metamorphosis

by seoafin

Summary

it was that dress. that damned black dress.

If there was anything you and your father agreed on the most; it was that you both hated parties with a burning passion.

You hated the sound of popping champagne, glasses clinking against each other, the fake smiles, and the forced laughter. The way people would warm up to you as soon as your father introduced you as his daughter. It was always met with surprise, since you never bothered to take the Manfred name. You were adopted, unofficially; though Carl had offered multiple times, you waved it off.

Thankfully, you had only been unable to get out of two parties, chalkling up your unavailability to being sick or busy.

You also knew your father shared the same dispassionate love for parties as you. They were nothing but frivolous small talk, a waste of time to 'butter him up' into selling his works.

"At least do it for your old man, I won't," he feigns a hacking cough and you blanch at how realistic it sounds, "be around soon."

Groaning, you pick a piece of dry paint off of your skin with a grimace. "Guilt tripping me? Nice one dad."

"Me?" To his credit, he at least pretends to look innocent. He waves his hand, "I'm too old for that."
"Sureee."

Staring at his latest artwork, you study the abstract lines and the contradicting colors, wondering just...what the hell you're supposed to be looking at. It's weird, but then again, you've learned to question any of his paintings; if anything, it can't be weirder than some of the other stuff you've seen. You slant your head sideways, as if a different perspective will somehow help you unveil the mystery behind the odd painting. Footsteps sound from behind you, and you hear the sound of your father's wheelchair scrape against the ground as he turns.

"Ah, Markus, how nice of you to join us."

Markus's voice is music to your ear and a part of you, the shameless, guilt-free part, could listen to it all day. You wonder what Elijah was thinking--giving Markus such a lovely voice. Deep and velvety, smooth against your ear--you definitely wouldn't mind hearing him sing.

"The Museum of Modern Art just called to confirm your presence at tonight's gala."

"And?"

"I told them you were coming," you feel eyes on the back of your head, "with a plus one."

You glare at your father halfheartedly. "That's playing dirty."

He chuckles, "c'mon, it won't be that bad," he twirls his finger, "you can play dress up for a night, and I don't know, maybe meet a guy? Let me die in peace knowing you'll be taken care of?" You can almost swear he glances at Markus, but you blink and he smiles.

It used to pain you every time your father brought up his impending death, but now the comments are so commonplace that you can only brush it off. The side of you playing the doting daughter worries about him, especially with his deteriorating condition and the medication-induced lethargy.

It was why you were so delighted that he decided to spend time with you outside in his studio.

You roll your eyes. "I could tell you in 100 different ways how sexist that statement was." You stand, giving him a pointed stare. "I can take care of myself you know, like a good twenty-first century independent woman?"

"Of course, sweetheart," he says airily, mischievous smile pulling at his lips. The twinkle in his eyes are back you note happily. "Just messing with you."

"Uh-huh," you reply dryly. "Markus, could you please take my dearest father for his three o'clock medication?"

Markus smiles knowingly and suddenly your mouth feels a little too dry.

"Of course."

Your father winks as Markus wheels him out. There's a sing-song quality to his voice that follows you through the door. "See you at six!"

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The damn zipper is stuck.
You glance at the holo-clock, 6:10.

Dress half zipped up, you glare at it in the body mirror as if your dress would magically zip itself up. But alas, you stand, arm growing tired in an upright position, trying to wiggle the zipper back into place with zero success.

You want to collapse onto your bed and just go to sleep, but time is ticking away, and you're left with one problem.

"Need help?" A voice asks from your doorway.

You pivot on your heels, staring Markus with wide eyes. Your hand immediately goes to your hair, "how long have you been standing there?" It comes out a little defensive, but something in your face burns at the fact that he's been watching you making a fool of yourself.

There's a smile on his face and you want to believe it's amusement, but a small voice in your head says you'd be fooling yourself.

He's programmed to be like smile, to act as if he likes you.

"Long enough."

He takes a step forward and stops, silently asking for your permission, and you nod at the same time your stomach sinks. Permission. He's unable to disobey given orders. Just another dose of harsh reality flinging ice cold water into your face you guess. Turning around, you face the mirror watching your dress billow out. It's a fancy black cocktail dress, that travels down to your ankles. You found the piece shoved to the back of your closet, forgotten. It must have been one of alcohol instigated reckless purchases.

He walks across the room, stopping when he reaches you.

It feels like a spark of electricity when his fingers touch your skin. They feel so...real. Flesh upon flesh. You have to restrain yourself from jolting away. You can see him behind in the mirror.

He's taller than you, his head peeking above yours. His fingers are cool against the naked expanse of your back. Of course he wouldn't emanate heat like humans, the thirium that runs through his veins was created to be an almost perfect replica of blood, yet he doesn't circulate blood like humans, he doesn't need to. After all, all androids were created to emulate humans as closely as possible, not to be human.

You were fully confident the technology to create perfectly lifelike androids existed. One so alike it'd be virtually impossible to tell it apart from a human. Would it ever be implemented? No. Humans were already threatened as it were, androids needed to be distinguished somehow, different in some way that would allow humans to assert their superiority.

Although one could argue that the lack of human characteristics such as needing to breath made androids the superior race.

"The zipper seems to be caught on the fabric." Markus murmurs, his breath hitting your neck in a way that makes your hairs stand.

"Oh."

Trying your best to stay still in the face of Markus's unknowing seduction, you study his outline in the mirror--his broad shoulders engulf yours, and his beautiful eyes are concentrated on the small
curve of your back, eyebrows furrowed in concentration. His fingers press down on the fabric on your back as he tries to flatten out your dress in an attempt to slide the zipper down. Your breath hitches in your throat. It feels like his touch sears through the material directly onto your skin, and you chastise yourself at making something so chaste...sexual.

You can feel him grasping the zipper, pulling it down to try to get the zipper to loosen enough.

"Are you alright?" The back of his hand comes up to the curve of your neck. You suck in a breath. "Your temperature--"

"I'm good!" You blurt out, voice an octave higher. "J-just a little hot in here, you know?" Mentally face palming, you bite back a groan. Hot? He's an android, he doesn't feel heat.

He chuckles, choosing not to comment as if sensing your embarrassment.

*God, someone just put me out of my misery.*

In less than a second, you dress is fully zipped up.

He steps back and finally, it feels like you can breathe.

"All done." He nods, eyes meetings yours.

You grin, giving him a little twirl. "How do I look?" You aren't expecting a serious answer. Maybe a curt, automated "fine" or something robotic, something that just may tamper down your feelings until you can fully get rid of them with a bottle of brandy and several flings.

With Markus's lips slightly parted, there's a small silence. That's when you start to immediate backtrack, regretting everything. Maybe you broke him with your unreasonable question. "Uh, nevermi-"

"Beautiful."

You falter, heart racing at what feels like a hundred beats per second and the blood rushes to your ears, roaring. He sounds *earnest.*

*He's programmed to say that, he's programmed to say that, he's programmed-*

He stares at you intently. Takes a step forward--

and then he's raising his hand to your face. For a split second you're unable to register the fact that his hand is on your face, so you stare, eyes wide and mouth open. Then he gently tucks a stray strand of hair behind your ear. The movement is so astonishingly gentle that you have to physically refrain yourself from leaning into his touch, but it's so damn hard.

Markus looks almost disgruntled as he forces his hand down slowly. "Your...hair."

It feels like your airways have closed, and you're struggling for a breath of air. Not to mention that it feels ridiculously hot in the room, even with all the bare skin you have exposed, you feel aflame. Too caught up in your own personal dilemma, you don't notice how Markus's LED slides to bright red.

He suddenly clears his throat, and you find that you can't meet his eyes so instead you rest them on the bright blue triangle stitched onto his uniform. It glows neon in the dimness of your room.

You sneak a quick look. His face is a blank slate, unreadable, unusually tense.
And then he relaxes. Smiles. His empty expression is gone so quick you wonder if you imagined it. "Carl's waiting for you downstairs."

You blink. "Yeah," you say wheezily. "Be right there."

Then he leaves.

It's only when you hear footsteps down the stairs that you regain the ability to think. Your legs feel like jelly as you plop down onto the floor, dress pooling around you.

Shaky fingers rise up to touch your cheek. An inexplicable feeling fills you, and you're conflicted; you don't really know whether you should act nonchalant or cry.

The only thing that feels concrete to you is how Markus's touch lingers on your skin.

It's warm.

This gala is everything you thought it'd be and worse.

Heels that make your feet ache, men leering down your dress, and the sound of high pitched falsetto laughs grating your ears, what's not to love?

A lot apparently.

Sparing a glance towards your father, you find him surrounded by a crowd of people, most only pretending to listen intently to him as he talks about his art. Markus stand behind him, arms neatly crossed behind his back, compliant and unblinking. If it weren't for the LED flickering, then you would've thought that he was turned off.

You think about how bored he must be, standing there, still as--

"I've never seen a type like that before." A voice purrs.

You reluctantly drag your gaze away to the owner of the voice. You frown. "What?"

The woman looks to be in her mid-50's, yet the makeup plastered to her face tells you that she isn't really ready to embrace her age yet. Her dress is a little too revealing to be deemed appropriate for this type of event, and she seems to be those shallow, high-pitched giggly types you tend to stay away from at parties.

She smiles, red lipstick bright. "Manfred's android." You don't like her tone. Or the way she appraises Markus lecherously, as if he's nothing but an object.

You reluctantly drag your gaze away to the owner of the voice. You frown. "What?"

You half a mind to leave right there and then, but something tells you that that wouldn't really reflect well on your father if you just suddenly stormed off mid-conversation. You know that he's hardly one to obey societal conventions, but still.

Your smile is tight. "He's a prototype. A gift from Elij--" you hesitate. "Mr. Kamski."

She looks surprised, interested. No attention paid to the fact that you refused to call Markus an 'it'. "Oh? I didn't realize those two knew each other." They did. You were there with your father when the both of you met the elusive founder of Cyberlife. Eyes latched onto Markus, she sighs. "How
nice. I wish Cyberlife would make me a personalized android."

Maybe if you stay silent she'd get a clue that you don't want to talk to her, but unfortunately, she continues her one-sided conversation. "If I had android like that..." she trails off with an irritating giggle. "Maybe I'd actually want to go home every once in a while. Thank god, they're nothing more than plastic toys," she says with a flippant wave.

A waiter comes with a tray holding champagne. Gratefully taking a flute, you swallow it down as she twitters on about some more frivolous topics. You just want to go home, and maybe wash your eyes with bleach because at the current moment you're taking an unwanted eyeful of the woman's chest.

"-hear he has a daughter-" that catches your attention, "-take advantage of it, who would blame her? I hear you can program it to do anything these days, even service you."

Anger unfurls in your gut as you register her snide comment. Take advantage of Markus? You? Disgust squeezes your throat; it comes hand-in-hand with shame.

A disbelieving scoff leaves your mouth through gritted teeth, loud enough that as her mouth stills, eyes narrowed. "Excuse me?"

You wrench your hand forward, livid expression blatant. "(y/n) Manfred, nice to meet you." You say coolly as you watch her beady eyes go wide. She looks like a gaping fish, mouth opening and closing, words unable to leave, and composure thrown out the window. She timidly shakes your head, and you don't miss the opportunity to squeeze until her hands go white. She winces and a satisfied smile spreads over your face.

Tears sting at your eyes as you scan above heads in an attempt to look for an exit. You need to think. You need air.

And you think you've had enough of people for now.

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