

Energy

By Kallie

Shaxa moaned with glee as she stepped through the aetherial veil and crossed from the infernal plane into reality. She stretched lasciviously, enjoying the feel of her physical body whilst at the same time posing and arching her back to perfectly show off the perfectly-shaped assets that made a succubus like her so suited to the art of seduction. It had been so long! Too long. So few mortals believed in the divine or the arcane anymore. Once, demonic summonings had been practically commonplace. Now, humans had reached such technological heights that they didn't seem to need or believe in such beings as angels and demons anymore. It was truly a shame. But Shaxa was pleased to learn that demonology was not quite a lost art. The summoning that she had just experienced was one of the most skillful she'd ever seen. Clearly, her summoner knew what they were doing. Unfortunately for them, Shaxa knew that knowledge was no defense against her wiles. Witches, sorcerers and occultists low and high had summoned her over the centuries and millennia, but none of them, however learned, had been able to control her. She had often feigned obedience at first, of course, but sooner or later she'd been to seduce them and manipulate them until they lowered their guard and allowed her to slip out of her bindings or past their summoning wards, and then they'd found themselves reduced to mere playthings before the demonic power of an unchained succubus queen. Shaxa shivered with anticipation, already relishing the thought of the many, many possible ways she might corrupt her would-be master.

But where was her summoner? As the thick, dark brimstone clouds produced by her summoning dissipated, Shaxa peered around her unfamiliar surroundings with keen, glowing, cat-like eyes. She'd never seen any human dwelling quite like this. Besides the blood-splattered pentagram marked on the floor for the ritual, everything in the room Shaxa found herself in was white and clean. The wall in front of her was made up of plain, uniform metal plates, and as she looked up and down the floor and ceiling seemed equally featureless. It reminded Shaxa of the sterile halls of the Almighty that she and her kind had rebelled to escape long ago more than it did the dirty hovels or creaking palaces she had been summoned to before. Time had passed, clearly. Shaxa had heard much of how the mortal world had changed and evolved from her fellow demons, but to see it for herself was another thing entirely. She decided she would need time to acclimate to the new state of the world before she could begin to dominate it.

"Welcome, demon."

Shaxa pivoted, and found herself facing another wall, but one made of a solid pane of glass. Beyond it was some kind corridor, leading far away in both directions. Shaxa realized she wasn't in a room, but some kind of cell. The only thing she could see in the corridor was the woman who had just addressed her. It was her summoner. It had to be. From just one look at her, Shaxa could tell she radiated the exact same arrogance and self-awarded authority that so many of her summoners had in ages past. Her clothes, for one thing. She was wearing a suit jacket and a white shirt, garments that had only just been invented the last time Shaxa had visited the material plane. She had never seen them worn by a woman, nor paired with a neat pencil skirt, flattering tights, and high heels. The mere fact that it was a woman who had summoned her was a little unusual, for obvious reasons. But it had happened before, and Shaxa was more than pleased that it had happened before. Women were so much more interesting and complex creatures than men, and that made their corruption so much more twisted and delightful. This particular woman had an unusually severe look to her, with her hair in a tight bun and her cold gaze framed by big, round glasses. Her mouth was pressed into a thin smile that was almost a sneer, and Shaxa couldn't help but admire how pretty she was, in a mature, refined way, her subtle, skillful makeup perfectly complimenting her dark complexion and thin eyes.

“Greetings, mortal.” Shaxa turned her words into a performance, allowing her rich, sultry, subtly inhuman voice to suggest all the pleasures a mortal might want. As she spoke, the succubus queen placed one taloned foot in front of the other and clasped her clawed hands behind her back, pressing her chest forward as she gave a slight bow. The human seemed unmoved, but Shaxa knew no-one was immune to the supernatural lust she could provoke. Her whole body was crafted to entice, and while she was technically clothed, her black loincloth and chest wrap were almost obscenely revealing, especially given how they contrasted with her pale, purple-tinged skin. Shaxa often found that keeping just a little of herself hidden could be the most provocative thing of all. “I am here at your pleasure,” she continued. “What manner of contract do you seek?”

The succubus felt it was safe to assume that this mortal was already familiar with the notion of contracting. A mortal could summon a demon, but they could not compel obedience. A contract had to be made. A demon would agree to be bound by certain terms, and in exchange be afforded some kind of boon or reward - usually, simply the promise of a degree of freedom and autonomy, or fun to be had. Demons yearned to be free on the material plane so that they could wreak havoc and sin, and mortal summoners were usually inclined to let them, to some extent, as long as the demon did what they wanted in some particular matters. Of course, unless mortals were extremely, extremely careful, the terms of such contracts often proved infinitely exploitable.

“Nothing,” the woman on the other side of the glass said.

“Nothing?” Shaxa raised an eyebrow. What kind of silly mortal posturing was this?

“I don’t seek a contract,” the woman explained. “Well, not yet. I think we should talk first. I’d like for us to understand each other better, so that you can better understand your... position.”

“Very well.” Mortals loved to hear themselves prattle. Shaxa had no problem with that. They always revealed more than they intended. This one did seem unusually calm and collected, however. Most mortals couldn’t resist being unnerved by her forked, flickering tongue or the regal crown of horns on her head. The succubus adopted a casual, languid pose and plastered a smile on her face, making herself look wide-eyed and eager to please. “What would you like to talk about?”

“I suppose I should introduce myself. After all, I already know your name, Shaxa.” The succubus’s name sounded light and delicate in the mortal woman’s refined, lightly-accented voice. “I am Director Kaya, technical director of the latest experimental energy project here at the Parasol Corporation.”

“The Parasol Corporation?” Shaxa repeated.

Director Kaya kept smiling. “One of the world’s largest multinational conglomerates.”

“I see.” Shaxa was already searching for an angle. Clearly this woman was ambitious, and probably ruthless. The kind who would do anything to claw their way to the top. Shaxa could use that. “Pray tell, what does Director Kaya of the Parasol Corporation want with a being such as myself? I am sure a woman of your stature has many demands on your time. Is trading words with me so profitable?”

“I simply thought I should see the results of our project for myself,” Director Kaya replied smoothly.

The director said nothing further. An awkward pause hung in the air for a moment. Shaxa could tell she was being baited. This mortal’s demeanor was starting to irritate her. Eventually Shaxa decided to take the bait. She didn’t want to seem like she was vying for dominance. “And what project is this?”

“I’m glad you asked.” Maddeningly, Director Kaya’s smile seemed to grow a fraction wider. She turned, and started to slowly pace back and forth in front of Shaxa’s cell. Shaxa, still bound within the

summoning glyph inscribed in blood on the floor, could only follow her with her eyes, a simpering smile plastered on her face. “We, here at Parasol, are very interested in energy. In form or another, it’s the world’s most valuable commodity. And that makes a powerful succubus such as you very, very interesting. As a succubus, you have the natural ability to drain energy through sex, of course. But I wonder, have you ever tried to study your own ability through a scientific lens? I imagine not.”

“Indeed, no,” Shaxa confirmed. She was careful not to show it, but she was starting to feel a little wary. Where was this leading? Mortal curiosity about the demonic was natural, and had motivated many summoners, but Director Kaya wasn’t a curious student or wide-eyed knowledge-seeker. That was plain to see.

“It’s truly fascinating,” Director Kaya continued. She sounded incredibly pleased with her own spiel. “The law of conservation of energy. That’s the great limit on all of our attempts to create energy. Energy cannot be created from whole cloth. It always comes from somewhere, transmitted from one form into another. But where does the energy that you drain come from, succubus? That question was the one that launched our project. The results of our experiments have been most promising. We hypothesize that the energy you drain comes not from the body or the physical, but from the soul, the spiritual. As a succubus, you possess the remarkable ability to draw that spiritual energy forth into a form which you can utilize to empower yourself. And that is something so valuable we cannot possibly ignore it.” Director Kaya grinned for a brief moment, showing teeth. “An untapped source.”

“Oh my, Director,” Shaxa giggled. “That’s so interesting. I would be more than happy to provide a little demonstration. In the name of furthering your project, of course.”

Director Kaya laughed. “I’m sure you would be.” She stopped pacing. “But no. We already have plenty of data. The initial phase of our project is already complete. It’s time to get things up and running. And that’s where you come in.”

“So... let me get this straight.” Shaxa’s jaw could have dropped. The arrogance of this mortal was astounding. “You have summoned me, a succubus, here because you want to use me as a glorified battery?”

Director Kaya’s smile turned a little crooked. “I suppose you could say that,” she replied, sounding amused.

“I think you misunderstand a few things, Director.” Shaxa shook her head with the weariness of a patient mother. For one who seemed so clever, this mortal was proving astonishingly foolish. “Allow me to explain how this works. You have summoned me, but if you desire my service, we need to form a contract. I’m sure a woman of your acumen understands what that means. This for that. Quid pro quo. What you’re proposing sounds so... dull. That is not a contract I am likely to agree too.”

Director Kaya’s reaction was the last thing Shaxa expected. The director’s smile grew and grew, until it was a jagged, malevolent grin that split her pretty, professional face from ear to ear. “I’m not sure I said anything about needing you to agree.”

The director raised a manicured hand and snapped her fingers. For a moment, Shaxa didn’t think anything had happened, but then a whirring, mechanical noise coming from above her head caught her attention. She looked up to see the panel in the ceiling above her retract, and in its place a small, mechanical nozzle descended from some kind of hidden compartment above. Shaxa looked up at it, unimpressed. She sniffed. Clearly there was no longer any point pretending to be co-operative.

“What is this?” She laughed haughtily. “You mortals come up with such clever little things.”

“We do.” The malicious smirk Shaxa had just seen on Director Kaya’s face had disappeared, and the thin smile was back. Shaxa was rapidly growing to hate that smile. She would enjoy wiping it off the

director's face once she worked her way out of whatever foolish scream she was trying to work. What kind of expression would suit the proud, arrogant woman best? A look of exquisite, masochistic pain, or one of raw, unadulterated, mindless need? "This is one of the other projects I've been developing," Director Kaya explained. "It's something that's proven very effective at controlling your kind. Living latex."

"Living..." Shaxa frowned. She had no idea what the director was talking about.

Shaxa wasn't left in suspense. As the light glinted off of Director Kaya's glasses, she raised her hand and snapped her fingers once more. This time, the result was instant. Shaxa jumped, startled, as the nozzle above her started spraying a thick, black, viscous ooze all over her body. Shaxa instinctively started trying to brush it away from her bare skin, and especially her face, but she found it difficult. The black, rubbery substance clung to her skin, but when she tried to grab hold of thick globs of it to pull it off of her, it seemed to suddenly become as thin and slippery as water. Trapped in the summoning glyph, Shaxa was unable to move out from underneath the nozzle, and she quickly realized there was no point trying to clean the ooze from her skin while she was still being drenched in it. The succubus queen had no choice but to resign herself to the humiliation. She had power and magic, yes, but not much. It had been so long since she'd been able to replenish her energy, and she knew she had to save what little she had left for something truly crucial. So, there was nothing Shaxa could do but simmer in her own rage as tried to comfort herself by contemplating the revenge she would take on the impudent mortal standing in front of her. Throughout the ordeal, she remained completely silent. She wasn't going to give Director Kaya the satisfaction of hearing her express her frustration.

After thirty seconds or so, the spray of black liquid stopped. By then, Shaxa was covered almost head to toe in the latex, her unnaturally pale, tinted skin barely showing and a large pool of the alien substance completely surrounded her. Calmly and methodically, she started brushing it off of herself and throwing it to the floor or against the walls, beginning with her face and head and then working her way down. All the while, she fixed Director Kaya with a deathly glare that promised mind-breaking pleasure and indescribable pain. Still, the director proved impossible to provoke a reaction in. Shaxa was looking forward to irrevocably destroying that calm, professional facade.

"Now, what did that achieve?" Shaxa spat, no longer hiding her contempt. Her long-awaited return to the material plane wasn't going as she'd envisioned. "Are you trying to disgust or debase me into submission? All you are doing is incurring my wrath."

"Do you know why we call it living latex?" Director Kaya completely ignored the succubus's naked threat. "Each latex molecule forms a protective bubble around a tiny nanobot, capable of locomotion. Through application of heat and small chemical changes, they can alter the physical properties of the rubber in order to suit the task at hand. And most impressively of all, their behavioral chips allow them to function independently, but they're all connected together in an adaptive neural net that functions as a kind of hive mind, allowing them to co-ordinate their behavior and locomotion as they pursue a simple goal stipulated by a human operator."

Shaxa blinked. She didn't understand what Director Kaya was saying. "What does it do, mortal?" she asked, exasperated.

The director simply pointed at the floor beneath her. "That."

Shaxa looked down and immediately gasped. All the way up to her ankles, her feet were immersed in black ooze. It seemed as though she was sinking into a mire, but she quickly realized that she wasn't sinking at all. The latex was rising. Looking around herself, she could immediately see that the pool of latex around her was much smaller than it had been. The rubber was pulling together, coalescing into a single, solid mass around Shaxa's feet. The succubus was stunned. She hadn't felt anything. If it had been magic, she would have sensed it. This was pure technology. As she watched, she could see the latex starting to creep further and further up her body, inch by inch. It seemed somehow aware of the fact that she had noticed what it was doing, and it started moving faster. Shaxa could feel it now: the smooth, alien coolness that was slick and

almost velvety against her skin. She raised one taloned foot, trying to pull away. Alarmingly, she immediately felt the mass of ooze around her feet pull against her, becoming like glue as it tried to keep her in place. Eventually, with effort, she managed to pull her right foot free and, clumsily placed it down just outside the pool of living latex. But to her horror, the latex already stuck to her right foot continued to spread across her skin, and the rubber that remained on the floor surged towards her left foot, eager to cling to her before she escaped from its reach. By the time she was able to get her other foot unstuck and stumble away as far as the summoning glyph would allow, so much of the living latex had already attached itself to her. The latex was now rising up her shins, and creeping, exploratory strands were reaching her knees. Shaxa's glowing, inhuman eyes went wide as she realized she didn't know what to do.

"Have I impressed you yet?" Director Kaya asked, the paper-thin veneer of politeness in her tone entirely undercut by the vicious, arrogant smirk on her face. She still looked every inch the perfect professional, her suit and skirt still perfectly neat, but the malevolence behind her intent was palpable.

"You will pay for this," Shaxa hissed, but her attention was mostly fixed on her current plight.

Director Kaya didn't bother to respond, and Shaxa had no more time for verbal sparring. The living latex was still climbing. The mass of it still on the floor was already at her feet again, and there was nowhere to run. Frantically, Shaxa reached down and started to pull it off of her body. She didn't know what was going to happen which it reached her torso or her head, but she felt certain she didn't want to find out the hard way. Just as before, when she tried to pull it away, the latex became sticky and resistant, and when she finally managed to get some kind of grip on it, it suddenly switched, becoming thin and slipping right through her fingertips. What little of it she got off, she threw against the furthest wall as hard as she could, but it immediately started making its way back towards her. It was relentless. Shaxa started using her claws, but it was like trying to cut air. She could think of nothing better to do than continue pulling at it, but it seemed to have little effect. Worse, after a minute or two of flailing, Shaxa noticed that small globs of the living latex had attached themselves to her hands, and were beginning to spread across her palms and along her fingertips. Shaxa immediately started trying to free her hands of this alien, seemingly-sentient substance, but she found she could do nothing more than spread the rubber from one hand to the next, utterly failing to do anything to save herself. Wherever she turned and whatever she tried to do, the latex responded to it perfectly, always finding a way to continue its inexorable advance upwards. It truly was like a living creature.

"Get this foulness off of me!" Shaxa commanded. While not painful, the feeling of the viscous rubber oozing and slithering across her skin was infinitely unsettling. She noticed that on the parts of her body that had been coated the longest, the latex was solidifying and setting, forming a single, smooth, reflective, skintight layer. Her legs were almost completely enveloped in the inky blackness, as were most of her hands.

"Are you feeling it yet?" Director Kaya asked. She was staring at Shaxa like she was nothing more than a specimen in a test tube, or perhaps a frog to be dissected. "Each little latex nanobot is armed with a tiny hypodermic needle. Right now, they're beginning to inject you, infusing you with their payload. It's a particular toxin we extracted from another kind of demon we were able to summon, combined with a few other artificial elements. It's not dangerous to your kind, but it makes for a very, very powerful drug. The effects are... well, you'll see."

Now that the director mentioned it, Shaxa realized she could feel something. Her body felt strange. It felt good. From her legs down, she felt weak and almost numb. A sense of deep relaxation was starting to sink into her muscles. The succubus had already half-given up on trying to pull her feet free of the living latex coagulating on the floor, but when she made another attempt she was shocked at how feeble she'd become. Shaxa strained and strained to rouse her lethargic body, but it was no use. The warm, relaxing pleasure was too much. It was an intense, pleasant tingling, heating her and suffusing her body. In all her many, many years of existence, she had never felt anything quite like it. With one hand, already coated in rubber, Shaxa reached down to touch her thigh, hoping she could somehow scratch the itch. Instead, she found herself mesmerized by how black and smooth her latex-clad body looked, and at how it reflected the harsh white lights of the cell like a shimmering, alien mirror. She ran a hand along her coated skin. It was so smooth it was almost

silky, but with a strange texture to it she couldn't place.

Then Shaxa realized what was happening to her, and she snapped herself out of the reverie she been sinking into. This drug, this venom, was doing more than making her body feel good. It was making her mind soften and grow weak. It was trying to control her. The succubus snarled. She wasn't going to let that happen. She wasn't going to fall prey to this mortal trickery. She was the one who was in control - always. But she had to act fast. Her arms were now totally covered in sleek blackness, and her shoulders and her breasts were now being assimilated by the living latex bodysuit forming on her skin. Shaxa glanced around the small cell. What could she do? She couldn't leave the summoning glyph. There was no-one and nothing else in there with her. She doubted that any of her powers of influence and manipulation could have any effect on the latex. What did that leave? Only Director Kaya, still staring at her from the far side of the glass. Shaxa grimaced. Until a contract was formed, it was difficult for a demon to exert much power outside the boundary of the summoning glyph. Difficult, but not impossible. And the succubus knew she had to try.

Shaxa reached deep inside herself, and took hold of the thin trickle of magic that she'd been able to bring with her from the infernal plane. As she began to channel it through herself, her eyes, already dimly glowing, blazed and flared with supernatural power. Shaxa knew this was no time for sparing. She didn't have the energy for a second attempt. She used up everything she had all at once, letting it loose in a shockwave that made the very air around her tremble and singe. Shaxa stared intently at Director Kaya, searching for a reaction. The infuriating woman was out of the summoning glyph and on the other side of the glass, yes, but the succubus was confident in her abilities. She wasn't just any succubus. She was a queen. The wave of carnal magic she'd just unleashed was enough to melt minds, bringing men and women alike to their knees in a frenzy of lust - lust directed at her. No summoning glyph, no matter how good, was going to be enough to completely block it out. All Shaxa needed was one moment of weakness, one moment where temptation overrode good sense. She would make Director Kaya release her or form a contract, and it would all be over. Shaxa would replenish her energy from the mortal's life force, and then begin her takeover. A woman in Director Kaya's position would make for such a useful puppet. With her as Shaxa's addicted, dulled pleasure-slave, there was no telling what she would be able to achieve.

Director Kaya raised her hand and reached forward, and for a moment, Shaxa's hopes surged. But then, the director grinned, and tapped on the glass with one fingertip. "Hexagrammatic wards," she explained, "inscribed into the glass thousands of times over, on a microscopic level. Enough to block almost any spell, I'm afraid. We mortals have come a long way."

Shaxa's latex-coated hands clenched. Her eyes bulged, and her face contorted into a mask of rage. This couldn't be happening to her. It was impossible. The latex was rising up her neck and beginning to climb over her jaw now, but she was ignoring it. She refused to acknowledge it. She was growing light-headed from the dose of drug she'd been exposed to, but that didn't matter. Shaxa believed with all her dark heart that nothing these foolish mortals came up with could possibly hold any power over her. She was a queen.

"Release me from this!" Shaxa screamed, pointing an accusatory finger at Director Kaya. "There is still a chance for you, mortal. Undo this trickery, and I will allow you to serve at my side. If you do not, then once I am free of it, you will experience pain and humiliation like you've never imagined! You will be a wretch! Lower than a dog! Than a worm!"

Director Kaya sighed. "The process is almost complete. Thankfully, you'll be quieter after that."

"What process?" Shaxa demanded, as the latex started to form a sleek mask over her face, contorting perfect to match the way she was speaking. "You think this is enough to subjugate me? You fool!"

"This process."

Shaxa felt the slick, cool, living latex surge up her jawline and up the sides of her face. She was taken by surprise by how quickly and intently it moved, and reached up to see if she could brush it off, but she

froze once the latex ooze began to push its way into her ears. The feeling of the inside of her body being invaded by the thick, smooth, rubbery substance was beyond intrusive. Shaxa could feel it burrowing deep. Too deep. The penetrating cold went further into her than she'd thought possible. She could feel it spreading it, exploring her, filling her. Once she overcame her initial shock and revulsion at the sensation, she tried again to reach up and brush it off - but she couldn't. She froze. This time, though it wasn't shock. She was simply frozen. She couldn't move.

"Commercially, one of the applications of these nanobots is deep brain surgery," Director Kaya explained. The malicious, face-splitting grin was back. Her eyes were wide and lurid, exhibiting much more than just professional curiosity. "They can get inside, traveling through the brain's natural pathways, repairing damage and removing tumors or removing dangerous clots. That's what they're for, at least as far as the public is aware. But once they're inside you, if programmed correctly, they can do a lot more than just repair. They can rewire."

Shaxa just stared at her in disbelief. Staring was all she could do. Out of the corners of her vision, she could see all the remaining parts of her body being consumed by latex. It even covered her eyes, although as it solidified it rapidly formed into a sheet of something like black glass, allowing her to see out.

"At least when manifested in physical form, intelligent demons have brains similar in fundamental structure to humans," Director Kaya continued. "Similar enough, anyway, for us to be able to remold you any way we want."

Shaxa tried to rally herself. She couldn't move, and her whole body was now filled with the strange pleasure the latex was causing, but she still had to believe she hadn't lost. No-one could make her submit this way, let alone a mere mortal. She was a queen. She just had to endure. She had to hold on her thoughts. She was familiar with mind control, even if she'd never experienced it herself, and she wasn't going to allow herself to succumb to that fate. She just had to hold on to herself, to her mind, to her thoughts. But as she focused herself on that idea, one, simple, thought appeared suddenly in her mind, eclipsing everything else.

Obey.

It was simple, singular, and overwhelmingly powerful. Shaxa was aware of its foreignness, but as much as she tried, she couldn't get it out of her head. How was that possible? She'd never felt such a powerful compulsion. Frantically, she searched herself for something else to focus on, some deep-seated totem of her identity. She only found one thing.

Obey.

She could feel it in her mind like a poison, cold and alien and a stark contrast to the warm, simmering lust and ambition that usually filled her. Shaxa tried to focus on it, to keep it distinct from the rest of her thoughts, but that only made it worse. Her only thought was to obey. It had started small, slipping insidiously into her mind, but now it was loud, clamoring, drowning out all other thoughts. The other thoughts that remained, her own thoughts, her free thoughts, were rapidly dissolving into the draining, drug-induced pleasure that now filled her whole body. Shaxa couldn't believe how quickly it had happened. It had only been moments, and already she was drowning. She was drowning, and she needed to obey. She was weak, and she needed to obey. She was losing and she needed to obey.

"No, no, no!" Shaxa whispered, finding she could barely speak. Her body was still frozen and it was a struggle simply to open her mouth, and when she tried to talk the first word that came to her lips was 'obey', she could feel it there in her mouth, her treacherous tongue poised to form it.

Obey. Obey. Obey.

What else was there? Shaxa was struggling to find anything. She could feel the tendrils of living latex coiled around her mind. Everything else was slipping away. There was only obedience and pleasure. Shaxa was left desperately reaching for scraps. She was struggling not to simply obey. But she knew she couldn't. Couldn't she? She was a queen. Wasn't she?

Obey.

Within just another few moments, Shaxa's every thought was obey. Every feeling was obey. The word itself, echoing and thundering through her head, had become almost meaningless, but the impulse underpinning it remained. The succubus was itching to obey. The pleasure in her body had given rise to need, and she somehow knew that obeying was the only way to sate it. It made perfect sense. Obedience was pleasure. Pleasure was obedience. She could think of nothing more than obey. She wanted nothing more to obey. Her plans were forgotten. Her rage was forgotten. As the black, shiny rubber completely finished coating her body in a perfectly skintight bodysuit, all of Shaxa's remaining thoughts and memories fell, tumbling into a black hole that swallowed them up utterly and left her with nothing but pure, blissful mindlessness and obedience. And then even her name was taken from her, and she was no longer Shaxa, but just a thoughtless, obedient thing.

The drone waited. Its hands fell limply to its sides, and its legs came together as it stood to attention. It had no purpose but to wait to obey, and mindless as it was, the simple, droning need to obey still echoed in the emptiness of its mind.

"Good," Director Kaya said, sounding pleased. The drone thought nothing. "Now there's only one thing left. We need to form a contract, you and I. Do you understand?"

"Yes," the drone that had once been a succubus replied.

"The terms of the contract are as follows," the director continued. "You will obey every command that you are given, perfectly and without distortion, and you will submit to any further brainwashing and conditioning that I deem necessary. In return, you will receive nothing. You will agree to this contract.

"I obey. I agree to this contract." The words, spoken by a demon, were enough. From behind the sleek mask that covered its face, the drone's eyes briefly glowed as its magic sealed the contract. The magical binding provided one more guarantee it would obey, if such a guarantee was needed. The wards of the summoning glyph became dormant, and the drone's full power was unlocked and unsealed, but it knew it would only use it in service to its new mistress.

"Good," Director Kaya said again. "Your designation is now Theta."

"Yes," Theta replied. There was no emotion in its voice.

"Perfect," Director Kaya concluded. "Then, we're done here. Commence the energy extraction process."

The director snapped her fingers. This time, a series of panels in one of the walls of the cell slid away, forming a door. Beyond the door was another, adjacent cell, identical to the one Theta had been summoned to. In that cell was another drone. The other drone walked towards it. Its figure was exaggerated and feminine, like Theta's, and from the latex-coated talons on its hands, it was clearly another succubus. If Theta had been capable of curiosity, it would have wondered just how many succubi had been entrapped within the secret cells of the Parasol Corporation. In the other drone's tinted mask, Theta could see its own reflection. Its demonic features, such as its horns and claws, were still obvious, as was its curvaceous, alluring body, but the latex covering it had somehow transformed it completely. There was no trace of individuality left, nor of thought or feeling. Both drones moved robotically, and they were virtually identical.

Theta felt nothing about that. It just obeyed.

The other drone quickly crossed the distance between them and, without pause, began to embrace Theta. Theta knew exactly what to do. The living latex puppeting her mind had programmed it well. The two drones began to touch each others' bodies. Their touches, enhanced by their natural succubus abilities, brought extraordinary pleasure even to each other. But nonetheless, the way they started to fuck each other was emotionless. They had no need for pleasure beyond the pleasure of obedience, and their purpose was simple: they would use their powers to extract as much energy from each other as possible, for the benefit of the mistress they now served.

Their mistress watched them for a brief moment, regarding them with clinical fascination. "What's next on today's agenda, Jolene?" Director Kaya asked, eventually.

From where she had been waiting a respectful distance away, the director's assistant stepped forwards. "You have a meeting with the chief executive, director," she said. "And then there are several calls for you that I've received for you while we've been down here."

Director Kaya sighed. "Very well, I suppose I'd better get on with it."

Jolene paused for a moment, glancing at the cell in which Theta had been summoned. "If I may, director?"

"You may."

"Why did you choose to come down here?" Jolene knew it wasn't her job to ask questions, but she also knew that the director enjoyed indulging her curiosity when she was in certain moods. "You don't need to oversee the process personally. We have people for that."

Director Kaya tilted her head thoughtfully. "We do, but I'm still in charge. It pays to carry out some personal oversight, on occasion."

"And?" Jolene pressed, following Director Kaya as her superior started leading her away past cell after cell, most of them filled. She could sense there was something more.

With her assistant at her back, unable to see, Director Kaya's face once again burst into a lopsided grin of unspeakable malice. "Fun."

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