

The spirals were what got you. You had lost track of how long you had been running. Avoiding drones, handlers. Dashing away at the first sign of noise. They wouldn't take you back to the institute. Little did you know, they had been tailoring your escape.

You had been looking behind you, trying to identify the source of the noise, a branch snapping, some leaves rustling, when you rounded the corner. So that when you turned round, facing the clearing, you were unable to avoid looking at it. That same spiral.

Green on black, slowly rotating, drilling into your well-conditioned mind. You struggled for a few moments more, but that intense, desperate need to escape was evaporating, along with your thoughts. All you could do was stare, and sink, and let go of your mind.

And that was what let the handlers catch up. Your handler in particular, their slightly firmer than necessary grasp on your shoulder told your already hypnotised mind what you should have known. You weren't going to get away. "It's over, subject. There is no escape."

As they turned you away from the spiral, you felt a few flickers of thought beginning to return. They let out a laugh as they saw the small flash of defiance in your eyes. "Thinking of running again? You can try. But you won't get away. No one gets away, silly."

You were trying to get your body to start running again, but it was being... Rebellious, or, well, obedient. Your handler began to lead you back, still facing you. "We give every subject the chance. Some don't take it. But others, like you, do. It's nice to give you hope."

They paused for a second, watching you, just walking in silence. Finally, they continued. "Just so we can squash it. It's all planned, silly. Every bit. We knew the spiral would get you. That's why we had those distractions set up where they were. We knew what worked best on you."

Finally, you broke your defiant eye contact, hearing the truth in their words. "We couldn't actually let a subject escape. Our clients have invested too much for us to let product go. Hey, look on the bright side, now you know that you can't run, just give in. Accept your new life, subject."

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