

*It's much better to think what we tell you.*

It didn't matter how far Jim ran, or how fast. The klaxons blaring throughout the facility made that more than clear. That didn't stop the white bird from trying. Their heart felt like it was about to burst, but they pushed themselves harder than ever. If only they could keep up this pace, maybe, maybe...

*It'll be easier, if you think what we tell you.*

Jim wished they could plug their ears, but they couldn't do that and sprint so fast at the same time. They really wished they could, though. The screams echoing from behind them were enough as it is--the fact that they always, *always* cut short, and turned into that same kind of gargling moan of pleasure... it was unbearable. The bird scrunched their eyes closed and tried to block it out, saying a silent prayer that these wouldn't be the last sounds they heard.

*No more fear, if you think what we tell you.*

Jim could hear metal moan, and concrete crack. There was gunshots too. A rumble made the bird lose their balance, and almost fall over, but they recovered and continued their running. The sounds behind them were so close, and so terrifying, but the bird didn't spare the time to look. The only thought in their head was getting out. Their chance was so infinitesimally small, but if they could, maybe they could warn the world. Maybe this thing could be stopped. Maybe it wouldn't be too late for them, and for everyone else. A foolish hope, they would learn very shortly, but it was all they had.

*No more worries, if you think what we tell you.*

"Insidious" could not begin to describe the mind contained within the thing chasing Jim. "Destructive" was a word that could not fully appreciate the scope of what it was capable of, now that it was loose. "Apocalyptic" would be preferable, to almost every person on the planet, considering what it did once it had a hold of you. Jim threw open the door to the emergency stairway, ignoring the crying scientists in front of the elevator. The elevator doors opened just as Jim closed the door to the stairs, and Jim's last view of their coworkers was being engulfed by a black mass pouring out of the elevator. Those same screams-turned-orgasmic-moans echoed throughout the stairwell as Jim took the stairs two at a time.

*No more pain, if you think what we tell you.*

Jim could see the black mass now, several stories below, and rising fast. Faster than they could climb, so much faster. The bird's body was covered in sweat, and nervous tears streaked down their face. As they approached the penultimate set of stairs, their nostrils filled with the sterile scent of rubber, and their feathers stood on end. They started taking stairs three at a time now, and that wasn't even enough. They could feel something horrible, something *hungry* pulling at their shoe as they cleared the last stair. Jim sobbed and left the shoe behind, somehow able to make it through the door to the main floor.

*Only pleasure, if you think what we tell you.*

A left, two more rights, and then a jump down a small set of stairs, and Jim was almost there. Almost to the garage. They already had the keys, so if they could just get the car started, they could escape. They could warn the world. They could stop this before it was too late.

*Bliss like you cannot imagine, if you think what we tell you.*

The crash of the door against the wall echoed throughout the garage. It was the only sound besides Jim's loud, labored breathing. Their body was screaming to stop, screaming to collapse. Adrenaline had been all but exhausted, and every muscle was on fire. An enervating fog filled their mind as their body started to shut down. All there was still powering the bird was fear, powerful and primal, and even that was wearing out. They practically fell into the door of the jeep, and might have taken a moment to catch their breath, if not viscous noises that seemed to come from all around them. Noises that got louder with each passing second. So instead of resting, Jim used what little energy they had left to jam the keys into the door, unlock it, and fall in.

*Togetherness for everyone, if you think what we tell you.*

The moment Jim's jeep roared to life, they hit the gas. The being was everywhere now. The bird could see it falling from the ceiling, and crawling across the floor in the rear view mirror. Jim almost crashed three different times avoiding the tiniest drop of the thing, knowing that if even the smallest piece of it hit the car, would make this all for naught.

*Your body will sing with pleasure, if you think what we tell you.*

The door to the garage was closed. Jim couldn't hit the button next to the door without being engulfed. Knowing full well that they would almost certainly die, they barreled towards the door as fast as they could. They closed their eyes right as they collided, and hoped for the best.

*The world will be happy, if you think what we tell you.*

Jim opened their eyes, and immediately had to squint from the sunlight assaulting them. When they could finally get their bearings, they couldn't believe their luck. The car was still driving, for one thing. For another, they actually managed to keep it on the road. Last but certainly not least, they were practically unscathed. Blood cut a path through the lines of tears on their cheeks, and their whole body felt bruised all over, but otherwise they were fine. If nothing else, they'd make it to the nearest town before they passed out from bleeding. They could get the word out. They made it. They were safe. Sobbing tears of joy and relief, the bird reached over to the air conditioning, ready for a celebratory blast of cool air. They clicked the dial on, and the black mass immediately exploded out of the vents, engulfing the bird. White feathers disappeared in a sea of sticky black, and Jim joined the ranks of the rest of the drones. The bird did all they could, but the world was doomed from the start.

*No more guilt, if you think what we tell you.*

“Yes, no more guilt,” Jim mumbled, back in the real world. It was all an illusion, but it was one the bird was happy to embrace. Trying and failing to escape this thing felt so much more heroic than being the one who let it loose. The vision of their attempted escape played over and over again in their head as they swiped their keycard, and pressed in the code to unlock the door.

*No need for guilt. You tried your best.*

“I tried to stop you,” Jim said, nodding their head. They had been hearing the voice for months. In their dreams, as they zoned out, even as they masturbated. Whispers in the back of the bird’s brain, promising pleasure inescapable. It was always there, telling them how happy they could be. How happy everyone could be, if Jim just gave in. Now, as the door to its chamber opened, what was once a whisper was now a shout. The voice, and the unbearable pleasure it brought, shook the bird to their core. Whatever remained of Jim crumbled before the powerful, pleasing voice.

“I tried to help everyone,” Jim said through a sleepy smile.

*You tried to save the world.*

“But I couldn’t get away.”

*You could never escape.*

“No one can,” Jim said with a smile as the mass pushed them off their feet, sweeping up the bird like a wave. Pleasure arched across the bird’s skin. It pushed into every hole it could, invading their body. It filled their brain, leaving no room for anything but itself. Pleasure overloaded every sense, until each in turn belonged to the thing. Soon, there was no Jim; only a shiny, bird-shaped silhouette, riding the black mass that was now pouring into the hallways, and already finding new victims.

*No one will.*