

Day Off

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Miranda looked out the window of Joe's apartment to the playground across the street. Several children were playing on the jungle gym and other things the playground had to offer. She smiled at the thought. Children just being children. On her home planet no such thing existed. There were no days off, every member of society needed to be ready for the inevitable. Invasion was always on their minds. Peace was always in danger when her people were concerned.

She was sure this wasn't what her people meant by surveillance on the humans, but it worked for now. Miranda didn't like the thought of her people invading Earth. What use would it gain them by taking over the peaceful people of Earth? She couldn't say.

"You're up early." Joe said as he sat up on the couch. He stretched and yawned himself awake. "Coffee?"

Miranda pointed to the coffee cup in her hand. "Already got some, but thanks. I think the pot is still warm if *you* want some." She smiled at him. It was a shame her people wanted to invade this planet, Joe was a good man. He and his people didn't need to be enslaved.

Standing up, Joe walked into the kitchen and grabbed a cup of coffee. It was

still hot. He was happy he didn't have to make a new pot. It wasn't that he was lazy, on the contrary. He just felt it efficient that she had made coffee so he could benefit from it being there.

"So, what are your plans for today?" Miranda asked. She hoped Joe would be going somewhere so she could go back to her ship and listen to the message from her people a second time. She wanted to make sure she understood what was going to happen. Or maybe her people had sent further instructions. She wasn't sure.

Joe smiled "Oh, I have the day off." He replied.

Miranda's smile faded away. *The day off? What the hell? Why would Joe have a day off? Did he take it off on purpose? Did he know she had mission orders?* She couldn't help but wonder. *No, that can't be it.* She thought. *Stop this nonsense thinking.* She screamed in her head.

"I see." Miranda said. "What do you have planned for today?"

Joe shrugged. "Dunno. I'll just see whatever comes up. Why, did you hvae something planned?"

Miranda shook her head and put her hands on her hips. "Nope, not at all. Nothing planned for me. Not a one." She smiled the fakest smile she could muster. Crossing the room, Miranda sat down on the couch. *Great.* She thought. *Now what am I going to do?*

A bright blue light flooded the room interrupting their conversation. Joe froze. "What the hell?" He asked. A radio in the corner that had been playing a song stopped playing.

Miranda stood from the couch and rushed to the window. Sure enough, one of her spaceships was hovering over the apartment building. “What are they doing here?” She asked. “Joe, run.” She spun around to see Joe floating in the air. It was too late for him to run, he couldn’t go anywhere.

“Shit!” Miranda exclaimed. This was out of the ordinary for her people to abduct someone during the morning of the day. They typically did abductions while people slept. That way the people being abducted couldn’t remember what was going on. The aliens had a very good way of hiding the fact they were messing with humans.

“Show yourselves!” Miranda yelled out to the ceiling. “Come down here and face me!”

A shimmering light appeared in the room as a Gray alien appeared before her. It stared Miranda in the eyes. “What right do you have to summon me here?” The alien asked. It was more of a thought than an ask, it communicated with Miranda telepathically.

Miranda rolled her eyes. “I have every right!” She yelled. “You just took my friend! Why?!”

The alien didn’t move. “He is an interruption to your mission. You must keep on point. He will only slow you down.”

“Like hell!” Miranda said. “You told me to watch the humans. That’s what I’m doing with him. Watching him. Learning about them so we can further our goals. That *was* the mission, wasn’t it?” She asked seeking a confirming answer. Miranda wasn’t sure the alien would give her the answer she sought after, but it

didn't hurt asking.

The alien nodded its head. "Yes, you are correct."

"Then let me do my job!" Miranda yelled again. She was short with her response on purpose. Miranda didn't want to upset the aliens, but she needed to get her point across. "Every moment you come here and interrupt the flow I have going on, the more you jeopardize this mission." She paused allowing the statement to sink in.

The alien shook its head. "No. I cannot stop interfering. Your human has a purpose for us. One that will make sense sometime soon. Until that time, you will continue on your mission without interruption." The alien paused for a moment, and then continued. "His purpose for us is greater than anything you've witnessed so far."

Miranda started to say something else, but the alien held up a finger.

"You will not allow yourself to be interrupted." It said before vanishing.

Joe was teleported back into the room from wherever he had gone. He looked around. "Whoa." Joe said. "What happened? Where was I?"

Miranda sat back down on the couch and patted a cushion. "Come have a seat, we have some things to talk about."

Joe remembered the abduction this time. He remembered being probed by the aliens and interrogated. Joe remembered the pain he felt and endured. Then there were the questions they asked him. It felt like hours had passed but only a few minutes passed in his absence. It was an ... odd ... feeling. Joe couldn't find a different way of explaining the experience.

Miranda put a hand on Joe's leg. "I know it's a lot to swallow. But I'm here for you, no matter what happens."

Joe looked at Miranda and frowned. "I don't want to be abducted again. If this keeps happening, I mean when will it come to an end?" His eyes pleaded for comfort. Pleaded for something to calm down for once. Something had to change, it had to stop.

Miranda hesitated. "I can't promise they won't take you again." She said. "But if I have anything to do with it, I will not allow it to happen while I'm here." She looked to the ceiling. Here she was telling Joe she would protect him, and yet she just couldn't do that. How was she supposed to protect him from her people in the future? Standing up, Miranda paced around the room.

Joe scoffed at the thought. He knew Miranda had no control over when the aliens would take him. He knew there was no way in hell she could help him or protect him. But it was the thought that counts right? Joe held out his hands towards Miranda. Walking over to him, she held them in her hands.

"I know you'll try your best." Joe said. He wished he could believe the words himself. Maybe in time he *would* eventually believe them. "I remember everything they did to me." Joe said. "Not just *this* encounter, but previous encounters as well. Somehow I remember it all." He put his head in his hands and wept.

Sitting down on the couch next to Joe, Miranda rubbed his back and held onto him. "Shhh, it's okay. It's going to be okay. I promise." She said trying to comfort him. Miranda wasn't sure how helpful her words were to Joe. *Hell,*

they might be hurtful instead of helping. She thought. Miranda couldn't tell Joe about the invasion plan, not yet. She needed more information about it before she could talk to him. Not everyone needed to know about the Earth's impending doom. "Come on, it's your day off. Let's go do something fun."

Miranda exited the room to get dressed. A few moments later, she returned wearing jeans and a t-shirt. It was comfortable. That's all she wanted today was to be comfortable.

Joe smiled at her. "You look relaxed." He said. "You look good."

Miranda twirled around a few times for the fun of it as Joe applauded.

Joe went and got ready as Miranda thought about their situation. Her people were still abducting humans, and one of those humans was close to her. She did not like this thought at all. Miranda had an agreement with the Grays that they wouldn't touch Joe anymore, but they apparently didn't want to uphold that agreement.

They spent the day seeing all the things the town had to offer. Which wasn't much. But that was small town living for you. Miranda wondered why out of all the places on Earth she had to crash there. Maybe it was fate? Nah, she didn't believe in fate. She believed things happen for a reason and there must be a reason that she's there now. Her people be damned. But, she did have a mission to complete. Earth would be better under the watchful care of her people, that much was certain.

Walking past a coffee shop, Miranda pulled Joe in. "Let's go in here." She said.

Joe nodded. "Alright."

Entering the coffee shop, they found a table in the corner and sat down at it. A waitress walked over to them prepared to take their order. "Hello and welcome, what can I get for you this fine morning?"

Joe grabbed a menu and quickly looked at it. "Two coffee's, cream and sugar and ooo two of these coffee cakes please."

The waitress made notes on her notepad and smiled at the couple. "Alright, I'll be back with your order." She walked away.

Joe looked at Miranda and saw she was thinking about something. "Penny for your thoughts?"

Miranda looked up at him puzzled by the expression. *Another human expression.* She sighed. "Oh nothing, nothing really. It's nothing. Just still thinking about what happened earlier today. It wasn't fair for them to take you like that. Especially when you're with me."

Joe held out a hand and watched as Miranda put her hand in his. "It's going to be okay." He said. "Was it a creepy experience? You bet your ass it was." He paused. "But, they returned me. They always return me no matter how long they keep me. I'm here."

Miranda nodded. "I know. It's just not fair to you. I wish I knew why they were so interested in you."

Joe shrugged. "Probably because I'm with you. They're suspicious at why you're spending time with a human."

"Maybe." Miranda conceded.

The waitress returned with two piping hot cups of coffee and two pieces of coffee cake. “Here you two go.” She said. “Anything else I can get for you?”

Joe shook his head. “This is perfect, thank you.”

“Alright, I’ll just leave this ticket here for you when you’re ready. No rush.” The waitress said with a smile. Turning around, she walked off to take care of other customers.

Taking a sip of her coffee, Miranda smiled. It had just the right amount of cream and sugar in it. She wasn’t a fan of black coffee. It tasted terrible to her. The coffee cake was on point as well. She gobbled it down in two bites. Granted it wasn’t that big of a piece so that wasn’t too difficult to do.

“So . . . I went and saw my ship.” Miranda said. “Nothing’s changed, the engine still won’t start. Life support is in shambles, it was working perfectly the other day. I don’t know what happened. I just got an alert. It’s a mess. It’s all just a mess right now.”

Joe took a drink from his cup, “I wouldn’t mind seeing your ship sometime.” He said. “If that’s okay, I mean.”

Miranda shook her head. “I’m not sure if that’s a good idea.” She said. “There are security measures in place that target and attack species that aren’t Grays.” It was a lie, but it was a good lie. There were no such security measures in place on her ship. Miranda just didn’t want Joe on her ship. It was her space, her personal space that belonged to her. A memory of home.

“Oh.” Joe said. “Well we don’t want your ship killing me.” He chuckled at the thought. Paying the bill, Joe stood from the table. “Ready?”

Miranda nodded and stood up as well. "This was fun." She said smiling. "We should do this again sometime."

Joe nodded in agreement. "Yes, definitely."

Exiting the coffee shop, Joe continued to smile. It was turning out to be a good day off after all.

The End