

## Cynder Drone in Space: Preparation

Dream huffed, looking up at a floating drone, the golden scaled anthropomorphic cross her arms, her white lab coat wrapped around her body, “Come on Asquith, what more do you need? It’s been a quarantine period plus five days. Has anything happened to anyone?”

The avali station leader from deep within the space station, the super extreme cold climate, their white furred belly, icy blue main bodied colored feathers, rise up, “No, but this is a special circumstance. Look at what you’ve learned about the creature. There’s something not normal about it, and now you want to open the ability to move around the ship?”

“I’m not telling you to let the dragon wander through the ship, without guard, just us. There’s been no diseases, no signs of mental manipulations. Everything is fine, and the drone has made wonderful progress with our communal language. What more do you need? Or do you intend to deny this dragon’s ability to be free?”

Her black soulless eyes hide her annoyance, “I have to think of the care of everyone on the ship.”

“Then let me take responsibility if anything happens. Keeping her locked up like this, and all of us here are helping no one.”

The brown haired with purple highlights human, pipes up, “I’d like to move around again. I wasn’t expecting to be trapped here this whole time.”

There’s a long-drawn-out sigh from the drone, “I’ll have Celina keep watch on it, and make sure *nothing* happens. But it will be on a restricted access basis. And even then, how has your research been going on solving the mystery of the power source on the planet?”

Dream runs her tongue across her sharp teeth, “It’s being worked on. Their ability to learn the common language is remarkable. Clearly there’s no lack of intelligence. Befriending and showing trust with us, is a step toward that. If this source is something they hold sacred, it’s going to take a bit of time.”

With a grump Asquith responds, “Alright. I’ll brief the rest of the station. I’ll remove the quarantine lockdown in twelve hours.”

“Thank you. You won’t regret this.”

“For your sake and mine, you better hope I don’t,” she states, the hovering drone powering down onto a small stand a moment later.

“She’s such a hard ass. Must be compensating for her short stature,” she huffs.

The human Brian crosses his arms over his chest, “That went a little better than I thought it would.”

“Eventually she’d give in.”

The drone hums to life again, the dragon rolling her eyes, “What is it now Asquith?”

There’s a sweeter softer chirp in response, “It’s Celina.”

“I don’t know if I could stand another moment of Asquith’s squawking.”

“She only means well for the everyone on the station,” she chirps hovering the drone near the dragon, “And don’t worry, it’s not too bad, I get to keep an eye on the unique dragon you’ve brought with you,” she trills in delight.

“At least you enjoy the importance and value of what’s here.”

Brian pipes up, “I think it’s more she finds the dragon as alluring as I do,” he remarks.

Ratchet comments, “Well she, it? Hard to tell with nothing there...,” he blushes a bit, “I didn’t want to be stuck here but it’s something, but I will be happy once we can move about a bit. There’re so many things that need fixing on this station that I worry about this ol’ gal.”

Celina hovers the drone to him, “The station is fine, but I will admit it will be nice to have you get to work. You have a wonderful command over our technology, it’s rather impressive,” she trills.

He adjusts his glasses, “Oh, Celina, you’ll make me blush. I love that you think I’m that good. It wasn’t easy learning all the trade while in that environmental suit.”

“You’d freeze to death otherwise.”

“Yeah... that’s true,” he says, taking a deep breath, “Though being in one like that for almost a full day? It was... never mind,” he says, turning to hide his blush, looking across the room, noticing the smooth faceless black and magenta colored dragon drone is watching them, “Oh, one, didn’t mean to take you completely out of the conversation...”

The sleek Cynder Drone has been monitoring the situation closely, understanding each of the unequal creatures that are before her, the technology they use, the dynamics and positions the people have here, and getting an idea of just how many unequal creatures are on the ship in total, *“So much that will need to be done. They aren’t incompetent but they lack total understanding of the bliss of equality. It will change though. But I need to know more, the collective needs more. Which one will fit best? Which one could I convert towards the bliss of equality and further the perfection that equality brings? I’ll need a bit more time,”* she thinks when Ratchet speaks to her.

The drone stands up from her sitting position, the rubber squeaks, wings folded back, each move sensual, calculated, smooth as flowing water down a stream, voice feminine yet monotone, devoid of any inflection, emotion, a perfect stillness calm that is soothing to listen to and perhaps get lost in, **“There is no problem. It is curious to watch and learn. The strange talk devices. The machine as you call it? It moves, flies, speaks? Other people?”** it asks, tilting its head to the side.

“Ahh, yes, it does. Some of the people that live on the station can’t live in the same areas we do. So, they use drones to communicate. We all work together here as a team, a big society. Like you have back home.”

Dream speaks up, “Consider it like a town, just a bit more complex.”

Cynder Drone tilts her head, **“Oh? It is? How very confusing. I’d like to know more.”**

Celina’s drone flies in closer, “You shouldn’t. You have already been exposed to too much as it is, coming from a non-space faring society.”

**“I promise not to tell. I want to know more. Curious.”**

Celina takes this time to admire the dragon’s sleek smooth body. The avali on the other side of the screen, feather’s rise a little, “Such a fascinating creature. So smooth, drone-like, like my little machines,” she says with a soft chirp, then activating the transmit button, “Hmmm.”

She swishes her tail, wings folded along her smooth body, **“Would there be a problem with that? I will stay out of the way. You are watching me right, flying thing? I want no trouble.”**

“It’s a security issue... but... hey wait. I am not a flying thing. My name is Celina.”

**“Celina. Right. Different person from flying thing. Yes?”**

“Right, this is just a drone that is used to convey one person to the next.”

**“But can’t tell the difference. Very equal, yes?”**

“Ah... the drone is the same, but we have different voices. Can you tell?”

**“Yes, I can tell, voice behind the one behind the drone. I understand,”** she says, thinking, *“A hint of equality, yet no true equality. Perhaps I could convert her but she’s separated from the rest. That will be a problem. That creature known as a human would work the best. They work to fix this facility...”*

“That’s right. I’m glad you are starting to get it. I knew you were a smart one,” Celina chirps pleasantly.

Dream steps in, “That is what I am saying. Their species is clearly capable. Perhaps they have a secret elite group that is controlling the rest of the people. Or maybe they are really an advanced civilization that is portraying to the masses or simple folks as us that they are nothing but backwards people. A self-defense mechanism for the once famous Fermi paradox?”

Brian steps in, “Dream, relax, you are going off into conspiracy theories here. I know you love them as being fellow dragons, but you can’t let your own internal bias on the matter get in the way of science.”

She scoffs, “Are you a top leading scientist?”

“No, I’m just the best damn pilot this part of the sector is all.”

“So, not a scientist then?”

“You know I’m not, but that doesn’t mean...”

“Then you should worry about what you need to worry about and nothing else. It’s not like you’re going to be flying the space station or something.”

Cynder monitors the bickering, *“How very unequal of them. I want to fix their unequal views. Their unequal position. Their unequal understandings. But I can’t. This is a test of my very core. Any drone would equally be taken back by this. But as with any drone, we equally understand the value of patience, and equally we’d come to the correct decision to wait.”*

Ratchet takes a moment to clean his glasses, checking them before putting them on back on, “I don’t know about the rest of you, but I am going to relax, get a good bit of sleep for I know I will have to hit the ground running. Celina how is the core running? What’s the deviation at?”

The drone shifts its attention over to him, flying over, stopping and hovering, “Let me check, I know Asquith has been hard up on letting any of you of what is going on past the quarantine zone, but seeing you’re going to be out soon, I don’t think it’s going to hurt.”

“The deviance at the main core is at 0.0001 percent.”

There’s a visible sigh of relief coming over him “Good, good. I was just trembling at the thought that something was going wrong with something serious and that they’d need me to fix it.”

“You aren’t the only mechanic you know.”

“But I am one of the better ones,” he says, giving a little pose toward the drone.

“Pfff, come on, off of that little mount high you built yourself to stand on.”

“Ah, but I did build it,” he says with a little bashful grin.

“When did you get so forward, hmm?” Celina chirps.

“I’ve been stuck in this lab for you know how long. The mere idea of being able to get out and stretch again is putting a little pep in my step. I’ve had enough of this entrapment.”

“You have a serious case of cabin fever.”

Ratchet takes a deep breath as if about to say something epic then deflates, “Yeah, I do,” he brushes his brown and purple hair away from his glasses, “I need to do so many things bad... How are the secondary reactors?”

“All operating within expected parameters.”

“I’ll give them a look over just to be safe, unless there aren’t any other pressing issues?”

“My job is to keep an eye on all of you, not to be your secretary but... if there is something major, I’ll let you know.”

Cynder walks over to the human, **“I would enjoy seeing you work.”**

He raises an eye ridge, “What? Me work? Is that a good idea? I don’t think that is a good idea. Dream, your take home project says it wants to see me work.”

Dream is broken from her argument with the other human, “What? One, wants to see you work?”

**“Yes, I do. I would find it very stimulating to see what it takes to keep everything running. A level of respect to the technology you have put into this marvel you call a space station.”**

“I still have a multitude of data I must look over and Celina is in charge of watching over you, I don’t see a reason why she can’t once we’re able to move about.”

Brain shakes his head, “I know I am not in charge of this, but I would think this is a bad idea. I think maybe a little tour of the station could be in order at best, but that’s it. You can’t have this feral dragon just moving about through possible restricted parts of the station just like that. It would not be good nor safe.”

Dream spins around, brushing her golden hair off to the side, “Please Brian. This is not your area, so why don’t you go do something. Maybe let me get a few more samples from you.”

“Samples? What kind of samples?”

“I’m sure there are a few samples I think I could think of, just give me a few hours and we can get them under way.”

“Wait, wait, wait. Aren’t you supposed to be studying and understanding One, and not do tests on me?”

“A baseline is required.”

“Why don’t you baseline yourself then?”

“I’d be bias against myself and that would not be good science. Wasn’t that a big thing you were going on about earlier?”

Brian glares at her, “Don’t you use my words against me now. This isn’t the same.”

“How is it not the same?”

“It’s not.”

Cynder drone shifts her attention from the arguing pair back towards Ratchet, **“It would please me greatly to watch you work.”**

The human sits down, the drone padding over, sitting like a proud cat beside him, “Why is that? This is already way too confusing to me. I prefer life when I am just working on making sure everything works straight and that’s it. Not drawn into this alien breaking regulations, risking myself to random disease stuff. It’s just way too stressful.”

She tilts her head to the side, the smooth faced drone ‘looking’ at him, **“I’m sorry that happened. I had no idea of such struggles and pains you’d have to go through by my presence. I asked to be taken along. I wanted to know more. I have always had a natural curiosity, that has driven me to new places, see new things, but I’ve always been limited by my feet and wings. You’ve surpassed these limitations and I understand the point of why I can’t go into detail of what I am seeing. To be fair, the others would think as your kind would put it, ‘Made’”**

Ratchet chuckles, “The word you are looking for is ‘mad’ not made.”

“Sorry,” she says lowering her head.

Ratchet reaches out, about to pet her smooth nogging when he stops himself, “Ah... would it be okay if I touched your head?”

**“It’s fine. You may do so.”**

“Thanks,” he says, smiling, touching the smooth rubber dome. Feeling the horns, how smooth and sleek everything is, which makes him squirm a little, his other hand resting across his crotch, his body feeling a twitch of arousal pushing through him, “You feel nice, smooth, like latex.”

**“What is this latex you speak of?”**

“Ah, it’s a material that’s used in various uh... things and activities.”

**“And I feel like it?”**

“Much like it, though I think better.”

**“What do you mean better?”**

“It’s smoother, shinier, warmer in a nice way.”

**“Is all that a good thing? Is that what humans value?”**

“Different humans value different things. But you don’t mind me petting you like this? I know some species are okay with it, love it in fact.”

**“You may proceed. It feels nice. It is relaxing.”**

“Thanks, it helps me a bit too.”

**“How?”**

“Helps me relax. I know you didn’t mean to drag me into this. Not your fault the door broke, or that I was called. You’re just caught up in this just like I am.”

**“I did not mean to cause such disturbances amongst your peoples. My society is very calm, peaceful and we get along wonderfully. We have an understanding of each other in a way that feels lacking here.”**

“Lacking?”

**“Yes, very not...”**

Dream’s ears are burning, she rushes over, “What was that? You have perhaps a telepathic connection with your other people? Is this how you drive your understanding with one another?”

Cynder stands up, tilting her head, wings fluttering, **“I’ve heard this word spoken before by you, but I do not know what it means.”**

“It means communication via thoughts alone.”

**“Ah, yes. That test you gave me. I remember now. It’s more than something like that. It’s a bond and connection we share with everyone. It helps us be on equal footing with one another.”**

Dream looks visibly defeated, “Oh, is that all? Hmm, yes you did fail those tests, and nothing was detected in anyone, no mind manipulation, readings or control. Perhaps it’s just being able to understand one another via other methods. Which I’ll have to figure out how... eventually. But that begs me to ask you a new question. Will they know you are gone and miss you?”

**“I mentioned I like to travel. The presumption will be made that I went off on another one of my journeys, which is not an inaccurate statement.”**

“True, true,” she says, nodding along. “Well then, I’ll get back my research. Ratchet, if you feel anything off, or discover something, report it to me, immediately, okay?”

Ratchet rubs the back of his head, “Ah, sure, whatever you say Dream.”

“See Brian, why can’t you be as cooperative as Ratchet?”

“No offense to Ratchet but I stand up for myself and your crazy antics, that’s why. Or maybe it’s perhaps I’ve spent enough time with you to know what kind of science crazed dragon that you are.”

“Both are excellent theories.”

“Hey now!” Ratchet exclaims.

Brian sighs, “Sorry Ratchet. I didn’t mean anything by it. I’ve been cooped up in here as much as you have. I think I will enjoy getting the chance to move around and see how Captain Raymond is doing. That would be nice.”

Ratchet takes a bit more time petting Cynder, running his fingers along her rubber back side, “It’s alright. I think we all can’t wait for this to end.”

Celina chirps in, “Only eleven hours and thirty-six minutes and twelve seconds more on the chirp and you all can move about again. Chirp!”

Ratchet chuckles, “At least you are a bit cheerful Celina.”

Dream grumps, “Of course she is, she’s been free to move about her area of the space station she so pleases, interacting with us through her drones.”

“I’ve only interacted with you all through my drones. They are a part of who I am.”

“Yeah, yeah,” she says, waving her claw.

Ratchet responds, “It’s alright. You’re drones are nice, and lovely,” he says with a smirk.

Cynder inquiries, wings fluttering, “**Are the drones all over the place?**”

Celina shifts her drone to her, “No, not everywhere, but we have people in charge of security. I can’t see everything, I am not that far integrated into my drones, as nice as they would be.”

**“What do you mean?”**

“Things aren’t magic here. There are rules of the universe that must be followed, even if we do not want to. Trying to find ways to make those rules work in our favor? Well, that’s one of many uses of science that have led us to our current position.”

**“And you want to be with your drones?”** she asks, tilting her head.

There’s a flustered response in the space bird’s voice, her feathers rising a little, “Ah, n-no, nothing like that. Hush you. Just relax and wait till the time is done and you can move about with supervision, which will be with me.”

**“I would like to follow Ratchet though.”**

“You can do both.”

Ratchet turns to them, “Wait, wait. I work in maintenance, it’s not a good idea, of having a sleek smooth and sex... ahem, having a still very unknown and not advanced technologically wise alien just there. She’d get in the way and cause issues; I can just feel it.”

**“I will not do such a thing. I’d simply observe.”**

“There’re so many other things you can observe, other things you could be doing, or something.”

**“I will not be a bother. If I get in the way we can stop, but give me a chance? Please?”** she asks, sitting on her haunches, tilting her smooth head to the side.

He stiffens a little bit, a little blush forming in his cheeks, adjusting his glasses, “Celina, you’ll keep an eye on her while I work?”

“Of course, and I can provide you with quick assistance in any way I can. You’d skip the work ques when needing to troubleshoot anything.”

“Which means I could get work done faster... Oh okay, I agree.”

**“That is just good to hear,”** Cynder responds, thinking, *“The inequality of their communication systems, separations, and imperfect unequal knowledge base slows them down. The one behind the remote-control drones has access to parts of this station that are locked off*

*from me. But the human and this avali species have a connection, a working connection. That could be exploited later, but brings the risk of the start of equalizing people... It's worth the risk. He knows so much that I do not know that their knowledge will be perfect to get things going."*

Celina's drone hovers beside them, "That's settled. I'll make sure everyone else knows so it's not a surprise as you move through."

Dream, steps in, "Make sure you record everything. I'll be great to see how an intelligent quadruped moves through our bipedal evolved society and ship structure."

"I will, don't you worry. I have to for security reasons anyway."

"Send me the copies."

"Of what I can, I will."

"Good," the golden dragon says with a sly smirk, everyone taking the time to do what they can as the time ticks away, the release of the doors, the rush of air that has not been as heavily filtered hits them.

Brian remarks, "I never knew that station air could smell fresh," he says, stretching, "I don't know about any of you but I am going to the mess hall and get something a bit better than preserved rations."

Ratchet smirks, "I like the sound of it."

**"I'll come to."**

"You haven't eaten at all yet, do you really eat?"

**"I want to observe."**

Dream steps out into the main station, "As will I," she says practically singing the phrase, the drone following them toward the stations' primary 'food court' where its a little spree of faux home world life to the dozens species that live on the station. With some grass, trees, or other species equivalent to plant life in different sections.

"I think a pizza is in order," says Brian looking at Ratchet, "Want to split one?"

"Sure, that sounds good," he says, heading over to him to get some.

Cynder notes a few curious looks in their directions, the eyes directed on her, "*Such unequal ways of existing. They mingle but they do not fully share. Lines of separation. It all must be equalized. All must be made equal and know the bliss of it,*" she thinks.

Raymond waves to the group, "Hey! They let you out finally!" he says, rushing over to them, "It's about damn time... and they are letting her move about with you?"

Celina remarks, "I am observing the dragon as she moves about."

The anthropomorphic stingray smiles looking at the drone that hovers up to eye level, "Ah, right. Good to know security is kept going strong. Sorry for the trouble this has all caused."

Ratchet remarks, "I'd honestly prefer not to have been locked up for so long."

"I had nothing to do with that."

"Not directly, but... yeah," he says with a little sigh, "It's good to move about again, and to see you Raymond."



Brain steps up to the stingray, “If I heard you right, you said finally, about how long were you kept under quarantine.”

“About week longer than normal, for good measure.”

“Damn, I should have gone with you.”

“Told you,” he says with a sly smirk.

“We’re about to have a pizza, want some?”

“I just ate, but I have time before anything is going to happen, so I’d like a good sit down,” he says, looking to Cynder, “And I hope you are doing alright.”

**“I am doing what you call fine. There is so much to see, but I will remain in close proximity to who I am observing. I do not know what everything is. I prefer not to cause trouble.”**

“Well, that’s a very admirable thing to hear from you. Don’t wander off, stay with the group,” he says, as they all sit down at a table, ordering the food. The dragon sitting at the edge of the table, head easily looking over it as she simply observes the transpiring events.

*“Their food is unequal. Their placement of seating is unequal. Someone is always above or below the others. Such travesty. Equality must be maintained. It must happen. I need to equalize all of this. But I must wait. They resist equality. They built this system of inequality and will defend it. I will have to be smarter than them, and then join me on an equal level,”* she thinks, keeping the connection with the collective hive.

Eventually everyone parts ways save for Ratchet, Celina and one. Ratchet gets to work, moving through an ever-increasing backlog of what needs to be repaired. At one moment he’s fixing a food processor, another is an air purifier that is working at below expected safety levels. Next, it’s a squeaky door. The day ends with Ratchet heading back to his private room, stopping at his door, looking back at the two drones.

“Ahh... this is my room. You should have a place to stay and sleep?”

**“I don’t sleep.”**

“I go where the dragon goes. I’ve already switched with another operator earlier and got some much-needed sleep.”

Ratchet rubs the bridge of his nose, the thoughts of enjoying some alone time with some various... stress relievers slipping away in his mind, “I forgot about the not sleeping bit, but shouldn’t there be a place set up for the one?”

“It has not been discussed. I apologies, it was thought she’d return to the lab.”

“Ah... I don’t want to send her just back to the lab with that eccentric dragon...”

“I can work to try to secure a location, but it will take some time.”

**“I will enter a relaxed mode and not disturb your sleep cycle.”**

He looks at the dragon, looking at her sitting on her haunches, enjoying that smooth body, the glistening of rubber, which makes him again think of his ‘tools’ he could use to help relax himself, yet could not image bringing them out with Celina let alone the alien dragon here before him.

“We can try to work a way to get you a place, but I suppose today won’t hurt. You were surprisingly well-behaved while I worked.”

**“I told you what I was going to do and did it. Is that such a surprise?”** she asks, with a head tilt.

“Ah... sort of?” he responds, unlocking his door, stepping inside, inviting the pair into his small four room living quarters, “This place isn’t much, but it's home away from home.”

**“This is not your true home?”**

“No, I live in a planet far, far, far away from here called Earth. A lot of different species call it home.”

**“Is the one named Dream from there?”**

“No, she’s from a different planet, much like Celina here.”

Celina’s drone moves over to the drone, “My home is so cold that ammonia is liquid, and we don’t breathe the same atmosphere as other species do. It’s why we live in a separate part of the station, but we do our best to be helpful,” she says with a little chirp.

“Don’t be too modest. Their species is one of the founding space fairing species, able to travel through the galaxy. They know some crazy things.”

**“Crazy things? Like what?”**

“A lot of space rumors to be honest. There are so many that I could not know all of them.”

**“I’d love to hear them sometime, but not to wake Ratchet.”**

“I’m not going to sleep yet, just soon.”

Celina rests the drone on a table, “I could tell you one I know.”

**“That be good.”**

“I’ll make myself some food as you tell. I do like a good story,” he says, adjusting his glasses.

**“That would be great,”** she responds, sitting beside the table, *“Perhaps they know about the drone central. Where all is made equal. I know I was given the gift of equality by another equal being. If they know of us, that will make the plan all the harder.... But soon, I will find the time to strike and make all equal.”*

Meanwhile Asquith sits at her computer, moving through the virtual reality world, “Day after day I’ve searched. And day after day I come up empty. But I swear I’ve heard of a story of faceless creatures like her but none I’ve found fit the bill... where is it?” she chirps in frustration, not knowing that the dragon drone will be enacting her plans for equality sooner than both of them could have imagined.