

## SIDRA KAIEEM

Its eyes moved again and again between the windshield (which ostensibly showed the empty void of nearby space and the tapestry of stellar bodies far away) and the readouts on its console (which, so far, read that the nearby space being mostly empty was correct: the only nearby body was the scout ship with no power running and no living lifeforms aboard.) The scouting ship was not especially visible to the naked eye, and, so far, the console did not read anything too noteworthy into its being there.

It licked its lips in anticipation.

Scavenger. Parasite. Demon.

The last readout came to the console: absolutely no signs of life detected, besides, of course, itself, who sat reading the console.

Sidra placed its hands into the control field, and began making the hand signs and minute movements to bring its ship on an intercept vector with the scout ship.

It had skin as black as the void outside, two horns that came to deep red points, a 12 inch cock, DD breasts, a mouthful of pointed teeth, a black serpentine tongue. It had been born human. In terms of rights it still could be called a human, although so far out past any significant colony, the matter of rights was a rather academic hypothetical, a kind of trivia that was more likely to be assessed post mortem rather than allow it any real benefit. It had appeared normal in its youth (blonde, monogendered, omnivorous chompers) but it had visited a

moon that specialized in augmentations, and had gotten a lot done over the course of a couple of years. Then, summarily, it left behind interactions with the living, off into the distant frontiers. It had had a given name before it had called itself Sidra Kaieem. It barely remembered what that name had been.

Among its augmentations, besides the aesthetic ones, was an implant into the skull to induce sleepdeath: the death, end, cessation, of the need to sleep. Chemicals were synthesized in it to give the brain the constant benefits of having slept, without the need to actually do it. It had been awake more than half of its life now. It rarely blinked.

Its ship intercepted with the scouting ship. Its ship's black tentacles began reaching over the scouting ship, jumpstarting the scouting ship's power, finding viable entrances, patting it down (feeling it up) for anything the remote scanners had failed to highlight.

A few minutes passed before a scathing hiss from the dashboard indicated that the tentacles had successfully coupled the ships: Sidra would be able to exit its port and enter the port of the small scouting ship. No EVA suit needed. It could go in its comfy black rags.

The scouting ship was more or less a cockpit that was adjoined by a few closets for different utilities, and one beast of an engine that comprised the back 9/10ths of the vehicle, hardly hominid-enterable aside from some maintenance crawlspaces.

It went straight to the pilot's seat, and viewed the insignia on the corpse that sat there.

It whistled to itself.

"Brigadier general. Good eats."

With the scouting ship's console back online, revived off of the jumpstart from Sidra's ship, the cause of death was revealed in the series of warnings in the log history. Glitch in the life support. Huge fluctuation in temperature, dropping to -200 Celsius in a second or less, and remaining there for seven hours. Sidra had seen it before. Some common-ish model of life support technology had the same defect. Inconvenient for those who were expecting the arrival of the person the defect killed. Convenient for scavengers. Parasites. Demons.

Sidra took the knife off of the brigadier general's belt and began cutting the clothes off of the corpse, then began at cutting the corpse into its constituent meat, indulging on a few raw bites to chew on during the process. In about half an hour, a skeleton and the associated inedible flesh remained in the pilot's seat, and mounds of meat stood around the cockpit floor like buildings in a surrealist miniature city. Sidra went back into its own ship, brought a jar back into the scouting ship's cockpit, and began sprinkling over the cuts a type of bio-hostile salt that cooked, dried, and preserved within an hour's time.

As the brigadier general was cooking, Sidra went into the maintenance crawlspaces of the engine, and took out the bits that were worth having. In its own cockpit, it commanded its ship's tentacles to begin taking the power supply from the scouting ship.

It crouched beside the skeleton, facing out of the scouting ship's cockpit. For lightyears and lightyears in any direction, there was no life except for it and its own microbiome, and there was not even any former life except for that of the one beside it, now being transferred into its own life. The idea of a planet filled shoulder-to-shoulder with such interactions... It astonished it that it had ever been able to be a part of something so busy and dense.

With the scouting ship jumpstarted again, there was no doubt it had sent out a broadcast signal to inform some allies of its location, and the fact that its pilot had become deceased. Another scout would come to assess and collect.

From its own ship, Sidra obtained a brush and paints, and got to work on the scouting ship's windshield. There were classic slogans, that it had used before: a favorite was, "Fuck you, I got mine." These days it liked to do things more memorable. On the windshield, it took its time painting a dog's ass with its tail raised, and a black hand reaching to it, and sticking a finger into the dog's anus.

Some scout would have something new to write on a report.

Sidra collected up the meat, brought it back into its own ship, and decoupled, and fled away into the vast frontier.