

Fanatical Publishing's

Weekly Review

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AND NOW, a word from the publisher:

Hello folks, Jochannon here; first let me say thank you for reading, and I hope you enjoy, and please feel free to share it with your friends, re-post it to your profile, spread it around; the more people who get to read it, the better!

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If you want to contribute, I'd love to see your work, send it to me at the aforementioned e-mail address with: 'category(prose, fanfic, poetry), story title, author's name' in the subject line: please include the text of your story in the body of the email, and please include a cover letter about you, your work, or whatever; include any links you want.

Do you have any questions or comments? If you do, I'd to hear them; write to me at the aforementioned e-mail address.

I'm bad at stopping these things, so I'll just say again: thank you for reading, and I hope you enjoy!

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RUNAWAY

Zorveska
of <http://zorveska.deviantart.com>

The empty streets seemed to beckon me as I stepped out of my house, hesitant to start my morning. As with every drab day in this town, the wind whispered past the chimneys, darted swiftly by the street lamps and gently caressed me, small wisps catching my hair and wafting it behind me as I started down the pavement, careful not to slip on the soulless ice.

The trip into town was one I took nearly every day. Just the thought of the repetitive rhythm of walking, the never ending pavement and the bleak sun was enough to send pin-prick shivers down my all-too suspecting spine. I tugged my padded coat further around me, my own personal shield to block the chill from seeping into my bones and forcing me to a standstill. Those days, if you were caught in the cold, it was almost impossible to escape its deadening clutches. First, you just felt numb. To any innocent bystander, you would just appear to become careless with your movements, slightly out of control, but of no cause for concern. Then, as the cold consumes your body, all rational thought seems to fade into the abyss and your body begins to slow. Your grip slackens on your coat, the one thing that can save you, and –

I shake my head, expelling the cruel thoughts that plagued me these past few days. Of course I had heard the stories, though my family were always quick to tell me how untrue they were. However, I have always had my doubts; my family had after all been notoriously known to lie without apprehension, too absorbed in their own affairs to care about others. Yes, my family were infamous manipulators, and thus I had gained the same unfortunate reputation upon joining this disturbed family. Upon my upcoming birthday, I planned to leave, run away even, catch the only train, filled with such promises of acceptance and success, which ran through the small town and make my way in the big city. Somewhere no-one would know me.

The thought brought a smile to my lips, but just a slight one. In my hometown, filled with drained people who had given up their hope long ago, a smile, however small, was rare, a sparkling gem among fake pearls. The murky browns and greys of the town soon trickled into your mood, no matter how bright you start out. Consider your personality a flame, burning fiercely, defying the ferocious wind. My flame is slowly dwindling, waning against the strong force of the others around me. I refused to conform all those years ago, and ever since the community had tried to break me, to defuse the flame, my one key to

escaping this obsolete place.

A weighty sigh escaped my lips. The small wood I had entered had always seemed so magical to me as a child: growing up, I only ever held fond memories of the tall oaks, the vivid verdant leaves, the feathery grassy carpet and the lush ivy scaling the wooden fence, seeking refuge from the monotonous town. Such colours sparked a peculiar desire inside of me, a small murmur that yearned for flight. The wood was probably the only place that wasn't covered in the snow, untainted by the corruption.

A pitiful growl interrupted my trance and reality hit hard. I still had months left until I could truly be away. Vexed, I overturned branches and leaves, searching for the source of the feeble whine. A dirty clump of white fuzz invaded my peripheral vision, and with a start I clambered over the deadened stump, the distressing remains of a once-great oak in its prime. A young-looking dog, struck frozen by the cold, looked back at me, unable to lift its head. Pulling the frightened animal into my arms, I glanced around frantically. The main town was too far away to help, and I doubted sorely that my family would be eager to take in a misguided stray.

The train horn blared through the dense air towards us, the familiar promise of safety and success lifting my spirits. With the tracks just a few feet in front of me, almost embedded into the woodland that I could proudly call home, a grave realisation dawns upon me. I know what I must do.

The last thing I saw as I glanced back reluctantly, the train rocking my recharged body soothingly from side to side, was the rising sun, casting red, purple, orange rays across the sky. Such a beautiful goodbye.

FIRSTS

Ambiguous-Catharsis
of <http://ambiguous-catharsis.deviantart.com>

After 537 years, I don't have very many "firsts" left, and if I do, they're usually something boring like "first time to tempt a plumber" or "first 60+ de-conversion." When you've lived for as long as I have, you just run out of things you've never done before. At least, I thought I had.

But I've never given a eulogy at the funeral of a man I've driven to suicide before.

Arthur McCann was a fun case. He was one of those people who everybody loves, who tithes 10% and has lots of cute kids that get scholarships to George Fox University. A regular, upstanding guy.

They are the ones that are fun to break.

As I step up in front of the microphone, I see Arthur's wife, now a widow, surrounded by her children in the front row. Looking at them, I realize that I could probably push one of the older boys to murder, and convince the mom... Heather is her name, to turn to the bottle. They're all already half-broken by Arthur's death, and it would be so easy to give them one more little shove. But that wouldn't be nearly as amusing as letting them stew in their sorrow and struggle to put their lives back together.

"Arthur McCann was one of the good guys."

He really was, before I got to him.

"He always had this big, open smile for everyone he saw."

Before I pulled him off the straight-and-narrow with stolen kisses in the middle of the night, he did smile. Afterwards, too, but privately and for a much different reason.

"He loved his wife."

Not enough, however, that he wouldn't let himself to be tempted away from her by a young man with dark hair and darker eyes. I could almost say "and an even darker soul," but that would imply that I have a soul.

"And his children."

I wondered how badly it would crush them to learn why their dad killed himself.

"And all those around him."

Arthur had been surprisingly good at keeping secrets, even from those people he cared about the most.

"I didn't have the pleasure of knowing him very long."

Oh, but what a pleasure that time had been.

"But in the time that I did."

One year. It had taken me one year to corrupt his soul and burn

his faith to ashes.

“I learned that every day is a.... b-blessing.”

Damn, I still trip over that word, and it stings my throat like salt on an open wound.

“We might never know what drove such a good man to take his own life.”

The funny thing was that Arthur’s soul hadn’t been damned by his relationship with me.

“Or why he left no explanation.”

He was embarrassed and ashamed and regretful, but not sentenced to Hellfire yet.

“But we can take a small comfort.”

It was his suicide, the desperate act of taking his own life, that tipped the scales.

“In knowing that he is in a better place.”

I almost smile at how easily the blatant lie rolls off my tongue. As I step down from the podium, the mourners come up to pay their last respects. The oldest boy, the one I think I can persuade to commit murder, braces himself against the open coffin and covers his eyes.

“I can’t believe it,” he whispers, his voice cracking. “It... it feels like he’s still here. I can’t believe he’s gone.”

I lay a comforting hand on his shoulder and look to my left. As I see him standing there between two of my brethren, I realize it is a first for Arthur as well.

The first time he gets to watch his own funeral.

LAND OF INSANITY, PT 6

Riolightwarrior
of <http://Riolightwarrior.deviantart.com>

Four months later. Russia 21:39. Moscow. Targets name: Tim Young. Age: 27. Height: 5.11. Nick name: Dead Eye, U.S. military sniper.

"Get in, get out." Simple. At least that's what I thought. Who knew there would be someone there to rain on good ol' Tim's parade?! Everything was set up and ready to go. I was ready to assassinate my target. I had him in the cross hairs, then "Boom!" Instead of him, it was me who got shot that day. I thought it was the end as I heard a woman's voice speak to me.

"You are dead, Tim Young. You haf been erased from existence. You are no longer a soldier. You are no vone." The voice whispered into my ear before I blacked out. I woke up five weeks later with needles in my arm, hooked up to a heart monitor. How did I get into a hospital? The voice then rang in my head again.

"You are dead, Tim Young. You haf been erased from existence. You are no longer a soldier. You are no vone." I was still alive. Did she miss vital points on purpose? Was I alive because she wanted me to be? I sat there a while until a nurse came in.

"Ah. Mister Young. You're awake. I hope you rested well. Now, if you would be so kind as to sit up for me, I need to change your bandages." Doing what I was asked, a sharp pain shot through my body, then I looked at the nurse. She glanced at me with an apologetic look.

"Sorry. I know it hurts. Whomever injured you did one Hell of a job. After shooting you, they lacerated your body, removing your tattoos. Do you know anyone who would do that?"

This puzzled me. As the nurse removed bandages off my body, I could feel the air hit every inch of torn flesh. To say the least, the gaping wound in my shoulder hurt the most. Only erasers did this. Then it hit me. What the voice said, "You have been erased from existence." I was attacked by an eraser, but why? The nurse walked up to me holding a phone with a number already programmed on it.

"The woman who brought you in left this for you. She said you would

understand." Nurse Kwolczyk placed the phone on the table beside me, then left. Sitting there, all I thought of was why an eraser would come after me. Eventually, my gaze went to the phone. The number was not familiar, and the blinking didn't help much either. Finally, I decided to press "Call." It took 12 minutes before I heard the same voice that had been ringing in my head. Her voice was husky and sounded like she was in her late 20s to early 30s with a German accent.

"I haf been waiting, Mister Young. How are your injuries? Sorry about cutting off all your beautiful body paintings, but as it stands, my job required me to do so. Thas neizer here, nor zere. Vhat matters is now," she said teasingly with a hint of pity. Listening to her, I couldn't help but to laugh a little at what she said. It's kind of odd hearing the person who almost killed you feel sorry for you, but I had to get down to buisness. Why was I erased, and who is this person?

"And speaking of now, may I ask who you are, Miss?" There was a long pause, followed by a long drawn out sigh before she replied in a dark, almost reluctant tone.

"I von't gif you the pleasure of knowink my true name, but I vill gif you somesing you can call me by. Wolf Runner." An interesting choice for a name, but it works as long as I have something to call her her by.

"All right, Wolf Runner. Why did you keep me alive, and why was I erased," I asked harshly, not wanting to waist anymore time. "I had a job to assassinate a man! An..." Wolf cut me off before I could finish what I was going to say.

"The man is dead, Mister Young. Don't vorry about zat. You vere gifen a hero's death. Turn the TV on to channel 12." My eyes widened as I looked for the remote to see what she was rambling about.

"Everyone has gathered here at Hero's Hill for the funeral of Timothy A. Young. He was a courageous 27-year old man who died in the line of duty. He has been awarded the Purple Heart for his bravery and sacrifice. His friends and family have all gathered here to pay their respects to this brave soldier." My jaw dropped at the sight of this, then Wolf chimed in.

"As you can see, the whole vorld sinks you're dead. Looks like zat nick name of yours is about to become your permanent name. Please understand, Mister Young... Oops... I mean, Mister Dead Eye, I had to do my job. Afterall, I haf to make a lifink don't I."

Thinking on it for a moment, I asked, "Who hired you?"

She laughed and said teasingly, "I will never tell. If you want to know, come and find me, Mister Dead Eye. I will be waiting." She giggled, and soon after the line went dead. Who gave the order to erase me was all I could think. Well, that and why. I decided it would be best to leave it be for another time, then slowly fell back to sleep.

A couple of hours later, someone touched my arm to wake me. I bolted up to see an old man in a black butler's uniform wearing a gentle look on his face. It was obvious that one wrong move on my part could get me killed in an instant.

"Mister Young, my master has requested that I come ask you if you would accept his offer to join a group of people who would greatly benefit you in finding out why you were erased," the man said in a forced, elderly sounding voice. How his master knew I was erased was a puzzle, but I was more curious how this group could benefit me.

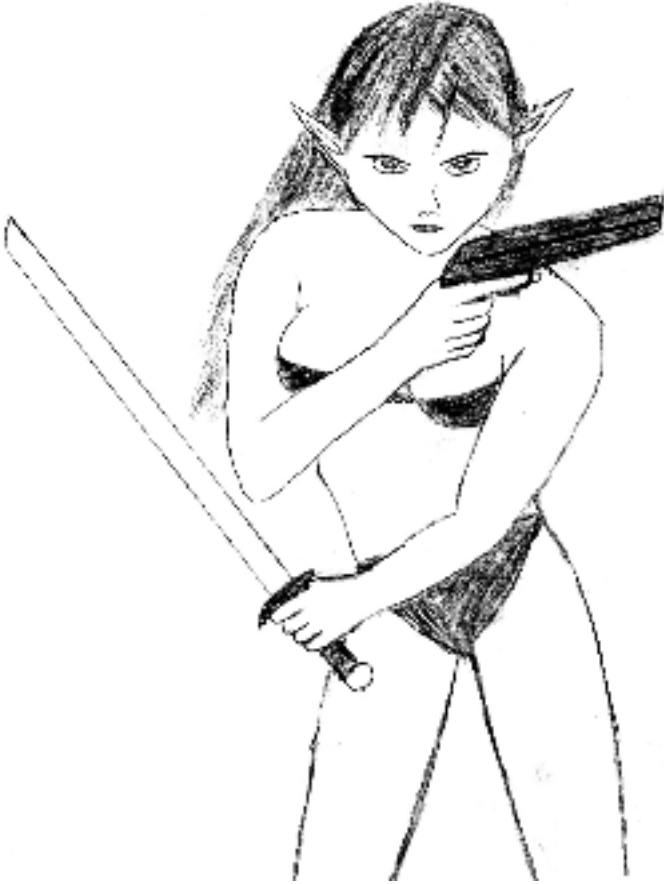
I mulled it over for a bit before finally responding to the offer. "All right, but answer a few questions for me first. Who is your master? How did he know I was erased? Why does he want to help me?"

In an almost sinister sounding, completely different voice, the man shifted his stance and smiled, replying, "My master knows much, seeing as he has contacts throughout the world. He can find out anything he wants. Even things that are top secret. All he has to do is ask. As for him wanting to help you, I think your and his goals are about the same as they are with the others on this 'task force'. Does that answer your question, Sir?" He shifted his stance back the way it was originally while putting on that gentle, old man look again.

"Y...yeah. Sure. umm. Where do we go, and what is his name," I asked frightened.

"My master's name is Mister X, and you'll find him by following me, Mister Young," he said, unfolding the fresh clothes I had in my room from who knows where. I knew I didn't have them when I was checked in. I'd never wear something so formal.

FAN FICTION



or: Leanna's Return

Brought to you courtesy of Gunslinger, the wandering Vigilante.

Check it out: <http://www.lulu.com/shop/jb-hickock/gunslinger/ebook/product-18930890.html>

ME2 HELLDIVER SAGA CHAPTER 31: GIFTS OF GREATNESS

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Jacob had been the next one that Kelly had told him was distracted. Austin was quick to talk to him on that subject.

"Kelly tells me you've got something on your mind. Care to share?" he asked.

"Yeah. Sorry, I'm a little unfocused. Personal matter. It won't affect my duties." Said Jacob.

"Jacob, I always have time for my crew. Tell me what's bothering you. Perhaps I can help." Said Austin.

"As I said, it's a personal matter. I don't want to waste our time if it turns out to be a goose chase. But..." Jacob was silent for a moment before he finally spoke. "Well, I got pinged by a ghost the other night. Family."

"I'm listening." Said Austin, crossing his arms.

"My private log got an update about the Hugo Gernsback, the ship my father served on. It sent an SOS last week, reporting a crash and requesting rescue. Shepard, that ship went missing ten years ago. I hadn't talked to my father for three years before that. I've buried everything but a body. I'm not convinced it isn't just some automated distress signal ticking over. It's been too long." Jacob explained.

"I'd think you'd be more excited that your father might be alive." Said Austin.

"He wasn't around enough for me to have bad memories. It's an old well-healed wound. But if he's actually alive and needs help... I also want to note that it's not normal procedure to be routed to the Normandy. This was passed to my personal log. Through Helldiver filters, of course. Cut all ties with Cerberus." Said Jacob.

"You didn't get along with your father?" Austin asked.

"He made no apologies, I'll give him that. You make a mistake, you own up to it, even if you keep making it. Whatever we had were a lifetime ago. I've had ten years to get to where I am. And as far as I know, he's still a ghost." Jacob replied.

"I think we can spare the time. Pass the coordinates to Joker." Said Austin.

"I appreciate that, Major. I don't expect more than dusty old bones, but it'll be good to close the record." said Jacob, gratefully.

Aeia was indeed a very nice place. It was the perfect example of what a tropical paradise was. Sunny weather, palm trees, the sound of the waves crashing, it had the lot. Austin and Jacob disembarked with Kasumi and Urz following behind them.

The large crashed wreckage of the Gernsback could be seen in the distance. From the looks of it, it seemed mostly intact. It hadn't even been stripped that much.

After some time of exploring the wreckage, they came across what looked like a VI.

"From the look of it, this beacon's been here awhile. Why would they wait years to signal?" said Jacob.

Pause in beacon protocol, eight years, 237 days, seven hours. Pause is recorded as: RECORD DELETED by Acting Captain Ronald Taylor." the VI replied.

"That's not right. My father was first officer." said Jacob.

"Ronald Taylor was promoted under emergency command protocols. Other flagged issues: Unsafe deceleration. Local food and neural decay. Beacon activation protocols." said the VI.

"Who's in command of this ship? Where are the survivors?" Austin asked.

"Captain Harris Fairchild reported killed following unscheduled suborbital descent. First Officer Ronald Taylor promoted in field to acting Captain." the VI replied.

"But where is he now?" Jacob asked.

The location of the remaining crew of the Hugo Gernsback is unknown. This beacon has been unattended for several maintenance cycles." said the VI.

"I assume "unsafe deceleration" refers to the crash? Give me the details." said Austin.

"Following an unspecified impact and sublight drive failure, the Hugo Gernsback made an unscheduled descent at 465% of theoretical recommended sub-orbital velocity. The Hugo Gernsback then decelerated at 782% of theoretical recommended approach velocity, sustaining significant damage to investment and crew." the VI explained.

"Why wasn't the beacon activated before now?" Austin asked.

"This emergency beacon became functional after 358 days, 12 hours, following the unscheduled suborbital descent of the Hugo Gernsback. Activation was triggered remotely after eight years, 237 days, seven hours, on the authority of acting Captain Ronald Taylor. Pause in beacon protocol is recorded as: RECORD DELETED." the VI replied.

"Something's not right here. Come on, let's get going." said Austin.

Right at that moment however, a woman suddenly ran out at

them.

"You came? From the sky? The leader said someone would come! He delayed for so long, but he still has power! Some have lost faith. The hunters! They will have seen your star. They will not let you help him." she said.

Everyone was left very confused by this. She almost hadn't made any sense at all.

"What are you talking about? You're not making sense." said the Helldiver.

"I – I, uh... I don't remember how to say it. He's our leader, and we serve so... we can go home. But some want to fight him. They were – they were cast out. He exiled them, so they hunt his machines and those who help him. They don't believe that rescue will come." said the woman.

At that moment, a man suddenly popped out from behind some wreckage and aimed his gun at the woman.

"Watch out!" Austin yelled as he pushed the woman out of the way. The shot just missed and instead impacted on the Helldiver's armour.

"Hunters! They won't stop until the leader is dead!" said the woman.

"Kill them! Agents of the liar! He will not escape!"

Despite their ruthlessness though, the hunters weren't armoured or equipped at all, so the group was able to deal with them almost instantly.

"So, that's "neural decay," huh? They just seemed regular old crazy to me." said Kasumi.

"My father wouldn't let this go on. Something is very wrong." said Jacob.

Austin looked back to where the woman was. She seemed almost petrified with fright.

"Are you alright?" Austin asked.

"You killed them, but there are more every day. They want to fight, but I just want to go home." She said.

"She's lost it. We need to find someone who can make sense of this." Said Jacob.

After a short while, they could see what looked like a small settlement in the distance.

"Is that a settlement ahead? They'd better be friendlier than the beach group. I need answers." Jacob commented.

"They're wearing the same uniform as the ones who attacked us,

but they don't look ready for a fight." Kasumi commented.

Austin looked around. The Thief was right; these people were wearing the same uniform but did not look hostile.

"There aren't any men here. Maybe it affects genders differently? Makes males get violent?" said Austin.

"Perhaps." Said Kasumi.

It was true. There were no men, only women. They didn't seem to be frightened or intimidated by the sudden appearance of two new people, a Helldiver and a Varren.

"It doesn't matter right now. One of these people must know what my father has to do with this!" said Jacob.

"You have his face! He promised to call the sky, but he sends nothing. He forced us to eat, to... decay. You are cursed with his face!" said one of the women.

"Not the best reaction to the family resemblance, Jacob." said Austin.

"They just don't know how handsome you are, Jacob." Said Kasumi, trying to sound suggestive as she winked at Jacob.

"Why would my father force his crew to eat toxic food? Whatever's happening here needs to stop." said Jacob.

Still the women mostly ignored them while they walked around the camp. But that didn't stop them from making the group believe that they weren't welcome.

"What the hell?! Someone had to push them to make that. That's borderline worship!" said Jacob as he observed a large man made structure in the middle of the camp.

A small squad of mechs suddenly appeared. They appeared to have one of the women at gunpoint.

You're Captain demands discipline! Weapons are not permitted." Said one of them.

Like the hunters though, they were easy to deal with.

Right as the group turned to leave though, the woman that the mechs had been threatening stopped them.

"Please! Wait! You... you fought his machines. You have his face, but you might stop this. This... I forget how to... read, but this... was the start. What he promised, and what they did to us. We need the sky. Take us back to the sky." she said as she handed a pad to Jacob.

"Jacob? What does it say?" Austin asked.

"It's a crew logbook. Some of them thought the beacon repair was taking too long. They were afraid they'd run out of supplies and lose their minds to the decay. My father restricted the ship food for

himself and the other officers so they wouldn't be affected. Everybody else had to eat the toxic food and hope for treatment later. The rest is a casualty list. A few mutinied over the decision. My father and the officers turned the mechs on them." said Jacob as he read the pad.

"He wasn't command material, and it got to him. Couldn't keep the crew in line without violence." said Austin.

"It didn't stop there. More incidents, harsh punishments. It's like they're cattle. Or toys. In a year, all the male crew members are flagged as "exiled" or dead. They separated out the women. Assigned them to officers like pets. And after the beacon is fixed, the officers appear in the casualties, too. After! My father took control and didn't stop it." said Jacob, now sounding very appalled.

"So why call for help now?" Austin asked.

"The surviving males are changing. Everything he did is coming back to bit him in the ass. Nine years. Why didn't he set it right? I need to find this man." said Jacob.

After several long fights with some of the other crew and the mechs, they finally found Ronald Taylor. True enough, he looked very much like Jacob himself. Surprisingly, he didn't seem to recognize his own son at first.

"You're here! I knew a real squad would blow through just fine. Sorry if the mechs scuffed your pads. I'll get you something nice when we get back to Alliance space. I got to have some back-pay coming." he said.

"What about your crew, Acting Captain?" Jacob asked coldly.

"Total loss. The toxic food turned them wild. They propped me up here in some kind of ritual behaviour. Waiting for a chance to signal has been hell." Taylor replied.

"That's the best you can do?" Jacob asked as he shook his head.

"You let all your people talk back like that... uh... who are you, exactly?" Taylor asked.

"Major Austin Shepard of the Helldivers. I believe you're acquainted with Mr Taylor?" Austin replied.

"Taylor?! Jacob. No, not Jacob." said Taylor.

"Why not me? Would ten years of this look better to anybody else?!" Jacob retaliated.

"You have to understand. This isn't me. The realities of command, they change you. I wasn't ready for that. I made sure you were taught right. Before I left. I had hoped to leave it at that." said Taylor.

"I'm not unreasonable, Captain. But ten years? What happened?" Austin asked.

"Goddammit, why did you do this to your crew?" said Jacob.

"There was resistance to the plan. Mutiny. We had to take a

hard line to keep order. And things settled down. As the decay set it in, we made sure the crew were comfortable. Some even seemed happier. Ignorance is bliss, right? And they were grateful for guidance, like an instinct. Pure authority was... easy. At first. Month in, the effect lowered inhibitions. They got territorial. Rank, protocol – they couldn't understand. We had to establish dominance. After a while the perks seemed... normal." Taylor replied.

"That's it? You created a harem and played king? Ten years in a juvenile fantasy?" Jacob asked.

"I can't point to where it all went wrong. But when the beacon was ready, revealing what happened didn't seem like a good idea." said Taylor.

"You didn't feel any responsibility to get out of here for the sake of family?" said Kasumi.

"I gave him a good start. He was a smart kid and was better off not following me. We figured that out a long time before I took jobs in deep space. And, after things escalated here, it seemed best to just disappear off the galactic map." Taylor replied.

"Until you needed someone to save your ass." said Jacob.

"We can help these people. The Arkanes can have ships here in days and pull everyone out." said Austin.

"He's not worth the fuel to haul him out, or the air he's breathing. He's dammed lucky I don't even think he's worth pulling the trigger." said Jacob as he pointed his pistol at his father. After a small while though, he lowered it. "I don't know who you are. Because you're not any father I remember."

"We'll secure him for an Alliance court. For every year here, he'll have ten to think about it." said Austin.

"Give him all the time in the galaxy. The man who did this doesn't know right from wrong." said Jacob.

"I'm sorry, Jacob. I did the best I could." said Taylor regrettably.

"I'm ten years past believing that."

"Helldiver ships are inbound to secure Captain Taylor and his crew, Major." said Joker.

"Best we get out of their way and let them do their job." said Austin.

"Roger that." Joker replied.

Austin went into the comm room to find Jacob on call.

"What do you mean, it wasn't you?"

Austin stepped into the grid to find Jacob talking with the Arkane Council. Jacob didn't look happy with them. Mind you, the same couldn't really be said of the Council either.

"Mr Taylor, if we had passed the information about the Gernsback to you, we would be smiling at your resolution of the

situation." said Spartan.

"As you can see, we are not smiling." Tarnack finished.

"You're sure about this, Councillors? I mean no disrespect, but this seems like the sort of thing you'd be the first to know about. Besides, nothing goes through my ship without a report to you." said Austin.

"We never lie, Shepard. Especially to our own. Mr Taylor may have once been the enemy, but he chose to turn away from that path. Even if we still don't trust him, that does not mean we should withhold anything. Information about family would never have been withheld either. said one of the councillors.

"We had no more reason to believe his father his father was alive than he did." said Tarnack.

"Still, we are happy to know the situation is behind you." said Spartan.

"Fine. You didn't forward it. So who did?" Jacob asked.

"I did."

A third figure then joined them. It was Miranda.

"You forwarded sensitive information to Jacob without notifying the Council? Miranda, are you insane?!" Austin nearly shouted. "Was this supposed to be a favour, or did you just want to see him squirm?"

"What he did with it was his own business. There was a time when it mattered to you. Sending this along seemed like keeping an old promise. I keep my promises." Miranda said to Jacob.

To say that the Arkane Council was furious with this was a very mild understatement. Many of them looked just about ready to tell Austin to arrest Miranda on the spot. Only Spartan and Tarnack though seemed to remain calm and keep their composure. They had both been on the Council the longest, so they had seen far worse. There was still a hint of bitterness in their voice though.

"Miss Lawson and Mr Taylor, we will discuss your liberal interpretation of security protocol in private. Shepard, if you would step outside?" said Spartan.

"As you wish, Councillors." said Austin as he bowed his head and left. He was actually glad he was being sent out. He'd much rather not see how bad this would get.

Several long painful minutes passed. Austin could already hear the faint muffled sounds of angry shouting, mostly Miranda's.

A short while later, the door opened and Miranda practically stormed out. She didn't even look at Austin once as she left. It was clear that she was in a bad mood. Jacob shortly followed.

"How'd it go?" Austin asked.

Not well if I'm honest." Jacob replied. "Miranda's now got the Arkane's monitoring her every move. They said that she should count

herself lucky that they didn't see this as a betrayal and that she' still in the ranks. To say that Miranda's in a bad mood because of this wouldn't be the phrase I would use."

"You good with this, Jacob?" Austin asked.

"It's all bull, Shepard. Captain Taylor can rot in prison – it doesn't change who I am or what I know. I've already mourned the man he used to be. I guess he was a good enough father that even he can't screw up what he taught me." said Jacob.

"You had no idea Miranda was behind this?"

"She's got a good memory. Selective, but good. I haven't thought about those days in a long time. Can't figure which promise she meant, though. Not sure I really want to know. She... requires a better man than I."

"Come on. We've got work to do."

"Aye, Major." "Shepard? Thanks for the help."

"Anytime, Jacob."

The two men shook hands before they finally departed, Jacob heading back to his usual spot in the armoury, and Austin heading down to crew area. He had something else that he needed to take care of.

With Jacob's father now dealt with, Austin could concentrate on something more important, his telepathic link with Liara. They had thought at first about talking to Samara with this, but because she was a Justicar and had most likely not had any bond mates for a long time, they decided Alaara and Sandra would be the wiser choice. They were all sat in the Normandy's dining area just outside the medbay and Miranda's quarters. So far, the Ex-Cerberus operative hadn't come out after her earlier talk with the Arkanes, but Austin reckoned she'd come round.

"A link like this isn't uncommon you know. Hundreds of bond mate couples can do it eventually. We're one of them." said Sandra.

"And you never told us about this?" Austin asked.

"And spoil the surprise for you? It's like you don't know us at all, Shepard." said Sandra.

"So how did you first find out about your mind link?" Liara asked curiously.

"I actually already knew about it a long time ago when I was your age." Said Alaara. "This is gonna sound a bit wrong, but... my parents... showed me."

"You...?" Liara went to say, but Alaara stopped her.

"It's nothing I'm proud of. It was enlightening and fun, but that's it. And I'd rather not talk about it." Said Alaara.

"How is it though that this mind link has only started happening

now? It's been almost three years now since we had our first Union." Austin asked.

"I'm not sure, to be honest. The only good conclusion I can think of is that because you've been dead for two years, and have now just started having Union again on such a regular basis, you're bond's finally had a chance to grow strong enough." said Alaara. "After all, it's hard to ignore the many moans we hear at night.

Sandra however gave her wife a slight nudge after she said that.

"This isn't something to be joked about lightly, Alaara. They've not been together as long as we have and Liara is also much younger than you. You're nearly 310, she's still only 109." she said.

"How long have you been together?" Liara asked curiously.

"Ooooooh, it's been so long now that I've lost count." said Sandra.

"I think it's been... eight years now? Was it eight?" Alaara asked as she tried to remember.

"I think it's ten years now actually. You became bond mates about three years after we all first met." said Austin.

"Goddess, has it been that long?" Alaara asked, surprised.

"Feels like a lifetime ago. Shepard was still a Commander, we all knew nothing about each other, and look at us now. You'd never believe the sort of things that happened to us in this day and age." said Sandra.

"To think I missed out on so much of that." Liara sighed as she cuddled up to Austin.

"You're the best thing that ever happened to me, Liara." he said.

Both Alaara and Sandra smiled at one another and held hands.

"There any other Union secrets we might want to know about?" Austin asked.

"You can also share dreams with one another, but I think you already knew that. That's always the first stage and happens as soon as a Union is done. The other affects come after it's used a lot more. You could say that it's the side effect of a very healthy relationship." said Alaara.

"Hardly unexpected considering how much you two love one another." Sandra smiled.

Liara remained silent for a little while before she spoke again.

"Sandra, if you don't mind me asking, are you Russian?" she asked.

Sandra was silent for a while. She was a bit surprised that Liara had asked her that.

"Yes I am actually. How did you guess?" she replied.

"It's just that occasionally your voice has the faintest hints of a Russian accent, even though you mostly sound Canadian. It made me start to wonder if you have a Russian heritage." said Liara.

"Hmm. Well, I guess there's no harm in you knowing since you

asked." said Sandra. "There's a somewhat interesting story behind that."

"I've heard it before from her, but to you two this should be something new." said Alara as she sat back in her seat.

"Both my parents were born and grew up in Russia. It was a somewhat difficult time since the first contact war had just ended. My parents you see hadn't married, they were still dating. Sometime later into their relationship, my mother found out that she was pregnant. It had happened by accident. When she told my father, in a fit of rage he revealed that she'd just been a fling for fun and that he was married. My mother left in anger. Despite her temptation however, she decided not to get an abortion. Unfortunately, she died in child birth, leaving me as an orphan." said Sandra.

"That's horrible. How did you survive?" Liara asked as Austin put his arm around her for comfort.

"I grew up on the streets, learning to look after myself." Sandra replied.

"Didn't your mother have any relatives?" Austin asked.

"No. My mother had a close friend, but she had so many financial problems that she couldn't afford to look after me. So I was forced to grow up on the streets, learned to look out for myself." said Sandra. "For most of my youth, I stayed in Russia occasionally finding a temperamental home in a small orphanage. During the day, I went out to try and see if there was any way to get some money. Nights, I spent in the orphanage. It was better than having to sleep outside. You ever tried to sleep outside in sub-zero temperatures without a blanket and hardly any warmth? Nightmare!"

"That still doesn't fully explain how you sound more American than Russian." said Liara.

"It wasn't until my teenage years that I eventually left Russia. I journeyed to America and soon found myself on the streets of New York. I remained there and eventually learned to speak English. I guess being around so many Americans eventually just caused me to lose my Russian accent." Said Sandra.

"If that's so though, then how did you ever manage to get to where you are now?" Liara asked.

Not long after I arrived, I ended up joining a gang who often took in orphans and looked after them. While this finally gave me an actual home and people I could actually call family, it did give me a small bit of responsibility." Sandra explained. "You see, because this gang often took in so many children who were homeless and simply looked after them, they became enemies of nearly every other gang out there as they were being robbed of potential recruits. So we all had to be very careful and learn to look out for each other. The gang even taught some of us to listen out and observe for rumours. I in particular

became extremely good at eavesdropping and listening to conversations. I could even overhear certain things in a noisy crowd. It was this sort of talent that eventually got me into communications. I started practicing around with communication channels and tried to listen out for many gang messages so that we could always move to a different spot if they found us or we could hide."

"Why eventually leave to become a Helldiver then?" Liara asked.

The gang often looks after children until they're old enough. By the time they reach the age 21 they're expected to have got a decent job, earned some money, and have a place to stay." Said Sandra. "I eventually heard about Helldiver recruits. The gang felt that my talent for communications might help so they encouraged me to accept. I left the gang when I hit the age of 19 and enlisted. And here I am now."

"Hmm, right within ravaging range." Alaara teased as she rubbed Sandra's leg.

"Darling, behave." said woman sternly.

"Or what?" Alaara asked seductively.

The Asari then sent an image into her bond mates head, causing Sandra to moan in surprised pleasure as she felt the feelings of her lover eating her pussy.

"We both know you always forgive me no matter what." Alaara finished, smiling evilly at her wife's flushed expression.

"It works that way as well?" Austin asked.

"Oh yes. You can transmit feelings, thoughts images, almost anything you can think of, literally." Alaara smiled cheekily. "It can even be used to change the way someone's feelings. For example, if one isn't in the best mood, you can use your own feelings to cheer them up."

"And unfortunately for me, I can never keep my wife under control. Not to mention there's a particularly sexual image she knows that always gets me off." Sandra sighed, doing her best to resist the urge to rub her nether region.

"Hmmm. Let me test that." Liara thought as she touched Austin's hand and sent a thought into his mind.

Austin temporarily was left speechless as Liara transmitted an image of her, masturbating furiously in his quarters without climax and begging him to come find her, into his mind.

When the Helldiver gave her a somewhat shocked look, she simply smiled.

"Just practicing." she said very innocently with puppy dog eyes.

"Later." he chuckled as he kissed her on the forehead.

Despite this though, Liara couldn't help but squirm a little with anticipation, as sleeping hours were less than an hour away.

Both Alaara and Sandra simply chuckled.

'You're a fast learner, young one.' said Alaara in a joking wise voice as though she was a teacher and Liara was a student.

"Learned from the best." Liara smiled.

"You've no idea." Sandra chuckled.

Well, I think it's about time we turned in for the night. Darling?" said Sandra as she looked at the time.

"Still a bit early, isn't it?" Alaara asked, a bit confused.

I've got a reward for you for giving me that image earlier." Said Sandra as she winked at her wife.

"Ohhhh! I see." Alaara smiled slyly. "Shepard, if you'll excuse us."

Have fun." Austin smiled as the two Helldivers left. "Ready to go to bed too?" he asked as Liara snuggled up to him.

You go ahead and get ready. I have something I just quickly want to take care of." Said Liara.

Don't take too long, love." Said Austin as he kissed her on the forehead again and got up from his seat.

As the Major headed for the elevator, it suddenly opened and Miranda stepped out, causing Austin to very nearly bump into her.

Oh. Sorry, Miranda. I didn't know you were in there." He said apologetically.

Shepard." Miranda nodded, smiling slightly. Austin didn't notice it, but she even winked at him.

As the Ex-Cerberus operative passed him, he caught a whiff of something. An extremely good and somewhat arousing smell.

Last time they had been on Omega, Miranda had bought a new type of perfume that she'd never tried before. She was told that it had some new type of pheromone in it and had hoped to wear it today. Ever since her last talk with Austin, the Helldiver had been trying to mostly stay clear of her after what he'd accidentally said. Little did he know that he'd also got her interested in him.

Miranda walked past Austin as she headed back to her quarters. Austin was left simply standing there for a while before he snapped out of it and got into the elevator. He couldn't deny however that he felt rather hot and he could even feel his cock slowly enlarging as it filled with warm blood. Not just that, but there also someone constantly on his mind, Miranda.

Liara had finished up changing. The little thing she'd told Austin she wanted to take care of was actually a cover-up. In truth, she'd just needed some time to apply some temporary body paint on herself. The body paint would glow in very faint lights and would eventually dissolve in about 5 hours or so, more than enough time for Shepard to enjoy her with it.

As she stepped into the elevator however, she suddenly felt

something flash in her mind.

Austin was stood in front of the galaxy map and was just walking to the elevator. As it opened however, Miranda suddenly stepped out.

Oh, pardon me, Major.” She said very seductively as she stopped him.

The Ex-Cerberus operative then moved right up close to Austin and lowered her voice.

I’ve cleared the engine room. Be there in five minutes.” She whispered.

What does she think she’s doing?! That’s my bond mate she’s trying to flirt with!” Liara thought as she saw the whole thing happen in front of her.

Should’ve known you wouldn’t settle for the Captain’s quarters.” Said Austin slyly.

“What?! Did he just...”

I settle for nothing but the best.” Miranda smiled as she stepped back into the elevator. She even winked at Austin as the doors closed.

Liara was left a bit confused by this. It was completely unlike Austin to do something like this. Then something occurred to her. Miranda had been in the elevator, there was only one elevator on the Normandy, and she was in it.

It wasn’t possible that what she’d seen could’ve just happened. It was impossible. Then Liara remembered what Alaara and Sandra had just said. They could share images and dreams. She had a feeling that what she’d just seen was actually a dream.

Sure enough, her suspicions where confirmed when the doors opened. Austin was lying fast asleep on the bed. He had only the covers covering very little of his naked body and she could clearly see his member sticking up from under them like a tent pole. He was moaning a small bit, an obvious sign that his dream was an arousing one.

Then another image flashed in her mind as she saw even more of the dream.

Miranda was stood in front of the massive drive core, this time wearing her old Cerberus cat-suit. True to what she’d said earlier, it was completely clear. No sign of Tali or Ken and Gabby.

Austin then suddenly walked up behind her and wrapped both his hands around her curved waist and spun her round.

The Helldiver instantly set to work on plating several soft kisses on the Ex-Cerberus operative’s neck. Miranda eagerly reciprocated while Austin propped her up on the console, breaking their kiss and

shifting his aim lower, attacking the top part of Miranda's generous cleavage which was exposed by her skimpy, skin-tight latex uniform.

After a few short kisses, he then picked her up again. He only got a few centimetres though before he stumbled and fell on his back with Miranda landing on top of him.

As Miranda straightened herself back up, she reached up for the hidden zipper on her outfit. An eager smile appeared on Austin's face as he watched Miranda very slowly slide it down and he saw her outfit open up ever so slightly.

Ohhhh, stop teasing me!" Austin moaned.

Miranda simply smiled very seductively as she slid the top portion of the outfit aside, exposing loads of her smooth skin and her massive breasts which were clad in a black bra.

Liara felt a powerful surge of jealous rage. However, it was not at Austin. She knew he was not to blame considering the effect her own pheromones had on him. In Asari culture, it was frowned upon to intoxicate a partner with drugs, stimulants pheromones, etc. There was no issue with it actually, just not to the point where it completely overwhelmed the partner where they just don't care anymore. They considered it taboo to rely solely on stimulants instead of their own natural skills.

Either way, Austin seemed to be enjoying this, maybe even a little too much.

"I can't have you do this. Sorry, my love, but I can't let you experience that type of pleasure. Not without me... keeping an eye on you." the Asari smiled naughtily.

Liara then glowed with Biotics and her clothes fell off her. She then slowly snuggled up to Austin, took his already erect cock in her hand and let her eyes go black as she joined with her sleeping bond mate's mind.

Austin had now torn Miranda's bra off, exposing her massive heaving breasts. They were a bit on the small side compared to Liara's, but they were still very large. The rest of Miranda's suit was still around her waist, but that didn't stop the Helldiver from grasping her gigantic ass.

"You weren't lying. Your father did get you the best genes money could buy. Your tits are so juicy." he said as he continued licking and sucking Miranda's large tits.

"I love your tongue playing with them." Miranda moaned.

At that moment, Austin suddenly saw Liara materialize out of nowhere. She was naked, apart from a black bra and underwear (his favourite type) this caused him to stop his attention on Miranda's breasts, whereas the Ex-Cerberus operative just seemed to try and catch her breath back.

"Liara? Is this a dream?" Austin asked, slightly surprised to see the love of his life here now while Miranda had just invited him to have sex with her.

"I'm afraid it is." Liara replied. "But I'm real."

"I get it. This is all happening in my dream, but you've joined minds with me." said Austin.

"I saw flashes of the dream. When I walked in, you were stirring in your sleep. Then I saw the dream fully." said Liara.

She was deliberately not joining in yet as she wanted to tease Austin and make this dream threesome a surprise for him.

"Ah! Love, I think I can explain why it is I'm dreaming about Miranda. Today she had this strange new perfume on. Must've stuck with me." Austin explained.

The dream Miranda was still panting in Austin's arms, oblivious to the fact that there was a half-naked Asari standing behind her.

"True. Not to mention that I've seen the way she's looking at you. I think she's got a crush on you." said Liara.

"Well I promise you now, that I'm never going to try anything with her. I don't even like her that much anyway. Only thing that does get my attention is her body."

"Exactly why I can't let you enjoy this dream..." said Liara.

"But..."

"...without me." Liara finished, smiling very seductively.

"You little minx." Austin smiled slyly.

Liara stripped herself of her underwear and knelt down behind Miranda as Austin resumed kissing her breasts.

"Nothing wrong with having a little fun. Besides, this is only a dream. Who's gonna know that we've dreamed about fucking Miranda. There are a few things I've wanted to do to her because she's such a bitch anyway."

"Who are you, and what have you done with my girlfriend?" Austin chuckled. Liara laughed along with this as she began moving her hands up and down Miranda's hourglass figure.

Austin now took one of Miranda's nipples into his mouth and started sucking.

"Are they big?" Liara asked as she planted a love bite on Miranda's neck.

"Yeah. They're huge, but... they're not as big as yours." Austin smiled as he switched from tit to tit.

"I wanna see. In the meantime, why don't you tear the rest of this outfit off?" Liara suggested.

Austin didn't object and stood up. There'd be more than enough time later to continue with Miranda's large breasts. It then suddenly occurred to him that he was still clothed.

"Why don't we give a little show for Miranda first? I'm the only

one still clothed here." He said.

Liara couldn't help but smile and kissed Austin. She first focused on removing his shirt, causing Miranda to lick her lips as she saw his exposed chest, and then Liara slowly moved down until her face was in line with where his raging member was struggling to break free. She slowly unbuttoned his trousers and slid them down until the Helldiver was now left in nothing but his boxers.

Miranda had one of her breasts in her hand and was massaging it, breathing heavily as she saw the massive bulge. She was getting so impatient to see it.

Liara could see Miranda's pure hunger and smiled evilly as she gripped her bond mate's boxers and began sliding them down as well. She did it at an agonisingly slow rate so that she could essentially torture Miranda. The Ex-Cerberus operative made a moan of desperation as she slowly watched Austin massive member come into view. The large head was already throbbing and the thick veins were beating as the blood flowed through them. Finally he was completely exposed and Liara threw the now useless shorts away.

The Asari took Austin's rock hard dick in her hand and started slowly stroking it.

"Mmmmmmm. Nice." Austin sighed, causing Liara to smile at him.

Miranda was panting so hard that she was practically sweating. Both Austin and Liara could see this and they nodded to one another. They were ready to enjoy the next stage of this.

"Strip!" Austin ordered.

Miranda immediately obeyed and she brought the zip on her outfit down fully. More and more of her smooth skin was slowly exposed as she peeled the tight cat suit off. Both Austin and Liara had sat down and were touching each other as they watched Miranda strip. The Ex-Cerberus operative even swung her wide hips around a bit to add to the little show.

Finally, Miranda had got her outfit as low as it would currently go. The whole of her upper body was now exposed all the way to her waist. Now no longer restricted at all, her massive tits now hung there, moving up and down with Miranda's panting, the sweat from her body only adding to amazing view as she glistened from the lights.

Miranda then turned around so that she had her back to the couple and bent down. Both Austin and Liara gave approving nods to one another as Miranda practically stuck her ass out at them while she unzipped both her long, leg high, boots.

With those now gone, there was nothing to get in the way of the rest of Miranda's outfit coming off.

"She may be a bitch, but that's a great ass!" said Liara.

"She's got nothing on you though, love." said Austin as he gave

Liara a small kiss on the cheek.

Miranda continued sliding the suit down until it stopped at where the black straps around her waist were. She then stuck her large butt out once again and shook it while she slid her hands over her two cheeks.

As she went to undo the black straps around her waist however, Austin stopped her.

"Leave those straps on, actually. They look quite sexy on you." he said.

"Kinky." Miranda smiled.

Liara then looked to Austin and motioned for him to stand up.

"Play with her ass for a bit. We gave her a show, now I want to enjoy one." she said.

"I think she's waited long enough." said Austin.

Miranda simply moaned as Austin started planting kisses on her behind. Liara meanwhile stood up and sat on the nearby console in front of the drive core. She then started rubbing her Azure furiously so that Miranda had something to look at. After a few seconds, Austin decided that to take this even further. He took both edges of the material covering Miranda's ass and slowly ripped it. Miranda moaned in delight as she felt the material rip, revealing her gorgeously large ass, black panties and already dripping pussy to Austin. At the same time, Miranda could feel the heat from Austin's cock since it was poking at her ass slightly due to its erectness.

If the Helldiver didn't know that Liara had an even better body than this, he'd say that Miranda had the body of a goddess. Of course, Liara had beaten the Ex-Cerberus operative to it, hence why Austin often called her Blue Goddess much to her delight.

Liara meanwhile had increased the rubbing of her dripping Azure as she watched this incredibly sexy sight. Because this was just a dream, she could just relax and enjoy it. She didn't need to worry about having to compete with Miranda or anything like that. It made no sense to try and compete with a dream after all.

Austin moved Miranda's black panties aside and gave her pussy a few good long licks, causing her to moan in delight.

"Shepard, please! I want you inside me!" she practically begged.

"Shall I?" Austin asked in a teasing manner as he turned to Liara.

"Beg some more!" Liara smiled evilly as she continued rubbing.

"PLEASE! I NEED YOU BIG COCK INSIDE ME, SHEPARD! PLEASE, FUCK ME!" Miranda almost yelled.

"That'll do." Liara shrugged.

Austin nodded and lined his member up with Miranda's core. Miranda gasped in pleasure as the Helldiver slowly thrust his cock inside her waiting hole.

"AAHHH" Both moaned loudly as Austin plunged his cock

deep into her depths, Miranda's insides immediately squeezing his shaft along the entire length invoking another cry of pleasure from both.

Liara increased the speed of her rubbing, which Miranda stared at. This only made her moan even more and also made her even wetter which allowed Austin's thrust to be even smoother thanks to the added lubrication.

Liara was enjoying this more than she thought she would. Seeing Austin fuck another woman was actually quite an arousing sight. She of course knew that he only ever had eyes for her and that this was just for fun, so she didn't need to worry about losing him either. This was better she could ever imagine, a pleasure so intense, something she never experienced when pleasuring herself on his cock. Everything was so enthralling, the sounds, the smell, his sweat, his moans. His large warm meat feeling up every spot of Miranda's insides, pushing against her cervix as he thrust into her from behind.

Austin began doubling the speeds of his thrusts, Miranda's moaning spurring him on. A few times in between thrusts, he pulled out so that he could rub the head of his cock between her two ass cheeks.

Both the thrusting and the rubbing increased as the engine room was filled with nothing but the sounds of loud moans and the wet slapping of flesh on flesh.

Miranda was nearing her peak. She could already feel her orgasm approaching with the constant hard thrusts. Within seconds, it reached beyond her control and she couldn't hold it back any longer. Miranda came.

"OH FUUUUCK!"

Austin couldn't help but smile as he felt Miranda's pussy clamp down on his cock and also get sprayed with her love juices.

"Wow, you were good." Miranda panted as she went to kiss Austin, but Liara stopped her.

"Oh no you don't. No one kisses him but me." said the Asari.

Miranda moaned as she turned round and looked down at Austin's throbbing member which she wrapped one of her hands around. Liara meanwhile had a nice view of Miranda's core.

"My, that looks so inviting." said Liara as she licked her lips.

"This your first time with a woman?" Miranda asked.

"You could say that." said Liara. "I want to try something."

"This ought to be good." Austin smiled.

"Bend over, bitch!" Liara ordered as she pushed Miranda up against the rail and forced her down.

"No please! Not in my ass..." Miranda begged as Liara lined her tongue up with Miranda's puckered hole. Without even paying any attention the Ex-Cerberus' begging, she forced herself in, hard.

Miranda screamed almost instantly.

"Oh God!"

"Is there anything Alara hasn't taught you? You have no idea how many times I've caught her doing that with Sandra." said Austin.

"Oh I'm sure there are some things she's saving just for herself and Sandra. There's a bit of a saying among my people. "The older they are, the more unpredictable they'll be." said Liara.

"In that case, carry on and have fun. Don't mind me. I'll just enjoy the show." said Austin.

"Touch yourself while you're at it, Austin. I want to see you touching yourself." Liara smiled.

"With pleasure!"

Austin reached down and started stroking his member. Liara meanwhile turned back to Miranda and continued thrusting her tongue in and out. At the same time, she ripped the rest of Miranda's outfit away, only her black straps left. Miranda's moaned filled both lovers' ears for several minutes. Liara kept up her pace before turning her gaze toward Shepard's tool. His hand was wrapped around the long rock-hard pole stroking up and down. The tip glistened with pre-cum.

"My turn." She said, turned on by the sight.

Austin didn't need to be told twice as Liara settled herself above him and he took his member in his hand and slowly helped guide it in.

Now it was Miranda's turn to touch herself while watching the sex.

Oh God! You're so much tighter than she is." Austin groaned as Liara's Azure engulfed his member.

Real life is better than a dream, my love." Liara moaned as Austin thrust upward into her and she bounced on him, his hands holding her up by the thighs. "Oh Goddess, you're so big!"

Miranda sighed and moaned as she masturbated in front of this couple fucking one another. The sight of Liara's big bouncing breasts and exotic moans only made her even wetter.

Austin kept slamming his cock inside Liara, the soft flesh of her ass rippling with every impact.

Ahhn.. MMm... yes.... cumming... aahhh Goddess...."

Austin didn't imagine she could squeeze his rod even harder, her pussy giving him an incredible amount of pleasure with each thrust. Austin moaned louder and louder as Liara's tight love canal brought him pleasure with each thrust.

Miranda reached her other hand up and used it to squeeze one of her massive tits as she continued fingering herself furiously while watching this incredible sex.

Liara was screaming again as she finally launched into her first

orgasm. Her knees buckled as the orgasm ravaged her already weakening body. Austin held her body upright as she got weaker and weaker, her orgasm flowing as she kept being pounded by Austin.

"By the Goddess, that was incredible." Liara panted as she slid off. In all the excitement, she'd nearly forgotten that Miranda was laying on the floor right in front of her and fingering herself.

Liara suddenly yelped as she felt her already pounded and wet Azure being licked. She looked down to see that Miranda was now eating her out.

There was a cunt in front of Miranda, and she was attacking it. Her mouth was latched onto the dark blue Azure belonging to Liara.

Austin meanwhile, seeing his girlfriend getting eaten out, slowly got up and got behind Miranda. He knelt down and once again thrust into Miranda's pussy, his cock already nice and wet thanks to both women.

Come on, Miranda! Eat her! Let her have it!" he said as he gave Miranda's bubble but a hard slap which earned an approving moan from the Ex-Cerberus operative.

Liara then flipped herself around so that she was now in a 69 with Miranda and she was also now gazing at her bond mate's massive cock sliding in and out of Miranda. While the Asari worked on licking Miranda while also watching her get pounded by Austin, Miranda herself inserted two of her fingers into Liara's Azure and started thrusting which made Liara moan and hum into her pussy.

Austin slowly pulled out again, setting a very slow rhythm. Liara watched in amazement as his member was exposed to the air again wet with Miranda's nectar. Austin almost pulled out before slowly pushing back in. Miranda moaned softly as the thick member went back in.

"Goddess... It looks so beautiful."

Austin smiled as Liara spoke up surprised at her comment. He wanted this but didn't expect her to be open to this.

With Liara's consent in hand he pulled back again, now ramming hard inside Miranda.

"AAAHH!"

The head nudged Miranda's cervix sending a powerful spike through her body. Her hand jerked with the jolt of pleasure. With her fingers still inside Liara. The young asari moaned in response as Miranda's fingers twisted inside her.

"I'm gonna cum!" Miranda moaned as the combination of Austin thrusting and Liara's fingering drove her over the edge.

OH FUCK!"

Liara latched onto Miranda's clit as the Ex-Cerberus operative came. Even for a dream, she tasted very nice.

"What now?" Austin asked as he slid out.

Ram it down her throat! Let's see if she can swallow it." Liara smiled evilly.

"I like that you're being so dominant over her. It's good." Austin smiled as his girlfriend picked Miranda up and lined her mouth up with his cock.

"Please, it's too big. I can't take it." Miranda begged as Austin grabbed her head and forced himself inside her mouth.

"Don't be shy, Lawson. Be a good girl and take in more." Said Liara as she groped Miranda's rack from behind.

"Ahh... your mouth is so tight, Miranda." Austin groaned as Miranda did her best to deep throat his massive meat.

"How does it feel, Lawson? Is it too big for your big mouth?" Liara taunted.

Nggh! Liara, put her hands behind her back. She's trying to push it out." Said Austin.

Sure enough, Miranda was trying to use both her hands to push herself away from Austin in a vague attempt to stop herself from gagging on his cock.

But of course, my love. We wouldn't want that to happen." Liara smiled evilly.

Before Miranda could react in time, Liara grabbed both her hands and forced them behind her back, keeping them in place with biotics.

There you go. Now start facefucking her." Said the Asari. "If she can't do it, I'll show her how a professional does it."

Austin continued pushing as much as he could. Despite that she was being forced to do this, there was a part of Miranda that was secretly enjoying this. Even now, she could feel a large lump forming on her throat where the Helldiver's massive dick was going down her throat.

"Wow! It's so big I can see your cock moving right down her throat. Can't believe you're able to push it that deep." Liara moaned her approval.

"I'm still not there yet. She's still not at the base yet." Austin grinned.

Your pussy is so wet, Miranda. Let me help you cum." Said Liara as she reached down and started fingering Miranda's wet pussy.

After a few more pushes, Miranda finally felt that she just couldn't take any more. Any further and she'd stop breathing.

Aw. Is that it?" Austin asked as he noticed that he still had an inch or two left out of Miranda's mouth.

I knew she couldn't take it all. So much for being perfect." Said Liara.

"You ready for your turn?" Austin asked as he very slowly, and at a rather torturing pace, pulled his cock out of Miranda's mouth.

Let her cum at least. She deserves that much.” Said Liara as she kept rubbing Miranda’s pussy, her orgasm very close. “You are so wet, you must be having a great time.”

Miranda very nearly passed out as the combination of her impending orgasm and Austin massive cock in her throat made her vision blur. Just before she blacked out however, Austin finally slid out. The Ex-Cerberus operative finally felt the oxygen return to her system. As she did however, she then found her orgasm let loose.

“What a dirty girl you are! Keep cumming for me!” said Liara as she kept fingering and felt her fingers get even wetter.

“Right, your turn.” Said Austin.

Liara nodded and assumed the same position that Miranda just had.

Right, watch and learn, Lawson. In fact, I might as well show you just how good I really am.” She said.

The Asari then took her bond mate’s cock in her hand and activated her biotics. Within just a few seconds, Austin’s size was now 12 inches and he was even thicker than before.

“No way is that going to fit all the way! You’ll kill yourself!” said Miranda in amazement.

I will show you how it’s done, Miranda. Austin, try not to cum while I’m doing this.” said Liara.

“I’ll do my best, love.” Said Austin.

Liara wrapped her blue lips around the member and slowly began taking it deeper and deeper, her jaw being stretched to its absolute limit.

Oh my god, this feels so good!” Austin moaned. “Come on, take it deeper!”

Yeah! You said you could take it all!” Mirada taunted.

Liara seemed to ignore Miranda and she instead used Austin’s comment to spur her on. Inch my inch, the massive dick went into her mouth and down her throat. The Asari made that she breathed nice and easy and remained calm so that she didn’t accidentally choke or gag on it. Even she had to admit this might be a bit much. She’d deep throated her lover many times, but never when he’d been this big. She’d usually just kept it in her mouth and not tried to swallow it. So far though, things were going well and she was already up to where Miranda had managed before stopping, and she still had a bit more room.

Come on, Liara. You’re nearly there!” said Austin as he put his hands on Liara’s head and gave her an extra push.

That seemed to do the trick and Liara finally felt herself touch the base. She’d done it.

My god, you actually did it.” Said Miranda in amazement.

Doch be so ahamed Mirrana, we Ahari are aways beher!” Liara

managed to say, her voice muffled by her boyfriend's cock in her mouth.

"Don't mean to cut this short, but I haven't got long before I cum. We'll need to wrap this up soon." Said Austin.

"Then at least fuck me in the ass. I definitely want that at least." Said Liara.

With pleasure." Said Austin as Liara got into position and he lined himself up. Miranda, you know what to do."

Miranda simply nodded and got under Austin. While he slowly slid his cock in, she tended to his balls, taking each one in her mouth at a time.

Oh Goddess!" Liara moaned as she felt Austin's massive meat plough right into her ass.

"Does it hurt, Liara?"

Liara gasped for air as Austin pushed his cock in all the way. Their bodies touching another.

"Aahh... A little... My ass... so full. So... Aahnn... good."

Several long minutes passed as Austin thrust in and out, Liara played with her Azure and Miranda played with Austin's testicles. After several thrusts, Austin knew he was beyond stopping. He was gonna cum any second now.

"I'm close! I'm gonna cum!"

Pull out then. I've got an idea." Liara panted.

Austin nodded and slid out.

"I can't believe his whole thing went in there." said Miranda as she gave Austin's cock a small lick.

It can do more than that." Liara smiled. She then turned back to Austin. "Stand against the rail. Miranda, do as I do."

Austin did as he was told and then he found both girls attacking his dick. He smiled as they both licked and pleased him. Having Liara pleasure him like this was more than perfect, but Miranda as well? This was heaven.

Miranda mostly focused on his balls again while Liara sucked hard on his mushroom head and also deep throating him again. It didn't take long for this to bring Austin to his orgasm at long last.

Oh god! I'm gonna cum!" Austin moaned.

"Cum for us, Austin!"

Austin let loose and he watched as several large spurts shot out. Some landed on Liara, the other landed on Miranda. Within just a few seconds, both their faces were now very white and dripping.

"What a load. Besides, what could be better to finish this little show than with fireworks?" Liara smiled as she and Miranda set on work on cleaning each other's faces.

Just the eight of that though made Austin shoot into another orgasm. Before he came however, he tried something new.

He grabbed Miranda's face and shoved his cock all the way down as much as he could. As he came, the Ex-Cerberus operative tried desperately to push him off but the cum flooded her throat so much that her struggles were short lived. She went limp very quickly.

Hmm, so that's what happens. Well at least I know now not to try that with you." Said Austin as he gently pushed the now limp Miranda off him. Liara's closer inspections showed that she wasn't breathing. The cum had suffocated her.

"Your right. That' wouldn't be a bad way to go, but still..." Liara nodded.

"Think it's time we woke up now, love."

Both Austin and Liara opened their eyes. They didn't feel exhausted at all considering that they just been in an epic threesome for a long time.

"Wow. What a dream." Austin sighed as Liara snuggled up to him.

"I know. That was also my first time with a woman. I'm glad I joined in." she smiled.

"As am I."

"Now I simply need to tell Miranda that you're... what's the phrase? Taken?"

"Indee..." Austin said, but a yawn interrupted him. He might not feel exhausted, but he certainly felt tired still.

Go back to sleep, love." Said Liara calmly.

"I love you."

I love you not because I need you, I need you because I love you."

Austin simply smiled as he drifted back off to sleep.

Liara meanwhile got up and stretched for a bit. Reaching for a robe, she walked towards the elevator. True to what she'd said earlier, she needed to sort something out once and for all with Miranda.

Liara found that Miranda's quarters weren't locked. As the doors opened she saw the Ex-Cerberus operative asleep in her bed and moaning a lot in her sleep. Liara didn't' even need to read her mind to know she was probably dreaming about Austin. She was even moaning his name.

The Asari walked right up to the foot of Miranda's bed and cleared her throat very loudly. Miranda stirred and very slowly opened her eyes.

Mmmm, Shepard?" she yawned as she let the covers slip, revealing her black bra holding her tits.

No. It's me." Said Liara.

Miranda quickly reacted to this and covered herself with the covers.

What the hell are you doing in here?!" she shouted.

I've come to tell you to leave Shepard alone." Liara simply replied in a very serious manner. Usually, she didn't act this coldly, but she needed Miranda to take her seriously.

I'm allowed to be attracted to him if I want! Who are you to say that?!" Miranda retorted.

"I'm his bond mate! He's taken." Said Liara.

She walked right up to Miranda and seized her by the neck. This new found aggressiveness seemed to frighten Miranda a bit.

Bond mate? You two are... together?" she said, very surprised.

Yes. And I will not have you try to intrude. I'm not possessive, but he and I know about you trying to get his attention, and we're not having it! You've no right to try and flirt with him when you know we're in a relationship!" Liara almost shouted.

I... I didn't know you where... please, I'm sorry. I thought you were just friends." Miranda almost begged.

Just friends? Just friends?! You where the one I delivered his body to. Surely you must've known why Feron and I went through all that mess with the Shadow Broker to get it?! Why he got captured?!"

"I thought you were just friends. I had no idea you two where lovers. It makes sense now." Said Miranda.

Despite this though, Liara still glared at her.

Well now you do know. So I'll make this very simple. You stay away from Austin, or I flay you alive... with my mind." She said.

O... of course. I'm sorry. If I'd known he was taken, I wouldn't have..." Miranda tried to say.

Glad we understand one another. Good night, Miranda." Said Liara.

The Asari turned to leave. Just as she reached the door, Miranda called her.

Liara, he's very lucky to have someone like you. Not many would get through what you did to bring a lover back to life. You may not believe me, but I'm happy for you." She said, trying to smile.

I'm sure there'll be someone for you as well." Said Liara, her mood brightening a bit. "Sorry if I scared you. I sometimes get a bit defensive when it comes to Austin. I lost him once, and I'm not letting it happen again."

I know. I feel the same way when it comes to my sister. She's all I have left." Said Miranda sympathetically.

Good night, Miranda." Said Liara, this time more friendly.

Good night... Liara."

Jacob simply sat at his own desk in silence. Although he'd dealt with what happened on Aeia, it was still bothering him a bit.

His contemplation was then suddenly interrupted by a soothing female voice behind him.

Still up at this hour?"

Jacob turned to see Kasumi standing against the wall by the door.

I hadn't realized what the time was." Jacob sighed.

Kasumi walked up to him and sat on the desk in front of him.

"Jacob, I... I wish there was something I could say. I'm sorry about your father." She said sympathetically.

"It's okay. I've had more than ten years to get over it. I'll be fine. I appreciate your concern though." Said Jacob.

"You're sure you don't want to talk about it? I've had to go through something very similar." Kasumi asked.

I'm fine. Honestly. But I appreciate your concern." Jacob smiled.

"He was your father. It has to be bothering you. I want to help." Said Kasumi.

"If I needed help, I'd let you know. Like I said, I've had a long time to deal with that man's death. I was just ahead of schedule." Said Jacob. He bowed his head for a moment, but then returned to normal and looked back at the thief sitting in front of him.

"So, no other family?" Kasumi asked.

"Afraid not. And I don't count my father at all after what he did. I'm an only child, and no extended family." Jacob replied.

"No Mrs Taylor waiting for you?" Kasumi asked eagerly.

"Where are you going with this, Kasumi?" Jacob asked hesitantly.

Just making sure I won't get my ass shot off if I make a move on you." Kasumi smiled.

Jacob now suddenly realized where Kasumi was going with this.

Well... I wasn't expecting that, Kasumi. I haven't looked at you that way." He said, trying to hide the nervousness in his voice.

"Oh, but I have." Kasumi said cheekily.

"I mean, I've looked, sure, but not seriously. An option, just not one I'd take. Okay, now I sound like an idiot, what I mean is --"

"Shhh."

Jacob felt two of Kasumi's fingers pressed to his lips.

It's okay. I'm sorry if I make you nervous. I just wanted you to know how I feel." She said.

The Thief went to get off the desk, but Jacob quickly grabbed her arm gently.

Don't take this the wrong way, Kasumi. I... I like you, a lot. I just hadn't thought about it that way before." He said. "Until now that is. I

can't deny I've always found you attractive, and I am curious to see what you might be hiding under that hood.

Kasumi smiled at that. That comment seemed to make her even more interested.

"You know what, Jacob?" I think we need each other. I know I need you." She said as she took one of Jacob's hands in her own.

"Okay, you want to know something that gets to me? You. That enough?" Jacob smiled as he did the same and took Kasumi's other hand in his. "You're very good at what you do, Kasumi. When this mess is over, you and I need some time."

"It's alright, Jacob. I'm here for you." Said Kasumi.

The two simply remained quiet for a while as their faces slowly drew together. Within just a few seconds, they sealed their lips with a tender kiss.

THE MASK OF HAPPINESS

CHAPTER 6

ReizYouUp
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It was night when Tsuki and The Happy Mask Salesman had to rest again. Calls of nighttime creatures could be heard throughout the air. They had made their way far into Kokiri Forest where the inventor's house stood. Since there was nowhere else to go for the time being, they had no choice. They crept inside.

"What is this place?" asked Tsuki.

"I once lived here, long ago." answered The Happy Mask Salesman. "This used to be my home."

Some shuffling could be heard from behind the couch. They discovered The Curiosity Shop Owner sleeping on it and Sakon beneath him, on the floor.

"Sakon?" questioned The Happy Mask Salesman. "Is that you?"

Sakon roused from his sleep and rubbed his eyes. He squinted in the near pitch black darkness.

"Uncle? Uncle! What are you doing here?!"

The Curiosity Shop Owner was awakened by Sakon's voice.

"Can't a guy get some sleep around here?! What are you-Oh. Oh, it's you?!"

"Yes. It is I." The Happy Mask Salesman said. "We came to rest here for the night. Then we shall arrive at the inn in Termina in the morning. I can see we have caught you too while you were out on business."

"We'? Who else is with you?"

Tsuki would have answered, but had just struck eyes with Sakon. Now, Sakon had a number of experiences throughout his short life. Some were good, and some were bad. Tsuki saw one of the worst. It had a profound effect on her, instantly. Sakon was putting a mask on in The Happy Mask Salesman's shop and a whole host of horrors burst through.

There was also a much happier moment in Sakon's past which made her smile. An old man with an instrument was walking down a dirt road and Sakon caught up with him. Sakon threw his arms around the man in a hug and the man accepted it gratefully. Tsuki could sense that they had both been missing one another as the man had been gone away for a very long time. They were glad to have each other back.

The Happy Mask Salesman turned to give Tsuki a knowing

look.

"What did you see?"

"Oh, the usual: something bad, then something good. I should start squinting like you." she kidded.

She could also sense something behind The Curiosity Shop Owner's dark glasses, but they shielded his eyes and prevented her from seeing anything. Ignoring the situation, Sakon decided to introduce himself.

"Hey, there, baby. The name's Sakon. What's yours?"

Sakon put his arm around Tsuki's waist then bent her over while Tsuki tried to push him away. The Happy Mask Salesman was immediately thrown into irate fury.

"Sakon! Get your hands off of your future aunt!"

Sakon reeled back in fear. His uncle always managed to scare him. Tsuki laughed. She was greatly amused.

"Sakon, meet Tsuki. Tsuki, this is my nephew."

"Uh, hi?" said Sakon, quite awkwardly.

Tsuki giggled again. "Nice to meet you, Sakon."

The Curiosity Shop Owner saw Tsuki's tribal clothes and it did not take him a wild guess.

"Aw, great. Another mind reader." He complained. "Don't I get enough of you to begin with, Sato?"

Sakon turned at the mention of his uncle's name. "You know my uncle?"

"Of course I know him! He's my-I mean. Yeah, I know him from..."

"He knows of me from a few trades on the black market." The Happy Mask Salesman stepped in.

"Speaking of which, would the nice lady like to purchase something?" The Curiosity Shop Owner placed a hand on one of the two packages they had set down.

The Happy Mask Salesman's scam-alert went into full gear. "Watch out. He's trying to rip you off."

"Who, me?" The Curiosity Shop Owner tried to make himself sound innocent. "Why I would never do such a thing."

The Curiosity Shop Owner saw the ocarina in Tsuki's hands.

"Wow! Now that must be expensive? Where'd you two get a thing like that? Care to sell it for a reasonable price?"

The Happy Mask Salesman answered before Tsuki could. "It is not for sale."

Just then, he spotted something on top of the other packages. He approached it in order to pick it up. He examined it closely to find a familiar sight. It was a pictograph covered in dust and old grime. Five people were in it. A man with no more than a tuft of blond hair and sparkling green eyes, a woman that greatly resembled Tsuki except for

the fact that her red hair was down instead of up, and three young boys. One boy had his eyes shut closed and was holding a mask, one boy held a strange instrument, and the last boy held a fishing rod.

"Where did you two get this?"

"Oh, that?" Sakon said. "I stole that from that table over there."

The Happy Mask Salesman was not impressed. "Sakon! You should know better than to steal from your grandparents' old home."

"My grandparents' home?"

"Yes. You see this woman and man in the pictograph? They are your grandparents. Your grandfather and your grandmother each owned this house together. Your father used it to create his inventions and your mother used it to tailor clothes."

"Who else is in the picture?" Sakon asked, referring to the three little boys.

"That is I and your uncle Guru Guru."

"But who is that kid?" Sakon pointed to the boy holding the fishing rod.

"That is your father."

The Curiosity Shop Owner shifted where he stood inconspicuously. He really wanted a change in subject.

"My father? Whoa."

A shine of moonlight fell from the roof and reflected on Tsuki. The Curiosity Shop Owner got a better look at her.

"Uh, hey. What are you doing with someone so young? She looks like she's 16, for the goddesses' sake."

"A lot of people from the tribe look younger than they really are. I'm actually 25."

"25!" he turned to The Happy Mask Salesman. "You did worse than me! I can't believe you're sleeping with her!"

"Do not be so rude!" The Happy Mask Salesman exclaimed. "We are not even married, yet. I am not sleeping with anyone! In fact, I have never slept with anyone, unlike you!"

Sakon cringed in disgust. "Geez, uncle, did you have to say that?"

The Curiosity Shop Owner burst out laughing. "You're still a virgin?!"

He held his sides and rocked back and forth with glee. Due to the force of his laughter, his glasses fell off of his face.

Tsuki caught his gaze instantaneously and saw things she would rather not see. The black market owner's most terrible moment made Tsuki feel a pang of sympathy for him. The Curiosity Shop Owner was much younger than he appeared to be a teenager. In the vision, fireworks burst into the air in the background of a dying woman. The Curiosity Shop Owner held the woman in despair. She greatly resembled the woman in the pictograph. His happiest moments were

next and had the opposite effect on Tsuki. They were disturbing and downright disgusting to her.

She envisioned slews of women that he was sleeping with. Each time he broke their hearts without a care. She witnessed them crying many tears and The Curiosity Shop Owner turning a blind eye to each one. Then she saw one woman in particular dressed in a long gown with hearts that seemed to cry out she was very rich. She had long brown hair and hazel eyes. The vision closed with a baby being born and The Curiosity Shop Owner holding it up triumphantly, his thoughts filled with greed. This time, Tsuki was the one brimming with anger. She clenched her fists and stared hard at the floor.

"Hey, what did you see?"

The Happy Mask Salesman witnessed her in distress.

"Sometimes it paints too much of a vivid painting in the museum of one's mind, does it not?" he advised.

"Hey! Sato, you stupid fortune teller, stop speaking in metaphors and tell me what she just saw!"

"I imagine it is something I already saw long ago."

In that moment, music could be heard, interrupting the collective of travelers. It sounded somewhat like a cross between an organ grinder and a phonograph. As it got closer and closer, The Curiosity Shop Owner got more and more nervous. The music finally got close enough to be in front of the doorway, and he could not take it anymore.

"Uh, come on, Sakon. We're leaving. Now!" he quickly began gathering up their things.

"Now? But why? I want to sleep!"

"There's no time to explain."

He thrustured both packages in Sakon's arms. He then turned around and ran out the back way of the house. Sakon followed quickly. The music hit a crescendo, then it finally ceased. When it did, The Happy Mask Salesman saw the newcomer in the midst of the darkness.

"It is nice to see you, Guru Guru."

"Sato! I haven't seen you in ages. How are you?"

"I am quite alright. I got engaged."

"Engaged? Really? Congratulations! Who's the lucky lady?"

"Guru Guru, this is Tsuki. Tsuki-"

The Happy Mask Salesman realized that Tsuki was still shaking from the vision she saw. He rested his hand on her arm to comfort her. Tsuki took it in her's then looked at him with tears in her eyes. She could barely choke out the next few words she spoke.

"Th-that-That man. That was Sakon's father!"

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Back at Ganondorf's castle, the soldier had arrived with a horse and each thief tied off in a chain gang. Impa and the princess were hidden underneath the horse, just clinging to it.

"When I give the signal, you and I will attack, princess." Impa ordered.

The bridge made out of blood slowly rose to meet the soldier, who stepped on it without a moment's hesitation. He led the prisoners all the way down to the dungeon. Ganondorf was already there. The soldier looked upon the scene of the broken cage in the lava.

"What happened here?" he questioned.

"That is none of your concern." Ganondorf replied. "Now tell me. How many prisoners are there?"

"Five."

"Very well then. Escort them to their cells."

Ganondorf threw the soldier the key. The soldier caught it, and then approached the rounded cell with Link and Nabooru inside. Once the door was opened, Impa whistled the signal. She jumped out from beneath the horse and positioned herself to block Ganondorf's attacks.

"Sheik!" she called. "You and the soldier get the prisoners out of here!"

"Yes!" cried Kaiden, oblivious.

"The princess's nursemaid?!" thundered Ganondorf. "You dare interfere with my plans?!"

Ganondorf began attacking by hurling balls of energy at Impa. She blocked each one with her katana and even sent a few back at the evil king, but Ganondorf blocked each one back with his cape. The soldier also helped by blocking the balls with his spear. Zelda got close to Link to reassure him and held out her hand.

"It's alright, Hero of Time. We have come to free you!"

Link took the hand of his rescuer, wary of this new face, but knew a friend of Impa was a friend of his. The disguised Zelda and soldier led him and Nabooru to safety. Ganondorf half-turned to fire a few shots at them while still defending himself from Impa and the soldier. One nearly hit Zelda, who ducked, but tripped and nearly fell into the lava. She then quickly remembered her Sheikah training.

She leapt onto the bars of the overturned cage like the tree stumps and branches back in the old Sheikah training grounds. Impa and Link followed after her to save her while Ganondorf's balls of energy followed close behind. He had just managed to disarm Impa who lay injured on the floor. She held out a trembling hand in Zelda's direction, but she was out of her reach. The soldier picked her up and attempted to carry her to the door.

Ganondorf came upon the prisoners with rapid speed and Zelda began ducking the energy balls like she would the Deku nuts Impa threw at her. She thought about catching the energy balls too, but wondered if handling something so powerful was such a good idea. The energy balls kept missing and splashed into the lava, nearly scorching everyone's flesh. Ganondorf was having trouble firing at three people at once. Just then, to Zelda's right, Ganondorf hit a bar of the cage instead of the lava.

The bar, which was much bigger than a Deku nut, flung threw the air and headed right threw Zelda. She caught it with her hand and used it to defend herself against Ganondorf. Nabooru called out to her direction.

"Young Sheikah! Throw the bar to me! I will use it against Ganon while you two free the fairy!"

Zelda nodded her head then tossed the bar. Nabooru caught it then began expertly blocking Ganondorf's attacks while Zelda and Link made a run for it. Just as they freed Navi, Ganondorf struck Nabooru who nearly fell into the lava. Ganondorf caught her, and then proceeded to throw her back into the cell. The soldier and Impa were in the way and were easy pickings for the King of Evil. Ganondorf then turned to Zelda and Link.

Link stepped in front to protect who he thought was the young Sheikah and Ganondorf pushed him out of the way. Ganondorf dragged the children to the round cell. Zelda broke free and tried to make one final escape attempt with Link when Ganondorf let out an enormous energy blast that went in all directions. It hit Zelda in the back and sent her flying. Ganondorf picked up the fallen princess one last time and led her and Link back to the cell.

"Wait a minute. Just where is that pestering firefly?!" Ganondorf asked, referring to Navi.

Navi had managed to escape while the others were fighting Ganondorf. Instead of bashing him in the head this time, she decided instead to make a break for it. She was now far outside the castle and looked back in dismay.

"I'm sorry, Link. I'll go get help!"

With that, she flew away in search of someone who could free them all.

Ganondorf healed Impa and Zelda as best as he could then locked the door on them. Before he turned around to return to his throne room, he sealed them all in pink floating crystals to make extra sure they would not escape again. Zelda slipped into a state of unconsciousness, and then her disguise vanished. She was now in her princess gown again.

"Aha! The Princess, Zelda!" Ganondorf proclaimed. "Now that I have her, the no one can stop me! The Triforce shall be mine and I

will rule over all of Hyrule!"

Ganondorf exited, cackling evilly and preparing to drain the Triforce pieces out of Zelda and Link.

"Great." Kaiden complained. "Now we're all stuck here together."

Impa whispered to the out cold Zelda. "Do not be ashamed, princess. You did you're best. I am still very proud of you."

Link was shocked to find out the Sheikah child had turned out to be Zelda. "Impa...What happened?"

"Young Link, when you failed to catch the Ocarina of Time, you set off a chain of events that led to Ganondorf's rule. Why did you not find the ocarina? Why did you not enter into the Temple of Time?"

"I saw two travelers take an ocarina. Is that what the princess was trying to give me?"

Zelda stirred in her sleep.

"The princess!" cried Impa. "She awakens!"

"Impa..." Zelda said slowly. She was still in pain from her healing wounds. "Do...not...be afraid. I...ugh...dreamed that four more...figures were...ugh...coming to the...dark storm clouds. There just may be...help for us yet."

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

It was still night and The Happy Mask Salesman, Tsuki, and Guru Guru all lay down in the grandparents' house. They were resting and The Curiosity Shop Owner and Sakon were long gone. Tsuki lay awake in the darkness, her thoughts still stirring of all the visions she had witnessed. The Happy Mask Salesman sensed her worry and fought to help her.

"Tsuki, what is wrong? Tell me it is not the visions?"

Tsuki sat upright on the furniture she had been laying on. "I feel so sorry for your nephew, Sakon. I can't believe that con artist is your brother! He threw Sakon away just like my own father threw away me... Sakon's childhood must've been ruined all because of him. Now he works for the man who abandoned him. Does he even know?"

The Happy Mask Salesman prepared himself for a long story. "21 long years ago, my brother had not yet opened his black market shop. He only owned a fishing hole and an items shop. Then he found a nice young lady who was much younger than him. She was very rich, and he used her money to eventually open up a shop on the black market. This all happened while I was out on a long trip searching for masks. He fooled the young woman into believing he was in love with her. At first, he did not know what to do as she became pregnant by accident, but then he hatched a plan."

"For nine months, he hid the pregnancy from the girls' parents

and searched for a buyer. When the time came for the baby to be born, he sold off Sakon to a man named Precious. He was a drag queen. I came back from my travels and saw the last few months' events in my brother's eyes, and I knew what I must do. I took Precious's adopted child from him, even though I knew the nice man would be hurt. After all, Sakon is my nephew. He is my family. I talked it over with Guru Guru who agreed to take the child. Sakon ended up being raised by his uncles, mostly on Guru Guru's part. Now, to answer your question, Tsuki... No, Sakon does not know who his father is, or his mother for that matter. I am afraid the secret is too vile to know, so I kept the truth hidden from Sakon for all these years. I shudder to think of what would happen if Sakon ever did indeed find out."

When The Happy Mask Salesman's story was finished, it only worsened Tsuki's heart. "I can't believe all of that happened! I hate jerks that're mean to women, and I HATE deadbeat dads! I can't believe after all that, he still uses his own flesh and blood for his personal gain!"

"Yes, my brother never expected to hire his own son, but when Sakon came to him asking for a job as a thief, he did not refuse. He has been working for him ever since."

"Who are you two talking about?" asked Guru Guru.

"Your other brother." commented Tsuki. "He was here earlier."

"He was...?"

"Yeah, then he left as soon as you came."

"Oh... So he did, did he?" Guru Guru seemed gravely disappointed. Tsuki saw this and tried to cheer him up.

"I saw in my visions that he was Sakon's father. I saw his mother dying and him trying to save her. I saw Sakon picking up this horrible mask and was traumatized by it. I also saw you and Sakon together. You were away for a very long time. Sakon missed you very much. He gave you such a big hug when you came back. He loves you very much. You're like a father to him."

"I...see. I'm very glad to hear that." Indeed, he was. "I think I know what event you're talking about, too."

There was not a thing said after that. The Happy Mask Salesman, his fiancé, and his brother all went to sleep. They would all head to the inn together in the morning.

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It was dawn, and Sakon and The Curiosity Shop Owner were headed for the black market shop. They had almost nearly made it out of the forest.

"I can't believe that he wouldn't sell me the ocarina." The

Curiosity Shop Owner complained.

"We've got enough stuff to carry, anyway." Sakon grunted beneath the weight of both packages. "It would sure help if you'd carry something..."

"Quit whining, Sakon. You're lucky I didn't make you carry the fruit box, too."

A snap of branches was heard from behind them, and The Curiosity Shop Owner drew his sword, not taking any chances. The sparkles of rainbow came out again in showers. He tossed the other sword to Sakon.

"We're being followed!" he called.

Instantly, the eight Gerudo warriors popped out of the trees and surrounded them. Sakon drew the blade and tried to fight them. The Curiosity Shop Owner flailed his blade wildly in fear. Three guards came upon Sakon and managed to disarm him. Only one guard went in front of The Curiosity Shop Owner who immediately fell down in surrender.

"Now that's just embarrassing," she remarked.

"Bring the coward over here!" Iayisha called.

The woman dragged The Curiosity Shop Owner to the other guards who formed a circle to surround them. They tied them up for questioning.

"Now," Iayisha began. "You will tell us where the man and woman with the ocarina are or there will be dire consequences."

The women lowered their swords to touch the tips of the men's necks.

"We're not telling you anything!" cried Sakon in defiance.

"If you don't, you will die!"

Iayisha gave a signal and the swords flew up in the air and glinted deadly in the bright sunlight. Sakon shut his eyes tight and waited. Just before the blades came crashing down, The Curiosity Shop Owner cried out.

"Wait! We know where they're going!"

The blades were signaled to a halt as The Curiosity Shop Owner continued.

"We last saw them at an old rundown house deeper into the woods. Before we left, they told us they were going to the inn in Clocktown."

Sakon managed to hop up even though he was bonded and rammed The Curiosity Shop Owner.

"You trader!" he yelled.

His ropes came loose and he punched The Curiosity Shop Owner again and again. He kicked him to the ground and spat in his face. The Gerudos still held them in a tight circle and would not let them go. Instead of trying to subdue Sakon, they laughed as he

continued to beat The Curiosity Shop Owner to a pulp.

Finally, Iayisha commanded, "Enough!" and Sakon was tightly bound once more.

"Sakon..." The Curiosity Shop Owner tried to explain. "Please understand! There was nothing I could do!"

Sakon pulled away from The Curiosity Shop Owner. He did not want to look at him or hear anything he had to say. "How could you...?" he whispered.

Iayisha cleared her throat. "I and my women are unfamiliar with Terminian land. You will guide us to this 'Clocktown' and we will beat them to the inn. There we will wait in hiding and catch them once they arrive."

"You better not tell them where to go!" yelled Sakon.

"He will if knows what's good for him."

"I will." said The Curiosity Shop Owner in defeat.

Together with their prisoners, the Gerudos made way for Clocktown, sure to capture their next targets. Sakon was silent all the way, filled with contempt over The Curiosity Shop Owner's betrayal.

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It was noon when The Happy Mask Salesman and company arrived at the inn. The Happy Mask Salesman paid the innkeeper, and then they headed for their room. The Gerudos had ordered a separate room and did not know that they were there yet. There were four beds in their room, which was more than enough.

"How long are we planning to stay here?" Tsuki asked The Happy Mask Salesman.

"Until my shop can be repaired. However, I have a feeling it will be a long time before that can occur."

"And how long will you be staying with us, Guru Guru?"

"Not long. I do a lot of traveling, myself, too. I go from Termina to Hyrule a lot. I won't be able to travel to Hyrule Castle Town since the fire destroyed everything like you saw, but Kakariko Village will still be open for business."

All three laid back on the beds, ready for afternoon naps.

"Hey, Sato?" asked Guru Guru.

"Hmm?" The Happy Mask Salesman murmured.

"I think I'm going to try to visit our other brother once he gets here."

The Happy Mask Salesman fought for words. He wondered what to say to that.

"I will go with you." he decided to say.

He rolled over to face Tsuki. Being in the same bed with her felt strange and alien, but he supposed he must get used to it if he was to

marry her.

“Can I ask you something?” Tsuki inquired. The Happy Mask Salesman could feel her breath on his face.

“What is it?”

“Guru Guru. He has red eyes. Does he have the sight, too?”

“No. Guru Guru’s eyes may be red, but he only carries the Mark of the Sighted.”

“Phew. That’s good.”

“Why?”

“So he doesn’t have to see the terrible things his brother has done.”

The Happy Mask Salesman had heard enough about his brother for one day. He was getting tired. He rolled over and drifted off to sleep.

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He and Tsuki were awakened not much later by the piercing sound of loud music being played. Guru Guru’s piercing red eyes were morose and his hand circled his instrument over and over. The Happy Mask Salesman was in shock to see his brother playing his strange instrument at an enormously fast pace. Tsuki covered her ears while he dashed for his mask bag. He rummaged in it all the while Guru Guru sang the most melancholy song.

“Oh, I’ll sing a song.

Why don’t you sing a long?

I’ll sing, though I’m sad

To keep my mind off the past.

He’s gone away.

He’ll come back another day.

He’s fishing in calmer waters now.

But when I go to see him, he makes not a sound.

He runs and hides.

There’s no delight.

When will I see him again?

It seems that I’ve lost my friend.”

A Gerudo guard rushed over from the next room over to see who was causing the commotion. She was quick, so no one saw her. Tsuki and The Happy Mask Salesman were too busy. She rushed back to report to her superior. All the while, Guru Guru kept singing.

“Oh I’ll sing a song.

Yet no one sings along.

I sing, because I’m sad.

This surely will last.

My mother’s gone away.

My father's gone away.
My brother has gone away, too.
Even she is gone.
Oh, how I miss you.
When will I see them again?
I've lost my family.
I've lost my friends.
When will I see them again?"

The Happy Mask Salesman finally found the mask he was looking for. It was a mask unlike any of the other masks he had been carrying, but it was just what he needed. With as much force as he could muster, he put the mask on Guru Guru's face.

The music stopped. Tsuki uncovered her ears. She was surprised to see Guru Guru smiling the happiest smile after all that. He was eerily calm and unmoving, as if the mask had contained his motion as well as his turbulent emotions. Then she realized it was not his face at all. It was the mask. The mask looked exactly like Guru Guru's face.

"I am very sorry about all that." The Happy Mask Salesman apologized. "Guru Guru gets like this anytime our youngest brother is near. You see, Guru Guru was the one to raise Sakon most of the time, and has considered himself a failure as Sakon became a thief. He blames himself entirely and after he lost his job with the Gorman Troupe, it was the final straw. He went into fits of insanity, just like now. He even tried to assemble a troupe of animals, once. Our brother knows that Guru Guru is insane because of him, so he flees every time Guru Guru tries to approach him."

"This throws him into even more chaos of the mind, so I set out to create a mask that would help him. Tsuki, you are looking upon The Mask of Happiness. I have not had to use it for a long time. Any time the wearer puts it on; he immediately becomes happy, no matter how unhappy his life is. But Guru Guru does not wish to wear the mask. He does not want to be happy all the time and as if drugged like the mask would make one. He returned the mask to me. So, he is still insane."

"That's horrible!" Tsuki cried once The Happy Mask Salesman was finished. "First your brother won't raise his son, and then he drives your other brother insane! How can you still care for him and want to visit him?!"

"He may be many things, and have done many things, but he is still my brother. Besides, there are not many more people I can still visit. Each time I go to see Guru Guru, he is in a fit of insanity, and Sakon will not visit me."

"Why not?"

"You saw the vision of Sakon putting on a dreadful mask that

nearly scarred him for life, yes? That was The Mask of Horrors. One day, while I was watching Sakon and he was very young, I had to make lunch for him. I gave him a mask-The Sparkles and Confetti Mask-to play with while I was busy.”

“The Sparkles and Confetti Mask?” Tsuki repeated.

“Yes! I thought all children liked sparkles and confetti! What could have possibly gone wrong? Oh, but something did go wrong. Something went terribly wrong. ...Sakon got bored of the mask I gave him to play with and threw it on the ground. He wandered around my mask shop until he found The Mask of Horrors. He put it on and saw a false vision of me murdering his father and his uncle, as well as two others.”

“I saw Sakon and ripped the mask off but it was too late. He has not looked at me the same way since. I am afraid I frighten Sakon. I frighten many people. You saw the way that traveler looked at me a few days ago. Everyone is afraid of me. I thought about putting on The Mask of Happiness myself, once long ago, but I cannot bring myself too. I already wear a mask. A mask of happiness. I am not happy, because my family is broken.”

Tsuki heard this long tale of woe and looked The Happy Mask Salesman deep in his eyes, filled with empathy.

“Sato, that’s horrible. But you know, like you said before, you’re not alone now. We have each other.”

“Yes. Ever since I met you, Tsuki, I have not felt alone. Each day with you has only brought more enjoyment to my heart. I am lucky to have found you. I do not feel alone anymore.”

They were each about to lean in for a kiss when the Gerudo guards busted in.

“Surrender the ocarina!” cried Iayisha.

The Happy Mask Salesman reached for his mask bag, but Iayisha threw her sword and it got caught on the wall. They were quickly surrounded. Iayisha grabbed the ocarina from Iayisha and held it up triumphantly.

“We have you now and the ocarina now! We will travel the rest of the day and all night to Ganondorf’s palace. We have won! Hyrule is ours!”

POETRY

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John Mahler's Quotes of the Day

<http://www.lulu.com/shop/john-mahler/john-mahlers-quotes-of-the-day/ebook/product-20105057.html>

Some people, at least, have enjoyed my Quotes of the Day, so here they are, for your amusement and bemusement: one entire year's worth of quotes. My quotes by the way; nobody else's. These are my thoughts and observations on the world around us: funny, sad, uplifting, evocative, inspiring, silly, and occasionally just plain stupid, they are all here for your perusal: enjoy!

TO BE NORMAL

by ArcticIndigoSponge
of <http://arcticindigosponge.deviantart.com>

This is something I've been dying to stress out for a while. A lot of my friends hate all the things about themselves that make them unique and wonderful. I sometimes wish that they would see that they're beautiful already. They don't need to change, nor should they want to.

To be Normal
That would be Perfect
But as much as most of us hate the thought
It's something that cannot be obtained
To be Perfect
To lead a normal Life
Is something beyond our reach
It's a foolish goal that we strive for
A goal to never be gained.
All those popular kids at school
Or those movie stars on magazine covers
Even they have their faults
They cover up those mistakes
With make-up and plastic surgery
So, instead of following that route
Of fake smiles and forced laughter
Accept your faults with pride and joy
Enjoy being different than the others
Live life to the fullest
Don't look down upon the qualities
That make you who you are
The things that make you unique
One of a kind
Beautiful
Courageous
Smart
Don't shun the things that make you kind
They give you more character than you can imagine
So embrace your weirdness
And give everything you do your all
Because To be Normal or Perfect
Is something that can never be obtained
And besides
Being Normal is overrated anyway.

DESTRUCTION

Jon Ritter

Look at this look at this look at this
half dressed wounds wrapped in knots of blonde hair
the scars run in patterns like dragon tattoos
delusional eyes cross, appraise each other
we are beautiful we are beautiful
real youth is tasted in the back of your throat
it happens quickly
the past is warped into arching colors
you scratch circles on your dollar bills
and test what you remember
speaking in gasps and moans it comes-
this incurable destruction, this
incomplete destruction.

INDIVIDUALITY

Kela Lewis-Morin

If you like what you read please feel free to follow me on twitter

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These days most people are other people.
Only a few templates are distributed amongst the billions.
Maybe it's because they see themselves as less than equals.
So they base and paste their thoughts from someone else's opinions.

Their unfulfilled lives a mimicry.
Obtaining incompatible abilities.
Altering their figures physically.

Their passions are quotations.
Their theories are past equations.
They become victims of affiliations.

Remoulding their models into the shape of their role models.
Worshipping the words of Drake, Einstein, Rhianna and Aristotle.
Pursuing the idolised physique of a manufactured Coca Cola bottle.

They squeeze themselves into already overcrowded groups.
But you can only have so many cards in one particular suit.
To every leader there will always be surplus of recruits.

This process progresses day by day.

To the point where he and she have become they

“Mummy, when I grow up I want to be just like them”

Is what they all will say.

HOW ARE YOU?

Maria Kubiak

- Hello. How are you?

I am:

Bad,

Sad,

Depressed,

Locked in misery,

Dead.

But wait,

You can't see it.

You can't see that fake smile.

You can't see this pain.

So I will reply shortly.

I am great.

LITTLE CHILD

Solilska
of <http://solilska.deviantart.com>

I stand in a field, as a child,
A simple flower, i hold in my palm,
A symbol of how easily something can be crushed or blown away,
Nurture this beauty and sigh away my pains,
A lotus, the soul of my love,
I hold in my hand.

As i contemplated these thoughts,
A Angel made itself known, walking in, with no halo or holy father,
Suddenly i felt insecure and stupid,
A boy in love with a flower.

It approached me and took my hands in its palms gently,
An angel maybe but a woman i was sure,
She possessed soft hands like small pieces of stroking silk,
Encasing my hands so they formed like fists.

A panic, i fell into fear as i began to crush my love, my flower,
Anxiety and pain, my heart began to cry and so did i,
She smiled and opened my hands palm up to show me,
The flower was still there and as perfect as uncrushed.

I awoke from this dream, a man,
I realized the flower was my love and my hands the rest of the world,
The hands are unable to crush what i love,
Love is something more, something untouchably strong,
As i studied my dream and its meaning,
I realized i was holding something in my arms,
The flower, the angel, the woman and my love.