before she could even fully remove it. Her fingers felt numb as if someone had slapped them hard.

“I sent him after you, so where is he?” Kelly repeated, her finger bore a small ring-sized glyph that slowly faded as the woman dropped her hand to her side.

“Where do you think?” Ayane rubbed her fingers to try and restore some feeling. “But where’s...”

“The Slimer? They ran off not long after you did,” Kelly said, then looked over at the fire. “I hope they didn’t run too far. Hardman!”

“Yes, Ma’am!” An eruption of debris rose and burst into the charred form of the man as his hand flew out and snapped around Ayane’s wrist before she could act. Struggling proved useless as he quickly snagged her other arm and went about tying her up with some charred masking tape.

He let out a chuckle which sent sparks flecking from his teeth. “You know, I learned somethin’ today. Warehouses are *full* of nice things.”

She looked at his burnt form with widened eyes. With his suit reduced to a charred set of pants the man was half-naked. What had been his skin before was now just ash and flakes on a white stone body that occasionally shone with glowing veins. Looking much like a marble statue had taken life and walked out of a Greek exhibit.

“She was serious...” Her brow knitting in concern, Kelly clicked her tongue and strode over to him. She placed her hand on his chest and slide it across the smooth surface as she inspected him. “She didn’t actually damage you, did she?”

He shook his head, an act that mesmerized Ayane as she watched his stone-like hair sway back and forth like it was completely natural and weightless. “Nah. Honestly felt like I was back in the kiln. Real cozy-like,” he said.

Ayane was quickly brought back to reality as Kelly’s hand whipped out and slapped her across the cheek, which surprised her more than pained her. “Hardman, see if you can sense if her friend is still in the area?”

Reaching a thumb up to his nose, Hardman snorted out a small plume of smoke from his nostrils before he tilted his head this way and that. “Mm, nothin’.”

“So, he’s gone?”

He shrugged. “Dunno. When I think about it, I actually haven’t felt anythin’ from the perp at all since this mess started.”

“Great...” Kelly pinched the brow of her nose. “Great, great, great... so he *was* wearing a Cover. Just who are we dealing with?” she moaned. The woman began to pace back and forth as she struggled with some internal conversation. Her eyes finally fell on Ayane again after a moment, their gaze locked onto her ballooned proportions.

“By the way, what happened to her?” Kelly said.

“Oh, I thought I could seduce your friend here to let me go.” Ayane wriggled in vain in her captor’s grip.

“She blew herself up.” Hardman added. “Sucked it out of an air tank back there.”

Kelly stared at Ayane’s chest for a time before finally breaking a smile. “Hardman, tie up her legs and then go see if another tank or two hasn’t yet been consumed by the fire, then meet me back at the front.”

Feeling dread build in the pit of her stomach, Ayane kicked and flailed briefly before her legs met the same fate as her arms in being utterly useless. A moment later and Kelly was dragging her unceremoniously towards the less burning side of the warehouse. “Goddamn it! Are you that upset about your stupid record!?”

“My *record* is the smallest thing that has been insulted today,” Kelly hissed. The area slowly cooled as they finally reached the area where they all had initially arrived in. Tossing Ayane onto her back in the middle of a clear area the woman leaned down. “One stray bit of lateness in an otherwise perfect record can be dismissed. Everyone has off days.” Her voice took an uncharacteristic edge as it rose in pitch. “But how am I to explain how a clueless, blow-up *bitch* like you and some slime-tossing *freak* managed to wreck our van, destroy an expensive glamour and above all even managed to dishevel my appearance in a single evening!”

“Are you serious. That’s it?” Ayane laughed. “Hey, if you want pointers how to hide your face after someone royally screwed your life over, I am a font of wisdom.”

“You shut it!” Kelly’s calm demeanour had fell off completely as she reached down and rolled Ayane onto her chest to face her directly. “I am *better* than this. I am better than you, your stupid friend and everyone else in Rimwatch!” She rose back to her height again and blew out a breath in a small attempt to reassert control. “And if I going to suffer a blemish, then someone is going to pay!”

The sound of metal scratched on concrete began to resound as Hardman emerged, dragging a pair of enormous air tanks behind him with a spool of hose draped across his shoulders.

“Let’s see how far you’ll go ‘seducing’ anyone.” Kelly smiled as she finally stepped off Ayane and moved out onto an open area on the floor. She opened her arms wide and strode around like an announcer in a wrestling arena. “You hear that! You fatuous little rodent! Your friend here is going to get a whole lot *tighter* in a hurry unless you show yourself!”

Ayane could only stare as the two massive tanks were placed nearby. One of them was twice as large than anything she ever bought and played with, let alone two of them. She renewed her struggle. Hoping to even loosen the tape binding her wrists together even a little.

“Course, this girl is a first for us!” Kelly continued. “We *really* don’t know her limits. She filled herself a bit in a show to my partner, maybe she’ll just explode as soon as we turn on the air, who knows?”

Ayane felt a chill enter the pit of her stomach at her words. “You’re not serious? Hey!” she yelped, but Kelly kept her gaze towards the rest of the warehouse.

Hardman stopped preparing the tanks. “Uh, boss. Ain’t that against procedures? We supposed to...”

“Mouth! Hardman!” Kelly spun in an instant and strode over to him. Snatching the hose from his hand and jabbing it into his face. “I *know* the procedures, but I’m angry. So should *you* be. We’ve done this for how long now without a hitch and now all this! We’ll never hear the end of it.”

The large man held up his stony hands defensively. “Oh, I don’t think it’s that bad. But breaking the rules is kinda...”

“I KNOW!” Kelly shrieked. Sucking in another breath she reached up and ran her hands through her hair, which still bore signs of the slime covered surprise from earlier. As her fingers came away with another glob of the goopy substance she let out a growl of frustration.

“Look, just don’t record any of this.” She huffed. “Besides, don’t tell me you didn’t try to break the rules with that mess earlier!”

He looked back towards the growing flames in the distant area of the warehouse and shrugged. “I needed to get her down was all. She was goin’ to be fine.”

Sighing, Kelly looked Hardman dead in the eye. “Do *not* record. That is an order.”

Standing ramrod straight Hardman seemed to stare blankly at a distant wall for a moment.  
“Acknowledged, Agent Kelandra.”

“That’s ‘Kelly,’ Hardman.” Kelly unwound the hose and snapped it experimentally like a whip before approaching Ayane. “Now, let’s see if your friend is still around.”

Unbeknownst to the Sweeper Agents, Ellerick was indeed still around. He had been watching from a small gap in a large stack of crates not too far from the proceedings. Having escaped Kelly’s attempt at revenge earlier by darting from cover to cover until the woman had lost sight of him, he then crawled into the perfectly sized gap where he now resided. Eventually his pursuer’s need for vengeance lost to her impatience and so she left him. Now alone, he was scrabbling to make some kind of plan together from the shattered remains of his previous while simultaneously admonishing himself. His earlier plan of rescue was simple. Conceived on the spot due to the other failure of not accounting for a stun gun to the ribs.

*“Immobilize the van, retrieve Ayane, and then hide low until they inevitably gave up in order to avoid any sort of conflict with any sort of Agent. Nice and relatively easy,”* he thought to himself. He had taken into account Kelly’s partner’s sensing range, but failed to account for one variable.

*“But why did I forget she had a phone?! Stupid stupid stupid!”* he growled inwardly and resisted the urge to smack his face. Now forced to consider conflict he found trying to come up with a suitable approach was proving impossible for him. Sweeper Agents were professionals. Powerful professionals boasting extraordinary magical skill assisted by the best training. Himself, in comparison, was just a desk clerk boasting the power to inspect vast inventories and sheets for incorrect signatures. His magical power was similarly pitiful.

*“What can I do?”* He wracked his brain for an answer.

“So, how did she do... that, again?” Kelly’s voice cut through his thoughts.

Hardman rubbed his chin. “Stuck it in her mouth, but kinda didn’t get to see the whole thing on account on the mess being on top of my head.”

“Really...” Kelly now stood over Ayane, who had never ceased trying to break her bindings since they dragged her there. “Is that right?”

Ayane glared up at her. “No, totally wrong. Requires a bit of imagination. I had to imagine myself shoving it up your ass for it to work.”

“Truly?” Kelly bent down and grabbed Ayane’s pants and tore them off her body. Baring her black panties to the world. “Ah, look. You have a nozzle.”

“Nice to know you are creeps on top of being jerks!” Ayane squirmed in a vain attempt at moving away from Kelly’s fingers. “They don’t write about that in the conspiracy papers.”

“They don’t write about a lot of things,” Kelly said as her fingers pressed into Ayane’s thigh around her tattoo. “What a unique design. Very pretty.”

“Thanks, but I didn’t approve of... AH!” Ayane’s voice was cut off as the cold feeling of the hose pushing aside her meagre lower garment and sliding inside her butt.

Kelly stood and brushed off her hands. “‘Stick it up my ass,’ right?”

“Petty bitch!” Ayane felt heat rise to her face as Kelly stepped back to the air tanks and rested a hand on the valve. “You are really going through with this?! There’s no way I could hold all that!”

“Mhm” Kelly nodded. “Though, I *may* be convinced to change my mind about finding your limits if you give some information. It just occurred to me we don’t even know who your friend is.”

Ellerick, still peering through the crack from his hiding place, felt his heart leap into his throat.

“No idea.” Ayane snapped. “They just plonked me and here gave me a recipe for MMGH.”

*PSHHHHHH*

She felt the valve turn before she saw it happen. Cold, unfeeling air rushed into her body to join the pressure already filling her chest. Her breasts shuddered and began to stretch out across her vision. The strained fabric of her top immediately began to tear across the sides as its tentative hold on her breasts began to fail.

Kelly leaned on the air tank and watched with curiosity. “From your interactions in the van I had assumed you didn’t know them. You are awfully loyal to a complete stranger.”

“Yeah, well. Try living months alone after having to cut contact with your friends, your family, everything as you try to search for a solution to a problem you have no idea about with nobody to turn to.” Ayane grit her teeth and shoved down the overwhelming urge to moan. Her skin tingled with pleasure as it yearned to yield to the growing pressure in her body. “Then, have someone, even a complete stranger, actually come and teach you more about this stupid world you come from than any book or website has provided.”

*“Then you punch them,”* Ayane thought.

Another turn of the valve. The rush of air increased. Her gleaming skin bulged through the faltering remains of her top as her chest yearned to push itself free. Twin yoga-balls pulsing underneath her ever larger as her front slowly forced her body to arc off the cold cement.

*PSSSSSSSSSSHHHHHHHHHHHH*

Shrugging, Kelly stretched and patted Hardman, flashing a hand signal which bode the large man over to Ayane’s swelling form. He stood close and on guard. “Well, *I* wouldn’t put my faith in a coward who bolts at the first sign of trouble,” Kelly added.

*SHRRRRRI-BAMPH*

Like a pair of balloons erupting for a surprise birthday party, Ayane’s breasts broke free of her top and fwomped into weightlessly round spheres. She let out a soft murmur as the pressure shifted throughout her body.

“And, if things keep going, I’m sure you’ll regret it too.” Kelly ended. She took her place in the dead centre of the little clearing with her arms folded. The look of someone who believes the result is already a forgone conclusion.

Ellerick on the other hand felt the opposite. A heat rose in his face as anger overtook him. He stared at Hardman, now completely bare and charred. Superfluous damage, and yet. “*No magic and she still managed that much. Kelly is right, I am a coward*” he cursed himself. “*I can’t do anything...*”

He shook his head. “*No, I need to think of something. Anything.*” Seemingly for the first time he scanned his surroundings. The warehouse, though destroyed and catching on fire, was a treasure trove of options.

*“If she can do that much. Then I’m going to do better,”* he declared to himself as he came upon a plan.

And the first step involved removing one of his shoes.

Meanwhile, Ayane struggled to push down the feeling of pleasure that assaulted her senses. “Not the time and place for this...” she muttered.

*CREEEEEEEEEEEEEAK*

Her boobs were now far larger than she had ever pushed them. Big, round, and tight they now resembled enormous beachballs that worked together to bend her back to accommodate them. She began to lose control of the air inside her body as the pressure inside her chest grew too much. Slowly, her ass-cheeks began to puff up and swell as her thighs plumped into thickening cylinders. The hose slowly vanished between them as they pressed together.

Kelly briefly relaxed her vigil as she glanced towards the spectacle. “Gods, you are a freak.”

“Only because of people like *you*... Heck, you stare enough that I’m starting to think you want to try it for yourself!” Ayane groaned as her panties began to dig into her. A thin line of fabric providing a last bastion of modesty fighting for its existence as her skin bulged around it. Her toes begin to curl as the front of it slowly shifted and rubbed against her sex.

Snorting through her nose Kelly turned to the surroundings again and raised her voice. “Clock is ticking! If you are still here to try and save your balloon bitch that is!”

“Maybe he got cold feet.” Hardman mused.

“The bastard ambushed a Sweeper van.” Kelly frowned. “Idiots risk their lives doing far less dangerous things for fun.”

“How’d you know?”

“I just do!” Kelly was beginning to tap her foot on the ground. “Just... Just do your job and keep a hand on the Altered.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” he replied. Reaching down he took hold of one of Ayane’s wrists in one hand and a length of the hose in the other.

*Creeeeeek*

Ayane’s panties began to protest their abuse as her thighs widened. But her thoughts were elsewhere, for she had begun to feel something unusual. In its search for space, the pressure had shifted towards her middle. Slowly her prone form began rising off the concrete.

“H-hey!” Ayane cried as she realized her belly was beginning to inflate. Something that had never happened before, and she had never dared experiment with. Now faced with an entirely new sensation she felt panic begin to set in. “Hey!”

Kelly looked over. “What is it?”

“MMpgh...I’m getting full!” Ayane groaned as the cold surface of the floor rubbed across her expanding midsection.

Kelly shrugged atop her perch. “That’s the idea.”

*Creeeeeeeeeeeeeek*

“Thought you wanted me as bait! I’m going to explode!” Ayane shrieked. “They aren’t here! So stop with this stupid show and just...”

“He’s NOT gone! I *know* it, so shut your rubbery mouth before I shove another hose in there too!” Kelly snapped.



Kelly clicked her tongue and shifted her aim. Her own glyph shone as she let loose another blast of wind. Shot in haste, the spell merely grazed the metal can but succeeded in sending it spinning into the air.

“A useless gesture. What’s ne...ugh!” she coughed. Her eyes squeezed shut as whatever spewed from the careening can wafted into his vicinity. “What..hack... is that?!” she managed to sputter as she bent over into another coughing fit. “Poison!?”

“Yes, indeed!” Ellerick cackled with a mix of glee and madness. “A very deadly poison, mind you. I would recommend you give up this fight quickly or you may risk your hair falling out before you see an alchemist!”

“You lowly, stupid...!” Kelly retort was cut short as another can had materialized from Ellerick’s cloak and launched into her midsection, knocking the wind out of her lungs even as she struggled to cough out whatever was filling them.

Ayane’s view of the spectacle rose as she did. Her belly now a growing cushion resting underneath her. Ellerick produced a bombardment of aerosols from seemingly nowhere and fired them like a machine gun. One bounced off Kelly’s leg, producing a yelp, and rolled close enough to where Ayane could see it.

“You can’t be serious...” Ayane muttered.

Ellerick’s mad laughter answered for her as more cans of deodorant, shaving cream, spray on sunscreens and other pressurized paraphernalia appeared mysteriously from his cloak’s hidden storage and were subsequently fired towards the blonde woman. She raised her own hand in defence and fired off her devastating wind blasts, but with her eyes shut and stinging from a concoction of personal care items shots flew wide, punching dents into walls and boxes.

*CREEEEEEEEEEEAK-Snap!*

Her creaking skin and a final explosive snap brought Ayane’s attention back to her herself. Her panties shot off her backside like a rubber band, causing her ballooning ass to bounce and swell into fully round cheeks with thick thighs to match. Her belly had finally caught up to her breasts in size and was now determined to surpass them.

The uncertainty of her own limits began to weight on her. The chill from before grew into panic as the pressure in her core continued to build. “Hey, can you hurry up and kick her ass!?” Ayane yelled over the cacophony of magic and merchandise filling the air. “I’m... I’m not sure how much bigger I can get!”

This fact wasn’t lost on Hardman who had been standing dutifully beside her. One hand holding Ayane steady and the other on the hose. “She’s getting pretty round, boss. We still doin’ this?”

Kelly’s answer was delayed as she raised a hand high. The glyph that formed was wider and thicker than ones she had produced before. But rather than aim it straight, she threw it straight down towards her feet. Touching the concrete the shining lines expanded to surround her completely.

“Drat...” Ellerick muttered as the wind-spell flared and a tornado materialized to form a protective ring around the woman.

Kelly held one arm down as she wiped her eyes feverishly. Finally, they opened. Bloodshot and red. “Don’t even think about it! I am *forgetting* this night ever existed after this! And that means both of you varlents are getting processed... RIGHT HERE!” She punctuated the last words with another flash of light. The tornado around her wiped itself into a storm. Her long ponytail finally broke free of it’s binding and spread her hair out into a wild, uncontrolled mane.

Ellerick fired off another can at her, only to watch the projectile get sucked up and crushed within the roiling storm that surrounded her. “Double drat...” he added onto his earlier muttering.

“No more tricks, lowborn! Do you see the chasm between us now?! I am BETTER!” Kelly cried. Keeping one hand aimed at her feet to maintain the protective spell, she formed another glyph in her free hand that slid through the storm and zipped across the air to hover at Ellerick’s chest. The action took Ellerick by surprise. He barely had time to move before the glyph shown bright and blasted him across the room point blank. The air in his lungs rushed out of him as the splintered remains of packing materials and crates roughly cushioned his landing.

Ayane’s eyes widened. “H-hey!”

To her relief, Ellerick pulled himself up as he patted his chest gingerly. “Haha... Ouuuch” he moaned. His back and front burned with pain, but thankfully that was it. “I’m in one piece...hah...” He looked up at Kelly. “Starting to feel tired?”

“You’ll find I have more than enough left for you!” Kelly hissed. “But just for that... Hardman! Let her have it!”

“Yes, Ma’am!” Hardman spun the valve until the red wheel spun itself off the tank entirely.

“No! Fuck off!” Ayane shrieked as she could only watch the large man drop the now-useless valve onto the floor in slow motion. The hose spiralling across the floor suddenly jerked and slithered wildly as it took in the increased flow and forced it straight into her.

**PSSSSSSSSSSSSSHHHHHHHHHHHH!**

“MmmmmnNGH OHH..G-GOD!” She yelped as she felt her body rumble. The full force of the tank emptying into her caused her whole being to vibrate from the flow of air now roiling inside her.

**CREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAK!!**

Her body’s creaking grew in pitch as it swelled out of control. Her belly shook and ballooned outwards into a dome of air and shot her up higher and higher. Her breasts groaned into enormous spheres that jutted out of her body like a pair of weather balloons. She realized with no small amount of dread that she had already risen to the height of Hardman and was still swelling higher.

**SHHHRIP**

A chilling sound came with a brief sense of freedom as the tape around her wrists finally gave way and snapped completely, much to Ayane’s surprise. “W-wait.. I wasn’t!” She cried, but realized she had no control over her arms anymore. Like a balloon toy filled to the brim with air her whole form was stuck in a pressurized pose. Her legs and arms pointed rigidly straight.

“WHOA...Ahhn! Too much! WAAY TOO MUCH.” She found she could only turn her head. “I-I can’t move!” The sheer helplessness drove her panic into overdrive. “I CAN’T MOVE! THERE’S TOO MUCH!”

“Don’t worry!” Ellerick ignored the pain in his chest and back as he pulled himself up. “I have a plan!”

“A plan...” Kelly scoffed. “Why are you even trying so hard? She’s just an Altered toy!”

“You shut up!” Ellerick shouted as he stood up fully. “All my life nobody has ever called my magic awesome. You and everyone else!”

“As is your lot, lowborn!” Kelly replied. Another glyph forming above her free hand. “You should know by now that no one can change their place in our world. Neither you, I or anyone!”

“Well, *highborn*. This lowborn is going save the girl.” He reached inside his cloak again and held it there like some wild-west gunslinger at high-noon. “And then find the biggest criminal in magical history. The one even people like *you* can only dream of getting close to.”

Kelly frowned. “Deydessa? Oh, now I *know* you must be mad.”

“The very same!” He yelled. “And then I’ll catch her! A feat that nobody will notice, and then finally, FINALLY things will change! Mark my words!”

Her wind glyph shining brightly, Kelly smiled haughtily. “I might have said I wanted to forget this night, but I’ll remember your stupidity. A toad wanting to change how the moon crosses the skies.”

The two magic-users stood frozen. Kelly, standing confidently in the midst of her storm. A bright green glyph held out. Ellerick, standing straight despite the pain in his body, his hand prepared to draw his final gambit. Ayane could only watch, the pressure of the situation matching the unfamiliar sense of pressure inside her body. Her belly now sat beneath her like she was laying on a blimp. Her breasts and ass had engorged on air until they were comically large globes that dwarfed her body entirely. She had surpassed her captors in height, and was now overlooking the standoff with a clear, steady view.

“Wait... Steady?” A thought pierced the haze of panic in her mind. It was then she realized that her body had ceased stretching any further. Her skin felt tight as a drum. Yet the pressure pushed at her from within. A building urge to release that only grew stronger as the moments ticked on.

Dread slunk its way into her mind as she glanced between the two, who still stood frustratingly motionless.

Her eyes looked up towards Ellerick. Even shrouded, she could somehow feel that his gaze was locked with hers. Seeing him standing there, with his cloak dishevelled and torn, an uncharacteristic feeling entered her to push back the dread a little.

Ayane opened her mouth. “Kick her...!”

BANG BANG

With a startling crack that made Ayane’s heart skip a beat, her nipples shot forwards like a pair of gunshots.

Ellerick’s arm moved.

Kelly released her blast of wind with mad laughter. A laugh that turned to surprise as her shot sailed through empty space. Her target was no longer there.

“Whoa!” Ellerick cried as he launched himself off his remaining *bound* glyph still attached to his other shoe. Lacking the even spread of power on the leap he spun wildly through the air, but felt elation as he sailed through the air towards his true target.

Hardman’s stony eyebrows raised and a grin broke his features as Ellerick flew towards him like a makeshift missile. “Boss was right, you have a screw loose!” he shouted happily as planted his feet and held his arms out like a sumo wrestler prepared to catch a charge. “This rock body ain’t just for show!”

Ellerick laughed madly. “That’s what I’m counting on!” Reaching out with his left hand he charged up the only other spell he had. He closed his eyes and prayed to whatever deity who may have been watching for this to work as his held out his palm towards the stone giant.

The glyph on his glove flared as he made impact with the man’s exposed torso.

He kept pushing.

“Oh... That’s...weird...” Was all Hardman could let out as his body absorbed the impact of the crazed gambit and began to twist in an unfamiliar way. His midsection softened into putty as the *Flux* glyph worked its magic and he soon found he lost control of his legs as his upper body was slowly slid off its base.

Kelly let out an uncharacteristic shriek. “HARDMAN!”

Ellericks hands joined the now half-Hardman's on the hose as they fell towards the floor. Ayane let out a yelp as the weight of two bodies yanked the hose still stuck within her. Like a balloon tied to a string her tense body swung with them.

*GROOOOOOOAN*

Her body creaked as her whole being shifted with them. "H-hey! Careful!"

"This is a first," Hardman remarked as he stared down at his predicament.

Ellerick panted as he planted his right hand on the rock man's chest and twisted him until his back was aimed towards Kelly, who was wide-eyed in shock. "This will likely be one too then."

The glyph haphazardly attached to this right hand flickered with light and he felt the blowback rock his arm as the magic pushed. Hardman's now soft body shrank inwards as the force worked its way through him.

Hardman only watched in bewilderment. "Ohh, that ain't..."

His comment was cut off as a resounding *pop* resounded. A small, perfectly round sphere shot out of Hardman's body and was sent flying towards Kelly's storm.

"NO!" Kelly screamed. Her glyph vanishing as the mysterious object sailed past her protective storm and into the flaming chaos that was the rest of the warehouse. The whirlwind immediately dissipated into harmless swirls of air as she ran after it. Her golden blonde hair being the last thing vanishing into the smoke.

Ayane could only stare as Hardman's body began to crumble like a statue being weathered by the elements at high speed. His lifeless face cracked and slid off into several chunks as his torso soon followed suit. Soon, all that was left attached to her was the arm, still dutifully clinging to her own. She had several questions.

*RUUUUUUUUUUUUMBLE*

Questions that were driven from her mind as her body suddenly began to stretch again. Her too-tight skin shook as it started losing the fight against the internal pressure.

*CREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAAAAAAAAAAAAAKK*

"Hngh! E-Ellerick! Hurry! I'm at my limit!" she grunted as she felt her body pass it's threshold. The air flowing into her sunk into a low tone as it echoed inside her enormous body. Her eyes widened as she watched her skin grow bright, then slowly transparent as it swelled. "Get it out! GET IT OUT! I'M GONNA BLOW!"

Ellerick, seeing Ayane's body swelling dangerously larger, scrambled to his feet. "Ok! Ok! Hold on!" he said as he braced one hand on her overblown ass cheek and yanked the hose.

"MMmph!" Ayane bit her lip and moaned as she felt the offending nozzle finally leave her body. But her relief was short lived as her body continued to stretch larger. Her skin, already pushed past the point of no return, was losing to the pressure inside her.

*GROOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOAN*

"NNngh! Too... there's already too much!" Ayane growled past her teeth. "I'm too big! I..."

Ellerick ran to her front. His eyes darting around for a solution. "W-what can I do? How do we let it out!"

Ayane's mind raced. She always let it out through orgasm, but there was no chance in this situation. Her thoughts were so far from thinking about pleasure, and with her body already struggling to contain the air inside her there was no time.

“I... I don’t know...” she finally admitted. “I have to...mmmgh... but I can’t, not here!”

“Have to what?!” Ellerick cried. “Just... I’ll think of something!”

*CREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAK*

Another surge of tension across her skin. As her body bloated before her eyes, she found herself unable to find a solution. “I’M GOING TO EXPLODE!”

“Look at me!” Ellerick cried.

Blinking back the tears she didn’t realize she had, Ayane forced herself to look at him. Ellerick had pulled his hood back. His hair and face were blackened with ash from his earlier run through the warehouse to find ammunition. But his eyes now stared back at her, still determined. Something about them allowed the same unfamiliar feeling from before to enter her thoughts.

“I *will* think of something. Just... hold it in somehow?” he said.

Ayane blinked again, to her own surprise she let out a small laugh. “D-do you have to phrase it like that?”

Ellerick’s mouth opened and closed. “Look, I’m under pressure here. Just give me a bit more time!”

“Stop, just stop. That’s my line!” Ayane replied with a bit of a forced smile. But his suggestion took root. She focused on her body. Strained and about to explode as it was, it was still hers.

*“I’ve controlled where the air went before... just... do it everywhere at once...”* she thought as she sucked in a tentative breath as she concentrated on her skin. The latex, rubbery skin that was now her entire self. She felt the displacement where Hardman’s now lifeless stony arm still clung to her. She felt the raging tension across it as it fought the air pressure yearning to escape. Though it was losing the battle, it still fought.

Imagining that she wanted all the air in her body to squeeze into a single point inside her, she readied herself. *“Ready...set”*

And clenched her whole being.

Immediately her body stopped shuddering and it’s expansion ceased. The pressure was still a roiling bomb inside her begging to be released, but she felt it squeezed within her for the moment. “I... got it... for now I think I got it...”

*CREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAK*

Another small surge of growth was enough for Ayane to realize she couldn’t afford to relax even for a moment.

“I... I’ll concentrate...” she finally whispered.

Ellerick let out a sigh. “O-okay, just. Keep doing that. Now...”

“LOWBORNS!” Kelly’s voice pierced the moment like a dagger. Her suited figure now stood on a pile of debris before them. Her once golden hair now noticeably less vibrant having been singed in several places and covered in soot.

Hardman’s orb was tucked to her chest like a previous child. “I am *done*.”

She raised her arm and a glyph appeared. It hovered above her palm for a moment before growing larger, and then larger still. It spread an array of golden light that nearly spanned the walls. Ellerick was already searching his cloak for anything as he stared at the coming calamity. Another can appeared in his hand and he raised it to fire. His body ached from overcasting but he reached deep into himself for whatever dregs of magic he had left.

“Can’t you just give up!” He shouted as his hand began to glow as he forced mana into the glyph. But just as Ellerick’s cast was about to flare a small blast of wind cracked into his outstretched hand. He let out a yelp of pain and sunk to the ground, clutching his arm. The shredded remains of the can and the glyph on his palm falling to the concrete. Gritting his teeth he looked up at Kelly. An imperious finger pointed in his direction as the glyph above her continued to grow in size and brightness.

Kelly stared coldly at the two as her spell completed. “Having to fudge a report will be worth it to not see both of your stupid faces again! GOODBYE!” A flick of her hand and the enormous ball of roiling air descended upon them like a tornado descending from the heavens.

“I’m sorry! I should have planned this better!” Ellerick yelled over the winds as he watched the magical storm grow closer. “I should have...”

He was surprised when he felt Ayane’s hand grab his shoulder. Teeth gritted from maintaining concentration on her body, she had managed to rock herself low enough to reach him. Her blue eyes bored into his. Ellerick felt her fingers dig into his shoulder as she pulled. Her overinflated body shifted, and then rose, as she lifted herself off the ground.

“What are you doing!?” He yelled as her body pivoted off his and floated itself into the path of the spell.

“Something!” she yelled back. Whether it was a combination of air and pleasure making her head fuzzy, but she knew at least she was sick of being useless.

“You can’t block that! You’ll...” Ellerick grabbed hold of her hands on his shoulders.

“Maybe!” She dug her fingers in as hard as she could. “But if you get past this you’ll get another shot at smacking that bitch across the face!” She closed her eyes as she braced for what was to come. “And sorry! For the shock... and the punch...”

Ellerick merely opened and closed his mouth a few times before closing his eyes with her. The roiling winds scattered debris and ash like a descending cyclone and engulfed them in their entirety. Across her overly tight skin Ayane could feel the power grow nearer and begin to brush across her too-tight skin.

Then suddenly there was silence.

Dust and loose items clattered across the concrete as the wind suddenly dissipated. The only sound was the growing roar of the flame behind the trio as relative normalcy asserted itself.

Ellerick dared open his eyes. “Di-did it misfire?!” he said as he watched ash swirl around the two as the air currents still bore the remnants of the brief magical storm. Ayane soon opened her own eyes. She had felt the magical energy touch her, but rather than twist her, crush her or whatever it was supposed to do, the feeling had ended right after. Like a soap bubble popping against her skin.

She waited a few moments before finally asking. “Misfire?”

“It’s when a spell’s array is flawed... the formula of the magic reaches a failure point and...” Ellerick gestured around them.

The pair looked each other in the eyes. Sharing a moment of combined relief to be alive and equal confusion. Ellerick kept his hand on hers as he slowly stepped to the side. Turning Ayane with him so both could lay eyes on Kelly, who was standing atop her debris pile looking dumbfounded.

“T-that’s impossible. I couldn’t have misfired... My spellcasting is flawless...” she muttered. She locked eyes with Ayane, and the characteristic fury returned.

That same fury reminded Ellerick that they were still very much in danger and confusing events would have to wait. Bolting from behind Ayane he leapt towards a piece of debris he could at least use as a club.

Kelly raised her arm and a glyph formed once again as she took aim. “It was a fluke, you understand. I. am. FLAWLESS!”

Ayane could only watch, again, as the fight resumed. Her overinflated balloon body still refused obey her needs and merely quivered in place. Her brows knit tight with concentration of keeping the pressure centred, but it was then she became aware of another sensation. The remains of Hardman’s rock-like arm still dangling from her wrist. The fingers had loosened considerably since their owner was seemingly ejected from his own body.

*THWAK*

A harsh sound like someone slamming wood with a hammer sounded out as Kelly resumed her barrage. Ellerick had dove behind a collapsing pile of bags. He had already removed his other shoe but lacked anything to fire. The Sweeper wasn’t taking any chances this time as she marched towards him. Firing her spell continually like a machine gun.

Ellerick was running out of options, while Ayane was being ignored, much to her annoyance. Born of desperation, she focused on the one option she had in reach. Concentrating, she urged the excess air out of her arm. Sinking the pressure back within her already over-taxed core to allow her arm to move once more.

*CRREEEEEEEEEEEEEEAAK*

She bit her lip as her body complained audibly from the added pressure. A shiver crossed her skin and she shoved down the urge to moan as she twisted her arm and pulled the stone appendage off her. Kelly was still focused on destroying Ellerick’s cover to notice Ayane taking aim and drawing her arm back. Stony arm held tight and ready.

“Fuck YOU!” she yelled as she let go of the concentration. Air rushed back into her arm and pressure reasserted itself. Her arm yielded to the rush in an instant and snapped forward. Ayane released her grip and let her projectile fly.

She was rewarded by a brief look of startlement on Kelly’s face as she had briefly turned. Only to see the stone arm of her partner rocket into her face.

*CRACK*

With the barrage of wind magic ceasing, Ellerick stood and peered around his cover only to witness Kelly’s unconscious body slump onto the concrete. Hardman’s orb rolled from her grasp and stopped quietly just before him.

“Y-you did it?” Ellerick muttered, but then a slight panic set in. “You didn’t...” He rushed over to the woman and pressed a finger against her neck. He let out a sigh in relief as the Sweeper was merely knocked out cold. “Oh, good... But how...”

*CRREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAAK*

*GROOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOAN*

“MMMMNGH FUUUUUCK!” Ayane moaned unabashedly through gritted teeth. Her body had begun to stretch again, but unlike before where it was uniform, this time each surge of growth was uneven. Her breasts inched forward. Then her legs. Her belly pulsed out suddenly. A cycle that repeated itself as she struggled to keep control.

*CRREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAAK*

*KIIIRK*

The heroic toss had taken more out of her than she realized, and the constant focus on her body has finally taken its toll. She was growing tired. The pressure roiled around in her body as it quickly found each source of weakness, forcing it to stretch as the air desperately searched for release.

Ayane couldn't keep up. Like a balloon about to pop in slow motion, her body swelled. Her skin grew clear. "I-I'm...I can't... I can't hold iiiiiiit! I need to... mmmmmf!" she hissed as she fought the urge to just let go.

Ellerick sped to her side. His mind frantically looking for options. "Hold on! T-there has to be a...a reverse pump or something" he said, but looking towards the raging inferno that was slowly consuming the warehouse, his heart sank.

*GROOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOAN*

"Ah...AH... IT'S TOO MUCH!" she said over the sound of her latex body like a final warning alarm. The sensation was indescribable. A rush of sensations overwhelmed her senses like she was on the verge of climaxing.

"How do you normally release the pressure!?" His looked across her body in desperation.

"MMMGGH!" She moaned. "I... I cum! But... I CAN'T!"

*CREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEA  
K*

The pressure begged for release and she couldn't fight it anymore.

"I'M GONNA BLOOOW!"

*PSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSHHH*

A sudden bout of relief rushed through her body. She gasped in tingly pleasure as she felt the air begin to exit. Her eyes widened and she looked back. Ellerick now stood at her thigh. His fingers pinched around her cursed nozzle. Slowly, gradually, the overwhelming pressure left her.

"Hah... hah... how?!" she finally managed to say between breaths. "I... I could never..."

"I... I pulled it?" he replied.

"You... you pulled it?" Ayane said, still dumfounded. "It *never* worked for me... I could only pump shit *in*.. And you..." She let out a breath. "Just like that?"

Ellerick looked between her and her thigh. "I wasn't really thinking! But I'm really just glad it works!"

Ayane stared as she tried to arrange her thoughts into a tangible shape, but the situation no longer dancing on a knife edge she decided to just file questions away for later. "Whatever... Just... Keep going."

Ellerick remained silent as Ayane sank her face into her overinflated breasts as they steadily shrank in size. The evening had been one surprise after another, but for once both finally felt as if things might be calming down.

Ayane let her mind drift across the new sensation of her body slowly deflating. It wasn't as pleasurable as an explosive orgasm, but it felt much like flopping onto a sofa after a long day and letting *everything* just sag into the cushions. Like her whole being relaxed as it ceased having to fight against the pressure and resume its usual shape.

She couldn't dismiss that part of her was disappointed at the end. That it would have felt *amazing* to let it all out at once. Trying to distract that thought she looked over at Kelly's slumped form, still thankfully motionless. The small orb she dropped was nearby. Finally having a closer look, it resembled the orb that Hardman thrust into her face back in her apartment, if it had been left outside to weather the elements for decades. A visible, if cartoonish, face was there on it's surface, alongside numerous other scratches and odd colours. Whatever it was, it too was thankfully motionless. Still feel the air leave her, she decided to just close her eyes.

She didn't know how long it took, but Ellerick's voice soon cut into her thoughts, coupled with the feeling of warm cloth around her shoulders. "Is this enough?"

Feeling Ellerick close her valve and pop it back into her body, she opened her eyes to find her body now much closer to the concrete than it had been. A cloak now laid itself across her shoulders in a modest offering of modesty. Turning her head, she found Ellerick back to how he looked in the book shop. An all-too out of place button up shirt, now far more sweaty than before, and office pants.

Ayane let out a small sigh. "You know, you just smashed all my notions of magic users in one fell swoop. Thanks," she said flatly.

He quirked his eyebrows and shrugged. "Not sure what you believed, but this is standard wear for many in my business, and on the other side besides. So you're welcome. If there's no more commentary on my clothing, we need to move."

"Others? More like them?" Ayane asked.

"Yes. Can you stand?" he asked.

"I should be fine," she said as she tried to rise to her feet, but found that her arms sagged unfamiliarly when she finally put her weight on them. They bent and twisted as she pushed herself off the concrete in ways that were far too unnatural.

Sitting up she prodded her arm experimentally. "What the hell?" she muttered as she found her body feeling overly soft. Her finger sank into her arm to the point she feared she could keep going and touch the other side.

A quick inspection of the rest of her body was enough to tell her the problem. "I think you let too much out..."

"Too much?" Ellerick asked.

Ayane attempted to stand up on her feet, and immediately regretted it. Lacking the normal balance of air in her body it was like her 'muscles' no longer wished to obey her instructions. Bereft of the normal pressure her posture sagged like a limp party balloon after a few days left out. Through much wobbling she found some semblance of equilibrium and rose to standing.

"This... feels weird... but it's not painful. Don't expect me to run though." Another problem dawned on her as she took a look down at her chest. Even her modest bust had vanished, and she was beginning to look far more 'aged' in a way that made her click her tongue in annoyance.

She sighed as she filed away another problem for later. Instead, she focused on walking. She took a step, and as expected she lurched forward as the quivering weight of her low-pressure body shifted. It was like she was a zombie from an old horror film.

"Well, if you are okay. Head for the exit. I need to get them before the fires do." Ellerick said before moving towards Kelly.

"Hah?!" Ayane squeaked. "She just tried to pulverize you and pop me!"

"I know, but..." he replied with a grunt as he lifted the unconscious woman onto his shoulder. "They are from my workplace, and it doesn't feel right to just leave them."

“Your work can go to hell.” Ayane huffed, but without being in any form to protest, she slowly shuffled to the door instead. She watched as he bent down to pick up the orb and tuck it beneath his arm. “What *is* that anyway?”

“It’s Hardman.” Ellerick replied as he caught up to her easily. “His core, anyway.”

“He’s not going to wake up and try to bowl us over or something?” She asked as she concentrated on shuffling out of the door and into the moonlit night.

“No, he’s harmless now.”

“Good.”

Glancing back she saw the roof of the warehouse billowing smoke. Consuming all evidence of their harrowing battle in an inferno that she started.

“How can they cover this up? Everyone for blocks could see this, and probably hear it too,” Ayane asked.

Panting with the effort of carrying Kelly’s limp body, Ellerick took a glance at the smoke with a tired expression. “Sweepers work in pairs. One magic user with a Greyeyes, that’s Hardman. The mage suppresses visual and memory...” He grunted as he finally slid the woman off his back and laid her down onto the dirt, before gingerly placing Hardman’s core onto her chest.

“And the walking boulder deals with cameras, electronics and other things,” Ayane slumped onto the ground. “But we knocked them out.”

“There are many other layers of assurance that work in the background.” Ellerick said as he massaged his right arm. “This will all be dismissed by your world as a simple, mundane accident.”

“Figures...” Ayane sighed. It seemed obvious from the beginning. The world of magic existed, but was firmly behind a veil of secrecy that not even modern technology could break. Old books only spoke of myths, while websites were just filled with so many random conspiracies that were dead ends in some cases, or just the fanciful musings of online strangers.

Lost in her thoughts she didn’t notice Ellerick had trotted over to her. “They should be safe enough here, but we need to keep going.” He knelt down to her level. “I can carry you to my car. It’s a few blocks from here. After that I know of a safehouse you can stay in.”

“Safehouse?” Ayane wobbled to her feet again. “What do you mean? Don’t you need to take me to the facility? Do this, magical tracer, whatever thing?”

Ellerick sucked in a breath and let it out slowly as he compiled his thoughts. He remained knelt, close to the ground as he rubbed his arm. “It... I think it’s a bad idea now.”

“Hah?!” Ayane blurted and felt her temper rise. “What do you mean, bad idea?!”

“I just... This night. My plans all fell through.” He rose and rolled up his sleeve. His right arm was now bright red with curious shining veins shining across his hand. “And this is the result of me just... shooting cans. Mundane magic many can do in their sleep one thousand times over before they become like this!” He growled.

Ayane stared at the arm. It looked painful. It trembled just from the effort of holding it up to show her. “So, what are you getting at?”

“It’s too dangerous...” He replied. “You nearly...”

“Yeah, I did. So what?” Ayane interjected. Flopping her arms so that they crossed. “I’ll say it straight. We *are* doing this.”

“So what?” Ellerick frowned. “Do you have any idea how much risk there’ll be.”

Ayane shrugged. “Nope.”

“Then why...”

She jabbed a soft finger into his chest. “Because in the span of one night you have given me a bigger glimpse into this world than I ever thought possible, and...” Another jab. “You are crazy trying to put me back in a box afterwards.”

Ellerick opened his arms wide as if to encompass the blaze behind him. “Look at where we ended up!”

Ayane looked down at Kelly, then up at the blaze. “Yep, we won against two stronger, harder secret agents, and are still standing!”

Ellerick stared at her as if she had grown extra appendages. But he looked down at the two fallen Sweepers and did feel a small bit of pride at the act.

Taking one wobbly step away, Ayane began to move. “You are stuck with me. Even if I have to suck a tank of helium and strap myself to your neck. Where’s the spirit you had when you started a shootout with the blonde bitch?”

“Probably burnt to a crisp somewhere in that warehouse.” Sighing, he pointed down another street. “Fine, but our ride is that way, and is quite a few blocks.” Ellerick stepped ahead of her and offered his back. “Would you like some help?”

Ayane took one more zombie-like attempt at walking before giving up. Letting out an annoyed groan, she allowed herself to slump over his shoulders. Her arms wrapping around his neck as she gripped him as tight as she could manage.

“You’re very light.” He said as he started walking.

“Thanks, I wonder why.” she quipped. As they slowly moved away from the blazing warehouse, Ayane took a glance back at the prone form of Kelly. Anger still simmered for the blonde-haired woman and her grinning partner.

An idea appeared in her mind. “Hey, do you have magic left for one last thing? It’ll take just a second...”

---

Their exodus was a slow plod through the darkened streets of the industrial district. It wasn’t long before the sound of sirens filled the air as the local fire brigades finally reacted to the blaze, but the pair were already long gone from the scene. Walking slowly in silence across the night streets and through darkened alleys. Occasionally glancing behind them to see that they weren’t followed by any more suspicious vans filled with even more suspicious individuals.

As they rounded a corner, Ellerick finally seemed to regain some energy as he laid eyes on his destination. “There. Our ride awaits!”

Ayane pulled herself until she could look over his shoulder. There, in the dim light of the moon, sat a boxy grey car that looked to have been dragged from the 1970s and plonked into the present. Pristine and horribly outdated.

“I’d be less disappointed if were a broomstick,” she sighed. Inwardly some part of her thought it was fitting. A vehicle that both fit in yet stood apart from society. Just like magic.

Ellerick turned his head to look at her. Pure confusion on his face. “Broomstick?”

Ayane let out a frustrated groan as another myth crashed and burned. “Don’t worry about it.”

She was grateful for finally sitting, or at least sagging down, on a regular chair after their ordeal when he gently placed her on the front seat. He seemed similarly grateful to be able to lean on something as he rested up against the car.

It was a few moments till he finally spoke. “Are you still set on this?”

“Yep.” Ayane without hesitation. “I’m not letting go of this chance. Besides, if I did go back into hiding what could I reasonably do? My face is now a wanted target.”

“I could send you money! Then you wouldn’t have to...” “Ellerick cleared his throat hurriedly and focused his gaze on a nearby wall.

Ayane snickered. “Entertain people?”

He nodded.

Ayane laughed, before looking down at her saggy body wearing nothing but his magical cloak for modesty, she was surprised she didn’t feel embarrassed or ashamed. She had long since stopped caring about how she showed herself off to her viewers if it meant paying rent.

“It’s not like this body is my own anyway,” she said. “I’m not even sure I could be considered alive.”

Silence fell on the pair. It was a few moments before Ellerick moved and placed his left hand against her arm.

Ayane looked at him curiously. “What are you doing?”

“Attempting to melt you.” Ellerick said flatly.

She jerked her arm back out of his reach. “What the fuck?!”

He held up his hands in surrender as she prepared to slap him. “See, didn’t work.”

Ayane stopped her retribution midswing. “What do you mean? Just so you know I’m still considering how hard I could actually hit you with my body like this.”

Ellerick slowly lowered his left hand and presented the glyph still embedded in his remaining glove. “*Flux* only ever works on non-living things. Like the metal roof, or artificial golems like Hardman was. If you were the same as him, it would have worked.”

Her hand still raised, she stared at him incredulously. Slowly, her limb arm fell back to her side. She let out a huff. “You are still a jerk.” Ayane felt a small warmth in her chest despite her words. She still felt a slight tinge of annoyance at him, and decided to act on it.

“So what do *you* think of my rubbery body?” she asked.

His eyebrows shot up. “Ah, umm. Well...”

“*Got him.*” She seized the moment. “You knew about the curse mark on my thigh because you *watched* me didn’t you. Got to see *all* of me.”

He turned away from her. His face slowly growing red as he felt a tinge of embarrassment. She kept up her assault. “It was you who sent the message before those two busted down my door. Did you like the show?”

“I-I was only doing it to research your mark!” He said quickly.

“Then why are you blushing?”

“Anybody would?!” He blurted out as he turned back to her. “You are still a woman!”

“So, you see me like a normal, regular girl.” The warmth in her own chest didn’t let up. She was having too much fun. A mischievous idea formed in her head. “But truth is for now, I’m not normal. I’m a latex skinned balloon girl.” She waved a limb arm at him. “See? A half-filled one. Entirely *not* normal.”

Ellerick opened and closed his mouth a few times before Ayane finally continued and shifted her body while pulling up the fabric of the cloak. Her long slender leg slid out from underneath and presented a thigh to him. Her cursed nozzle faced him.

“But, I appreciate your words,” she said slowly. “In thanks, you get to help me a bit.”

He looked like she had just punched him in the jaw again as he looked down at her thigh. “What!? Can’t you just do it yourself? Like in...” he cleared his throat again.

“Like my videos? Do you have a pump on hand?”

“No. But still, this is...”

She couldn’t help but giggle. “Look, If we are safe, it’ll be fine,” she said as she teasingly as she wiggled her leg. “Thought never crossed your mind that you’d want to do it yourself? You’d be my *first*, and I *want* you to.”

Ellerick slowly reached up and placed a palm on his face. “Did you really have to phrase it like that?”

She giggled, and reached out to touch his injured arm gently. “Sorry, stopping the teasing and being serious, I just don’t want you to have to carry me with that.” She said quietly before shifting her hand to his other arm and guiding it to her thigh in invitation.

“Just enough till I can walk normally again,” she finished.

Ellerick stared at her for the longest time before nodding slowly. His face still hot and his heart beating quickly “Okay. In that case.”

Ayane watched him with a little flutter in her chest as he knelt and brought his face closer to her thigh. She felt his breath brush over her skin before his hand gently reached up and pulled her nozzle. Questions still formed as to why he could release the air from her, while she could only put it in.

“Why is it you could do that? You know, release it all,” she asked, deciding to try and distract him from his nervousness.

He traced a finger around the curse mark that circled the nozzle. He frowned as he looked closely at the crescent moon symbol that adorned her thigh. “I really have no idea.”

She couldn’t feel his fingers around it as he plucked it open, but she felt the air flow as it started to shift and attempt to escape her body.

“Okay... I’ll start.” Ellerick sucked in a breath, both out of nervousness and in preparation, before gently wrapping his lips around it and beginning to blow.

“*Oh...*” Ayane shivered as air flowed into her. Far flung from the cold, stale pumps and air tanks she had used in the past which did little but fill her mercilessly, the air flowing into her body was warm and gentle. She felt it heat up her core as it spread throughout her body like a breeze.

“*When did I forget what a warm body felt like?*” she thought as she closed her eyes and revelled in the feeling of her body begin to stretch back into shape. Allowing the air to flow to wherever it wished, she felt her body slowly firm back into shape. Her thighs rounded beneath Ellericks fingers and stretched into their moderately curvy size as he continued to blow into her.

*Crrreeeeeeeeak*

Ayane’s body sounded out gently as she arced her back. Her breasts had begun to swell with each breath now. With pulsing growth they brushed aside the cloak and her nipples sprang into the night

air. Her skin stretched pleasingly, and she felt her body shiver uncontrollably as a tingle of pleasure swept across her form.

She hadn't realized she had been lost in bliss until she noticed Ellerick had stopped. He was staring up at her from her thigh. His face red from either the effort or something else, both weren't sure. "Is this enough."

Ayane brought her hand up and flexed it experimentally. Bending her fingers back and forth and feeling the expected resistance. "Well, everything feels normal again." She looked down at him, his fingers still pinched around her nozzle.

She smiled down at him. "Sure you don't want a few more puffs? I'm suddenly in the mood again." Stretching herself out while seating in the car she gave him a tantalizing view of her body barely covered in his cloak. "After tonight I am more sure of my limits than ever before, so you *know* I can go bigger."

For a brief moment Ellerick considered taking her up on that. But he quickly shoved down the urge. There were more important things. Instead, he let out a huff and closed her nozzle shut. "You were going to stop the teasing, and you can walk again properly, no?"

"Sorry, sorry!" she laughed.

He pushed the nozzle back into her body with a light push. His face still burned bright red as he stood up and started walking around the car. He flopped into the driver's seat and sagged into the leather seating.

Letting the warmth dissipate regretfully, she turned her mind to important matters. "Before we go charge into your workplace filled with danger and excitement, can we possibly visit my apartment?" Ayane pleaded.

Ellerick tilted his head as he considered the possibilities. "It *should* be safe. Their focus would be on retrieving those two and masking the incident. We can't stay long though, they may circle back."

"I just need some clothes and things" she said.

He nodded back as the car roared to life. "I know the way."

The drive back was blissfully silent. Both occupants of the car lost in their own thoughts as they traversed the night streets. Perhaps it was a tad too quiet, as Ellerick flicked on the radio partway through the drive. Late night tunes belted out with the faint crackle of old speakers, and Ayane could feel her eyelids grow heavy despite how rapid her mind was flipping through the harrowing experience.

"Can you turn the radio up a bit?" Ayane asked. Hoping that the added noise will keep her from napping.

He nodded and was reaching for the dial when the music suddenly stopped.

<Hey you Owls and Owletts out there, this is your Midnight Muse with some breaking news! If you're smelling smoke out on the town then you're getting wiff of a blaze that just hit the old warehouse district. Faulty electrical wiring and poor storage conditions have been blamed for the fire, but the authorities have already got it under control. No culprits and no injuries on the scene. Ain't that the best? Now, back to the tunes!>

Ayane flicked the radio off. Suddenly not interested.

Ellerick nodded ahead of them. "Fine timing. We are here."

He stopped the car a little away from the apartment and squinted. Ayane looked around for any suspicious vans and people in suits. Thankfully, for all the power they seemingly had at their disposal,

they weren't focusing it here. Satisfied that they weren't going to be ambushed, Ellerick eased the car forward until they slipped into the parking lot.

Ayane watched the apartment's office for any sign of Ms. Goldblum. The lights were off and there wasn't any sound. A small urge to knock on the door just to ensure she was okay formed, but she thought better of it. Instead she opened the car door and quickly moved towards her apartment.

Ellerick hopped out quickly after her. "Wait a second."

"What? Aren't we in a hurry?" Ayane stopped at the top of the stairs.

"Well yes, but if they followed protocol they might have left something behind," Ellerick said as he moved in front of her.

It dawned on her. "That orb thing?"

Ellerick nodded. Both quietly moved until they stood in front of Ayane's busted up door.

"Fuck! My keys were in my bag..." she hissed.

*Knock knock*

To her surprise, Ellerick had reached forward and rapped the door with his good hand.

"What are you doing? If it's another Hardman answers what can we..." she began just as the door swung open and she found herself looking at a mirror image.

"What the fuck!" Ayane squeaked as the doppelganger stared back at her. It had apparently rummaged through her wardrobe and was sporting one of her old rock band tank tops and short skirts that she hadn't worn in months.

The Other Ayane smiled brightly. "Hey! I wasn't expecting some cool late night guests like you two! How's the evening treating you!"

Ayane opened her mouth and closed it. "I do *not* sound like that!"

"Oh! You have such great fashion sense!" The Other Ayane said as it looked her up and down. "Where did you buy that! Do you have fashion recommendations?"

Ellerick stepped in front of her and quickly pressed his finger into the middle of the double's chest. Gritting his teeth he shot a small pulse of mana in the required spot. He looked squarely into the Doppel's eyes. "Pause all previous instructions!"

The Other Ayane closed her eyes and stood up straight, with her arms flopping down to its sides. Freezing in place like it was a simple barbie doll.

"The fuck is this?!" Ayane stepped up to her copy and touched its face roughly. It felt warm to the touch, but oddly firm. Like she was touching a heated tire.

"It's like Hardman, if you removed all the special designs and additions that made him a menace, and made it much less intelligent." He thought for a moment. "I'm surprised it's so... chipper? It's supposed to be a stand-in."

"I am not!" Ayane squeaked. "Nor have I ever been like..." She gestured wildly at her copy. "That!"

Ellerick rubbed his left hand on his chin, perplexed. "How odd. They should have copied your personality onto the core of it before they left"

"The small ball thing? This thing was that?"

Ellerick nodded. "A flash copy. Designed to take your place for a short while."

"What happens after short while?"

He cleared his throat. “W-well, it... has an ‘accident’,” he said nervously, as if expecting Ayane to burst into anger, or confusion. “Just to tie up the loose end, really.”

To his surprise, Ayane just stood there taking in her copy. From head to toe it resembled her to how she was before she was cursed. Her skin was lifelike; despite it’s unnatural feel. The outfit it wore was something she enjoyed wearing in the hotter months, but had long since given up on. A simple black top with some comfortable hotpants that left much of her legs exposed to a nice breeze. The kind of fashion she had long since given up on.

Ayane pursed her lips. It vexed her how more normal this lifeless copy of her was. It vexed her a lot. She had a lot of things to say if she ever got to meet her curse maker again.

“I’ll dress and pack quickly. Just give me a few minutes.” She said as she pushed passed Other-Ayane out of her way and slipped out of the cloak, leaving her entirely naked.

“I’ll keep watch.” Ellerick cleared his throat as he averted his gaze and quickly moved to stand outside.

Ayane stopped and looked over her shoulder. “What kind of place is your workplace anyway??”

Ellerick sucked in a breath. Standing straight and looking ahead with purpose. “West Rimwatch Headquarters. Base of the Sweepers, and one of the four main gates to enter the magical side.”

“*Magical side*” Ayane muttered. “No fancy name for it or anything?”

“I mean, there are many names for it depending on the race or culture, like Ezermeth, The Great Salvation, Khuzdul... but since you aren’t from there I thought...”

Ayane thought for a moment. “Well, I, as the non-magic folk here, shall give it an appropriate name based on my experiences of meeting so many colourful crazies like you and yours. I’m not going to keep calling it ‘the magic side’.”

Ellerick frowned and was about to turn before catching himself. “W-well, alright? What then?”

She smiled. “Flipside!”

---

“I gave you my report so just GET ME OUT ALREADY!” Kelly screamed.

Her blonde head and hands were the only things visible as the rest of her body had been submerged into the concrete. Standing above her were two more figures, both women. Both suited. Identical in nearly every way bar wildly different hairstyles.

One, raven hair roped into a long thin ponytail similar to Kelly’s preferred look, idly flicked up and caught Hardman’s core while the other woman, her head covered in a thick brunette coloured mane, was fighting back the urge to laugh and failing miserably.

“Hck..hah! Oh, sorry. I haven’t a clue how to use flux. *Lowborn* magic as it is, you’ll have to wait for the cleaners to show up,” said Blair. “But to think, the great Agent Kelandra lost to such a *powerful* foe.” She laughed as she flicked Kelly’s ears. There was a pop, and two sharp elf ears sprung out to replace the fake ones she had been wearing.

Kelly, ‘Kelandra’, growled in frustration at the two. “Yes, ha ha ha, laugh it up. But stop throwing Hardman! He’s not a toy you stupid Golem!”

Blair looked back at her partner. Ebony’s grey eyes were lazily watching the smoke from the warehouse. If there was any enjoyment in her game, she didn’t show it.

“Oh, you can trust Ebony. She’s as reliable as they come. As they *all* come if you bothered getting the newer models.” Blair laughed. “But you elves never really change. Always stuck in some century in the past just like your partner.”

Kelly was opened her mouth to reply when Blair produced a phone and placed it before her mouth.

A curt male voice soon spoke. <“I heard everything, Agent Kelandra. You say the culprit was an individual using a Cover?”>

Her elf ears twitched as she heard the voice. “Y-yes, sir,” she replied meekly.

< “And they retrieved the Altered. No signs of release?” >

“No Outbursts detected sir! We swept the area,” Blair said. “Mana levels are in the green. Well, aside from one particular area filled with some high level *wind* magic.”

Kelly’s ears drooped and she averted her gaze as best she could from Blair’s leering visage.

< “Fortunate, but unusual. Finally, please confirm the last part.” >

Kelly nodded slowly. “Yes sir. The Altered was... immune to magic. Even to magic of my level.”

The phone sat silent for a few moments.

< “We have a lot of work ahead of us.” >