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WARNING: May contain coarse language, violence, gore or sexual content. Reader discretion is advised.

Chapter 14. “Welcome Home(?)”

No thoughts. Just absolute calm and nothingness. It was...liberating.

Troy felt light. It was as if all weight and gravity had separated from him. He felt himself rise up. Light slowly illuminated from far out. Slight murmurs of sound came from far away. It reminded him of waking up in the hospital bed. Cognizant of his surroundings, but unable to fully comprehend them.

Suddenly, an image of his parents looming over the hospital bed popped up in his sight. He felt groggy. Lightheaded. His eyelids and whole body felt very heavy. This wasn't just an image. This was the entire memory playing out. His mom's face was soaked with tears hidden behind a smile. His dad was blinking faster than normal - a pained look on his face. Pursed lips adorned his face as white knuckles grasped at his dress shirt. Everything felt numb to Troy. He couldn't even feel his mother's body as she slung herself over his motionless body.

Troy blinked as she let him go. Her eyes sparkled with fresh tears and her smile was bright as she hovered close to him. He held his backpack straps tightly as she kissed his cheek and said, “Have a good day, sweetie.” He hesitantly kissed her cheek back and turned. He gazed upon the massive yellow monster. He lifted his foot as high as he could and ascended the maw of the beast as it swallowed him whole. The tongue of the beast was an elderly lady wearing pink and powder all across her face up to her overly hairsprayed top. She gnawed at her gum as she sneered at him. “Take your seat, kid,” she growled with a chain-smoker's rasp. He'd soon find out that voice could sound like a choking cat as she screamed at the others to “Si-down!”

Troy slowly descended the throat of the creature. Various polyps with eyes glared at him.

One such lesion with freckles on his face yelled, "Who the hell are you!?" in a voice very high for such a rotund specimen.

Troy wanted to speak. But he was too embarrassed by his speech...impediment.

"Got another 'tard, guys!" The boy shouted and started laughing obnoxiously.

The kids around him started laughing - the sound was piercing to Troy's ears. Troy discovered anger for the first time. The boy's fist met Troy's face. Troy reeled around and fell into a seat that contained a wolf boy with strange, swirling blue eyes and wings sitting next to a cheetah with equally unsettling golden eyes. Troy blinked through the pain and tears as they disappeared and was replaced with tall, blonde girl. She used a tissue to wipe his bloodied lip. She became his first crush. His first kiss.

She was cute. She was a bit strange, though. He slipped a note to her one day later that year as Spring rolled in to see if she wanted to be his girlfriend. She read the note aloud and looked at him in disgust.

"No," she bluntly stated. "That's gross."

Troy was confused. She was the one that suggested they kiss under their coats during winter. She slipped her tongue in his mouth and slapped it around like stiff taffy candy. Her mouth tasted sweet. Despite him being "gross," perhaps just for being a boy at the time, she would become pregnant and drop out of school his Freshman year. That was the last time he saw her.

In eighth grade, he met an average, yet beautiful in his mind, brunette with captivating blue eyes. She was a bit of a science nerd who ran track. He would find out her father was a Catholic priest. Troy would later view religious followers as if they were cults but, now, he viewed it as a scary prospect.

They enjoyed each other's company on the long bus rides. She wore a religious symbol around her neck attached to a choker. She would joke that it was her collar that leashed her to her forced faith. Troy came to love everything about her. They got along so well. They joked about and talked about the things they enjoyed. She was so funny, smart, and cute. Everything he found attractive in a potential lover. He wanted to, but couldn't create enough courage to ask her to be with him.

Her parents found out about their close bond. They forced her to stop interacting with him. They even forced her to change buses. They would later have a class together

when he started eleventh grade. It was extremely awkward. They never spoke to each other. She never even acknowledged his presence.

A year later - when Troy picked up a job at the local grocer - she passed through the line he was bagging for. She seemed genuinely happy to see him. She initiated the short conversation. She was smiling. Glowing even. She confessed to still having feelings for him but she was leaving the country with her fiancée after graduating. That was the last time he saw her. That was fine. He would meet and marry Jackie the next year.

This must've been what was meant as "your life flashing before your eyes." It seemed his journey stopped here. The image of Jackie with the donut man blipped before something leapt into Troy's arms.

Angel!

She began to purr and settled into his arms. Troy felt happy. He stared at her as he stroked her fur. She didn't stay long. She soon roused and jumped from his grasp. He reached out to her as she walked away. It was like he touched her reflection in a pool of water as the image rippled until it was unrecognizable. Her image blurred, then came together as the face of one of the beast people.

His vision cleared but not much. Just enough. The being before him was like a mix of Angel and his crush that got away. She had the strangest eyes, though. Like...unpolished gold nuggets. She looked very familiar. Like a dirty cheetah. Her breath was awful. He reached out to her. His hand brushed her whiskers and his hand sank into her furred face. She purred, pressed her face into his hand, then pulled away.

Troy's vision went dark for, what felt like, a brief period. He opened his eyes and his sight snapped into focus. He felt a hand slap his away from the face of the being before him. It was another feline's face that had a pair of wire frames resting upon the end of its nose. She said something, but he couldn't understand what was being said. Something brushed his ear.

"Do you understand me?" She asked.

Her voice had a peculiar drawl to it in the "R's." It was like the sound of the letter started in the tip of her lips and ended in the back of her throat in a slight rumble. The tone had a slight whine to it.

"Nod your head if 'Yes.'" She sounded irritated. Frustrated and angry even.

He did his best to follow directions. He heard her hands clap as the furred appendages came together over to the side.

“Thank fucking Winged Sav-yer!” She exclaimed as she straightened up.

She sighed and snatched a clipboard from beside him. She wrote something down.

“Maybe now ya can explain ta me how that barbaric bitch can nearly kill three of our own as she hovered over yer dying ass after teleporting in. Maybe yer name or where yer from. Or explain where ya got the tech.”

She looked over at him with such a disgusted look. At least it seemed that way. He had trouble interpreting the bestial expressions.

“Or maybe why I saved yer ass. I don’t wanna fucking die by her hand but I just gotta know: How’s that pussy smell?” She looked at him with such disdain. “Did ya taste it? I can’t explain why else yer so important to her.” She looked at him with wild eyes and her volume rose with every sentence. “That cunt ain’t been washed in years so I hope yer immune system’s strong tappin’ that,” she said and looked back at the chart. “Sick bastard,” she muttered. She seemed to write something down. “Fuck,” she said quietly. “Not like yer gonna be talking fer a while.”

Troy had no idea what was going on. He looked to his left and saw a bed next to him with an unknown species of manimal unconscious with heavy bandaging around the neck. The technology around him was more familiar. Some things were more advanced, but most of it was similar to what he was accustomed to. Beeps, blips, and boops filled the air with ventilation whooshes every so often. He reached up and touched the tube in his mouth. It ended next to his jaw before going off outside his view. He saw his hand as he reached out. It was green and not the blue from the suit he was wearing. To his right, he saw more beds with two more unconscious, unrecognizable manimals on beds with heavily bandaged necks.

The feline doctor looked down at him from the clipboard and “tsked” as she rolled her eyes. She let the clipboard fall next to his leg. She took his wrist and flung it back to his side.

“Stop touching shit!” She growled.

She reached over him with her clenched teeth bared between curled lips. Her ears were flat against the top of her head, her nostrils flared, flesh and fur bunched up at the end of her gray nose, and her azure blue eyes were ablaze. The black to dark gray patch on her face caused them to pop more brightly than if they were surrounded by the smokey gray fur on the rest of her body. If he remembered correctly, this was similar to the Siamese breed from his planet.

"I spen' the las' *two* days shapin' groun' flesh to skin and veins, pumpin' pre-shuss blood, an' appeasin' ma lead-a 'cause 'is "prize bitch" serves a smooth skin, pink ass human sack of..."

She was clearly mad at him. For existing, it seemed. She stopped yelling as her fanged teeth pressed into her lower lip. Her eyes darted around his face - seemingly sizing him up from top to bottom and back.

"Doctor Sparkle," a male voice called.

She didn't look amused as her demeanor changed degrees of pissed off. Annoyed was the word.

"Master wishes to see him if he's awake."

Her squinted eyes looked to her left as her lips pressed together in the middle of her mouth - her jaw slightly jutting ahead. Her glasses caught on her flared nostrils and were slowly pressed back up her nose with a dark socked hand.

"Whatever gets me outta his sight," she spat and turned away.

"Very good. By your leave."

She scoffed and moved her hand to wave the male off. The door closed. She turned back to Troy with her eyes closed but eyelids fluttering. Her eyes snapped open after a moment. Troy attempted a smile. Whatever drug she gave him was *really* good. The pain from before and her slapping his hand to the pain from his hand crashing into the bed felt like it was floating above him. He envisioned his smile with the tube shoved in his esophagus. It made him giggle. She looked like the panther mascot from the neighboring school where he grew up - only more realistic.

"Yuck it up, asshole. In four hours, ya'll wish ya were dead." She turned with a step, then looked back with an evil grin. Her tail swished behind her back to and fro. "If ya make it that long."

She turned away, then came back with a wheelchair. She leaned over him, put a hand...paw...thing...on his chin and the other on the tube.

"If you don't want yer air and nourishment to end up on the wrong sides, I suggest you relax yer neck."

It seemed as if she were suppressing the prior accent and dialect change. Either way, she talked funny. It made him giggle more as she pulled the tube from his mouth. She set the tubes on top of a metal tray to his left. He seemed perplexed and giggled at how rudiment that process seemed. She grabbed something from the tray and shoved it into his mouth. It sounded like it clacked against his teeth before she withdrew it and it clanged on the try.

"Well," she said and trailed off, then sighed - more like scoffed. "Unfortunately," she resumed and placed her hands on her hips. "You're healing well." She took her hands and motioned each way. "These fine men, however," she said and put her right hand on her hip and the other over her small chest bumps.

She looked down her nose at him in what he could only describe as "thought." She lowered her short muzzle at him.

"If we lose any one of these guys...I don't *care* if I get exiled or put to death," she said, her accent trying to peek back through her words. She hesitated a moment. "Ah will...nevah...help y'all 'gain."

After a moment of looking at him in utter disgust, she traveled her eyes down by his feet and set into motion. She pulled back the covers and grabbed his legs. She swung them out to the side until they were hovering off the edge. She stepped over and leaned in as she grabbed his left arm. She dipped in close and slung his arm over her head and across her neck.

She smelled good. Like there was a hint of vanilla masked by the sanitized air around them. Her neck fur was soft, too. He wanted to pet her.

She scooped him up, then slid her other hand under his back. She pulled him with a grunt and lifted him up, turned him around, and lifted him until he was sat in the chair with an unpleasant flop. She seemed to be strong despite her frame. She moved in front of him and seemed to stumble. She grabbed the foot rail to the bed and brought her hand up to her forehead. Her legs wobbled and she placed her other hand on the

rail as she collected herself. She stood there breathing slowly through her partially open mouth. Troy now noticed the ragged state her face was in. She looked exhausted.

After a few moments of grasping the rail and regaining her breath, she straightened up and turned towards Troy. Her face was expressionless and her eyes seemed distant. Troy still wasn't sure how to read this bestial face, but it seemed familiar to him. He could feel that look. Something was wrong with her besides exhaustion. She cleared her throat and moved behind Troy. He heard a click, followed by the sound of plastic or leather creaking, then a clack. She had moved his intravenous bag to a hook on the back of the chair. She leaned in beside him and seemed to unlock the brake to the chair. He could smell the sweat along her nape. Her breath was gross - like she was dehydrated. There was something else, too.

It wasn't like the smell of the mouse. There wasn't that pleasantly pungent aroma that was alluring. It wasn't a musky, spicy, or other body odor smell he was familiar with. He wasn't in a proper mindset to deduce what it was exactly. The sickeningly sweet smell of arousal that he picked up from the mouse wasn't here. He suddenly found himself proud that he made it out of the girls' room without doing something he'd regret with how full of that smell the air was in that small of a space. It was overpowering. He felt his thighs stirring just thinking about it. It was a curious thing to him. He wondered if they all projected that smell. Perhaps they emitted smells based on mood.

He remembered how Jackie tasted down there. A silly grin stretched across his face. "I wonder if they taste different if they smell different during each mood?" He thought. The chair was in motion in time for him to giggle the thought away.

Details passed him by. The speed in which they went made his vision blurry. He figured the drugs slowed his processing speed. Doors, hallways, other rooms, and manimals passed them by. Some were walking by. Some were standing idle and looked over as they passed. Some...no...most of them were naked. Possibly. He'd only seen that strange feline warrior, the dead bodies, and the Doctor as his sample size. Perhaps clothing was optional in their culture. They passed by a couple that was playing naked cop frisking the naked perp.

The walls seemed to be made of metal he recognized. Lights seemed to be lights and not strange luminations from an unknown source. This place seemed normal...er. There were even some dilapidated sections. Walls missing or falling apart. Fire damage it seemed. His eyes couldn't completely focus and it was making them ache. He shut them for the time being. The sounds of the place became as one: Like a room of people talking in that nondescript, hushed murmur. The chair stopped a few times. There was the sound of a whirring motor that hummed, stopped, then whirred again as they moved

until it faded into the background behind him. One room they entered was louder. Clanking, shuffling, footsteps, laughter, shouting, and talking.

“Hey, Doc! Hold the fuck up!” One voice called.

It sounded like a larger female's voice. Well, her voice was large. He supposed that her size had nothing to do with it. Though, maybe she *was* large. Either way, the room went silent and everyone seemed to stand still. Troy tried to open his eyes. They rolled around in their sockets a few times as he blinked his vision to clarity. They finally centered and focused.

His eyes landed on a beast of a woman. A beastly...beast? She was over six feet tall. Her bone structure was thick. Her shoulders were twice as wide as his and massive. Her clothes were extremely tight and didn't hide anything to the imagination - especially showing the musculature detail in her abdomen and thighs. The spaghetti string tank top was white and stretched to near translucence. The gray lettering on it was faded but still read in large block letters “MAJOR” and in smaller letters underneath it “PAIN IN THE ASS”. The leggings she wore were once black - now gray with repeated washings and also due to the strain they were under. Her feet - which were larger than his - capped off calves as big as his thighs and thighs as big as his waist. Shapely hips were where her hands rested. One was real. The other was a metal prosthetic. They capped arms the size of his legs with veins as thick as pencils protruding from the close-cut fur. Her shoulders helped to support her ample breasts that were crested by thumb-sized nipples protruding out from the fabric. White fangs extended from her top lip and pressed into her bottom lip. The fangs, the muscles, her expression, and her size made her look very frightening.

The fur on her forehead was a very short mix of brown, silver, and gray. Thick and voluminous hair of the same mixture stood on her head about four inches and slid to the back and down past her shoulders. Her jaw and cheekbones were very pronounced. Her eyes were slightly smaller than he'd seen on other manimals. Her muzzle was short and narrow.

Wolverine? Badger? Bear? Porcupine? Hedgehog? Troy hadn't a clue.

Troy's body dipped to the right as he looked over his left shoulder at the doctor. She looked surprised or frightened. She tapped her glasses back up her nose, straightened up, and brought her right hand about forty-five degrees out from her body. Her hand collapsed into a fist that was brought sharply to the middle of her chest near the collarbone with the inside of her hand making contact.

“M-Major!” She struggled out as she held her fist in place.

The Major did the same salute in a more fluid and crisp motion. Her muscles rippled and her - not ample, per se, so much as average-sized breasts that were more noticeable due to the stretching of the fabric - jiggled.

Troy's eyes couldn't seem to waver from her body when he watched her move. Her body was phenomenal! He didn't think he'd like to lie with a body that could break him in half like hers that held such curves, but he felt his pelvis swirl with desire.

The salute involved snapping the feet together, standing straight-backed, slapping the opposite hand to the thigh, chest out, chin straight, and with the hand that extended first to a whole hand point, of sorts, then into a fist against the chest.

Major, within the same motion, rebounded the fist and sent both hands behind her back and let her foot reach out to a shoulder-width resting position.

Troy found the bone structure, muscle response, and overall shape fascinating. It was so...human! Especially on top of the fact they were still animals. Ears, nose, muzzle, teeth, coloring, nails or claws, pads on the fingertips and palms of the hands, and even some of their species-specific traits. He could hear the sniffs as he passed in the halls. He could see and hear the Major's nose working for a moment as well. He wanted to touch her. To run his fingers through her fur. Feel the bones, the muscles, the connective tissues, the strange way their lower legs worked as if still animalistic with how they bent slightly forward at the thigh, rounded at the “knee,” then zigzagged back to a second “knee,” and ended at a large paw or foot of sorts. He wanted to feel her belly. Reach down and touch her...

The Doctor said something and the Major responded. Troy wondered what her vagina looked like. Was it bare? Was it covered in fur? Did she purr when excited or happy? Did the breasts produce milk or did they have teats or belly nipples like cats from his world? Were they silky to the touch and rough when they were pregnant like “normal” animals? Were they covered in fur as well? Was it coarse hair or a patch of fluffy fur that was down there? How were they when it came to reproduction? Did one take her from behind and bite down on her neck to mate with...

“Eyes up, fleshy!” Major spat.

Her expression was of hatred as she held her normal hand on her hip and waved her metal hand up towards the ceiling. Ice cold laser eyes sent a chill up his spine as he looked into them with the horizontal pupil hiding in her rich brown eyes. Her darker

muzzle was slightly scrunched at the nose and bared her sharp teeth. Her stance shifted and she placed the hand on her hip as the other hand went out to the side.

“So who in the hell are you?” She asked venomously as her hand swung towards him. “What the hell makes you so special?”

Her expression softened a bit but her hand still held the intensity. Her hands slowly snaked behind her back and she sent her feet into motion. She circled around him once. Troy saw about a foot long tail trail behind her. It looked more like a flattened squirrel on the side of the road as it limply floated behind her over the waistband of the leggings.

She dragged her toe to a rest in front of him. She pivoted on her toes and reset to face him. Her muzzle was slightly raised as her eyes sneered down at him. Her hands unclasped from behind her and her arms swung forward. Her hands stopped in front of her with palms out as if she were about to receive a basketball pass. Her upper lip curled up showing her fangs. She started to speak - preceded by a “tch.”

“I want to make this as perfectly...*fucking* clear as possible.” Her voice was even until the emphasis after the pause. Her tone was serious and “no-nonsense.” Her hands trembled and her veins bulged as her muscles rippled under the fur. “The only reason...” Her hands closed into fists as her hands pumped up and down a few times before reopening. She bit her lip before she continued. “The only reason,” she repeated with emphasis on each word. Her hands closed save for her clawed pointers aimed at him. “You are still alive...” Another pause. Her pointers collected with the rest to form her intimidating fists. Her thumbs shot up. “Because...” Her arms dipped slightly and her biceps flexed as she slowly drew her arms back towards her until her thumbs pressed into her upper chest. “/...say so.” If this were a fantasy movie, her eyes would have burst into flames. Troy could see the spittle fly from her lips that were mere inches from his own.

She straightened back up as she clasped her hands behind her back again. She began to pace back and forth as she continued. “I don’t have any information on you, fleshy. No knowledge of what happened on that ship. I’ve also no desire to house a fucking spy on my ship amongst my family.” She pivoted and paced back the other direction. “Furthermore, I don’t know the ‘how’ or the ‘why,’ but I’d love to know what you did to my deadliest soldier to where she risked her life to protect you. But,” she said and came to a stop. “What I *do* know,” she continued and peered at the wall with intensity. “Either way,” she said and turned as she bent over and shoved her short muzzle into the side of his face. “You’re dead. Whether you’re a spy, worthless, or otherwise.” She straightened up and paced once more. “I hear our leader is even less thrilled at the

notion of you being here. So...there's that." She stopped and peered over her shoulder at him, then continued to pace. She came to a stop by a table with an attached bench that had plates of food strewn about it as if they had interrupted meal time. "Get him out of here and start preparing our televisions to record his execution." Major turned and stood at attention before saluting and waving off the Doctor.

"Y-yes, Major," the Doctor said and saluted before returning back behind Troy.

They moved through the corridors again. This area of the ship seemed to be more occupied than where they came from. Daggered eyes, insults, distasteful gestures, and fingers sliding across throats were his welcome to his new residence...or prison. A cute bunny girl not-so-adorably dropped her pants, grabbed her butt cheeks, and spread herself wide apart. Troy - as all people do during train wrecks - looked directly at the unattended status of her backside under the matted teardrop tail before immediately regretting that decision. Some threw objects and food at him. Shirts, shoes, boots, and rotting food.

"Gah-dammit, people!" The Doctor shrieked. "Stahp throwin' shit if'n ya can't hit HIM!"

A bear-like, beefy fellow stood and carried a bowl up to Troy. He casually shoved it into Troy's face. It sounded like something crunched. Troy heard the sound of something clattering on the floor with a distinctive sound of utensils hitting the hard floor.

"Fucking hell, Frank!" The Doctor shouted. "It sounded like you...heh-heh...crushed his...*SNERK*...crushed his nose," the Doctor said while laughing and chortling between words. She even snorted.

Cheers and jeers echoed throughout the hallway. Troy could feel the warmth begin to seep into his face. He couldn't breathe. It felt like his eyes were glued shut with the thick substance. He was soon able to breathe and he opened his eyes. It was blurry, but he could see a manimal wiping off his face.

"There ya go, cutey," he or she said with softness and kindness he'd not heard in a long time.

Troy smiled at him or her before a glint shined in their eye and a smirk flashed on their face. Troy could barely see the hand that struck his throat. He just knew that he couldn't breathe.

"Fuck you!" The androgynous one bellowed and spit in his face.

The hallway erupted in cheers.

“You’re fucking dead, fleshy!” Someone shouted amongst the noise.

This didn’t make Troy feel welcome. Far from it. Maybe the drugs were wearing off and his medically induced happy place was crumbling, or he was just cognizant enough to comprehend the words. As he gasped for air, he wished he’d stayed put on that examination table if this was the life he was to live now.