

The message had come through half an hour before Ashari had checked it. The phone had just shown him an image link, rather than the image itself. It was only when three text messages came in a row after that he lifted the phone to see what it was.

His heart skipped a beat on seeing the picture.

A short while ago he'd been accosted by the hyena woman Samara and so he was able to instantly recognise Samara's brother, Cade, in the shot, bearing a smug expression and with his hand on the head of a captive shape beside him. While Ofenna didn't discuss it much, Ashari knew that the gatomon costume he saw, occupied with a body and roped to a chair, was hers. Furthermore the fact this was coming from her phone-

He could only assume it was her!

He checked the messages at last. [Yo Ash, since you didn't wanna come meet, we invited ourselves over to your sister's place. She'd probably love you to come join and I'm sure you'd both hate the consequences if you didn't.]

[Yo, you there?]

[Hey, you're not even reading this shit? That's unbelievable, guess we need to encourage you more.]

The last message had another photo attached, more rope had been splayed over the suit's chest and a bag of some kind had been placed on her lap, a few tools and toys poking out from it.

His mind raced, should he call the police? No... he thought of all the ways that might backfire, the hyenas had been out of his life so long he didn't know if they were still strictly juvenile or if they could turn violent but this wouldn't be the first time they'd lured him in by inconveniencing Ofenna.

His thumb swiped to call Ofenna's phone.

"Yyy'ello." Cade's voice answered, making Ashari's stomach twist.

"Cade! You let her go and get out of there this instant."

"Can't do that, Ashari. Sis was very clear that negotiations aren't happening until you come here in person. Don't keep us waiting."

"Then let me talk to Samara!" Ashari growled.

"She's busy, you know, we have a lioness to keep occupied after all." Cade replied, hanging up instantly.

Ashari stood in stunned silence, he could still call the authorities but outside of that what choice did he have. He grabbed some things in a hurry and strode quickly to his car.

The door had been left ajar on purpose, the lion ran into his sister's house, up the flight of stairs and burst into the room. His haste more to embolden himself than anything as he knew if he hesitated he might lose the will entirely.

The gatomon suit struggled on seeing him run in, making deep "Mmmh, Mmmmm!"s at him. Cade was as close as in the picture, able to threaten his captive before Ashari could close the gap.

Cade wore a slight smile as he looked the lion up and down. "Huh, you were quicker than expected. Sam will be heartbroken that she'd missed a chance."

"Two on one, you think you can win?" Ashari growled.

"Please, one of you is too bound to do anything of use and I can take you in a fight." Cade said calm and coolly.

"So what's the plan then, you brought me here just for a standoff?" The lion asked with impatience.

Cade gestured to a table with his free hand. "A little contract. You sign that sheet and then I let her go." He said, squeezing the gatomon suit's shoulder.

"H-huh?" He looked to the sheet, then sidestepped towards the table, lifting the page while keeping his eye on Cade. His brows rose in shock at it. "A pet contract?!"

"It's Sam's idea, you should be thankful I had a hand in proofreading as I was the one who added the duration." He replied.

Ashari looked back. "What, a month?! You want me to be your pet, whatever that means, for a month?" He had a hankering that he knew exactly what it meant but better to play ignorant for now.

"You don't have to sign it but then there's no telling what we'll do with Fenny. As I said, be thankful. I'm the one who added the clause that she can't keep you forever and if you sign it in good faith, well, the rules affect us too. We can't use you in any unpleasant way. It'll let us catch up, like old times." The hyena said with another smirk.

Ashari looked it over again. There was no way something like this was official or legally binding.

"Mmmh, Pllhhs." The costume whined in a frightened tone. Ashari grimaced and winced.

“Ofenna... do... Do you think I should sign this?” In response the suited head nodded. The crisis gripped Ashari as he read over the terms and rules again. Why did it have to be a whole month?

“Y-you’d let us both leave and take some time, right? Let me ... prepare?”

“Hell no, we do this here and now. You sign it and then you surrender, only after that will I untie these ropes and help get this costume off.” He said poking the bonds attached to the chair. He mulled it over, for all the anger he felt over Cade the man had always prided himself on keeping himself honest. Sometimes the truth he told was phrased ambiguously, yet he never outright lied. There was another quiet plea from behind the fixed smile of the mask, it was enough to tip Ashari’s decision.

Ashari slammed his hand and the paper down on the table as he grabbed the nearest pen and scrawled across it. “There!”

“Great.” Cade flung a pair of objects toward Ashari. Leather cuffs with a clip that could be linked. “Sit down, put those over your ankles and then connect them. After which you’ll let me cuff you and then I’ll do my part in releasing my captive.”

The lion obeyed in swift order at which point Cade walked over, more leather in hand. He held out his hand for Ashari’s, letting him choose to behave and with a grimace of reluctance Ashari held his wrist out, letting it be bent behind the back and cuffed. Another cuff went to the lion’s free limb and then a collar went to Ashari’s neck, pressed under his long hair. A chain linked the arms to the back of his neck, binding him there.

“This stuff is all temporary, Samara has more for you to wear.” He said as he rose and walked back to the chair. He patted the suited shape’s shoulder and she stood up, the ropes falling away. Ashari had a moment of confusion, the ropes couldn’t have been untied that fast, surely. Cade reached to the zipper at the back of the costume and pulled it while the wearer calmly pulled on the mask.

Samara tossed the mask aside as she revealed her big grinning head to the lion. “Damn, you got no idea how hard it was not to laugh! But thanks for trading a month of your life so I could get out of this thing, it gets warm fast, ahaha!”

“S-Samara?! What have you done with Ofenna?” He asked in sudden concern, cursing himself for not seeing the ruse. The contract had avoided names throughout so he hadn’t picked up that he might not even be seeing Ofenna get free.

“She’s next door but she’s safe, don’t worry.” Samara said, the two hyena’s strode over to Ashari who was shuffling away from them. Struggling against the cuffs. “Hey now, you’re not gonna go back on your contract right? We both saw you sign it.”

He fell still, wincing again.

“Atta boy. We need to get you dressed up properly if you’re gonna be my pet!” Samara declared with joy.

“Show me my sister, first.” He insisted.

Samara’s smile dropped as she crouched in front of him, squeezing his head between her costume’s thick gloved hands. “Pets don’t make demands. Just for that you don’t get to see her until after you’re dressed.”

She stepped away, pulling the costume open down the back and stepping out of it revealing more of herself than either of the men in the room had anticipated. Cade just calmly ignored it, already focused on Ashari though the lion snapped his gaze away hastily, flushed in embarrassment.

“What else has Fenny got?” She asked out loud, walking to one of the closets and digging around in the outfits there. “Ooo, this is nice.” While she dressed herself in Ofenna’s looser or more flexible clothing, Ashari twisted in uncertainty.

“So, Ash.” Cade started. Sitting beside him. “You’re making me doubt you read the rules with how you’re carrying on. No speaking until spoken to. No demands or orders. It’s basic stuff.” He said. “And this is not an invitation for you to talk back.” Cade said. Waiting, watching. His hand went down to the cuffs at Ashari’s wrists when he’d seen enough to be satisfied. “...good. Who knows, by the end of the month you might be hoping we’ll offer you an extension. Trust me though, as fun as it is to make you both do things, agreeing and enjoying it will make everyone’s time easier. Now, to show me you’ve taken on what I’m saying, you’ll undress yourself here. Down to your skivvies.”

The lion grunted but felt that anything short of full compliance would only cause more issues. He wasn’t too thrilled about baring his torso to them though he braced himself for humiliation and mockery when his hoodie and shirt came off to reveal sensual rose pink clothing; a tight cropped vest across his torso and independent sleeves running from his wrists to the shoulder. It was exactly the kind of thing the hyenas would bully him over in their youth.

The fact that Cade didn’t even bat an eyelid at it felt oddly vindicating, he simply said. “Those off, too. They’ll be in the way.” Ashari obliged and Cade left him to it, walking over to a bag of supplies while he picked up the gatomon costume and draped it loosely on the chair. He rooted around in it until he pulled out four flexible, medium length pouches of a black material and a mass of brown fabric with darker patches, lighter patches and long stripes. The latter slid almost frictionlessly into a pool of wrinkles when he dropped it beside the lion, a lined interior poked through from the zipper at the back of it.

Cade knelt down to remove the ankle cuffs now that the lion was exposed from the waist up and then waited for him to part with his trousers and lower legwear. “Gimme an arm.” He

said, reaching forward with one of the pouches. Samara made a soft cooing noise of excitement as she hopped over.

“Oooh, the best part, let me help!” She said, seizing Ashari’s hand and pulling it so that the elbow was jutting out at Cade. The pouch slid over the point of his joint, the material’s opening folded over the lion’s arm and closed over the hand. It took both of Cade’s hands to stretch it into place, compacting Ashari’s arm down with two loose straps dangling.

Ashari grunted questioningly but kept himself from actually asking or offending them further.

His other arm was similarly bundled and then the fabric straps were drawn together, one set behind his back the other over his chest to tighten the arm-binding sleeves together and make his arms almost useless.

When they were in place Samara abruptly dragged her arm across his waist and threw him onto his back. “Ah! Hey what was that for?”

“Hush!” She chided, bouncing up to set her legs either side of him and then sit, pinning him down as she grabbed for his leg. Together she and Cade wrestled the limb into another of the pouches, by which time Ashari had pieced together what was happening with them but was too hesitant to disrupt it.

Cade’s fingers rolled against his fur as he pulled the tighter fitting pouch, one that tested Ashari’s flexibility, over his leg and up to cover the foot. Another set of buckles followed it, behind the rump and looping over the tail’s base for extra security.

“Now you’re looking like a pet, already.” Samara said with glee as she reached for the fabric pile, the two of them shook the clothing out, smooth lycra, no wonder they’d not thought anything of Ashari wearing something similar if this was what they were going to put him in.

The thing was deformed to the same squat pose that the fresh bindings held Ashari in, the fabric was so smooth and slippery that it took both hyenas to put it in place over the legs. Samara had to take her weight off Ashari, rising to pull the fabric over his arms and take a more intimate than necessary brush over his chest to push the suit in.

The lion grunted. “Please...” He tried again, seeking permission lightly.

They didn’t rebuke him but neither hyena gave him permission to talk further. Instead he was rolled onto his front as Cade seized the zipper and Samara guided the back portion of the cloth bitch-suit into position. It closed up all the way to Ashari’s neck, with a loose mass dangling, not enough for a hood, though it hinted at another purpose; Samara hooked her thumb into the mass, pulling it up over Ashari’s nose and muzzle. Thin enough to breath through and flexible enough to speak, even when the zipper reached the top behind his head. However it had a printed on grin as though he were flashing teeth smugly.

The brown and the stripes all came together, while Samara and Cade were spotted hyenas, they'd dressed their pet up as a striped hyena. Just the top of his head poked out to show he was a lion.

"Been waiting for this ever since I was done with your sis." Samara said enigmatically as she reached into a pocket and pulled out a long strappy collar. She held it in front of the lion, letting him see the engraved tag which said 'Ash' on it.

"W-wait!" He asked as it was pulled open.

"Nope." Samara said as she tugged it back over his throat and buckled it. Like Ofenna's it had a special metal clasp that fully covered the buckle, locking in place to stop it detaching unbidden and it was tight enough that it served to lock the hyena-print suit onto the lion. "Y'know Cade, I think he's getting a bit too mouthy, don't think we can trust him to behave and hold his tongue."

"Honestly? I think he'd behave. You just want an excuse to gag him. Well you don't need my permission." Cade replied.

"Haha, thanks bro." She said, stepping away.

"No! Samara, Cade, you don't have to! I'll be good!" He said, both of them leaving him alone but the lion struggled just to get onto his elbows and knees. By the time he was moving toward them Samara had already turned back, a long rubber muzzle in hand that matched the one she'd used on Ofenna. "Stop!" He said as she bent down to grab him by the collar and pull him up.

"Ahh yeah, those kinds of noises are what I remember you for." She said, passing the muzzle to Cade as he now free hand tugged down the mask. He shoved it into place on her behalf, another perfect fit that felt too tight for the wearer, just Ashari's nose preserved from it. The mask was flicked up, obscuring it and he was dropped again.

His snout fell to the floor, trying to rub and squeeze the cover down with his folded arms but the slick lycra was far too slippery to give him a good grasp. "Behave now, pet." Cade warned lightly as he finished buckling it on. "We've got plenty of other things to use, some you'll like a bunch less, if you don't want us to skip straight to them... just behave. Okay?" He said tapping Ashari's side.

"C'mon, let's show him off!" Samara said excitedly as she grabbed a leash and snapped it onto the collar.

It took a while for Ashari to get moving, dragged and yanked by the hyena for not being quick enough to move and also occasionally just because she wanted to. He was pulled out into the hallway and down one room, the door was kicked open loudly and he heard a lighter pitched

mumble of alarm from inside. The light clicked on and he saw what was presumably actually his sister this time.

A tight cage had her trapped on all fours like him, though the costume she wore was so thick that it squashed into the bars.

“Mmmh! Nhh hmm mmmh!” She moaned in alarm on seeing her brother had been caught by them too.

Cade moved to Ofenna’s cage, wrenched it open and pulled her out of it. His hands moved to the soft plush Nala mask covering her head and fought her eyes to stare into his. His hands clacked and clicked at the collar’s clasp, finding the tiny keyhole to open it so that he could unzip the hood enough to pull it down and show Ofenna’s head to the air again.

“Haha, just what I always wanted from you two. A pet and a toy!” Samara said with a cackle. “And Fenny just loves being my plaything, she was giggling about it earlier and probably will be again after dinner.” Samara said, pulling out a remote and wiggling it threateningly. Ofenna shrank back, glaring all the while. “Oh don’t look at me like that Fenny, can’t I have a bit of fun?”

Cade pushed Ofenna’s head back into the mask with the reveal done, locking the collar again before he reached forward, plucking the leash from Samara’s hands by tugging at the ring it was tethered to. He threaded it into the ring at the front of Ofenna’s collar and pulled until they were both forced together. Ashari’s thinly covered nose was tightly wedged into the soft mask’s snout so that it was pressed around him.

Ofenna’s arms were grabbed by the opportunistic Samara, pulled behind Ashari’s back while running below his own arms and then the cuffs went down over the suit to shackle them in a hug. “Speaking of dinner, I’m gonna go get some food ready. Cade, you’ll be sure to check up on these two, right?” Samara said, winking and handing him the remote that controlled the tickling devices lashed to Ofenna’s body.

“Yeah yeah, in between preparing their beds, of course.”

“Awesome.” She said hopping away.

Cade shoved them around so that they were lying side-by-side, still entangled and pressed together before he stepped back. He wasn’t planning anything further today but he made sure they heard the ominous noises of more items clinking, hidden from their view.

The whole situation was impossible and distressing. The sister he’d come here to save was now bound in a hug next to him while he himself couldn’t even find a way to be comfortable,

unable to stretch his limbs or roll in any direction. The linked collars also kept them from parting or offering any comforting gestures.

All Ofenna knew was what she could see, that Ashari had been caught by the bullies, dressed up and from his expression he was just as daunted as she was. He wanted to apologise for failing her, to explain his situation that he tried to trade himself for her release and only serve to 'release' Samara. Cade rolled his eyes at the mewling noise they made.

The way they carried on it was like they'd be there forever. Cade had every intention of seeing the contract honoured as a maximum. Even though neither of them had told Ofenna how long it would be. Besides, knowing Samara, she'd get bored of them far quicker than that, especially if she had to do four people's cooking every other day. Just enough time to get them to behave, have some fun, make sure they wouldn't press charges and then they could release them until the hyena's felt like another session in the future.

He worked while they squirmed and huffed in dejected quiet, holding up a headset to his ears to make sure he'd hooked the right audio into it. He nodded, setting it down quietly beside the stack of gear for later. Minutes later he heard the call from Samara and walked over to the lions, removing the leash and pulling Ofenna up to her feet. "Let's not keep her waiting." Cade said as he led the first captive towards the dining room.