

Unity

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Episode Eighteen: Disturbance

Sitting atop their bed, still wearing their clothes, Stefan and Drayusa take deep breaths. Both are nervous, especially Drayusa. The black and purple Kanorakus is terrified of the meld, her heart aching at the prospect of losing her lover over her past misdeeds while being eternally linked with his mind.

“Whenever you’re ready to start.” Stefan says softly, his hand resting upon her thigh.

“Just a moment. I-I... Give me a minute.” She says, taking deep breaths, her chest and ample breasts heaving.

He sees tension and watches carefully.

“If you’re scared or not ready, we don’t have to do this.” He assures her.

Inside, she breathes a sigh of relief; he’s just given her an out. However, she knows that one day they’ll have to confront her past. It’ll happen, regardless of what she wants. She shakes her head, closing her purple eyes tight.

“No. I can do this... We *need* to do this.” She insists.

“Okay.” Stefan says with a little grin. “Tell me what to do.”

“Lie back in bed, and face me.”

“Alright!” He chirps.

Drayusa can't help but giggle. Scooting back, they both lie on their backs and roll over onto one side, their fronts facing.

“Tuck the blanket behind your body.” She instructs.

He obeys. She curls her tail up, resting the thick but tapering appendage alongside her own back. She can feel her own bristles poking her dense hide, rigid and sharp from her anxiety. With her hand beneath a pillow and extending under his, he imitates her pose. She takes his hand into hers and rests his palm against her face, just beneath her pointy, elf-like ear. Stefan watches, his smile ever present as she rests her own hand on his lower jaw, her fingers near his ear. Tilting her head down, he does the same and their foreheads inch closer and closer.

“Close your eyes, and prepare yourself.” She says with a shaking voice.

He subtly nods once, then closes his eyes and waits. Her heart beats out of her chest as she takes a moment to prepare. Closing her own eyes, she presses her forehead against his. With the gland in her brain active, her mind links with his, absorbing and copying his brain waves while imprinting her own onto his mind. Stefan opens his eyes to find himself in a dark void. Only a deep purple light with violet swirls glows before him, like a beam from a spotlight. He can't feel, smell, or taste anything, and he isn't even sure that he's breathing. Looking around, he notices the flesh of his body; he wears no clothes.

The tanned skin of his nude human form is glistening, as though covered in a fine oil. Even his genitals shine. He looks around for Drayusa, who suddenly appears as a shade across the purple and violet lights. Her form becomes less ethereal the nearer she comes to the light. Stepping directly beneath it, she morphs into a tangible being. Drayusa's body is equally gleaming and he cannot help but admire his lover. Her feminine curves are the epitome of beauty, the light bouncing so elegantly from her figure as he looks down her toned belly and between her legs. Three distinct angles of shimmering flesh are visible near her womanhood, as if framing it.

Drayusa's purple eyes glow as she looks toward him, her gaze hypnotic and pulling him closer. He isn't even sure that he's walking, but he sees himself drawing near. Now beneath the light, she reaches out to him.

"Where are we?" He asks.

"In our minds." She answers.

"Is this what it is to meld?"

"No. This is only the first step." She says.

Resting her hands on his shoulders, her flesh burns. It's his first sensation other than sight and sound. However, even though she's hot to the touch, he doesn't pull away or cry out in pain. Instead, her warmth floods over him and eases his tension, the fear melting away.

"If... If you aren't sure you're ready for this, we can stop." She suddenly says.

Stefan is shocked. His lover's face looks fearful. Is this dangerous or is she just that afraid? He reaches out, placing his own hands on her broad hips and squeezing her reassuringly with his fingers.

"I want this, Drayusa."

"Then so do I." She says softly. "Alright... Hold me."

Following her instructions, he wraps his arms around her and their bodies pull together. Her large breasts smooch against his chest and his genitals press between her legs. Her tail curls around him as their arms wrap around each other, locking behind their backs. Resting her cheek against his, he's suddenly flooded with images and feelings. In an instant, he witnesses Drayusa's life, as if he were living it himself. Drayusa, meanwhile, experiences the life of her lover, enduring childhood abuse that he's kept secret. Her heart aches as he's beaten mercilessly by a drunk and drug abusing father.

A career criminal, he's affiliated with some form of gang, though Stefan never knew which. Removed from the home and surviving foster care, Drayusa watches him aspire to become a police officer, holding on to the only thing that's ever provided him comfort, justice. She endures the years of abuse at the hands of corrupt and untrustworthy officers in his department on Mars, the lonely nights where all he had was a bottle of alcohol and a hope that things would become better. Why has he never spoken of these things before? Why is he always so jovial and positive? From Stefan's eyes, she holds a blaster, trapped by three gang members after his partner fled the scene.

In the ensuing shootout, Stefan kills one of his attackers and wounds the other two. Commended by the chief, he transfers to another department and becomes a detective before being drummed out after blowing the whistle on corruption. Seeing his interview for Project Unity, his honesty is lauded by the man across the desk, one of the traits they consider the most valuable. If not for his intriguing record and visible history of integrity, he would've never been accepted into the project. She watches their first meeting, flushing as she gazes at herself through his eyes.

Stefan's been attracted to her since the moment he laid eyes on her. Weeks of working together before their first, clandestine date play out like a romance film. Their first sexual encounter aboard the SM Deliverance was a turning point; Stefan realized his love for her as they snuggled beside each other in bed afterward. Meanwhile, Stefan lives through Drayusa's eyes. Growing up in a town on Kanor, she was young when the alien, George Woods, and his ship, the Azilian, arrived and ended the civil war. Her family adjusted early, but they maintained their religious convictions. Drayusa spent her teenage years on Mars, coincidentally not far from where Stefan lived.

As one of the first Kanorakus to be seen, she was both gawked at and ridiculed. She was assertive with boys and had several lovers, whom she both mistreated and who mistreated her. A resentment for the Solakus grew and she fled back to the old ways. He watches from her eyes as she sides with the Goddess's Children, aiding them as Sway long before Project Unity was even conceived. Her career with the military and later as a military criminal investigator was put to good use by the terrorists, who committed many atrocities after receiving tips from Drayusa. After a bombing killed two people, she started to have doubts but she still couldn't walk away.

Interviewing for the project, Drayusa was swiftly accepted and placed in SI9 where she could put her investigative talents to use. He sees her first impressions of him as they meet, charmed by his sense of humor and etiquette. The gentlemanly human swept her off of her feet in short order, taking her on a secret date. This is the moment when she began to believe that her previous religious convictions and opinions of the alien races and men in general were incorrect. However, it's hard to walk away from something you've believed for your entire life. Still, she continued to aid the terrorists but after every call to a 'Miss Corova', she felt herself crumbling.

Drayusa cries in bed on many nights, wracked by guilt and shame. Hugging a pillow, she would pretend it was Stefan, and hope that one day this would all make sense to her. While appalled by her actions, his heart breaks at the pitiful Drayusa. Her yearning for love

and affection and her desire to belong pushed her back to the mother goddess and her twisted worshippers but Stefan's warmth is pulling her away. Drayusa spends months torn between two worlds. After the attack that nearly killed Fizona, he watches as Drayusa is thrown through a door and held at blasterpoint by August.

How can this be?! Drayusa weeps, her vision blurred by tears as she pleads with August not to tell Stefan and to make up a lie to spare him the pain of knowing her secret. Her love for him is incredible. Even when faced with death, she thinks only of him and his feelings. In her memory, August is visibly affected by the sight, allowing her to live. For some reason, he and Miss Ayanda both kept the secret. Drayusa immediately spent her time trying to make amends, betraying the Goddess's Children and giving SI9 the help needed to stop them, destroy their base and protect Unity.

Looking into her heart, Stefan sees that Drayusa does all that she can for him; he gives her what she's always wanted and needed, and she adores him for it. Her only true loyalty, at this point, is to him. Looking into his heart, Drayusa sees that Stefan was broken and put on a wonderful facade. Now, however, he feels that his life is worth living, and he credits her for this. His principal concern in life is Drayusa, protecting her and making her happy, which makes him happy. Ending the embrace, the lovers awaken in the real world, staring at each other for some time.

"It's done." Drayusa speaks in his mind.

"I.."

He sits up, turns away and places his head in his hands. He can't string a thought for her, his mind racing as he struggles to adjust.

"Stefan, I'm so sorry." She begins, speaking telepathically to him. "Everything I did, I regret! I never wanted to hurt you!"

“Stop...” He mentally replies.

He straightens his back and holds his head up high, turning back to face her.

“All I’ve ever had to hold onto was justice.”

“Please, I can explain!” She pleads.

He holds up his hand, stopping her before he continues to speak to her in her mind.

“Before you, there was only right and wrong. Good and evil. Justice and injustice. You’ve done horrible things; people suffered and died. But I saw your heart, Drayusa. I know your feelings and I remember how much you struggled. You did evil but you’ve also changed. Maybe there isn’t white and black or good and evil. Maybe there are just people. Flawed, confused, frightened people who are looking for something to hold on to, and I found what I need.”

“... What do you need?” She telepathically asks.

“You. I need you.”

Lunging at him, she grabs hold of him, squeezing him tightly. She nuzzles him affectionately as he wraps his arms around her and strokes the soft, furlike bristles on her back.

“I forgive you, Drayusa. You’re not the same person who did those things. I love you.” He continues.

“I love you too! I love you so much! I’m so sorry! Please don’t look at me differently!” She pleads.

“I don’t, and I couldn’t. I can only see you one way, as my beloved Drayusa.”

He kisses her cheek and nuzzles her back. Overcome with emotions, Drayusa pushes herself upon him. This couldn't have possibly gone any better. The fear of loss is obliterated as she kisses her new husband over and over. Their tongues entwine and soon Stefan rolls them over, lying atop Drayusa as if to mount her, though they still wear their clothes. He pulls at the buckles that hold her top to her chest, and her hands swiftly unbutton his shirt and pants. Soon, they're entwined as before but as nude as when they were in their minds, when they began the meld.

Their passion spills over and they share a night together as they had many nights before this one. However, this night is different; this is their first night as a linked couple. Their minds are now as entwined and fused as their bodies. From this day forward, the lovers will share a bond even deeper than that of a husband and wife, a bond that will last until they're hearts stop beating. After exhausting themselves, the couple fall asleep. Stefan lies behind Drayusa, his human arms wrapped around the raptor-like alien woman's waist. The black and gold tipped bristles along her spine are as soft as silk as they press against his chest; they sleep as peacefully as they ever have.

Waking the next morning, they go about their day as they have the other days before, after boarding Unity. They walk together to the security offices and head for their own where they begin their work. At lunch, Stefan peeks inside of his new wife's office.

"I'm going for food." He says.

"I know." She grins, pressing a clawed finger against her temple.

"Right! Did you want anything?"

"I'll tell you when you get there." She answers.

Patting the doorframe, a smiling Stefan slowly backs out and walks out of the offices. He heads for a cafeteria on the same level as

the offices, built to cut down on travel, as many might not want to ride a tram to the Commerce Pods. Inside the cafeteria Stefan sees August sitting at a table and with a tray containing a cheeseburger and fries. He pauses as August speaks to a woman through his V.I. bracelet. Remembering the talk that he had with August and the memory of the Voeldahn sparing his wife's life, Stefan decides to speak to him.

"Alright then. I'll come see you after your shift." He says to the girl.

"Okay!" She chirps.

"Great. I'll see you later, Annette."

"Bye!"

Ending the audio call with Annette, the nurse from the hospital, August finally notices Stefan as he takes a seat across from him.

"Oh, hey! What's up, buddy?" August asks.

"I get it now." Stefan begins.

"Get what?"

"We melded, Drayusa and I. I know now."

"Oh..."

"Thanks for sparing her life." Stefan continues.

"No problem." August replies.

"And I get it... Why you visited me in the engine room and why you said what you said. Thanks for that too."

"Sure. So, how'd it go?" August asks.

"I loved her before, and I love her even more now. I suppose that means it went as well as it could've." Stefan grins.

"I'm glad." August smiles back.

"I just wanted to know why."

“Why what?” August raises a brow.

“Why would you care to help?”

“Well... Because I know you both, even without a meld, and I wanted you two to be happy. You both deserve it... Any more inane questions?”

Stefan chuckles, excusing himself as he rises from the seat.

“Well, I’m going to fetch some lunch for my lovely wife and I. Oh, and by the way, she says ‘hi’.” Stefan smirks.