

Elise Roma enjoyed walking the halls of the ship. When she wasn't busy making sure the inventory of prisoners was accurate and that every cryopod was functioning properly, she liked simply walking through the corridors.

Even when she was summoned by a superior, she made sure to enjoy the walk. It gave her time to prepare for the coming meeting, either making sure she had all the information she'd need or, as was the case now, she could simply prepare herself mentally since she hadn't been told what this was about.

The crew she walked by mostly ignored her as she ignored them. She had a few friends, but they were either technicians or guards, and the odds of encountering anyone from either group on the command level were low.

She walked by a Xanain scrubbing the floor. His antennas vibrated before he lifted his head. He watched her with his disconcerting multifaceted eyes, gave a nod, and went back to scrubbing.

He wasn't what she preferred, with his thin, scaly body. She didn't even know if he was actually male. She hadn't bothered studying his species. All she'd cared about was that he had equipment in the right location and that he could use it in a way to bring her pleasure. In exchange for spending nights in her bed, she made sure he had light duties instead of slowly wasting away in one of the tubes.

She'd discovered at a young age that humans did nothing for her. At first she'd thought it was men who didn't interest her, but she'd experimented and found that humans were just too boring, regardless of their gender. Aliens, now they knew how to show her a good time. Especially when they had the proper motivation.

She left the Xanain behind without a second glance.

The door to the bridge opened, and she entered the busy space. Officers manned the boards, hurried about on errands, and just talked amongst each other. She didn't have any reason to be here. Her duties kept her in the lower parts of the ship, but when the captain called, you came.

The man turned his chair and fixed his gaze on her. As with the other rare occasions she'd seen him, his white jacket and pants were impeccable. Not a speck of color on them; even his hair was slowly turning that stark of a white.

"You wanted to see me, Captain?"

"I'd like you to explain this to me." He motioned for the communications officer and an image appeared between them.

It was an alien, a Samalian. Shoulders and up. Black fur with possible dots on it, or it could be the poor quality of the image. Under was the bounty information.

'Tristan, wanted for kidnapping.' The amount made her breath catch. If money had been any kind of motivation, she would have deserted on the spot.

"Well?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but other than this being a bounty, I'm not sure what you want me to do."

The captain made another sign, accompanied by an annoyed sigh. The bounty shrank, and a list appeared next to it. She recognized it as the prisoner manifest. One entry was highlighted.

'Tristan, Samalian, C10.'

"Maybe you can explain to me how it is that one of our prisoners has kidnapped someone?"

She took out her datapad and pulled up the information.

"Sir, this is either a joke, or someone put the wrong name to the face." She brought up the image while sending an order for the tube to be pulled from storage. She sent the image next to that of the bounty. "The coloring's wrong. Tristan's fur isn't black, it's brown. Without any other details I can't say more, but—" She brought up the image from the thawing lab. "—he's right there, as you can see." She zoomed in on the tube with the Samalian floating in the liquid. He wasn't moving, but she brought up the life sign display and confirmed he was doing fine.

"This is Tristan, nice and sleeping in C10. He's been there since he was brought back. If you want, I'll be happy to take you to the lab so you can check him over yourself."

The man waved the suggestion away. "A joke then?"

“More likely a desperate attempt to get someone killed. With that kind of bounty, whoever that is will be hunted down by anyone with a ship. As soon as someone looks at the information closer, the bounty’s going to be changed or removed.”

“All right, good, good, so long as he’s still here. I don’t care who gets killed.” He turned to face the front of the bridge, and a woman approached him with a datapad.

Dismissed, Elise left. The Xanain nodded to her again, but she ignored him. Something bothered her. Bounties for that kind of money would be checked before being approved. She did a search for the bounty, looked for related information, and came up with footage. A fight on a wreck of a station, or on a ship, involving a Samalian and humans. One of a Samalian putting a body in the trunk of a hover. The quality of the fight was too low for her to do anything with it, but the one with the hover had been taken by a good-quality camera.

She zoomed in, and the Samalian’s fur was dark brown, and she could make out speckling in it. It was something of a coincidence that there would be two Samalians with the same body type and fur pattern. Although they weren’t an exact match, this one was bigger, more muscular, more male.

But it couldn’t be Tristan, he was in the tube. Not only did the computer and camera say so, she’d done a visual check less than a month ago.

And she remembered him. How could she not? The way he’d looked as the cryofluid sloshed off his body, matting the fur and leaving nothing to the imagination. She’d had such plans for him, if only he hadn’t pulled off an escape.

When he was finally brought back, she couldn’t take the chance to release him, no matter how tempting he was. He’d escaped once. If he did it a second time and she’d let him out, her career would be over.

Still, something nagged at her. She sent the order to leave the tube out, went to her room for a datachip, and headed for the lab.

The cryo transition room, called the thawing lab by the technicians, was empty. Unless they needed to move a prisoner out, there was no need to have anyone here. The tube marked C10 was on the central pedestal, and there was a body in it.

She checked the readout, everything was optimal. She brought up the computer records, compared them. They matched. This was indeed Tristan, according to the computer.

“Then,” she tapped her lips, “why is it you don’t look right?”

She hadn’t thought about it until looking at the Samalian dumping the body, but didn’t the one in the tube look thinner? Less muscular than she remembered? He could have lost mass while free, but Tristan hadn’t struck her as someone to let himself go. And really, with the traveling he’d had to do, how long had he been free? A few subjective months?

She looked at his midsection, but that was no help. She’d fantasized about it for so long her memory had become distorted. Which was why she’d gotten the chip. The one with the scan she’d run on him herself as he was let out. Oh, the numbers of fantasies that had fueled.

She inserted the chip in her datapad and placed both readouts side by side. Immediately she saw differences. Enough that she pulled out the DNA for both. Definitely not the same person.

This wasn’t the Samalian she’d released to hunt down the captain’s escaped plaything.

She was by the comm before she stopped herself. She’d confirmed this was Tristan when he was returned. Sure, she’d used the records in the computer, but could she be held accountable if someone had gotten into their system and changed that?

If she told the captain, after telling him the bounty couldn’t have been Tristan, what would he do? Who would he blame for the loss of revenue?

She stepped back to the tube and tapped on it. “If you aren’t Tristan, you aren’t going to be able to escape, will you?” She looked him up and down, licking her lips. “You certainly are a nice specimen.”

After his return, she hadn’t thought she could control someone like Tristan, but this Samalian? Him she could make hers for as long as he pleased her.

She shivered as she made plans.

She couldn’t just release him. Unlike the others, there was no way she could justify taking “Tristan” out to give him light duties. She’d have to make sure the ship still thought he was in his tube.

That meant bringing in one of her technician friends and making sure the Samalian kept to

specific rooms, so the ship wouldn't detect him. And a few guards, as well as one medic. Fortunately, she knew one who still owed her a favor for that night of fun she'd arranged for him.

Yes, with them it would go perfectly.

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The Samalian stirred in her bed. She watched him from the doorway, the stunner behind her back. She didn't think he'd try anything physical, but she wasn't taking any risk, not considering who this was.

He coughed, looked around, then bolted to a sitting position, eyes wide, ears back. "Where? How?" He noticed her and focused on her. "Who are you? Where am I?" He sounded scared. "I was attacked! This crazy woman jumped me, beat me up!" He touched his face. "What happened?"

"You're on the Sayatoga prison ship," Elise said.

His eyes went even wider. "Prison? Why? I haven't done anything."

"You're Tristan, a dangerous criminal wanted for more deaths than I can count."

"Who? I'm not— My name is Justin. I run and own Luminex." He found some fortitude. "I demand that you release me immediately."

"Unfortunately, that isn't going to happen. The ship thinks you're Tristan, so that's who you are."

"Check outside sources," he demanded. "Luminex has my medical records."

Elise shrugged. She walked to the bed, putting the stunner on the dresser on the way. "That doesn't matter. If the captain finds out you're not Tristan, it's going to cost me my job." She sat on the end of the bed. "How about you tell me why he arranged for you to take his place?"

"I don't know, I've never heard of this Tristan."

She smiled. "That's a lie. You two are brothers."

His demeanor changed, losing the fear and confusion. "I see you did your research."

"I have to."

Justin let himself fall back with a sigh. His head hit the pillow and he placed his hands on his chest. "He wants me dead. He's been trying to kill me ever since we were kids. He can't stand that I'm smarter than he is. I guess using me to ensure no one would come looking for him was a backup plan. I'd almost escaped too. I was at the spaceport when that crazy bitch jumped me."

He looked around. "So, why am I here? This doesn't look like much of a cell."

She moved closer. "The Sayatoga keeps its prisoners in cryotubes. Fewer troubles that way."

Justin's ears tilted. "Really? Then how did Tristan escape?"

"Because of the captain's arrogance. He thought he could use the prisoners to capture one who'd managed to get loose in the ship. All it caused was chaos. It turned into a mass escape attempt. Tristan and that prisoner who'd gotten loose were the only ones to succeed. How did you know he was held here?"

"My survival depends on knowing where he is." He looked around. "Is this your room?"

She nodded.

"It's very nice. Why am I here?"

She moved next to him and placed a hand on his chest, rubbing it. "I have a proposal for you." She moved her hand to his stomach. "If you agree to stay with me, to do what I say, I can keep you out of the cryotube." Her hand reached further down, under the covers, and she rubbed his groin.

Justin let out a small moan. He placed his hand behind his head. "And what exactly am I to do for you?"

She wrapped her hand around the shaft. "Pleasure me."

Justin moaned and thrust up. "Oh, I'll be happy to do that." He licked his lips. "Since you have things in hand, are you going to use me? Or do you need me to do the work?"

She smiled. "You seem rather eager to agree to this." She squeezed, and Justin let out a purr mixed in with the moan.

He looked at her, eyes half-lidded. "If there's one thing I excel at, it's doing whatever I need to so I'll survive." He smiled at her and ran his long tongue over his muzzle. "And this has to be the most pleasurable way I've ensured my survival. So yes, I'm more than happy to pleasure

you.”

She released him and stood. She undressed slowly, watching him watch her. He couldn't stop licking his lips. His ears pointed forward and his eyes shone with desire. Not only did he want to do this for his survival, but he wanted her, her body.

She smiled; this would be even easier than she'd expected. Unlike the others, who she had to convince this was to their advantage, and who then had to find a way to work themselves to having sex with another species, this man was eager for it.

Nude, she stood there. He extended his hand, and she took it, letting him pull her on top of him. She threw the covers off and admired his hardness as she straddled him. He was already panting as he ground against her.

She moved against him, rubbing to get herself wet, and then moved to take him in her. He tried to grab her hips, to take control, but she batted his hands away. With a mischievous grin, he put his hands behind his head, acknowledging his defeat, but promising he wouldn't give up.

Yes, she would enjoy this, she thought as she moved on him. Enjoy him. He wouldn't just submit to her. He would try to take charge, to be the one in control, but she would teach him this was much better when he let her tell him how it would go. He would learn to follow her lead.

When she was ready, she changed her angle, and they moaned in unison.

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She panted as she lay on top of him.

That had been even more pleasurable than she'd imagined. The Samalian was talented, and built in such a way he'd hit all the right spots inside her. He turned, and she slipped onto the bed next to him. He pulled her against him. He was still ready to go, she could feel, but he didn't thrust. He let her back rest against his chest while his hand moved between her legs.

“I think you misunderstand what it means to do what I say,” she said. He moved a finger, and she moaned. “I am the one in control.” He moved it again, and she whimpered. After her first orgasm he'd began taking charge of how he pleased her.

He nibbled her neck. “I'm used to running things, Mistress.” He made her moan loudly. “I'm afraid it's going to take time before I fully understand my role.” She bit her lips to stifle a scream. “Maybe you'll need to arrange to train me multiple times a day?”

She yelled, and he continued pleasuring her until she sagged. “And here I thought,” she said, panting, “that you'd fight me.”

He kissed the back of her neck. “Why would I ever want to do that?” He nibbled the lobe of her ear. “Do you have any idea how long I've looked for someone willing to take charge?” He moved his hand between her legs again and she moaned. “Every woman I've been with wanted me to own them.” He rested his muzzle by her ear and whispered. “I do wonder one thing.”

“Yes?” she asked dreamily.

“Is your ambition limited to owning me? Or can you see yourself owning so much more?”