Code: Safe Word

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Summary

Roxanne calls time-out on Metro Man Day, interrupting Megamind’s Death Ray plot before it even begins. Her original plan is a single, casual hook-up with her annoyingly attractive supervillain. But Megamind, Roxanne comes to realize, matters to her a lot more than she would care to admit—and she also comes to realize that he’s not really very happy as a supervillain. Clearly, it’s time for Roxanne to come up with another plan...
Chapter 1

Roxanne shifted position, testing the bonds around her wrists. They held. She glanced up at her captor.

Evan was shifting from one foot to the other in the bedroom doorway, looking extremely uncomfortable in his leather pants and eyepatch. He wasn’t even trying to get into the spirit of the thing.

Roxanne felt a twitch of annoyance and shoved it down. He just didn’t know what he was doing, yet, that was all. Surely, if she just showed him how it was done, he’d pick it up.

She gasped in false-fright and arched her back, the motion drawing attention to her breasts. Which already looked phenomenal in the corset she’d purchased, by the way, if she did say so herself.

“Who—who are you?” she asked in a wavery voice.

Evan didn’t answer, just continued shuffling his feet. That twitch of annoyance was back again, stronger this time. Honestly, how hard was it to play along? She’d humored him when he’d insisted listening to Barry Manilow in bed for the last four weeks (and really—Barry Manilow? in bed?) so now it was supposed to be her turn. It wasn’t like roleplay was such a shocking kink, right? Or light bondage? But Evan had looked so scandalized when she’d suggested it, as though she’d just casually announced her decision to take up a career in supervillainy, like Megamind still occasionally told her she should.

And, okay, yes, she could see that there were maybe some strange connotations there, what with her…unusual professional life and all, which was why she’d firmly vetoed Evan’s one and only, extremely tentative roleplay suggestion: that he dress up like Metro Man. She’d suggested pirate and captive as an alternative. Pirate and captive! Totally a classic! And not at all similar to what went on in her everyday life shut up stupid subconscious!

Well, okay, so the professional-kidnappee thing was only one of the reasons she’d vetoed Evan’s suggestion. There were others. Like the fact that there was no way in hell that Evan had the panache to pull off a cape. And the fact that she’d always found Wayne Scott about as attractive as a toothpaste commercial. Honestly, if she’d wanted to go to bed with Metro Man, she would have, you know, gone to bed with Metro Man. The real Metro Man. Instead of wasting all that time trying to convince people that she was not dating Metro Man. That was the biggest point in Evan’s favor, actually, that, after the twenty-third time she told him she wasn’t with Metro Man, he finally asked her out.

Oh, who was she kidding, it was practically the only point in his favor! If he hadn’t been the only one in Metro City willing to believe her, Roxanne would never have wasted so much time with such a boring, vanilla whiner who listened to Barry! Manilow! In bed!

Roxanne took a deep breath and ruthlessly repressed her excessive mental punctuation. She was starting to sound as bad as Megamind. At least this time it was only in her head and nobody could actually hear her picking up his speech patterns. She’d almost slipped and said ‘re-vuange!’ to someone last week. That had been close. Stupid speech pattern convergence. It was a perfectly natural social adaptation to frequent verbal interaction! Was it her fault she spent so much time with the weirdo?

She was getting sidetracked.
All right, so she’d given Evan the helpless damsel line and he hadn’t responded. Time to go the fiery wench route.

“You’ll never get away with this!”

Not especially creative, perhaps, but definitely easy to respond to. Roxanne could think of at least six possible ways to answer off the top of her head.

“Roxy,” Evan whined, “I really don’t think this is working.”

That was not one of the six.

“Evan,” Roxanne sighed. “What did I tell you about breaking character?”

“I’m just really not feeling this,” Evan said.

Sort of, Roxanne wanted to scream, like I wasn’t feeling those orgasms I faked for the last four weeks to the not-so-inspiring sounds of Manilow Sings Sinatra?

“Just give it a few minutes,” Roxanne said coaxingly. “We’ll just do the banter, and then if you’re still not feeling it, we don’t have to—”

“This eyepatch is giving me a headache,” Evan complained. “And these pants chafe.”

Yeah, definitely not enough panache to pull off a cape.

“So take them off, then,” suggested Roxanne, attempting to sound sultry instead of simply annoyed.

“Roxy!” exclaimed Evan, looking appalled.

“Or,” said Roxanne, resisting, oh, resisting, the urge to roll her eyes, “like I said, we can just start with the banter. Come on; it’ll be fun! You say something like, ‘you can scream all you wish; I’m afraid no one can hear you!’ and then I say something like—”

“I just don’t understand why this,” Evan gestured vaguely around the bedroom, “is supposed to be sexy. Tying people up? Who does that?”

“Lots of people are into bondage!”

“But why?”

Roxanne sighed, not really in the mood to explain all of this yet again.

“Danger is sexy,” she said bluntly. “It’s why lots of people go to see scary movies on dates.”

“I don’t like scary movies!”

“It’s also,” Roxanne said, trying in vain to hold on to any semblance of arousal, “a whole trust thing. I’m trusting you not to do anything I don’t like.”

Evan looked confused.

“I thought you said it was a danger thing.”

“It’s both,” Roxanne said shortly. “It’s a paradox. Like light, you know—both a particle and a
Evan looked more confused than ever.

God, what an idiot.

“I feel weird that you’re tied up. It’s like—good people don’t do things like this!”

Roxanne should have suggested that she be the one doing the tying up, a thought she’d originally toyed with but then dismissed as too scary for Evan’s first role-play experience. He would have made a much more convincing captive than he did pirate, what with the way he was practically clutching his chest like a Victorian maiden whose virtue had just been outraged. Of course, the mere prospect that Roxanne might like to do something like that would probably have caused his fragile little brain to collapse in shock.

“That’s what the safeword is for,” Roxanne explained for the—no joke—fifteenth time. “Remember the safeword? If something happens that I don’t feel comfortable with, I say the safeword and the scene stops. And what’s the safeword, Evan?”

“Blue,” said Evan.

“Yes,” said Roxanne. “Very good. The safeword is blue. Primary color! Nice and easy to remember! Definitely not something that you will accidentally forget or that will naturally come up in the dialogue of the scene! So! Let’s continue.”

“Can’t we just stop with all this silly stuff?” Evan said, whining again. “I can put us on some nice relaxing music, light some candles?”

“Relaxing music,” said Roxanne flatly. “Sure. Why not.”

Later, after yet another round of disappointing sex with Barry Manilow in the background, Roxanne, lying awake with Evan snoring softly beside her, decided the hell with this.

Roxanne put on her green skirt, cream colored blouse, and a pair of sensible flats and considered herself in the mirror.

There. Serious professional reporter. Perfect.

She turned to pick up her purse, then hesitated, eyes on the mirror.

And then she changed into her off-the-shoulder red dress and a pair of black heels instead.

She just broke up with her boyfriend; was entitled to show a little skin. Plus, it was a warm day!

Also, she was probably going to be kidnapped later. Megamind was predictable like that: holidays always meant a kidnapping—Christmas, Metro Man Day, Halloween, Valentine’s Day, Roxanne’s birthday—and she was damned if she was going to look less than her best.

She looked at her reflection again.

Much better.
Roxanne shifted position, testing the bonds around her wrists. They held. She glanced up at her captor.

Megamind was sitting in his tall-backed chair, shadows from the collar of his cape cutting sharply into the hollows beneath his cheekbones, one gloved hand stroking the glass case of a brainbot, electricity dancing underneath his fingertips.

*Hell yeah,* Roxanne thought, and then thought, rather more frantically, *wait, what the hell?*

“You can scream all you wish, Miss Ritchi,” said Megamind. “I’m afraid no one can hear you.”

Roxanne’s brain—sort of shorted out a bit.

Did—what—he just—and she—Okay, that—that was. A weird thought. To have. About the—*hands* and the *electricity* and the long line of his throat, that narrow strip of blue skin showing between the edges of his collar what would his skin taste like if she licked it there *stop it Roxanne.*

And then that was a strange coincidence, with the, the banter, but that was probably just, you know, another speech pattern convergence thing! A nasty side effect of getting kidnapped too many times by the same person and listening to them monologue about their evil plans incessantly! Because there was no way, no way, that Roxanne actually thought that Megamind was sort of sexy. No way. None. No.

Probably best not to think about the way that she’d dressed up for this kidnapping like it was a date.

Oh, god, what was she doing with her face? Was she making a weird face? Had she changed her expression at all? Apparently not, because Megamind was asking Minion why Roxanne wasn’t screaming and then demonstrating, himself, how a proper captive ought to be screaming *could she make him scream like that would he let her tie him up and—*

*Stop.*

“That’s a little better,” said Roxanne, as Megamind screamed for the second time as the brainbot he’d been holding kept its metal jaws locked tight around his wrist.

And that was better, Megamind flailing his arm frantically, looking ridiculous. Much less confusing.

“Is there some nerdy supervillain website,” Roxanne continued, wanting to keep up the tone of general mockery, “where you get Tesla coils and blink-y dials?”

“Actually,” said Minion, from beside her, “most of it comes from an outlet store in—”

“Don’t answer that!” Megamind commanded.

“—Romania,” Minion stage-whispered to her.

“No! Stop!” exclaimed Megamind, sending his chair over to the two of them with the push of one black-booted foot (that was Megamind all over, never walk if you can glide, leap, dance, or fall). “She’s using her nosy reporter skills on your weak-willed mind—” (was that a subtle Star Wars reference? It was, wasn’t it—god, he was such a nerd), “to discover all our secrets!”
Suddenly his attention snapped back to Roxanne, his eyes fixed on her face; he leaned close to her, and wow, there went that humorous tone, gone, poof, and there went Roxanne’s heartbeat, kicking up into a higher gear.

“Such—tricks,” he said, voice low and intimate as he moved around her, practically murmuring in her hair, “won’t work—on me.”

“Please talk slower,” Roxanne said back, her voice no louder than his, answering on autopilot because he was so close right there if he leaned forward just a couple of inches, he could— He leaned forward.

“Temptress,” he said softly, the word brushing across her lips like the ghost of a kiss and she gasped, lips parting and—

Oh god.

Megamind leaned back, looking at her face, waiting for her to respond—what were they talking about again? Was it sex? Because Roxanne kind of felt like they were talking about sex.

An expression of confusion flickered across Megamind’s face as the moment stretched and still Roxanne didn’t respond. Why the hell didn’t he just kiss her? Tying her up, wearing those damn outfits, whispering in her hair—the fucking tease of it all was a far worse torture than any doomsday machinery that he’d ever threatened her with. No wonder she found the kidnappings more and more frustrating every time.

“Anyway,” said Megamind, moving away from her, sounding rather puzzled. “Since Miss Ritchi is speechless with fear, I think it’s about time to call her boyfriend in tights.”

He moved towards the main monitor of the lair, shaking the brainbot off of his arm. Minion took up a place off camera. Megamind ran his fingers along the points of his cape collar, making them curve even more dramatically. He looked at Roxanne, frowned slightly, and then glanced over at Minion and nodded sharply.

“What,” said Roxanne, her voice a little rougher around the edges than it usually was, “no deathtraps this time?”

Megamind frowned again, deeper this time.

“You want—?”

“Come on, Megamind,” Roxanne said, “make a girl feel special.”

Megamind’s mouth quirked sideways, almost into an evil smirk, but somehow less—deliberate than that.

“My dear Miss Ritchi,” he said, still smiling at her, “you may have all the deathtraps your heart desires.”

And he flipped every single one of the switches at once. She’d seen all of those particular death traps before (sometimes she thought she had seen every possible type of deathtrap before), but the suddenness of it, of all of them at once, almost succeeded in making her jump, and then Megamind was nodding again at Minion to get the cameras rolling and Roxanne was back to feeling dissatisfied and irritated and turned on.

She had to be out of her mind. Even if she, admittedly, found Megamind attractive, there was no
way she should be disappointed that nothing could come of it. One does not play bondage games with a supervillian, after all. That would be insane. How could she trust him?

Except, Roxanne realized, she did trust him. She was sitting tied to a chair with alligators snapping at her feet, flamethrowers and giant drills and guns pointed at her head, and she wasn’t worried about getting accidentally bitten, shot, drilled, or set on fire at all because Megamind never put her chair close enough to any of his deathtraps to actually damage her and he always had the safety on.

You are an idiot she told herself. You don’t even know if he’s attracted to you. Besides which, you really think this crazy megalomaniacal alien is going to understand and respect the concept of safe words? Of course not. How many times had she demanded that he let her go from a kidnapping? A lot of damn times, that’s how many. And how many times had he let her go? That’s right, none.

Except—what was that thing Megamind and Metro Man sometimes said to each other, when things had spiraled too far out of control and they needed to take a break—oh, yes, that was it—time-out.

“Megamind,” said Roxanne, and he looked over his shoulder at her, away from the screen, and Roxanne had no idea if this was even going to work, if he would listen to her the way he listened to Metro Man, if he considered her to be an equal participant in this weird game they played, but, oh, to hell with everything.

“I’m calling time-out,” said Roxanne.

Megamind’s eyes widened and he glanced quickly over at Minion, then raised a hand and made a cutting motion at his neck and suddenly Roxanne felt a whole lot more confident about the probability of her attraction being recipricated, because that was her take-us-off-the-air motion right there. She might have started inadvertently copying some of his speech patterns, but he was right there with her, unconsciously mimicking her gestures.

“What is it?” Megamind asked her, an honest expression of worry on his face. “What’s wrong; are you hurt; are the ropes too tight?”

His hands moved rapidly over the console, and the deathtraps disappeared, floor closing over the alligators, flamethrower and drill and gun and that ridiculous boot wheel of death folding themselves back up into the walls. Megamind moved towards her, leaning over her with a concerned expression, written large across his features, like all of his expressions always were.

“I—” Roxanne said, and then stopped. She wasn’t really sure how to go about this; hadn’t really thought she’d get this far, actually. “Can we just—postpone this kidnapping? For another day?”

Megamind frowned at her, looking almost hurt.

“It’s Metro Man day,” he said.

“I know,” Roxanne said, “I know that! I do! But there’s just—I—there’s something else that I’d rather do today!”

Megamind definitely looked hurt now, with a veneer of anger over the hurt. He stopped leaning over her and stood up fully, looking down at her coldly.

“Something else,” he said, “that you’d rather do. I see. Well, I’m sorry to disappoint you, Miss Ritchi, but evil does not run on a sched-you-all. So, back to the—”

“With you!” Roxanne blurted out desperately. “Something else that I’d rather do with you today!”
Megamind went still for half a second, and then, in one swift motion that left Roxanne a little breathless, he stripped off his right glove and placed the palm of his hand against the side of her face.

“Wh,” said Roxanne, rather unintelligibly.

“Are you ill?” he asked. “I think you might be running a fever; you’re not really making sense and your face is flushed and your skin feels hot, although—I’m not really certain what the normal temperature range for human skin feels like. That’s probably important; I should find that out.” He shifted slightly, as if he was going to take his hand away, so Roxanne deliberately tipped her head, leaning into his touch. He took a sharp breath. “You’re—ah—”

“I’m not sick,” Roxanne said.

“Drugged, maybe?” Megamind asked, so softly it was almost to himself. Roxanne could feel the calluses on his palm and and on his fingertips against her cheek. “Did the spray smell odd this time? Have you eaten or drank anything unusual? Did you hit your head?” He ran his fingers through her hair, checking for bumps. Roxanne shivered.

“I broke up with my boyfriend today,” she said abruptly, looking down at the floor.

Megamind froze again, then sank suddenly to his knees in front of her, so that he was looking up into her face.

“You and Metro Man broke up?” he asked incredulously. “What happened? Are you okay? What did he do? It had to be bad, for you to break up with him—”

He stood again without warning and crossed the distance to the control panel rapidly. Roxanne blinked.

“What—” she began, but Megamind was already speaking, hands moving over the keyboard, pressing buttons.

“I have a death ray; you can watch—you can give the order—you can press the button!”

“Is this another scheme to convince me to be your Evil Queen?” Roxanne asked, smiling slightly.

He looked over his shoulder at her, expression utterly serious.

“It doesn’t have to be,” he said. “This can just be a one-time thing. We don’t even have to televise it.” He gestured toward Minion, and then at the ceiling. “Full concentrated power of the sun—satellites—you know. It might actually work this time.” The ceiling opened up, revealing daylight and the cityscape—and, in the distance, the shape of the abandoned observatory, which was a bit odd, considering Roxanne had sort of, until this moment, thought they were in the abandoned observatory. Megamind was still talking. “I had planned to lure him to the observatory with this clever decoy—you were supposed to recognize it and shout out our supposed location during the broadcast. That was the surprise for today, by the way, that’s why the deathtraps were old—the real observatory was the big reveal—”

“That—” Roxanne’s jaw had dropped a little. She closed it. He’d planned around her observational skills. The big reveal wasn’t even about one-upping Metro Man; it was all about her. “That was a pretty damn good plan.”

Megamind looked at her as though she’d just handed him the moon.
“Oh,” he said softly, and then made a visible and only partially successful effort to pull himself together. “Yes! Well! Of course it was! And we can still play it that way if you want—the cameras can easily short out on this end just as he reaches the observatory if you want to press the button or give the order! Minion, you should probably start warming up the death ray now,” he added.

Roxanne raised her eyebrows. Megamind’s plots had been foiled several times before due to the fact that most of his evil machines were built with an (entirely pointless, she suspected) ‘warming up’ feature. But this was the first time he’d suggested warming up any of the devices ahead of their deployment.

Jesus, he really was serious about this letting her use the death ray thing, wasn’t he? Was it creepy that she found that incredibly touching? He hated Metro Man, had been trying to defeat him for years, and here he was, offering her the glory of his best and most likely chance at getting rid of his loathed rival based on the assumption that Metro Man had hurt her feelings. Make a girl feel special, indeed.

Fuck creepy. That was the sweetest thing anyone had ever done for her. If she disliked Wayne, she might have been slightly tempted to actually do it. But—

“It wasn’t Wayne,” Roxanne said, “that I broke up with. I was never with him.”

“Wh—what?” asked Megamind, looking shocked, and then slightly disbelieving. “But I thought—”

“I know,” said Roxanne, “everybody does! It’s really irritating, actually. Because I have never dated him. Never. Not once. I don’t even find him attractive. At all.”

Megamind pressed the palm of his bare hand against his own cheek.

“Maybe I’m the one running a fever,” he murmured to himself. “I think I might be hallucinating. Possibly I should sit down.” He did, half-collapsing into his chair. “Did you hear that, Minion?” he asked. “Miss Ritchi told me I came up with a good plan! And then she said that she broke up with Metro Man—or that she never dated him—or that she finds him unattractive! Or something!”

“I heard, Sir,” said Minion, sounding almost as shocked as Megamind.

“Is this reality?” Megamind asked, hand still on his cheek, eyes round.

“I don’t think he’s attractive,” Roxanne repeated, since it seemed to bear repeating, “and I’ve never gone out with him. My ex-boyfriend’s name is Evan.”

Megamind snapped back into focus.

“Eh-vahn what?”

“What?”

“What is the last name of this Eh-vahn?”


“I need a name to search for the new death-ray target,” he said, as though this were a perfectly reasonable thing to say.

“What?” asked Roxanne, torn between feeling appalled and sort of wanting to laugh. “Oh, no! No, no! Don’t bother wasting a death ray on Evan! He definitely isn’t worth it!”
“Fine, no death-ray,” said Megamind. “What’s it to be, then? De-gun? Freeze ray? Shrink ray? We could—oh, I don’t know!—egg his car? Give me some parameters of evil, here!”

“Death-ray to car egging,” said Roxanne, feeling happier than she had in months. “You do cover a lot of ground, don’t you?”

“Whatever you need,” Megamind said, with heart wrenching sincerity.

“I don’t—I don’t need any of that,” said Roxanne.

“You could be the one to foil my villainous plot today?” he asked. “You could take me to the prison yourself.”

“What?” asked Roxanne, honestly thrown. “What are you talking about?”

“I thought that was maybe what you were talking about! I thought it might—I don’t know! Cheer you up?”

“No,” said Roxanne. “That is definitely not what I was talking about.”

“But,” Megamind tilted his head, eyebrows drawing together in confusion. “You said you wanted to do something with me today.”

“Yes,” said Roxanne.

“I can’t imagine what else you’d want with me,” he said simply.

“Oh,” said Roxanne, and very nearly lost her nerve right there and then. He looked so damn innocent, sitting there, watching her with his too-large, too-green eyes, offering her anything from death-rays to help engaging in petty vandalism to turning himself in. He was dressed from head to toe in what was practically fetish gear and he was telling her without a hint of irony that he couldn’t imagine what she wanted with him.

She could just—ask him to play scrabble with her or something. He’d probably be thrilled.

“What did he do?” Megamind asked, interrupting her train of thought.

“Hmm?” she asked. “Who? Oh! Evan, you mean? Nothing, really.” She bit her lip. “He was boring.”

“Boring?”

“Extremely boring,” she said earnestly. “He listened to Barry Manilow.”

An expression of acute horror dawned on Megamind’s face.

“You’re kidding,” he said.

“Nope,” said Roxanne, grinning at the look on his face.

“The death ray really is too good for him,” said Megamind with a shudder.

Roxanne laughed, throwing her head back. When she got herself under control again, she looked back at Megamind, who was grinning crookedly, biting his lip. It took him a moment to notice her gaze, though, because his eyes were on her bare shoulders, following the sweep of her neck down to the straps of her dress. He licked his lips, and then looked back at her face with a guilty
expression, a slight flush on his cheeks and the tips of his ears.

He always wore those high collars, Roxanne thought a little dizzily. From the back of his head all across his shoulders, like if he wasn’t wearing one, he’d be half-dressed or something. She’d always taken that as a personal affectation, but Megamind wasn’t human (a thing Roxanne… actually had trouble remembering, sometimes, oddly enough?). It was possible that his species had some sort of neck thing, and if that’s the case, then this off-the-shoulder dress Roxanne had on was probably wearing the equivalent of a white shirt and no bra.

Experimentally, Roxanne sighed, arching her neck and pushing down her shoulders. Megamind’s eyes tracked the movement for a moment before snapping back to her face.

Oh, hell yes. She was good and this was happening.

“Minion, could I talk your boss alone?” Roxanne asked sweetly.

Minion, who had, if Roxanne had to guess, probably seen the whole checking-out-Roxanne’s-neck deal, said, “Suuure thing, Miss Ritchie,” in an extremely skeptical and definitely judgmental tone, and then made some sort of series of gestures at Megamind over Roxanne’s head. She could have turned around to see what they were, but she was too preoccupied with watching the flush deepen on Megamind’s face.

“Yes, yes, I understand,” hissed Megamind finally, making shooing motions at Minion and the brainbot, who finally clanked and flew their way out of the room, Minion getting on the lift and going down to the main level of the Lair and the brainbot swooping down after him through the air. The door clanged shut behind them.

Megamind turned back to Roxanne, eyes fixed firmly on her face.

“I—” he said. “What did—you probably want me to untie you.”

“I haven’t decided yet,” Roxanne said before she had a chance to psych herself out of it.

Megamind’s eyebrows went up in surprise and then down in confusion.

“Are you sure you’re feeling—”

“I want to try something,” Roxanne said quickly. “A—game, kind of. To see if it works.”

“A game?”

“A game.”

“What kind of game?”

Roxanne took a breath.

“I want you to pretend that you’ve kidnapped me.”

Megamind blinked at her.

“But I have kidnapped you,” he pointed out.

“Right,” Roxanne said, “yes.” Way to just point the essential f**ked-up-ness of this right out, Megamind. “Okay, but. I want you to pretend you’ve kidnapped me and we haven’t had this conversation.”
“Ooookay,” Megamind said, skeptical but clearly following.

“We’re going to start at the beginning of the kidnapping,” Roxanne said, “and we’re going to keep playing until I say stop, all right?”

“Until you say stop,” Megamind agreed, nodding his head. “What are the rest of the rules of this game?”

“No calling Metro Man,” Roxanne said, thinking fast. “Or Minion or the brain-bots. It’s just us playing. You and me.”

“Just us,” Megamind confirmed. “Should I get the bag?”

“No!” Roxanne hated that bag. It smelled disgusting. “Use something else. A blindfold or something. And—” She wanted him to be close to her; didn’t want him to be across the room—

“No death traps.”

Megamind tilted his head. “How am I supposed to threaten you?” he asked. “It’s going to be a pretty pointless kidnapping if there isn’t anything to threaten you with!”

“You could, ah—use the de-gun? Like you did the, um, the first time you kidnapped me, remember?”

Roxanne certainly remembered. She’d been working as an intern at the station, filming one of his battles with Metro Man; all of the other journalists had run for shelter, but Roxanne had been determined to do better than everyone else, catch the eye of the public and earn herself an actual position at channel 8. She’d certainly caught Megamind’s eye. He’d snatched her in the middle of the street, mid-battle, one arm around her waist, the other holding the gun pressed to her temple. He’d been standing behind her, so she hadn’t been able to see him when he whispered in her ear you should have run when you had the chance.

God, Megamind didn’t even really know what they were talking about and this was still embarrassing.

“Yes, of course I remember,” Megamind said, waving a hand dismissively. “But that was a spur-of-the-moment kidnapping; it wasn’t exactly a well-thought-out plan, you know.”

“Neither is this,” Roxanne muttered.

She was crazy, wasn’t she? This was crazy. She snuck a glance at Megamind from beneath her eyelashes. He was looking at her with an expression of extreme concentration, as though she were an exceptionally complex machine he was trying to reverse-engineer. It was—yeah, it was kind of hot. Kind of. Extremely. Yes.

Crazy or not, Roxanne really wanted this to happen.

“What are the rest of the rules?”

“No more rules,” Roxanne said. “Everything else is fine.”

“All right,” Megamind said.

“Really,” Roxanne stressed. “Everything else. You can do whatever you want. Because you know
that, if I don’t like something, I’ll just say the—I’ll just say stop. The word ‘stop’, I mean. It has to be the actual word.”

“Like a code?”

“Exactly! Yes, like a code. Or like calling time-out.”


“Win?”

“The game, Miss Ritchi,” Megamind said. “How do I win?”

“It isn’t that kind of a game.”

“No death-traps, no winning.” Megamind made a disgusted face. “This sounds like a rather boring game, Miss Ritchi!”

“I’ll scream for you.”

“You—what?” Megamind stared at her, green eyes wide.

“I’ll scream. During the game.”

For a moment, he just looked at her, lips slightly parted, cheeks flushing.

“I’ll go get the blindfold,” he said quickly, and jumped to do just that.

“Good,” said Roxanne, and then added, “And lock the door!”

Megamind glanced at her curiously over one shoulder, and then moved to continue his search for the blindfold. He moved behind Roxanne; she heard the sound of a bolt sliding into place.

Holy shit. This was actually happening, wasn’t it?

She could hear him pushing things aside, opening drawers, and then she heard him say, “Ah-ha!” The sound of his boot-heels on the metal floor; he was moving closer to her, moving to stand behind her.

“Please close your eyes, Miss Ritchi,” she heard him say, close behind her.

Roxanne suppressed a shiver and closed her eyes. The cloth settled over her face gently; she felt him tie it behind her head, making sure not to catch any of her hair in the knot. She heard him moving again, walking away, flipping switches; she couldn’t be sure through the cloth, but she thought the quality of the light changed. Skylight closing, she thought. More sounds of switches being flipped, things being moved around, and then—

Silence.

In the dark, Roxanne waited. The silence lengthened, stretched. Roxanne became aware of the sound of her own breathing: a little faster than normal? She could feel the beat of her pulse in her throat, in her wrists beneath the ropes.

Where was Megamind; what was he doing; was he just going to leave her like this?

Roxanne felt a quick flutter of panic.
Had he known all along what she was wanting? Was this some sort of cruel trick to punish her? Could she get out of these ropes if she tried?

Roxanne twisted, trying to get enough leverage to slip one of her hands free.

A mocking laugh rang out from the dark. Roxanne jerked at the sound of it, closer than she’d expected.

“No need to stop trying to free yourself on my account,” Megamind’s voice came to her. “Your struggles—although futile—are quite entertaining to watch.”

Roxanne shivered, let herself shiver.

“Megamind,” she breathed.

“Miss Ritchi,” Megamind said, a curl of amusement in his voice. “It’s so nice to see you again.”

“Very funny,” Roxanne said, allowing her voice to waver uncertainly.

“Take off the blindfold.” There was a long silence, and then—

“No,” said Megamind. Roxanne jumped; he was on her other side now. How had he moved so silently? She turned her face blindly towards his voice.

“Quit playing games, Megamind,” she said, testing him.

He hesitated.

“Oh,” he said, “but I’m having so much fun. Aren’t you having fun, Miss Ritchi?” So he’d definitely understood the specificity of the safeword; that was good.

“No,” she lied. “I’m not having fun, Megamind! Undo the blindfold!”

“No,” Megamind said again. “I don’t think I will.” There was a subtly questioning note to his voice, though. Was giving her an opening?

“Take it off!”

A beat of silence.

“Ask me nicely,” he said, “and I’ll think about it.”

Goddamn, but he was a natural at this.

Roxanne licked her lips and tilted her head back, arching her neck slightly (she was definitely not above playing dirty). She could hear Megamind’s swift, quiet intake of breath.

“Please, Megamind,” she said, “please take it off of me; I really want you to take it off of me, please.” Yeah, so not above playing dirty.

“Well,” said Megamind, a bit breathlessly, “since you said please.”

A hand cupped the side of her face; Roxanne jolted a bit at the unexpected contact, then let herself lean a tiny bit into his hand. It was his right hand; he had put his glove back on, she was disappointed to notice. She could feel his other hand lift the blindfold away. She opened her eyes. Megamind was leaning over her, wickedly smirking face close to hers. His hand was still on her
cheek. In a sudden burst of inspiration, Roxanne tilted her chin up so that his hand slid down to her throat. Megamind’s mouth fell open, eyes flickering to her throat, to his hand on her throat. Before he could move it away, Roxanne screamed.

The expression on Megamind’s face was well worth it.

His hand twitched, fingers curling at the back of her neck, thumb jerking over her pulse point. Roxanne, running out of breath, stopped screaming and gulped for air, swallowing and pressing up into his hand so he could feel the movement of her throat. His eyes were so large that it was impossible to miss their sudden dilation, to miss the way they flickered from her neck to her eyes to her mouth. Roxanne tilted her chin up even more in permission, but Megamind didn’t appear to understand the gesture. Instead of kissing her, he blinked, glanced away from her for a moment, and then let go of her, moving a few steps back.

Roxanne wanted to scream again, this time in frustration. That had been so close.

“You won’t get away with this,” she snapped.

“Oh?” Megamind asked, sounding a little dazed. “Away with what?”

“Whatever you’re planning to do to me,” she said. “You are planning to do something to me, eventually, right?”

Megamind tossed the blindfold aside and drew his gun smoothly.

“I haven’t made any plans, at the moment,” he said, spinning the gun around one finger. He stopped twirling it and aimed it at her. “Isn’t that what you’re always wanting from me, Miss Ritchi? Unpredictability?”

“And what do you want from me, Megamind?” Roxanne asked. She dragged her eyes over him, deliberately letting her gaze linger on his hands (she always liked the gun), on his eyes (pupils still blown wide and black), on the infuriating curl of his lips, on the tantalizing line of his exposed throat. “Here I am, tied up, completely at your mercy—what is it you want from me?”

Surely that was clear enough, even for him, but, no, he just tilted his head, a considering expression on his face.

“You could scream for me again,” he said, lips curving into a smile. “I liked that very much.”

Damn it, how was it possible for someone so brilliant to be so oblivious?

“You want me to scream again?” Roxanne said, and lifted her chin in a challenge (incidentally calling attention to her neck again—playing dirty: it’s how Roxanne rolls). “Make me.”

His sudden lunge took her by surprise; Roxanne actually jumped, and then he was leaning over her again, even closer than before, one hand in her hair, tilting her head to an angle just shy of painful, the other pressing the barrel of the gun beneath her jaw.

“Oh god please,” Roxanne gasped, all in a rush.

“Oooh, begging! I liked the begging, too!” Megamind said, looking delighted, looking at her neck, at her mouth.

“Please.”
“Please, what?” asked Megamind, tapping the gun lightly against her skin. “You’re going to have to be more specific, Miss Ritchi.”

“Please, Megamind!”

He stopped tapping the gun, pressed the barrel of it beneath her jaw again.

“Not exactly what I meant by more specific, Miss Ritchi,” he said, arching an eyebrow.

Roxanne shuddered, swallowed. Was he teasing her deliberately, or did he really still not know?

“Please kiss me,” she said.

And—he really hadn’t known; the expression of utter shock that overtook his face was proof enough of that.

“What?” he breathed.

“I said,” Roxanne said, quiet and insistent, “I want you to kiss me.”

He didn’t move, remained perfectly still.

“Megamind—”

He kissed her.

He kissed her desperately, as though he’d been wanting it as much as she had, as though he was afraid her permission might be rescinded at any moment. He kissed her like the world was ending, hand tightening in her hair, gun pressed hard beneath her chin.

It was exactly what Roxanne wanted, right up until the point that he tore his mouth away, panting for breath.

“Don’t stop,” Roxanne complained, leaning forward to kiss him again.

He let go of her so fast it was like she’d set him on fire. One moment he was centimeters away from her, and the next he was gone, stumbling backwards, tripping over his cape and falling.

“What are you doing?” Roxanne asked, looking down at him, sprawled out on the floor in front of her.

“You said stop,” he said, looking up at her, eyes wide and sort of wild.


“Forgot?” he said blankly.

“I was a little—” Roxanne bit her lip, “distracted. We need a better safeword.”

“Ah?” said Megamind, looking baffled.

A sudden noise made them both jump.

“Uh, Sir,” Minion rattled the door knob again. “Is everything all right? I heard screaming and the door seems to be jammed.”
“We’re fine, Minion!” Roxanne called, looking over at her shoulder, feeling a brief flicker of panic at the thought of Minion breaking the door down in concern and walking in on them. Although—that was irrational, wasn’t it? Her tied up in a chair was pretty much business as usual for them. She looked back at Megamind, still on the floor looking gobsmacked.

“We are fine, aren’t we?” she asked. He had certainly seemed into the roleplay and the kiss, but she was starting to get a little worried that she’d freaked him out or something.

“Ah?” said Megamind again, and then, leaping to his feet, said, loudly, “Oh! Yes! We’re fine! Totally fine, Minion! Extremely fine! Miss Ritchi and I were just—' he looked at Roxanne, “I’m not really sure what we were doing? But it was fine! Really, really fine!”

Roxanne laughed, fondness blooming warm in her chest.

God, she actually really liked him, didn’t she?

Stockholm Syndrome Stockholm Syndrome, a nasty voice in Roxanne’s voice said snidely. Except —

—Megamind backing off so fast he fell over, looking up at her with guileless green eyes, you said stop—

You can watch; you can give the order; you can press the button!

If she had Stockholm Syndrome, Megamind definitely had—what was it called?—the opposite of Stockholm Syndrome—Lyme Syndrome. So it all balanced out, didn’t it?

“Okay,” said Minion, from behind the door, sounding even more skeptical than when she’d said she’d wanted to talk to Megamind alone.

“If the door mechanism is faulty, I should probably break it down now.”

“No, no!” Megamind said frantically, “The door is fine, Minion! Leave the door!”

Roxanne stifled a snort of laughter. They really couldn’t do this here. Minion was way too perceptive and nosy.

Was it weird to invite a supervillain to your apartment? Probably not weirder than springing surprise bondage and roleplaying on them. Even though surprise bondage and roleplaying was basically the foundation of all of their interactions. Just—usually with less making out.

A damsel in distress inviting her supervillain up to her apartment was probably less weird than the fact that she’d had to be the one to propose the bondage and role-play and making out.

“Megamind,” she said, cutting him off in the middle of his assurances to Minion that everything was fine Minion honestly just go away and do something else now. “Would you like to come back to my apartment with me?”

Megamind stared at her for several seconds.

“Oh,” he said. “Yes?”

She smiled, rather wickedly, wondering if it looked anything like his evil grin.

“Good,” she said. “You can untie me now, then.”
He scrambled to do so.

Minion looked deeply confused when Megamind threw open the door and raced past him, Roxanne in tow, shouting, “Miss Ritchi wants me to take her home now, Minion; I’ll be back later!”

“Much later!” Roxanne called over her shoulder, laughing as she tried to keep up with Megamind.

“Much later!” Megamind yelled, and threw open the door of the invisible car.

“No, no!” Roxanne laughed, pulling on his wrist, “The hover bike, I want to take the hover bike!” Megamind’s face lit up even more at that.

“Oh, yes,” he breathed. “We can absolutely take the hover bike.”
“Okay, so,” Roxanne said, as Megamind followed her through the balcony doorway and into her apartment.

She really wished she hadn’t left the door locked that morning; when they’d landed, she’d had to have Megamind pick the lock, and that had given her adrenaline from the ride time to fade into nervousness. And then he’d flipped some sort of switch on the hover bike, making it go invisible like the car, and she’d remembered abruptly the many reasons why it would be bad for someone to look up and see his hover bike on her balcony.

At least most people would still be at the museum.

“All right,” he said uncertainly, and allowed her to pull him towards the couch. She pushed lightly at his shoulders, mindful of the spikes, and he sat, perching nervously on the edge of the cushions.

Roxanne sat down beside him. No drinks—Megamind looked like he was ready to bolt; she’d probably come back from the kitchen to find him gone and she really did not want that.

“Okay,” she said. “Well. You—probably have some questions.”

“I—yes. A lot.”

“Have you done any of this before?” she asked. He was freaking out so hard, and he hadn’t known to kiss her, earlier—

He laughed shortly.

“You’re kidding, right?” he asked. “Of course I haven’t done any of this before!”

He made a face.

I don’t really know what we were doing, he’d said, before. Roxanne had always assumed that Megamind was into—well, the same things she was into, actually, but more—hardcore? The leather, the spikes, the constant tying her up to various pieces of weaponry—she had extrapolated, she had assumed—and the flirting! He flirted with her constantly! She’d always thought he must have experience.

“Oh,” she said. “Well. You—probably have some questions.”

“I—yes. A lot.”

She motioned for him to go on.

“All right.” He looked away from her, rubbing gloved fingertips over the material of the couch arm. It was sort of mesmerizing; the mundanity of her couch against the black leather. “So you said—you just broke up with your boyfriend today. Um. Is it—is it possible that this—” he gestured
between them, still without meeting her eyes, “—is due to the *fragility of your current emotional state*?”

Roxanne tilted her head at him.

“That’s the question you’re going to go with?” she asked incredulously. “Not about—any of the other stuff?”

“It’s the most important question,” he muttered, crossing his arms over his chest, a flush spreading across his cheeks.

Roxanne suddenly found it hard to breathe. Jesus, he was worried about taking advantage of her emotional turmoil. That was apparently the big issue here, not ‘Roxy, when are we going to move this to the bedroom’ or ‘Rox, are you really into this freaky S&M stuff’ or any of the other things guys she’d brought home before had asked her.

And *god*, his ears were going all pink-tipped now; she wanted to *bite* them.

“I was never really particularly attached to Evan,” Roxanne said. “I know, I know! That makes me sound like a terrible person! But when the whole city thinks you’re dating someone with superpowers, your options are really limited. So no, I’m not feeling emotionally vulnerable right now.”

“Oh,” he said, drawing in on himself even more. “So that’s what this is, then.”

Roxanne frowned.

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“Well, you just said—options are limited,” Megamind said, and gestured to himself.

“No,” Roxanne said. “That is *not* what this is! I am definitely, sincerely attracted to you, Megamind.”

He gives her a look of utter disbelief.

“A fact,” Roxanne said, “that I probably should have figured out around the time that I started picking out outfits for kidnappings based on how sexy they were.” She waved a hand at her dress. Megamind gaped at her for a moment, and then—

“You—” he said, reaching a tentative hand towards the strap of her dress, but stopped short of actually touching it. “You wore this—for *me*?”

Roxanne leaned in just slightly, so that his fingertips touched her shoulder. He took a sharp breath.

“Yes,” she said, “I did.” She gave him a sly look from beneath her lashes. “You wore this—for *me*?”

Roxanne leaned in just slightly, so that his fingertips touched her shoulder. He took a sharp breath.

“Yeah,” she said, “I did.” She gave him a sly look from beneath her lashes. “You like it?”

He nodded, eyes on the exposed line of her shoulders and neck, and ghosted his fingers lightly over her collarbone, towards the hollow of her throat. Roxanne shivered.

“Yes,” he said, “I like it very much.”

He leaned forward slightly, as though he intended to press his lips to her neck. Roxanne obligingly tilted her head back a bit; she certainly wasn’t going to stop him from doing that.

But instead of kissing her neck, he stopped himself, leaned back, and took his hand away.
“The game,” he said. “Earlier, what was that?”

“It’s called roleplay,” Roxanne said.

“This is a thing?” Megamind asked. “That people do?”

“Some of them, yes.”

“A sex thing?”

“Yes.”

“You told me to leave you tied up,” he said, frowning. “Why?”

“That is—it’s called bondage. It’s—also a thing.”

“This is also a sex thing?” he asked, looking at her with intense concentration.

“Yes,” Roxanne said, flushing.

“These are both sex things that you enjoy?” Megamind asked, eyes still intent on her face.

“Yes,” said Roxanne, blushing even more. “Did you not like—?”

“Of course I did,” Megamind said dismissively, “but I thought—this is within the range of normal sexual expression?”

“Yes,” Roxanne said, a little defensively.

“Oh, that is such a relief to hear!” Megamind sagged backwards on the couch. “I thought it was just me! I thought it was another thing wrong—” He tilted his head, mind clearly spinning off in a different direction. “How do people usually do the roleplaying?” he asked. “I mean, I’m guessing that most of them don’t have a basis of regular kidnappings to work with.”

“No,” Roxanne said. “I’m pretty sure that’s just us. It isn’t exclusively a kidnapping thing, though. You can play all sorts of scenes, like—oh, alien abduction—”

“So, basically us.”

Roxanne laughed.

“Pirate and captive,” she continued.

“Us, except I have an eyepatch.” Megamind nodded wisely.

Roxanne laughed again.

“Or—” she laughed even harder as something occurred to her. “You know, people probably do roleplay as us! I mean, as actual you and me! Oh, my god! I can’t believe I never thought of that before!”

“That’s—” Megamind looked thoughtful. “You really think so?”

“Yes, I really think so! I mean, we roleplayed as us!”

“…huh,” said Megamind. “I—can’t decide if that’s weird or flattering?”
“Both, I think,” Roxanne said. “Anyway, kidnapping is definitely a feature of a lot of scenarios, yes, but power imbalances are a big thing in general.”

“Power imbalances?”

“Like doctor and patient—”

Megamind made a disgusted face.

“Ugh, hospitals!”

“Or—cop and criminal—”

Megamind made an even more disgusted face.

“Ugh, prison,” he said.

“Or—teacher and student—”

Megamind made the most disgusted face of all.

“Ugh, school,” he said.

“Really?” Roxanne snickered. “School is worse for you than prison?”

Megamind nodded emphatically.

“So much worse! Extremely worse! All of the worse! The worst.”

“All right,” Roxanne said, smothering her laughter, “we won’t do any of those, then. Anyway, the power imbalances thing can be separate from the role-playing, or even the bondage—power imbalance stuff is generally referred to as dominance and submission—and then there’s stuff that’s based on pain.”

“On pain?”

“There’s a whole range of pain, though,” Roxanne explained. “I mean, there’s light stuff, like biting and scratching and spanking, and then it goes up from there—flogging, some people like slapping or punching even—some people like to play around with knives, although that can get dangerous. I don’t really get very into pain that much, personally, and playing around with your gun, earlier, is about as close to edge-play as I’ve ever gotten…”

“Edge-play?”

“The dangerous stuff,” Roxanne said. “Like knives, or guns that, you know, aren’t set to dehydrate, or choking.”

“And people…work out ahead of time what they like?”

“Sometimes,” Roxanne said. “Sometimes not. Small things, people sometimes incorporate without negotiation, but major things usually have to be talked about. And safewords are important.”

“Safewords,” Megamind said. “Like ‘stop’ earlier.”

“Right,” said Roxanne, “but people don’t usually pick a word like ‘stop’. I mean, we both remember how that turned out for us! A safeword should, ideally, be something that isn’t going to
naturally come up in conversation. A lot of times, people just use ‘safeword’ as the safeword.”

“What about Code: Safeword?”

Roxanne’s lips twitched.

“That would…work, too.” She shifted on the couch. “So.”

Megamind looked at her inquiringly.

“You haven’t run away, yet,” Roxanne said.

Megamind smirked at her.

“Oh, Miss Ritchi,” he said, “it would take a lot more than this to scare me off.”

Roxanne licked her lips and edged closer to him.

“Would it,” she said.

He nodded, eyes on her mouth, cocky smile still in place.

“How about me being the one to tie you up, then?” Roxanne asked.

Megamind’s eyes fluttered, and for a moment, Roxanne was sure he’d refuse.

“All right,” he said, instead.

She laced her fingers together with his gloved ones and led him upstairs.

He was looking apprehensive by the time they made it to Roxanne’s bedroom, eyes a little too wide, breath coming a little too fast, so Roxanne pushed him gently against the wall and kissed him as hard as she could, until he melted against her, moaning into her mouth and tangling his hands in her hair.

Roxanne pulled back slightly so she could look at him.

“Megamind,” she said. “You remember the safeword?”

“The—the safeword is Code: Safeword,” he said, looking dazed and very thoroughly kissed.

“And you say it…?” Roxanne prompted.

He licked his lips, eyes on her mouth. God, how could she have ever kidded herself that she didn’t think he was hot?

“If I want to stop,” he said.

“Yes,” Roxanne said. “If you want to stop. You say it; we stop; that’s how it works. Is there anything you definitely don’t want to do?”

“I—um, would rather you not hurt me that much? If that’s okay? I mean, biting and scratching sounds intriguing, but the slapping and the punching doesn’t really seem—but! If that’s something you want to do to me—and it probably—”
Roxanne leaned forward and kissed him quickly.

“Megamind, I don’t want to do anything you don’t want,” she said gently. “And I told you, I don’t really get that into pain. Is there anything else you know you don’t want to try?”

“I don’t—I don’t think so?”

“Okay, but if something comes up that you don’t like, do not be afraid to tell me. Code: Safeword exists for a reason. Are you ready?”

A brief flicker of worry in his face, and then an expression of determination overtook his features.

“Yes,” he said.

Roxanne kissed him again, running her hands down his sides, settling the right one at his waist; letting the left one wander a little lower, to the holster of his gun.

She felt the moment that he realized what she was doing, felt him tense beneath her. She felt, too, the moment that he decided to let her do it, the moment he could easily have grabbed her wrist, stopped her, said the safeword, the moment that he stayed still instead—rigid, trembling, but still.

Roxanne pulled the gun from the holster and stepped back from Megamind. She glanced swiftly down at the gun, checking the setting, making sure it was still on dehydrate. She didn’t plan to put her finger on the trigger, but better to be sure.

She brought the gun up, aiming it at him, cocked her hip, and gave him the most wicked smirk she could manage.

“Holy fuck,” Megamind said breathlessly in response.

Roxanne felt her smile widen. She hadn’t ever heard him curse like that before. Definitely a turn-on. As was the way he was clutching at the wall as if was the only thing keeping him upright, eyes large and dark, pupils blown wide.

“Go and stand by the bed,” she said, and then, when he hesitated for half a second, added sharply, “now.”

His eyes were wide; he pushed himself away from the wall and went to stand in the middle of the room, at the foot of the bed.

“Kneel,” Roxanne commanded, on a whim, and he went to his knees easily, fluidly, and entirely without protest.

Roxanne walked towards him, hips swaying, gun in hand, Megamind on his knees watching her every step. She felt sexier than she had in—even, really.

“Well, well, well,” she said, stopping in front of him. “The tables have turned, haven’t they?” She gripped Megamind’s chin in one hand, ran her thumb across his bottom lip and then over the strip of his goatee. Megamind made a soft, half-smothered sound. “I’m the one holding the gun now.” She stroked the barrel of the gun down his cheek. “You know, I’ve always wanted one of these.”

“I’ll make you one,” Megamind said.

Roxanne paused for a moment. Was that—was that a real offer? You can give the order; you can push the button! It probably was, wasn’t it?
She was totally going to hold him to that. Hell yes, space gun! Ooh, maybe they could have a shootout the next time he kidnapped her—both guns set to dehydrate; that could be fun.

“You are worried, aren’t you?” she said, filing the shootout idea away for discussion at a later time. “What should I do with you, now that I have you here, like this, completely at my mercy?”

“Whatever you want,” Megamind said simply, and ducked his head to press a kiss to the wrist of the hand still gripping his chin.

Roxanne sucked in a breath.

“That’s right,” she said. “Whatever I want.” She stepped away from him, trained the gun on him once more, and smirked—Megamind had seemed to like that the last time she’d done it. And sure enough, she saw the muscles of his throat work as he swallowed involuntarily.

“Stand up and take your clothes off,” she said.

Megamind stood, and tugged his boots off swiftly, one hand on the edge of the bed for balance.

“Ah ah ah!” Roxanne said. “Slower than that.”

Megamind, still leaning against the bed, looked up at her at that.

Slowly, he placed his left boot on the floor—his feet were bare now; Roxanne had never considered how endearingly vulnerable Megamind would look barefoot. He straightened up slowly, too, and then began slowly to pull off his right glove—down past his elbow, down past his forearm, revealing only another layer of leather until he pulled the glove past his wrist, finally exposing blue skin. He pulled the glove completely off and tossed it aside, then reached for his other glove, pulling it off like he had the first.

When the glove had been pulled down to his wrist, however, he hesitated this time. He tipped his head, a sudden I-have-just-had-a-clever-idea expression darting across his face. He flashed Roxanne a quick, slightly wicked smile, and then bit into the fingertip of the glove and tugged it the rest of the way off with his teeth.

He tossed the glove down and glanced up at her through his eyelashes, as though looking for approval. Roxanne gave an appreciative hum and he smiled shyly, ducking his head.

Jesus, shy wasn’t something Roxanne would ever have thought to associate with Megamind, but it was really working for her.

“Holster,” she said.

Obediently, he unbuckled the holster from around his thigh, his waist, and then let it fall. He reached for the buckle of his belt—god, Megamind wore a lot of clothing, didn’t he?—but Roxanne said—

“Collar, Megamind.”

Megamind blinked at her, startled, and then his hands to the insignia at the base of his throat, twisting the one of the lightning bolts, popping open a hidden catch. Flushing deeply and looking away from her, he pulled the edges of his leather collar apart—oh, yes, there was definitely some sort of neck thing going on, Roxanne decided. He pulled the collar the rest of the way off, spiked shoulder guards slipping from his shoulders, and then dropped the entire cape on the floor.
His hands fell to the buckle of his belt again, and an expression of apprehension clouded his face. His fingers stilled on the buckle as the look of apprehension deepened.

Fuck, he was getting nervous again, wasn’t he? Were they going too fast? Too slow? He was the only one who was partially undressed—maybe that was what was freaking him out?

Bare hands, feet, and neck might not be what Roxanne would normally call almost naked, but on Megamind, who she’d never even seen without shoulder spikes before, the effect was sort of startlingly provocative. And if his species did have some kind of cultural modesty standard involving necks—or if (interesting thought) necks were an erogenous zone—then possibly telling him to take off his collar had been too much too soon? Too much focus on him, maybe?

“Megamind,” Roxanne said. “Megamind.”

He looked up at her at last, eyes focusing on her face.

“Come here.”

He came to her, still looking pretty anxious, and stopped in front of her.

“Kiss,” Roxanne said, pointing to her lips. Megamind leaned forward and pressed his lips to hers, then pulled back as though he wasn’t sure he had permission to do more than just that.

“Kiss,” she repeated, pointing to her bare shoulder. He complied with just the barest hesitation, kissing her shoulder butterfly-light.

“Kiss,” she tilted her head back and trailed one finger down the column of her throat.

Megamind drew a sharp breath, then reached for her, one hand going to cradle the back of her neck, the other trailing down Roxanne’s throat, following the path of her own finger.

God, his hands on her skin. She wanted more of that; she wanted all of that.

He put his lips to her throat. Roxanne shuddered at the sensation and reached up to wrap her own hand around the back of his neck, holding him in place, pulling him to her harder. He moaned at that, and moaned again when she scratched her nails lightly down the back of his neck.

Roxanne loosened her grip and tipped her head back to look in his face.

“Unzip my dress,” she said, intensely gratified at his resulting expression. She turned, giving him access to the zipper on her back.

“And tell me what you find most attractive about me.”

“Everything,” Megamind said, pulling the zipper down.

“Now take it off of me,” Roxanne instructed, “and be more specific.”

“Every—I told you—you’re perfect,” Megamind said fervently, sliding the dress off of her arms. It fell past her hips and then to the ground.

He pressed a quick kiss between her shoulder blades.

Roxanne laughed.

“Smooth,” she said. “But—‘not exactly what I meant by more specific,’ Megamind,” Roxanne
added, throwing his own words from earlier back at him.

With most guys she’d been with, she knew, the answer that question would either be your eyes or your ass, depending on whether or not they were lying, but she’d bet money on Megamind’s answer being your neck.

“Your intelligence,” he said, placing his hands lightly on her bare shoulders, just his fingertips touching skin.

Roxanne looked sharply over her shoulder at him. Something in her expression must have been alarming to him, because his eyebrows drew together and he pulled his hands back from her shoulders.

“Sorry,” he said, “is that a bad answer? I just—I love the way your mind works. It’s incredible. Very, very sexy. Um. Why—why are you looking at me like that?”

Roxanne spun around and shoved him so that the backs of his knees hit the edge of the mattress and he toppled back onto the bed with a startled noise. She climbed into his lap, knees on either side of his narrow hips, pushed him down into the mattress with one hand in the center of his chest, and leaned down to kiss him hard and fast, her breasts pressed against his leather-clad chest. He made another startled noise.

Her intelligence—he thought her mind was sexy—this, coming from fucking Megamind, who was so brilliant that it sort of defied description, had to be the best compliment Roxanne had ever been given.

She set the gun down with a clatter on her bedside table; possibly knocking something else off, if the sound was anything to judge by—she really couldn’t bring herself to care—and then reached down and unbuckled Megamind’s belt, blind and one-handed and more than a little rough. He made that startled sound again; but really, how the hell could he say something like that and expect Roxanne not to want to tear off his clothes?

She sat up, one hand still planted on his chest, pressing him down.

“Clothes need to be off, now,” she said, and then, deciding it was best to lead by example, swung herself off of his lap to remove her panties.

“Yes,” Megamind said, both hands going behind his back to unzip his shirt—ooh, he was flexible, “but. Well. It occurs to me that—”

Jesus, was he wearing another shirt underneath his first shirt?

“Why the hell do you wear so many goddamn layers?” Roxanne asked in exasperation. She wanted to touch him, damn it, and all these stupid clothes of his were getting in her way.

“I don’t like my body very—I mean—there are several reasons—special fabric—functions as armor—but—”

He lifted his hips to unzip the back of his pants and pulled them off and hell fucking no, the undershirt thing was an entire undersuit? Was he ever going to be naked?

“But that’s not really—you see, there’s something—”

He began to pull his arms out of the undersuit; Roxanne, without looking away, jerked the drawer of her bedside table open and reached inside, fingers roaming over the contents of the drawer until
she found her handcuffs.

“—something that I just feel that I should mention—” His eyes fell on the cuffs in her hands. “Uhh—”

“Put your hands over your head,” Roxanne said, reaching over him to loop the cuffs through the top bar of her headboard. He was still not naked—he had pulled the undersuit down to his waist but no further—but Roxanne was tired of waiting. Besides, she rather thought she might enjoy undressing him the rest of the way once his hands were secure.

“I—” Megamind swallowed and put his hands over his head; Roxanne snapped the cuffs on his wrists. “Um. What was I—right, yes—the thing that I really feel that I should mention—”

Roxanne ran a single fingertip down the side of his throat. He arched up into the pressure, eyes going unfocused, stuttering into silence.

“So I was right,” Roxanne said smugly. “About the neck thing.”

“The—the neck thing?”

“The high collars,” Roxanne said. “They’re not just a cultural norm.”

“Wha—”

“This—” she leaned down and licked a stripe up his neck, then whispered in his ear, “—is an erogenous zone.” She punctuated the words with a nip to his ear.

Megamind whined.

Roxanne sat up enough to look into his face.

“Your ears, too?” she asked.

“Nerve endings—whole area—”

“Really?” Roxanne asked delightedly. “How far up does it go? How far down does it go?”

“Um, down to my—my collarbones and shoulders—all of my ears and—up to the lamboid suture of my skull—ah!”

He cut himself off as Roxanne, who only vaguely remembered the anatomy class she took back in high school, and who, even had she been able to recall the location of the lamboid suture on a human skull, wouldn’t really have known how to translate this location to Megamind’s larger, differently-shaped head, made a guess based on the general shape of Megamind’s head—there, she thought, right there, where it curved like it was meant to fit perfectly into her palms—and slid her hands beneath his head, cupping it.

“Here?” she asked sweetly as Megamind pressed back into her hands, eyes fluttering closed, mouth falling open.

“Yes, yes there, exactly there oh god,” Megamind said.

Roxanne pressed her thumbs a little harder into his skin and then used her hands on the back of his head to tip his face up for a kiss.

And he just let her, let her tilt his head precisely as she wanted, let her thrust her tongue into his
mouth.

She smoothed her hands down from his head over his neck to his shoulders. The way that his hands were cuffed meant she didn’t have full access to his shoulders, but he said collarbones, too, didn’t he? Roxanne moved down from kissing his mouth to bite his collarbone. He jerked beneath her, cuffs rattling, so she did it again, harder this time, sucking at the skin.

“You’re going—going to leave a mark if you keep doing that,” Megamind said, sounding breathless and sort of shocked.

Roxanne bit down one more time and then stopped to look at his face.

“Yeah,” she said, “That’s kind of the point.”

Megamind’s expression definitely went shocked at that.

“But someone could see,” he said, eyes wide, and ah, here was the cultural modesty standard thing again. This was going to be fun.

“Not here, they won’t,” Roxanne said, tracing the little purple mark her mouth had left on his collarbone. “The shoulder guards will cover that. And here—” (she bit the side of his neck and Megamind hissed and jerked in his restraints) “—your collar will cover that. Nobody will be able to see them.” She trailed her fingers up from the first mark to the second one. “But I’ll know they’re there. And you’ll know that they’re there. Won’t you? Every time you turn your head or move your shoulders you’re going to remember that they’re there; going to remember how you got them, how I handcuffed you to my bed and marked you.”

Megamind’s breathing had gone shallow, his eyes dark.

“Oh,” he said.

“Now if I put a mark—” (she leaned down until her mouth was hovering just above the base of his throat, stayed there for a long moment, and then pressed a quick, teasing kiss to the skin there) “—here—well. Your suit doesn’t cover there, does it? Everyone would be able to see it if I marked you there.” She kissed the same spot again, placing her mouth on his skin and holding herself there.

“Oh,” Megamind said again, the sound of his voice vibrating underneath her mouth.

She let her lips part, pressed an open mouthed kiss with a hint of teeth to his throat. Megamind made a soft, needy sound and pushed up into the kiss. Roxanne bit him obligingly, sucking his skin hard until he cried out, and then sat up to admire her handiwork.

There were three marks now; three violet prints of Roxanne’s mouth on the blue of Megamind’s skin.

“There,” Roxanne whispered, touching each mark in turn, ending with the one at the base of his throat, right above where the silver clasp of his M logo always lay. “Now everyone will know who you belong to.”

She traced the shape of an R over the kiss-shaped bruise.

“Yes, yes, god, yes,” Megamind babbled. “Miss Ritchi—”

Roxanne frowned. Miss Ritchi. That was—well, the sort of power dynamic that she would
normally be encouraging in these sort of circumstances, but he always called her that. She wanted—

“I want you to say my name, Megamind,” she said.

“Miss—”

“No. My name.”

A slow look of wonder dawned on Megamind’s face.

“Roxanne,” he said, as though it were the most beautiful word he’d ever spoken.

“Just like that,” she said, and ran the palm of her hand down the long line of his throat, over his sternum, down over his stomach to where that damn undersuit was still hiding the rest of his body from her.

“Ngh,” Megamind, “Uh! The! The thing! That I was going to say before and which is very important and Miss—I—Roxanne—” Roxanne paused, hand flat against his lower abdomen, feeling the muscles quivering beneath her touch. Megamind jerked against the cuffs, straining at them, making them rattle. “Possibly I could just—call time out—for a moment?” he managed to say.

Roxanne took her hand away from his stomach.

“What’s wrong?” she asked. “Did you forget the safeword? Is it the handcuffs, are they a problem…? I could tie you up instead?”

“I—what? Handcuffs?” Megamind looks utterly confused. “Why would they be a problem? These are nice handcuffs; much more comfortable than ordinary ones!”

“Well—when we were talking about roleplaying,” Roxanne said, “you said you didn’t want to do anything with cop and criminal, so I didn’t know if—”

“That’s because prison is boring,” Megamind said. “Not because I’ve got some sort of fear of handcuffs!”

“Why did you call time out, then?” Roxanne asked.

“I realized that I should—probably warn you about—the fact that—I have NonStandardForAHumanGenitalia,” he said in a rush, “because I didn’t want it to be just like ‘Surprise! Tentacles!’”

Roxanne blinked at him.

“You have tentacles?”

Megamind flinched and flushed deeply.

“Surprise,” he muttered, turning his head to look away from her. “Sorry. You can unlock the cuffs and I’ll just go.”


He looked at her, eyebrows drawing together.
“Because,” he said, “you know—tentacles.”

He made a face.

“Are—are the tentacles a big problem?” Roxanne asked, still mystified and, okay, yes, a bit caught off guard by Megamind blurting out that he had tentacles. “Do they—I don’t know—have like poisonous suction cups or something?”

“What?” Megamind asked, sounding baffled. “What are you—no—why would there be suction cups? Why would they be poisonous? Under what bizarre evolutionary circumstances would poisonous suction cups on genitalia ever be an adaptational advantage?”

“I don’t know!” Roxanne said, “You just seemed to be freaking out an awful lot, so I thought maybe the problem was that we were physically incompatible or something and poisonous suction cups were the most insurmountable tentacle-related difficulty I could think of!”

“The tentacles are the insurmountable difficulty!” Megamind exclaimed. “The problem is that my body looks like something people see in their fucking nightmares, and not something you could ever, ever want!” He closed his eyes and drew in a shaky breath. “Please just take the handcuffs off and let me go,” he said in a small, defeated voice.

Fucking hell, that was a lot of self-loathing.

Oh god, what had he said earlier, when she’d asked him about wearing so many layers? He’d cut himself off before he could finish, and Roxanne hadn’t been asking to get an answer, had mostly just been complaining, so she hadn’t really listened at the time, but—I don’t like my body very much. Jesus. And before that, downstairs, when she’d told him she liked bondage and roleplaying and he’d been so relieved that he wasn’t the only one—he’d cut himself off that time, too, but—I thought it was another thing wrong with me. And he’d said options are limited and so that’s what this is and—

“Megamind,” Roxanne said. “Megamind, look at me.”

He looked at her, an expression of misery in his eyes.

“Are you saying the safeword?” Roxanne asked, speaking slowly and clearly. “Because I very much still want this to happen, so if you want to stop then you need to say the safeword. Otherwise —” she kissed the mark that she’d put on his throat, “—I’m not going to stop.”

“What—what?” Megamind asked, the word shaking around the edges and cracking down the middle.

“Do you remember the safeword?” Roxanne asked. He nodded, slowly, hesitantly. “Do you want to say the safeword?” He shook his head, eyes on hers, as though he was trying desperately not to let himself hope.

“Good,” Roxanne said fiercely, and kissed him.

She’d thought, back at the lair, that Megamind kissed like the world was ending. She thought again how apt that description was.

He kissed her like this was his only chance to do so; like he was certain that this was all some sort of mistake, never to be repeated. His kiss was all need and desperation, and although it was electrifying, knowing that he wanted her so much, the despair lurking underneath the obvious desire made Roxanne’s chest ache.
Megamind shouldn’t have to feel like that, shouldn’t have to feel as though he wasn’t worth kissing, shouldn’t have to feel as though he wasn’t worth lov—

Roxanne broke the kiss with a gasp.

—loving. *Shouldn’t have to feel as though he wasn’t worth loving.*

But that was just. Theoretical. Right. Because while she might have a—a *fondness* for him, this was still Megamind she was thinking about.

*Megamind,* who kidnapped her and threatened her and tried to take over the city on a regular basis.

Megamind, who had offered to use his death ray on her ex-boyfriend, who built a swarm of spike-covered flying robots and then played *fetch* with them, who had once lost a battle because he’d been too busy keeping his giant robot suit from stepping on a stray cat to pay attention to his fight with Metro Man. Megamind had tried to play it off afterwards like that wasn’t what happened, but Roxanne had been right there watching, tied to a telephone pole, and such things cannot be unseen.

Megamind, who said *you’re perfect* like he *meant* it, who said *I love the way your mind works,* who, beneath the supervillain facade was actually shockingly sweet and weirdly, unexpectedly funny—

Fuck.

Oh, fuck.

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Chapter End Notes

tbc
Roxanne, feeling a little lightheaded, looked down at Megamind.

Did he—could he—surely he couldn’t possibly feel the same way. He’d never—

Megamind wasn’t exactly subtle about telling people what he wanted, right? He wanted Metro Man gone and he announced it to the world on a weekly basis. He would have said something if he had been in love with her. He would have written it in the sky with smoke bombs and laser cannons. If he’d wanted Roxanne like that she would have known.

Everyone would have known.

Megamind hadn’t even kissed her before she suggested it. All of this had been Roxanne’s idea. He’d probably never even considered her in a romantic context before, never thought of her outside the box of Damsel In Distress that he and Wayne and the city had put her inside.

So.

Fuck.

“What’s wrong,” Megamind said, more a statement that a question.

Roxanne opened her mouth to say I think I just realized I’m in love with you because even if Megamind didn’t feel the same way, he deserved to know, didn’t he? He deserved to know somebody loved him.

But—

What’s the likelihood of him believing you?

Roxanne looked at him, at the way he was holding himself away from her, shoulders tensed as if for a blow, mouth a thin line, remembered the flat way he’d said what’s wrong, as though he thought he already knew what was wrong, as though—

He thought she’d just realized what she was doing and decided to stop. That was it, wasn’t it? That was what he was thinking.

And so, if she told him now, if she said I think I fell in love with you the moment you ran your giant robot suit into a brick wall rather than step on a cat, he would—he was perpetually shocked that she wanted to kiss him—he’d probably think she was mocking him. He would leave her apartment and most likely never speak to her again.

Roxanne closed her mouth and placed the palm of her trembling hand on his cheek.

“Hey,” she said, voice a bit uneven.

“…um, yes,” said Megamind, looking confused (she couldn’t really blame him), “ollo?”

Roxanne laughed a little shakily.
“You mean ‘hello’?” she said.

“Is that how you—? Right, yes, hel-lo?”

“Honestly, supergenius,” Roxanne said, with a smile, “how do you not know how to say ‘hello’?”

“People don’t usually greet me,” Megamind said, “mostly when they see me they’re too busy running away and screaming.”

He smiled wryly up at her, as though it was a joke, as though it was funny, but now that she knew what to look for, Roxanne could see the brittleness of the expression, could hear all the bitterness turned inwards in his voice and her breath caught like it was snagged on the sharp edges of his smile.

She didn’t—she didn’t know what to say to that, so she leaned down to kiss him again, tried to pour every ounce of love and reassurance she could into the kiss, all of the words that she knew she couldn’t say because he hurt too much to hear them. *It’s okay and I’m sorry and fuck whoever it was that made you hate yourself like this and I love you I love you I love you.*

She kissed him until she absolutely had to pull away to breathe. Megamind collapsed backwards, letting the handcuffs bear most of his weight, head tipped at an awkward angle against the headboard.

“Oh, hey,” said Roxanne, and slid a pillow underneath his neck, adjusting it so that it supported the curvature of his head.

Megamind looked at her as though she was the most bafflingly wonderful thing he had ever seen.

So Roxanne kissed him again, pressed her lips to his jaw, his cheekbones, the sharp point of his chin, to all of the three marks she’d left on him. She sat up and placed one hand on his chest, reaching up with the other to trace the outside shell of his left ear, marveling at the feeling of his heartbeat quickening underneath her palm, at the way his breath stuttered into a soft cry when she simultaneously took his ear between her thumb and forefinger and rubbed it firmly and reached with her other hand to tweak one of his nipples.

“What does this feel like to you?” she asked, fingers moving against his ear.

“What—what does—?” Megamind panted.

“Does it feel anything like this?” Roxanne rolled his nipple between the fingers of her other hand.

“Ah! Yes! It’s—similar but not exactly—”

“Which do you like better?” Roxanne asked, changing the position of her hands to stroke his other ear and nipple.

“Which? Is this? Is this a trick question?” he said. “Both; both is—both at once is good.”

“I’m not doing this too hard?” asked Roxanne, fingers moving on his ear.

“No, it’s—what you’re doing is, um, very nice. It’s sort of—right on the edge of pain? B—but in a good way?”

“Do you want me to try doing it harder?”

“Would you?” Megamind asked, eyes wide.
In response, Roxanne twisted his nipple and ran her fingernail over the outside of his ear.

Megamind made a high, choked-off sound.

“Is that still good?” Roxanne asked.

“Yes,” he said, “yes, god.”

“Describe what it feels like,” Roxanne told him, watching his face.

“You—I—it’s, um, it hurts but it feels good at the same time? Like, like biting into a really cold ice cream cone! Or, ah, a weirdly pleasurable electric shock? Or like when you bit me, before! I’m not sure how much sense I’m making—”

Roxanne laughed and kissed him, then moved her hands to his waist, to his undersuit. Megamind sucked in a sharp breath.

“I’m going to take this off of you, now,” Roxanne said, keeping her voice calm and even. “Lift your hips for me?”

Megamind flushed and looked away, biting his lips, but obediently raised his hips up so Roxanne could peel the suit the rest of the way from his body.

She dropped the suit off the side of the bed and looked back at him.

She blinked.

There were no tentacles anywhere that she could see, just a sort of seam between his legs, starting a few inches below his navel and ending at the bottom of his pubic bone.

“There, now,” Roxanne said soothingly, placing her hand on his stomach, right above the seam. “Everything is fine, see?” She stroked her thumb across his skin. “The tentacles are internal?” she asked in a voice carefully devoid of judgement. She glanced up at Megamind’s face.

His eyes were fixed on her, hope and terror warring in his expression.

“At the moment,” he said. “They’re, um. They extend out. When—but I thought I’d better wait. To do that.”

Roxanne tilted her head.

“The extension thing is under voluntary control?” she asked. He nodded. “That must be convenient.”

“I—” Megamind’s eyebrows drew together. “I guess so?”

"Is it difficult?” Roxanne asked.

“Extending them? N—no? Not when I’m, well. Not when I’m aroused. I have to concentrate to keep it from happening, actually.”

“Does not extending them,” Roxanne said, an idea dawning, “get harder the more turned on you get?”

“Yes, of course.”
Roxanne grinned.

“Excellent,” she said.

“Is—is it?” Megamind asked, sounding dubious.

“I am going to have so much fun with you,” Roxanne said gleefully. “All right, new rules! No extending the tentacles until I tell you to.”

“Yes, of course,” Megamind agreed readily.

“And you have to hold still,” Roxanne said, stroking her hand lightly over the seam between Megamind’s legs, making his hips twitch, “while I touch you.” She smirked at him. “Think you can be good for me?”

“Probably not,” Megamind muttered, with that bitter twist to his voice that Roxanne hated.

“Of course you can,” Roxanne said.

“I’ve—I’ve never been very good at ‘good’,,” Megamind said.

“Oh, hush,” said Roxanne. “You’ve been very good for me so far.”

Megamind glanced up at her, blushing deeply, lips parting, and my, wasn’t that an interesting reaction? She would have assumed that Megamind would get off to being told how bad he was, but—she was going to have to remember that.

"I—” he said as she began to trace lazy swirls over his chest, “I just realized that I’d probably better ask—how, um. How long are you wanting this to last? I understand duration is important, but people never really mention specific, you know. Lengths of time.”

“You really don’t need to worry about that, Megamind,” Roxanne reassured him. “It’s your first time; I’m not expecting you to last very long.”

Megamind’s brow furrowed.

“No, but—oh, that’s right, it’s not like that for humans.”

“Not like what?”

“Orgasms are under voluntary control as well,” Megamind said simply. “I can last however long you want me to.”

Roxanne’s hand went still on his chest.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” she asked incredulously.

“Er,” said Megamind, “no?”

“Holy fucking—oh my god.”

“Sorry?” said Megamind.

“It’s like finding a unicorn,” Roxanne breathed. “A magical sex unicorn.”

“Um,” Megamind said. “Just so I’m clear, the—the sex unicorn is a good thing?”
“The best thing,” Roxanne said fervently. “Oh my god, Megamind! Okay, so, yeah, that changes things.” She leaned down and kissed him. “You don’t come until I tell you to.”

“Okay,” Megamind said, clearly confused but cooperative.

“Repeat the rules for me,” she commanded.

“No extending the tentacles until you tell me to,” Megamind recited. “No—no orgasming until you tell me to. And—”

Roxanne reached out and, without warning, rubbed her thumb over the rim of his ear.

Megamind took a sharp breath but, she was impressed to see, managed to keep himself from moving.

“—and I have to hold still,” he finished.

“Very good,” Roxanne said, and Megamind blushed again.

Oh, yes, that was definitely a thing.

She ran her thumb over his ear again harder this time, then slipped her other hand behind his head. Megamind’s mouth fell open; Roxanne could feel him trembling, feel him struggling against the desire to press back into her hand. She let the fingers of her other hand trail from his ear over his jaw, then down over his throat, feeling him gasp for breath and swallow involuntarily underneath her hand. She ran her fingers lightly over his collar bones from one side to the other, letting her other hand slide down from cupping his head to holding the back of his neck.

“Oh my god,” said Megamind, “oh my god, do I—? Do I have to be quiet? I’m not sure I—I don’t think I can—ah—do that?”

“Do we need to go over the rules again?” Roxanne asked sharply, rolling one of his nipples beneath her thumb.

“The—what? No, I just—”

“I think we do,” Roxanne said, and took both of her hands away. “Tell me what the rules are, Megamind.”

“Wha—stopping—why are you—?”

“I’m not going to touch you again until you tell me what the rules are,” Roxanne said sweetly.

“No extending tentacles until you say,” Megamind said in a rush, “no coming until you say and I have to hold still I remember the rules oh god Roxanne please touch me again—”

“Is there anything in the rules about you being quiet?” Roxanne asked, hands still folded primly in her lap.

“No! No there isn’t! Roxanne, please—”

“So does that answer your question?”

“Yes! Yes it does! Please—”

“Are you sure?” Roxanne asked, smirking wickedly. “Because I wouldn’t want you to feel as
“Though I hadn’t answered your question.”

“God fucking damn it, Roxanne,” Megamind moaned, “will you please just touch me?”

Roxanne drew a single finger over the line of his collar bones.

The noise that Megamind made was extremely frustrated and recognizably inhuman.

“You know,” Roxanne said conversationally, watching him struggle not to struggle in the handcuffs as she drew slow circles on his chest and stomach with her finger. “I’ve never heard you curse like this before. Usually it’s all ‘oh no!’ and ‘for Evil’s sake!’”

“Yes, well, usually—son of a bitch, Roxanne, please—usually I have more fucking control! Ah! But now I’m too busy following your goddamn rules to—” Roxanne’s hand stilled entirely. “You—your excellent rules! Your totally reasonable and in no way to be disparaged rules! Please don’t stop touching me again or I think I might cry!”

Roxanne laughed and leaned down to press a kiss to the center of his chest. And then, since she was already down there, she took one of his nipples between her lips and sucked at it gently.

Megamind made a high, shocked, keening sound which cut off into a gasp when Roxanne grazed his nipple with her teeth.

She drew back and blew lightly on his nipple, watching his face.

“Oh my god,” he said, “Oh my god, I don’t understand how this is really happening to me.”

“You’re not still thinking that you might be hallucinating, are you?” Roxanne asked.

“No,” he said. “I mean—” Roxanne moved over to give his other nipple the same treatment, “Ah! I’ve—I’ve got a good imagination, but—I don’t—I’ve never come up with something this vivid before.”

Roxanne looked sharply up at him.

“Have you thought about this before?” she asked.


Never really needed—?

“About me,” Roxanne said, “have you thought about this with me, specifically?”

Megamind looked at her at that, eyebrows drawing together.

“Who else would I be thinking about?” he asked in honest confusion.

Roxanne’s mind sort of whited out for a few seconds.

He’d wanted her before this. He’d wanted her before she’d suggested it. Just her. Who else would I be thinking about? That was—

“How many times?” she asked. “How many times have you thought about me like this, Megamind?”
“I don’t know; a lot?” Megamind said, clearly uncomfortable. “A weird amount. A creepy amount. Why do you look happy about this?”

“Do you touch yourself when you think about me?” Roxanne asked. “Do you get yourself off like that?”

Megamind blushed deeply.

“Wh—why would you want to know that?”

“Do you?”

“I—” he looked away. “Yes,” he admitted, voice barely above a whisper.

Roxanne grinned, wanting to hug herself in glee. He did want her. Her, specifically, and maybe that was all it was, but Roxanne could work with that.

And god, she was picturing it now, imagining him imagining her, writhing in that high-backed chair of his, one hand between his legs, head thrown back, eyes closed, moaning—

“Sorry,” Megamind said, still in that barely-audible tone.

Roxanne blinked, mental picture breaking up, and looked at him with a frown.

“Sorry?” she said. “Megamind, we are, at this moment, naked in bed together. Why would I be upset about finding out you fantasize about me?”

“Because it’s—” he made a face, “—disgusting.”

Roxanne’s frown deepened.

“Does your culture have a serious masturbation taboo or something?” she asked.

“What?” Megamind looked at her. “No. That is—I don’t think so? I don’t really know; I was eight days old and the world was ending; sexual education wasn’t really high on anyone’s list of priorities. I just meant because it’s—” he cut himself off, glancing away. “Me.”

Roxanne’s heart contracted painfully in her chest. God damn it, Megamind.

“Hey,” she said, taking hold of his chin and turning his head, forcing him to look at her. “Your logic is obviously flawed. Look at me. Naked. In bed. With you. I manifestly do not think you are disgusting.”

“Right,” Megamind said, but he still sounded unconvinced.

“I wish I could see you touching yourself,” Roxanne said, moving her fingers over his ear. “I’ll bet it’s hot.”

Megamind looked at her as though he thought she might be insane.

“It’s really not that exciting,” he said. “I told you, orgasms are under voluntary control. I usually just get it over with as quickly as possible.”

“That,” Roxanne said, “is a fucking travesty.” She leaned in and kissed him on the ear.

“Sex is for enjoying, even if you’re doing it by yourself.” She ran the tip of her tongue along the
rim of his ear. Megamind made a half-smothered sound.

“You deserve to let yourself feel good.” She took his ear between her teeth and tugged at it lightly. Megamind made the sound again, louder this time.

“Let me make you feel good,” she whispered, lips pressed to his ear.

“Yes, please,” Megamind moaned.

Roxanne kissed him on the ear again quickly and sat up, moving her hand to the seam between his legs. She hesitated for just a moment—she didn’t really know what to do; what if she hurt him?—but Megamind had seemed to like it when she touched him there feather-light, earlier, when she’d been telling him not to move. She did that again.

“Tell me what this feels like to you,” she said.

“Good,” Megamind said in a shivery voice, “it feels good. Sort of—like when you touch my ears or my head, but more—? Like sparks underneath my skin or—like you have electricity running through your fingers.”

“Is this a good pressure?”

Megamind laughed breathlessly.

“I mean, it’s good, certainly, but—maybe a little harder? Ohmygod yeslikethat,” he said in response to Roxanne stroking harder. His head fell back against the pillow.

Roxanne continued to stroke him, varying the speed, the direction, watching to see what he seemed to like best, what made his mouth fall open, what made his stomach muscles clench and unclench with the suppressed need to push up into her hand, listening to hear what made his breathing pick up, what sort of touches made him moan or whimper.

The skin around his sex, she noticed as she continued to touch him, was changing color, flushing a darker blue, almost a violet color.

She stroked three fingers down the length of the seam, one finger on either side of the line, and one directly on top of it. Megamind made another of those inhuman noises, a sort of whirring sound in the back of his throat.

“Megamind,” she said, an idea occurring to her, “would it be all right if I put my fingers inside you?”

“What?” Megamind looked at her eyes wide and dark and sort of unfocused with lust. “I—you can? If you want to. But why would you—”

“Would that feel good to you?” Roxanne asked insistently, because Megamind looked as though he would have agreed to anything she suggested at this point and she didn’t want to end up hurting him.

“I don’t know,” he said, “I’ve never really thought about trying it before.”

“Okay,” Roxanne said, “then you have to tell me if this feels good or not.”

She slowly slid a single finger inside of him.

Megamind’s eyes went even wider and more unfocused.
“Holy fucking shit.”

“Good?” Roxanne asked.

“Yes,” Megamind said. “Yes, good. Fuck. Is there—is there a word that’s beyond good?”

“Great?” Roxanne suggested. “Amazing? Excellent? Well done, Roxanne, you’re a genius?”

“Yes, all of those,” Megamind agreed.

Roxanne laughed.

She—she could feel him, around her finger, he’d said *tentacles*, and she’d had a hard time picturing what he meant, but she could—she could feel them moving inside of his sex, like—sort of like fingers, but slick, and smoother than fingers, more supple, twisting, grasping for her.

Roxanne was still having a hard time picturing what he must look like, but—the way she could feel his body rearranging itself to seek her touch was certainly very sexy in her book.

She slid her finger most of the way out of him and then pressed it in again. Megamind moaned and bit at his lips.

Roxanne fingered him like that for a few minutes, watching his face, watching his sex flush an even deeper blue, and then when she felt like he was ready, she added a second finger.

Megamind’s back arched, hips snapping upwards.

“Fuck,” he babbled, “sorry, sorry, fuck, the rules, sorry,” his hips still stuttering up even as he spoke, as though he couldn’t help it. He turned his face away, shame and misery in his expression.

“You did so good,” Roxanne said warmly. “You did so good, Megamind, you held out so long. You were so good for me; you go ahead and move now, baby. Take what you want; you deserve it.”

Megamind stared at her, shocked and wide-eyed.

“I—I did okay?”

“Much better than okay,” Roxanne said firmly.

“And it’s—I can—?”

He rolled his hips up.

“Go right ahead.”

Megamind let out a shuddering breath and rolled his hips up again and again.

Roxanne watched, speechless with amazement and desire as the most feared man in Metro City fucked himself on her fingers.

“Your hand,” he moaned. “It—*fuck*—it feels so good.”

“Yeah?” Roxanne slid a third finger inside of him. “How about now?”

“Great amazing excellent!” Megamind said. “Well done, Roxanne, you’re a genius oh *fuck* oh
Roxanne—"

"Do you think you could come like this?" Roxanne asked curiously.

"I—," Megamind licked his lips, looking at her. "I don’t know. I told you, I’ve never done this, but—maybe? Do—do you want me to try?"

Roxanne really sort of did, wanted to see him come apart on her fingers, but—he was clearly worried about the tentacle thing, and chances were, if she told him to come like this, he’d think that she was freaked out by the tentacle thing, so—

"Not this time," she said.

"This—is there—?" Megamind’s mouth worked for a moment before he managed to say, "Is there—going to be another time?"

"Yeah, Megamind," Roxanne said softly, "there can be another time if you want."

"How many?" he demanded. "How many more times?"

And Roxanne should probably explain some things, should probably consider the possible repercussions of this before she went and made some sort of rash promise, but she could see the hope shining naked in Megamind’s face, and beneath that the fear of what he obviously considered to be her inevitable rejection. And she wanted—

Fuck it.

"As many as you want, Megamind."

"All of them," he said quickly. "I want all of them."

That was—did he—surely he couldn’t be—

He couldn’t mean what Roxanne wanted him to mean.

She definitely needed to explain this, didn’t she?

She looked at Megamind, hopeful still but with that despairing edge to his expression, the one that said *I am waiting for you to say no.*

Fuck everything.

"Yeah, Megamind," she said. "All of them sounds good to me."

Megamind looked at her in slow dawning wonder. He looked at her as though he had just discovered what it was that made electrons spin, as though he’d just discovered that it was *her.*

"Hey," she said. "I need you to hold still again. I want to try something."

Megamind obediently forced himself to stop moving, trembling with the effort of staying still.

Roxanne slid her fingers out of his body and he gave a high whine of disappointment but still didn’t move. She moved a little farther down the bed, placed her hands on his hips, leaned down, and licked him from the bottom of his sex to the top.

The noise that Megamind made in response was probably best described as a barely suppressed
scream.

“All right?” Roxanne asked, looking at his face.

“Don’t stop don’t stop oh god, Roxanne, do that again, please—”

Roxanne did it again, flicking her tongue inside of him, then thrusting it in slow, like a kiss. He tasted sweet inside, like biting into a clover flower to suck the nectar from the bottom of the petals. She could feel his tentacles moving inside of him, tangling with each other, with her tongue, and although it was a bit of a strange feeling, certainly not comparable to anything she’d ever experienced before, it definitely wasn’t bad.

Roxanne pulled away to look at Megamind, handcuffed to her bed, all blue skin and alien proportions and sex.

“Look at you,” she said, her voice sounding rough to her own ears, “god, you’re gorgeous.”

“You—” Megamind panted. “You don’t have to—say things like that.”

“What, true things?”

Megamind made a derisive noise.

“It is the truth,” Roxanne insisted. “You’re beautiful. And I know you said you don’t—you don’t like your body, but please believe me when I tell you that I? Really do.”

Megamind made a wry face.

“I do,” Roxanne said. “I like the way our skin looks together. We’re practically complementary colors; don’t you think it looks nice? I like that when I touch you down here it goes a darker blue and I like the way your cheekbones blush purple and your ears go pink at the tips—stop shaking your head at me, Megamind; I do—I like the way your ears are shaped, just slightly pointed enough to be interesting, and I like the way your head is shaped—the proportion of it relative to the size of your neck is very aesthetically pleasing, like—a heavy flower on a long, slender stem. I like how smooth your head is and I like the way it fits in my hands and the way you moan when I have it in my hands. I like the way you move when my fingers are inside of you and I like the way you taste. I like your body, Megamind; I like every bit of you that you have shown me. And now—”

Roxanne leaned in and kissed him.

“—I would like to see the rest of you, please.”

Chapter End Notes

…tbc
“I—are you—” Megamind swallowed and looked away. “Are you sure? You don’t have to—”

“Yes, Megamind,” Roxanne said, “I’m sure. I want to see you.”

“All—all right,” he said, still not looking at her. “Just—could you—could you just kiss me one more time, please?”

Roxanne put her hand on his cheek and turned his face towards her, then bent down and kissed him.

It was painfully obvious, from the desperate way he leaned up into the kiss, that when he said kiss me one more time, what he’d really meant was kiss me one last time. Roxanne did her best to kiss him like she really meant it, like she intended to do so again and again, however many times he wanted.

As far as she could tell, though, it didn’t seem to do much good. Megamind still looked petrified when she pulled away, his breathing fast and shallow. He had his eyes squeezed shut, and when Roxanne placed her hand on his hip, to steady him, ground him, let him know she was still here, that she wasn’t going anywhere, he made a soft, hurt noise in the back of his throat and turned his face away.

Should she—should she tell him that he didn’t have to do this? What were the chances of him actually taking that the right way? She rubbed her thumb along his hipbone instead. “It’s going to be okay,” she said soothingly. “Megamind, I promise you, it’s going to be okay.” Megamind laughed shortly, eyes still tightly shut, turning his face even more away from her. He gritted his teeth. Roxanne, still stroking his hip, felt the muscles of his abdomen contract and then relax beneath her hand. She glanced down. Was that—   The seam between Megamind’s legs dilated, the sides parting from one another, opening like a flower, and—yes, those were definitely tentacles, slowly sliding out from his body, unfurling like petals.

They were slightly longer than fingers, each a little wider than a finger at the base and tapering to a point about as narrow as the tip of Roxanne’s pinky. There were five of them, arranged in a sort of star shape—radial symmetry, Roxanne realized, like a sea star. They were smooth, no suction cups, just as promised, and they were slick too, coated in some sort of shiny liquid (self-lubricating? nice). They were blue, of course, that deep, near-violet color where they joined to his body, shading to a lighter blue in the middle and flushed lavender-pink at the tips, like his ears (mmm, very nice).

Roxanne watched, fascinated, as they curled and uncurled, twisted and untwisted.

She glanced back up at Megamind’s face. His eyes were still shut tightly, his features all screwed up in fear and resolve.

He was hyperventilating, obviously holding himself back from outright panic by sheer force of will alone, so much tension in the lines of his arms, his neck, his clenched jaw, that he looked like he’d shatter if Roxanne touched him wrong.
He was so clearly terrified, so clearly determined to do this anyway.

Fuck, but he was brave. He’d let her take away his weapon and point it at him, let him handcuff and strip him, let her put her fingers inside of him—and now this.

God, Megamind, he was just—

“There,” Roxanne said, voice uneven around the edges. “What did I tell you?”

She leaned in and put her lips to Megamind’s ear.

“You’re perfect,” she whispered.

Megamind’s breath caught on a sobbing gasp.

Roxanne sat back and looked into his face. His eyes were open now, wide with shock, tears at the edges of them. Roxanne smiled at him gently and cupped his face in both hands, brushing her thumbs over his cheekbones. His lips were parted, his mouth trembling; Roxanne tipped his face up and kissed him, feeling his tears spill over onto her fingers as she did.

“You—you’re still here,” Megamind said when she pulled away, sounding lost, “how are you still —?”

“Where else would I be?”

“Anywhere—anywhere else—” he said, “—running and screaming.”

“Megamind,” Roxanne said gently. She ran the palm of her hand down the center line of his body and smiled. “You don’t scare me, sweetheart.”

She stroked her fingers over one of his tentacles. It curled around her index finger; Megamind made a quiet choking noise.

“S—sorry,” he managed to say after a moment, “it’s all—they’re all—” He made a face. “—slimy.”

“Self-lubrication is always a plus,” Roxanne said, watching as the tentacle uncurled from her finger. “It makes sex easier and more enjoyable. My body does it, too.”

“Your body—?”

Roxanne glanced up at Megamind. He had a look of disbelief on his face.

“Yeah,” she said, “I—” She bit her lip as an idea occurred to her. “Here, watch.” She slid her hand between her own legs and dipped two fingers inside of herself.

“Oh, my god,” said Megamind, watching her. “Oh, my god, you—that’s—”

Roxanne hadn’t really been planning on putting on a show, but let it never be said that she didn’t love an appreciative audience. She grinned at him and pumped her fingers in and out of herself, enjoying the expression on his face as he watched her. Finally she slid her fingers out of herself and held them out to Megamind, showing him how wet they were.

“See? Totally normal and—”

Megamind leaned forward and took her fingers into his mouth. Roxanne cut herself off, unable to
remember what she’d been saying, watching as he held her fingers in place with his teeth and licked them clean.

Megamind glanced at her face and frowned, looking suddenly self-conscious. He pulled back, her fingers sliding from between his lips.

“Uh,” he said, “sorry, was that too—was that a weird thing to do?”

“Oh, my god,” Roxanne said blankly, “how—how are you this hot?”

“So—that was okay?”

“Definitely.”

“Oh, good,” Megamind said, “because I—that was quite—” He looked down, blushing. “You taste good.”

“You are so goddamn adorable,” Roxanne said warmly. Megamind’s ears turned a brighter shade of pink.

“Hey, question,” Roxanne added, looking down at the tentacles, “is the movement of these voluntary or involuntary?”

She moved her hand so that it was hovering above them, watching as they reached towards her.

“Sort of both?” Megamind said. “I mean, it’s involuntary unless I really think about it? Kind of like extending them. Why? Ohh,” he said, “are the—are the rules in effect again?”

“Good guess,” Roxanne said. “Repeat the rules for me,” she commanded.

“No coming until you tell me to,” Megamind recited quickly. “And I’ve got to stay still. And. Um. Well, not extending the tentacles until you told me to was also a rule, but. It’s no longer applicable?” He glanced at her face.

“Well done,” Roxanne said, and drew her finger down the first tentacle once more.

Megamind made that alien whirring noise again; the tentacles seemed to sort of pulse—Roxanne thought that might be the effect of Megamind trying not to let them move.

“Describe this,” Roxanne said, drawing her finger back up the tentacle.

“It’s—ah! It’s good; it’s like the sparks feeling again, sort of, only more so?”

“Better or less good than when I had my fingers inside of you?”

“I don’t—neither? Just as good, but—not the same. The stretching feeling of your fingers inside was—very pleasurable, but. The tentacles are extremely—gmmnn!—sensitive! Fuckfuckfuck, Roxanne—!”

Roxanne, who had wrapped one hand around the second tentacle, loosened her grip.

“Too much?” she asked, concerned.

“Not enough,” Megamind said. “Not enough; Roxanne, you’re driving me out of my mind with this fucking—touching one at a time thing!”
“Am I?” Roxanne asked archly. “Perhaps I’d better stop, then.”

She took her hand away entirely; Megamind made a sharp trilling noise, almost like birdsong.

“Nonono! Don’t stop! Please, please don’t stop! I’ll be good, I promise, I promise I’ll be good! Please, Roxanne, please let me be good for you!”

“You’re so pretty when you’re begging.” Roxanne said, and twirled one finger around just the tip of the third tentacle.

Megamind *wailed*, shoulders and upper back arching with the effort of keeping his hips still, handcuffs rattling as his arms jerked in the restraints.

“So pretty,” Roxanne said again, stroking the fourth tentacle from base to tip and then placing just her fingertips on the fifth tentacle. “Move just this one for me.”

Megamind’s body shuddered, his breath hissing between his teeth. The tentacle wrapped around her finger, uncoiled itself, pressed up insistently against her palm.

“Good,” Roxanne said approvingly (Megamind’s body shuddered once more). “Now hold it still again.

“Hold—? What?!” *Fuck,* Megamind said in dismay, and stopped moving the tentacle.

“You take direction so well,” Roxanne said in admiration. “Now move this one for me,” she added, tapping the third tentacle.

It twined itself quickly around her finger.

“And hold still again,” she said.

“I’m *dying,*” Megamind moaned, tentacle going still only with a clear effort on his part. “I’m *dying;* I’m going to *die.*”

“Hmm,” Roxanne said sympathetically. “Move this one.”

“Cocksucking motherfucking son of a bitch,” Megamind burst out, pressing the tentacle hard against her hand. “Please, Roxanne, please, please, please—!”

“There now,” Roxanne said. “Hold still again.”

Megamind gave a quiet, near-scream of frustration, but held still.

Roxanne held her hand just above his tentacles, hovering close, so close, but not quite touching. Megamind’s breathing got shallower and shallower, faster and faster, the moment lengthening, tension mounting, his body twitching with the need to shove himself into her hand, trembling as he stopped himself from moving, forced himself to stay still, to stay still, to stay still—

He broke, hips bucking upwards, tentacles pushing against her palm, twisting through her fingers, around her wrist.

“Roxanne—!”

“Good,” Roxanne said, pressing her palm harder against him, tightening her fingers. “*Move.*”

Megamind gasped in relief and fucked his hips up into her hand, his tentacles writhing around her.
Roxanne moved her fingers with him, trying to mimic the motion of his tentacles as closely as possible. Megamind made a shocked sound, and another, louder and more drawn out sound, when she reached her other hand up to toy with one of his nipples again. His back arched as he pushed up wantonly into the hand on his chest and then up into the hand on his tentacles.

“More, more, more,” he moaned, “please, Roxanne, please, I want—I want—I need—”

“What?” Roxanne asked. “What is it that you need, baby?”

“I—I don’t know,” Megamind said, eyes on her face, lips parted, looking dazed and desperate. “God, I don’t know, I just—I need—I don’t know.”

“That’s okay,” Roxanne reassured him. “You don’t need to worry about it, sweetheart. I’ve got a few ideas. I’m going to take care of you.”

Megamind’s hips snapped up sharply at that, tentacles pulsing around her fingers.

“Thank you,” he said in a ragged voice, “you have no idea how much I—” he panted for breath.

“You’re so sweet,” Roxanne said, brushing her thumb back and forth across his nipple. “Hold you hips still for me again.”

Megamind made that trilling birdsong sound of distress again and shuddered, but pressed his hips down into the bed. Roxanne kept her hand tangled with his tentacles as she slid down the bed. She put her other hand on his hip.

“Don’t move,” she told him, and took the nearest tentacle into her mouth.

Megamind cried out above her, voice breaking in the middle of the sound.

He tasted sweet, just like he had when she’d pressed her tongue inside of him, and the tentacle pulsed inside her mouth, like a heartbeat. Roxanne sucked at it gently, sliding her mouth down to the base and then back up, swirling her tongue around the tip. The tentacle moved inside her mouth, small, hesitant movements, brushing against the roof of her mouth, curling around her tongue. She grazed it lightly with her teeth—he’d said they were sensitive; she didn’t want to hurt him—and Megamind cried out again.

“Yes yes, fuck yes!”

Roxanne did it again, then pulled her mouth away and took the second tentacle between her lips. She did that with each of his tentacles in turn, teasing them with her tongue and teeth until he was crying out wordlessly with every breath. She let the last tentacle slip from her mouth and blew lightly over them.

Megamind screamed.

Roxanne looked up at him.

“Was that too much?” she asked, concerned.

“Fuck—no—it wasn’t—too much,” Megamind gasped. “Again, please, please, again!”

Roxanne licked the nearest tentacle from bottom to top and blew on it.

Megamind screamed again.
This, Roxanne thought, I did this. I took this beautiful, brilliant man and made him scream with pleasure for me.

God, she wanted him, wanted to feel him against her, inside of her. Could she—?

Condoms clearly weren’t an option; the tentacles weren’t shaped for them. She was on birth control, but—

“Megamind,” she said, sitting up and placing her hand on his cheek. “I need you to focus for me for a second, okay? I’ve got an important question that I need you to answer.”

“Question?” Megamind said, voice raw around the edges. He blinked at her, eyes focusing. “You—a—what’s the—what’s the question?”

“It has to do,” Roxanne said, “with biology.”

“What?”

“Biology.”

Megamind looked at her for a long moment. She saw the exact moment that he caught the reference.


Roxanne nodded, biting her lip and grinning.

“Biology,” Roxanne said, finishing the quote, “as in reproduction.”

Megamind burst out into startled laughter.

“Did—you really just make a Star Trek reference? While we’re—Oh, my god!”

“The opportunity was too good to pass up,” Roxanne said, laughing with him.

“You like Star Trek,” Megamind said wonderingly. “You like Star Trek enough to quote it. That’s fantastic.”

“I mean,” Roxanne said, “I actually tend to prefer next generation over the original series—but like I said, how many chances do you get to quote the ‘biology’ speech and have it be actually relevant to the conversation?”

“You prefer next generation?” Megamind tipped his head inquiringly. “I like the original series better.”

“Really? All the cheap special effects—”

“I like the cheap special effects! Considering the low budget and the time in which they were filming—”

Roxanne, grinning, leaned forward and kissed him, cutting him off.

“Of course you do,” she said. “But I feel like we’re getting off-topic.”

“Off—oh, did you actually have a question? This wasn’t just a, ‘let me fulfill one of Megamind’s biggest fantasies’ thing?”
“You’ve—fantasized about us discussing Star Trek?” Roxanne asked, laughing.

Megamind blushed and looked away.

“I told you,” he said, “I’ve thought about you a lot.” He glanced back up at her shyly through his lashes. “Um. What—what was the question?”

“Are we—genetically compatible?” Roxanne asked. “Could we reproduce?”

Megamind looked startled, and then frowned, obviously considering the question.

“Not—without a—great deal of scientific intervention,” he said after several seconds. “Why?”

“Because I really want to fuck you,” Roxanne said.

Megamind stopped breathing.

“You—want—what?” he managed to stutter out.

“I want to fuck you,” Roxanne repeated. “I want to feel you inside of me.”

Megamind stared at her.

“You—” he said. “You would be—willing to—do that. With me?”

“Yes,” Roxanne said firmly.

“Even though I’m all—” Megamind made a face. “ Weird? Down there?”

“Sweetheart,” Roxanne said, slipping her hands behind his neck, watching his eyes go half-lidded. “I really cannot stress enough how much I am loving the tentacles.”

A look of disbelief broke through the expression of lust on Megamind’s face.

“Oh, don’t look at me like that,” she said, blushing and stroking her fingers up over his ears. “They’re very pretty, for one. I told you how much like like the different colors of your skin. And the radial symmetry of them is very visually satisfying to me. Also, the fact that they’re prehensile and capable of independent, controlled movement? Really excited about that.” She sighed at the deeply unconvinced expression on his face. “I really wish I could make you understand how beautiful you are. I wish I knew how to make you believe me.”

“It’s just sort of—hard to fathom,” Megamind said in a small voice.

“Megamind, what possible reason would I have to lie to you about this?”

“I don’t—I don’t know,” he said. “You’re—you might be—trying to keep from hurting me. I know I’m—” he looked away, pressing his lips briefly together. “—rather pathetic really. You’re—you’re smart enough to know that. Most people don’t—I can fool most people into thinking that I’m—” He cut himself off and looked at her with a smile that trembled around the edges. “But I’ve never been able to trick you,” he said. “You see right through me, don’t you? I’ve always admired that about you.”

“Yeah, Megamind,” Roxanne said forcefully. “I do see right through you. I see through the ‘evil villain’ act that you feel like you need to put on to keep yourself safe from other people. But I also see through this fucked up, inaccurate and—downright cruel perception that you have of yourself! I see that you are sweet and brave and funny and fun and unbelievably smart! Do you know, I’ve
never seen you hurt somebody weaker than you? I’ve never seen you even try. Do you know how many other people I can say that about, Megamind? None. None is the amount of other people I can say that about. I see you, Megamind. And I like what I see. I would like you even if I didn’t think you were basically sex incarnate which I do. By the way.”

Megamind shook his head. Roxanne caught his chin, forcing him to stop, and then bent and kissed him hard.

“I like,” she said, pulling away, “your skin.” She kissed him again. “I like your head.” She kissed his cheek. “I like the sharp contours of your face.” She kissed his other cheek. “I like how dramatic your expressions are.” She kissed his chin. “I like your neck.” She kissed the mark on his throat; Megamind gasped. “Correction, I love your neck.” She kissed the mark again and he moaned. “I love how responsive you are, how eager you are to try new things. I love—”

—you, she thought, I love you but stopped herself from saying it. She kissed him again instead.

“And I like the goddamn tentacles, all right?” she said when she came back up for air. “Will you please just relax about the tentacles? The tentacles are not a fucking problem for me.” She placed a hand on the center of his chest. “You are not pathetic. No matter how much you hate yourself, I am never going to think you are pathetic. I don’t care how many times you need to hear me say it, this is never going to change: I think you are amazing.”

Megamind looked at her like she was made of sunlight.

“I really want you, Megamind,” Roxanne said. “Please, let me have you.”

She touched her fingertips lightly to the mark on his throat, feeling him swallow beneath her hand.

“Yes,” Megamind said. “God, Roxanne, I—yes, of course.”

Roxanne kissed him.

“Good,” she whispered. “That’s good.”

She kissed his throat again, and then the center of his chest, moving down his body, mouthing each of his nipples in turn, pressing her lips to his abdomen, just above where the tentacles joined to his body, kissing his hipbone and sucking the tip of one tentacle briefly into her mouth.

Megamind let out a long, shuddering breath and Roxanne sat up and straddled his lap, the tentacles pressing against her stomach.

“Oh god,” said Megamind blankly.

“You remember the rules?” Roxanne asked.

Megamind didn’t look like he remembered the rules. He didn’t look like he remembered his own name.


“Tentacles can move,” Roxanne said. “But the rest of you stays still for now. Are you with me?”

“With—yes, yes, I’m with you—”

“Good,” Roxanne said, raising herself up slightly and taking hold of one of his tentacles. “We’re
“going to do this slowly, all right? Just like when I put my fingers in you.”

“Yes, right, slowly, yes,” Megamind babbled, nodding his head frantically. “One at a time, you mean?”

“Look at you,” Roxanne said, voice warm with approval, “catching on so quickly.”

She guided the tentacle into herself, watching Megamind’s face, watching his expression blow open with pleasure.

It felt—really nice, the slick, easy way it slid inside of her, the gentle pressure of it pressing up and in at the same time as Roxanne rolled her hips down, pushing it deeper.


She put her hands on his chest for balance and rolled her hips again and again, lost in the sensation and in the way Megamind watched her, like he couldn’t look away, like he never wanted to see anything else.

“Add another one,” Roxanne commanded, voice rough, and felt a second tentacle join the first, both of them pressing into her at different angles, each one moving a little differently.

She grabbed a third tentacle and put it just where she wanted it, against her clit, where she was aching to be touched.

“Touch me,” she said. “Touch me here.” Megamind complied, the tentacle moving against her.

“God, yes,” she moaned, head falling back. “Just like that, Megamind. Fuck, that feels good.”

She shuddered and glanced down at him again. He looked like he was having a religious experience.

“Keep doing that,” she told him, “and put another one inside of me.”

“Roxanne,” Megamind moaned, as though that were the only word he could remember, and pushed a third tentacle inside of her, still stroking her clit. “Roxanne.”

“Oh, fuck yes, Megamind,” Roxanne gasped, spreading her knees shamelessly wide on either side of his hips, grinding down against him. “Another. Put it in me; I want to feel all of you.”

Megamind gazed up at her, mouth open, eyes impossibly wide, tentacle on her clit still moving, and pressed a fourth tentacle into her.

It was a tight fit, making Roxanne’s body stretch and burn and ache in all the best ways as she rolled her hips down onto him.

“Move,” she said, “move with me, Megamind.”

“Oh, thank fuck,” Megamind moaned and rolled his hips up to meet hers. “Roxanne, god, Roxanne —”

“Perfect, perfect,” Roxanne managed to say, “you’re amazing, Megamind, this is amazing, so good—”

It was—it was sort of like being fingered and sort of like being fucked, but better than either of those things, the rhythm different, fluid and more insistent, smoother, no pauses, the motion of
their hips together with the slick slide of Megamind’s tentacles inside of her, on her clit, each one moving differently from the others, no hard edges to anything, just wave after wave of pleasure.

Roxanne moved her hands to Megamind’s handcuffed wrists, pinning them to the headboard.

His hands—god, he wasn’t even using his hands—

She laced her fingers with his, felt him tighten his hands around hers.

She could feel the pleasure building inside of herself, coiling low in her belly with every turn and twist and turn of his tentacles, with every roll of their hips. She rolled her hips harder, chasing the feeling, gasping when the tentacle on her clit moved a new way, found the perfect angle, the perfect pattern, repeated it again and again and—

“Roxanne,” said Megamind, wonder in his voice and his expression and—

Roxanne’s orgasm crashed over her like a wave, unstoppable, inevitable as a tide coming in, leaving her gasping in its wake.

“Oh,” Megamind said, looking up at her like a man who has just seen a miracle.

She slid her hands around the back of his neck and continued to roll her hips, hard and thorough and achingly slow, then brought her palms up to cup the back of his head. He cried out and pressed his head back into her hands, tentacles pulsing against and inside her.

“Roxanne,” he begged, “Roxanne, please—”

“Look at you,” Roxanne murmured. “So beautiful. So good. You’ve done everything I’ve asked you to, haven’t you? You’ve been so very good for me. Didn’t I tell you, baby? Didn’t I tell you that you could be good?”

She drew two fingers down the length of his throat, let them rest on the mark there.

He was sobbing now, incoherent and pleading, saying her name over and over again.

“Roxanne, Roxanne, Roxanne—”

“You’ve been so very good, Megamind,” Roxanne said, leaning down to kiss his panting mouth. “So very, very good.” She slid her other hand around to cup the side of his face, brushing her thumb over his cheekbone.

“Go ahead and come for me now, sweetheart,” she said gently.

Megamind cried out softly, eyes going unfocused, spine arching as his hips snapped up towards her, tentacles pulsing repeatedly, quick and rapid, almost fluttering inside her, the feeling of it like the sensation of freefall, of weightlessness, of flying.

“Perfect,” Roxanne told him as he gasped, looking up at her, his breath still ragged and uneven. “Absolutely perfect.”

“Roxanne,” said Megamind helplessly.

He turned his head to press a kiss to the palm of her hand on his face. He pressed another to her wrist, her fingertips, her thumb. His arms jerked in the handcuffs and he made a low noise of frustration.
“These,” he said urgently, “need to come off now; take them off of me, I want to touch you.”

He sounded almost desperate, and the edge to his voice sent a thrill through Roxanne, in spite of how hard she’d already come just a few minutes ago. She disentangled herself from Megamind (he made a hissing noise when she climbed out of his lap) and reached over to the dresser, yanking the drawer open.

“Hurry up,” Megamind demanded.

“Just a—just a second,” Roxanne said, “there are a lot of things in this drawer; I’ve got to find the key!”

Megamind growled in frustration.

“Forget the fucking key,” he said. “The gun is right there; just use the damn gun!”

Oh, hell yes, she could use the gun; she could certainly use the gun.

Roxanne grabbed it and rolled back over, straddling Megamind’s lap again, pressing the barrel of the gun against the chain of the handcuffs.

“Hold still,” she told him, grinning wickedly, and squeezed the trigger.

The gun jerked in her hands when she fired it, more of a kick than she expected, but she held it steady.

The bright blue beam of light hit the chain at point-blank range and actually went through it, dehydrating not just the chain but a portion of her headboard as well, and—maybe even part of the wall? But she didn’t really have a chance to inspect the damage because even as the little blue cube was falling, Megamind had already started moving, sitting up, taking the gun from her hands and dropping it on the mattress, then reaching for her.

He pulled her to him hard, and kissed her recklessly, hands everywhere: her hair, her face, roaming all over her body.

She could feel his tentacles writhing between them again, just as enthusiastically as ever.

When Megamind finally let her break free to breathe, she said, “What’s—you’re still”—she gestured between their bodies.

“Oh, that,” Megamind said, making a face even as he stroked his fingers through her hair. “Yes, that’s—sorry. It. Always takes me more than one orgasm to get them to stop?”

Roxanne gaped at him.

“Always?” she asked.

“Yes,” Megamind said, stroking both hands down her back. “It’s very inconvenient.”

Roxanne dissolved into laughter, burying her face in the curve between his neck and shoulder. Megamind made a noise of startled pleasure.

“Wh—ah!—what are you laughing at?” he asked, sounding mystified.

“You,” Roxanne said. She kissed his neck and sat up, looking him in the face. “You really are a magical sex unicorn! Your body is basically a wet-dream come true! And you think! That it’s
inconvenient! How many times can you come in a row?"

“I don’t know,” Megamind said, still sounding baffled. “I haven’t ever tested it. I told you, I’m mostly just trying to make it go away.”

“ Fucking hell, Megamind,” Roxanne said, torn between laughter and feeling appalled at the sheer waste it all. “Well, rest assured, we will be testing it! Put that on the goddamn list, right after seeing if you can come with my fingers inside you.”

“Okay,” Megamind said, “list, yes, got it, but, um. First could we—?”

“What?” Roxanne said, watching a blush spread over his cheeks, watching the tips of his ears flush. “What do you want to do first?”


Roxanne laughed again, the wonderful strangeness of all this really hitting her hard. Megamind. Megamind was asking if he could tie her up. And she was so on board with that.

“Yes,” she said. “I’d like that.”

“Really?” Megamind said, looking delighted. “Then—and—could we—downstairs, maybe, the kitchen? I want you in a chair.”

A chair. A chair. Like—

“—like I usually am when you kidnap me?” Roxanne asked, heart beating hard, telling herself not to read too much into it.

Megamind’s blush deepened.

“Yes,” he said. “Well. That is. Another thing that I—have thought about a lot.”

Roxanne grinned and kissed him.

“Good,” she said.

“Good?” Megamind asked. “Really?”

“Yeah,” said Roxanne. “Good.” She laughed again, touching the broken handcuff bracelets still fastened on his wrists. “You are going to have to tie me, though. We sort of broke my handcuffs.” She looked up at the headboard. “And my headboard.”

“I’ll fix it,” Megamind promised, leaning forward to kiss her swiftly. “Later. I’ll fix both of them later! But—”

“Yes,” Roxanne said, “later, definitely later. Sex now.”

“Yes!” Megamind said, “Thank you, yes! Repair work later! Do you, um. Have something we could use for rope?”

“I’m sure we can find something,” Roxanne said archly.
to be continued

art for this story is at http://setepenre-set.tumblr.com/image/140730814994

(the star trek reference/quote is from amok time)
	hank you all for reading (and for the lovely reviews!)
Roxanne had, to be honest, a great number of things to use as rope. There was a reason the drawer of her bedside dresser was so full. When she laid her entire collection of out in front of Megamind, he looked shocked and delighted.

“I can pick any of these?” he asked.

Roxanne grinned at his expression.

“Whichever you like,” she said.

Megamind slid his fingers over the material of the nearest restraints, then picked it up and twisted it experimentally in his hands.

His hands—mmm.

Roxanne settled back on the pillows and enjoyed the view of Megamind sitting on the edge of her bed, picking up each of her restraints in turn and running them through his fingers.

Finally he held up a length of thin nylon cord.

“This one?” he asked, and then, when she nodded, picked up a blue silk scarf. “And, um, blindfold?”

“Sure,” she said, smiling at the way he was blushing. “Come on, let’s go tie me up.”

So now here she was, tied up in a chair again in the dark. It was—a bit disconcerting, actually, how normal that felt. Business as usual for her and Megamind. The fact that he’d insisted she be wearing clothes for this was only adding to her general sense of deja-vu. It was almost as if—as if nothing that had happened between them that day was really real, which was a rather dismaying sensation.

Megamind had wanted to put all of his clothes back on again, too, until Roxanne had begged him not to.

(“It took me so long to get you out of all that in the first place; don’t tell me you’re going to make me go through that again!”)

She’d convinced him to wear her black robe instead, which had been a revelation on several levels. She’d seen Megamind in leather, of course, but she’d never seen him in silk and lace. The textures of it against his skin had looked divine. Roxanne had been hard pressed to keep her hands to herself. It didn’t help matters that the robe was so obviously something that was meant to be removed quickly. Also, it was her robe. Roxanne had never been with a guy who could (or would) wear her clothing before. It was definitely an unexpected turn-on.

Megamind was such a paradox. He had such terrible self-esteem, but he hadn’t even batted an eye when she suggested that he wear her robe, as though it had honestly never occurred to him that he
should feel self-conscious in lace. He’d blushed more over the low neckline of it than anything. She wished she wasn’t wearing this blindfold; she wanted to look at him some more.

Roxanne shifted in her chair, hands behind her back, knees pressed primly together, and waited. And waited.

And waited.

Impatience crackled underneath her skin. What was he doing?

“Megamind?” she called finally.

“Miss Ritchi,” Megamind’s voice murmured from the darkness, and holy fuck, she’d thought Megamind flirted with her usually, but that—that low half-growl thing he had going on right now was—yeah, that was on a whole different level of sexy.

(He’d called her Miss Ritchi—were they doing the roleplaying-as-themselves thing again? She was totally up for that, especially if he kept using that voice.)

“What—what are you doing?” Roxanne asked finally, after another long, frustrating silence.

“Looking at you,” Megamind said, making her jump a little; he was behind her now, circling around her.

“You see me like this all the time,” Roxanne pointed out.

“Yes, but I don’t usually give myself permission to really look,” Megamind said, sounding as though he were actually distracted. “It never felt—I—do I have your permission, Miss Ritchi? Do I have your permission to look at you?”

With anybody else, tied up as she was, Roxanne would have assumed that the answer they were hoping for was no, that they wanted the scene to go in that sort of direction. But Megamind—the way he phrased it, the tone of his voice—it seemed like he wanted—

“Yes, Megamind,” Roxanne said, going with her instincts. “You can look if you want to.”

She heard him laugh a little breathlessly.

“‘If I want to’, he said, “I always want to. I could look at you forever and never get tired of it.”

He had moved closer, she realized; he was standing right in front of her chair. She tipped her chin up in invitation, but he didn’t kiss her, didn’t touch her, didn’t—

She pushed her shoulders back, arching her neck, and she could hear his breath start to come faster, but he still didn’t—

She licked her lips, parting them—come on, Megamind, come on—and still he didn’t—

“Aren’t you ever going to touch me?”

Megamind’s breath caught.

“Do you want me to?” he asked, sounding as though he still didn’t believe it could be possible.
“Yes,” Roxanne said.

“Where?” he asked, the tone of his voice less like he was teasing and more like he was honestly asking. “Where do you want me to touch you, Miss Ritchi?”

“Everywhere,” Roxanne said.

Megamind inhaled sharply, and then his fingertips were on the side of her face, resting there lightly, so lightly that she could feel the way his hands were trembling.

“Everywhere,” he said. “I can do that.”

He cupped the side of her face and slid his other hand into her hair, stroking his fingers through it, toying with the strands (had he ever—he had probably never played with someone’s hair before —). He traced the curve of her ear and, even though she was nowhere near as sensitive there as he was, the move still sent a shiver through her.

With the hand that cradled her face, he ran his thumb over her lower lip, making a noise of surprise when Roxanne parted her lips and took it into her mouth.

“You,” he said, half-laughing, and kissed her just beneath her jaw, right over her pulse point.

He leaned over her, one arm resting on the back of the chair, the other hand in her hair again, fingers tightening, tipping her head back. He pressed his lips to her throat, then to her temple, back down to her shoulder, up to her ear, to the corner of her mouth, never anything she could predict, no discernible pattern to it that she could figure out and try to respond to.

He kissed her, light and quick, on the lips, pulling away when Roxanne tried to deepen the kiss. She made a sound of mingled annoyance and desire and leaned forward blindly, trying to capture his mouth again.

He laughed and kissed her cheekbone, too fast for her to turn into him in time to make him really kiss her, and then he ran both of his hands slowly down her neck and shoulders, thumbs gliding over the front of her throat and then brushing across her collar bones.

Roxanne let her head fall back, eyes closing beneath the blindfold, as his hands moved down her arms, behind her back to her bound wrists, then back up again to her shoulders, his hands leaving a trail of shivery sensation in their wake.

She felt his mouth at her throat again, his lips pressed to the hollow between her collar bones, and then his hands were on her sides, just below her breasts. He moved them down to her hips, then slowly back up again—what had Megamind said, when she’d asked him to describe how it felt when she touched him? *Sparks under my skin; electricity running through your fingers.* That was —that was a good description.

His hands stopped moving up again, settling in place just beneath her breasts again.

“Megamind, please,” Roxanne said, more breathily than she intended.

“Please, what, Miss Ritchi?” Megamind asked, voice darker and more wicked than he’d ever managed while threatening her with deathtraps, thumbs just brushing the underside of her breasts through the material of her dress and why the ever-loving fuck had he insisted she be wearing clothing for this—

“Please touch me,” Roxanne said.
Megamind tapped his thumbs against her ribs pointedly.

“I am touching you,” he said.

“God damn it, Megamind—”

“How do you want me to touch you?” he asked. Roxanne, hearing the sly smile in his voice, broke, arching her back, pushing her breasts into his hands.

“Megamind—”

“How do you want me to touch you like this?” he asked, palming her breasts, squeezing slightly, brushing his thumbs back and forth across her nipples, still through the damn fabric of her damn dress. “Do you want me to touch you like this?”

“I want your hands on my skin,” Roxanne moaned.

He immediately moved his hands to her bare arms.

“How do you want me to touch you like this?” he asked innocently as Roxanne made a noise of utter frustration that was not quite a scream.

“You,” she said, “know perfectly damn well what I meant!”

She twisted in the chair, trying to find the angle that would let her shove herself into his hands again.

“Ah-ah-ah, Miss Ritchi!” Megamind said admonishingly, removing his hands from her entirely. “I’ve already touched you there.”

“Megamind—“

“And you did say that you wanted me to touch you everywhere,” he said in a voice of complete reason as Roxanne growled low in her throat.

She heard the sound of his knees hitting the floor; he was kneeling in front of her, she realized, and her heart flipped over a little at the thought.

“Let it never be said,” he continued, “that I don’t listen to your feedback, Miss Ritchi.”

He placed his hands on her hips and then ran his palms down her thighs, her calves, her ankles.

“Oh, please,” she managed to say, “when have you ever listened to any of my feedback?”

He wrapped a hand around one ankle, lifting her foot slightly, slipping off her shoe, pressing his thumb firmly into the arch of her foot. He put her foot back on the floor and did the same to the other one.

“I’m listening now,” he said, putting her bare foot carefully back down on the floor. And then his hands were on her knees, suddenly, pushing them apart, brazenly spreading her legs.

“Any complaints, Miss Ritchi?” he asked.

“I—” Roxanne gasped. “N—no. No complaints.”

“Really?” he said, fingers curling around her calves, thumbs moving in tiny circles. “You know,
you could tell me to stop, Miss Ritchi. Just tell me that you want me to stop—” she felt him press a kiss to one of her knees. “—and I’ll stop.”

Was he—were they still in the scene? Was he trying to remind her about Code: Safeword? That—no; he was still calling her Miss Ritchi; they were apparently still playing.

(tell me that you want me to stop and I’ll stop and when she’d asked if he was ever going to touch her, he’d said do you want me to like it was a real question and do I have your permission, Miss Ritchi, and—)

Was that—was that the point to the scenario Megamind had set up? Was her consent the central element of the fantasy?

Because that would be—

“Please don’t stop,” Roxanne whispered. “I don’t want you to stop.”

Megamind’s hands stopped moving for a moment (Roxanne felt her heart beating in her throat—one, twice, three times—she wanted to see him, wanted to look at his face, watch his expression —)

“Then I won’t,” Megamind said, and put one hand lightly, hesitantly, on her knee.

Roxanne wanted, so very badly, to grab his wrist and shove his hand up her skirt, but her hands were tied behind her back.

She shifted her wrists together, testing the bond reflexively, and—

—wait. That wasn’t—the cord was tied far too loosely around her wrists; with a little effort she could definitely slip free. Why would he—? Megamind knew how to tie her up; god knew he’d done it enough times. He knew exactly how tight to make the knots. Why would he tie her up wrong on purpose? Was it a courtesy thing, him trying to make sure she was comfortable or something, or did he actually want her to—

Megamind’s hands slipped beneath her skirt, scattering her thoughts, his fingers stroking feather-light up her inner thighs, then ghosting across the front of her panties, light and delicate, like a question.

“Yes,” Roxanne said, and he stroked her again.

“Yes,” she repeated, as he continued to touch her, hard then soft, then hard again, altering the direction of the strokes, the speed, pausing in between each one, repeating some, changing others—was he—

—was he studying her reactions? Like she was one of his experiments; like figuring out the best way to make her moan was worth research and analysis and scientific scrutiny.

She wanted to see him, damn it, wanted to look at him looking at her. Was he frowning in concentration, was he doing that lip-bite smile everything-is-going-according-to-plan thing?

Megamind slid his fingers—fucking finally—down the front of her panties and touched her properly—diagonal upstroke to the left followed by a light, teasing circle around her clit and then a hard downstroke—the exact fucking move that Roxanne always used to get herself off when she was the one doing this holy fuck holy shit how the hell did he figure that out?
“Interesting,” Megamind murmured, pressing one finger inside of her.

Roxanne whimpered, hips moving of their own accord, pushing towards him.

Megamind pulled his finger back, and then thrust it in again, repeated the motion, added a second finger, pumped them in and out of her a few times.

“Hm,” he said, a quiet, thoughtful sound, as though he were trying to understand something.

Roxanne pushed her hips towards him again.

He went still for a second, and then said—

“Oh,” in a tone of surprise.

Roxanne’s hips rolled into him again.

“Really?” he said, “My voice? Is that what—is that what made you move like that? Do you like it when I talk?”

“Yes,” Roxanne moaned, doing her best to fuck herself on his hand in spite of the awkward angle and the way his wrist was trapped between her panties and skirt. “I love it when you talk.”

“Seriously?” Megamind asked, laughter in his voice. “I would have guessed you would be tired of listening to me by now. Aren’t you the one, Miss Ritchi, who’s always complaining about my tendency to monologue?”

“That’s because,” Roxanne hissed, “every time you start, I have to press my knees together and try not to squirm in the fucking chair.”

“Press your knees—? Oh,” he said, “I get it. The pressure here—” he twisted his wrist and rubbed her clit with his thumb, causing Roxanne to make a rather embarrassing sound. “That’s fascinating. All this time you’ve been telling me to be quiet—when really what you wanted was for me to keep talking and touch you like this?” He stroked her clit again.

“That,” Roxanne said, throwing her head back, “or to ride your mouth and make you shut up like that.”

Megamind went still, and then took his hand away. Before Roxanne could make more than a small noise of protest, however, he yanked her forward in the chair.

“Megamind—”

Megamind shoved her skirt up and her panties down, hitching her knees over his shoulders and leaning down to lick her from the bottom of her sex to the top.

Roxanne cried out and he did it again, tongue dragging over her, thrusting inside, then moving over her again and again, varying the motions, just as he had done with his fingers, teasing her with his tongue, with his lips, with his teeth and that was—

She twisted her wrists, freeing her hands from the rope, tearing off the blindfold.

It was just as hot as she’d thought it would be—hotter, actually, the sight of Megamind with his face pressed between her thighs, the blue skin, the exaggerated curve of his head—

Roxanne put her hands on the back of his head, fingers placed just right to make him moan.
And he did moan, a pleased, oddly unsurprised sound—so he had wanted her to free herself—and then he looked up at her, mouth flushed and wet, and made a noise that did sound surprised.

“You took off the blindfold?” he asked, sounding confused.

“I wanted to see you,” Roxanne said.

And, oh, the expression on his face at that, like—

He stood and picked her up off the chair in one fluid motion, one arm beneath her ass, the other on the back of her neck, cradling her head as he kissed her and—holy hell, Megamind was a lot stronger than Roxanne had assumed, because Roxanne’s legs were wrapped around his waist and her arms were around his neck and he was holding her like that with no indication of difficulty.

She raked her nails over the back of his head and neck and he made a muffled sound against her mouth, turning and setting her down so that she was perched on the edge of the kitchen table. He yanked her dress up and pulled it over her head. Roxanne obligingly raised her arms to let him pull it off of her. She reached for him again when he tossed the dress aside.

“Hands on the table, Miss Ritchi,” Megamind growled, grabbing her wrists and forcing her hands down onto the table top.

“Oh,” Roxanne said, a shaky exhalation, and then Megamind was kissing her again, hands sliding up her body, palming her breasts.

He tweaked her nipples, rolling them between his fingers, and pulled his mouth away from hers to kiss her neck, her throat, her shoulders. Roxanne made a noise of encouragement and he bent and put his mouth to one of her breasts.

She arched her back, pressing up into the delicious sensation of his mouth on her, and wrapped her arms around his neck again.

Megamind grabbed her wrists and broke her grip.

“Miss Ritchi,” he said darkly, threateningly, “I told you to keep your hands on the table. If you can’t be trusted to control yourself, then I will have to tie you up again. And then leave you like that until you’ve learned your lesson,” he added sharply, probably because Roxanne clearly wasn’t phased by his threat to tie her up again.

“You wouldn’t,” Roxanne said.

Megamind smirked at her, standing between her legs, body bent over hers, his hands pinning hers to the table.

“Wouldn’t I?” he said. “Really?” He laughed. “Haven’t you heard, Temptress?”

His gaze flicked over her, eyes drinking in the sight of her throat, her breasts, her mouth. His eyes met hers again and his smile widened, sharp and white and predatory—god, he looked like he wanted to eat her.

“I’m evil.”

Roxanne’s breath caught.

“You asked me before,” Megamind said, lowering his voice and leaning closer to her, “if I
remembered the first time I kidnapped you. So tell me, Miss Ritchi—do you remember? Do you remember—” he pressed a biting sort of kiss to her jaw, “—the first thing I ever said to you?”

“You—”

“I said,” Megamind leaned closer still, putting his lips to her ear, whispering, “you should have run while you had the chance.”

Roxanne gasped; Megamind pulled away to look into her face.

“Oh, my dear, beautiful, perfect Miss Ritchi,” he said, kissing her and then pulling back again to smile at her crookedly. “You really should have run while you had the chance.”

“Megamind,” Roxanne said, “Megamind, please, please—”

Megamind laughed.

“I do love it when you beg,” he said. “Lie back on the table, Miss Ritchi,” he added gently. “Let me give you what you need.”

Trembling, Roxanne let herself lie back on the table.

“There now,” Megamind said, pressing a kiss to her hip. “Just like that.” He looked up at her, frowning slightly. “Earlier, you said—multiple orgasms, this is something humans can’t do?”


Megamind grinned at her, sharp and sudden.

“Good,” he said, and hooked one of her knees over his shoulder again, bending down to put his mouth to her once more.

“Oh, god,” Roxanne said, her voice high and thready. “Oh, god, Megamind, please—”

It was better, even, than the first time he’d gone down on her, because he’d evidently kept track of all of her responses the first time around, so that this time—

—everything he did was—

“—oh fuck oh god oh fuck—“

Roxanne realized that she had placed the foot that wasn’t curled around Megamind’s back flat against the table, that she was using it for leverage, thrusting herself up against his mouth, and made herself stop.

“Please,” she moaned, “Megamind, please—”

He sucked hard at her clit and she bucked up towards him again; her fingers tightened around nothing, nails raking uselessly against the table top; she forced herself to stop moving.

Megamind hummed against her, then darted his tongue out rapidly to taste her; Roxanne felt her hips stutter and made them be still.

Megamind growled and looked up at her.

“Why do you keep fucking stopping?” he snarled. “You said you wanted to ride my mouth; fucking
“I—” Roxanne panted, (god, he looked angry; it was so fucking hot she wanted to scream) “I—you won’t be able to breathe—”

“So I’ll hold my goddamn breath.”

“I don’t want to hurt you,” Roxanne said.

Megamind rolled his eyes.

“Do I look like I’m made of fucking glass?” He licked her clit suddenly, and then blew a cold stream of air on it.

Roxanne cried out.

“Yes,” Megamind said smugly. “I remember that move. I was paying attention, you know. And I’ve got several other ideas I can try out if that doesn’t convince you. What I lack in personal experience I’m fairly certain I can more than make up for in creativity. I am amazingly intelligent; I hope you realize this! Or else you will rue the day that you ever underestimated Megamind! The incredibly handsome criminal genius and Master of All Villainy!”

Roxanne gave a startled laugh.

“Did you really just evil monologue at me in the middle of sex?” she asked.

“That’s right,” Megamind said, grinning and biting his lip. “What are you gonna do about it?”

“I—"

“Come on, Temptress,” Megamind said, “shut me up.”

He bent his mouth to her again—oh god—and this time Roxanne gave herself up to the feeling, let her body do as it liked, rolling her hips up into him, riding his mouth just like she’d been dying to.

Megamind made a sound of deep satisfaction and braced one hand on the table, placing the palm of his other hand on the small of her back, helping to support her while she took her pleasure from his mouth, his tongue continuing to move against her, with her.

“Megamind,” Roxanne said, “Megamind—"

Megamind hummed contentedly, as if there was nothing else in the world he’d rather be doing and —

Roxanne cried out, back arching as she came.

Megamind caught her and helped her to lower her hips slowly so that she was lying on the table, boneless and breathless, little colored sparks dancing at the corners of her vision.

“That,” Megamind said, grinning at her, “was fantastic.”

Roxanne’s breath caught on a disbelieving laugh.

Megamind. He just—he went down on her so hard she was still seeing stars and he was the one who thought it was fantastic?
Roxanne pushed herself up shakily and put one hand on the back of Megamind’s head, pulling him in for a kiss (keep your hands on the table, he’d said, but Roxanne had never really been very good at following the rules when it didn’t suit her).

She could taste herself on him as she kissed him, as he moaned into her mouth and kissed her back like he wanted to drown in her, like he still hadn’t gotten enough of her, like he could never get enough of her.

With her free hand, Roxanne found the sash of the robe Megamind was wearing and untied the knot. The robe fell open and she reached down, tangling her fingers with his tentacles.

Megamind made another noise against her lips and pulled her hard against him. Roxanne wrapped her legs around his waist, feeling his tentacles wrapping around her fingers, moving between their bodies. Megamind picked her up again, turning and setting her back down in the chair, going to his knees in front of her.

“Please,” she said, pushing the robe off his shoulders, “oh, please—”

Megamind pulled her to the edge of the chair, pulled her flush with his body.

“Tell me,” he said, “tell me you want this.”

His tentacles moved against her, pressing, writhing, stroking her inner thighs, her stomach, her clit.

“I do,” Roxanne said, “I do; I want this; I want you, Megamind—”

He pressed two tentacles into her at once, slick and easy, and leaned up to kiss her, his hands on her breasts, clever fingers dancing on her nipples.

“Tell me that you like the way I touch you,” Megamind said, hands and tentacles all moving.

“God, Megamind,” Roxanne moaned, “I love the way you touch me; nothing has ever felt this good, nothing—”

Megamind pressed two more tentacles into her and ran two fingers down the front of her throat. Roxanne reached out and mimicked the gesture on him, making him gasp.

“Tell me—” he said, voice shaking around the edges. “Tell me that you’ll give me anything I want—”

“Anything,” Roxanne said recklessly, “anything you want, Megamind—”

He trailed a trembling hand down the center line of her body.

“Tell me that you’ll do anything I ask—” he said.

“Anything, anything—”

He replaced the tentacle on her clit with his fingers and pressed the fifth tentacle inside of her.

Roxanne screamed—

“—yes god yes—”

She wrapped her legs around his waist, pulling him closer.
“Tell me,” Megamind said, voice breaking down the middle, “tell me that you love me, Roxanne, please—”

“I love you,” Roxanne cried, “oh god, Megamind, I love you! I love—”

Megamind kissed her and Roxanne’s orgasm broke over her like rain after a thousand years of drought.

She cried out and Megamind cried out with her, the expression of ecstasy on his face so intense it almost looked like pain. Roxanne fell back in the chair, Megamind’s head pressed to the curve between her neck and shoulder. She petted the back of his head mindlessly, unable to keep her hands from his skin and—

His breathing was uneven, shuddery gasps like he was trying not to cry. Roxanne ran her hands over his shoulders and felt them go tense beneath her touch, practically vibrating with it, like a cord pulled to the breaking point and about to snap.

“Hey,” she said soothingly, “hey, sweetheart, Megamind, it’s okay—”

Fuck, should she not be touching him like this? His shoulders and head were an erogenous zone; maybe overstimulation was a problem?

She moved her hands to his upper back instead, but this didn’t seem to help.

“I’m sorry,” he said, clearly forcing the words out through gritted teeth, face still hidden, “I’m sorry, I’m so fucking sorry—”

Maybe he was just—emotionally overwhelmed?

“It’s okay,” she said, “Really, it’s okay, this happens sometimes after sex; the chemicals released —”

Megamind gave a breathy, bitter laugh.

“No,” he said, “not about my—general mental and emotional instability, about—earlier, when I—”

He cut himself off, pushing away from her, disentangling their bodies. He shook his head.

“What?” Roxanne asked. “Earlier when you what?”

“I—” Megamind said, glancing away from her. He swallowed. “No, you’re right, it’s better that we just ignore—never mind. Please forgive the—” he waved a self-deprecating hand, “—over-emotional alien outburst,” he smiled up at her, not even close to convincingly, and got to his feet.

“Megamind—”

“Thank you,” he said, with breathtaking sincerity. He leaned over her, one hand on the back of her chair, the other hand beneath her chin, tilting it up. He looked—

What was—what was wrong? She’d finally told him that she loved him; he’d asked her to, wasn’t that a good thing?

He looked like his heart was breaking.

“That was exactly what I wanted,” he said softly, with a smile that trembled around the edges, and bent down to kiss her.
Roxanne heard the sound of the balcony door opening.

“Hey, Roxy,” Wayne’s voice said, unnaturally loud and booming, “You home? I really need to talk to somebody. I kinda think I might be sort of having a midlife cri—”

His gaze fell on Megamind and Roxanne.

“—sis.”

Chapter End Notes

to be continued...
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

There was a moment of frozen silence.

“Uh,” said Wayne.

“What the fuck, Wayne!” Roxanne shrieked, leaping up to grab her dress from the floor and holding it in front of herself. “You can’t just walk into somebody’s apartment without asking; we’ve fucking talked about this before!”

“I’m sorry!” Wayne said defensively, “I’m sorry! I’m having a midlife crisis! I forgot!” He looked at Megamind, who was standing like a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming car, and raised his eyebrows. “Possibly,” he added, “I’m not the only one having a midlife crisis?”

Megamind made a small, choked sound in the back of his throat. His eyes were too wide, whites showing all around his irises, and his breath was coming too hard, too fast. He looked like he was —

“Oh, fuck you, Wayne,” Roxanne hissed, abandoning her attempts to pull on her dress in favor of picking up her robe and wrapping it around Megamind’s shoulders.

“Jeez, Roxy, I—”

“Hey,” Roxanne said, lowering her voice and trying to get Megamind’s eyes to focus on her as she coaxed him into putting on the bathrobe—he was still hyperventilating; he looked like he was about to pass out—“Hey, it’s okay; Megamind, I’m here with you; it’s okay—”

“SIR!”

The front door of Roxanne’s apartment slammed open as Minion, carrying a large laser cannon and followed by a small cloud of brainbots, burst into the room.

Roxanne gave a small scream of surprise and grabbed her dress again, clutching it in front of her body.

“Sir, are you all right?! I saw Metro Ma—” Minion cut himself off as his eyes fell on Megamind and Roxanne.

There was another moment of silence, and then Minion’s eyes went wide. He pointed at Megamind.

“Wha—” Minion spluttered, “—that’s—what?!"

Megamind blushed violently and covered the mark on his throat with his hand.

“Aren’t you going to yell at him for coming in your apartment without asking?” Wayne asked sulkily.

“What’s going on!?” Minion demanded.

“Bowg bowg!”
“I—” Megamind said in a small, fragile voice, “—I really want to be wearing more clothing right now.”

“I think we all want that,” Wayne said.

Megamind flushed even harder, but his eyes went hard and his mouth went flat. He lowered the hand that was covering the mark on his throat, letting it ball into a fist at his side.

Then he lifted his chin, a deliberate, defiant, fuck-you tilt.

As if this was some sort of signal, Minion raised the laser cannon to his shoulder. The brainbots went into attack formation. Wayne raised his fingertips to his temple, preparing to activate his laser vision; Megamind grabbed Roxanne’s arm, sweeping her protectively behind himself and—

“TIME OUT!” Roxanne shouted.

They froze, even the brainbots halting midair to turn their eyestalks curiously towards Roxanne.

“Roxy—”

“Miss Ritchi—”

“Bowg—”

“Shut up, all of you!” Roxanne snapped. “This is what’s going to happen: Megamind and I are going to go and get dressed. No one is to attempt to kill anyone else while we’re gone! No one! When we come back, we will all have a civil discussion like civil fucking people.”

Wayne opened his mouth.

“You,” Roxanne said, pointing at him. “Shut up. Just sit down and shut up until I come back. You—” she pointed at the brainbot who was eyeing her abandoned shoes hungrily. “—I see you! Do not even think about it! And Minion—” she turned to Minion, who was watching her with wide, shocked eyes, “—just try to keep things under control while we’re gone, will you?”

“Um,” said Minion, eyes darting between her and Megamind. “Yes? Miss—ma’am? Yes, Ma’am.”

“Right,” said Roxanne, and dragged Megamind up the steps to her bedroom with as much dignity as she could muster, considering her bare ass was showing all the way up the stairs.

“I—” Megamind said, as Roxanne pulled him inside her bedroom and closed the door firmly behind them. “I am—I am so very sorry about all this.”

He stepped away from her, rapidly gathering up his clothes with sharp, abrupt motions.

“Megamind—,” Roxanne said, “Megamind, you don’t need to apologize.”

He began pulling on his undersuit, still wearing her robe, dressing beneath it like he—like he was afraid to let her see his skin, like they hadn’t—

“Megamind,” Roxanne repeated, heart twisting painfully.

He finished putting on the undersuit, took off her robe, folded it swiftly, and put it on the bed.

“That was extremely terrible for me,” he said, “and I am sure that it was worse for you.”
He picked up his pants and began to put them on.

“They—them walking in on us like that, you mean?” Roxanne asked, stepping into her dress, keeping her eyes on Megamind as she pulled it up. He nodded jerkily and picked up his shirt, shoving his arms into the sleeves. “Why would that be worse for me?” she asked, mystified.

Megamind, sitting on the edge of the bed to put on his shoes, looked up at her with a sort of bitter, incredulous smile.

Did he mean—

“Oh,” Roxanne said quietly. “You think—you think that I’m embarrassed because I was with you?”

“Yes, of course,” Megamind said flatly, pulling on his gloves, hiding his hands from her. “That could not have been—I’m sorry. People know, now, and—I’m sure you never wanted that.”

“Megamind,” Roxanne said, moving to stand in front of him. He didn’t look up at her, so she caught his chin and tilted his face up.

His expression was—it was like there was a wall there, behind his eyes, keeping him from her.

“I,” Roxanne said, without looking away from his face, “am not ashamed of being with you. I do not care that they know.”

Something flickered in his expression—disbelief? Hope? She couldn’t really tell, it disappeared so quickly.

“I would have preferred,” Roxanne continued, risking a wry smile, “not to be naked when they found out, obviously. But I am not upset that they know.”

Another flicker in his expression, definitely disbelief this time.

Roxanne let her fingers trail down the length of his throat to the mark she’d given him.

“I told you,” she added softly, and traced an R over the mark again. “Let them see.”

Megamind’s eyes went wide, the wall disappearing from behind his eyes, revealing shock and confusion. His lips parted, and Roxanne couldn’t help leaning down to kiss him.

“But if you feel uncomfortable with them seeing the mark,” she added as she pulled away, “I can get you a scarf to wear or something.”

“I—” Megamind said. He looked like he was about to fall over backwards onto the bed—(Roxanne resisted the urge to shove him back and climb into his lap) “You—that’s—why—?”

The door to Roxanne’s bedroom opened. She turned sharply, about to yell at whoever the fuck thought it was okay to—

“Bowg,” said the brainbot cautiously, and held out her shoes to her.

Roxanne blinked at it.

“Oh,” she said.

She took the shoes.
“Thank you,” she added, and, after a moment’s hesitation, carefully patted the brainbot on its glass dome, in between all of the spikes.

It made a happy sound, wriggling under her hand, and then swooped off into the hall again, pulling the door closed behind itself.

Roxanne smiled and turned back to Megamind, intending to kiss him again, but found that, while her back was turned, he had stood and finished dressing. Even his gloves were on again, and as she watched, he ran his fingers along the edges of his cape collar, making it stand up stiffly.

It was—it was disconcerting, seeing him in his usual clothes again. She’d never realized before today how much of his skin his suit covered. Everything but the top of his head, his face, and the narrow line of his exposed throat, between the sides of his collar.

He slid the gun into the holster on his thigh and tightened a buckle on his left glove.

Even his hands were covered.

And she knew now why he dressed like that (don’t like my body very much), and she understood why he’d said, downstairs, that he wanted to be wearing more clothing, but she couldn’t help feel that—that the suit wasn’t just meant to hide him from Wayne, from—from the embarrassment of the situation, but also from—

Also from her.

She glanced down at the mark on his throat—she’d placed it just right, just above the clasp with Megamind’s insignia.

“I,” Megamind said, “would like that scarf, please.”

Oh.

She hadn’t really expected him to forego the scarf, but she’d hoped—

*He’s uncomfortable* Roxanne told herself sharply, trying to quell her disappointment. *He has a cultural modesty standard involving necks! He’s uncomfortable; stop trying to make this about you.*

She went to get him a scarf.

The blue silk scarf would have been best, of course, but it was still downstairs.

Unfortunately, the only other scarf she had was a fluffy pink one that she dredged up from the back of her closet. Megamind looked at it with distaste, and then sighed and put it on.

Roxanne couldn’t help but feel a twinge of dismay that he would rather wear that scarf then show —

*Stop it.*

“Eyeliner,” Megamind said suddenly.

“What?”

“Eyeliner,” Megamind repeated. “I—do you have some that—do you have some that I can use?”
“Some eyeliner?” Roxanne asked. She knew he wore it sometimes, of course, but this hardly seemed the moment for—

Megamind’s mouth twisted sideways.

“Yes,” he said. “Well. Sometimes it—sometimes it helps me to feel more in control. More confident. Less like a colossal failure.” His mouth twisted again and he looked away from Roxanne, eyes going down and to the side. “I—,” he said, “—I’m aware that this is sad and pathetic. You—never mind.”

“Megamind—”

“It’s fine. I’m fine. Let’s get this over with.”

“I—” Roxanne reached for his wrist, but he shied away from her touch.

He—he didn’t want her touching him?

She left her hand extended out for a moment, giving him a chance to change his mind, to step closer. He didn’t, though, so she let her hand drop back to her side.

“I’m going to fix my hair before we go down,” Roxanne said, playing for time. There was no way she would get Megamind to talk about whatever this was in front of Wayne and Minion.

(he’d been upset even before Wayne came in, when he pulled away from her, when he said I’m sorry and better we just ignore—)

Slowly, she went to her bureau, opened the top drawer, and got out the bag with her makeup and hair products in it. She opened the bag, and, careful not to look up at Megamind’s reflection in the mirror, took out a black eyeliner pencil and set it on the far edge of the bureau.

She got out her hairbrush and looked up at her own reflection.

Wow, yeah, it was a good thing she’d thought to fix her hair in order to give Megamind time to calm down, because her hair was a mess. She made a face at her reflection and set about trying to fix it.

Motion in the reflection of the room: Megamind moving closer, moving to stand at the extreme edge of the bureau. Out of the corner of her eye, Roxanne saw him pick up the eyeliner pencil. Good.

Okay.

She flattened her hair out as best she could, brushed her bangs to one side, then risked a glance over at Megamind’s reflection in the mirror.

He was leaning close to the glass, fingertips of one hand pressed to his cheekbone and eyebrow, lining his eye with the other hand.

Roxanne, watching him, felt a great tide of affection rise up in her chest.

God, she really did love him.

He was just standing there putting on eyeliner (in leather and spikes and a pink fluffy scarf—oh,
Megamind)—and Roxanne’s heart ached with how much she—

—she wanted this all the time. She wanted them to stand side by side in front of the mirror to get ready in the morning, wanted to lean her head on his shoulder as they sat on the couch, wanted him to fall asleep with his head in her lap, wanted to sit across the kitchen table from him and eat breakfast while he explained whatever insanely complicated machine he was working on that week.

She wanted—okay, yes, she wanted to handcuff him to her bed again, wanted to fuck him on every horizontal and vertical surface in her apartment (and the Lair—ohhh god, the Lair—she definitely had some thoughts about the Lair)—

But she also wanted to hold his hand as they walked down the sidewalk together, wanted him to drop her off at work with a kiss on the cheek, wanted—

She wanted to introduce him to her family, which would be terrible, she knew, completely and objectively terrible on every possible level, but she still wanted to do it, and if that wasn’t love then she didn’t know what love was.

Roxanne paused, brush in hand.

“Megamind,” she said, around the tightness in her throat, “earlier, when I said—”

Megamind flinched, nearly stabbing himself in the eye with the pencil.

“Please,” he said, “please don’t. It was—it was wrong of me. To ask that of you. I was—it was selfish of me and I’m sorry but I really—please. Don’t.”

Selfish? How—okay, so there were two ways to take that, Roxanne thought, trying, god, trying to stay calm, to keep her heart from sinking. Either he still didn’t believe her, and thought it was selfish to ask her to lie—or—

—or he didn’t love her back and he thought it was selfish to ask her to tell him when he couldn’t return her feelings.

And for someone like Megamind, desperate for affection, always denied it—the prospect of someone loving him had to be intoxicating to him, didn’t it? Of course he’d want to hear her say it, regardless of how he felt about her. Roxanne had thought it herself, earlier, when she’d first debated telling him, had thought that he deserved to know that someone loved him even if he couldn’t love her back.

But he said he thought about me before this, Roxanne’s heart cried out, he said who else would I be thinking about.

Yes, but, said Roxanne’s rational self, think about it, Roxanne. Who else, besides you, does he see on a regular basis?

(options are limited)

No. He wanted me; he did—

He’s already regretting it. He was awfully determined to cover up that mark you gave him.

He’s shy!
He’s pulling away; you noticed that, didn’t you? That kiss, downstairs, right before Wayne came it, that was a goodbye kiss if there ever was one. You scared him off. You told him that you love him and now he feels trapped, obligated, guilty.

No! He asked me—he asked me to tell him that I loved him!

Yes, whispered Roxanne’s rational self, and remember how he didn’t say it back?

Roxanne found that her hands were shaking, that she was clenching the hairbrush hard enough to turn her knuckles white, hard enough to hurt. She made herself put it down, tried to make herself let go of the handle.

But I love you she cried, shouted, screamed inside her own mind.

(let go, Roxanne.)

I love you

(let go. let go.)

Why can’t you love me back?

(let. go.)

Roxanne let go.

Megamind put down the eyeliner.

“Well,” Roxanne said in a calm voice that sounded very far away to her own ears, “I guess we’re ready, then.”

Wayne was sitting at Roxanne’s kitchen table when they came down. The cord and the blindfold had been cleared away (Roxanne hoped the brainbots hadn’t torn them to shreds), as had her abandoned panties, and the chair had been pushed primly into place beneath the kitchen table.

Minion had made coffee and was pouring out a cup for Wayne with aggressive politeness.

“There you are,” Minion said, pushing the cup at Wayne. “Hope you enjoy it,” he added, tone perfectly cordial, but still somehow managing to imply very strongly that what he really hoped Wayne would do with the coffee was choke on it and die.

When Wayne looked up at Roxanne and Megamind and said—

“What took you two so long?”

—in a suspicious tone, Roxanne mentally seconded the choke-and-die invitation.

Megamind shot him a nasty look but didn’t say anything, just leaned back against the kitchen counter, arms crossed.

Wayne looked at him quizzically, gaze lingering on the pink scarf, and Roxanne saw Megamind tense even further.
“So, Wayne,” Roxanne said loudly, “what’s this about you having a midlife crisis?”

The best defense was a good offense, after all.

Wayne looked at her, startled, looking away from Megamind.

“Thank you, Minion,” Roxanne added, taking the cup that Minion was offering.

“You’re welcome, Ma’am,” Minion said. “I—I hope it’s all right that I went ahead and made coffee.”


“I—” Wayne shook himself. “That can wait. How long has this been—”

“No, Wayne,” Roxanne said firmly. “We are not talking about that.”

“Drink, Sir?” Minion asked in an undertone.

“Roxy, how long has—”

“Is there anything stronger than coffee?” Megamind asked in an undertone, arms folded even tighter across his chest than before.

“Like wine?” Roxanne asked.

“Like cyanide,” Megamind muttered.

“Don’t joke about that, Sir,” Minion said sharply.

Megamind grimaced and looked away.

“Roxy,” Wayne said, in his most Metro-Man-ly voice. “You need to tell me—”

“No. This crisis of yours was evidently important, so important that you came into my home without knocking because you needed to talk to me. So talk.”

“Roxy, I think I have a right to be concerned when—”

“Wayne,” Roxanne said, fixing him with a hard stare. “Kindly stick to the subject at hand.”

“—when I catch one of my friends sleeping with a supervillain who—”

“Catch?” Roxanne tilted her chin up and looked down her nose at Wayne, folding both hands over the back of the kitchen chair—a power stance.

Of course, she had no actual physical advantage over Wayne, but the psychological effect still worked. Wayne, the only one in the kitchen who was sitting down, shifted uncomfortably in his chair).

“Catch,” Roxanne repeated evenly. “That’s an interesting choice of word, there. Have you been watching me, Wayne?”

“Whu—?” Wayne looked baffled and even more uncomfortable. “What? No! Of course—”

“I see,” Roxanne said, in a tone that said I don’t believe you.
She did believe him, of course. She was pretty sure Wayne barely thought about her at all when she wasn’t right in front of him. But the tone, like the stance, did what it was supposed to.

Wayne flushed dully.

“So,” Roxanne said, “if you haven’t, as you say, been watching me, then catch is really an inaccurate choice of word, isn’t it? A better way of putting it might be ‘when I grossly invade the privacy of a woman by entering her home without permission and subsequently spy on her in a moment of intimacy’. Much more accurate, don’t you think? Or perhaps you’d like to pass on from this subject to the topic actually under discussion, hm?”

“Spy?” Wayne spluttered. “There was no—there was no spying! I—you—you sound like _him_!”

Roxanne bristled and glared at Wayne. She heard Megamind give a sharp laugh.

“Like _me_? You’re kidding, right?” he said to Wayne. “Have you never watched her interviews? She always gets like this when people don’t cooperate.”

Wayne looked shifty. Megamind looked baffled.

“You don’t watch her interviews?” he asked. “What is wrong with you? Oh, my evil gods—I’ll bet you watch the ones where she interviews you, though, don’t you? Ha!” he crowed when Wayne merely looked uncomfortable and didn’t deny it. “You do! I knew it!” He shook his head. “I thought you said you were friends.”

“Oh, what would you know about _friends_?” Wayne asked, scowling.

Roxanne felt herself go cold, and then hot, all over. Minion made an angry noise and set the coffee pot down on the counter so hard Roxanne was surprised it didn’t shatter.

“Not very much, admittedly,” Megamind said coldly. “But I would think that some level of interest in the things they care about would be recommended.”

“Sorry,” Wayne snapped, “I guess we can’t all be creepy, obsessive stalk—”

“Wayne, I swear to god,” Roxanne said in a voice like a scalpel, “if you finish that sentence, _I will_ use the death ray on you the next time Megamind offers to let me.”

Wayne’s mouth closed with a click. He seemed to be thinking hard, considering something.

“Death ray?” he asked, finally, which—had not really been what Roxanne was expecting him to say. “Was that the plan for today?” Megamind, eyeing him cautiously, raised his shoulders and then dropped them again in a movement too sharp to be called a shrug.

“Damn,” Wayne said, sounding almost wistful. “That would have been good.”

“Oh, what is the deal with you today?” Megamind burst out, throwing his hands up in exasperation. “How in Evil’s name would a death ray have been good!!?”

“Well, see,” Wayne said, taking a gulp from his coffee mug and then gesturing with it, “I was planning on faking my death from whatever evil plot you came up with today. And a death ray—it’s a good note to go out on, right? I mean, it just doesn’t get much more impressive than ‘killed by a death ray’.”

“I—,” Megamind said, “I mean—_not_ getting killed. By a death ray. Is probably more impressive,
but—you—faking—“ He gaped at Wayne. “What do you mean you were going to—why the hell would you fake your own death?”

“I’m just so tired of it all!” Wayne groaned, putting down his coffee mug and leaning his head in his hands. “I was up there on the stage, doing the whole Metro Man thing, you know, but I was just kind of going through the motions. And then I realized—I’d been doing this same silly charade my entire life! So I used my super speed and went to go clear my head. I went to the park and flew a kite, went to the library, read some self-help books, went to a restaurant and ate some guy’s fries—trying to get my mind off how I was feeling, you know? But I just felt stuck.”

“Stuck?” Megamind said, frowning. “Why would you feel stuck? You have—you have the best job in the entire world. You’re the hero. You get to help people.”

“I’m tired of helping people!” Wayne exclaimed, running his hands through his hair in agitation, destroying its perfect coif. “Ever since I can remember, I’ve always had to be what the city wanted me to be! But what about me? What about what I want to do?”

“What do you want to do?” Megamind asked slowly.

“I don’t know!” Wayne burst out. “Or, well—yes, I—music! I want to play the guitar and sing and write my own songs and have people listen to me and don’t you dare laugh at me!”

“Wait,” Roxanne said, holding up a hand. “You were going to—you were going to pretend that Megamind had murdered you? You were going to let everyone think that he’d murdered you?”

“Stuck?” Megamind said, frowning. “Why would you feel stuck? You have—you have the best job in the entire world. You’re the hero. You get to help people.”

“I’m not laughing at you,” Megamind said quietly. “I would never—I would never laugh at someone’s—”

“I have a choice! Everybody else gets a choice! I want one! No one said this hero thing has to be a lifetime gig! That’s when I decided I’d fake my death! I’d wait for you to show up, go through the old routine once more for the road, pretend you’d found my weakness, borrow a skeleton from the nursing school down the—”

“Wait,” Roxanne said, holding up a hand. “You were going to—you were going to pretend that Megamind had murdered you? You were going to let everyone think that he’d murdered you?”

“I figured I’d give the little guy a freebie, you know, let him win for once,” Wayne said.

“Oh, fuck you!” Megamind spat, pushing himself back against the counter, arms wrapped protectively around himself.

“You were going to frame Megamind for murder, am I hearing this correctly? Is that a thing you were going to do?”

Wayne shifted uneasily in his chair.

“It sounds so bad when you put it like that,” he said. “But, really, I—”

“God, you are such an asshole!” Roxanne said.

“I’ll second that,” Minion said beneath his breath.

Roxanne put her mug down on the counter to prevent herself from chucking it at Wayne’s head. “You weren’t even going to tell him?”

“Well, he knows now,” Wayne said shiftily. “So I was thinking—”

“No, Wayne,” Roxanne said flatly, since Megamind was looking resigned, almost as if he might
agree, as if he thought he owed Wayne that, or something.

“But I just—”

“No,” Roxanne snapped. “You are not putting Megamind in that position.”

“But I need him to help me fake my death!” Wayne whined. “A hero can’t just quit!”

“Why not?” Megamind asked, eyebrows drawn together, head tilted. “Why can’t you just announce your successor and retire? I’m not going to stop you from—wait. You do have someone picked out to take over for you, right?

Wayne gave him a blank, guilty look.

“You don’t have a—oh, for fuck’s sake!” Megamind shoved himself away from the counter and began to pace. “You were just going to disappear entirely, without bothering to set up a new hero!? What do you think would happen to the city if you did that?”

“I mean,” Wayne said, picking up his coffee cup and turning it around in his hands, avoiding Megamind’s eyes. “I know you won’t actually hurt it.”

“That is entirely beside the point!” Megamind hissed.

“Besides,” Wayne said, “can’t you—I don’t know, just—stop being a supervillain?”

“No, I can’t stop! Look at me!” Megamind gestured wildly. “Evil! Clearly evil!”

Everyone looked at Megamind.

“Dude,” Wayne said, saying what everyone was thinking, “you’re wearing a fluffy pink scarf.”

Megamind didn’t even seem to hear him, he was so worked up.

“I can’t just—what about the other criminals? What about the city’s other villains? Who do you think keeps them under control while you’re off smiling for the masses and signing autographs? I do. That’s the point of me! That’s the one thing that I’m—”

“Megamind,” Roxanne said slowly, “do you—do you want to stop being a supervillain?”

“This city needs me! What I want is irrelevant!”

“Megamind,” Roxanne said, “Megamind, what you want is not fucking irrelevant! Do you want to stop?”

“I never wanted to start in the first place!” Megamind shouted, whirling on her with such a sudden intensity that Roxanne almost stumbled backwards. “It’s just something that happened! A—a label that got—people say you’re something for so long that eventually you decide ‘well, I guess this is what I am’ because there’s no choice but to accept it!”

“What?” Wayne asked, sounding baffled. “No, that’s not—that can’t be right. I’m all for you reforming, little buddy, but you chose to be the bad guy.”

“I chose,” Megamind said flatly, rounding on him. “Yes, of course, you’re right. I chose to be the bad guy.”

“Sir,” Minion began placatingly.
“No no, he’s absolutely correct! I chose to be the bad guy!” Megamind bared his teeth.

“Because it was either be the bad guy—or be the pathetic alien freak that killed itself at age sixteen because it couldn’t face a world where everyone hated it. What a choice. That was.”

“What?” Wayne asked, face and voice shocked.

Roxanne pressed her hands to her mouth in horror.

Oh god.

Oh god.

(Megamind making that comment about cyanide and Minion’s sharp *don’t joke about that, Sir*)

Megamind made a noise like a wild thing caught in a trap and pressed the heels of his hands hard into his eye sockets, breath hissing through his teeth. After a few moments, he lowered his hands, opened his eyes, and fixed Wayne with a hard look.

“You have. To choose a successor. You cannot just abandon these people. As the resident supervillain, I can keep the criminal element under a certain amount of control, but the city needs a hero to function. Pick someone. I will—I will help them, I will train them, even, if you don’t want to; if you can’t find someone with powers, I will figure out a way around it. But you have to choose someone.”

“I—” Wayne said, hesitantly, “I’m having a—a thought.”

Roxanne could see the thought flash across Megamind’s face *that’s a change*, could see the moment that he bit his tongue and *didn’t say it*.

“What?” he asked instead.

“Why don’t you do it?”

A muscle in Megamind’s jaw jumped.

“Fine,” he said in a tight voice. “Fine, I’ll pick someone out myself, and you can just do the announcement—”

“No, I mean,” Wayne said, more confident now, “why don’t you do it yourself? Why don’t you be the hero?”

There was a long silence, and then Megamind broke into laughter.

“You’re joking, right? You—you’re not joking? Are—are you fucking insane?” he asked. “Look at me! I’m—me! Evil! Who the fuck is going to accept me as a hero? I—”

He continued talking, but Roxanne was thinking too hard to listen very closely, wheels turning in her mind, connections—*never been very good at good and this city needs me and you cannot just abandon these people and you have the best job in the entire world; you get to help people and—*

“The cat thing,” she murmured. “I wonder if we still have the footage.” KCMP had edited the cat from the broadcast of that particular evil plot, but if she could find the footage—

She was talking to herself, really, but Megamind, hearing her, stopped his rant mid sentence and turned to look at her.
“What?” he asked. “Cat thing? What cat thing?”

“Oh my god, Roxy,” Wayne rolled his eyes, “are you gonna go on about the cat thing again?”

“What cat thing?” Megamind asked, frowning, without taking his eyes off of her.

“The time you threw a fight to save a cat or something; I don’t know,” Wayne said. “I wasn’t really paying attention, but Roxy just would not shut up about it afterwards. I mean, she always talks about you—‘did you see the thing that Megamind did today; did you hear him reference Lord of the Rings’—but this was just. I was like—Roxy. Maybe we could just chill about the cat thing? For like two seconds?”

Roxanne felt herself flush under Megamind’s confused gaze.

“Ohhh,” Minion said. “You must mean Princess Sharp Teeth.”

Roxanne blinked, looking over at Minion.

“You—you named the cat?” she asked.

“Sir named her, actually.”

Roxanne looked back at Megamind, who was blushing now, avoiding her gaze.

“She was very bitey,” he muttered. “She doesn’t like me at all.”

“After we broke Sir out of prison the next time, we went back and got her,” Minion said cheerfully. “Sir gave her to a nice lady. We check up on her regularly.”

“Minion,” Megamind moaned, covering his face. “You can’t just tell people things like that!”

God, I love you Roxanne thought, and it only hurt a little bit, the knowledge that he didn’t love her back: a small sort of pain, easily ignored.

“Okay,” she said. “I’m going to need this woman’s name and address.”

Megamind, hands still over his face, peered at her through his fingers. (Fuck, he was adorable.)

“Why?” he asked.

“Human interest,” Roxanne tilted her head, frowning at the word choice. “Alien interest. Emotional interest? This is going to work.”

“What,” Megamind said. “This—the idea of me replacing—have you lost your goddamn mind? There is no way that would work!”

“Yes, it will! Listen, Megamind—stop shaking your head at me and listen! You’re not evil. I know this. Everybody here knows this.”

Roxanne gestured around the room; Minion and Wayne nodded. She sighed at the expression on Megamind’s face.

“Oh, okay,” she said, “everybody here but you knows this. We just have to get everyone else in the city to see it. So. I have a Plan. All of the things—like the cat thing—all of the things that you try to hide from people, to make them think you’re—scarier, more evil than you really are? We’re going to tell people about them!”
“What,” Megamind said sarcastically. “So I should just take over the news stations to tell everyone ‘greetings, Metrocity, just thought you might like to know that your hated supervillain is actually a soft-hearted loser who likes to rescue stray cats in his spare time?’ That should work wonderfully!”

“Of course not!” Roxanne said, waving a dismissive hand. “You aren’t going to tell them anything! I am.”

“You—what,” Megamind said, looking uncertain, “like, on air? As a report?”

“As a whole goddamn series of reports, Megamind, a multi-part expose on Megamind: the Person Behind the Persona!” She tapped her chin thoughtfully. “The Character Behind the Cape! The—something—a word that starts with S—behind the Supervillain? Or we could go with just ‘villain’ and use Vs.”

“Wha—?” Megamind said weakly.

“Er, Roxy,” Wayne said, “not that I’m not with you on this, but—are you going to maybe, you know, get fired? If you start saying things like that?”

“Oh, she doesn’t need to worry about that,” Minion said, either oblivious or deliberately ignoring the frantic shushing signals that Megamind was suddenly directing towards him. “Sir owns a controlling interest in the KCMP station. Our lawyers have already explained very clearly that Miss Ritchi is to be considered permanently employed.”

Roxanne felt her mouth drop open.

“You. What?” she said. “When did—when did this happen?”

“Minion,” Megamind growled. “I am going to—” He rubbed a hand over his face. “Six years ago,” he said, wincing. “I—after you cut your hair? They started making your pieces shorter and less frequent and I. Well. I made a graph of the times and the duration and it did seem to be decreasing at a steady rate and. I panicked? A little.” He swallowed. “So I bought the stock and I set up a phone conference with the board and it turned out they were trying to phase you out in favor of ‘someone with more of a feminine image’ which, as I told them was fucking ridiculous. So. Six years—six years ago. Your—your expression right now, I can’t—I can’t tell if you’re mad at me or not?”

Roxanne—wasn’t really sure, herself, if she was mad or not. On the one hand, him sort of owning the company she worked for was—that was weird, right? And super inappropriate? Although—they had probably reached a point, what with the whole serial-kidnapping thing, where further weirdness and inappropriateness was pretty much superfluous?

And it was nice to know that she was now guaranteed employment for as long as she should wish it. She had—she was thirty now; female newscasters didn’t usually last that long, and she had been beginning to worry.

“I don’t know,” Roxanne said slowly. “I mean, I—I’ve always been proud of being good at my job. And now you’re telling me that—the only reason I’ve got my job is because you bought it for me? So that’s a little bit—”

“You are good at your job!” Megamind exclaimed. “I wouldn’t have—I told you, your intelligence, your—your competence, it’s the reason I—” he gestured wildly. “Roxanne, they were going to fire you because of your hair!”
That was. That was a fair point, actually. (She’d thought, six years ago, that they were cutting her reports shorter and shorter each time, but had dismissed the concern as paranoia when everything went back to normal—well. When Megamind secretly bought the news station Jesus fucking christ and things appeared to go back to normal god damn. Except—)

“Six years ago,” Roxanne said, “that would be right around the time all the KCMP’s affirmative action and nondiscrimination policies got that major update, right?”

Megamind froze.

“Er,” he said.

“Sir wrote those himself,” Minion offered.

“Of course he did,” Roxanne said. “And that would have been right around the time that I got that pay raise, too?”

“That wasn’t just you!” Megamind said defensively. “All female and nonwhite employees had their pay increased to match the salaries of their white male counterparts! That pay gap was appalling!”

“But you never—” she frowned. She’d never gotten any orders to interview Megamind, each time she’d gone to see him to get information for a story while he was (briefly) in prison, it had been entirely her own idea.

“You never pulled any strings to get me to interview you.”

“No,” Megamind said, avoiding her gaze. “You had to spend enough time with me against your will, with the—” he waved a hand, “—kidnapping. You didn’t need your work forcing you into contact with me as well. Plus it seemed—skeevy? To do that. I never—I never manipulated your place of employment beyond insuring that it remained your place of employment.”

“And rewriting the affirmative action and nondiscrimination policies,” Roxanne put it. “And getting rid of the pay gap.”

Megamind made a dismissive sound.

“Oh, but those things weren’t just about you, they were about—” he shut his mouth quickly.

Roxanne grinned.

“—about fairness?” she asked. “About justice? About doing the right thing? This Plan is totally going to work,” Roxanne added smugly.

Megamind made a noise of frustration.

“So!” she said. “First we’re going to show everyone that you are actually a decent person—”

“Show them, show them?” Minion asked. “I mean. The brainbots have an auto-record function. I’m just saying.”

“Minion!”

“Excellent! That’s step one. Step two is Wayne’s retirement announcement. That’s where we should stage the hand-off of the role of Defender,” Roxanne continued. “We’ll want to leak some information about Wayne’s upcoming retirement first, so people aren’t completely shocked, and —”
“This is a good plan,” Minion said, fins fluttering excitedly.

“This is a great plan!” Wayne said, grinning enthusiastically.

“This is a terrible plan,” Megamind moaned. “It is doomed to failure.”

“So, you won’t—you won’t do it?” Roxanne asked, heart plummeting.

Megamind sighed.

“Oh,” he said. “I’ll do it. Terrible plans that are doomed to failure are kind of my specialty.” He smiled wryly. “You might have noticed.”

“Nonsense!” Roxanne said imperiously. “This plan is not going to fail!”

“Heh,” said Minion, and then added, when Roxanne looked at him inquiringly. “Sorry, it’s just—Sir always says that.”

Fuck. He did always say that, didn’t he? She was doing it again! She was picking up on his fucking speech patterns! And she was pretty sure she had, at some point, done that wavy-arms-wavy-arms gesture he always used when monologuing about his evil plots!

Oh fuck it, Roxanne decided. Who gave a shit about the speech pattern and gesture convergence! His gestures and way of talking were fun.

“This plan,” she said, waving a hand, “Is a brilliant plan! A slightly devious plan of deception for the dissemination of the greater truth! Ahahah! Yes!” she clapped her hands and then rubbed them together in anticipation. “Now it’s time to plot the details! We are going to scheme!”

Roxanne heard Minion make a choking noise. Wayne was snickering in the background, but Roxanne wasn’t paying attention to either of them, because she had glanced over at Megamind.

Megamind was staring at her with his eyes wide and his lips parted, his expression—(so he was at least still attracted to her, Roxanne thought, and breathed a mental sigh of relief)

“Uh,” said Wayne, “do we need to—do we need to give you two a moment alone?”

Roxanne blushed, but glared at him.

“Nobody asked for your input, Metro Ma-hn,” she said, deliberately drawing his name out the way Megamind always did.

Minion and Wayne’s jaws both dropped. Roxanne blushed even harder, but that was. So worth it, especially when she looked over at Megamind.

“Oh my god,” he said in a breathless rush. “That was. Oh my—what. I—you—and—scheming—? I don’t understand,” he continued, in a slightly hysterical tone, “What is this, Give-Megamind-everything-he’s-ever-wanted day?”

Roxanne smiled so hard her face hurt.

“Perhaps,” Minion said in an undertone to Wayne, “you’d like to throw in an apology and really make it complete.”

Roxanne glanced over at them curiously, just in time to see an expression of discomfort cross
Wayne’s face.

“Right,” Megamind said to himself, and then repeated, in a louder and slightly more together tone, “Right! Yes. Scheming. I’m going to need a writing implement of some kind. And a lot of paper. And some string. Number 228, go and get that.”

The designated brainbot (the same one, Roxanne thought, that had brought her shoes up to her after she shouted at it) swooped off obediently.

Megamind turned back to Roxanne.

“On a scale of mildly annoyed to shoving me off the balcony, how mad would you be if I wrote on the walls?”

Roxanne blinked.

“You know what, go for it,” she said, “I’ve been thinking about repainting them anyway.”

“You are amazing,” Megamind said fervently as bot 228 swooped back in and offered him a selection of pens, markers, crayons, and, oddly, a tube of lipstick. “Bot 645, projection mode, far wall of the apartment. Three screens, layered view. First screen: Roxanne Ritchi’s schedule for the next month. Second screen: KCMP rough broadcast schedule for the next month. Third screen: Metrocity calendar of events for the next month.”

He looked at Roxanne.

“I’m giving us a month. You have to wind up an evil scheme in about a month or people start getting bored and losing interest; I’m assuming it’s the same for schemes of goodness.” He took a pen and grabbed a piece of paper from bot 228. “Minion, start making a list of ‘similar to the cat thing’ occurrences.”

“On it, sir!”

“Can we—can there be music?” Megamind asked Roxanne. “While we work? It helps me to concentrate.”

“That’s fine,” Roxanne said. “I’ll play something.”

She went to the cabinet with her stereo in it and opened the drawer, looking through her cds. The one on top was Barry Manilow. Evan must have forgotten it when he huffed off after she broke up with him this morning.

God, was that only this morning?

She grimaced at the cd, and then smirked, just a little wickedly.

“Hey, 228,” Roxanne called the brainbot that had wanted to destroy her shoes.

It flew to her, eyestalk moving from side to side in curiosity. Roxanne held the Barry Manilow cd aloft. 228’s eyestalk focused on the plastic case.

“Bowg! Bowg!”

“Snack,” Roxanne said, and tossed the cd in the air.

228 caught it with a satisfyingly destructive crunch, and then flew to hide beneath her table with its
new toy. Roxanne could hear its metal jaws working. She smiled to herself and glanced up to see Megamind watching her.

“Was that—?” he asked.

“Ha,” Roxanne said, “yeah.”

“Only thing to do,” Megamind said, nodding so hard in approval that Roxanne had to laugh.

She turned back to the music drawer and began to sort through it.

“Hey, Roxy,” Wayne said, hovering at her shoulder. “Could you—could you not call me Metro Man anymore? That just—that’s not who I am. Not anymore.”

“Okay, Wayne,” Roxanne said, and then added, “and could you maybe not call me Roxy? I prefer Roxanne.”

Like I told you the first time we met, she thought, but didn’t say. Of course, though, he hadn’t remembered for more than ten minutes, and then everybody had picked up on the stupid nickname—if Metro Man did it, then it must be right!


“Thanks,” Roxanne said, pulling out a Guns N’ Roses cd and popping it in the stereo. She glanced over at Megamind, who was already writing on her walls, frowning fiercely in concentration.

“Wayne,” Roxanne said, lowering her voice as the sound of electric guitars filled the apartment, “what did Minion mean by you needing to apologize? It didn’t sound like he was just talking about for today.”

Wayne scratched the back of his neck awkwardly.

“Well, you see, Roxy—Roxanne, we—Megamind and I—we sort of went to school together.”

“High school?” Roxanne asked sharply, remembering Megamind saying killed itself at age sixteen because it couldn’t face a world where everybody hated it

(over Wayne’s shoulder, she could see Megamind nodding his head along absently to the music even as he wrote).

“Yeah,” Wayne said. “And—well, before high school, too. We went to the same elementary school for about half a year.”

(school is worse for you than prison? she’d asked, and he’d said so much worse.)

“I see,” said Roxanne, in her most hard-nosed-reporter voice.

“It was—I was—it wasn’t good. I messed up, Roxy. I messed up real bad.” Wayne winced.

“Roxanne,” he corrected himself. “Sorry.”

Roxanne gave him the go on nod that always worked on interviewees.

“I bullied him,” Wayne admitted in a rush of words. “And I convinced—everybody else to do it to. The teacher already hated him—I think ‘cause she knew he was smarter than her—and it was easy. It was easy to make everybody hate him, to make them think he was this—freak, this alien weirdo, and I needed to—I needed them to think that about him. I needed them to think it about him so that
they wouldn’t think it about me. I—we—everybody was always telling him he was bad. I think—I think maybe I pushed him into this whole supervillain thing.” He paused, looking guilty and sort of surprised. “I think maybe I kind of ruined his life, actually.”

Roxanne looked over at Megamind again. He was writing with both hands now, singing along under his breath *strapped in the chair of the city’s gas chamber why I’m here I can’t quite remember.*

(not very good at good)

(what I want is irrelevant)

(it was just something that happened)

Roxanne blinked hard, her eyes blurring with tears.

“Roxanne?” Wayne asked nervously after a long moment. “Are you—what do you think? About the apology?”

Roxanne swallowed.

Megamind clipped a notecard to a length of string and handed off to a brainbot, singing a little louder *I want to see how good it can be oh won’t you please take me home.*

“Roxanne?”

“Yes, Wayne,” Roxanne said. “I do think you need to apologize.”

“Do—do you think I ruined his life?”

Megamind picked up the second pen and twirled it

“Yeah, Wayne,” Roxanne said. “I think you kind of did.”

She let out a shaky breath. Megamind put the pen to her wall and started to write.

“But now we are going to fix it.”

Chapter End Notes

to be continued...

(the song Megamind is singing along with is, of course, Paradise City)
Roxanne sat cross-legged on her couch, eyes on the television, where an image of her was standing next to a little old lady with a cat in her arms.

“—claims that Metro City’s resident supervillain, Megamind...gave her a cat. Mabel, perhaps you can tell us a little bit about how this happened.”

The image of Roxanne turned to the woman, who looked flustered and pleased.

On the couch, Roxanne smiled wryly. Mabel Wanamaker, dressed in a soft pink cardigan and holding a plump, sleek tabby, looked like the kind of apple-pie-baking elderly maiden aunt who mailed her family members birthday cards with baby animals on them.

In reality, she’d slammed her door in Roxanne’s face and threatened to call the police when Roxanne showed up on her doorstep asking about Megamind, demanding that, ‘you motherfucking vultures leave the poor man the hell alone for once’.

(She’d been very defensive of Megamind; Roxanne had approved even though it made things difficult.)

Roxanne had wound up texting Megamind (he’d gotten a cell phone after she pointed out that they needed to a way to stay in contact during the implementation of the Plan) asking for his help with Ms. Wanamaker, and he’d texted back give me a minute.

It took more than a minute, long enough for Hal to complain loudly about crazy old broads and to try to wheedle Roxanne into forgetting the interview and going to get a coffee instead, long enough for Roxanne to send Hal away with instructions to buy them some coffee and bring it back (she purposefully directed him to a coffee shop that was not especially close by; maybe it was a bad idea, sending her camera man off while she was in the midst of trying to get a story, but Hal was just so fucking irritating, and Roxanne just had not been in the mood for his bullshit.)

He’d still been gone when Ms. Wanamaker opened her front door with a glare and invited Roxanne inside in a distinctly unwelcoming manner. They sat in a cheerful yellow kitchen and Ms. Wanamaker very pointedly did not offer Roxanne anything to drink.

Roxanne had tried making light small talk in an attempt to get the woman to warm up to her, had even complimented her cat. Ms. Wanamaker had glared throughout all of Roxanne’s pleasantries, until finally Roxanne had fallen silent, contemplating what she was going to do if this interview fell through. Minion had compiled that list of similar occurrences, but she’d really wanted to include the cat thing—

“Why?” Ms. Wanamaker said.

Roxanne blinked, coming out of her thoughts.

“I’m—I’m sorry?” Roxanne said. “Why what?”

“Why are you doing this?” Ms Wanamaker demanded, arms folded, narrowed eyes on Roxanne’s face. “What’s the angle?”
“I just want people to know the truth,” Roxanne said slowly. “That’s what reporters are for.”

Mabel Wanamaker snorted. Roxanne told herself not to be offended; lots of people were cynical about reporters.

“Really,” Roxanne said. “Just the truth. Why does there have to be an angle?”

“There’s always an angle,” Mabel Wanamaker said. “So what is it, then? Are you looking to make people laugh at him?”

“What? No! I—”

“Because they will, you know. He seems to think you don’t mean any harm, but, personally, I—”

“They cheer for Metro Man when he rescues somebody’s cat!” Roxanne burst out. “They can damn well cheer for Megamind!”

Mabel Wanamaker had fallen silent and looked at Roxanne hard for a moment. Roxanne could feel herself flushing.

“Huh,” Ms. Wanamaker said at last, eyebrows drawing together in an expression of surprise. “You really don’t want to hurt him.”

“No, I don’t, Ms. Wanamaker,” Roxanne said. “I don’t want to hurt him. I want to help him. I am going to help him. Whether you give me this story or not.”

Ms. Wanamaker had sighed.

“You’re a lot more naive than I expected,” she told Roxanne. She shook her head. “People are going to laugh,” she continued gently. “People are always looking to laugh at him. I expect that’s why he tries so hard to be frightening, poor man.”

“Yes,” Roxanne said quietly. “I know. But it doesn’t have to be like that. It doesn’t have to be this—this choice between two shitty options! I’m a reporter; I know what I’m doing. I can tell this story the way it should be told. Trust me, I’ve made people a lot less worthwhile than Megamind look good.”

“So that’s really the angle?” Ms. Wanamaker said. “Making Megamind look good is the angle.”

“Yes,” Roxanne told her. “Like I said, I just want people to know the truth.”

“Why?” Mabel Wanamaker asked.

Roxanne threw her hands up in exasperation.

“Because they’re wrong about him! Everyone’s—”

“You’ve never seemed particularly interested in making him look good before,” Mabel pointed out.

“What, all those times he kidnapped me and acted like I was some cringing little damsel who was too stupid to live?” Roxanne asked, feeling a little annoyed. “No, I wasn’t really worried about what he looked like, all those times.”

“So what changed?”

“I saw him run his robot suit into a wall to save a stray cat,” Roxanne said shortly.
Mabel Wanamaker blinked at her for a moment.

Roxanne sighed.

“And he let me out of a kidnapping when I broke up with my boyfriend.”

“Ohh,” said Ms. Wanamaker. “So you’re looking to get back at Metro Man by making Megamind look good.”

Roxanne ran her hands through her hair in frustration. She was so fucking done with the whole Roxanne-Ritchi-and-Metro-Man-are-together thing.

“Metro Man and I were never a couple!” she said. “This isn’t about him. It’s just—I was wrong about Megamind. Everyone is wrong about Megamind.” She scrubbed her hand down her face.

“Megamind is wrong about Megamind,” she said. “God, he’s got this idea that he’s this irredeemably evil—that nobody could ever—and he’s wrong.” She looked at Mabel Wanamaker. “You know he’s wrong, right?”

Mabel Wanamaker looked at Roxanne for a long moment.

“All right, dear,” Mabel said at last, with a sigh. “All right. I’ll make us some tea and we can talk about it. Mind you,” she added, “I still don’t think this is going to work. But if it doesn’t, it won’t be my goddamn fault.”

By the time Hal appeared with Roxanne’s (cold) coffee, the Mabel and Roxanne had drank most of the entire pot of tea and had planned out the entire interview. Roxanne had suggested that she hold Princess Sharp Teeth, and Mabel, seeing where she was going with this, had changed into her pinkeast, fluffiest sweater.

(“Sometimes the truth needs a little help,” she’d said with wide-eyed, affected innocence.)

Hal had been passive-aggressively pissed-off that Roxanne hadn’t waited for her coffee, had rolled his eyes the entire time he was behind the camera, taping the interview.

After they had finished taping, and had packed up to go, he’d said, just quiet enough to be considered under his breath, but definitely loud enough for Mabel Wanamaker to hear—

“Wow, I knew that blue freak was a loser; guess I just didn’t realize how big a loser.”

Mabel’s eyes had met Roxanne, and Roxanne could hear her thinking I told you so.


And she’d stalked out of the house.

He’d spent the whole car ride back to the station trying to convince her that he hadn’t meant it like that, come on Roxy, lighten up, but Roxanne had been having none of that shit.

Even as she was stepping out of the van, he was saying—

“No, no, Roxy—hey, Roxy, come on, Roxaroo, don’t be like that—”

And then Roxanne slammed the door shut, cutting him off.
He rolled down the window.

“Hey, don’t be mad, come on, it was just a joke; lets go out to dinner and then I’ll edit the footage for you.”

“No, Hal,” Roxanne said. “I do not want to go out to dinner with you. And I’m editing this footage myself.”

Hal had gotten this infuriating little superior smile.

“Roxaroo, babe, I know you’re mad, but don’t be stupid. You can’t work the editing system.”

Roxanne had been so filled with rage that she hadn’t even been able to think of a come-back sufficient to carry the weight of all the fuck you she was feeling.

“Fuck you, Hal,” she said, finally. “Fuck you, fuck off, and leave me the fuck alone.”

Hal’s superior smile had fallen away, leaving something—dark and angry and honestly sort of scary in its place.

“Fine!” he said. “You’ll see! You’ll be calling for my help before the night is up!”

And he’d driven the van away from the sidewalk with a squall of tires.

It had been pretty late; the only people still in the office when Roxanne stomped into the building was Palak the intern. She was still working, but she very kindly showed Roxanne how to work the editing system anyway when Roxanne asked (Roxanne had known how to use the old system; the one they’d had back when she was an intern, but they’d upgraded several times since then).

“Bad interview?” Palak asked sympathetically, doubtless because of the way Roxanne was scowling at the computer screen.

“No,” Roxanne said. “The interview was fine. It’s just—Hal.”

Palak made a face.

“Ugh,” she said, “Hal. He’s so creepy.”

Roxanne looked sidelong at Palak, frowning.

“Is he creepy to you, too?” she asked. She’d thought it was just her, that it would be unreasonable to complain because it was just her, and besides, he hadn’t actually ever done anything, just—

“Yeah,” Palak said. “I mean, not as bad as he is with you or anything, but he’s sort of creepy with all of the girls in the office. Katie from the front desk got stuck in the elevator with him last December, and she said he spent the whole time trying to tell her that they needed to huddle for warmth.Roxanne gave a bark of laughter and Palak grinned.

“Not in, like, a joking way, either,” Palak said. “He was serious.” She looked at the thumbnails of the footage on the screen and frowned. “Why would he—”

“What?”

“Oh!” Palak said, “nothing. Never mind. I just—I don’t understand why he shot this part from a wide angle. It’s the most emotional part of the interview, right? It should be a close up.” She chewed on her thumbnail, looking guilty. “Sorry. You probably don’t—”
“Did you study camera work?” Roxanne asked, and then realized that probably sounded critical. “I mean—I just sort of assumed you were here for editing, specifically, since that’s what they always have you doing.”

“Nah, I actually—I wanted to do investigative reporting, originally?” Palak said, glancing away. “I, uh. Used to watch all your broadcasts in high school; it’s what got me into journalism—that’s—probably a weird thing to say, sorry—“

Roxanne blinked. Her first reaction, of course, was fear—Palak had watched Roxanne’s broadcasts in high school; Roxanne was practically ancient in female newscaster years; she was going to get replaced any day now by Palak with her beautiful clear skin and her shiny black hair and her youthful perkiness—

(permanently employed, Roxanne reminded herself; you’re safe and god how fucked up is it that your automatic reaction to this girl telling you that she admires you has to be to feel like she’s competition?

Because in any other situation, on any other news station, she would be competition, and it was fucked up, and Roxanne hated that.)

“And when you said you wanted to be on camera,” Roxanne said slowly, “they probably told you that we already have one female on-scene reporter here, right?”

“Yeah,” Palak said, “that and, you know. Nobody in Michigan wants to see a brown girl on the news.”

Roxanne growled in irritation.

“Have they even read the station’s non-discrimination policy?” she asked.

Palak smiled wryly.

“Nobody really takes those things seriously,” she said. “It’s like the sexual harassment policy. Why haven’t you reported Hal? Why haven’t any of us reported Hal?

“Because he’s never actually—”

“Done anything, yeah. And we know it’s not going to do us any good. What, you really think the shareholders care about this stuff?” Palak shook her head. “Anyway, I didn’t study camera work. I’ve just listened to Katie a lot; she actually did go to school for camera work, but when she applied here, they told her all they had open was a secretarial position—”

Roxanne stood up abruptly, grabbing her phone.

“Excuse me,” she said. “I have to make a phone call.”

And then she walked into the supply cabinet and shut the door, ignoring the way Palak was looking at her as if she was crazy.

Megamind picked up on the first ring.

“Hel-lo?” he said carefully.

Roxanne pressed the phone close to her ear and leaned back against the shelves of the supply cabinet.
“Hey,” she said, “have I ever told you that Hal, my camera man, sort of sexually harasses me?”

There was a silence on the other end of the line.

“No,” Megamind said finally, voice dark. “You have not ever told me that. Is this—is this a supervillain call? Because I do still have that orbital death ray, and the offer to let you push the button very much still stands.”

Roxanne grinned and shivered a little in the privacy of the supply cabinet. Such a delicious feeling of power. Was it bad that she was enjoying this? Oh, whatever; it wasn’t like she was actually going to do it.

Just. You know. Fantasize about it a little bit.

“No,” she said, “we’re trying to get you out of supervillainy; I wouldn’t do that to you. This is more of a call-to-the-owner-of-a-controlling-interest-in-the-station thing. I want you to fire him; not zap him with a death ray.”

Megamind made a disappointed noise and Roxanne snickered.

“What is the last name of this ‘Hal’?” he asked, saying Hal’s name as if it left a bad taste in his mouth. “I need it for the termination notice, since you won’t let me use it for the death ray target search. Now that would be a real ‘termination’!”

Roxanne snickered.

“Morals,” Megamind scoffed. “Honestly, so inconvenient!”

“It’s Stewart,” Roxanne said, still laughing.

“Right,” Megamind said. Roxanne could hear the smile in his voice. “Hal Schtewart. I’m typing up the email now. Do you have someone in mind for his replacement?”

“Yeah,” Roxanne said, “I do, actually. And—there’s no reason, is there, that the station can’t have two female on-scene journalists?”

“I—I don’t think so?” Megamind said, sounding puzzled.

“Okay,” Roxanne said, ignoring the bubble of panic that wanted to rise in her chest. This was what you were supposed to do with power; you were supposed to use it to make things better.

Come on, Roxanne; come on. Be brave.

“Okay. As senior reporter, I still want first pick of the stories, but there’s this intern who I want to give a chance. I wish—I’d really like to see her in action first; the camera woman, too, but—”

“Ooh!” Megamind said. “I could kidnap you! During a story, and then they could take over!”

“What?” Roxanne laughed. “Megamind. No. What did I just tell you; no death rays, no kidnapping —”

“Just one more time! Once more!” Megamind said, sounding entirely too excited about this.

“Megamind—”
“Come on, Miss Ritchi,” Megamind said, voice low and sly and oh god he had a sexy voice, “once more for old time’s sake.”

“I—” Roxanne swallowed.

Fuck.

“Yeah, okay,” she said. “If! If we can get Wayne on board with this. And we’ll have to plan it out the right way; the last thing we need at this point is the negative publicity of you getting sent to jail and having to break out again—”

“Yes!” Megamind exclaimed. “This is going to be glorious! The final kidnapping! The evil plot to end all plots! What do you want to do for the death trap?” he asked eagerly. “Do you have any requests? Something new, or an old favorite?”

Roxanne covered her face, trying to keep from laughing.

“Surprise me,” she said. “You think you can manage to plan this thing out with Wayne without one of you killing the other? I’ve got to finish editing this piece; it’s supposed to air tomorrow.”

“Yes, yes,” Megamind said dismissively. “I will play nice with Mr. Goody-Two-Shoes.”

“Okay,” Roxanne said, “lo—” she choked on the casual love you that she’d almost said.

“—later,” she said, instead, “I will—I will talk to you later.”

That was yesterday; when Roxanne went into work today, Hal had been at the front desk, red-faced and yelling at the very confused temp secretary who had been called in to replace Katie.

“—fucking bullshit, never sexually harassed a woman in my life. I’m a nice guy!” Hal shouted.

“Sir,” said the temp secretary, looking as though she wished she had turned down this particular job offer, “This is my first day here; I have no idea what you’re talking about and I don’t know what you expect me to do about—”

“The number for security is listed next to the phone,” Roxanne said helpfully. The temp shot her a grateful look.

Hal rounded on her in a rage.

“You! You fucking did this? All because I called that giant-headed blue freak a loser? You—you bitch! What, do you have some sort of sick fetish for being tied up? Did he use mind control on you?”

Roxanne put on her best expression of bewilderment, conscious of the way that the entire office was staring at her and Hal.

“What are you talking about?” she asked. “I come in and you’re screaming at this poor woman about sexual harassment and now you’re talking about Megamind? Are you okay, Hal? Maybe you need to see a doctor; you seem really confused.”

“No, I am not okay, because you fucking got me fired, you whore!”

“Hal, I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Roxanne said, shaking her head as though deeply bewildered.
At the front desk, the temp was speaking into the phone, asking for security.

Roxanne looked around at her audience with an ‘is this guy for real’ face.

“I’m gonna get to work, though,” she said, and went to her desk.

Hal stormed out of the building. Roxanne set her purse on her desk and sat down in her chair, crossing one leg over the other. She powered on her computer and opened her email.

“Holy shit,” Palak whispered, eyes wide, staring at Roxanne.

“I,” Katie said, hovering uncertainly at the edge of Roxanne’s desk. “I don’t understand? I’m—I got this email? Saying that I’m supposed to be your new cameraperson? Is this a joke?”

“Well,” Roxanne said, “Seeing as how Hal is apparently fired now and there’s someone at your old desk—I’d say it’s probably for real.”

Katie had made a strangled noise and clutched at Palak for support.

(Roxanne, on her couch, watched critically as the image of her nodded along to Mabel Wanamaker.)

“—met him for the first time when I was—having a little trouble,” Mabel was saying to the camera. “I was homeless, you see, and I was sleeping down at the corner of Hamilton and 24th street. And this was last year, when the city put in those sidewalk spikes, you remember—”

“The ‘anti-homeless’ spikes, yes,” Roxanne said, “viewers will recall this station’s reports on the inhumane hostile architecture implemented by Metro City officials last year.”

“I was trying to sleep on the corner there,” Mabel continued, “and, of course, I couldn’t lie down, but I’m small, so if I sat up sideways and sort of scrunched my knees a bit I could get some sleep that way. Well, one night, Megamind came by with his Minion and all those flying robots of his and he walked up to me and told me to move. Now, I don’t have any idea what’s happening, but when a supervillain tells you to move, you move. I don’t know what I was expecting really, but—”

Mabel broke off, shaking her head.

“Was he doing something criminal on that corner?” Roxanne asked.

“Well, it probably wasn’t legal, exactly,” Mabel said, “but—what he did was, he tore up all of those spikes.”

“He tore up the spikes?”

“Yep. He just tore them right on up out of the ground,” Mabel said. “And then his Minion gave me a blanket and a sandwich and they left.”

“A supervillain gave you a blanket and a sandwich,” Roxanne repeated. “You understand, Mabel, that this is probably a bit difficult for our viewers to believe…”

“It was hard for me to believe, too!” Mabel said. “I woke up the next morning and I sort of thought I’d dreamed it. But then I asked around at the soup kitchen, and everybody said that he’d been to visit them, too, tearing up the spikes and handing out food and blankets.”

“Viewers will also recall,” Roxanne interjected, “that there was a mysterious wave of vandalism centering on the destruction of the city’s ‘defensive architecture’. And that the destruction was so
complete that the city subsequently decided to abandon plans for more, similar architectural
additions due to concerns about waste and expense.” She turned to Mabel. “So it doesn’t seem like
a stretch to assume that this mysterious vandalism can actually be attributed to Megamind.”

“Not a stretch at all,” Mabel said. “You just have to ask the city’s homeless. They’ll tell you.”

“And it was soon after this, then, that Megamind gave Princess Sharp Teeth to you,” Roxanne
prompted. “That’s a very interesting name, by the way.”

“Oh, yes; he named her! Covered in bites and scratches, the poor man. He looked miserable. I was
on my corner, feeding some pigeons part of a muffin I was eating, and he pulled up in that invisible
car and rolled down the window and asked me if I liked cats as well as birds. I said I did, so he
opened the car door and got out and he said ‘this is Princess Sharp Teeth. And then he handed you
to me, didn’t he, darling?” Mabel cooed at the cat, who blinked sleepily at her.

“Tell me, if it isn’t too personal,” Roxanne said, “how did you and Princess Sharp Teeth come to
live in this very lovely home? Did that have something to do with Megamind as well?”

“Oh, no,” Mabel said, scratching Princess Sharp Teeth under the chin and smiling. “I won the
lottery. That very day that Princess here came to me.”

“Really,” Roxanne said, raising her eyebrows, “and the timing of that doesn’t strike you as
amazingly convenient?”

“Good karma,” Mabel said, smiling serenely. “You do something good and the universe will take
care of you.”

“I see. Now, for our viewers wondering where Megamind might have gotten a cat—let’s take a
look at the footage of one of Megamind’s battles with Metro Man. Look closely, and you might just
see someone familiar…”

The footage rolled: Megamind in his battlesuit, laughing villainously; Roxanne, tied to a telephone
pole, looking unimpressed; and in the background, a skinnier, mangier Princess Sharp Teeth,
sniffing around the garbage in a gutter. Metro Man arriving, the start of the battle, Princess Sharp
Teeth freezing in place, ears back, tail puffed out. Metro Man throwing a traffic light at Megamind,
nearly striking the cat, who panicked and ran beneath the feet of the robot suit, Megamind seeing
the cat, his wide-eyed look of dismay, the way he kept dancing around her, trying frantically not to
step on her as Metro Man continued to attack the suit.

And the conclusion: Megamind running the suit into a building, finally, to avoid stepping on the
cat.

The picture on the television changed to one of Princess Sharp Teeth, looking very pleased and
plump and regal in Mabel’s arms.

“This never-before broadcast footage,” the voice of Roxanne said, over the picture of the cat,
“certainly does seem to confirm at least one part of Ms. Wanamaker’s claims about the softer side
of Metro City’s most notorious villain. But what about her assertion that our supervillain has been
secretly moonlighting as an architectural vigilante on behalf of the city’s homeless population?”

The picture changed to one of Roxanne sitting next to a man on a park bench.

“I was sleeping on the ground next to this bench,” the man said, “because it had an ‘armrest’, you
know, right across the middle of it, to keep you from lying down, and I heard this—grinding noise,
and I woke up, and Megamind was standing there! Made me jump, let me tell you!”
Roxanne, on the screen, turned a small, understanding smile to the camera, the curve of her lips just slightly fonder than her viewers would be expecting.

“Yes,” she said, “he’s good at that.”

(She’d practiced the exact angle of that smile over and over again in the mirror until it was perfect—the idea was to work the people of the city up to the idea of Megamind’s goodness gradually. Roxanne would be able to look even fonder in the next report.)

“Right!” the man on the park bench said, smiling too and shaking his head. “Well, it was just the craziest thing, when I took a second to really look, I noticed that he was sawing off that armrest in the middle of the bench…”

Roxanne, alone in her living room, regarded the image of herself critically. The shot was good; Katie definitely appeared to know what she was doing. Now the only real question was whether or not she could improvise under pressure.

Hmm, had that pale blue shirt she’d worn for this interview been too much? No, Roxanne decided; the way the light caught it, you wouldn’t be able to say for sure if it was blue or white.

Perfect. Plant the feeling of uncertainty in the viewers’ minds, linked to the signature colors of the city’s hero and villain: look, see, you can’t tell for sure which one is which.

Roxanne already had her clothes for the next week picked out: an entire seven-days worth of blue garments, gradually deepening in shade from powder blue to robin’s egg to that bright cobalt color of Megamind’s own uniform.

She planned to start adding black to her ensembles the following week, and then the week after that—

Oh, maybe she could get Minion to make her something! Nothing too obvious, but something that would subtly link her to Megamind. (People trusted Roxanne; an important trait in a reporter. If she appeared to support Megamind, they would be more likely to support him as well.)

Could Minion do subtle? Surely he could, right? He was smart, and really a very talented clothing designer—

Roxanne made a mental note to ask Minion about the idea, the next time she saw him and Megamind.

(Oh, and she needed to ask Megamind what day the kidnapping would be on, too; she would have to plan around that—)

“So there you have it,” the Roxanne on the television screen said, turning to the camera, “Megamind: Super Villain or Secret Vigilante? Is this unexpected gallantry an anomaly, or is there truly more to Megamind than this city has been allowed to see? This is Roxanne Ritchi, seeking the truth.”

A line of text ran across the bottom of the screen, urging viewers with similar stories to call KCMP.

Roxanne rubbed a hand across her tired eyes and flicked off the television.

Silence settled over her empty apartment.
Well. So.

Roxanne wrapped her empty arms around her own body. She felt so very—she missed—

(He could call him. He could—no. He might be sleeping. He might be working. He might be not wanting to talk to her, *Roxanne, come on, leave the poor man alone; he doesn’t owe your lovesick heart anything.*)

Roxanne went up to her empty bedroom in the silence of her empty apartment.

She climbed into her empty bed.

She waited for sleep to come.

Eventually, it did.

Chapter End Notes

to be continued…

(notes: Hostile architecture is an actual thing—the benches that make it impossible to sleep on them, and ‘anti-homeless spikes’, etc. It is horrible.)

Thank you so much to everyone for reading and reviewing! You are all amazing.

And a special thank you the tumblr anon and tumblr user animefreakkatie, who volunteered their names for the characters of Palak and Katie. The character of Palak is Indian; the anon specified. I hope you both like your namesake characters! <3
Roxanne woke up alone and she went downstairs alone and she ate breakfast alone, in a room with Megamind’s handwriting all over the walls, and then she went to work.

The interview with Mabel had aired the day before; the station aired it again during the morning news.

There were—a lot of phone calls in response to the station’s request for more information.

Some of the callers were calling to express outrage, of course, claiming that the station was ‘contributing to the moral decay of our city’ by airing a report that cast Megamind in a positive light. And some were plain garden-variety crazies who wanted to tell the station about how Megamind had ‘abducted and probed’ them. But quite a few had serious stories about Megamind.

“—and he asked those guys what the hell they were thinking, pulling a knife on a pregnant woman, and he made them give my money back—”

“—thought that little flying robot thing was going to bite me, but it just barked at me, like a dog, it was the weirdest damn thing, and then it sorta dropped the stick in front of me, like it wanted to play—”

“—looked around to make sure nobody was watching, and then he helped me up—”

Karen Li, the temp in charge of the receptionist’s desk, proved to be invaluable, screening the calls, getting rid of cranks in mere minutes, and selecting the stories that showed promise. Roxanne, Katie, and Palak did three interviews before lunchtime; when they went back to the station (with a sandwich for Karen Li, as a thank you), they found that she had conscripted Lisa from Technical Support, Connie from Meteorology, and Xavier from Human Resources, into helping with the calls.

“I made a list for you,” Karen said, “organized by how important they sounded and cross-referenced by how long it should take you to get to the location of each caller.” She tore into her sandwich, a martial light in her eye.

“Wow,” Roxanne said, looking at the list. It was color-coded; she was seriously impressed.

(Megamind would approve of this woman; Roxanne should tell him to try to hire her permanently.)

“Also,” Karen added, “You’re probably going to want me to come with you to the first interview, if you decide to do it, because I’m guessing you don’t speak Mandarin.”

“Er—no, I don’t speak Mandarin,” Roxanne said, “you can translate?”

Karen nodded.

“Like I said, though,” she added, “it’s your choice whether or not to do it.”

“Why wouldn’t I?”

“Well, it’s a couple that owns a restaurant; they want to tell you how Megamind runs his protection...
racket,” Karen said. “It sounded like they were really positive about him, though? I don’t know. Is ‘friendly neighborhood gangster’ what you’re going for?”

Roxanne flipped through the list—there were multiple pages, they definitely needed to keep Karen —

“There’s a lot of obviously positive stuff on there,” Karen said, waving a hand at the list, “if you want to prioritize those stories. That’s what the color-coding is for: blue for clearly positive stories, yellow for stuff with kids—he’s popular with kids, who knew—not a lot of stories maybe, but you could get some good sound bites—and pink for the stuff that’s questionable.”

Roxanne turned back to the first page. Protection racket; ‘friendly neighborhood gangster’; this sounded so interesting.

“Let’s go ahead and do the protection racket interview,” she said, “we have enough footage for tonight’s story anyway; if this falls through, then we’ll still be set. I’ll need you to translate; we’ll go as soon as you’re done eating.”

“Is the station going to be okay with her leaving the front desk?” Katie asked.

“I’ll count it as my lunch break,” Karen said.

“Besides,” Palak said, grinning, “Roxanne only gets people who deserve it fired.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” Roxanne said serenely.

“Right,” Palak said, “I tell her Hal’s creepy to everyone, she makes one phone call, and boom! Fired. Who the hell did you call from the supplies closet?”

“No comment,” Roxanne said, to various groans, snickers, and rolled eyes.

Karen finished her sandwich, balled up the wrapper, and tossed it in the trash.

“Remember,” she said, “what I told you about the—”


“Got it,” Connie said. Xavier flashed a thumbs-up, and Lisa answered a ringing phone.

“You have reached KCMP News; if you’d like to share a story about Megamind, please—”

“Let’s go,” Roxanne said.

“Does anybody else feel like we’re in one of those television shows, doing the team-walk thing?” Palak asked in an undertone, behind Roxanne.

“Ooh, the power walk!” Katie said, “I always wanted to film one of those. A low angle for the camera, maybe some slow motion, Roxanne’s coat billowing out dramatically—”

Roxanne grinned to herself. It sounded like Megamind was going to like her new camera operator as well.

“—and then he tells me that he is—selling fire insurance,” Karen translated. Mrs. Wang said something else in Mandarin, “—and I know what ‘fire insurance’ means! I want to call the police, but my husband says no, that it is a very reasonable rate, and that if we pay up, this Megamind will leave us alone then.”
Mr. Wang nodded and said something. Mrs. Wang rolled her eyes and then began talking again.

“—so we pay! And he goes away. But then—he comes back. And at first, I’m thinking he’s going to be asking for more money. But—he—does a fire inspection—”

Karen frowned, and asked Mrs. Wang something in Mandarin; Mrs. Wang repeated the phrase, added something else.

“—yes, a fire inspection,” Karen said, “—a really good inspection, not like those slackers that work for the city do, and he—replaces our insulation? And rewire the restaurant. And he tells us that he’s going to take good care of us. I think he’s just—all talk, but when we have a small fire—one of our cooks; he doesn’t work here anymore—Megamind—pays to have the repairs done. Yes. Pays to have the repairs done. Because, he says, we have fire insurance.”

Mrs. Wang made a face and said something that even Roxanne could tell was derisive.

Karen laughed, sounding surprised, and then said, “—uh. Real insurance wouldn’t pay anything—scam insurance is less of a scam than—real insurance.”

Behind the Katie’s camera, Palak snickered silently.

Roxanne let herself smile, too.

“And was that your last interaction with Megamind?” Roxanne asked. Karen translated the question.

“No, he comes in to check on us—and to—eat. He likes our fried mantou.”

Mrs. Wang said something else, and Karen hesitated a long moment. Roxanne looked at her inquiringly.

“Er,” Karen said, “she—says she’s worried he doesn’t eat enough.” She looked nervously at Roxanne. “I think she—wants you to tell him to eat more?”

Roxanne blinked at Karen, then looked at Mrs. Wang, whose face was set in a stern expression.

“I’ll—pass the message along,” Roxanne said slowly.

Karen translated and Mrs. Wang’s face broke into an approving smile. She began to talk again.

“—he takes good care of us; when that—big chain knock-off buffet tried to open next door to us and put us out of business, he drove them off and—”

“Thank you again for the interview,” Roxanne said.

Karen repeated her words to Mrs. Wang, who nodded and smiled. Mr. Wang looked worried and said something to his wife, who made an expressive ‘you are ridiculous’ face and began speaking to him.

“The equipment is packed,” Katie said, coming up to Roxanne and Karen, Palak behind her, “if you’re ready to—”

Inside the main area of the restaurant, the bell over the door jingled. Mr. Wang, looking relieved to escape his wife’s scolding, disappeared through the door of the kitchen. Mrs. Wang said something
to Karen, who laughed and nodded.

Roxanne, about to step through the kitchen door, nearly collided with Mr. Wang, who burst into the room, a terrified look on his face, and immediately began speaking in a rapid undertone to his wife. Roxanne frowned and again went to step through the door, only to be brought up short when Mr. Wang stepped in front of her, hands flapping.

“No no no!” he said. “No! Stay—no! No no!”

“Excuse me, I—what—what’s happening?” Roxanne demanded, as Mr. Wang herded them all towards a—was he herding them towards a closet?

Mrs. Wang was following them, speaking to him in an annoyed way, voice rising. He shushed her frantically, then pushed Roxanne, Karen, Palak, and Katie into the closet.

“Sorry,” he said apologetically, and shut the door.

“Did—did we just get kidnapped?” Katie asked.

The closet light was on; Roxanne could clearly see everyone as they turned to her, the resident expert on getting kidnapped.

Roxanne reached out and tried the door handle. It turned easily; she eased the door open a crack.

“I’d say no,” she said.

Everyone in the closet breathed a sigh of relief.

“What are we doing here, then?” Palak asked.

“We should leave, right?” Karen hissed. “I vote we leave.”

Roxanne peered through the crack of the door; Mr. and Mrs. Wang were both gone; they probably should get out while—

—too late.

Mrs. Wang threw open the kitchen door and strode inside, followed by her husband, who was talking rapidly, and a small, slender man who—Roxanne frowned—was bald and green-eyed and had a—terribly familiar pattern of facial hair. If it wasn’t for the size of the head and the skin color—

He said something in Mandarin and Roxanne gasped, because holy shit that was Megamind’s voice; that was Megamind; how had he made himself look—

The man who was clearly Megamind in disguise stopped mid-sentence and turned to the closet—oh, he’d heard her.

He reached for the watch on his wrist and twisted something on the face of it, and—yes, there was Megamind, flickering into view—god, that was so cool.

And god damn, had she ever missed him.

(Behind Roxanne, someone—Karen, she thought, made a small squeaking sound.)

Mr. Wang said something, voice loud, and Megamind replied, but his eyes were on the closet still
and—yep, he’d heard her, he was coming over, pulling out his gun.

“We’re going to die,” Karen whispered.

Roxanne rolled her eyes, and then Megamind wrenched the closet door open, gun at the ready. The expression on his face faltered from focused suspicion to shock and confusion when he saw them.

“Ro—Miss Ritchi?” he said. “What—are you doing here?’ He tilted his head. “What are you doing in the closet?” His eyes narrowed. “What have you been filming?”

Ah, right, they probably were going to have to play it that way, weren’t they? Him pretending to be angry about that last broadcast of hers, the one with Mabel and Princess Sharp Teeth.

“Special report on the restaurants of Metro City,” Roxanne said.

“Really,” Megamind said flatly.

“Really,” Roxanne said, raising her eyebrows. “Now if you don’t mind, we’d like to get back to the station; I’ve got some editing to do.”

“Oh, but I’m so terribly interested in this restaurant report!” Megamind said, with a wide, sharp smile. “I’d so like to see the footage!”

Roxanne smiled; Megamind looked startled—god, she wanted to kiss him.

“Of course,” she said, turning to Katie and popping the tape from the camera. She turned back to Megamind, who looked even more confused, now, and stepped towards him, holding out the tape.

At the last moment, though, she ducked past him in the doorway and ran into the kitchen.

“You—!” she heard him say behind her, and then she ran, trying not to laugh, through the kitchen door and into the main part of the restaurant.

The people seated at the tables looked rather startled when Roxanne burst into the room, Megamind at her heels.

“You are being—” Megamind chased her around a table of startled people “—extremely uncooperative, Miss Ritchi!”

Roxanne did laugh, then; she couldn’t help it. Megamind grabbed for her arm; Roxanne dodged.

“Give me the tape!”

“No!”

“Nosy reporter—what have you—been poking your nose in this time—”

“None of your business!” Roxanne said, trapped behind the counter.

“Isn’t it?” Megamind said. He leaped up onto the counter and then smoothly dropped down in front of her, blocking her escape entirely. “Well, then, you won’t mind if I have a look at that tape—”

He caught her wrist; Roxanne quickly switched the tape to her other hand, put her hand behind her back. Megamind’s other arm went around her waist, grabbing for her hand, but she twisted her arm back around and, in a sudden moment of inspiration, shoved the tape down the front of her shirt, into her bra.
“Ha!” she said, into Megamind’s face.

His mouth dropped open.

“You—” he said, “you—cheater!”

Roxanne smirked at him; his eyes flicked down to her lips.

“What’s the matter, Megamind,” she taunted, “don’t you want it anymore?”

Megamind growled in frustration; the sound sent a delicious thrill through Roxanne’s whole body.

“Well, I obviously can’t take it now,” he said.

Roxanne raised her eyebrows; she’d always loved teasing him, and this was—so fucking delightful, Megamind pressed against her like this, the memory of what he felt like, underneath those clothes, the way she could see the faintest trace of the mark she’d given him on his throat.

She tilted her chin up and heard Megamind take a sharp breath.

“Well,” she pointed out, “you could.”

Megamind’s eyes glinted wickedly.

“Permission?” he asked, looking as though he was perfectly willing to shove his hand down the front of her shirt in front of this entire restaurant if she answered yes.

Roxanne gasped.

“Wha—no!” she said.

“Didn’t think so,” Megamind said. He stepped away from her; Roxanne barely stopped herself from reaching out to pull him back. “You may have won this particular battle, Tempt—Miss Ritchi! But your—determination to destroy my reputation will get you nowhere in the end!” He gestured dramatically. “My evil is undeniable!”

Mr. Wang, clutching at the doorframe of the kitchen door, said something in Mandarin.

Megamind waved a dismissive hand and said something back. Roxanne shot him a questioning look.

“He wanted to know if I blamed him for speaking to you,” Megamind said. “But I can hardly hold the poor man accountable for what you and your nosy reporter skills managed to pry out of his weak-willed mind.”

Megamind looked around the restaurant, at everyone looking at the two of them. The tips of his ears went pink and then he glared around the room.

“Undeniable evil!” he said loudly.

He made the mistake of meeting Roxanne’s eyes; she almost choked on another laugh and Megamind flushed even harder, then abruptly whirled on his heel, and strode out of the restaurant.

“Chow chow, all!” he called, waving his hand in the air.

“Yeah, sooo evil,” Roxanne said, rolling her eyes. “Absolutely undeniable, right.”
She smoothed her hands down her skirt, suddenly aware that everyone in the restaurant was still staring at her, that she still had the tape jammed down her shirt.

She cleared her throat.

“Well,” she said to Karen, Palak, and Katie, who were hovering beside Mr. and Mrs. Wang, in the kitchen doorway, “shall we go now?”

“We’re cutting the part where she asked you to tell him to eat more,” Palak said, later, when they were back at the station, “right?”

Roxanne tapped her pen against the desk.

“Play that part for me again,” she said.

She watched carefully as the video played. Had she—no, she hadn’t blushed, thank god. But the expression in her eyes—hm, that was probably too much, wasn’t it? It was a fine line to walk.

“Why’d she ask you, anyway?” Palak asked, with a sharp eyed glance, and Roxanne remembered that this girl wanted to be an investigative journalist, that she’d already watched that—probably very ill-advised—interaction in the restaurant.

Damage control; damage control; don’t look self-conscious; don’t look uncomfortable.

“Do you have any idea how much time I’ve spent with him over the years?” Roxanne asked lightly. “Anyone you spend that much time with ends up sort of feeling like a friend.”

“I suppose,” Palak said, then added, with a sidelong look, “do you think he’d listen?”

Roxanne laughed.

“If I told him to eat more?” she said. “No. But Minion might. Cut that part, but tell Katie I want to film something else to go at the end.”

Roxanne sat alone on her couch again, watching herself on the television.

“—yet more evidence that Megamind, Metro City’s resident ‘supervillain’—”

(the Roxanne on the television screen turned a knowing half-smile on the viewers)

“—is more community-minded than it would seem at first glance. As ever, this is Roxanne Ritchi, seeking the truth.”

(the Roxanne on the screen allowed her smile to widen)

“Oh, and Megamind?” she said sweetly, “Mrs. Wang worries you don’t eat enough.”

The image on the screen changed to Dan and Steve, in the studio.

“—thank you, Roxanne,” Dan said, looking rather nervous. Katie had looked about the same, when she filmed Roxanne saying that. “And—now let’s go to Connie, with the weather.”
Roxanne turned off the television, then put down the remote and rubbed her hands over her face.

She should go to sleep. She should. She—

Her phone rang, startling her. Was it—

“Hello?” she asked, flipping it open and pressing it to her ear, hoping—

“I eat a normal amount!” Megamind’s voice said, sounding outraged. “Just because I happen to have different dietary requirements than humans—I can’t help that I—look like this!”

“Megamind,” Roxanne said, grinning and hugging one of her decorative couch pillows (she looked like an idiot, but it wasn’t like he was there to see). “Hey.”

“And why did you say ‘supervillain’ like that?” Megamind went on, voice rising. “Like some sort of—of joke! I—this isn’t a joke, this is—this is a bad idea, is what this is—why are we doing this; it isn’t going to work—”

“Megamind,” Roxanne said, putting the pillow aside, pressing the phone closer to her ear, smile falling away, “hey, Megamind, shh, no, calm down, it’s okay—”

“Do not tell me to calm down!” Megamind said, sounding really angry and near to panic and—

“Sorry,” Roxanne said, “sorry, no, that was the wrong thing to say. You—you can be angry; I’m not saying you can’t be angry; I just don’t want you to panic. You don’t need to panic. We can talk about this.”

She heard Megamind take an unsteady breath, then another.

“Okay?” she said.

“Yes,” he bit out.

“Okay,” Roxanne said. “I’m—sorry for upsetting you. The eating thing was—really just me thinking it was sweet that she worries about you, thinking that it might win some people over, you having this lady fussing over you like you’re her grandson or something. And showing everybody that I feel comfortable enough with you to tease you. It—definitely wasn’t a criticism of your body, Megamind. I told you how much I like your body, remember?”

On the other end of the line, Megamind made a scoffing noise.

“I’m sorry that I made you feel attacked by saying that,” Roxanne said, “and. I don’t think this is a joke. It is definitely not a joke to me. You—are definitely not a joke to me. I just—really feel that the idea of you being a supervillain is ridiculous.”

“I am a supervillain!”

“Yes, I know you are; you’re just not very—”

“I know I’m not very good at it!” Megamind said, almost shouting again, “I’m not very good at anything!”

“You’re good at being melodramatic!” Roxanne said before she could stop herself.

There was a silence on the other end of the line; Roxanne’s heart dropped—god, she’d done it again, said something thoughtlessly cruel and ended up making someone she cared about hate her;
he was never going to want to—

Megamind—laughed. It was a quiet, choked sort of laughed, but also a—genuine one.

“Okay,” he said, “I—melodramatic, I will give you.”

Roxanne closed her eyes and let out a relieved breath. Fuck. How was he not even angrier with her after that comment?

“I’m sorry,” she said, “I shouldn’t have said that.”


“No, don’t be!” Roxanne said quickly, grabbing the pillow and wrapping her arms around it again. “I—I’m glad you called. I—I missed you,” she said quietly, then had a small moment of oh-god-I-shouldn’t-have-said-that, which turned into several moments of fuck-I-really-shouldn’t-have-said-that when Megamind was silent for a few seconds.

“You—saw me earlier today,” he said finally, voice uncertain.

“Yeah, but it’s—not like we got to actually talk,” Roxanne said. “You had to chase me around and pretend to be mad at me.”

“—and then I called you to argue for real,” Megamind said. “Tell me, why the hell would you ever want to talk to me?”

“I like talking to you!” Roxanne said, “Megamind, I would rather argue with you than—”

(talk with anybody else, she nearly said, but stopped herself in time)

“—than sit in my empty apartment alone and not talk to anybody,” she continued, “which is what I was doing before you called.”

“I see,” Megamind said wryly. “So really I did you a favor by calling to shout at you?”

“Exactly,” Roxanne said, bringing her knees into her chest and resting her chin on the pillow. She heard Megamind sigh.

“I really am sorry for shouting, Roxanne,” Megamind said quietly. “I shouldn’t have.”

“It’s okay,” Roxanne said, “you’re allowed to be upset. You have valid concerns.”

“Do I?” he asked. “It’s—hard for me to tell? I’ve been—edging closer to—panic—ever since that first broadcast. I think maybe I would have—reacted badly tonight no matter what? I’m—I’m not a very brave person. Or a very rational person, really.”

“Oh, shut up, you are ridiculously brave,” Roxanne said. “The way you see yourself is—so entirely wrong! And—Megamind, just because something’s an emotional response, just because it’s based in—feelings, and not in ‘rationality’, that doesn’t mean it’s not—real or important. You like Star Trek, you nerd, I know that you know this.”

Megamind laughed, a shocked, half-unwilling sound.

“I suppose you’re right,” he said, “you almost always are.”
“Damn straight,” Roxanne said firmly, feeling a warm glow spreading through her chest.

(I suppose you’re right; you almost always are)

“I just—I don’t like panicking,” he said. “It’s unpleasant and—counterproductive.”

“Oh,” Roxanne said, “Well. Is there anything that helps you with that?”

“You,” he said, and Roxanne’s stupid heart flipped over. “I always feel—better, calmer, more—
more. When you’re—around—or—talking to me. But that’s—I shouldn’t—”

“You can talk to me,” Roxanne said, “you can—I told you, I like talking to you, Megamind. I want
to—”

“But I can’t expect you to—I shouldn’t depend on you like that; you’re not responsible for my—
emotional and mental functionality—”

“Okay, no, obviously I can’t be—solely responsible for—but—would it help,” Roxanne
swallowed. “Would it help to know that—I’m with you on this thing, Megamind; you don’t have to
do this by yourself. This—the Plan and—your—emotional health, too. You don’t have to do either
of those things all by yourself.”

A long silence on the other end of the line.

“Yes,” Megamind whispered, “yes, that helps.”

“All right,” Roxanne said, “all right then. I’m with you, okay?”

Okay,” Megamind said, voice shaking slightly.

“All right,” Roxanne said, “and—I’ll try to check in with you before broadcasting things about you
that I think you might not be okay with, all right?”

“You don’t have to—” Megamind said, sounding distressed. “I trust you, Roxanne, I trust you to—
do your job.”

“And I appreciate that,” Roxanne said, “so very fucking much, Megamind; you have no idea. But
this Plan is going to be—very personal for you. And sometimes I might not catch something you
would catch. I want us to work together on this. Partners, all right?”

“—partners,” Megamind said. “—I—yes, Roxanne, I would—very much like that. I have wanted—
I have wanted that, with you, for so long.”

“—really?” Roxanne asked, hope rising, rising—

Megamind laughed.

“How many times did I ask you to be Evil Queen?” he said.

“Oh,” Roxanne said, hope and heart falling, “is—is that what the Evil Queen thing was about?”

(is that all it was about?)

“Of course,” Megamind said, “Every plan I ever came up with, you knew exactly how it was
flawed! Your mind is—so incredible, really, Roxanne, entirely incredible. I have absolutely no
doubt that, if you had turned evil, we would have defeated Metro Man and conquered this city
together.”

The way he said that, so—such complete certainty—was it weird that it made Roxanne’s heart ache?

“But then we would have had to rule it,” Roxanne pointed out, ignoring the tightness in her chest.

“Yes,” Megamind said, “which wouldn’t be as exciting as the actual fighting, of course, but—I’m sure it would still have been fun if you were there! Just think! What would you want for this city, if you could have anything?”

“A bigger library,” Roxanne said promptly.

“Done,” Megamind said. “A better system of aid for the homeless.”

“Better social aid in general,” Roxanne said.

“Definitely. What else?”

“Another wing for the Art Museum.”

“A Science and Technology Museum!”

“Better public education.”

“More qualified public school teachers.”

“We’d need to make teaching a prestige position,” Roxanne said. “highly paid, highly competitive —”

“—instead of like now, when teaching is mostly a fall-back for people,” Megamind finished, “and there’s this horrible stigma against teaching because it means you’re some sort of ‘failure’.”

“Yes. Also, free healthcare. We should have that. We’re probably going to have to prioritize some of these things, though, aren’t we? Where would we get the money to do all of this at once?”

“I wonder if we could somehow get away from capitalism as a feature of our society?” Megamind said. “If everyone has a right to a standard of living, then money ends up being used only for luxury items and experiences? Or! We could print our own money!”

“That seems like a disaster waiting to happen,” Roxanne said.

“Oh, come on! It worked for Lincoln!”

“Yeah, but—inflation.”

“Hm, all right, point taken. What if we printed our own money but set a cap on the cost for things?”

“What, on every single thing?” Roxanne asked, “That anyone could possibly sell? It’s just not workable.”

“We would need people to research that sort of information for us,” Megamind said. “An index of prices—there are people who like doing that sort of thing.”

Roxanne laughed.
“Yeah,” she said, “and I think I know one of them. Karen Li, that new temp secretary, is phenomenal. You should definitely try to get her full time.”

“Really?” Megamind said, “I will, then. Is the new camera operator working out?”

“Katie is great,” Roxanne said. “Palak, too. I think you’d like them. All three of them, really.” She hesitated, then added, “They were at the restaurant today.”

“Oh,” Megamind said, “the people in the closet behind you?”

“Palak was the one in the red shirt, with the beautiful hair,” Roxanne said, feeling her heartbeat pick up.

“Ah,” Megamind said, “Um. Right. I—didn’t really notice what they—looked like? Sorry. But! I did notice that there were three of them!”

Roxanne breathed a—stupid, pathetic—sigh of relief.

“It’s not important,” she said, and yawned audibly.

“I should let you get to sleep,” Megamind said.

“No, not—talk to me a little while longer?” Roxanne asked, and then wanted to shake herself for sounding so pathetic.

Megamind was silent for a moment.

“Of course,” he said finally, “what—what should I talk about?”

Roxanne curled up on her side on the couch, the phone beneath her head, pressed to her ear.

“Anything,” she said. “Tell me about one of your inventions. What are you building for the last kidnapping?”

Megamind chuckled quietly.

“Nosy reporter. That’s a surprise. But! I can tell you about the new power source I’ve come up with for it! It starts with an entirely new chemical compound for the fuel, minimal waste and quite powerful. The compound consists of—”

Roxanne fell asleep like that, with Megamind’s voice in her ear, lying on the couch in the room with Megamind’s handwriting on the walls.

She woke up to sunlight streaming through the tall windows. Her phone was still beneath her head—she winced; phones were definitely not meant to be slept on like that; she was going to have a headache.

The line was still open; on the other end she could hear the quiet, even sounds of Megamind breathing. He was still asleep, she realized.

(So close, so close to what she wanted, so close to waking up beside him. If he was here, if they were together, she could lie back down and fall asleep in his arms again or she could lean down and kiss him awake—)

“Megamind,” she said softly, and then, even more quietly and because he was still asleep, “I love you.”
Only the sound of his sleeping breaths answered her.

Definitely for the best, Roxanne. He doesn’t want to hear that; he told you.

“Hey, Megamind,” she said, slightly louder, “Megamind, wake up.”

“Mmmm?” he said, sounding mostly asleep still. “What?”

(God, why did he have to be so fucking adorable?)

“It’s morning,” Roxanne said gently.

“Morning?”

“Yes,” Roxanne said, “I’m going to have to hang up now so I can get ready for work, but—I’d like to see you tonight.”

“—the Plan,” Megamind said, yawning.

No, not the Plan, Roxanne wanted to cry, I just want to see you.

“Yeah,” Roxanne said, “we should—set up regular meetings. To. Talk about the Plan.”

“—send you directions to the Lair,” Megamind mumbled—she had a strong suspicion he was lying down again.

“Thanks,” Roxanne said, “but—I think I would have been able to find it myself, you know.”

Megamind made an inquiring noise.

“It’s the only building in the Metro City with a fake observatory on the roof,” Roxanne said.

Megamind laughed, soft and mellow and affectionate.

“So smart,” he said. “You. Too smart.”

(Roxanne held the memory of that, and of the sound of his laughter, close to her heart as she hung up the phone and went upstairs to her empty bedroom to get dressed.)

Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

(thank you to everyone reading, reviewing, and sending kudos!)
“—so you see,” Megamind said, “how the chemical composition of the fuel makes it possible to—Roxanne, are you still awake?”

The soft sound of her breathing answered him.

Megamind hesitated a moment, and then said, without changing the tone of his voice, “I’m really not sure why you’re doing this. I know you don’t—I know you don’t love me. Not really. It was—unbelievably kind of you to say that when I asked, though. I never properly thanked you for that, did I? I never properly thanked you for—any of it. I know it didn’t—taking me to bed like that, I know it didn’t mean the same thing to you as it did to me.”

He paused very slightly, listening to the sound of Roxanne’s breathing, making sure that—yes, she was still asleep.

“I’ve never been able to separate the idea of sex from romantic love,” he said quietly. “I know that’s—I know they’re separate for most people. I know they’re—separate for you. I—it was too much, wasn’t it, me asking you to tell me that you loved me. I don’t imagine you’ll want to touch me again after—that’s the problem with me, really. I’m always—too much. I always—I always want too much.”

He’d tried explaining some of this to Minion—ma’am, Minion had called her, and it had seemed a good plan to head that idea off as quickly as possible before things got even more awkward. Minion had—not really understood.

But you’ve fallen in love with her, Minion had said.

Yes, Megamind had admitted, but she’s not in love with me.

Minion had been very confused.

But she—he had gestured to the mark on Megamind’s neck as though this was undeniable evidence.

(Remembering, Megamind made a face. As far as he and Minion figured, Minion’s species had probably spawned to reproduce, which meant that Minion only understood what Megamind had explained of romantic/sexual pair bonding behavior, back when both of them were teenagers. This had apparently left Minion with the impression that everyone felt the same about the whole thing as Megamind.)

I don’t think that can be right, Minion had said flatly, when Megamind finished telling him that no, Minion; sex and love are not the same thing for her; you can’t expect—she doesn’t want me like that; she doesn’t feel like that about me—

(Megamind, Roxanne had said, in her room, after he’d begged her for eyeliner, earlier, when I said—)

And Megamind had known what she was going to say, had known she was going to say I didn’t mean it when I said I loved you, and so he’d said please don’t.

Please don’t say it out loud; I understand already, you don’t need to say it; my grasping, hungry heart can’t take hearing you say it out loud.)
You need to talk to her, Minion had told him, at the end of the explanation.

(Minion—probably hadn’t meant while she was unconscious, but—oh, Megamind didn’t—still didn’t—still didn’t want to hear her say I don’t love you out loud.)

Megamind paused again to make sure Roxanne was still asleep, and then continued.

“I am grateful, though,” he said. “I never thought I’d get to have that much with you. I—"

love you, he tried to say, but the words caught in his throat.

He should hang up the phone now.

Oh, but she’d said I’d rather argue with you than sit in my apartment alone and not talk to anybody, and she’d said talk to me, and was that—oh.

That—that was why, wasn’t it, that was why she’d said kiss me, why she’d said would you like to come back to my apartment with me, why she’d said I missed you. That was why she was spending so much time and effort on helping him:

Roxanne was lonely.

That was why.

It all made sense now.

And—well.

Megamind could—he could help Roxanne with that, he thought; he could entertain her, keep her company until she found someone—more worth her while.

He could do that.

(he could; he could; it would only break his heart: an easy price to pay, an easy choice. His heart was already broken, after all, there was no point in wrapping it up in cotton wool and handling it with care now.)

Megamind was always going to want too much from Roxanne.

Luckily, he was used to not getting what he wanted.

Megamind curled up to sleep with the phone placed strategically beneath his head—she could wake him up, this way, if she wanted him to talk to her again.

(And he could fall asleep to the sound of her breathing and pretend that she was here, beside him, pretend she had meant it, when she said she loved him, pretend—)

He slept.
Chapter 10

Roxanne didn’t count on someone having taken a cell phone video of that scene in the restaurant; especially didn’t count on the video being posted online and going viral overnight.

The station was in an uproar when Roxanne got to work; Lisa was in the process of (possibly illegally; no one wanted to ask) trying to take the video down from the site; Karen was yelling at someone on the phone; Xavier was speaking in a terrifyingly calm way to someone else on the phone, and the station manager was red-faced and shouting in a rather unhelpful way.

The whole office went silent when Roxanne walked in, and then everyone started talking to her at once.

“—video without your consent—”

“—Megamind—”

“—goddamn firewalls; I’ll give you a FIRE DAMN IT—“

“—scandal! This station has never—”

“—no, I’m telling you, you dimwitted piece of—”

“—ma’am, I need you to listen to what I am saying—”

“—could someone please tell me what’s going on?” Roxanne asked.

The problem wasn’t really the video, of course. The flirting had been—yes, a little obvious, but certainly not disastrously so.

The real problem was the way people were talking about the video, and how many people were talking about the video.

...clearly something there...

...been saying for years...

...LOOK AT THE WAY THEY’RE LOOKING AT EACH OTHER OMG...

“This is my fault,” Megamind said (eventually said—the first thing he said when Roxanne locked herself in the bathroom, called him, and told him not to panic but to look at this website, was a fluent, minute-and-a-half long string of profanity).

“Your fault; how could this possibly be your fault?” Roxanne hissed in an undertone.

“I have a program in place,” Megamind moaned, “that’s supposed to—it deletes any—articles or posts that—might prove damaging to—to my image, or yours, but it goes off of keywords and someone has evidently—this site is a—they’ve noticed the program, I think, because they aren’t using any of the keywords; this site—there are posts about us going back years, and none of them have the keywords; these people—”
“Is that why they’ve written our names like that sometimes, with some of the letters censored out?”

“Yes,” Megamind said, “fuck fuck fuck yes—god damn it—should have been paying more attention, should have—and now they’re using the ‘Roxanne Ritchi, seeking the truth’ thing to label their—conspiracy theory—and—and now people just searching for information on your actual broadcasts about this ‘seeking the truth’ thing are ending up on this fucking website that’s—I—I am going to burn this website to the ground—”

“No!” Roxanne said, thinking quickly, “no, you can’t; that’ll make it worse; you’ll get even more people thinking that there’s—something to hide—”

“There is something to—!”

“Give me a second,” Roxanne said, “just—I’m thinking, all right?”

Megamind, to her surprise, obediently went silent.

“Okay,” Roxanne said after a moment of furious thought. “Okay. This is—not a perfect solution, but—I think KCMP is going to have to show the clip.”

“What? How the hell is that going to—”

“Hiding in plain sight,” Roxanne said. “Every other station is going to be showing it; me refusing to let them show it here just makes it look suspicious. We’re going to show the clip and I’m going to act like it’s no big deal. And then we are going to distract the fuck out of everyone, all right?”

“With what?” Megamind asked, sounding desperate to be convinced.

“We’re going to start rumors of Wayne’s retirement early,” Roxanne said. “I’m going to do an interview with Wayne about it today. Probably live. People always find live broadcasts more exciting, more—convincing. I will try to keep the conversation away from anything that might be upsetting to you, but obviously I can’t promise—”

“I trust you,” Megamind said, voice still tight and sort of angry. “Do what you have to.”

Roxanne closed her eyes and leaned her forehead against the wall.

I trust you, god, no fucking pressure there.

How the hell was she going to—

Stop.

You can do this, Roxanne.

You can do this. Breathe.

“Oh,” she said, “and after the interview airs, I need you to be ready with—what did Lisa call them?—sock-puppets.”

“—uh?” Megamind said, sounding baffled. “Sock—sock puppets? What does—improve-isational clothing-based theatre have to do with anything?”

“Not sock-puppet sock-puppets,” Roxanne said, laughing in a startled way. “The—sock-puppets like when one person comes up with several online accounts and acts like they’re different people so they can—have a conversation, make people think that it’s not just them—"
“Oh!” Megamind said, and she could hear a surprised laugh in his voice, too. “Okay, that makes a lot more—I can do the online sock-puppeting about the retirement rumors, yes.”

“Oh, good,” Roxanne said, pressing her phone close to her ear, wishing he was here with her so she could put her arms around him instead. “Go ahead and start that now—and if you could do something fancy with—maybe make it look like people have been talking about him retiring for a while? And then the discussion really needs to explode after the interview airs.”

“Yes, I can do that,” Megamind said. “I will do that.” He gave a shaky exhale. “Tell me not to panic.”

“You don’t need to panic,” Roxanne told him (and herself, too, honestly). “We can deal with this.”

“Yes,” Megamind said. “Okay, I am on the—improve-isational internet theatre now. No panicking.”

“No panicking,” Roxanne said. “I’m—with you,” she added. “And I’ll see you tonight.”

“So, Wayne,” Roxanne said, “what are your thoughts about the recently revealed information on Metro City’s own supervillain?”

(she was careful to put the stress on Wayne’s name—she always called him Metro Man during her broadcasts before—and to keep the word supervillain entirely free from anything resembling mockery.)

(Wayne was wearing civilian clothes, too, at her instruction, something they’d never done during an interview before)

“Well, Roxy—Roxanne,” Wayne said, with that earnest gee-shucks-I’m-just-so-trustworthy expression, “I’ve always thought there was more to Megamind than there seemed. It’s good to know that I was right.”

“You mentioned once that the two of you went to school together,” Roxanne said, “tell me, has that affected your view of him?”

An expression of discomfort crossed Wayne’s face.

“Er—” he said, “—well, I have known him a long time—we did go to school together.”

“Yes,” Roxanne said, making her mouth smile, “you’ll have to tell us about that sometime.”

Wayne briefly looked even more uncomfortable, then smiled a Metro Man sort of smile.

“Sure, Rox—Roxanne. Hey,” he added, as they’d agreed, “I wanted to let you know that I’m sorry about all the trouble you’ve been having with that video and the rumors.”

“Oh,” Roxanne said with a wry, unconcerned laugh, “thank you. That has been a little uncomfortable, yes.”

(Understatement of the fucking century. Perfect dismissive tone; well done, Roxanne.)

“But,” Roxanne went, “speaking of rumors, tell me, Wayne—is there any truth to rumors of your upcoming retirement?”
Wayne scratched the back of his neck.

“Well, I mean,” he said, “I’ve always planned to retire someday, you know? I wouldn’t want to say I’ve got any immediate plans, but—there’s just so much I still want to do, so many things I still want to experience, that I feel like I haven’t been able to because of the—demands of being Metro Man.”

“Can you give me an example?” Roxanne asked.

“Oh,” Wayne said, “well, I’ve—I’d really like to have a shot at romance someday. It’s kinda hard trying to date someone when you keep getting called away in the middle of everything…”

“Or when you keep getting kidnapped,” Roxanne put in.

Wayne laughed.

“Yeah, I guess you do know how it is,” he said.

“And it can’t have been easy for you,” Roxanne said, “trying to date when everybody assumed that you and I were together! It’s certainly been difficult for me.”

(Sh...
right? And I am not just some damsel in distress. And you—Wayne Scott—you’re more than just Metro Man.”

Wayne cleared his throat, eyes bright.

“Yeah,” he said, “yeah, I am.”

“Honestly,” Roxanne said, “I could almost be happy about this weird rumor about me and Megamind, even if it is—completely off base, because at least it means people have started questioning the pattern, started seeing us as people.”

“That’s a good way of looking at it,” Wayne said.

“So how about you?” Roxanne said. “Why don’t you tell the viewers a little bit about Wayne Scott, the person?”

Wayne took a breath.

“Well,” he said, “I’ve always been really interested in music…”

“‘So,’ Wayne said, turning his sandwich around in his hands.

“So,” Roxanne said, in a prompting kind of way.

Wayne had asked, after they finished taping his interview, if they could get something for lunch. Roxanne had been startled, but had agreed. Katie and Palak had gone on to the station with subs for what everyone at the station had, after the way the group had rallied around Roxanne this morning, started referring to, in a way that was only half joking, as ‘Roxanne’s Team’: Karen, Lisa, Xavier, Palak, Connie, and Katie.

On the park bench, Roxanne waited. Wayne clearly wanted to talk, but he just kept staring at his sandwich.

Roxanne took a bite of her own sandwich. She might as well eat while Wayne worked himself up to say—whatever it was he wanted to say.

“So,” Wayne said again, “you and Megamind.”

Roxanne lowered her sandwich slowly.

“Yes?” she said in a dangerous way. “Are you planning on voicing your objection again?”

Wayne looked up from his sandwich, frowning.

“What?” he said, and then his eyes went wide. “Oh! No, I was—oh, man, he’s right, I really am bad at this—”

“At what?” Roxanne asked.

“Friends,” Wayne said, “I—I’ve been thinking and—well, he said you were supposed to show interest in things that are important to them! And—and he’s—clearly something that’s important to you…”
“Oh,” Roxanne said.

“So—” Wayne said, looking uncomfortable, “—so he’s good, then? You guys are good? Everything is good?”

And there were—so many ways to answer that.

He doesn’t love me back and my heart hurts and nothing is good, things are not good, I want to cry and I’m terrified and—

“Oh,” Roxanne said. “Everything is fine.”

“Good, good,” Wayne said, “good—” he crammed his sandwich into his mouth in what appeared to be an attempt to stop talking, and took a bite.

“Yeah,” Roxanne said, and took another bite of sandwich. “Good.”

—and, that’s the last measurement, ma’am—Miss. Miss Ritchi,” Minion said, throwing the tape measure over the shoulder of his robot suit.

“Thanks, Minion,” Roxanne said. “I really appreciate it.”

“Of course,” Minion said. “I can show you some designs later—tomorrow, after I’ve had a chance to—and that way you can tell me if you don’t—like what I’ve come up with.”

“I’d love to see your designs,” Roxanne said, “but I’m sure any outfit you come up with will be great.”

Minion fluttered in the glass headpiece of the suit in a pleased fashion.

“Oh, ma’am, you’re much too—” Minion cut himself off, a hesitant expression coming over his face.

Roxanne looked at him questioningly.

“Ah,” he said, “—Miss Ritchi—have you—have you and Sir—talked?”

Roxanne, putting her suit jacket back on, suppressed a wince.

“Talked?” she said, playing for time.

“Because you should really—you should really do that. I think.” Minion said. “You—”

“Aren’t you done yet?” Megamind called loudly from the other side of the curtain. “Come on, for Evil’s sake, how long does it take to measure someone?”

Minion rolled his eyes and Roxanne pulled the curtain aside.

“Here, try this!” Megamind said, and pushed something into her hands.

Roxanne looked down and blinked. It was—

It was a gun, a lot like the one Megamind carried, but slightly smaller, with silver filigree, instead of copper.
Roxanne curled her fingers around the grip.

It fit her hand perfectly.

“You—you made me a de-gun?” she asked incredulously.

“I finished it today,” Megamind said, gloved fingers twisting together. “The sock-puppeting wasn’t sufficiently distracting and I needed something to do with my hands and you said you wanted one, and—”

“—oh my god, this is the best gift ever,” Roxanne said, heart flipping over and over.

“—I’ll go get some snacks!” Minion said, and fairly bolted from the room.

“…you really like it?” Megamind asked, voice uncertain. “I—I gave you the same settings as mine; I wasn’t sure if that would—”

“Show me how to use all of them,” Roxanne said, too excited about her space gun (fuck yeah she had a ray gun now), too even let the fact that she was alone with Megamind get—really awkward.

(Space guns made everything better, she thought.)

When Minion came back in fifteen minutes later—snacks, right, uh-huh, reeeal subtle, Minion—Roxanne and Megamind were engaged in gluing various things to the walls with the de-coupage setting of the de-gun and snickering like children.

Minion gave Roxanne a reproachful look that said, quite clearly, *I told you to talk to him*, but—oh, they’d already decided to move up the date of the final part of the plan in response to that video and having to spread the rumors about Wayne’s retirement early, and so they’d already talked about everything important, hadn’t they?

The way she wanted to wrap her arms around him and just—lean together, like that, and breathe, and feel calm and safe and—that. That wasn’t important.

(The stupid, yearning ache in her heart was not important.)

The sun was setting when she left the Lair, red-gold light and deep blue shadows, and Roxanne sat alone in the silence of her car for several moments without starting the engine and told herself that she wasn’t going to cry.

Her phone rang as she was pulling away from the Lair; she answered it without looking at who was calling, hoping, hoping, desperately hoping that Megamind had decided to call her and tell her to come back—

“Roxanne Rachel Ritchi,” said the voice on the other end of the line, “have you lost your mind?”

“Hello, mother,” Roxanne said, then silently mouthed *fuck fuck FUCK*. “How are you?”

(God fucking damn it, this was what Roxanne got for not screening her damn calls.)
“I am extremely concerned,” her mother said, “that’s how I am! I have been watching these latest ‘interviews’ of yours, and I am very, very worried.”

“I didn’t think you got the KCMP news channel there,” Roxanne said.

“We don’t,” her mother said, “I’ve been watching them online. Don’t change the subject.”

“I wasn’t changing the subject,” Roxanne lied, fighting the urge to slam her head against the steering wheel.

(Why, why had she answered the phone without looking?)

“Roxanne, tell me you’re not doing what I think you’re doing.”

“What do you think I’m doing?” Roxanne asked in a tight voice as she made an illegal U-turn.

“I think—and I am desperately hoping that I’m wrong—I think that you are throwing yourself at the criminal, mentally-unstable alien who has been threatening your life for ten damn years!”

(Mentally unstable—Megamind on the phone I don’t like panicking; it’s unpleasant and counterproductive.)

“For god’s sake, Roxanne, these interviews are practically a come-on; what are you going to do if he decides to take you up on the offer? Men like that don’t know how to take no for an answer.”

(Megamind looking up at her from the floor of the Lair, eyes wide and almost frightened you said stop)

(Roxanne was fairly certain that no was the only answer Megamind did know how to take)

“Megamind isn’t like that, mother,” Roxanne snapped. “He’s not going to hurt me; he’s never hurt me.”

(Megamind pressing the gun he’d made her into her hands, his fingers twisting nervously you really like it?)

“He points guns at your head!” her mother said, voice rising. “He ties you up and tries to—blow you up with bombs and announces he’s going to kill you and he laughs about it, Roxanne—why the hell you won’t file a restraining order, I’ll never understand—”

“If he really wanted to kill me, he would have killed me a long time ago,” Roxanne said. “Do we really have to go through this again?”

—god, she was so tired of this fight; they’d had it so many times. The last time had been two weeks ago, the last time her mother called.

“—just come home, Roxanne, honey, please; it isn’t safe there—”

Roxanne pulled the van sharply to the curb in front of the Lair and slammed the car into park.

“I am home!” Roxanne said. “This is my home, mother; I have a life here; I have a job here; I live here, and for the last time, I am not going to uproot my entire life to move back to Wisconsin with you. For fuck’s sake, I am thirty goddamn years old! When the hell are you going to stop treating me like I’m some—silly little teenage girl?”

“Whenever you stop acting like one! Oh, Roxanne,” her mother said, tone changing, “oh,
Roxanne, I’m sorry.”

Roxanne gritted her teeth, tried to force the words that’s okay, mother, through her lips.

“I’ve failed you,” her mother continued. “I’ve failed you as a parent, and I’m so sorry for that. I’ve turned you into this—victim.”

“I am not a victim,” Roxanne snarled.

“—this easy target for the wrong sort of attention,” her mother went on. “People like him see that and they take advantage of it. I should have been there more for you, when you were growing up; I should have explained; your father walking out on us like that couldn’t have helped, but this is on me; it is; I do know that.”

“I’m done with this conversation,” Roxanne said. “I’m not listening to this, mother; I have to go.”

“Please tell me you’re not already sleeping with him,” her mother begged.

“—I said I’m done with this conversation! I’m not going to answer that; it isn’t any of your business!”

“Roxanne, you need to think about what you’re doing!” her mother said. “He is dangerous. Did he tell you that you’re special to him? Did he tell you that he loves you? He is lying; men like him, they’re always lying when they say things like that. Men like that aren’t capable of love.”

Roxanne was shaking, shaking with rage and unshed tears. She clung to her phone, to the steering wheel, fixed her eyes blindly on the dashboard.

“Don’t you dare,” she said, low and furious. “Don’t you dare say he’s not capable of love. You don’t even know him. You don’t know how he is with Minion. They talk to each other like family—no, you know what, not like family—like how family is supposed to be. You don’t know how he is with the brainbots—the way he pets them and plays with them and makes over them when they’re hurt. He loves those robots more than most people are able to love something made of flesh and blood. He loves this city; you said you’ve seen the interviews, haven’t you been paying attention? He cares so much about the people of this city, although, to be brutally honest, I’m not really sure why, since pretty much all we’ve ever done is fuck him over endlessly! And yet! He still loves this city! So don’t you dare say Megamind’s not capable of love.”

“Roxanne—”

“But you are right about one thing, mother,” Roxanne said, “he doesn’t love me. So thanks. Thanks for that. This has been a really great talk.”

“He isn’t even human, Roxanne; he isn’t worth—”

“Not human is not the same thing as less than human,” Roxanne said, knuckles going white on the steering wheel. “‘It is—that kind of utter bullshit that has—god, this planet has—just completely—we, humans, the people of this planet? Do you know what we’ve done? We have taken the most intelligent, kindest, genuinely good man that—do not interrupt me; I am talking; you don’t get to talk now—we have taken the most genuinely good man that I have ever met, and we have made him hate himself. We have made him think that he’s evil, that he’s not worth—anything, that what he wants is irrelevant, because he ‘isn’t even human’—he would agree with you about this, and it makes me want to scream—”

“He’s done something to you, Roxanne, he’s done something to your brain, some sort of mind
control—”

Roxanne laughed, her laughter like broken glass in her throat.

“If you don’t know that this is me saying this,” Roxanne said, “then I guess you don’t really know me.”

“You’re going to get yourself killed!” her mother cried. “You’re going to get yourself killed; he’s going to kill you and they’re going to call me down to the morgue to identify my daughter’s body and—”

“That’s fucking nonsense,” Roxanne said flatly, “but—tell you what, if that happens, please feel free to tell my corpse ‘I told you so.’”

She slammed the phone shut, powered it down entirely, and tossed it in the passenger seat.

And then she got out of the car and strode purposefully back into the Lair.

Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

Thank you so much to everyone reading, reviewing, and sending kudos! I really appreciate it all.

(Elotaria, I hope you enjoy the de-coupage!)
Chapter 11

Roxanne stalked through the Lair, past the car and the hover bike and the Spiderbot. Minion, carrying a laundry basket, rounded a corner and saw her.

“Er—” he said, and then seemed to take in the expression on her face. “I’ll—uh—I’ve got some errands to run…”

“Good,” Roxanne said, still striding forward. “You do that.”

“Bots, this way!” Minion said, and then hissed, “Yes, 228, that means you, too! Come on, come on —”

Roxanne took a sharp turn into the main area of the Lair, her heels echoing sharply on the floor.

Megamind was pretty much where she had left him, leaning over a lab table, sketching something out. He looked up when she came in, and then straightened up from the table, a look of surprise coming over his face.

“Oh!” he said, “um. Did—did you—forget something?”

“No,” Roxanne said, not slowing her walk.

Megamind’s expression flickered into confusion, and then Roxanne was in front of him.

“I missed you,” she said, rage simmering beneath her voice.

“You—you only left five minutes ago?” Megamind said uncertainly.

Roxanne caught his chin and pulled him forward into a hard kiss. He made a surprised noise but kissed her back. Roxanne tore her mouth away.

“I missed you like this,” she said.

“Oh,” Megamind said dazedly.

Roxanne kissed him again, fast and forceful, and reached her hand up to cup the back of his head. He made a surprised noise but kissed her back. Roxanne tore her mouth away.

“I missed you like this,” she said.

“Oh,” Megamind said dazedly.

Roxanne kissed him again, fast and forceful, and reached her hand up to cup the back of his head. He made a soft noise into her mouth and she bit down on his lower lip.

She pushed herself away from him; Megamind stumbled a little, hands going back to the lab table to catch his balance, eyes on her, lips parted.

“Here’s what’s going to happen,” Roxanne said. “You are going to tie me up, and then you are going to do whatever you want to me.”

“Oh,” Megamind said again, “uh. O—okay.”

“You’re really sure you don’t want to give me a narrower set of parameters?” Megamind asked,
standing at the foot of the bed, frowning slightly.

Roxanne, naked on the bed with her hands tied over her head, shifted her wrists experimentally. He’d tied her tightly enough this time that she couldn’t get out; good.

He’d taken her to his bedroom. She’d been expecting him to tie her up and fuck her on the lab table, but he’d reached out for her hand and led her here instead.

Megamind’s bedroom was—it sort of made Roxanne’s heart ache. Mismatched bookshelves filled with tattered paperback books lined one wall; a cheap poster of an impressionist painting of the ocean was tacked in the middle of another (it had been a motivational poster, once, she thought, but the words on the bottom had been torn off and discarded.) The rest of the walls were bare concrete.

There weren’t any windows, which—yes made sense, maybe, since it was in the Lair, but—surely he could have set up some sort of star-trek-y screen on one of the walls, made it look like he had a view, at least.

The bed was a twin, for fuck’s sake; how many banks had he robbed over the years? —and it had never occurred to him to buy himself a goddamn kingsize bed and some silk fucking sheets? Or at least something with a thread count over fucking—fifty, which was what these felt like, jesus christ.

(let me take care of you, Roxanne wanted to tell him, her rage from earlier cooling to sadness. Let me show you how to be nice to yourself. Someone clearly needs to.)

“I mean—” Megamind said, with a quick uncertain movement of one hand, “whatever I want, that’s a—really—nonspecific—”

“I meant it,” Roxanne said, “whatever you want.”

She shifted on the bed again, with more purpose this time, one bare leg drawing up the other. Megamind’s breath caught, a lavender flush painting it’s way across his cheekbones, his eyes going slightly unfocused.

“Okay,” he said, “okay, but—if you don’t like something, you are going to tell me, right? You said—that’s what Code: Safeword is for—”

“I will say the safeword if I want you to stop,” Roxanne said, “but right now I’d like you to start.”

Megamind laughed.

“All right, all right!” he said, taking off his cape and boots, pulling off his gloves. “Give me a second!”

“A second?” Roxanne said, heartbeat picking up at the sight of his bare hands—god, she was getting wet over seeing his hands, this was ridiculous, “I’m dying of old age over here!” He slid his pants off, pulled his shirt off and tossed it aside. “You need clothes that don’t take a hundred years to get out of, Megamind.”

He pulled off the undersuit, stepped out of it, and then knelt on the bed in front of her, brushing one hand down the side of his own neck, almost absently, continuing the motion down his chest, towards the seam between his legs.

“Patience is a virtue!” he said scoldingly.
“Uh-huh, right,” Roxanne said. “So’s chastity, supposedly,” she added, raising one eyebrow. “And modesty.”

She spread her legs in front of him. Megamind gasped and ground the heel of his hand between his legs.

“Personally,” Roxanne said, “I’ve never seen the point of them.” She smirked. “Guess I’m just better at bad than you, Megamind.”

“What?!“ Megamind spluttered. “You—you are not!”

“Mm,” Roxanne said, raising both eyebrows this time, “remind me again which one of us is doing the lecturing about virtue?”

Megamind laughed again, startled, head going back, throat bared to her.

“Touché,” he said, looking at her again, eyes dancing.

“Yes, please do touch.” Roxanne tilted her head illustratively at her body. “I’ve only been waiting forever now,” she complained.

Megamind took a sharp breath as his tentacles slowly slid out of his body—god, that was so hot.

“So much complaining,” he said, slightly breathlessly, hand stroking over his tentacles, and then cupping them. “But you—always did have a smart mouth, Miss Ritchi.”

Roxanne felt a pulse of heat between her legs, waiting for the let me give you something better to do with your mouth that she was sure he’d say next—god, she could definitely go for that, Megamind’s hands in her hair, Megamind thrusting into her mouth—

—but the moment passed and he didn’t say it, just set one hand on her knee and drew his fingertips up her thigh instead.

―yes,” Roxanne said, slightly thrown by the unexpectedly missed opportunity. “I’m— not really sure why you never gagged me, before, during kidnappings,” she added, the thought occurring to her for the first time.

She had always been pretty vocal in her criticism, during the kidnappings; really, the logical move on Megamind’s part would have been to stop her from talking.

Megamind, bending to kiss her hip, looked up at her with an incredulous expression.

“Gagged you?” he said, and made a face. “Ugh, no.”

Roxanne looked at him curiously.

“I said you had a smart mouth, Roxanne,” Megamind said, “I never said I didn’t like it.”

Roxanne stared at him, a shock of desire going through her.

“Gagged you,” Megamind scoffed. “Please.”

He kissed the inside of her right thigh.

“Talking to you—” he leaned over to press his mouth to the inside of her other thigh, “was the highlight of every evil plot.”
Roxanne’s mouth shaped itself into an O.

She—she didn’t know how to—how was she supposed to answer that—

“Our interactions were my primary form of intellectual stimulation,” Megamind murmured into her skin.

Roxanne gasped—holy fuck, that was—a hell of a compliment, coming from Megamind—

He kissed her thigh again and moved his mouth between her legs.

“Oh,” Roxanne said, arms jerking in the ropes.

Megamind hummed in response, the vibration of it making her breath hiss between her teeth, making her back arch.

God, how had she gone so long without realizing that this was what she wanted? That he was what she wanted: Megamind, with his infectious enthusiasm and his unexpected compliments—I said you had a smart mouth; I never said I didn’t like it, and our interactions were my primary form of intellectual stimulation and—

Roxanne tugged uselessly at the restraints again—damn it, she wanted to put her hands on his head—

Megamind licked her harder, and Roxanne said—

“—fuck, Megamind, yes—”

—and wrapped her legs around his head instead. Megamind moaned, his mouth pressed against her. Roxanne moaned in answer and let her head fall back, closing her eyes and giving herself over to sensation, let everything else melt away, everything—everything—everything but the ropes around her wrists and her legs around the wide, smooth shape of Megamind’s head and the heat of his mouth—

“—ah!” Roxanne gasped, body going taut with pleasure, and then boneless, relaxing back onto the bed, held upright by her bound arms. Megamind made a pleased noise and Roxanne unwound her legs from his head—shit, hopefully she hadn’t kept him from breathing—

He was smiling, though, as he sat up, as he stroked her stomach with his fingertips.

“You know,” Roxanne said, when she’d gotten her breath partially back, “that wasn’t really what I was expecting when I told you that you could do whatever you wanted to me.”

Megamind’s hand went still on her skin, an uncertain look coming across his face.

“Bad?” he asked.

“What?” Roxanne said, “No! No, Megamind, come on, don’t be ridiculous, that was definitely not bad, oh my god. I just—it wasn’t what I expected; I—was that—I. Was that really what you wanted to do?”

“I mean,” Megamind said, “it’s not—the only thing I want to do—”

Roxanne smiled, raising her eyebrows.

“Oh?” she said archly. “Is that so?”
Megamind’s mouth curved up into a sharp smile, wicked around the corners.

“Oh, Miss Ritchi,” he said, placing the palm of his hand flat against her stomach. “I have—such plans for you.”

He slid his hand down, began slowly circling her clit with his fingers. Roxanne gasped.

“I didn’t get to make you come like this last time,” he said, as if he thought the idea of fucking Roxanne with his fingers was some sort of privilege. “I’m really looking forward to it.”

“—well,” Roxanne said, long-suffering tone belied by the slightly breathy quality of her voice and the way she was already squirming beneath his hand a little, “I suppose, if it means that much to you.”

Megamind laughed, and leaned forward to capture her mouth with his, nipping at her lower lip.

“Smartass,” he murmured against her mouth.

He kissed her again, then sat back on his heels, watching her as he continued to finger her.

It was—really quite intense, having her arms tied over her head like this, Megamind’s gaze raking down over her throat and her shoulders and her breasts and then sliding back up to her face—the way he was looking at her, watching her with such—utter focus as his fingers stroked her; the way the only sound in the room was Roxanne’s increasingly hard breathing.

“It has occurred to me,” Megamind said, finally speaking, “based on our previous experiments together—”

Roxanne pushed up into his hand, biting her lip to hold back a whimper.

Jesus, why was that so hot: Megamind saying ‘experiments’ in that tone, in this context—

“—that this—” he pressed a little more firmly against her clit, “—is the primary location for your sexual pleasure, correct?”

He reversed the direction in which his fingers were circling.

“—yes,” Roxanne said.

Megamind reached up with his left hand and ran his fingers up and down the lips of her sex, still stroking her clit with his right.

“Actual penetration,” Megamind continued, sliding a finger of his left hand into her, then adding another, “is non-essential.”

Roxanne felt a shudder of sensation go through her.

Damn it, that wasn’t even dirty talk, Roxanne, get it together—

“Am I right about that, Roxanne?” Megamind asked, gently thrusting his fingers in and out of her while continuing to play with her clit.

“—yes,” Roxanne said, striving to match his tone of scientific curiosity, “the—ah!—there’s a—a feeling of fullness, of being stretched, but it’s not—ohh—not as pleasurable as—not as intense—and part of the appeal is—psychological, not physiological—”
“Another difference between our species, I think,” Megamind said, “because when you put your fingers in me, the stretching feeling was incredibly intense, positively overwhelming.

Although—the psychological appeal, yes, I can certainly see what you mean, there, but—however! Back to the subject at—hand—” he bit his lip and grinned at Roxanne, who groaned, partially at the completely terrible pun and partially at how hot and—stupidly endearing—she found his terrible puns oh god, she was in way over her head with him, much too attracted, far, far too in love—

Megamind snickered, and then schooled his face into a serious expression once more.

“Ahem! Yes,” he said, “back to the subject at hand. I did, however, also notice, when I was inside of you, moving—my—tentacles—that there was a particular angle which—”

He crooked his fingers in a way that was so shockingly, exactly right that Roxanne very nearly screamed, crying out sharply.

“Yes, there it is,” Megamind murmured, continuing to stroke her with both of his hands as Roxanne cried out again, hips jerking, climax rushing through her. “There. Perfect. God, Roxanne, you’re so fucking perfect, do you know that?”

Roxanne—felt her eyes wanting to fill up with tears at that (why did he have to say things like that when he didn’t love her, why couldn’t he just love her) but luckily Megamind leaned in to kiss her before he noticed.

She kissed him back and felt the tears recede. Megamind pulled away and regarded her again, hands on his own knees now, head tilted at a contemplative angle.

“…what?” Roxanne said after a moment.

“I’m trying to figure out which one I like more,” Megamind said.

“What, going down on me or fingering me?” Roxanne asked, slightly incredulous.

“Mhm,” Megamind said, “yes. I very much enjoy the—closeness of using my mouth on you, and the way you taste is extremely—but I also really love watching you come. It’s fascinating. The expressions on your face and the arch of your spine, and—” He smiled at her crookedly. “—also the fact that it’s an involuntary reaction is incredibly gratifying to me.”

Roxanne frowned, trying to follow.

“The fact that it’s involuntary?” she asked. “I would have thought—that would be—a turn-off for you, honestly? The way that it’s like—blinking or sneezing for me—” she trailed off.

“What? No,” Megamind shook his head. “Definitely not a turn-off, how could you think—the fact that—that you definitely feel—that you aren’t just—humoring me, that you aren’t just letting me think—that I really am able to make you feel that good—” he shrugged, smiling again. “Like I said, incredibly gratifying…” he trailed off, eyes going wide, and then his smile widened, sharpened, into what Roxanne recognized as his ‘I have just had a very clever idea’ smirk.

“What?” she asked.

“Sneezing,” he said, with a wicked chuckle, and, without further explanation, moved to put his mouth between her legs again.
“Ah!” Roxanne said. What did—sneezing have to do with—ohhh, god; he was really good at that, and he was—not messing around at all this time, eating her like he wanted her to come right now, not pausing or easing up or stopping, and it was really goddamn effective, Roxanne was close, much faster than she’d expected, so close, almost—

He stopped. Roxanne gave a cry of dismay, which changed into a moan as he stroked her with his fingers instead.

All right, if he wanted to—do that instead, that was—more than okay, fuck, yes, she was—

He stopped.

“What are you—” Roxanne cut herself off with a gasp when he started to lick her again.

Yes—that was—she—

He stopped.

“You—oh my god, seriously, sneezing?!” Roxanne said, because all of a sudden, she got it: sneezing, god damn it, and the way it was so frustrating when someone stopped you from doing it—

Only Megamind, really. Only Megamind would independently come up with the concept of edging after a chance remark about sneezes.

Megamind smirked at her and started to finger her again.

Okay, okay, good, she’d gotten it, he would let her come now, right? She was—

He stopped.

Roxanne gave a growl of frustration and Megamind laughed, then bent his mouth to her again.

This time, Roxanne wasn’t taking any chances; she moved to wrap her legs around his head again—

Megamind ducked out of the way—fuck he was fast—

“I have a better idea,” he said, moving to untie the knot holding her hands to the headboard, then pushing lightly at her, urging her to kneel facing the headboard.

“Does this—better idea—involves you fucking me like this?” Roxanne asked, letting him tie her hands to the headboard again, his body pressed against her back, his tentacles writhing against her skin, his fingers moving swiftly with the rope. She arched her back invitingly. Behind her, she heard Megamind’s breath catch.

“That is—very tempting,” he said, “but—no, I—here, let me—”

He finished the last knot and then moved to lie with his head beside her, looking up at her. He slid his hand around one of her knees, guiding her to straddle his head.

“Okay?” he asked, hands moving to her waist.

“Holy shit,” Roxanne said, looking down at him—he wanted her to—

She lowered herself onto his mouth and he made a pleased noise, tongue going out to lick her.
Roxanne moaned and let herself rock lightly against him, fucking his mouth—god, his head, the shape of it, large and blue and—undeniably him, and the trust implied in the way he was lying there, letting her—wanting her to do this—

—the way he was looking up at her, like he was watching something amazing—

He moaned, and she felt him take one hand from her waist; was he—she looked over her shoulder—yes, god, yes, he was touching himself while she did this; that was—

Roxanne cried out, grinding herself down against his mouth as she came.

She panted for breath, looking back down at Megamind—oh, she should—she lifted herself up shakily, Megamind helping her to balance, both of his hands on her waist again, and swung her leg off of him.

“Roxanne—” he said, eyes dark, voice rough around the edges.

He pushed himself up to sit against the headboard, pulled her to straddle his lap, and kissed her, hands cupping her face.

“Is—is this—?” he asked, breaking the kiss, tentacles stroking at the edges of her sex, stroking but not—

“Yes,” Roxanne said, pushing herself down as he pressed two tentacles into her. “Yes,” she said again, starting to roll her hips, riding him.

The rhythm she set was—too fast, not entirely even; her legs were shaky still and it was hard to balance with her hands tied, but Megamind didn’t seem to care, shuddering and crying out, hands on her face still.

He was—so beautiful. He was always beautiful, of course, but the way he looked when he was inside of her was—fucking divine, really, expression completely open, everything washed away but pleasure and something like awe.

“Oh—oh—oh god, Roxanne—” he said, going still for a moment, and then jerking his hips with a gasp, tentacles fluttering as he came.

Roxanne didn’t stop moving; that was only once for him; she wanted to make him come again like this and she was afraid if she stopped she was going to collapse into an exhausted heap.

“Roxanne—” Megamind said helplessly.

She leaned forward and kissed his mouth, pulled away again to look into his sweet, beloved face.

He gasped for breath, neck arching, head tilting back before he looked at her again.

“Put your hand on my throat,” Roxanne commanded.

Wide eyed, he did, placing his right hand on her throat and just—holding it there, not pushing or tightening his fingers, just holding.

Roxanne swallowed deliberately, letting him feel the motion of her throat, and he made a shocked noise in response.

“Megamind,” she moaned, pressing her throat forward into his hand.
He cried out wordlessly and came again for her.

“—oh my god, Roxanne,” he said, after he had caught his breath, and then added, “—ah, I—here—”

He reached up, undoing the knots on her wrists blindly. Roxanne winced a bit, lowering her arms, and a look of concern came over Megamind’s face.

“Are—are you okay?” he asked worriedly. “I didn’t—did I hurt—”

“Mph—no,” Roxanne said, then let her head fall forward onto his shoulder, pressed her face to the crook of his neck. “—so tired,” she mumbled into his skin, “—may never recover.”

Megamind gave a quiet laugh, startled and relieved.

“Okay,” he said, “okay, just—”

He wrapped his arms around her, one around her waist, the other cradling the back of her head, and flipped both of them over, lowering her onto the bed. He kissed her cheek and then sat up, taking one of her hands and starting to rub the marks that the ropes had left on her wrist. Roxanne watched him, eyes half-lidded. He kissed the back of her hand and then switched to rubbing her other wrist.

“Better?” he asked.

“Mmm,” Roxanne made a vague, affirmative noise as Megamind moved to lie beside her, propped up on one elbow, fingertips trailing up and down her arm.

“Megamind,” Roxanne said after a long moment of quiet, “I have something I need to—talk to you about—”

“—all right,” he said.

She swallowed.

“I know,” she said, forcing the words out, “that you—that we don’t—feel the same. About each other. But I—I want to—I want you to know that you—” Roxanne took another breath, let it out shakily. “You are worth caring about, Megamind. I don’t ever want you to think that you’re not worth—you—you are worth—everything.”

“—oh,” Megamind said, she could not look at him, could not let herself look. “I—uh. Thank—thank you?”

Roxanne’s heart twisted.

Thank you.

Well.

She hadn’t really been expecting anything more.

“And,” she went on, “I still want—”

(everything, anything you’ll give me)

She turned towards him and kissed him.
“This,” she said, “I still want this. If that’s okay with you.”

“Re—really?” Megamind asked, “you still—? Even though I—”

Roxanne kissed him again, cutting him off, not wanting to hear him say even though I don’t love you back.

“Yes,” she said, “that—it doesn’t have to matter.”

Megamind stared at her, frozen in place.

“Right?” she asked, uncertainly.

“I—right,” he whispered, “of—of course it. It doesn’t have to matter. It doesn’t have to matter—at all, if it doesn’t—if it doesn’t matter to you.”

“It doesn’t,” she said quickly. “I—just—just this is enough. All right?”

“Yes,” he said quietly. “Yes, I—yes. Just—just this.”

“I mean,” Roxanne said nervously, “we’re—we’re friends, at least, right?”

“Friends,” Megamind said in an uncertain voice. “Yes, I’d—I’d like that. We’re—we’re friends. We—enjoy each other’s company.”

“Exactly!” Roxanne said. “I—I like being able to—to be with you like this. It doesn’t have to be any more than that.”

“It—doesn’t have to be more than that,” Megamind repeated, “I—yes.”

“Good,” Roxanne said. “That’s—that’s good. I’m glad,” she added, heart soaring and breaking at the same time.

(it would be enough; it would; it would have to be enough)

He leaned in to kiss her, then, and Roxanne kissed him back.

(Not too hard, now, not too desperate, don’t let the ravenous hunger of your heart bleed through.)

She pulled away, letting herself fall back on the pillow, eyes closing for a moment—just a moment.

(Yes, god yes, she wanted to stay with him; she wanted to stay forever)

(Sh she should get up now, shouldn’t she. She should get up and leave, but she wanted—)

“Do—do you want to stay?” she heard Megamind ask.

She opened her eyes. He was watching her, looking uncertain.

“Because you—you can stay,” he said. “If you want to. You—you said you were tired and—and I know—being lonely is—I know—so if you—you can—if you want to stay—”

(Yes, god yes, she wanted to stay with him; she wanted to stay forever)

She turned towards him, tucking her head beneath his chin.

“Yes,” she whispered. “I’ll—I’d like to stay.”

(she could stay for a while; she could let herself stay for just a little while)
Megamind woke up and Roxanne was gone.

He wrapped his arms around his chest, closed his eyes, and breathed.

(okay. that was okay. he was going to be okay)

He wasn’t going to be able to sleep again; he could already tell, so he got up and went to work on the battlebot for the Final Kidnapping.

“Sir?” Minion’s voice echoed through the empty Lair—sometime later; Megamind had lost track—“Did you—talk to Miss Ritchi?”

Megamind gripped the edge of the lab workbench briefly and did not turn around.

“Yes,” he said, picking up a wrench, tightening a bolt. “Yes, we talked.”

“Was I right?” Minion asked, voice rising with excitement. “I was right, wasn’t I!”

“No, Minion,” Megamind sighed, “unfortunately, I was right.”

“—what?” Minion asked. “Sir—”

“She doesn’t love me, Minion,” Megamind said bluntly. “She said so. She was very—kind—about it.”

(you’re worth caring about—we’re friends, at least—it doesn’t have to matter)

“What? Are you—are you sure?”

“I’m sure, Minion—please,” Megamind said, voice wobbling, “just—just drop it.”

Minion was silent for a long minute.

“You’re not going to—you’re not going to keep—seeing her, then, right?” Minion asked, voice hard. “Are you? Because that is a very bad plan.”

“All of my plans are bad plans,” Megamind muttered.

“Oh, this is bad,” Minion said, voice rising, “this is—so bad. You’re in love with her and—”

“I know that!” Megamind threw the wrench across the room and whirled to face Minion. “She knows that! Everyone knows that! It’s not something that matters!”

“You’re going to let yourself get—completely fixated on her! You need to keep away from her, Sir! You need to get over her and—”

“Minion,” Megamind said quietly, and Minion went silent, rant stopping abruptly.

(Minion knew that tone in Megamind’s voice, the tone of I am going to say something important)

(Minion, I don’t think anyone’s ever going to like me)

(Minion, I think I might really be evil)
(Minion, I’ve been thinking about the bridge again, and I need you to make sure I don’t do something stupid)

Megamind took a breath, let it out, fixed his eyes on an oil spot on the Lair floor.

“I’ve been in love with her for years, Minion,” he said. “I was never going to get over her anyway.”

“Oh, Sir,” Minion said, voice going soft and sympathetic.

“Bowg.”

Megamind looked over at the brainbot at his elbow, holding the wrench he’d thrown in sharp metal jaws.

“Thank you, 228,” he said, smiling tremulously and reaching out to run a hand over 228’s braincase. “Do you want to play fetch with Daddy?”

Chapter End Notes

…to be continued

D: I’M SORRY. I’M SO SORRY. THE MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND ANGST CONTINUES (please don’t hate me)
(touché translates to ‘touch’; that’s the joke Roxanne was making–she can talk all she likes about Megamind’s terrible puns; she is really not any better lol.)

Thank you to everyone for reading, reviewing, and sending kudos! I really appreciate it.
“So you met Megamind, Luis?” Roxanne asked.

Luis Gonzales, a small, skinny kid, who, he had solemnly announced to the camera, was seven years old, nodded.

Juana, his mother, seated next to him on the couch, patted him on the shoulder.

“Contarles sobre el Supremo,” she said encouragingly.

“Yes,” said Luis. “I met el Supremo Megamind.”

“Would you like to tell me about that?” Roxanne asked.

Luis nodded eagerly.

“I was at the park,” he said, “and some big boys started bugging me ‘cause I had Manto with me.” He held up a bedraggled grayish baby blanket. “And they took him and they were holding him over my head and not giving him back and one of them said he was gonna tear Manto in half.” Luis frowned and held the blanket close. His face brightened suddenly. “And then el Supremo—como por arte de magia! Bam!” Luis jumped to his feet and threw his arms wide, an intense scowl on his face.

The pose was—even with the blanket over one of the kid’s arms, the resemblance to Megamind’s stance was absolutely striking.

“From nowhere, he steps out!” Luis said. He whirled his blanket over his shoulders, draping it there like a cape. “And he walks to us—like this!”

Luis stalked around the couch in an exaggeratedly powerful way.

Roxanne found that she was grinning delightedly, and quickly covered her mouth with one hand.

“And everyone is stuck in place in surprise,” Luis said, coming back to stand in front of the couch. “And when he gets to us, he takes Manto away from those big boys—” Luis mimed grabbing and yanking the blanket “—and he hands Manto to me—” Luis pulled the blanket off his shoulders and held it close to his chest. “And then! El Supremo Megamind, he looks at those big boys like this—” Luis glared over the blanket clutched to his chest—god, this kid had Megamind’s expressions down “—and he says: no.”

Luis smiled and sat on the couch again.

“Just ‘no’?” Roxanne asked, when she had managed to fight down the urge to make an extremely unprofessional, high-pitched noise.

Luis shrugged.

“He didn’t have to say anything else,” he said. “El Supremo, he isn’t very big, maybe, but nobody messes with him!” He grinned. “Nobody messes with me and Manto, anymore, either.”
“Se le—llama—el supremo?” Roxanne asked Luis’ mother, after the interview was over. *(You call him Overlord?)*

“Si,” Juana said, “todo el mundo por aqui lo llama el Supremo.” *(Everyone who lives around here calls him the Overlord.)*

She said something else, too rapid and complex for Roxanne’s rather basic spanish to comprehend.

“Lo siento; lo siento!” Roxanne said. “No puedo seguir el ritmo!” *(Too fast; too fast! I can’t keep up with you!)*

She looked at Luis. “Can you translate?”

“Yes,” Luis said. “She says ‘everybody who lives around here calls him that’. He looks out for us, so he’s el Supremo.”

“What does she mean, ‘looks out for you’?”

“Like he did with me,” Luis said, “and the flying robots, they fly down here and they stop people from doing bad things.”

“The brainbots stop people from doing illegal things?”

Juana shook her head, said something to Luis.

“She says ‘not illegal things, bad things’,” Luis told Roxanne. “She says she thinks you’ll understand they’re not the same, always.”

“Yes,” Roxanne said, “—ah, si— puedo filmar este?” she added to Juana.

*(Roxanne definitely knew enough Spanish to ask someone if she could film them.)*

Luis relayed the message, and Juana hesitated a moment, then nodded. Roxanne gestured to Katie to start filming; Katie gave her a thumbs up, then pointed to indicate the beginning of the recording.

“Gracias,” Roxanne said to Juana, “Could you—start from the beginning, please, with what you just told me?”

Luis asked in Spanish.

“Si, si,” said Juana. She sat up straight and looked directly into the camera. “Todo el mundo por aqui lo llama el Supremo,” she repeated, speaking slowly and clearly.

Luis translated.

“—sometimes, you know, maybe somebody goes missing, and you can’t go to the cops, ‘cause maybe what they do for a living ain’t exactly legal, or they don’t got a green card, or you don’t got a green card, or—” Odell shifted his weight and his eyes; Ty picked up where he’d left off.

“—and you don’t want them to get arrested, or for you to get arrested, so, yeah. You can’t go to the cops. ‘Cause then you get arrested, and they probably don’t find the person, anyway. And you
can’t go to Metro Man, ‘cause he’s in with the cops, and he might find your missing person for you, but he’s gonna report you, too. So you flag down one of the ‘bots, and you tell it—‘my friend is missing; he looks like this; I think he might be in trouble’—”

“And then?” Roxanne prompted.

The two men shrugged.

“And then he finds your friend for you,” Odell said. “Somebody who knows somebody passes the word along to you—hey, they found him in an alleyway with two broken legs; he was in rehab; he was at the bottom of the lake—”

“Mostly he finds them for you,” Ty jumped in.

“Yeah, mostly,” Odell nodded. “Not every time. He ain’t perfect.”

“He don’t gotta be perfect, though,” Ty added. “Perfect don’t want nothing to do with us.”

“So, yeah,” Odell said, “he finds your friend. And if they was in rehab or the hospital, maybe somebody by the name of Mr. John Doe is on the records as paying the bills. And if they was at the bottom of the lake, and there ain’t enough money to bury ’em decent, maybe a whole lotta cash gets left on the collection plate when they pass it around to raise money for the funeral on sunday, and nobody knows how it got there.”

“And does Megamind expect any sort of repayment for these services?” Roxanne asked.

“Well, it’s like you sorta owe him a favor,” Odell explained. “Nothing you can’t afford to give, but—maybe you get asked to pick up a package and drop it off somewhere else, and you don’t ask what’s in the package—or maybe there’s this little old lady who lives a few blocks off whose grandson got shot, and you get asked to go talk to her once in a while, or maybe you get given some money and told to bail somebody out—”

“—sources indicate that, not only does Megamind own the design patents for an impressive number of the most technologically advanced prosthetic limbs and comfort-focused mobility aids on the market today, most of the money made from these patents is donated anonymously to various charities. The leaders of several of these charities have come forward to speak with KCMP—”

“I’m here with Dr. Ezra Bergen, psychologist and one of the country’s leading sociological theorists. Dr. Bergen, who has written several books on the reintegration of criminals into society, has an interesting take on the possible rehabilitation of Metro City’s supervillain.”

Roxanne turned expectantly towards Dr. Bergen, who leaned forward eagerly in his seat.

“Really, it’s a matter of practicality,” Dr. Bergen said. “It is readily apparent that continuing to attempt Megamind’s incarceration is an impractical drain on the city’s resources. This is not an attempt to discredit Metro City’s Prison for the Criminally Gifted—it’s a well-run, state-of-the-art facility! It just wasn’t built to hold someone like Megamind. Really, I think, any prison constructed that could hold him would be—prohibitively expensive, as well as undoubtedly inhumane. Now
clearly, clearly, this is a man with the potential to contribute to society! The level of intelligence alone makes that obvious. So the essential question is, can he be reformed, would he ever be willing to do so?"

“And what do you think the answer to that question is, Doctor?” Roxanne asked.

“I think,” Dr. Bergen said, “that he could do so. Based on his prison psychological reports, and on all of the new information that we’ve learned about him recently, I’d even be willing to go so far as to say that this is a man who wants to contribute to society! That this is a man who is already secretly contributing to the betterment of society, and who might, with the help of a practical, merciful justice system and a public willing to believe in second chances, be led to do so openly—”

“So tell me, Wayne,” Roxanne said, “what do you think about this idea of Megamind being reformed?”

“I think it’s great!” Wayne smiled a wide, white smile. “Like I said, I’ve always thought the little guy wasn’t so bad, really. I’d definitely support the city if it decided to issue clemency.”

“Possibly his sentences could be commuted to community service,” Roxanne suggested.

“Exactly!” Wayne said, and then added, as they’d agreed before the start of the interview. “I mean, it might seem a little crazy, but I could certainly use some help.”

“Certainly no one knows more about supercrime than a former supervillain,” Roxanne said.

Wayne laughed.

“Right?” he said. “And then maybe I’d get to make some real plans for retiring.” He trailed off wistfully, and then smiled again and shrugged. “It’d depend, though, on if he’d be willing to go for it, you know?”

“Little guy!?” Megamind said, glaring at Wayne in outrage.

“What?” Wayne looked genuinely baffled. “You are little.”

Megamind made an angry hissing noise.

“Everyone is little compared to you, Wayne,” Roxanne said dryly. “Elephants are little compared to you. Houses are little compared to you. Planets are little compared to you.”

Wayne spluttered, as if he wasn’t certain whether or not he should be offended.

“Exactly!” Megamind said, pointing and bouncing on his toes (like that might make him taller; Roxanne bit her lip to keep from laughing. He was too adorable; it wasn’t fair.) “Exactly, everybody is little compared to you, you—you buffalo large man!”

Roxanne did burst out laughing at that.

Wayne spluttered some more.
Roxanne looked at the Warden of Metro City Prison for the Criminally Gifted expectantly. He looked back at her, frowning slightly. She got the distinct impression that she was being judged.

“Mr. Williams—”

“John,” he said.

Roxanne raised her eyebrows. Evidently she’d passed whatever—test, inspection that had been.

“John,” she said. “What was it you wanted to talk to me about?”

(He’d called her up, asked her to come down to the prison. She’d assumed he wanted to give an interview, but when they’d arrived, he’d asked to speak to her privately in his office.)

He sighed heavily through his mustache.

“I hope,” he said, “that you know what you’re doing. You—I am—betting that you got him to agree to this, somehow, didn’t you? No, don’t answer me; plausible deniability. But I’m guessing that you did, because he would have found a way to—stop those reports of yours, if he didn’t want them.” He sighed again, rubbed his face. “I have been—trying to get that boy to go straight since he was sixteen, you know. If this doesn’t work, he’s never going to try again—”

Roxanne frowned.

“Since he was sixteen?” she asked. “I wasn’t aware that the Prison for the Criminally Gifted took in juvenile offenders.”

“We don’t,” John said. “He was—he grew up here.”

“—here.” Roxanne said, still frowning. “Here, as in—the prison?”

“Yes,” John said shortly.

“That seems—extremely illegal,” Roxanne said.

John laughed. It wasn’t a very happy sound.

“It wasn’t really legal at first,” he said. “There was—I was supposed to report it, when he first landed. I knew that. There are—government agencies. That are supposed to take care of—that sort of thing. Facilities designed to handle alien lifeforms.” He gave Roxanne a pointed look. “You get what I’m saying?”

“Oh,” Roxanne said softly. “Yes. I see. So you didn’t report him.”

“No,” John blew out a breath. “No, I didn’t. I mean, hell, how was I supposed to—he was just a baby; I couldn’t—” He cleared his throat, shook his head. “So the doc and I—the old prison doctor, Dr. Kelly, not that new one we’ve got now—the doc and I talked it over and we agreed to keep it quiet. He knew some people, got the refugee paperwork filed in a—bit of a roundabout, but perfectly legal manner, and by the time the government realized what was going on, he was already legally protected.” He laughed again, just as unhappy. “And oh, when they found out, they were not pleased, let me tell you. Hearings and inquiries and investigations, trying to get the kid declared a ‘non-intelligent lifeform’. You can imagine how that turned out. Kid ran mental circles around those suits, made them look like idiots.”
“Of course he did,” Roxanne murmured.

“And he knew—he knew what they were trying to do,” John said, looking furious. “He knew they were trying to say he was a—an animal. Who the hell does that to a six-year-old child?” He glared down at a pen on his desk. “Well. Finally they had to admit that he was clearly intelligent. The judge all but called them incompetent, ruled to make him a ward of the state—not due to mental incapacitation, he was careful to note, but because the ‘subject’ was, in fact, a child—and gave me and Kelly special permission to keep him out of foster care—that judge knew what those suits were thinking, figured the kid would be safer in a prison.”

John looked up at her, something fierce in his expression.

“I tried to keep him safe,” he said. “For all the good that did.” He let out a shaky breath. “I wanted us to try for adoption, but Kelly said, ‘John, you’re a workaholic bachelor and I’m a bitterly divorced alcoholic. We go for adoption, they’re gonna scream ‘queers’ and they’re gonna scream ‘pedophiles’ and they’re gonna take the kid away entirely. Be grateful for what we’ve got.’” He scowled. “And then that damn school, and—everything, and the kid was so—angry, all the time, and he just wouldn’t listen, he never—”

John shook his head.


“I hope you don’t say that to Megamind,” Roxanne said, before she could stop herself.

John blinked at her.

“Why not?” he asked. “It’s the truth, isn’t it?”

Roxanne pressed her lips together.

“Because when you tell your child ‘I failed as a parent’—when you say that, what they hear is ‘you are an unsatisfactory result,’” Roxanne said, keeping her voice under iron control, not allowing it to shake.

John stared at her.

“Trust me,” she said, with a small, tight smile. “You’re talking to the family disappointment, here.”

“I—see,” he said slowly. “I never—thought of it like that before.” He sighed. “You have to admit, though, he could have—turned out better.”

“I do not admit that,” Roxanne said forcefully. “Happier? Yes, he could have turned out a whole hell of a lot happier! But better? No. Please excuse me; I have a very full schedule.”

She stood up, suddenly, turned to go.

“Wait,” John said, behind her.

She turned slowly to him. He was standing, pulling something from his desk drawer. He moved around his desk, held it out to her: a framed photograph. She took it.

“I wanted,” John said, “to show you this. You said that Scott told you about how he went to school with Megamind?”

“Yes,” Roxanne said. She looked down at the picture in her hand.
It was a school photograph, a posed shot of a classroom of children. On one side of the photograph, a group of smiling children, their arms around each other, the teacher standing behind them, beaming.

On the other side of the photograph—

—the child was clearly Megamind, dressed in a small orange prison jumpsuit, holding a glass sphere with Minion inside it. He was standing all alone, removed from the rest of the group, and the look on his face was—more of a pained wince than a smile: the look of someone trying not to cry.

“Trust me,” John said, voice angry now, “you don’t know the half of it. You show that. You show people what that Scott kid did to my boy.”

“Ruined his life,” Roxanne murmured, brushing her thumb over the glass, over the little blue boy’s unhappy face. She looked up at the Warden. “I’d like to keep this, but I can’t promise you it will air.”

He opened his mouth, obviously intending to protest.

“Plausible deniability related reasons,” Roxanne said quickly. “I won’t—something like this—not without his permission.”

A muscle in the Warden’s jaw jumped, but he nodded stiffly.

“I see,” he said. “That’s—that’s all right then. I just—I just wish there was something else I could do—”

“Well,” Roxanne said, slipping the photograph into her purse, “perhaps you’d like to give me an on-air description of your feelings regarding the possible reformation of Metro City’s supervillain.”

The Warden nodded.

“I can do that,” he said.
Roxanne turned over in bed for what was quite possibly the forty-second time and tried, once again, to shove her pillow into a more comfortable shape.

God damn it. She didn’t even feel tired; she was going to regret this tomorrow.

She flopped over onto her other side—ugh, no, that was actually worse—

Fuck this. She was going to go make herself a cup of tea and watch infomercials on late-night television until her brain melted or she went to sleep out of self-defense, whichever came first.

She flipped the light switch at the bottom of the staircase and very nearly had a heart attack because—

“Jesus christ, Megamind! What the hell are you doing up there?!”

He was sitting cross-legged on top of her kitchen table, perched there like some kind of—unexpected gargoyle, or oversized lawn ornament, or—why was he sitting on the table?

Megamind looked at her, wide-eyed and frozen, for a moment, and then, in one smooth motion, jumped off of the table and made for the balcony.

“Sorry—” he said stiffly, his shoulders high, arms wrapped around his chest, “—sorry, I’ll just—”

“What?” Roxanne asked, laughing now, as she followed him, “Megamind—you just startled me, that’s all, you don’t have to—”

“—stupid, idiotic, creepy,” Megamind was muttering to himself, voice low and accusatory.

Roxanne felt the laugh die on her lips.

“Hey,” she said gently, reaching for him, “hey, what is it? What’s wrong?”

Megamind jerked out of reach, back still to her, looking out of the sliding glass doors that led onto the balcony.

“Everything,” he hissed. “Me, especially. I shouldn’t have—shouldn’t have come here, shouldn’t have stayed, shouldn’t have—I should go—”

He reached for the handle of the door.

“Stop,” Roxanne said quietly. To her surprise, he did stop, freezing in place, fingers on the door handle.

“Stay,” she said. “Please. I want you to—I want you to stay.”

Megamind growled, low in his throat, a strange, tri-tone, inhuman noise.

Roxanne shivered, a feeling that was nothing like fear traveling down her spine.

“Tell me,” she said, keeping her voice calm.

For a moment, he was silent, and she wondered if maybe he wouldn’t answer, but then—
“—I couldn’t sleep,” he said, voice low and almost furious. “I couldn’t sleep, and I couldn’t stop thinking, and I needed to look at the Plan again, only it’s here, so I thought I would come here, but then all of the lights were off and I should have left; I know I should have left, but I just—”

Roxanne reached out once more, and this time he let her touch him. She stood behind him and wrapped her arms around his chest. His hands latched onto her wrists, his grip hard, like he was trying to anchor himself.

He made that growling noise again, low and miserable.

“Shh,” Roxanne said pressed a kiss to his shoulder. “Shh, sweetheart. It’s okay.”

He was quiet for a few moments, only the sound of their own breathing, the lights of the city shining in the glass, both of their faces reflected in the window, blurred and translucent.

“I should go,” he said. “I should—I should—”

Roxanne kissed his ear and he went silent. Wrapped around him like this, she could feel the shiver that went through his whole body.

“Megamind,” she said, and he made an unhappy, questioning noise.

She pressed her lips to his ear.

“Come to bed.”

“I’m not going to be able to sleep,” Megamind said flatly, as she led him into the bedroom.

“I wasn’t really planning on sleeping just yet,” Roxanne said, raising her eyebrows suggestively. He didn’t laugh.

“You should sleep,” he said. “I should go; I should let you sleep.”

Roxanne rolled her eyes.

“Clearly I wasn’t sleeping anyway,” she pointed out, “seeing as how I came downstairs in the middle of the night. I was planning on watching infomercials, Megamind. Trust me, sex is a much better alternative.”

“I don’t understand why you’re doing this,” he said in a low voice as she turned on the lamp in the corner, casting the room into gentle, golden half-light. “I don’t understand why you’re wasting your time on me.”

“Hey,” Roxanne said, flicking his cheek gently with one finger. “It’s my time. I’ll waste it however I like. But just for the record? I don’t think of time spent with you as ‘wasted’.”

He opened his mouth, no doubt to argue, so Roxanne kissed him. She walked him backwards as they kissed, until they reached the bed, and then she pulled away, pushing lightly at his shoulders, urging him to sit on the edge of the mattress.

She looked down at him. God, he was—he was wearing pajamas, soft and warm pajamas with little hazard signs printed on them—his pajamas had a cape; he was wearing slippers shaped like bats; he was—
—unreasonably adorable.

And just like that, Roxanne knew what she wanted to do with him.

“Will you let me tie you up again?” she asked a little breathlessly. “Arms and legs both this time?”

Megamind looked startled by the non-sequiter, but nodded jerkily.

“Excellent,” Roxanne said, unbuttoning his pajamas.

She was sort of tempted to leave him in them, the shirt unbuttoned, the pants shoved down, but she wanted to see his skin so badly. She pushed the shirt off of his shoulders, kissing his throat as he struggled to untangle his arms.

He was blushing by the time he finally managed to get the shirt off, blushing and avoiding her eyes. Roxanne smiled reassuringly at him and pushed him back onto the bed.

He’d kicked his slippers off, while she wasn’t looking, so Roxanne reached for the waistband of his pants, pulled them down off of his narrow hips—he was lucky he was so skinny, otherwise she would be stealing these pajamas—and then off of his legs.

She tossed the pajama pants aside and opened her bedside drawer, looking for—ah, yes, there were, in the back: black silk ropes, four of them.

Roxanne turned back to Megamind, who was sitting naked on her bed now, watching her with dark eyes, mouth compressed into a flat line, tentacles still retracted.

“Do you want this?” Roxanne asked. He looked so unhappy; she honestly couldn’t tell. “You can tell me if you don’t, Megamind. I won’t be upset.”

“Oh, I want,” he said, face turning away, fingers tightening on the sheets of her bed. “I want—very much. I just don’t understand why you want to do this. I broke into your house; you should be—angry, you should be scared—”

Roxanne rolled her eyes.

“Like you’ve never broken into my house before,” she said.

Megamind’s breath hissed between his teeth.

“That makes it worse, not better,” he said. “I don’t understand—you don’t make any sense. You were angry with—Wayne, when he came inside without asking; why aren’t you angry with me?”

“You’re—different, Megamind,” Roxanne said. “You’re—special.”

He gave her a look that clearly indicated he thought she was absolutely insane.

“You—just—you have a—standing invitation,” Roxanne said, “to come inside whenever you like, okay? Honestly, it was mostly the fact that you were sitting like that on my table that made me jump. Why were you…?”

“Sometimes I think better if I’m higher up, I don’t know, it’s—” Megamind said, waving one hand in a jerky, dismissive motion. Roxanne caught it and pressed a kiss to his palm.

“I should get you a key of your own,” Roxanne murmured absently. “There’s one around the apartment somewhere; I just have to find it.”
“I kidnapped you!” Megamind said, voice high and distressed. “For years, Roxanne! I threatened you with, with deathtraps; why are you offering me a key to your apartment are you out of your mind? I am dangerous!”

“I know that!” Roxanne said, dropping the silk ropes on the bed and taking his face in both hands. “I know that, Megamind, I do, but—you’re not dangerous to me. You’ve never been dangerous to me.”

“Deathtraps! Are you seriously forgetting all of the—”

“Right, yes, the ‘deathtraps’,” Roxanne said, sliding her hands around to hold the back of his head. “Your flamethrower that never got close enough to singe me and your guns that always had the safety on and your lasers that were always pointed just slightly to the left of my chair—oh, did you think I wouldn’t notice?—and yes, by all means, let’s talk about the chair, the way you always placed it just right, so that the alligators could get close enough to look like they might bite without ever being able to reach me. Let’s talk about all those times the bomb strapped to my chest conveniently failed to go off when Wayne couldn’t be bothered to show up on time—every time, you acted like it was a malfunction; you made yourself look stupid for me, Megamind; can I just tell you how sweet that was? Let’s talk—”

She pushed him suddenly, down onto the bed, one hand in the middle of his chest, and leaned over him, her face close to his.

“—about the first time you kidnapped me. You remember that, don’t you? I know you do; you said so. You put your gun to my head—it was set to de-hydrate; I know it was because I saw you shoot something with it right before that, and you didn’t change the setting before you grabbed me—and you told me I should have run, and you acted like you were going to use me as a shield, but when Wayne aimed badly with his laser vision and I almost got hit? You fucking twisted us around so I wouldn’t and ended up getting burned yourself! And every time you kidnapped me after that, you were so shocked when I didn’t scream. Always asking why I wasn’t afraid of you—how the hell am I supposed to be afraid of you, Megamind? Being with you makes me feel safe!”


Roxanne leaned down farther and kissed him, too hard, in defiance.

“Okay, first off, fuck you for saying that,” she hissed, when she tore her mouth away. “And second—traumatic bonding—like Stockholm Syndrome—requires actual psychological trauma to have occurred. You never caused me any psychological trauma, you—utter, utter idiot, because I saw you let yourself get set on fucking fire to protect me ten goddamn seconds after we met—jesus christ, Megamind, you are the actual worst at being evil!—and then! it was perfectly plain to me! every time you kidnapped me! that you didn’t mean me any actual harm! because I have basic! observational! skills! If you wanted someone you could make scream, you should have picked out a girl who isn’t a reporter!”

Megamind’s mouth had fallen slightly open in shock; Roxanne kissed him again, hard, with a hint of teeth.

“And third!” she snapped, pulling away. “How dare you act like I’m the only one who was affected by our constant interactions, Captain I-Made-You-a-Frequent-Kidnapping-Card-Cash-It-In-For-Whatever-You-Like-Miss-Ritchi!”

“—discontinued that promotion,” Megamind said weakly.
“Yeah,” Roxanne snarled. “And don’t think I forgot about that; you still owe me a pony, you asshole!”

“I never understood that request!” Megamind burst out. “What would you even do with a pony? You live in an apartment! In the city! You never took the Frequent Kidnapping Card seriously and —why are you laughing?!”

“Because—we—are—ridiculous,” Roxanne said, punctuating each word with a kiss: cheek, nose, forehead, lips.

She bumped the side of her nose against his, leaned their foreheads briefly together, and sat up, laughing helplessly.

“Stop arguing over whether or not you psychologically damaged me and put your hands over your head,” she told him, “I want to tie you up and fuck your brains out now, you stupid, brilliant man.”

Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

notes:

AT LAST, THE NEXT EPISODE OF SEX AND ANGST AND SOCIAL JUSTICE!

Thank you all so much for reading and reviewing and sending kudos. And for checking up on me! <3 Seriously; you're all great.

(I hope the chapter was worth the wait!)
Megamind pressed his lips together, his jaw tightening, but he complied, hands going over his head.

(god, she was never going to get over how hot Megamind doing what she told him to was)

Roxanne crawled up the bed to tie his right wrist to the bottom of the right bedpost, then straddled his lap and leaned down to kiss him, quick and hard, before reaching for his other wrist and tying it to the bottom of the left bedpost.

She stood up and moved to the foot of the bed, let her gaze drag up the length of Megamind’s body, smiling wickedly as her eyes met his.

“Spread your legs for me, sweetheart,” she said.

Megamind flushed, drawing his knees up and in reflexively. Roxanne arched an eyebrow and he bit his lip. Still, he didn’t look away from her face as he slowly parted his knees.

“Very good,” Roxanne said warmly, and he did look away, then, blushing even harder.

Roxanne took hold of his right ankle, straightening his leg out, and tied him to to the foot of the bed before securing his other ankle to the opposite side of the bed.

Megamind took a sharp breath. Yes, having your legs tied apart was a bit different than having your hands cuffed, Roxanne thought. He wouldn’t be used to this like he was used to handcuffs.

She stepped back to admire her handiwork.

Megamind was spread-eagle on the bed, flat on his back, head supported by her pillow. With his arms tied out like that, she would have much better access to his neck and shoulders than if she’d just secured them over his head again.

He looked positively decadent, stretched out naked on her bed like that, the black silk ropes stark against his perfect blue skin.

“God, you’re so fucking hot,” Roxanne said, and Megamind flushed again, all down the beautiful blue length of his body, twitching in the restraints, as though he wanted to turn away from her gaze.

But, of course, he couldn’t.

“How are you feeling?” Roxanne asked.

“Anxious. Extremely aroused. Incredibly exposed,” Megamind bit out the words. “Could you please turn off the light?”


“But—”

“No.”
“Roxanne—”

“Beg me,” Roxanne said, “and I’ll think about it.”

Megamind ducked his chin to one of his shoulders.

“Please, Roxanne,” he said in a small voice. “Please turn off the lights. Please.”

He looked up at her through his lashes.

“No,” Roxanne said gently.

Megamind’s eyes went wide.

“But—but you said—!”

“That I’d think about it,” Roxanne said, still gently. “I thought about it. The answer’s no.”

Megamind’s mouth fell open.

“You—that’s—evil!”

Roxanne laughed.

“Flattery will get you nowhere,” she said, smirking at him. “The lights stay on, Megamind. I want to look at you.”

Megamind made a derisive noise and jerked irritably in his restraints.

“Fucking why?” he snapped.

“Because you’re hot as hell,” Roxanne said calmly, “and looking at you turns me on.”

Megamind made another noise of scorn.

“Look on the bright side, baby,” Roxanne said, pulling her shirt over her head and letting her hands cup her own breasts. “With the lights on, you get to look at me, too.”

“Bright side?” Megamind repeated, with a snort of unwilling amusement.

“I know,” Roxanne said. “I’m hilarious. My wordplay is incredible and my banter unparalleled.”

“Oh, please,” Megamind said. “You call that banter? That’s not—”

He stopped, stuttering into stunned silence, as Roxanne rolled her nipples between her fingers.

“You were saying?” she said archly.

“Was—was I?” Megamind asked. “Saying?”

“That’s what I thought,” Roxanne said, dropping her hands to the waistband of her panties, letting her fingers trace the material teasingly.

Megamind’s breath hitched.

“You remember the rules from the last time I tied you up?” Roxanne asked.
“Of course I remember the rules.”

“And do you remember the safeword?”

“Of course I remember the safeword,” Megamind said, a trifle impatiently. “My memory is practically flawless.”

“Really?” Roxanne slid her palms up her own sides, over her hips, then her breasts. “Practically flawless?” She cupped the back of her neck, making a noise of pleasure, playing up to the way she could see Megamind’s breath start to come faster, his chest rising and falling rapidly.

She smirked at him.

“Well, when I’m through with you, genius,” she said, “you aren’t going to be able to remember your own name.”

Roxanne slid her hands down again, trailing one hand down her own throat and hooking the thumb of the other in the waistband of her panties.

“You’re damn well going to be able to remember mine, though,” she added as Megamind swallowed visibly.

She pulled the waistband of her panties enticingly down over the swell of one hip. Megamind’s eyes tracked the movement.

“Because you’re going to be screaming it.”

“Oh,” Megamind said breathily. He swallowed again, made an obvious attempt to pull himself together. “Oh, so you think you can make me scream, Miss Ritchi?”

“I know I can,” Roxanne said, walking towards the bed. “I already have. Last time I had you in handcuffs. Remember, Mr. Practically-flawless-memory?” She climbed onto the mattress. “But this time you’re going to be screaming my name.”

She ghosted one hand over the front of her panties, touched herself through the cloth, using her other hand to roll her nipple again. Megamind moaned, and she grinned, moving both hands away from her own body. He made a noise of frustration.

“Temptress,” he said.

“That’s right,” Roxanne said. “Let’s just go over the rules again, shall we?”

Megamind groaned, moving restlessly in the restraints. Roxanne smiled.

“You don’t have to worry about staying still,” she said, touching knot in the rope on one of his wrists with a fingertip. “I’ve taken care of that for you. So all you need to concentrate on is extending the tentacles when I tell you to and coming when I say. Got it?”

Megamind’s head tilted to one side.

“The phrasing of that was slightly different this time,” he said curiously.

“Oh,” Roxanne said, smiling at him. “So you noticed that? Yes, the game is a little different this time. Remember the list?”

Megamind opened his mouth. Roxanne rolled her eyes.
“Yes, I know; practically flawless memory. Tell me what’s on the list.”

“Seeing if I can—if I can come from your fingers inside of me,” Megamind said. “And—seeing how many times I can come in a row. Which one—which one are we doing?”

Roxanne leaned down to kiss him.

“Both of them,” she said.

She shifted so that she was leaning on one elbow over him, her arm curled beneath his bound arm, her hand cupping the back of his head. Megamind gasped, mouth falling open. Roxanne touched his lips with her free hand, then trailed her fingers down, over his goatee and the point of his chin, over the length of his throat, moving her hand back and forth over his clavicle before bringing her fingers back to the middle of his body and trailing them down his sternum to the flat, quivering plane of his stomach, to the seam of his sex.

He was wet for her already there.

The knowledge of it—Megamind slick with desire over just watching her undress and touch herself—flared hot and bright in the pit of her stomach, pushed her even further into arousal.

She slid her fingers up and down the seam a few times, light and quick and teasing, then harder and slower, until at last Megamind said—

“—please,” in a needy voice.

Roxanne pushed her thumb hard against the swell of Megamind’s head and pressed a finger inside of him at the same time.

Megamind cried out, and then cried out again when she started to slowly fuck him with her finger while firmly rubbing the thumb on his head in tiny circles.

“Gorgeous,” Roxanne murmured. “One of these days I’m going to give you a neck massage and it’s going to be so fucking hot I may actually die of arousal.”

She pressed a second finger inside of him—god, he was so beautiful, writhing in his restraints like that, mouth and eyes wide, pupils blown huge and black. She licked the shell of his ear and he whimpered.

Roxanne fingered him slow and easy, counterpoint to the way she could feel his tentacles moving wildly beneath his skin, pulsing and curling desperately around her fingers.

She twisted her hand experimentally and was rewarded with a gasp from Megamind and a stuttered—

“—ohhh g—god.”

Roxanne added the twisting motion to the thrust of her fingers and then tried scissoring her fingers.

“Roxanne—!” Megamind bucked his hips up.

“Megamind,” Roxanne murmured, and scraped her teeth across his clavicle, incorporating the scissoring motion to the turning thrust of her fingers inside of him.

“—fuck fuck yes fuck,” Megamind babbled. “Roxanne, yes—!”
“Mmm,” Roxanne said, putting her mouth to his throat and sucking the skin there. She pulled back to look at his face. “Does that feel good?”

“—oh god, yes, it feels so good, Roxanne—”

“Do you like having my fingers inside of you, baby?”

“—fuck, yes,” Megamind moaned. “I love it—feels so good—wanted this since the first time you did it, Roxanne—”

“Really?” Roxanne said, sitting up so she could look him full in the face. “You’ve been thinking about this?”

Megamind flushed, head turning to the side, chin ducking against his own shoulder in a vain attempt to hide.

“Haven’t been able to stop thinking about this,” he muttered. “I tried doing it myself but it wasn’t the same.”

Tried doing it himself.

“Oh my god,” Roxanne said. “That is so incredibly hot. Did you blush? I’ll bet you blushed.”

“I—I don’t know,” Megamind said, looking up at her with an expression of confusion. “It wasn’t like I was looking in a mirror—”

“Where were you?” Roxanne asked, wanting to get the full details of this, so she could get an as-accurate-as-possible mental picture of Megamind fingering himself jesus fucking christ. “Were you in the shower; were you in your chair? What were you wearing?”

“I—I was in bed,” Megamind said, turning his head away again, blushing even harder than before. “I was in my pajamas, I—I was trying to sleep, but I—ah!—I kept remembering—this, and I just—I—” He cut himself off, shaking his head from side to side.

“So you got undressed—?” Roxanne prompted gently. She pulled her fingers back, almost out all the way and played with him like that for a moment, running her fingertips up and down the inside edges of the seam between Megamind’s legs, shallow and teasing.

Megamind whined, hips thrusting up, trying to get her to go deeper.

“No, I—Roxanne, please!—I didn’t get undressed, I—god it’s embarrassing—I just shoved my hand down the front of my pants and—”

Roxanne pushed her fingers in him again, as deep as they would go, a reward for answering her question. Megamind cried out.

“You were embarrassed?” Roxanne asked

“Extremely,” Megamind said. “I couldn’t even—oh god yes Roxanne!—I couldn’t even bring myself to take off my shirt.”

“Did you make yourself come like that?” Roxanne asked, picturing it, Megamind, still dressed in those sweet, innocent pajamas of his, tangled up in blankets and sheets, fingers inside of himself, squirming and blushing violently, like he was doing now.

“Definitely not,” Megamind said. “It didn’t feel—oh—oh god—anwhere near as good as this.
Besides, I—"

"What?"

“I wanted you to do it,” Megamind gasped out, looking at her again, all wide dark eyes and flushed cheeks. “I wanted you to be the one to make me come like this, Roxanne, please—”

“Are you close?”

“Yes, I—it’s—I’m—if you’ll—if you’ll let me—”

“Come for me, then, Megamind,” Roxanne said. “I want to see.”

Megamind cried out, back arching as his sex fluttered around her fingers, tentacles pulsing, grasping at her, trying to pull her deeper. Roxanne fingered him through it until his hips stopped jerking and he lay limp and gasping, his head fallen back on the pillow.

“Beautiful,” Roxanne said, “god, Megamind, that was perfect. I want you to do that again for me, as soon as you’re ready.”

He lifted his head and looked at her, eyes meeting hers, eyes dark.

“Roxanne,” he said.

And then his hips rolled up again as, shaking and trembling, he fell apart for the second time around her fingers.

He just—that quickly—?

“Holy fuck,” Roxanne said, “good; that was so good; are you okay to keep going?”

“Yes, god,” Megamind said, “fuck—please—please keep going.”

Roxanne began to move her hand again, setting a slow, gentle pace, fingerling him like that until Megamind made that sound like birdsong, high and sharp and distressed, and his hips twitched up as he pushed himself onto her fingers.

“Something you want, Megamind?” Roxanne asked.

“Please—please—”

“If there’s something that you want,” Roxanne said, keeping the motion of her fingers light and slow, “then you’re going to have to ask for it.”

“Please—Roxanne—please—” Megamind panted, turning his head, hiding his face against the pillow.

“You can have anything you want, Megamind,” Roxanne told him gently, “but you have to ask.”

“Please, Roxanne,” Megamind said in a rush, “please—harder.”

“Very good,” Roxanne said, and began to thrust her fingers into him more firmly, still keeping the pace slow.

Megamind moaned, half in pleasure and half in frustration.
“Yes, baby?” Roxanne asked, biting her lip and smiling. “Was there something else you wanted?”

Megamind made that birdsong sound again.

“Because if there’s something else you want,” Roxanne said sweetly, “you’re going to have to ask for that as well.”

“Faster—please—”

Roxanne complied, moving her hand faster. She fingered him and Megamind started to move restlessly on the bed, shifting his hips as if seeking more sensation. He hissed through his teeth, back arching.

Roxanne grinned.

“Is there something more that you want?” she asked. “Because you know what you have to do to get it, if there is.”

Megamind growled and Roxanne laughed, leaning down to lick one of his nipples.

He cried out and then made a noise of dismay as Roxanne sat up again to look at him.

“Roxanne—!”

“Ask,” Roxanne said.

Megamind cried out again and spread his legs even wider in the restraints.

“Ask,” Roxanne repeated, voice steady in spite of how she could feel herself trembling with desire.

“Oh, god, Roxanne!” Megamind cried. “Fuck! Please! I need another finger; another one, please; put it in me!”

Roxanne slid a third finger inside of him and then stopped moving her hand.

Megamind outright screamed.

“Fucking—god damn it—Roxanne!” he begged. “Please! Move your fucking hand! Fuck me with your fingers, Roxanne, please!”

Roxanne pulled her fingers out and thrust them back in, hard and fast and deep.

“Yes—yes—yes!” Megamind said, voice rising, head thrown back, legs spread wide in his restraints. “God, yes! Oh god, yes!”

“Are you ready to come again?” Roxanne asked.

“Oh—oh—Roxanne—yes!”

“Go on, then.”

“Ahh!” Megamind’s back arched as he came again.

“Good boy,” Roxanne said, when he was finished.

Megamind whimpered and his hips rolled up again into her.
“Oh,” he said, eyes going wide. He looked shocked at the response of his own body.

Roxanne laughed.

“Do you want another like this?” she asked. “Or do you want me to go down on you now?”

Megamind’s eyes went even wider.

“I—you—but—! But you haven’t even—what about you? You aren’t—let me—let me touch you, Roxanne; let me do something for you—”

“No,” Roxanne said, “not yet.”

“But—”

Roxanne slid her fingers out of him; Megamind made a strangled noise. Her hand was soaked, dripping with how wet he was. A drop slid down her wrist; Megamind made a sound of embarrassment and distress, so Roxanne licked her hand—god she loved the sweet way he tasted.

“Oh—oh my god,” Megamind said breathlessly. “Please, Roxanne, please let me—you’ve already spent so long on—let me do something for you—”

“No,” Roxanne said. “This is what I want to do right now. I am going to make you come over and over again until you can’t think straight, Megamind. I am going blow your brilliant goddamn mind. However long that takes, because it will be fucking worth it, all right?”

“Roxanne—” Megamind begged.

“Come on, sweetheart,” Roxanne purred, moving to lie between his legs. “Let me show you what you’re worth, Megamind.”

“I—ah!” He cut himself off with a gasp when Roxanne licked over him.

She took her time, teasing him with little flicks of her tongue, pressing kisses around the violet-flushed skin of his sex, flattening her tongue and licking over him.

God, he was perfect: sweet and panting underneath her, making the most delicious little noises.

Roxanne pressed an open-mouthed kiss to the skin next to his sex and sucked hard. Megamind gasped her name and she licked up the seam of him, tip of her tongue just barely inside.

“Oh god Roxanne,” Megamind said shakily.

Roxanne licked downwards in the same way, making him take a sharp breath, and then thrust her tongue inside him.

“Ohh-hhh,” Megamind said, the sound of it drawn out by the press of Roxanne’s tongue.

She flicked her tongue up and down, moved it in a circular motion—she could feel his tentacles moving inside of him, responding to her. She pulled away for a moment to look at Megamind.

“Whenever you’re ready,” she said gently. “But please don’t rush on my account. I am really enjoying this.”

“You—you can’t possibly—”
“You taste like candy,” Roxanne says, rolling her eyes. “And you look like a pornographic pin-up. Also I am majorly turned on by this power dynamic, so.”

“Then let me do something about that,” Megamind pleaded.

“Later,” Roxanne said. “I’m enjoying the anticipation.”

Megamind’s lips gave a bitter twist upwards into an unhappy smile.

“‘Having is not so pleasing a thing, after all, as wanting’, when it comes to me, is it?” he said.

Roxanne glared at him and flicked his hip.

“God damn it, Megamind,” she said, “You would take the most cynical, negative line in the entire Star Trek canon and quote it out of context in a way that makes it even worse. Having is much, much better than just wanting, with you. But the wanting can make the having even better, see? And—no. You know what, I’m going to need you to come for me twice like this, now, to make up for that comment.”

Megamind blinked at her.

“I’m—I’m fairly certain most people don’t use orgasms as punishment?” he said uncertainly.

“Yeah, well most people,” Roxanne said, “aren’t fucking a beautiful, repressed idiot who seems to think that letting himself feel good is some sort of crime!”

“I am not repressed!”

“Megamind,” Roxanne said flatly, “you are the most repressed fucking person that I have ever met in my goddamn life. Notice how you didn’t deny my observation that you think that letting yourself feel good is wrong.”

“I—but—”

“If you can tell me,” Roxanne said, “if you can say, out loud, looking me in the face, that you deserve to feel good, then I will untie you right now and let you go down on me to your heart’s content.”

Megamind flushed and looked away, making an involuntary face.

“Yeah,” Roxanne sighed. “That’s what I thought. Two orgasms like this, Megamind. And if I think you’re forcing yourself to come too quickly then I’m going to make you give me two more.”

His eyes snapped guiltily to hers.

“How—” he said, and then stopped himself.

“I know how you think, Megamind,” Roxanne said, stroking her knuckles over his hip soothingly. “I always did, remember?”

Megamind swallowed.

“I remember.”

“How about this,” Roxanne said. “I’ll tap you, like this—” she tapped her fingertips on his hip, “—when I think you’ve let yourself wait long enough, okay?”
“Okay,” Megamind said.

“Good,” Roxanne said. “I want you to be good and let yourself feel this, all right? Can you do that for me, Megamind? Can you please let yourself feel how good I want to make you feel?”

“I—” Megamind hesitated. “Roxanne—I’ll—I’ll try.”

Roxanne smiled at him warmly.

“Good,” she said.

She bent her head and licked him again.

“I—” Megamind said as she worked him with her tongue, “—it does—it does feel good, what you’re doing, Roxanne, I just—ah!—I just feel—ohh—I—guilty, I feel—like I’m not contributing—Roxanne!—the reciprocity of the—fuck! Roxanne! Oh, please, Roxanne, please, do that again—that—yes! Yes! That—exactly! Oh, god that feels—that feels so good, Roxanne, so—oh!—” He cried out wordlessly as Roxanne continued to lick him. She waited until the sounds he was making went high and breathless and rhythmic, synced with the involuntary twitching of his hips beneath her, and then she tapped her fingertips on his hip.

Megamind cried out and came for her again, the sweet liquid of him gushing over her tongue. Roxanne continued to lick him even as he started to come down, not giving him any time to catch his breath or collect his thoughts.

He moaned, a long, drawn out sound that seemed to vibrate in his chest in a way that Roxanne didn’t think a human would be able to duplicate. Roxanne used the fingers of one hand to spread the sides of his sex apart and thrust her tongue into him.

Megamind wailed, body arching desperately up towards her. Roxanne rubbed her fingers up and down the sides of his sex and thrust her tongue rapidly in and out.

“Roxa—oh god—fuck—ah!” Megamind’s voice cracked as his words slid into a scream.

Roxanne pushed her tongue into him as deeply as she could.

“Roxanne!” Megamind screamed, and Roxanne felt a thrill of sheer satisfaction as she reached up to tap his hip.

He screamed again as he came, high and wordless.

Roxanne licked him lightly, easing him down, and then sat up and looked at him. God, he looked wrecked; flushed and gasping and trembling, lips swollen and bitten looking, tears in his eyes.

“You did so good, baby,” Roxanne said, voice warm and approving as she crawled up the bed to lie beside him. She draped herself half over him, stroked his face, and kissed his jaw. “I’m so proud of you.”

He gulped, breath hitching into a sob, tears spilling over.

“S—sorry,” he said, turning his face away from hers.

“Shh, sweetheart,” Roxanne said, pushing herself up on one elbow so she could look down into his face. She put her hand on his cheek, turning his head towards her. “You don’t have to be sorry.” She brushed his tears away and kissed his cheek. “Do you need to stop? We don’t have to keep
going if you don’t want to, Megamind. I’m not going to be upset if you say the safeword.”

“But what—what about the experiment?” Megamind asked, pressing his cheek into the curve of her palm. “You said you wanted to know—don’t you—”

“I am interested in the experiment,” Roxanne said gently, “but I’m much more interested in you being happy, Megamind.”

Megamind looked at her, his eyes wide as they met hers.

“Oh,” he said, “that is—I—”

“What?” Roxanne asked.

“Nothing,” he said, “just. I—” he swallowed. “I want—to keep going. I—god, Roxanne, I want you to keep touching me; I want you to keep paying attention to me; it’s—nothing has ever felt this good. I want—more. I just. Is that.” He glanced away, and then looked up at her again, biting his lip uncertainly. “—is that really an okay thing for me to want?”

“Yes,” Roxanne said firmly. “It is definitely okay for you to want more, Megamind. I told you, I want to do this. Besides, wanting—wanting pleasure isn’t—bad or wrong. Wanting attention isn’t wrong. And wanting someone to—” Roxanne swallowed the words love you “—wanting someone to care about you isn’t wrong. And I do. Care about you. So if you want to have this, Megamind, then I am so very happy to give it to you.”


He turned his face into her hand, mouth pressed to her palm like he was trying to stop himself from saying anything more—god, everything. Roxanne wanted to give him—

*Let me give you my heart,* she wanted to say, and didn’t, because *he didn’t mean it like that,* Roxanne.

“Do you think,” Megamind asked, words slightly muffled, cheeks burning, “that you could kiss me again, please?”

Roxanne leaned down and he turned his head up to meet hers. He made a relieved sound when she kissed him, moaned and sucked on her tongue when she slipped it into his mouth.

Roxanne moved both hands to cup the back of his head and he moaned louder, and she kissed him until she was dizzy, until he was pressing his head back into her hands and gasping against her mouth.

She pulled away just slightly, letting her lips graze his as she murmured:

“There’s something I want to try with you. I think you’ll like it,” she added, pausing to kiss him again before continuing, “—but if you don’t, then I want you to tell me, okay?”

“Yes,” Megamind moaned, “Roxanne.”

The sensation of it, Megamind speaking her name against her lips, hit Roxanne like lightning, making her crush her mouth to his in a hard kiss before tearing herself away.

She sat up, opening the drawer of her bedside table again, pushing things aside until she found what she was looking for.
Megamind looked at her curiously when she held up her favorite vibrator.  

(smooth blue silicone; she really should have noticed the fact she was hung up on Megamind a lot sooner than she had)  

Megamind frowned at the vibrator in obvious confusion—didn’t he know—?  

Roxanne felt her mouth curving into a wicked smile.  

Oh, this was going to be fun.  

Roxanne trailed the tip of the vibrator down the side of Megamind’s neck, over his collar bones. He watched her, expression flickering as he tried to understand.  

Roxanne’s grin widened as she pressed the vibrator against the sensitive curve at the back of his head and turned it on.  

The sound Megamind made wasn’t exactly a scream; it was too breathy for that—almost silent: a whisper cry. His eyes flew wide, his spine arching and head bending back into the vibrations, mouth falling open.  

Roxanne moved the vibrator away from his skin for a moment and he made that birdsong sound of dismay.  

“Good so far?” she asked.  

“Please—oh god please don’t stop,” Megamind begged, head twisting on the pillow, trying to press himself against the toy again.  

Roxanne let him, and was rewarded by Megamind’s moan that started low in his chest and ended in a sharp, drawn out, warbling noise. Roxanne put her free hand on his throat, like he liked to do with her, feeling the vibrations of the inhuman sound of pleasure he was making for her. Fuck, but that was—so entirely fascinating and gratifying and—unbelievably endearing.  

She moved to lie down beside him, curling her body around his, nudging his chin with her face, turning his head slightly so that she could place her mouth on the other side of the generous curve of his beautiful head and suck.  

The noise Megamind was making went higher and louder; Roxanne scraped her teeth against his skin there, put her lips to his ear and said—  

“Come for me like this.”  

—before moving her mouth back to his head and sucking again, hard, pressing the vibrator firmly against the other side of his head and stroking the pulse point of his neck with her other hand.  

The sound Megamind was making cut out into a series of wordless almost-sobs as he convulsed with pleasure.  

Roxanne waited until he was finished, and then sat up, removing the vibrator from his head. Megamind made a soft noise of protest which changed into a surprised gasp when she brushed the vibrator against the seam between his legs.  

She stroked the toy down the seam and Megamind moaned and writhed underneath of it, rubbing himself against the vibrator.
Roxanne smiled down at him.

“Still good, I take it?” she asked.

“S-so good,” Megamind managed, fingers working uselessly as he fought against the restraints, hips moving in mindless circles against the vibrator. “So good, Roxanne; you’re—a fucking goddess; I love—your mind—it’s brilliant; you’re brilliant—”

He pushed up against the vibrator a little harder, back arching, his hips moving in wide circles against the toy.

“Good boy,” Roxanne murmured, “there you go, yes. Doesn’t that feel good? Oh, you don’t have to blush; I know it does. This is my vibrator, you know.”

A flicker in Megamind’s expression: a question.

“I use this myself,” Roxanne explained. “Like this and also—well, I’ll show you what else it can do it a minute.”

Megamind’s mouth fell open.

“You—” he choked out, the motion of his hips going a little harder, a little less controlled.

“Mm, yes,” Roxanne said. “When I’m alone, mostly.” She laughed a little at Megamind’s resulting expression, feeling desire thrumming through her—god, the way he moved his face.

“How you like thinking about that?” Roxanne asked slyly. “Me, lying where you are, grinding up against this toy like you’re doing? I’ll show you some time, if you want.”

“Yes, I—ah!—th-that would be—”

Roxanne grinned and leaned down to kiss him.

“Or maybe I’ll let you use it on me,” Roxanne went on, and Megamind’s eyes went wide.

“Oh—”

“Tell me what this feels like to you,” Roxanne commanded.

“Ah! It—it’s like—when you touch me there, but—oh god—but this is—harder?” One of his hands twitched in the restraints; his attempt at a gesture cut short by the rope. “Like—ohh—like a—zap!—feeling—instead of a—zing—”

Roxanne laughed and Megamind made a face that was half self-deprecating smile and half wry grimace.

“—unclear description—” he panted out. “—hard to—can’t—explain—ohgodohgodohgod ohhh—”

“Do you like this better than when I use my fingers on you there?” Roxanne asked.

“No!” Megamind said, the word rapped out so fast and forceful that Roxanne blinked in surprise. “No, I—this is good, this is great, but—I—like, as an occasional—thing, not—I like it best—when you touch me, Roxanne; I love—the way your hands feel on my skin—you’re so—warm, always; I thought you had a fever, that day in the Lair, but—I—looked it up and you—your body temperature is naturally—several degrees warmer than mine—”
“You looked that up?” Roxanne asked, feeling absurdly touched.

“—told you I would,” Megamind said, brow furrowing. “I—I just—and—you. Are warm and—you’re so—”

He choked, turned his face away from her, blush spreading over his cheeks and ears.

“—gentle,” he continued, eyes squeezed shut, “—with—with me, and—and n-nobody ever touches me like that—like I’m—like they d-don’t want to hurt me—”

He made a soft sound in the back of his throat.

“Please—please don’t stop touching me, Roxanne,” Megamind said in a small, desperate voice.

“Oh, sweetheart,” Roxanne said, heart twisting painfully. She flicked the vibrator off, tossed it to one side, and draped herself over Megamind.

He made a startled noise, looked at her. She wrapped one arm beneath his head, supporting it, cupped his cheek in her other palm, stroked her hand down his throat and then rested it on his chest.

“Of course I won’t stop touching you.” She kissed the corner of his mouth. “That isn’t a—a substitution for my touch, Megamind; it isn’t—you don’t have to choose between them. You can have both. You can always have both; you can—”

She kissed him, feeling the desperate way he leaned into it. Roxanne let the kiss lengthen, deepen, trying to tell him without words, with the press of her mouth against his: I love you and I always want to touch you and you don’t need to be afraid.

Roxanne kissed him until he relaxed, until he seemed to calm down, and then she kissed him a little longer, because she wanted to, and because she could, and because he deserved to be kissed as often as possible.

“Sorry,” Megamind muttered, when she had to pause the kiss to catch her breath. “I got—scared. When you said—I just. Sorry.”

“You,” Roxanne said, kissing his jaw, his cheek, his forehead, “you don’t have to apologize. You don’t have to apologize, Megamind, and you don’t have to be scared. I love touching you. I don’t want to stop.”

She brushed her mouth over his, feeling the shaky breath he took, and kissed the sharp point of his chin.

“Sorry,” he said again, and then made a face when she glanced up at him. “And—sorry for—saying sorry after you—told me not to—did it again—sorry—ah, fuck—”

“Oh, Megamind,” Roxanne said, half laughing, half tearful. “You don’t need to apologize for—any of that, either. You can—you can say sorry if it makes you feel better, though. You can say it; you just don’t have to. That’s all.”

“Sorry,” Megamind blurted. “For being so—awkward and highly strung and prone to panic and, and inexperienced and—and for—everything else, for—everything I ever—all of the—kidnapping, the deathtraps and, and the w-way I can never seem to leave you well enough alone—sorry. I—I’m sorry, Roxanne.”
“That’s okay,” Roxanne said, kissing him. “That’s all okay, Megamind. I—I like you the way that you are. Awkwardness and highly strung nerves and tendency to panic and all. Those things aren’t—they aren’t character flaws. I understand that they make you unhappy, and I want you to be happy. But they aren’t something that I need to—overlook or forgive you for.”

Megamind looked at her disbelievingly. Roxanne sighed and stroked her fingers over his face.

“And I understand if you need me to tell you this more than once, okay? However many times you need to hear it, Megamind, this isn’t going to change: I think you are amazing.”

“You—you said that, before,” Megamind said, wide-eyed and shocked. “You said that, the last time we were—here.”

“I know,” Roxanne said, smiling into his eyes. “And I’ll say it again and again for you, Megamind. Really, however many times you need to hear it. You’re amazing. And I’m so happy that I know you.”

Megamind gave her another look of disbelief.

“Kidnapping and deathtraps included,” she said, feeling herself flush. “I know I complained a lot, but—I think I would have been—really bored, without you. Besides—” she touched his lips with the tips of her fingers. “—if you hadn’t kidnapped me all those times, we wouldn’t be here now, like this. And that would be a tragedy, let me tell you.”

“—for you, too?” Megamind asked, lips moving against her fingertips.

“Oh my god, yes,” Roxanne said. “You are—way fun to be around, generally, and—Megamind, you are—really, really great in bed, okay? Like—incredible. Best sex of my life, hands down, no competition.”

“Really?” Megamind asked.

“Yes,” Roxanne said firmly. “And—I definitely don’t mind that you’re inexperienced, Megamind. I—honestly? I’m really enjoying the fact that I get to be the one to show you all of this for the first time.”

“Even when I panic?” Megamind said, pulling a face.

“Even when you panic,” Roxanne said. She kissed him. “Now,” she added, “do you want to keep going? Or do you want to just hang out tonight instead?”

“You—want to continue?” Megamind asked. “You’d be willing to—even after I—ruined the mood?”

“You,” Roxanne said, kissing his cheek, “are precious,” she kissed his other cheek, “and adorable,” she kissed his lips, “and very sexy.” She stroked one fingertip down the length of his nose. “And nothing is ruined. I’d love to keep going if you want me to, but there is absolutely no pressure. Whatever you decide is fine.”

“Can we—can we keep going?” Megamind asked shyly. “I’d—I’d like to keep going, if—if that’s all right?”

Roxanne grinned at him.

“Excellent,” she said, and leaned down to kiss him.
Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

notes: WOW THAT UPDATE WAS A LOT FASTER THAN THE PREVIOUS ONE
LOL

thank you to everyone reading and reviewing! I appreciate it so much. <3
Roxanne took her time with the kiss, easing Megamind back into feeling comfortable. She felt him relax for her by degrees, sighing into the kiss and then moaning against her mouth.

She sat up and smiled at him warmly, stroking her hands over his face, then running her fingertips over his ears lightly, teasingly. His breath hitched and she ran her fingers down the tendons on either side of his neck, loving the way he moved beneath her hands. She leaned down and nuzzled his throat before kissing up the length of it.

Roxanne wrapped her hands around the back of his neck and pressed her nose to the soft, vulnerable space behind his ear, hearing the way he gasped in response. She kissed him there, then stroked upwards with her hands, cupping the back of his head.

“—oh,” Megamind said softly.

She moved to kiss along his jaw, stroking her palms over the curve of his big, beautiful head, running her hands over every bit of it: the sides, the top.

_I like it best when you touch me_, he’d said, and _oh_, Roxanne loved touching him, the cool silken-smoothness of his skin—he was right; he was always a little cooler than her—and the expressions that played over his face at every move of her hands, and the sweet, lovely way he responded to her touch—shy at first, always, but with such an obvious, aching desire for contact that it made Roxanne’s heart hurt.

_(If he’s like this with you, what will he be like when he finds someone he actually loves?_ Roxanne thought, and then shoved that thought aside.)

Still petting his head, Roxanne leaned down and kissed his forehead, then pressed her own forehead against his.

Megamind took a sharp breath at the motion, so Roxanne stayed like that, placing her hands flat on the sides of his head now. She rubbed her forehead against his, moving it slowly back and forth. Megamind made an odd, soft sound in the back of his throat.

“Is this okay?” Roxanne asked, uncertain what the sound had signified.

“Y-yes, it’s—really, um—nice?” Megamind’s voice was a little wobbly.

“What does it feel like?” Roxanne asked, concerned with the tremor in his voice.

“Like—like—a hug?”

He didn’t sound certain; when was the last time he’d been hugged—

“—or like holding hands?” he continued. “But—but—different, too?” Megamind gulped. “I don’t know; it’s not a sex feeling, it’s—it feels—significant somehow and—probably a weird alien thing—I—the—and—and the longer you stay like that—oh god your hands and—and your head, Roxanne—oh god—oh god oh god—ohgodohgod ohgodRoxanne please kiss me or I think I might start crying—”
Roxanne kissed him, breaking the contact between their foreheads and moving her hands down to cup his face instead of his head—he really had sounded close to tears and she didn’t want to hurt him somehow.

He kissed her frantically, mouth desperate against hers, lips parting for her immediately, less of an invitation and more of a plea. She slid her tongue past his lips and he made a grateful whimpering noise.

His body arched up against her as he tried to press closer. Roxanne slipped one arm beneath his head, cradling it, and stroked her other palm down his chest, and he made a moaning, sobbing sound against her lips, still trying to push closer to her.

Roxanne slid her hand lower, stroking over the seam between his legs, and felt his hips buck in response.

He was so wet, the slickness of him making her palm slip easily against his skin. He whined, grinding himself against her hand, and Roxanne thrust three fingers into him at once.

Megamind gasped against her mouth, hips still moving, fucking himself on her fingers even as she thrusted them in and out of him, working him hard and fast, continuing to kiss him the entire time.

He moaned again, that long, drawn-out, inhuman sound, the harmonics of it sending delicious shivers down Roxanne’s spine, making her kiss him even harder. She pressed her hand firmly against his head, twisted her fingers inside of him, and bit down on his lower lip.

Megamind came, crying out into the kiss, hips bucking wildly. Roxanne kept up the motion of her fingers, trying to ease him down, but Megamind, hips still stuttering upwards, broke the kiss to gasp out—

“—please, please, please—”

—and so she quickened the motion of her hand again, moving her mouth to lick over his ear before putting her lips to the side of his neck and biting down, sucking hard.

Megamind wailed and thrashed against the restraints, and Roxanne felt him come again, muscles contracting around the fingers she had buried inside him.

This time when she started to slow the motion of her hand, he let her, collapsing back on the bed, chest heaving as he panted.

Roxanne sat up and looked at him.

“Wow,” she said, a smile curving her lips.

She moved her fingers inside him again, a small, light motion, and Megamind twitched in response.

“Sorry—” he panted, “—don’t know—what that was—”

“That was hot,” Roxanne said, “that’s what that was. Holy shit.”

Megamind flushed, looked away.

“—weird,” he muttered.

“Hot,” Roxanne said, fluttering her fingers inside of him, feeling the way his tentacles curled around her fingers at the motion. “Really hot.”
She pulled her fingers out almost all of the way, and then pressed them in experimentally. Megamind moaned, legs spreading for her. Roxanne bit her lip, smirking.

“Another like this, I think,” she said, “and save the vibrator for a different day.”

“You—” Megamind looked up at her through his lashes, blushing deeply. He bit his lip. “I—well—you could—try the vibrator again. N-now? If you wanted…”

“You want me to?” Roxanne asked, half to tease and half to make sure he wasn’t just agreeing to it to please her.

“Um,” Megamind said, “I—yes, please. I really liked—everything you did with it before, and—I’m feeling, uh. Calmer. Now. So—if you—if you want—”

Roxanne leaned down to kiss him gently, sliding her fingers from his body.

“Okay,” she said, smiling at him as she pulled away. “I do think you’ll like it, but you will tell me if you don’t, yeah? And then I’ll stop. And it won’t be a big deal. All right?”

“All right,” Megamind said, looking up at her with a crooked, shy smile. “You—really are—so good to me, Roxanne. So much—nicer than I deserve.”

Roxanne’s heart twisted painfully.

“I’m really not,” she said. “You—you deserve to be treated—you deserve to be treated good, Megamind. Because you are good.”

Megamind made a disbelieving face, mouth opening to argue. Roxanne kissed him quickly to silence him.

“Hush,” she whispered. “Stop arguing. Let me take care of you.”

He smiled a wry, sad smile, eyes cutting away from hers, but he didn’t try to press his point.

Roxanne searched in the rumpled blankets until she found the vibrator again, then dragged her fingers, still wet from being inside Megamind, over the shaft of the toy, slicking it up. He was already wet, of course, but there was nothing wrong with a little extra lubrication, especially considering that he’d never done this before.

She looked up to see Megamind watching her, an expression of curiosity in his face.

“You remember how I used this on you before?” Roxanne asked, brushing the tip of the vibrator over the seam between his legs but not turning it on yet.

“Mmm,” he said, moving a little underneath of the vibrator, rubbing lightly against the toy, “yes.”

“Well,” she said, “do you think you’d be all right with me putting it inside of you now? Like I do my fingers.”

Megamind’s eyes went wide and his tongue darted out to lick his lips.

“Uh,” he said, sounding a little nervous a lot turned on, “that sounds—very—like a thing I would be all right with, yes.”

Roxanne grinned at him. God, he was cute.
“Such a good boy,” she said warmly, and Megamind blushed. She placed her free hand flat against his stomach, feeling the muscles there tighten in response. “You’re so brave, Megamind. I’m gonna make you feel so good, baby.”

She stroked the tip of the vibrator between the lips of him, watching his eyes go even wider, and then she slowly pressed the toy inside him.

Megamind’s mouth fell open as he gasped. Roxanne paused, the toy fully sheathed inside of him, her hand on the base of it.

“Good?” she asked.

“…fuck,” Megamind whispered. “—ohhh so good—”

“Tell me,” Roxanne said, “tell me what you feel.”

“So—oh god—the stretching is—oh my god, Roxanne—it’s—I feel—full and—um—taken care of and—you, like this, and, and being tied up and the—your, um, the vibrator and it’s—inside of me like that and—I should feel scared, because you—you could do anything you wanted to me and that’s sort of—but—but I—I trust you—”

He looked at her with wide eyes, his mouth trembling a little.

“I trust you,” he said, “I—I feel safe with you.”

Roxanne smiled down at him, a little tremulously, and took her hand from his stomach to rest her fingertips on his cheek.

“Good,” she said, “that’s good, Megamind; I’m so glad you feel safe with me, because that’s—that’s the way I feel when I’m with you.”

Megamind turned his head and kissed the palm of her hand.

“—sort of incomprehensible, really,” he murmured, “but—I—god, Roxanne, I’m—so, so grateful for that—”

“You’re so sweet,” Roxanne said, drawing the pad of her thumb over his lower lip.

(god, she loved him so much it hurt)

“Are you ready for the next part?” she asked.

“Fuck, yes,” Megamind said forcefully, and Roxanne laughed. “Are you going to turn it on now?” he asked eagerly.

Roxanne had been planning on doing that, actually, but, presented with such a golden opportunity to tease him—

“Not yet,” she said, and began to fuck him with the toy instead.

“Ohhhhh fffffuck,” Megamind moaned, head falling back. “Oh, fuck that’s—that feels fantastic, Roxanne—”

“Yeah?” she asked. “Describe it.”

“Ah!,” he said, hips starting to move with her. “I—well—it’s—it feels—really—b-big, and so the
—ohh—the stretching is—so fucking—I—really—yes!—ohh Roxanne, yes—please! please turn it on! I want—please—the vibrations on, on my head were so—! and, and then on—oh, please Roxanne, please, please—”

Roxanne flicked it on.

Megamind gave a hoarse shout, hips bucking harder now, in a way that Roxanne thought might be involuntary.

“Still good?” she asked.

Megamind moaned wordlessly in answer and Roxanne bit back a smile. She decided to test him.

“Describe it for me,” she said.

He moaned again, the inhuman sounding one.

“—waves;” he managed to choke out, “—electricity, humming; closed circuit; lightning in slow motion—”

Jesus, that was almost poetic.

“Roxanne,” he moaned, and Roxanne knew, suddenly, what he meant by lightning in slow motion, the sound of him saying her name like that traveling down her spine in a slow bloom of heat.

“God, you’re perfect,” she said, her voice rough to her own ears. “Look at you,” she added as he arched his back and spread his legs shamelessly for her, “beautiful.”

She continued to move the toy, fucking him with it in long, slow strokes, her other hand on his hip, encouraging him to thrust upwards.

She kept that up for—she wasn’t sure how long, really, with the way she was mesmerized by the sight of Megamind, letting her do this to him, by the sounds he was making, and by the way his eyes were fixed on her face. She waited until he begged her—

“—please, Roxanne, please, please—”

—and then she waited until his begging dissolved into incoherent noises, until he wasn’t using words at all, until he was moaning and fighting his restraints, and then she waited until he stopped fighting, until the motion of his hips stuttered and faltered, until he was just panting and whimpering and writhing desperately on the bed for her.

“There,” she said, stroking his hip soothingly while she fucked him with her toy, while the vibrator pulsed and hummed inside of him, “there you are, baby. Doesn’t that feel good, sweetheart? Doesn’t it feel good, just lying there and taking it? You’re so good, letting yourself get fucked like this, Megamind. So goddamn brave. You’ve been so good for me; I’m so impressed, Megamind, so very, very impressed.”

He made a choked, sobbing noise at that, and Roxanne smiled gently at him.

“You did so good. Come for me, now, beautiful.”

Megamind cried out, his whole body rocking with the force of his climax. Roxanne kept the toy moving through his convulsions, and when he seemed to be coming down, she increased the speed, thrusting the vibrator into him faster. He made a shocked noise, hips snapping upwards sharply
again. Roxanne twisted the vibrator, rotating it as she fucked him, and he wailed in response.

“Good,” she said, “again.”

Megamind jerked in his restraints, his voice going up an octave as he came.

Roxanne sped up her thrusts of the toy once more, continuing to twist it as she worked him, and reached up to roll one of his nipples between her fingers roughly.

“Again,” she said, and his voice cracked into a scream as he came for her again.

She twisted his nipple hard just as his orgasm started to end and said—

“Again, Megamind.”

—And Megamind came again, this climax following the last one in a sort of wave, no real pause in between—

“Perfect,” Roxanne said, and pulled the vibrator out of him without warning.

Megamind made that birdsong noise of distress, louder and sharper than ever before, his hips rising as he tried to fuck himself on the toy again.

“Tentacles out, now,” Roxanne commanded.

The sides of his sex parted immediately, tentacles unfurling, reaching towards her hand.

Roxanne lowered the vibrator into the sweetly writhing tangle of them, let several tentacles curl around the shaft of the vibrator.

“Hold this for me, sweetheart,” she said, and let go of the toy completely.

Megamind’s eyes flew wide, the rest of his tentacles wrapping around the vibrator as well.

Roxanne laughed and moved to kiss her way up his body: navel, ribcage, chest. She took each of his nipples in her mouth in turn and sucked at them, light and then hard, grazing them with her teeth, licking over them with her flattened tongue, and then blowing a stream of cold air on each of them.

Megamind screamed at that, just as he had the last time she did it. Roxanne looked at his face—he looked overwhelmed in the best possible way, eyes wide and mouth open, watching her with an expression that was a lovely blend of shock and bliss and desperation. His chest was heaving with every breath he took; Roxanne kissed him on the left side of his chest, over his heart (was his heart there? it would be if he was human, but—)

She glanced down to see how he was doing with the toy. The tentacles were wrapped around the vibrator, still, each of them taking turns holding it in place while the others curled and uncurled, rubbing themselves off against the humming shaft—fuck, that was so hot, the way he was able to do that—

Megamind’s made a low, frantic noise; Roxanne looked back at his face. His eyes were squeezed shut, his jaw clenched, his head whipping back and forth on the pillow—fighting against the instinct to let himself come, she realized. Waiting for her permission, still, like she’d told him to when they started this.

God, that kind of—utterly sweet desire to please her, coupled with Megamind’s beautiful,
maddening stubborn refusal to ever give up, it was just—

Roxanne put her hand on his cheek.

“Megamind,” she said, and he forced his eyes open, forced them to focus on her.

Finally he managed it. Roxanne smiled at him.

“You’re allowed to come whenever you like now,” she said.

Megamind came immediately, gasping, Roxanne’s hand on his chin. She leaned down to lick over his clavicle, and then bite at it. Megamind cried out, body jerking—coming again? Roxanne was too busy kissing his shoulders and scraping her teeth over the skin there to decide for sure. She switched to playing with his ears and licking his neck and throat. Megamind gave a breathy cry, twitching beneath her, and Roxanne bit at his neck over and over again, sucking at his skin, never hard enough to leave a mark, but certainly hard enough to make him wail and thrash wildly on the bed before collapsing into the mattress. She kissed the back of his head and Megamind whimpered quietly.

Roxanne sat up again, looking down at him.

His movements on the bed were slower now, less pronounced; his hips moving in little circles instead of thrusting upwards; his tentacles twitching around the vibrator instead of writhing. He was gasping for breath, his eyes on her.

“That was amazing,” Roxanne said, stroking her fingertips down his face. “You—” she drew her finger down the line of his facial hair and tapped his chin, “—are amazing.”

Megamind made a choking sound and Roxanne smiled at him.

“Do you think you can manage one more?” she asked, sliding her panties off.

“—oh god,” Megamind said breathlessly.

“I’ll take that, thank you,” Roxanne said, slipping the vibrator from his tentacles.

She turned it off and tossed it aside, turned to Megamind again. His tentacles were still out, and still moving, but slowly. Roxanne touched one of them and Megamind hissed through his teeth even as the tendril curled weakly around her finger.

“Really, though,” she said, “are you okay to try for one more? It’s not going to be an issue at all if you don’t want to. I do have a vibrator here, and I did promise to give you a demonstration…”

“Please, I—” Megamind said, “I—I’d like—I want—I want to try—”

“You sure?”

“Yes,” Megamind said, “yes, I’d—I want to—please, Roxanne, I want to feel you—”

Roxanne grinned and him and straddled his lap. His legs being tied like they were made it necessary to spread her knees rather far; two of his tentacles slid easily inside of her, no resistance. She moaned, grinding down on him, then lifting herself up to help him to press two more inside.

Megamind made a quiet noise, fifth tentacle flickering on her clit, too soft to do much more than tease.
Roxanne grinned. Poor thing; she’d worn him out.

She looked over her shoulder, sudden clever idea occurring. She reached over and picked up the vibrator again, pressing it between her clit and his tentacle and flicking it on.

“Ohh, yes,” Roxanne said, eyes falling shut and head bending back, “fuck, yes.”

Megamind made a strangled, choking noise that turned into a series of rhythmic gasps as Roxanne began to roll her hips and move the vibrator at the same time. She looked down; Megamind’s tentacle was curled around the vibrator—oh, that was so hot, being able to use the toy on both of them at the same time like this, even as she fucked him.

Roxanne looked at Megamind’s face; he was looking at her already, gaze raking up her body, from the place where they were joined together, over her stomach, her breasts, her neck, and then to her face. His lips were parted, his expression was so open, filled with a worshipful kind of shock—god, it was absolutely beautiful, the way pleasure always seemed to catch Megamind off guard. He was so beautiful, so—

Roxanne gasped, feeling heat begin to gather in the pit of her stomach—oh, that—she hadn’t realized she was so close already—oh—

“Megamind,” she said, murmured, really, body curving forwards, shuddering through her climax, “—Megamind, Megamind, Megamind—”

She put her free hand on his chest for balance, shivering while sparks danced on the edge of her vision.

“—god,” Roxanne said, shakily, blinking hard.

Megamind moaned her name, and Roxanne forced her eyes to focus again, looking at him.

His hands were working in the restraints again, fingers clutching uselessly at thin air, spine arching, his head bending back, baring the long, naked line of his throat to her as his hips continued to roll unevenly up into her.

“Roxanne—Roxanne—please—” he begged, voice breaking, “—please, please, please—I need—”

“—to come again?” Roxanne asked, moving the vibrator again, keeping it away from her oversensitive clit in favor of teasing his tentacle with it. She resumed the motion of her hips, riding him. “Do you need to come again, baby? Is that what you need?”

“Yes, please—” Megamind said, crying out sharply when she found a new angle for the vibrator that made him jerk beneath her, “—please, Roxanne, please—”

“Tell me,” Roxanne said.

“Please—oh god!—please, Roxanne, please—let me—come?”

“No, don’t ask,” Roxanne said, “Tell me. Tell me to make you come.”

Megamind hissed through his teeth.

“—Roxanne—”

“Tell me,” Roxanne said. “Tell me to make you feel good.”
“Roxanne—” Megamind wailed, head shaking from side to side, “—oh god—oh god oh god oh god—ah!—”

Roxanne caught his chin, forced him to look at her, his eyes meeting hers.

“Tell me that you deserve to feel good, Megamind.”

For a long moment, she didn’t think he would answer her, didn’t think he would manage to force the words out, but then finally—

“M-make—me—come, Roxanne,” Megamind sobbed, “—I—I—I d-deserve to—feel—good.”

Roxanne smiled down at him triumphantly.

“Yes,” she said, with an extra-hard thrust of her hips and a sharp twist of the vibrator, “you do. Come now, Megamind; you absolutely deserve it.”

Megamind arched his back, body going taut and shaking as he sobbed through his climax. Roxanne kept moving the entire time, watching his face, waiting for him to come down. Finally he started to. She turned off the vibrator and tossed it to one side, then leaned forward and kissed him on the cheek as he gasped for breath, tears standing in his eyes.

“You did so good; you did so good, Megamind, so good—” she kissed his other cheek, then his forehead, and then climbed off his lap so that she could untie him.

He made a noise of dismay when she did, so Roxanne untied the first knot one-handed, petting over his head with her other hand. She kissed his wrist once she it was free, then the palm of his hand and the backs of his fingers. They twitched at the press of her mouth, as if he was trying to reach for her, to touch her too, so Roxanne rested his palm against the curve of her cheek briefly before carefully setting his arm down in a more comfortable position and climbing over him to undo the second knot on his other wrist.

She repeated the motions with that hand, stroking his head while she untied him, pressing her lips to his hand once the rope fell away.

Roxanne leaned down and kissed Megamind (he seemed to have gotten his breath back a bit now), stroking his face with her hands and ending with a kiss to the tip of his nose that made him give a quiet, startled laugh.

She smiled down at him and moved to untie his ankles, leaning her hip against his leg as she did, pressing a kiss to each of his knees after she was finished, causing him to give that surprised, breathless laugh again.

She moved to lie beside him, her heart flipping over in pleased surprise when he reached for her, pressing his face to the curve where her neck and shoulder met, his arm wrapping tight around her waist, his legs tangling with hers.

Roxanne wrapped her own arm around him, turning her head to kiss his temple, the only part of him she could reach.

“Hey,” she said softly.

Megamind made a vague noise in response.

Roxanne laughed quietly.
“You all right?” she asked.

Megamind hummed contentedly.

Roxanne stroked her hand up and down his spine, biting her lip and smiling to herself.

“I really did blow your mind, didn’t I?” she murmured, feeling quite proud of herself. “I win.”

“—experiment, not a competition,” Megamind said complainingly.

Roxanne snickered.

“Oh, that’s right,” she said, “I should have known your competitive ass wouldn’t let that go by. How many times was that, then, that you were able to come?”

For a long moment, he was silent.

“—I actually lost count,” he admitted.

Roxanne laughed; Megamind moved his head back enough to look up at her, and his reproachful expression only made her laugh harder.

“Oh my god!” Roxanne gasped. “Oh my—that’s so great.”

“—I was distracted!” he said, laughing now, too.

“Oh my god I made you lose count,” Roxanne said wonderingly. “I definitely blew your mind and I totally win!”

“Ha, yes, but I’m the competitive one.” Megamind rolled his eyes, a blush spreading over his cheeks. He moved his head closer again, pressing his lips to her throat as she laughed.

Roxanne stroked her hand over his back once more, laughter subsiding. Megamind dropped his head onto the pillow with a quiet noise.

“I should go,” he said after a moment of lying together in silence.

“Don’t,” Roxanne said, before she could think better of it. She winced and then added, because she might as well, at that point, “Stay? Please? I’d like you to stay.”

“—of—of course,” Megamind said, “I can—I can stay if you like. But, um—”

He hesitated and Roxanne forced herself to look at him, her stomach twisting itself in knots.

“—how long do you want me to stay?” he asked.

Forever, Roxanne wanted to say, but luckily managed to stop herself this time.

“Be here when I wake up?” she asked.

Megamind blinked, looking surprised—oh god, she’d asked for too much, hadn’t she; he’d been hoping she’d tell him ‘for a couple of minutes’ or ‘until I fall asleep’ but—

“I can do that,” he said.

“Okay,” Roxanne said, “okay, good.”
She reached for him, curling up close again.

“Is it okay if I just leave the lamp on?” she asked. “—really don’t want to get up.”

“It’s fine,” Megamind said quietly, fingers stroking her hair.

“Are you going to be able to sleep?” Roxanne said, remembering he’d told her before that he wouldn’t.

“…yes, actually,” Megamind said, sounding tired and surprised and happy. “—I feel—relaxed. Calm. You’re amazing, you know that? Really amazing. Thirty some years stuck in this body, and I never knew it could feel—anything like this good, Roxanne.”

“Is that the way you feel about it?” Roxanne asked softly, “Stuck?”

Megamind made a quiet noise, still stroking her hair.

“Sometimes,” he said, “—not—all the time. There are—certain physical things that I—enjoy my body during. Fighting. Dancing. Flying—and—and being with you. I—”

He paused, for so long that Roxanne thought he was finished talking, so long that she very nearly drifted off to sleep, and then—

“I like my body when it is with your body,” Megamind said softly, “It is—so quite new a thing. Muscles better and nerves—more. I like your body. I like what it does. I like it’s hows. I like to feel the spine of your body and it’s bones, and the trembling firm-smoothness which I will again and again and again kiss…”

He trailed off.

“—that was poetry,” Roxanne said disbelievingly.

He just—quoted poetry to her while he held her in his arms, and it wasn’t fair, it wasn’t fair that he was so lovely, wasn’t fair that he didn’t love her.

“Um,” Megamind said, “yes, it—was, yes. It—ah—” He cleared his throat awkwardly. “Too weird?”

“No,” Roxanne whispered, pressing her face to his shoulder, “no, it was perfect.”

“—good,” Megamind said quietly, “that’s—that’s good, I—I meant it. You make me feel—almost—comfortable, with myself, and I really, Roxanne—I can’t thank you enough for that—”

“You don’t have to thank me, Megamind,” Roxanne said, face pressed to his shoulder still, eyes prickling, and she wasn’t going to cry, she wasn’t. “God, you don’t need to thank me.”

“But I—”

“Shh,” Roxanne said, shutting her eyes tightly. “Shh, Megamind—sweetheart—just—” She kissed his shoulder. “Just go to sleep, okay?”

“—okay,” Megamaind breathed. Roxanne felt him stroking her hair again. “Okay, I’ll—I’ll see you in the morning, Roxanne…”

(Roxanne tried not to fall asleep, tried to keep awake for as long as possible, memorizing the sensation of Megamind’s body in her arms and his hands in her hair, but eventually the rise and fall
of his chest and the soft motion of him stroking her hair lulled her and sleep came.)

Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

notes: the poem that Megamind quotes is I Like My Body When It Is With Your by e. e. cummings. I feel like Megamind would like e. e. cummings--his poems are really visually striking, and a lot of time they only really make sense if you read them out loud...reminds me a bit of Megamind’s idea cloud: the way it’s visual, not just notes, the way you have to step back and look at it to have it make sense.
“Megamind,” Roxanne murmured, “—Megamind, Megamind, Megamind—”

Megamind heard her voice as if from far away, almost drowned out by the sound of his blood rushing in his ears.

He felt her put her hand on his chest, leaning on him as she convulsed with her climax, every contraction of her body around him, every move of her hips sending a wave of pleasure through him.

Not just waves, though, the sensations didn’t just wash through him and dissipate, they lingered in his body, at the base of his spine and in the arches of his feet and at the place where his skull met the top of his spine—

“—god,” Roxanne said, her voice quiet.

Another pulse of sensation went through him, the pleasure spreading through his entire body now in a sweet rush of warmth, licking over his skin and curling around his bones—

“Roxanne—” Megamind moaned.

God it—it was too—the pleasure was too much, it was too good, too good, more than he’d ever—

Megamind couldn’t seem to catch hold of his thoughts, to—he felt his body reacting, couldn’t control it, fingers clawing at the air, heels sliding on the sheets as he uselessly fought the restraints, his back arching as he showed Roxanne his throat, hips thrusting up into Roxanne, no rhythm, no control, just the desperate need to shove himself closer to the maddening, delicious, fever-heat of her.

(Above him and around him and still not close enough)

“Roxanne—Roxanne—please,” Megamind begged, voice cracking with greedy desperation, “—please, please, please—I need—”

“To come again?” Roxanne asked him, her hips rolling once more, vibrator stroking over his tentacle, both feelings going up his spine like an electric shock, and then spreading through his entire body in—Lichtenberg figures, lightning strike fractals of pleasure. “Do you need to come again, baby? Is that what you need?”

“Yes, please—” Megamind cried out and jerked on the bed as Roxanne pressed the tip of the vibrator the the base of his tentacle at just the right angle, as another bolt of pleasure lanced mercilessly through him, and then spread. “—please, Roxanne, please—”

“Tell me,” Roxanne said.

“Please—oh god!—please, Roxanne, please—let me—come?” Megamind begged, twisting on the bed, needing—needing—

“No, don’t ask,” Roxanne told him to his dismay. “Tell me. Tell me to make you come.”
Megamind let his breath hiss through his teeth in frustration—how could he—

“—Roxanne—”

“Tell me,” Roxanne said, still riding him, still stroking his tentacle with the pulsing, humming toy, driving him even further into pleasure. “Tell me to make you feel good,” Roxanne continued, as if she didn’t, wasn’t, already, but he needed her to—

The impulse to let himself come was so strong he could almost taste it, could feel it, so close, right there, if he just let himself reach out and take what he wanted—

But Roxanne had told him to wait until she gave him permission and he—he wanted to be good for her, he wanted to be good for her so badly, wanted to be good—

He shook his head from side to side; he would be good for Roxanne, he would be good for her, he—

“Roxanne—” Megamind wailed, fighting the need to let himself come, to put an end to this torturous eternity of pleasure without release—he would be good—for Roxanne—

“—oh god—oh god oh god oh god—ah!” Megamind heard himself babble.

Roxanne’s hand caught his chin, forcing him to look at her. She looked into his eyes—

“Tell me that you deserve to feel good, Megamind,” she commanded.

Megamind felt—like a circuit about to overload, too much power, no release and he—

(tell me that you deserve to feel good, Megamind)

—didn’t, did he—did he?—deserve to—he couldn’t think with the way that she—did he deserve—could he deserve—he’d been good for her, he had done what she told him to—he’d been good—he’d been good, he’d actually been good, and so maybe, maybe, perhaps—oh god—

“M-make—me—come, Roxanne,” Megamind sobbed, forcing out the words that he wasn’t sure, even now, that he believed, “—I—I—I d-deserve to—feel—good.”

He looked up at Roxanne, who smiled down at him like a goddess of victory.

“Yes,” she said, hips slamming down, vibrator twisting sharply against his tentacle, rough in the best possible way, “you do.”

(Megamind felt—he—he felt as though he was on fire, lit up and glowing with how—)

“Come now, Megamind,” Roxanne told him. “You absolutely deserve it.”

Megamind’s climax bust through him, his thoughts flying apart, leaving behind something sweet and golden and bright—something—was that—was he that—

Megamind felt himself coalescing, thoughts coming back together as he again became aware of his body, the way he was shaking, the sobbing sound of his own gasping breath.

“You did so good; you did so good, Megamind, so good—” Roxanne said kissing his cheek—the vibrator was gone now; she was leaning down, pressing her lips to his forehead—oh—
She climbed out of his lap, leaving him cold and bereft, but then her hand was on his head, stroking him, oh god that was so nice—

The rope around his wrist fell away—oh, so that was what she was—and Roxanne kissed his his wrist, kissed his palm—oh— then turned his hand over and kissed the backs of his fingers and Megamind tried to reach for her, to touch her face or stroke her hair or—something, he wanted—but he was so exhausted, nerves still overloaded from being made to come so hard, so many times, that his fingers were only able to twitch weakly.

Brilliant, beautiful Roxanne, though, seemed to understand the gesture anyway, and pressed the palm of his hand to the curve of her lovely, perfect face. She arranged his arm at his side for him and then climbed over his body to untie his other wrist.

She stroked his head again, as she did, and kissed his hand; Megamind turned his head to watch her.

She was so—she just—she was—

Roxanne leaned down and kissed him, her hands stroking his face, so warm and kind and soft that it made Megamind’s heart ache in a way that was somewhere in between hurt and happiness.

(the gentleness of her hands, the kind, reassuring pressure of her lips against his; Megamind had always imagined that love would feel like that, but—)

(take what you can get and be grateful, Megamind)

Roxanne pulled away and kissed the tip of his nose, surprising him into a laugh—god, he loved her. She smiled at him—

(Megamind would like a lifetime of Roxanne smiling at him that way)

—and moved down the bed, untying his ankles, hip pressed to his leg.

She kissed his knees when she was done, startling him into breathless laughter again—his knees, god, this was—this was a thing that was happening to him, he was actually living in a universe in which Roxanne Ritchi kissed his knees and then moved to lie beside him in bed, a universe in which he could reach for her, wrap his arms around her, tangle their legs together, and press his face to the soft, unbelievably lovely curve between her neck and shoulder—this was the universe he was living in—he was—ridiculously lucky.

“Hey,” Roxanne said, her voice soft.

The only thing Megamind could manage in response was a vague noise. He heard her, felt her laugh.

“You all right?” she asked.

*This is literally the happiest moment of my entire existence*, Megamind thought.

He made a contented humming sound instead of saying that.

Megamind felt Roxanne’s hand stroking up and down his spine.

(He’d been wrong before, Megamind decided: this was actually the happiest moment of his entire existence)
“I really did blow your mind, didn’t I?” he heard Roxanne murmur. “I win.”

“—experiment, not a competition,” Megamind managed, quite proud of forming words.

Roxanne snickered.

(fuck, the sound/feeling of her laughter this close was mesmerizing)

“Oh, that’s right,” she said teasingly, “I should have known your competitive ass wouldn’t let that go by. How many times was that, then, that you were able to come?”

Megamind blinked, tried to remember—he’d—okay so there had been—but then, when she’d put the vibrator in his tentacles and started kissing his neck and shoulders and throat, and—well, everything had gotten a little—blurry. At that point.

“—I actually lost count,” Megamind admitted finally.

Roxanne laughed again, Megamind tipped his head back to look up at her reproachfully, and she just laughed harder, and of course Megamind had to laugh, then, too.

“Oh my god!” Roxanne gasped. “Oh my—that’s so great.”

“I was distracted!” Megamind protested.

“Oh my god I made you lose count,” Roxanne marveled. “I definitely blew your mind and I totally win!”

Megamind felt himself flushing. Like there had ever been any question about her blowing his mind.

He rolled his eyes at her gloating (really, Roxanne would have made such an excellent supervillain).

“Ha, yes,” he said, “but I’m the competitive one.”

Roxanne laughed again and Megamind gave into the temptation to press his lips to her throat, to feel the vibrations of her laughter like that.

She ran her palm over his back again, still laughing (ohh, Megamind had been wrong, both times, before: this—this was, in fact, the happiest moment of his entire existence)

Roxanne’s laughter began to subside; Megamind moved his head so that it was on the pillow next to hers.

(remember this, Megamind, press this moment into your mind; you’ll need it later, when this is over)

For a long moment, they lay together in silence.

“I should go,” Megamind said, looking at Roxanne’s profile as she looked up at the ceiling.


(of course, Megamind told himself. You’re here to chase away her loneliness; of course she wants you to stay.)
“—of—of course,” Megamind said, “I can—I can stay if you like. But, um—”

He’d asked her to stay, the last time they did this, and she’d left, at some point before he woke up. He’d been asleep so he didn’t know when, exactly, politeness dictated he should follow her lead in this matter and slip away…

Roxanne looked over at him.

Oh, fuck it; she already knew he was an awkward, under-socialized mess; he’d just ask her what she wanted, she would tell him, and then he would do that: Problem Fucking Solved.

“—how long do you want me to stay?”

Roxanne hesitated a moment.

“Be here when I wake up?” she said.

Megamind blinked at her.

That was—not what he was expecting, he’d been thinking she’d say ‘a few minutes’ or ‘just until I fall asleep’, but—

Be here when I wake up?

That—

(take it, Megamind, quickly, before you lose your chance)

“I can do that,” he said, instead of what he wanted to say, which—

(let me stay with you forever, Roxanne; I always want to be here when you wake up)

“Oh,” Roxanne said. “Okay, good.”

She curled up against him again, face against his shoulder, one hand curled between their chests, beside his hand, their fingertips touching, her other arm wrapped around him, her palm against his spine. Megamind wrapped his free arm around her as well, hand going up to stroke her hair.

(oh, but he loved her almost too much to bear)

“Is it okay if I leave the lamp on?” Roxanne asked, not moving from her place in his arms. “—really don’t want to get up.” she continued.

“It’s fine,” Megamind told her, voice quiet.

(leave the light on and let me look at you like this, here in my arms)

“Are you going to be able to sleep?” Roxanne asked.

Megamind hesitated. He hadn’t…really been planning on sleeping, actually, but ‘I was sort of intending to stay awake and watch you sleep’ was…probably a Really Fucking Weird and Creepy Thing To Say, Megamind, You Freak.

Besides, he was, now that he thought about it, rather—tired, and—lying here, like this, with Roxanne, it was so—he felt safe and warm and content, nerves still humming softly, pleasurably, from how many times she’d made him come, from how intense that last climax had been—
“...yes, actually,” Megamind said. Huh. He hadn’t felt this much like sleeping it...a very long time. “—I feel—relaxed. Calm.” He felt good; he hadn’t felt this good in—he had never felt this good before. “You’re amazing, you know that?” he told Roxanne, the wonder he felt creeping into his voice. “Really amazing.” He closed his eyes for a moment, smiling wryly, tremulously. “Thirty some years stuck in this body, and I never knew it could feel—anything like this good, Roxanne.”

“Is that the way you feel about it?” Roxanne asked softly. “Stuck?”

Megamind’s eyes flew wide. He made a small noise of distress—he hadn’t really meant to say that, but—Roxanne hadn’t sounded judgmental, so—

—he forced himself relax again.

“Sometimes,” he said quietly.

(god, he hadn’t ever—he hadn’t ever told anybody that before, hadn’t ever admitted it out loud, not once, not to Minion, not to the brainbots, not to his own inhuman reflection in the mirror)

“—not—all the time,” he added, to reassure Roxanne, and because it was true, it wasn’t all the time, he—“There are—certain physical things that I—enjoy my body during. Fighting. Dancing. Flying—and”—he stroked his fingers through her hair, “—and being with you. I—”

(how could he begin to explain to her, how could he begin to explain what she’d done for him? He couldn’t say when you tell me I’m beautiful I feel like it could almost be true, and he couldn’t say you made me tell you that I deserve to feel good and in that moment I almost believed it, and he couldn’t say and then when you looked at me, after I said that, I felt like I was glowing; sometimes when you look at me, Roxanne, I feel like I’m luminous, like I’m something worth looking at, something worth touching, something worthwhile, like my body isn’t just another prison, isn’t just something to be borne, that it’s—capable of—feeling and giving—so much pleasure and happiness, so much more than I ever expected—)

He—he couldn’t say—any of that, but—

(oh, could he—would that be too—)

Had he waited to long to speak, now? Would it be—awkward to—

Oh, to hell with it; Roxanne deserved to know—something of what she’d given him, so—

“I like my body when it is with your body,” Megamind said quietly, “It is—so quite new a thing.”

(it was new, this feeling of—not just acceptance of his own physical form, but comfort, comfort in his own skin; completely new and not a little terrifying and—he swallowed, almost choking, but he’d started this; he would go on)

“—muscles better and nerves—more,” he continued. “I like your body,” he said, quiet and honest, trying not to let his voice shake. “I like what it does.”

(the exact angle of her smile and the way she moved her hands when she spoke and the sound of her laughter)

“—I like it’s hows.”

(how her eyes lit up when she understood something, how her lips began to curve up into a smirk when she knew she was winning an argument, how her face moved when she was thinking)
“I like to feel the spine of your body—”

(the arch of her back when she came, the feeling of her vertebrae under his palms, bending, shifting, moving, so beautiful and impossible and alive)

“—and its bones,”

(his lips pressed to her shoulder bone, her clavicle, her hip; her head in his hands, perfection in every curve of her skull)

“—and the trembling firm-smoothness—”

(her skin, the soft, decadent warmth of it, the way she responded to his touch)

“—which I will again and again and again kiss…”

(he wanted to kiss her everywhere, over and over and over again, wanted to tell her with the press of his lips that every inch of her was beautiful; that every molecule of her being and they way they all fitted together into her, Roxanne, was nothing short of a miracle)

Megamind let his voice trail off into silence.

“—that was poetry,” Roxanne said, and Megamind froze, uncertain as to what the tone of her voice signified.

“Um,” he said nervously, “yes, it—was, yes. It—ah—” He cleared his throat, feeling a stone of dread in the pit of his stomach. Shit, he shouldn’t have said that, shouldn’t have—

“—too weird?” he asked.

Roxanne pressed her face to his shoulder a bit harder.

“No,” she whispered, “no, it was perfect.”

Megamind let out a shaky breath, relaxing again, stone in the pit of his stomach disappearing.

“—good,” he said quietly. (thank god) “—that’s—that’s good, I—I meant it. You make me feel—almost—comfortable, with myself, and I really, Roxanne—I can’t thank you enough for that—”

(did she understand yet; did she see now all that she’d given him?)

“You don’t have to thank me, Megamind,” Roxanne said, “god, you don’t need to thank me.”

Megamind frowned.

(He did, though; didn’t she—didn’t she see—that was the point he was trying to—)

“But I—”

“Shh,” Roxanne said. “Shh, Megamind—sweetheart—just—” he felt her press her lips to his shoulder. “Just go to sleep, okay?”

Megamind took a breath.

(of course, she was tired, she wanted—of course he could be quiet for her and let her sleep)

“—okay,” Megamind breathed, hand in her hair, stroking the silky-soft strands. “Okay, I’ll—I’ll
see you in the morning, Roxanne…”

(In the morning, he would see Roxanne in the morning; the universe, in its mercy, had given him this: the chance to hold Roxanne in his arms, to stroke her hair while she fell asleep, the chance to wake up beside her, to see her in the morning—)

He had been given this—*incredible* thing, and he was so very, very grateful for it.

The fact that he wanted to be able to whisper *I love you* to her, the way that he ached to hear her say it back, to know that she meant it—

(that was unimportant, hardly worth mentioning.

Megamind stroked Roxanne’s hair and listened to the sound of her breathing, heard it slow and even out, felt her body go pliant and soft as she fell asleep in his arms.

Eventually, he slept as well.

Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

I hope you all enjoyed the chapter, that Megamind's pov is something you liked reading!

Thank you for the comments and the kudos! I appreciate them very much!

notes: Lichtenberg figures are the branching, fractal shapes of electrical discharges through insulating material. (To visualize, think of the way lightning branches outwards—lightning is, in itself, a natural Lichtenberg figure--and, when you're struck by lightning, you end up with a scar that *looks* like lightning: this is, also, a Lichtenberg figure.)

POETRY AND LIGHTNING. (appropriate for Megamind, I think)
Roxanne woke up to sunlight through her bedroom curtains and the sound of Megamind breathing.

He’d rolled over onto his back in the night; Roxanne was draped half over him, her face pressed to the crook of his neck, her hand on his chest, and one leg over his hip.

Judging from the deep, even sound of his breath, he seemed to be asleep still. Roxanne pulled away enough to look at him, pushing herself up on one elbow.

Yes, he was asleep, eyes closed and lips parted, his expressive face relaxed and oddly vulnerable in sleep.

(I trust you, he’d said, I feel safe with you, and god, he must have meant it, to let himself fall so deeply asleep with her, in her bed like this)

His neck was so thin, the juxtaposition of it to the fullness of his head so beautiful—like a heavy flower on a long, narrow stem, she’d told him before.

A lotus, she decided, now. A blue one.

She watched his chest rise and fall, bare and defenseless. One of his hands was on the pillow next to his face, the palm up, fingers loosely curled, and that felt, somehow, terribly important to Roxanne: the shape of his fingers and the blue of his skin.

*I feel safe with you*, Roxanne remembered again, and felt a fierce protectiveness rise up inside of her chest.

(I will take care of you; I will make you safe)

She pressed her lips together briefly, tears pricking at her eyes.

Enough; this wasn’t the time to get all maudlin. He’d stayed as a favor to her; he didn’t need her waking him up crying all over him.

Waking him up—

Roxanne hesitated, and then leaned down to brush her lips softly against his, waking him with a kiss, just like she’d imagined doing, the day she woke up on the couch after falling asleep talking to him on the phone.

She felt him waking up, his lips beginning to respond to hers. He made a quiet, surprised noise of pleasure and started to kiss her back in earnest, one of his hands sliding into her hair, the other resting lightly at the small of her back, palm and fingers cool against her skin.

Roxanne pulled away to look at him again. Megamind was looking up at her, eyes wide open now, expression faintly amazed.

“Good morning,” she said quietly, smiling gently at him.

“Very,” he breathed, and then looked a little confused. “Uh—I—I mean—”
Roxanne laughed and kissed him again, then bumped the sides of their noses gently together.

“Breakfast?” she asked, and watched his face light up again.

“I can’t actually cook.” Megamind warned Roxanne, feeling that full disclosure was probably safest, under the circumstances.

“Mm, sure you’re not just trying to get out of helping?” Roxanne asked—teased? Was she joking?

She was wearing his pajama top; it didn’t really fit her, only just buttoning over her chest, only just barely covering the curve of her ass—it was more than a little distracting. She’d stolen it when they were getting dressed, which meant that he was left in the bottom half of his pajamas, without a shirt. (He could hardly wear the cape without a shirt; that would look ridiculous)

But he certainly wasn’t going to complain, not when it meant Roxanne wearing his shirt and looking like—and besides, she kept her apartment a little warm for his taste anyway—and did he mention how distracting his shirt was on Roxanne and—

—shit; he still hadn’t responded to her, and he really wasn’t sure whether or not she was joking—

“No, I wouldn’t do that,” he said, figuring it was best to answer as if it was a serious question. “I’m—actively bad at cooking; I get distracted and wind up burning things or—start experimenting and overcomplicate things and pretty soon three hours have passed and I still haven’t eaten…but I. You don’t have to cook? As far as I’m concerned we can—eat cereal. Or something. Really, you don’t need to feel—mmph!”

His words cut off as Roxanne kissed him without warning.

Okay, that was—odd but he wasn’t going to complain about that, either. He let her press him back against the kitchen counter; she seemed to want to. His hands settled uncertainly at her waist—he really, really wanted to slide his hands beneath the hem of his shirt that she was wearing and cup her ass, pull her hips to his, wanted to lift her up and let her wrap her legs around his waist so he could then, possibly, just possibly, pin her against the wall and fuck her until she screamed his name—

But he wasn’t really certain what level of—sexual shenanigans was appropriate for the situation—was this a leading-to-sex kiss? A reassurance kiss? A shut-up kiss?

Roxanne broke the kiss—whatever kind of kiss it was—and grinned at him.

“You’re so sweet,” she said.

Megamind, remembering his probably very inappropriate thoughts re: pinning Roxanne to the wall and fucking her until she screamed, grimaced guiltily, feeling himself blushing.

“I’m really not,” he said.

Roxanne rolled her eyes at him—clearly she didn’t believe him. It was a good thing she couldn’t read his mind.

“I’ll make the eggs,” she said. “Can you handle the toast?”

“Toast!” Megamind said, feeling relieved—he was able to help after all! “I can do toast!”
He knew how to make toast; you just put the bread in the toaster and pushed down on the little handle thing and waited for it to pop up. Provided you didn’t start doing something else, wander off, and forget about the toast after it popped up, there wasn’t much you could do to ruin toast.

“Bread’s in the corner cabinet,” Roxanne said, bending to get a frying pan from one of the lower cupboards and—fuck, oh god, she was—he swallowed hard and averted his eyes, went to retrieve the bread from the cabinet.

It was a very good thing, he thought again, fervently, as he loosened the twist tie on the bread and pulled out two slices, that Roxanne couldn’t read his mind.

He put the bread in the toaster, went to press the handle down, and then hesitated.

There was a—dial on the toaster, with numbers around it, starting at zero and going up to six. The dial was on zero now. He pressed the handle down experimentally, but it popped up again. He pressed it down and held it there, then let go. It popped back up immediately.

Ah, so he had to select a number. Hmm, which one should—perhaps he should start at one and test each number in turn? But that wouldn’t really give him an accurate reading on the level of toastiness that each setting was designed to provide. Because each subsequent setting would add to the toastiness that the previous settings had already provided—oh, he should use a different slice of bread for each setting; that should give more accurate results! Or maybe—

Aaaaand he was getting sidetracked into experimentation stop it, Megamind, just make some normal toast like a normal person for fuck’s sake.

Evil gods, it really, really was a good thing Roxanne couldn’t read his mind—half of his thoughts were inappropriate fantasies about her and the other half were him freaking out about perfectly ordinary things like making toast.

He was such a failure at normality; it wasn’t even funny.

Well, it wasn’t like she didn’t already know that.

(Maybe if you were a little more normal, she might be able to love you, Megamind thought, and then pushed that thought aside.)

“What number—er—should I set the toaster to?” he asked, glancing over at Roxanne, who was halfway through scrambling the eggs already.

“Oh!” Roxanne said, looking over her shoulder at him. “Sorry; three; I should have said."

So the setting-of-the-toaster thing wasn’t one of those Basic Social Rules that he’d somehow missed? That was—a relief.

Megamind carefully turned the dial to three and pressed down the lever of the toaster.

“Um, Roxanne,” he said, thought occurring, “I should—Minion is probably wondering—can I borrow your phone?”

“Yeah, sure; it’s in my purse.” she said. “You didn’t bring your phone last night?”

Megamind made a face.

“No,” he admitted.
He hadn’t even brought the disguise watch last night, which had been—really reckless, especially considering he’d been wearing his pajamas. But he’d been so—stupidly distraught, he hadn’t been thinking straight.

Roxanne’s purse was on the kitchen table; he went around the kitchen island to it and then hesitated. Did she—want him to bring her the purse so she could get the phone out for him, or had she given him tacit permission to get the phone out himself?

He looked at Roxanne, who was frowning down at the pan full of eggs, spatula in hand.

“Uh,” he said, “can I—?”

She glanced over and he gestured at the purse. Roxanne gave him a look of fond amusement.

“Yes, Megamind, go ahead.”

She turned back to the stove and Megamind gingerly opened her purse and attempted to sort through the contents without disturbing anything too much.

Okay, lipstick, chapstick, lipstick, pen, eyeliner, notepad, hand lotion, gum, why did she have a framed photograph in her—?

Megamind pulled out the photograph in curiosity and looked at it.

A nasty jolt of recognition went through him; he jerked his hand like the photograph was some sort of snake, as though he’d just been bitten by it.

“Why do you have this?” he asked, looking down at it in dismay, and then putting it face down on the table.

“Wh—oh,” Roxanne said.

He looked over at her; she was turned away from the stove again, looking at him.

“The Warden gave it to me, when I went to interview him,” she said.

“Ugh, why?” Megamind asked, shoving the thing a little farther away from himself.

“He thought—and I thought, maybe, too—that it could be useful to show it during a report.”

Megamind turned a look of horror on her, and she added quickly:

“I told him I had to ask you, first, Megamind.”

“No,” Megamind said forcefully.

Roxanne blinked.

“Oh, but—”

“No,” he said again, panic rising, “I said no.”

“And that’s fine!” Roxanne said, putting her hands up in supplication (she was still holding the spatula; that might have struck him as amusing, some other time). “I just—want to make sure that you’ve thought this through, all right? Based on, well, what you said, about school, and also something that—Wayne said, actually, I—think it might be—important?”
“Important to demonstrate to everyone that I’ve always been an outcast freak?” Megamind said, taking hold of the back of a chair. “I really fail to see how that could help our case.”

“Hey,” Roxanne said, turning off the stove, putting down the spatula and moving around the kitchen island towards him. “That’s not what that photograph looks like.”

She reached out and put one of her hands lightly on the back of his. Megamind’s mouth went flat.

“Not to you, maybe,” he said. “You, apparently, don’t—see me like that—god only fucking knows why—but to everyone else—”

“No,” Roxanne said, “not to everyone else, either. Megamind, this isn’t just because I—” she took a deep breath. “Okay,” she said, “okay, so is it okay if I—try to explain? You don’t have to let me show this, Megamind, but—just let me explain?”

Megamind threw himself down into the chair and gestured at her to continue.

“All right,” Roxanne said, sitting down beside him and turning the photograph over again. “So, the first and most basic reason I’d consider showing this is the same reason for showing anyone’s photograph of them as a child in a news report designed to demonstrate—emotional interest. People are wired to sympathize with children, to protect them—it’s an—evolutionary instinct.”

“Human children,” Megamind said pointedly.

“No, it works with other species, too,” Roxanne said, “it’s why we think baby animals are so adorable. There’s a—code, I guess? Of physical traits that we find cute: big eyes, big head, round cheeks.”

She tapped the photograph; Megamind’s eyes flew to her face.

Oh, that—

“You were a cute kid, Megamind,” she said softly. “Science supports this statement.”

“I—” Megamind cut himself off, shaking his head.

That didn’t seem—surely that couldn’t be right? He was—she might have a point about the baby animal thing, but he was—too close to human-looking for that to work, he thought. It was—like with robots, or dolls, you got too close to human without actually being human, and you fell into the uncanny valley and ended up creepy instead of cute.

“Also,” Roxanne was continuing, “I think that this photograph reveals a lot about—your dynamic with—with Wayne, and with—society in general. I mean—people looking at this picture of this cute kid with big sad eyes, standing all by himself, and they’re going to think ‘oh. so that’s why he became a supervillain’.”

Megamind frowned.

“But that’s—” he cut himself off again. That wasn’t exactly right, but—more importantly—“I look—weak—and—showing weakness is dangerous, Roxanne; it makes people more likely to attack you.”

Roxanne blinked, looking surprised, then thoughtful.

“Sometimes,” she said, “sometimes it does. But—the other side of that—people love an underdog,
Megamind. We like them, we want to see them win. That’s a story we want to see play out, and this picture sets up that narrative—”

Megamind tilted his head.

“...I—suppose that makes sense,” he said slowly. “It’s like with—betting; people love the long shot, I’ve noticed that—”

(he probably shouldn’t talk about the fact that he dealt with illegal betting, right? that was probably not breakfast-appropriate conversation? shit, this whole conversation was probably not breakfast-appropriate conversation—)

“It’s—like you were talking about—” Megamind said, thought occurring (yes, god, distract yourself with the intellectual challenge) “—in your interview with Wayne? About—people seeing us in—a simplified way? Because that was the way that fit the pattern they were expecting?”

“Exactly!” Roxanne said.

“But I thought you didn’t want people to—try to force us to fit their patterns?” Megamind asked uncertainly.

Roxanne sighed.

“I don’t,” she said, “but, realistically speaking, people are always going to try to make you fit some narrative pattern or other. The trick is getting them to pick the right pattern.” She smiled wryly at Megamind. “I mean, there’s a reason we call news reports ‘stories’.”

Oh. That was—an interesting idea.

“I think this is a narrative pattern we can use,” Roxanne continued. “But I am definitely not going to force you to let me show this picture, Megamind. It’s up to you.”

_____

Roxanne looked at Megamind, waiting for—

“Roxanne—” he said, and then grimaced and turned the photograph face down again.

Damn, so that was probably a no.

“All right,” he said.

Roxanne blinked.

“All—really?” she asked. She hesitated. “Megamind, are you—are you sure? I don’t want you to feel that I’m—pressuring you into this, I—”

“I don’t,” Megamind said.

He paused, looked closely at her face, frowning, then tilted his head.

“I get the feeling that you’re worried about—you wouldn’t—you don’t need to—” he took a breath, shook his head. “You don’t need to worry.” he said slowly. “about being able to force me into something I really don’t want, Roxanne. If that’s what you’re thinking.”
Roxanne took a sharp breath. Was she—that obvious?

“Are you sure?” she asked, “I know I can be—pushy and—people always say—”

Roxanne,“ he smiled at her crookedly. “I’m very stubborn. Perhaps you haven’t noticed. If I didn’t think your logic was sound, I wouldn’t agree. No matter how pushy you got. So you don’t need to worry. Okay?”

“Okay,” Roxanne said, still, honestly, a little worried, but deciding to trust that Megamind knew his own mind and was telling her the truth.

“Shit,” he said, eyes widening.

“What?” Roxanne asked.

“What?” Roxanne asked.

“I forgot the toast,” he said in consternation.

Roxanne laughed and stood up.

“Well, you did warn me you were bad at cooking,” she said. “Oh, stop making that guilty face; it’s not a big deal! I’ll re-toast it. You call Minion—and then you can set the table, all right?”

Megamind nodded.

He had to call several times to get through to Minion; he was calling his own cell phone, apparently, and said that Minion might hesitate to answer it on the first ring.

“He should get his own phone,” Roxanne said, and Megamind, holding her phone to his ear, jotted down a note on the idea cloud:

get Minion phone.

She was done scrambling the eggs and re-toasting the toast by the time Megamind finally got ahold of Minion, so she decided to make coffee while she waited for Megamind to get done with the call.

Roxanne listened idly to Megamind’s half of the conversation—apologies for being reckless, for not calling earlier, and a request for Minion to bring one of the disguise watches over to the apartment—as the coffee brewed. She opened the refrigerator and considered her cream options.

Ooh, she still hadn’t opened the new peppermint creamer! Mm, yes, peppermint. Would Megamind—

“Hey,” she said, taking a drink from her cup as Megamind hung up the phone, “how do you feel about peppermint in coffee?”

“I have never before considered the possibility of peppermint in coffee,” Megamind said, sounding intrigued, putting her phone back in her purse and coming back into the kitchen.

“Try?” Roxanne said, holding out her own cup.

Megamind hesitated a moment, and then put his hands over hers and took a sip from the cup like that.

It was—a strange move, oddly intimate, especially considering he didn’t appear to be attempting flirtation with it: his eyes were down, avoiding hers almost shyly, and he released her hands as soon as he finished drinking, stepped away from her instead of towards.
He was blushing as he did, though, blushing as he turned away and opened one of the kitchen cabinets.

What was that about? Roxanne wondered. The moment had felt—weirdly heavy. What had Megamind said, last night, when she leaned their foreheads together and put her hands on the sides of his head? Significant. This had felt significant, too.

Why hadn’t he stepped forward and kissed her? She’d wanted him to—but then, he hadn’t really reacted to her wearing his shirt or bending over while wearing his shirt or pushing him up against the cabinets and kissing him; maybe he just didn’t feel—like touching her this morning?

But then why had he put his hands over hers to—and he’d kissed her back, both times she’d kissed him this morning—

“That,” Megamind said, opening another cabinet, finding the plates on the second try—(oh, Roxanne should have told him where they were, but she’d been a little flustered by the press of his hands over hers, by watching him bend his head to drink from her cup.) “I like that,” he said. “But with—more sugar.”

“Really; more sugar?” Roxanne asked, pouring him a cup—her hands were not shaking because that would be ridiculous. She added the peppermint creamer to his cup. “Forks are in the drawer to your left. How much more sugar?”

“Ah!” Megamind said, opening the silverware drawer and getting out two forks. “I—six spoonfuls, usually.”

“Wow,” Roxanne said, raising her eyebrows, but spooning in the sugar. “Wait, is that—what you said before, about different dietary requirements, is that to do with that?”

“I’m not actually sure,” Megamind said, filling each of the plates with eggs.

Roxanne stirred the sugar into his coffee.

“Minion and I don’t—have a very clear—I mean, just for example,” Megamind said, waving the spatula in an explanatory manner, “we think Minion was an obligate carnivore on our planet, but here, he feels ill if he goes more than a few weeks without some sort of green vegetables. And when I was—early teenage years, I went through a phase where I craved tuna, of all things, almost exclusively; still don’t know what that was about. I mean, I do know that my species was partially aquatic, but—tuna fish? I don’t even like it, ordinarily…so—I don’t know if the sugar thing is—an actual thing, or if it’s just a personal—taste. thing.”

He put the spatula back, retrieved the pieces of toast from the top of the toaster, where Roxanne had left them, and picked up the plates, moving with them to the table. Roxanne followed with the coffee cups.

“I really didn’t get a whole lot of—developmental information,” Megamind said, putting the plats down and carefully placing the forks beside them. “Or—cultural information. Or—any—sort of information. There was a little, but—most of the pod’s system was used for—navigation and life support.”

“Pod?” Roxanne asked, putting down the coffee.

“…escape pod,” Megamind said, sitting down cross-legged on his chair. “My planet sort of—there was a—black hole.” He grimaced. “Can we—ah, possibly change the subject?”
He glanced up at her, and some of the guilt she was feeling must have shown on her face (nosey reporter; he said before that the world ended; why would you make him talk about it), because his expression went soft and surprised.

“Oh,” he said, “I—I don’t mean that I don’t ever want to tell you, Roxanne. I—it’s—if you—really want to—to hear about it, I would—I’d like to tell you. Sometime. But just—not today? It’s—today is…this, here, with you, is—this is nice. I’d—like it to stay nice. Is that—okay?”

“Definitely,” Roxanne said. “So—subject change!”

“Subject change,” Megamind agreed, face relieved as he nodded. “Uh—are you aware that you have sixteen voicemails on your phone?”

Roxanne groaned and he looked at her curiously.

“My mother,” she said. “Ugh, I just need to delete them.”

Megamind frowned, head tilting.

“You aren’t—going to listen to them?” he asked hesitantly.

“I already know what she’ll say in them,” Roxanne said, stabbing a bit of scrambled egg with her fork. “‘You’re ruining your life, Roxanne; you’re ruining my life, Roxanne; why don’t you take a break from that job of yours and come stay in Wisconsin with your family forever, Roxanne’.”

Roxanne took a vicious bite of egg.

“Your mother—disapproves of—your career?” Megamind asked, and then his gaze sharpened. “Or—she disapproves of—” he gestured between the two of them with his fork, “this?”

(tell me you’re not doing what I think you’re doing, Roxanne remembered her mother saying, and felt a jolt of discomfort go through her)

Megamind seemed to understand the obvious, accidental implication of the gesture, too, because he blushed suddenly, and then made a face, adding, “Not—this, this; I mean—the reports—about me —”

(tell me you’re not already sleeping with him, Roxanne’s mother had said, and yeah, she was definitely not going to bring that little gem out for Megamind, who was still blushing and who now looked deeply concerned.)

“I just—my mother and I don’t get along very well,” Roxanne said, a trifle defensively. People got so judgmental when she told them that, like she had some sort of moral obligation as a woman to be best friends with her mother.

“I—I’m sorry,” Megamind said awkwardly. “I—if this is—if this thing—about me—has caused —”

Oh, was he worried it was his—?

“Megamind, my mother has disapproved of every single thing I’ve done since I was twelve years old,” Roxanne said, with a laugh that was only half-forced, “this definitely isn’t your fault. Really, I don’t know why she’s always wanting me to move back to Wisconsin; every time we’re together, we just end up fighting.”
Roxanne looked down at her plate of eggs. She had divided them in half without realizing it; a sharp line between the two piles. She scraped them together again, stirred them with the tines of her fork.

“…did—something specific happen when you were twelve?” Megamind asked.

Roxanne looked up at him. Both his hands were curled around his coffee cup, holding it a little too tightly; his expression uncertain.

“I—you don’t have to tell me,” he said, with a nervous gesture, a quick, sharp motion of one hand. He took hold of the coffee cup again. “If you don’t want to, you don’t—”

“When I was—we moved to Wisconsin,” Roxanne said, “when I was twelve. We lived here, before that, but—my mom grew up in Wisconsin, in this—god, this tiny little town, where everybody knows everybody else, and is probably related to them in some way.” She made an involuntary noise of distaste, which probably wasn’t strictly fair, but. “We moved back there and I hated it, and then she married her old high school boyfriend, which—”

Roxanne glanced at Megamind; he was watching her with an expression of absorption. It was—actually a little disconcerting; people didn’t usually listen to her quite this closely when she was telling them the—honestly pretty boring—story of her life.

“Bill isn’t a bad guy,” Roxanne said, “he’s just—ugh, he drives me up the wall! Not so much anymore, but—he’s the kind of guy who writes the ‘rules of the house’ down and puts them up on the refrigerator with magnets. His kids had a behavior chart, for fuck’s sake, you know, the kind where you move a little notecard with your name up and down a scale based on how ‘good’ or ‘bad’ you’ve been that day?”

Megamind made a noise of sheer disgust.

“School,” he said, mouth twisting like the word tasted bad.

“Exactly! And I was twelve! And I’d been in charge of myself, basically, for years; my dad—my ‘real’ dad,” Roxanne rolled her eyes—real, yeah, what a joke that was—“left when I was like six and my mom was barely around—” Roxanne took a breath. “—it wasn’t her fault—she had to work, and she did try to make time with me—we used to go bike riding in the park, here, sometimes, but—but really, I took care of myself a lot. And I was good at it, too! I got good grades; never had any trouble in school—and then all of a sudden I was stuck out in the middle of nowhere with this, this dweeb telling me I needed to be a good girl so I could eat dessert at dinner, and I just—snapped, you know what I mean?”

Megamind raised his eyebrows.

“You do realize who you’re talking to, right?” he asked dryly.

Roxanne gave a surprised crack of laughter.

“Yeah,” she said, “yeah, I guess you do know what I mean.”

“Perks of being friends with a supervillain,” he said, grinning, “no judgement for your teenage rebellious phase!”

“Yeah, except as far as my mother’s concerned,” Roxanne said, rolling her eyes, “my teenage rebellious phase never ended.”
Megamind managed, somehow, to raise his eyebrows even higher.

“Again,” he said, “you do realize who you’re talking to, yes?”

Roxanne laughed again, and then, on a whim, leaned back in her chair and kicked her feet up into Megamind’s lap, propping them up there. Megamind made a startled sound, then shifted so her ankles were resting more comfortably on his knee.

“I’m really glad you’re here,” Roxanne said, too abrupt, probably, too truthful. Megamind looked surprised.

“—yes, I—I am, as well,” he said.

“Sorry,” she told him, picking up her toast and taking a bite.

“Hm? Sorry for what?” Megamind asked, tearing his own toast in half absently.

“You said you wanted to keep things nice,” Roxanne said, “and then I got into—ugh, all of that.”

“It wasn’t something that I minded,” Megamind said, frowning slightly. “It—it was nice that you—wanted to tell me. We’re—we are friends, and—and that’s something that friends do. Right?”

“Yeah, I guess it is something friends do,” Roxanne said, swallowing down the bitter taste of that word: friends. “Ha, it’s too bad we didn’t go to the same school,” she added, trying to lighten her own mood. “We could have had our teenage rebellious phase together.”

Megamind grinned at her as he took a bite of his toast.

“Completly off topic,” Roxanne said, and Megamind made an inquiring noise, “why do you need Minion to bring the disguise watch?”

“Well, I took the hoverbike here,” Megamind said, waving the piece of toast he was holding at her balcony.

The balcony looked empty, but Roxanne wasn’t surprised by that.

“Oh!” Megamind said, “ah, well, the invisibility setting on the hoverbike is—” he pulled a face, “—there is a sliight defect.”

Roxanne made her own inquiring noise, motioned at him to continue.

“The invisibility setting only works on the bike itself,” Megamind admitted ruefully. “Not on the person riding it.”

Roxanne blinked, then pictured Megamind, riding through the air on an invisible hoverbike. She gave a snort of laughter.

Megamind laughed as well.

“Yes,” he said, “you—heh—see the problem, don’t you? I’ve been trying in my spare time to expand the invisibility shield to include a rider, but it’s a bit tricky, since the shield is powered by electricity. Getting it to work without injuring the rider is a fascinating challenge! It—” he stopped, looking self-conscious. “Sorry,” he said, “I’m—this is—I know I—tend to go on about boring
“Hey,” Roxanne said, smiling and poking him gently in the ribs with the toes of one foot, “this is definitely not boring. And I like hearing you talk.”

Megamind gave her a doubtful look.

“Really,” Roxanne assured him. “I’m interested. What about some sort of—special protective suit for the rider?”

“Minion and I did some experiments with that!” Megamind said, eyes lighting up, “But interestingly—”

Roxanne continued to eat absently, barely noticing when the eggs and the coffee went cold, because of the warm glow she felt, being able to be here, listening to Megamind talk about his inventions over breakfast, just like she’d realized she wanted, the day it had finally occurred to her that she was in love with him.

Eventually, of course, she had to go and get dressed for work. Megamind insisted on gathering up the dishes and washing them.

“I can do this,” he said, as though it was—terribly important, that he contribute an equal amount to their breakfast.

It was really adorable.

Whoever was able to make him love them was going to be so lucky, Roxanne thought, with a wistful, aching twist of her heart, and found herself blinking back tears as she dressed.

Satiny blue pencil skirt, white shirt, wide black belt. She put on a pair of black heels and considered herself in the mirror, added a wide black leather cuff bracelet, reconsidered her reflection. Hmm, the bracelet—too bondage-y? Ohh, what if—

She found what she was looking for at the back of her closet; a purse she’d bought years ago, on a whim, and was never quite daring enough to use before.

It was blue and black leather, with silver studs for decoration, but what really made it was the fact that there were actual spikes on the top of the handbag—soft, blunt ones, made out of black leather, but spikes, all the same.

Roxanne bit her lip, considering. Probably—to much, right? But—

—she imagined Megamind’s face, when he saw her with it.

Oh, fuck it, she decided, picking up the bag, feeling herself blush. It wasn’t like her purse was going to be on camera with her.

His face, when he turned around from the sink and saw her, was absolutely worth it.

Megamind’s eyes went wide and his lips parted, his tongue darting out to lick them, a faint lavender-pink color suffusing his ears and cheekbones.
Really, how was she supposed to stop herself from pushing him gently against the counter again so she could kiss him? It was too much to ask of her.

His hands and arms were soapy up to the elbows, so he was stuck holding onto the edge of the counter, unable to touch her, but there was something about that which was— Weirdly hot, just like the fact that he was still shirtless and in pajamas while she was fully dressed was weirdly hot, and the fact that she actually had to bend her head down slightly because of the way she was just a little taller when he was barefoot and she was in heels was—Way weirdly hot.

Was that strange, the way the height difference was turning her on? Oh to hell with it, she thought, and went ahead and played it up anyway, putting her hand beneath his chin, tipping his face up for the kiss.

Megamind didn’t seem to have any complaints; he kissed her back enthusiastically, and when she reluctantly broke the kiss, he swayed forward just a bit, face upturned, his eyes unfocused.

“Got you,” Roxanne thought gleefully, and gave him another swift kiss—he was so pretty, and he so obviously wanted one; she couldn’t help herself.

“I’ll see you later, sweetheart,” she told him.

“Ah?” Megamind said, and made a valiant, not entirely successful attempt to pull himself together.

“Ah, um, yes; h-have—have a good—work—thing. Yes.”

Roxanne grinned and bit her lip, managing to hold in her burst of triumphant—slightly evil—laughter until she was in the elevator.

“Guh,” Megamind said, left alone in Roxanne’s apartment, weak-kneed and clutching at the edge of her counter to hold himself up.

Holy fucking hell, that had been—really unexpected and hot, Roxanne dressed like that—spikes! there had been spikes!—pushing him up against the counter to kiss him. She had been taller than him, had tipped his face up when she kissed him and—fuck, was it weird that her being able to do that had such an effect on him? They were about the same height, ordinarily, but with her in heels and him not wearing shoes…

He was allowed to find that attractive, right? She was the one who kissed him like that, so presumably that meant it must be allowed.

Right. Megamind mentally shook himself. Enough swooning. Time to finish the dishes. Oh! And then he could fix Roxanne’s bed and handcuffs, like he’d promised!—Hmm, he’d need a de-gun for that, though; there was one hidden beneath the seat of the hoverbike, but he’d have to wait for Minion to arrive with the disguise watch before venturing out onto the balcony…

(…God, this morning had been—all kinds of unexpected. She’d shared her drink with him. That had been—)

Megamind hadn’t been lying when he told Roxanne he hadn’t gotten much cultural information. But, on the pod, there had been a—well, as far as he’d been able to guess it was some kind of theatrical recording; fiction or history, he couldn’t really tell. The file wasn’t very long, and it had been damaged during the flight to earth, but he’d been able to piece together a few bits of what he thought might have been his culture.
Sharing drinks was—important.

(That last night on his planet, too, the night before the black hole, when his parents had talked together in low, grave voices over dinner—he remembered his parents had drank from the same cup that night, passing it back and forth as they spoke, their hands lingering together.)

The forehead touching thing, that Roxanne had done, last night; Megamind hadn’t remembered that. And it hadn’t been on the recording. But it had felt—her hands on either side of his head, their foreheads pressed together, it had—it had felt important. Maybe it—was something you didn’t do in front of other people?

*Or maybe you’re just a gigantic freak who gets emotional about all the wrong things,* he thought, and then grimaced.

Stop. Stop thinking about that.

(the photograph in her purse, the photograph that she was going to show on television today oh god oh god—)

Don’t think about that, either. It was the—logical move, damn it!

*Roxanne would tell you to stop panicking,* Megamind told himself, and, incredibly, felt his frantic heartbeat slow and his breathing calm.

*You don’t need to panic* he remembered her saying *I’m with you.*

She’d said it was up to him, and he knew if he called her right now, this moment, and told her that he’d changed his mind about showing the photograph, she would let him.

He wasn’t—going to do that, but—just knowing that he could—that he could say no if he wanted, that she would listen—just knowing that was possible was enough to head off the impending panic.

Megamind took a deep, shaky breath, rinsed the last dish and set it carefully on the rack beside the sink, and let himself think again about that last kiss from Roxanne, instead, let himself remember how it had felt.

God, it had been—would it be just as hot the other way around, he wondered: him in a pair of heeled boots, Roxanne barefoot, his hand beneath her chin as he tipped her face up for a kiss?…it seemed just as hot, the way he was imagining it, but he wanted to—

Megamind picked up a dishtowel and began to dry the dishes.

Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

thank you so much to everyone for the kudos and the comments! I really appreciate them a great deal.
“Really, though,” Lisa said, “you’re not worried at all about what he might do?”

“What,” Roxanne said dryly, “like kidnap me and threaten me with deathtraps? Wow. That’ll be. So scary. Whatever will I do.”

Lisa grinned.

“I got kidnapped, once,” Connie said.

Everybody turned to look at her.

“—by Megamind?” Roxanne asked, an irrational pulse of jealousy going through her.

“No,” Connie said, “I—do you remember—Lady Doppler?”

Roxanne frowned.

“Weather-based supervillain, right?” she said. “Didn’t she—drop off the radar a few years back?” she finished, then snickered while everyone else groaned.

(oh, whatever; Megamind would have thought it was funny)

“Retired, yeah,” Connie said, then coughed. “I mean—I, uh, think so, anyway.”

“So what happened when she kidnapped you?” Roxanne asked.

“Well,” Connie leaned forward, “she was really snippy about—get this—my forecasts. Apparently, she’d tried a few weeks before to start up a freak storm—people were supposed to be caught off-guard; it was some sort of distraction for a crime or something, I don’t know. Only I’d predicted it, and so everyone was prepared when it came and it ended up not even being a big deal.”

“Were you freaked out?” Katie asked.

“I would have been,” Karen said with a shudder. “Getting locked in a closet was enough physical peril for me, thank you so much.”

“Oh, come on; it wasn’t that scary!” Roxanne said, “we weren’t even actually locked in!”

“I think you set ‘scary’ at a higher bar than normal people,” Palak said.

Lisa made a noise of agreement.

“I don’t even like haunted houses,” Xavier said. “No kidnapping for me, please.”

“So she kidnapped you and complained about your forecasts,” Roxanne prompted Connie.

“Yeah,” Connie said, “so I told her—‘maybe if you hate being predicted, you should stop being so predictable’.”

She shrugged nonchalantly and leaned back in her desk chair.
“Ooh, predictable,” Roxanne said, grinning, “bet she hated that.”

“Oh, yeah,” Connie said. “I knew she would; I mean, Megamind always hates it when you say it to him.”

“Weren’t you scared, though?” Katie asked Connie.

“Well, yeah,” Connie said, “but I wasn’t gonna show it—KCMP,” she added, looking at Roxanne proudly, “has an image to uphold.”

“An image?” Roxanne asked, raising her eyebrows.

“Yeah, you know,” Connie said, “—grace under pressure—no screaming damsels—”

“You remember that youtube video from a few years ago,” Katie said reminiscently, “the one—”

“—where it’s Megamind—” Palak jumped in.

“—with all of the deathtraps—” Lisa said.

“—and then, like, Roxanne’s face—” Karen said. She attempted an expression of flat distain, but was laughing too hard to hold it.

“I remember that video!” Xavier said, and tried to do the face as well, but cracked up.

“And then!” Connie said.

“Roxanne Ritchi is Unimpressed,” they all chorused.

“What video is this?” Roxanne asked, bemused.

Lisa waved a dismissive hand.

“Youtube video,” she said, “somebody edited the footage together of you guys. It was really funny. You really never watched it?”

“No,” Roxanne said, pulling out her phone and texting Megamind, “I haven’t.”

Megamind, head and shoulders beneath Roxanne’s bed as he searched for the blue cube that contained the missing piece of her headboard, heard the message alert go off—Minion had brought the watch and his phone, and Megamind had sent him to get a phone of his own while he stayed behind at Roxanne’s apartment so that he could do the repairs he’d promised her.

He reached for the phone and flicked it open, the screen glowing bright in the darkness beneath Roxanne’s bed, and read the message from her.

have u seen a vid called roxanne Ritchi is unimpressed?

Megamind laughed, typing his reply.

AHAHAHAHAHA yes i love that one

He sent the message, slipped the phone back into his pocket, then snagged the blue cube and crawled out from beneath the bed.
There was a cup of water on the bedside table; he’d brought it upstairs to re-hydrate the cube. He did that now, and the missing portion of the headboard rehydrated itself, along with the missing chain from between Roxanne’s handcuffs, and a small, roughly circular chunk of Roxanne’s wall.

Fixing the wall was the first step, of course. Megamind knelt on the bed and held the missing piece up to the wall, figuring out which way to turn it so that it fit correctly. He set the de-gun to decoupage, fired at the hole in the wall, and fitted the missing piece into place. Decoupage dried quickly; he only had to hold it there for a moment before he was able to let go and inspect his work.

There was a small crack in the plaster all the way around the decoupaged section, but other than that, it looked good. Much better than it had before he’d fixed it, certainly.

His phone message alert sounded again as he was picking up the broken piece of Roxanne’s headboard. Megamind flipped the phone open and read the message.

*what?! has everyone seen this vid but me?*

Grinning, he opened up the internet on his phone—it had been slow when he first bought the phone, but he’d fixed that easily enough—and swiftly found the video Roxanne was talking about. He sent it to her, then followed it with a text:

*here u go lol :)*

He turned back to the repairs of Roxanne’s headboard.

Roxanne’s phone vibrated; she checked it—Megamind had sent her a video.

She grinned and flipped the phone shut. She’d watch it later.

“Who is he?” Palak asked.

Roxanne, putting her phone back in her purse, looked up.

“Hmm? Who is who?”

Lisa snickered; Palak snorted; Karen rolled her eyes. Connie, Katie, and Xavier all exchanged a meaningful look.

“Dude,” Palak said. “We’ve all seen your face when you’re checking your phone. Who is it that you’re dating?”

“I—he’s—we’re—we’re not dating,” Roxanne said.

They all looked at her, and then at each other, in disbelief.

“We’re not,” Roxanne insisted. “This is just—business.”


“And we’re friends,” Roxanne added.

“Mm-hm,” Karen said.
Roxanne felt herself flush.

“Okay, and we hook up sometimes, all right?” she said, crossing her arms defensively. “But we’re not dating.”

“Sounds like dating,” Katie commented.

“It’s not,” Roxanne said flatly. “We—talked about it. He doesn’t feel like that about me.”

They all winced.

“Ah, shit,” Palak said, “sorry.”

“It’s okay,” Roxanne said, forcing herself to shrug lightheartedly. “You didn’t know.” She glanced at the clock. “All right, let’s head out for the interview, Katie.”

(Wayne had asked, when she’d called him on the way to the studio, to give him a bit to get ready, but she didn’t want to take too long and risk him losing his nerve and backing out.)

Repairing the headboard was simple; decoupaging the handcuffs was a bit trickier. He finished them, though, and left them on the little table beside Roxanne’s bed, then went downstairs.

Okay, so he’d—washed the dishes and put them away, and he’d repaired Roxanne’s bed and her handcuffs. She hadn’t mentioned needing anything else—

(Megamind’s eyes fell on a loose piece of blank paper resting on Roxanne’s stereo just as he remembered her saying, last night, you still owe me a pony, you asshole.)

Would she—would she think it was funny if he—?

Megamind picked up the paper and a nearby pen, brought them over to the coffee table, and started to sketch.

“Roxanne—I—I’m not sure I can go through with this,” Wayne said, looking a little bit sick.

“Yes, you can,” Roxanne said, keeping her voice firm and calm: the tone that always worked best with reluctant interviewees.

Wayne shook his head; his face was actually a few shades paler than it normally was. Shit; he might really back out of this—Roxanne signaled to Katie to give them a few minutes. Katie; luckily, appeared to fully understand the gesture, since she strolled off from behind the camera and moved in a carefully casual way towards the window of Wayne’s living room, noisy busying herself with adjusting the curtain for the shot’s light source.

“What is it that’s got you so worried?” Roxanne asked Wayne, voice still calm, but now with a touch of sympathy.

“I just—” Wayne sighed and ran his hand through his hair, “—aw, man, I don’t know. I—people
look up to Metro Man, you know? I feel—I feel like I’m—tarnishing the image.”

“But you don’t want to be Metro Man any more,” Roxanne pointed out.

Wayne sighed.

“Yeah, but—that doesn’t mean I wanted him to—this is why the death ray would have been great! Metro Man could have gone out at the top of his game, everybody loving him—”

“And hating Megamind,” Roxanne said quietly. “For something he didn’t do.”

Wayne winced.

“I know, I know—” he swallowed. “I just—Metro Man is a hero. What if—what if everybody hates me?” he added in a small voice.

“Wayne,” Roxanne said, “I’m not going to lie to you; there—might be some negative reactions to this. Some people might even hate you for it. And I know that sounds awful, and I know you’ve never been hated before—”

“Yes, I have,” Wayne muttered, “he hates me.”

Roxanne sighed.

“No, Wayne,” she said. “I’m pretty sure he doesn’t. He listened to that whole CD of your songs that you gave us. I don’t think he would have done that if he hated you.”

—Wayne had asked them, the next time they met up, what they both thought. Roxanne, who had stopped listening after the first song, had made vaguely encouraging noises and diplomatically avoiding telling Wayne how horrible he was at music.

Megamind had told Wayne that he “thought he had talent”. Wayne had lit up at that, and then he had caught sight of Roxanne’s disbelieving expression and his face had fallen.

“Ah, that’s okay, little buddy,” Wayne had said, “You don’t have to lie. I know I don’t have talent, really.”

Megamind had hesitated.

“—okay, no, you don’t,” he’d said, “but—but! Neither did Sid Vicious! Passion is much more important than talent—”

(Megamind really was so much nicer than she was, Roxanne thought again, and then shook her head.)

“Wayne,” she said now, “admitting that you’ve made mistakes doesn’t make you a bad person. Making mistakes doesn’t make you a bad person. It just makes you a person.”

He stared at her as if she’d said something he’d genuinely never heard before.

“And you have as much of a right to be a person as anyone else,” Roxanne said.

Wayne stared at her for a long moment, and then he took a shaky breath, his eyes suspiciously bright.

“—okay,” he said, “okay, okay, okay. Let’s do this.”
Roxanne caught Katie’s eye, and motioned to her to come over again.

“All right,” Roxanne said, “now, Wayne, I want you to tell the viewers what you told me.”

“I bullied him. We all did. The teacher, too—he was different and he was smart, and it was easy, and—I was scared that if they didn’t hate him, then they were going to hate me—”

Roxanne, standing in her living room, watched as the video feed cut from a close up of Wayne’s face to the school photograph, her stomach twisting itself into knots.

(this would work. it was going to work. she was going to make it work.)

“…contact KCMP. As always, this is Roxanne Ritchi, seeking the truth.”

Roxanne took a breath and turned off the television.

Silence fell in her apartment.

Should she—should she check on Megamind? He had seemed all right, had said he was all right, when she called him after the interview with Wayne first aired, earlier in the day, but she hadn’t been able to talk to him for very long; she’d been hiding in the copy room and their conversation had been hurried and whispered. Maybe she should call him again—

Oh, who are you kidding; you just want to talk to him, she thought, hugging a pillow to her chest.

(It was late; she didn’t even know if he was up watching the re-run. She’d probably just end up waking him.)

Roxanne sighed, put down the pillow, and ran her hand through her hair. Time to go face her empty bed, she supposed.

She didn’t get up, though. She pulled her purse over from the other side of the couch, instead, and took her phone out, flipping it open.

Sixteen voicemails, ugh. And her phone wouldn’t let her automatically delete them; she’d have to listen to them all.

—yeah, no, not tonight.

She opened up her text conversation with Megamind instead, clicked on the video he’d sent her, and settled back on the couch cushions to watch.

It—actually was pretty funny; the video started with Megamind giving an evil monologue, switched to Roxanne’s unimpressed face, then back to Megamind. The pattern repeated itself, the cuts gradually speeding up as Megamind showed her deathtrap after deathtrap, each one more ridiculously overblown than the last, his agitation increasing until he was waving his arms and shouting, hopping around like he did sometimes when he got especially worked up.

“Aligators! Flame-throwers! Freeze ray! Boot wheel of Death! Why isn’t she screaming!?"

The video switched to Roxanne’s face again, her expression flat. Text flashed across the screen: Roxanne Ritchi Is Unimpressed.
In the background, Megamind could be heard making a shrieking noise of frustration, and then the video ended.

Roxanne grinned and shook her head, flipping the phone shut and putting it back in her purse. He was such a nerd.

(Sheshe should go to bed now. She should.)

As she set her purse on the coffee table, a piece of paper caught her eye. She picked it up and looked at it curiously.

The M-and-two-lightning-bolts symbol in the bottom corner caught her attention first; the rest of the paper, though, was filled with a drawing of a pony with an incredibly disgusted expression and a speech bubble above its head that said NAY.

Roxanne laughed, the sound echoing in the empty space of the apartment and—

She sucked in a sharp breath, laughter cutting off as she found herself abruptly blinking back tears.

The silence that fell after was—too loud, and her apartment seemed suddenly both suffocating and incredibly empty, the silence and the empty space and the night beyond the windows pressing against the glass like cold dark water—at any moment the glass would break and the darkness would rush in and fill her lungs and she would drown.

“You’re being ridiculous,” she told herself, and then wished she hadn’t spoken—the sound of her own voice made the silence even worse, somehow.

She bit down hard on the inside of her own cheek. She wanted out of this apartment, wanted—she wanted—

(she wanted Megamind, wanted him to be here with her, wanted to be with him somewhere else, anywhere else—he wouldn’t even have to touch her, wouldn’t have to hold her; she just wanted to be somewhere where she could see him existing—)

Roxanne pressed her palm to her mouth—she was not going to cry—and picked up her phone.

She would—she would text him, yes, she would let herself text him. And if he didn’t answer she would not keep bothering him; she would go to bed like a reasonable person. She typed:

**hey r u awake?**

and pressed send, then flipped her phone shut, closed her eyes, and attempted to regulate her breathing.

Her phone buzzed and Roxanne’s heart leaped in her chest. She flipped the phone open to read Megamind’s message.

**yes! what is up (besides u and me, miss ritchi?)**

Roxanne took a breath that was entirely too much like a sob for her liking and tried to think of a way to phrase this that didn’t sound demanding or unreasonable or like she was an absolute lunatic.

(I need to see you because I sort of feel like I’m drowning in silence right now was obviously not ideal, and I don’t want to sleep in a bed that doesn’t have you in it was much too needy, and—)

**I miss u :( can I come over?**
Roxanne sent the text and immediately regretted it. Shit; that was probably too pushy; there was no way for him to say no politely and she didn’t want him to feel trapped or obligated.

She started to type out *it’s ok if you’re too busy*, but before she could send it, Megamind’s reply made her phone buzz.

_of course! can’t wait lol :)_

—Okay, that seemed—like he actually meant it, right? Damn text messages and their inability to fully convey tone—

To hell with it. She wanted to see him and she was going to see him.

---

The Lair was darker and quieter than usual when she got there. Roxanne made her way down the hall towards Megamind’s workspace, expecting at any moment to meet with Minion or the brainbots, but she did not.

She turned the corner and saw Megamind.

He was standing at one of his lab tables, working on some sort of machine that appeared to be mostly in pieces at the moment. He was wearing a prison uniform, the top half of it unbuttoned and folded down, the sleeves knotted around his waist.

He looked up when he heard the sound of Roxanne’s footsteps, and smiled when he saw her, his face lighting up.

_(oh good, so maybe he really did want her there; she’d started to have second thoughts when she saw that he was working.)_

“Hey,” Roxanne said, taking the last few steps towards him and leaning forward to kiss him.

He met her halfway, kissing her back, though he didn’t put his hands on her waist or her face or in her hair.

“Ol—hel-lo,” Megamind said, breaking the kiss.

Roxanne glanced questioningly down at his hands.

“Ah,” he said, “sorry, my hands are a bit—” he held them up, showing her, “dirty. Here, have a seat,” he hooked his foot around the leg of his tall-back chair and rolled it out from beneath the lab table like that, “I should be done with this soon, but—just give me about six minutes.”

“You don’t have to hurry,” Roxanne said, sitting down, “I mean, it’s not like you were expecting me to come over tonight. Besides,” she added, smirking, “I’m enjoying the view.”

Megamind gave her a confused glance and looked around the darkened Lair doubtfully, at the shadows and the vague black shapes of machines only dimly visible. Roxanne rolled her eyes and pointedly looked him up and down, letting her gaze linger on his bare chest and arms. That, Megamind appeared to get, if the way he blushed was any indication, the tips of his ears and his cheekbones turning pink.

_(his face was a bit dirty, too; there was a smudge of black along one cheekbone which was, for some reason, incredibly endearing to her.)_
Roxanne kicked off her shoes and tucked her feet up underneath her legs, arranging herself more comfortably in Megamind’s chair.

“Is the Lair warmer than usual?” she asked, half-teasing, half serious. Maybe she was imagining things, but—

“Oh, um, yes,” Megamind said, “I—when you said you were coming over, I went ahead and changed the ambient temperature to something you would—be more comfortable with.”

Roxanne felt her heart flip over just a little.

“Do you usually keep the Lair cold because it’s more comfortable for you like that?” Roxanne asked. It hadn’t ever occurred to her that the chill of the Lair was intentional; she’d just figured it was an unfortunate side effect of the fact that it was in a drafty warehouse.

“Yes,” Megamind said, looking down at the table again, hands moving as he worked. “This isn’t—terribly uncomfortable for me, or anything, though. Just a little warm. Hence—” he gestured at the way he was dressed.

“What’s with the prison uniform?” Roxanne said. “I would have thought you’d had enough of wearing those.”

Megamind shrugged.

“No sense in letting them go to waste,” he said, “they make good work clothes, if nothing else. And—I have to admit, I find it satisfying to make sure they’re really thoroughly ruined.”

He glanced up at her quickly with a mischievous smile and wiped his hands down the legs of the uniform, leaving smears of black. Roxanne laughed.

(the sound echoed even more than it had in her apartment, but somehow it didn’t seem lonely at all, here in the Liar, with Megamind.)

“Where are the brainbots?” Roxanne asked, watching Megamind’s hands assemble the machine. It was strange, being in the Lair and not seeing the brainbots flying around at all.

“Asleep. Minion, too. Would you push that wrench over here, please?”

Roxanne did.

“What are you working on?” she said.

“Ah-ah-ah!” Megamind said, grinning. “nosey reporter! This is for the Final Kidnapping; it’s a surprise.”

“Ohh, right, sorry,” Roxanne says, smiling and shaking her head. “Just give me a hint, though, is it a giant robot? I’ll bet you it’s a giant robot.”

“No hints for you, Miss Ritchi!” Megamind said. “You’re much too clever,”

“Come on, just a little hint?” Roxanne teased.

“You,” Megamind said, “just want to uncover all my secrets, don’t you?”

“Yes,” Roxanne said, tone more sincere than she intended.
Megamind looked up at her sharply.

“Wh—really?” he asked.

“—well, yeah,” Roxanne said, forcing her voice casual. “You’re—interesting, Megamind; of course I want to know more about you.”

“…oh,” Megamind said, looking terribly caught off guard. “—okay, um. What—what do you want to know?”

Everything, Roxanne wanted to say, but bit her tongue.

“Anything,” she said, which—that was a little better, wasn’t it, a little more controlled?—“small things, even. What’s your favorite color?”

“Black,” Megamind said.

“Should have guessed,” Roxanne said, grinning. “Mine’s blue.”

Megamind gave her a surprised look.

“When I was nine, this kid in my class told me that blue was for boys, so I called him a ‘misogynistic imbecile’ and kicked him in the shins,” Roxanne said.

Megamind laughed.

“I had a large vocabulary, as a kid,” Roxanne said, “but I didn’t have very many friends.”

“I didn’t have any,” Megamind said.

“It really is too bad we didn’t go to the same school,” Roxanne said (shit, was that getting too close to things he might not want to talk about? He’d said he was all right after they showed the photograph, but he’d been really upset that morning—)

“Ha, yes!” Megamind said. “I could have cheered from the sidelines while you kicked people in the shins! Interestingly, did you know that the ‘pink is for girls and blue is for boys’ rule didn’t come into existence until the 1940s? Before that, it was actually reversed for a while. Human gender is weird.”

“I didn’t know that,” Roxanne said, “I could have kicked people in the shins and you could have offered informative commentary from the sidelines.”

Megamind laughed, and then his expression went sort of sad.

“You wouldn’t have liked me,” he said.

“What? Why not?”

He shrugged.

“Nobody ever did. I was—odd. I tended to set things on fire or make them blow up on accident, and I talked too much about things nobody thought were interesting…”

“That doesn’t sound any different from you now,” Roxanne said, “And I like you now. Although I definitely take issue with ‘not interesting’. I think the things you talk about are interesting. Who was it that told you that you talk too much?”
“Everyone,” Megamind said.

“I’ll tell you a secret,” Roxanne said, “people said the same thing about me. Only where you probably got ‘boring’ and ‘annoying’, I got ‘shrill’ and ‘bitchy’.”

Megamind made a face of sympathetic disgust.

“Anytime you want to kick the world in the shins, Roxanne,” he said, “you let me know, and I’ll be there with the informative commentary.”

Roxanne laughed and he smiled crookedly at her.

“What did you mean,” she said curiously, “about human gender being weird?”

Megamind’s mouth twisted.

“Oh, I don’t know,” he said, “maybe it’s just—me. That’s weird. Everyone else has always seemed to—just—know. Their own—and. And maybe it’s the—ah—fundamental strangeness of—my body, but—” He flushed, looked away, and then looked at Roxanne again. “—I feel like this is unforgivably odd,” he said flatly. “I feel like you’re not going to want me or like me anymore if I tell you this, Roxanne. Please let me change the subject.”

“Hey,” Roxanne said softly, reaching out to place her fingertips lightly on his wrist. His hand jerked slightly at the touch, but he didn’t pull away. “You don’t have to keep talking about it if you don’t want to. But—really, Megamind, I don’t think there’s—anything, gender or—sexuality-wise, that you could tell me about yourself that would make me—stop liking or wanting you? I mean, I’m—bi, actually, for one thing,” she said, “and also, I—really, really like you. A lot. And—knowing you better isn’t going to make me like you less.”

Megamind gave a bitter sort of laugh.

“Are you sure?” he asked cynically, and then blinked. “Wait, you’re—you’re—bisexual?”

Roxanne shrugged, feeling herself flush self-consciously. She looked down at their hands, her fingers on the blue of his wrist.

“Yeah,” she said, “I—don’t tell people very often—I usually date guys? And people tend to get—weird. When I tell them. Especially people that I’m dating…”


“Well, they—hear ‘bisexual’,,” Roxanne said, “and they think ‘slutty’ and ‘will probably cheat on you’.”

“—but that doesn’t make any sense,” Megamind said.

“No,” Roxanne said, “no, it doesn’t.” She looked up at his face, studying his expression. “—you’re really not bothered by this,” she said.

“No, of course I’m not,” Megamind said, “did—did you really think I would be?”

“I don’t know,” Roxanne said, “I just—like I said, people tend to—I guess I’m just used to—” she gestured vaguely with the hand that wasn’t on Megamind’s wrist. “…this is one of the things that my mother disapproves of, by the way,” she said. “I caused a hell of a scandal in that tiny little town when I got a girlfriend as a teenager. My mother insisted that i was just doing it for the
attention, or to—upset her. I was worried, actually, for a long time, that maybe she was right, that I wasn’t really—that it was just a rebellion thing, but—”

She shrugged.

“I’m sorry,” Megamind said. “That—sounds like it was—unpleasant.”

“Thank you,” Roxanne said. “The confusion was unpleasant, but I figured it out, eventually. Moving away helped. And I do mostly go for guys, but I still find girls attractive, too, so. Bisexual.” She took a breath that was just a little shaky. “I really don’t usually tell people all this.”

“I’m glad you told me,” Megamind said quietly, “I—I think you’re interesting, too, Roxanne; I want to know more about you, too. And I—the—the thing that I was—” he pressed his lips together briefly and looked away from her.

“I’m not sure what gender I am,” he said, his voice low, “or what sex I am. I’ve—done scans of my anatomy; but I don’t even know what’s normal for my species—I—I seem to be—most likely physically male? And I feel like I’m—I feel like I’m—probably male? Mostly male? But everyone else has always just seemed to know, like what they are is some sort of—terribly obvious fact. I—I tried some—different things. As a teenager. But this—male seemed to fit—closest, but not—not perfectly, but closest, and god, I’m not even sure if this is—something that would be usual for my species, or if I’d be a freak no matter what—”

“You are not a freak,” Roxanne said fiercely. “You don’t have to fit anybody’s categories, Megamind—not for my species, and not for yours, either.”

She tightened her fingers around his wrist. Megamind took a sharp breath.

“And it’s not just you, Megamind,” she said, “the gender thing? That’s not just you that feels like that. There are other people who feel like that, too.”

“Are—are there?” Megamind asked, eyes wide.

“Yes,” Roxanne said. “There absolutely are. Do you prefer me to use male pronouns? Or do you want something gender neutral?”

“There are gender neutral pronouns?” Megamind asked.

“Yeah,” Roxanne said, “some people use they, or ze, or e…”

Megamind’s nose wrinkled.

“No, I—I think I still like he,” Megamind said. “It seems to—be the most correct? Is—is that okay?”

“Of course, Megamind,” Roxanne said, smiling, “it’s whatever you like best. If you ever want to try something else, you just let me know. But of course I’ll still use male pronouns if you want me to.”

“And—and ‘mostly male’—that’s—that’s an okay thing? For me to be?” Megamind asked, watching her closely.

“Yes,” Roxanne said firmly. “It is completely okay. I am—Megamind, I am so glad you told me.”

Roxanne gave his wrist a squeeze and then let go, hopping off of the chair and circling the lab
table to stand in front of him

“And—hey, guess what?” she said softly.

“…what?” Megamind asked uncertainly.

She put her hands on either side of his head and then leaned forward until their foreheads were pressed together.

“I know you better, now,” she whispered. “And I still like you just as much.”

“—really?” Megamind asked, voice trembling.

“Yes,” Roxanne said.

She closed her eyes and stayed there for a moment, both of them quiet.

Megamind had said that the forehead touching was good (like a hug, he’d told her), but it had seemed like it had the potential to get overwhelming quickly; he’d almost cried when she did it before. So she moved her hands to the side of his face instead after a long moment and pulled away enough to smile at him.

He smiled back, a little tremulously. Roxanne kissed him, then took another step towards him, moving closer. Megamind took a half step back, until he was up against the lab table. His hands went to the edge of the table for balance—and it was just like that morning: Megamind shirtless and pressed back against the counter, his hands on the table’s edge.

Roxanne put one hand lightly on his chest, holding him in place, and leaned in to kiss him again, deeper and more fully this time.

Megamind made a quiet noise as she kissed him, helpless and soft, and Roxanne slid her hand from his chest to cup the back of his neck.

“—ah,” he gasped as she broke the kiss, his head tilting back to give her better access as she pressed her lips to his throat.

“Do you need to finish your project?” Roxanne murmured, and ran her tongue along the line of his clavicle.

“—to—oh god—to hell with the project,” Megamind said.

Roxanne laughed and kissed his shoulder. Megamind’s breath hissed through his teeth.

“You said Minion and the brainbots are asleep,” Roxanne said. “Do you think you can be quiet?”

“Quiet?”

“I’ll take you to your room if you don’t think you can be quiet,” Roxanne told him, “but I really want to have you right here.”

“Oh my god,” Megamind said, “oh my god yes. I—yes, I can—I can be quiet.”

“There’s my good boy,” Roxanne said, stepping back slightly to admire the way Megamind blushed at that, his eyelashes fluttering and his lips parting.

She reached for the sleeves of the uniform that were knotted around his waist and untied them.
“Show me those beautiful blue tentacles, sweetheart,” she said, and pushed the uniform down off his hips.

Megamind ducked his head towards his shoulder as if he was embarrassed at the way the cloth puddled around his ankles, so Roxanne turned his face back towards hers with one finger on his chin, kissed him swiftly, and smiled at him in reassurance.

“Come on, gorgeous,” she said coaxingly, sliding a hand down his chest, down his abdomen, then running a fingernail lightly over the seam between his legs. “You don’t have to be shy.” She ran her nail lightly up the seam this time, and Megamind shuddered. “I want to see you.”

Megamind bit his lip, his hips twitching forward slightly, his tentacles sliding out and into her hand, twining with her fingers and pressing against her palm.

“There we go,” Roxanne said, rubbing her palm against him, mimicking the motion of his tentacles with her fingers, “god, you’re so fucking sexy.”

Megamind glanced up at her through his lashes and then arched his neck to the side in something that looked like invitation. Roxanne licked up the side of his neck then put her teeth to his skin and sucked lightly until he moaned, the sound vibrating underneath her lips. Roxanne bit him admonishingly and he made a choked, whining sort of sound.

“Quiet,” she reminded him.

“S-sorry,” he said, “yes, quiet, yes, I can do quiet—”

Roxanne smirked and stepped back from him, looking him up and down again in admiration—fuck, but he was hot—and then smirked at him. Megamind gulped, the muscles of his long throat working as he swallowed, and Roxanne went to her knees in front of him.

“Uh—” Megamind said, “wh—what are you doing?”

“Fulfilling a fantasy,” Roxanne said, glancing up at him, still smirking.

And then she frowned; he looked—guilty?

“—you—you don’t have to—do that, Roxanne,” he whispered.

Roxanne blinked.

“It’s a fantasy of mine, Megamind,” Roxanne said slowly.

Megamind just looked at her with big, unhappy eyes.

“Have you thought about me like this before?” Roxanne asked, her voice gentle.

“—tried not to,” Megamind said, flinching visibly. “Bad enough that I—thought about you at all, while I was—but—but wanting you—like this—is just—” he shook his head.

“I’ve gone down on you before,” Roxanne pointed out.

“Not on your knees,” Megamind said, looking miserable. “Not—not on your knees, Roxanne; I don’t want—I shouldn’t want—”

“Those are two different things, Megamind,” Roxanne said. “Which is it: don’t want, or shouldn’t want?”
Megamind made a noise of distress and didn’t answer.

“I had you kneel the first time we were together,” Roxanne said, “did you dislike that?”

Megamind looked away from her and shook his head.

“It seemed like you actually liked it, am I right?”

Megamind blushed and nodded, but his mouth was flat.

“It’s not the same, though,” he said, “you’re—you’re better than this, Roxanne.”

Roxanne jerked back a little, as if he’d slapped her.

“Hey,” she said sharply, “look at me. I said look at me, Megamind.”

Megamind looked at her finally.

“Yes, that’s right,” Roxanne said, “look at me, here, like this—no, don’t look away; I didn’t say you could look away—look at me here, like this, on my knees for you. And tell me, Megamind—do you respect me any less, seeing me like this?”

This time it was Megamind who jerked back like he’d been slapped.

“No, of course not,” he said.

“Do you think I would be down here if I didn’t want to be? Is it only you that’s allowed to enjoy kneeling? Don’t I get to want the things that I want?”

“Wh—yes! Of course, yes, Roxanne—”

“If you really don’t want to do this, Megamind, then we don’t have to,” Roxanne said, “but my worth as a person is not dependent on how I like to fuck, so I’d really like you to think through the implications when you say something like ‘you’re better than this’, okay?”

“…oh,” Megamind said.

“Yeah,” Roxanne said, seeing understanding dawn in his face.

“—I’m—I’m sorry,” Megamind said softly, “I’m sorry, Roxanne; I didn’t think—I’m sorry.”

He was looking guilty again, so Roxanne leaned forward and kissed him quickly on the hip.

“It’s okay, sweetheart,” she said.

“Please feel free to kick me in the shins,” Megamind said.

Roxanne laughed and ran both palms down his shins instead.

“Idiot,” she said affectionately, and then slid her hands up his calves to curl around the backs of his knees.

“Oh, just so we’re clear,” Roxanne said, smiling up at him, “you do want me to do this, right?”

“Yes,” Megamind said, voice too tight, too fast, “I—I’ve wanted this for—I really did try not to, Roxanne; I tried not to imagine it—”
“Someday,” Roxanne said, kissing his hip again, slower this time, “when you feel ready,” she kissed his other hip, “I want you to tell me all about these fantasies of yours,” she kissed the inside of his thigh, “the ones about me.”

Megamind muttered something that sounded like ‘all about you’. Roxanne kissed the inside of his other thigh.

“So I can try to make them happen,” Roxanne said, and nipped lightly at his hip.

Megamind moaned, so she bit him again, a little harder.

“Remember to be quiet,” she said.

Megamind made a small, affirmative noise. Roxanne smirked up at him, made sure he was watching as she licked her lips. God, his expression already—oh, this was going to be fun.

She started off slow and teasing, kissing his stomach, his hips, his thighs, everywhere but where he really wanted her. Megamind’s breathing picked up, going ragged, but he seemed to be doing well with being quiet.

Roxanne moved to press light, quick kisses to his tentacles, gliding her palms up his thighs, cupping his ass before sliding her hands around to hold his hips.

His tentacles weren’t moving as much as she would have expected; she had a moment of insecurity about that—was he not enjoying this?—until she licked him suddenly, her tongue flat and rough over his tentacles, and Megamind gasped, all of the tentacles twitching for a moment before going still again.

Roxanne glanced up at him; he was looking down at her, biting his lip, a look of concentration on his face. Was he trying to hold still?

(He thought he could control himself; Roxanne was going to show him how very wrong he was.)

Speaking of sweet things—Roxanne licked him once more, tasting him, then did it again and again, dragging her tongue over him, languid and torturous. Megamind’s breath stuttered, his tentacles fluttering—soft at first, and then gradually harder until at last he made a low, keening sound in the back of his throat and his tentacles writhed beneath her tongue.

Roxanne grinned briefly to herself before starting to kiss his tentacles again, slow, open-mouthed kisses now, letting his tentacles slide in and out of her mouth, pressing against her lips, tangling around her tongue.

“—ah!” Megamind said breathlessly.

Roxanne looked up at him; his hands were clutching at the edge of the table and his head was thrown back, his chest heaving as he panted. As she watched, though, he looked down at her again. Their eyes met and he made a quiet, whimpering noise.

(God, the way he looked at her made her heart flip over, made heat flare in the pit of her stomach.)

She moved her right hand from his hip to the base of his tentacles, gathering them together so she could wrap her lips around the tips of all of them at once.
“Oh my god,” Megamind said, half-whispering, half-gasping as he watched her slide her mouth down him slowly, “—oh my god oh my god, Roxanne—

She pulled her mouth back, letting his tentacles almost slip out of her mouth, and then slid back down until her lips were kissing her hand on the base of his tentacles.

It was a bit of a challenge; the individual tentacles might not be particularly thick, but gathered together like this they were fairly wide at the base. And they were moving as she sucked them, pressing against her palate, twisting against her tongue; Roxanne wasn’t really used to the sensation of that. But it was so, so very worth it: the quiet sounds Megamind was making as she bobbed her head, the way he gasped when she grazed him carefully with her teeth.

She picked up the pace, bobbing her head a little faster, sucking him a little harder. Megamind moaned.

Roxanne hummed in pleasure—Megamind moaned again at that. Cautiously, she moved the hand around his tentacles so that only her thumb and forefinger were holding him together—she felt like she was getting the hang of this now, and she wanted to see how deep she could take him.

She managed it, her mouth sliding down nearly to the base of his tentacles, and Megamind made a shocked sound, his knees buckling as he scrabbled at the edge of the lab table for balance, trying to hold himself up.

One of his hands went to the back of her head, his fingers tightening in her hair as he pulled her forward. Roxanne let him guide her motions, bobbing her head faster as he tugged her towards his body. With the hand that was on his hip, she pulled him forward, trying to encourage him to thrust into her mouth.

Megamind made a choked, sobbing sound and cupped the back of her head in his hand, hips rocking forward, tentacles thrusting past her lips.

Roxanne made a noise of approval and looked up at him, their eyes meeting. Megamind’s control broke completely, the motion of his hips going harder, fucking her mouth as he gasped out her name again and again.

Perfect; he was perfect, moving for her like this, looking down at her as if he’d forgotten anything other than her even existed.

She might not be able to make him love her, but she could make him feel like this, could make him look at her like this, and Roxanne smiled up at him with her eyes and brushed her thumb, soft and affectionate, over his hipbone.

Megamind said her name one last time as he came for her.

Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

I hope you all enjoyed the chapter! Thank you so much for the reviews and the kudos; they are so encouraging and I appreciate them so very much.
Megamind clung desperately to the edge of the lab table and to the last scraps of his self-control—he’d already lost the battle with himself to keep his tentacles still while Roxanne—while she—oh god, her mouth, the heat of it and the flicker of her tongue and the way she looked with her lips wrapped around him, her head bobbing as she sucked his tentacles.

The way she looked on her knees in front of him; Megamind had always hated himself for how much he wanted Roxanne on her knees, but she’d said it was all right, she’d said it wasn’t disrespectful to want, said that she’d wanted to do this with him. How she possibly could want to, Megamind had no idea, but—

Roxanne hummed, a noise of pleasure that sent vibrations through his tentacles and Megamind couldn’t stop himself from moaning at the sensation, at the confirmation that Roxanne was actually enjoying this, that despite everything that was wrong with him, despite everything he’d done wrong, despite everything and against all logic, she really wanted to be here, like this, with him.

She moved her hand, changing the position of it so that she was only gripping him with her thumb and forefinger—what was—

Her mouth slid ever further down, almost to the base of his tentacles, and Megamind heard himself make an incoherent noise, clutching at the table’s edge as his knees buckled.

He put his hand on the back of her head without thinking, tangling his fingers in her hair, instinctively pulling her closer, trying to get her to take him faster—oh—oh he shouldn’t have—shouldn’t—

Roxanne pulled his hip—pulled him towards herself, as though she wanted him to—

Megamind heard his own breathing catch like a sob as he cupped the back of Roxanne’s head and let his hips rock forward—once, just once; he shouldn’t—he needed to control himself, needed to stop, to—

Roxanne looked up at him, meeting his eyes, and then she made a noise, a beautiful, humming, almost-moan of satisfaction, and the last thread of Megamind’s self-control snapped, his hips thrusting forward again and again, fucking his tentacles into the wet heat of Roxanne’s mouth.

He was saying her name, he realized, repeating it over and over as he looked down at Roxanne, as she looked up at him with an expression in her eyes that was—she looked happy and—and impossibly, unmistakably fond, and then she stroked her thumb gently over his hipbone in a gesture of affection, and Megamind said her name once more as he came, pleasure sweeping through him in a bright wave.

Megamind came down, came back to himself; he was trembling, he realized, clinging to the lab table with one hand, his other hand still tangled with Roxanne’s hair—shit, was he pulling too hard; had he hurt her, had he—

He made a concerned noise and took his hand from the back of her head, stroking her cheek worriedly. Roxanne, her mouth still wrapped around his tentacles, made a sound of amusement, an
almost-laugh, and the unexpected sensation of that made his breath hiss between his teeth, made him grab for the edge of the table with both hands as his knees threatened again to give out.

Roxanne slid her mouth slowly off of him and grinned up at him, her hair tousled and her lips reddened, looking incredibly debauched and ridiculously pleased with herself.

“Maybe you’d better sit down, sweetheart,” she said, voice sweetly wicked, “you look like you’re about to fall over.”

She licked his tentacles suddenly, without warning, and Megamind gasped, knees going weak once more. Roxanne laughed again and got to her feet, moving around the table to drag his chair over for him.

She kissed him, hard and fast, ending the kiss with a bite to his lower lip that made Megamind’s spine feel as though it was turning to liquid.

“Sit,” she said, stepping away from him, and Megamind collapsed sort of bonelessly into his chair.

“—I—that—you,” Megamind said breathlessly, “—that was—”

Roxanne’s smile went wider, evidently finding his inability to articulate a complete thought gratifying.

“Yeah?” she said, “I thought it was pretty great.”

“Really great,” Megamind said fervently, “amazingly great. So so great.”

Roxanne threw him a self-satisfied glance.

“And—and that was okay,” Megamind asked, still a little concerned at the way he’d— “the, um, the way that I—reacted…?”

Roxanne raised one eyebrow.

“You mean the part where you pulled my hair and fucked my mouth?” she asked, voice arch.

Megamind made a shocked noise as his tentacles all writhed before he could stop them, the reaction sending a swift pulse of shame mixed with desire through him.

“I definitely liked that part,” Roxanne said.

“D-did you?” Megamind asked in guilty disbelief.

(why, why did that turn him on so much, her saying pulled my hair and fucked my mouth, so blunt and filthy? surely it—surely it shouldn’t, right? surely he shouldn’t like the idea, the memory of being so rough with her—)

Roxanne tilted her head, a calculating expression crossing her features.

“You look so sexy when I’m sucking you off, Megamind,” she said, watching his face closely.

Megamind’s mouth fell open, his tentacles pulsing again.

Roxanne laughed delightedly at his reaction.

“Dirty talk is a turn on for you, huh?” she said.
“Mmm,” Roxanne said, looking him up and down, eyes going half-lidded. “I loved giving you that blowjob, Megamind. It was so hot when you grabbed my head and pulled me forward and made me take you until you came in my mouth.”

Megamind gasped.

“We could have been doing that for years,” Roxanne continued, reaching up to undo the first button of her shirt. Megamind watched her hands, mesmerized by their slow, graceful movements. “Every time you kidnapped me.” She undid another button. “You could have turned off the cameras and I could have pinned your hips to the control panel and sucked you until you screamed. And nobody would have known but us.”

Megamind whimpered, hand reaching for his own tentacles, stroking them. He realized what he was doing mid-motion and stopped, feeling himself blush with embarrassment and shame.

“God, yes, touch yourself for me, Megamind,” Roxanne said, eyes dark, hands moving swiftly as she undid the rest of her buttons. “Fuck, that’s even hotter than I imagined.”

Megamind did as she told him to, stroking himself hesitantly at first, and then harder, forgetting his embarrassment as Roxanne let her shirt slip over her shoulders, down her arms, and then off of her wrists.

“So you like that,” Roxanne said, “the idea of me going down on you with the city none the wiser?”

Megamind bit his lip and reached up with his free hand to run his nails down the side of his neck.

“Or maybe,” Roxanne said, “you like the idea of me going down on you while the whole city watches better.”

Megamind gasped, hips jerking up, tentacles pushing up into his own hand as an unexpected shock of desire went through him.

“Yeah?” Roxanne asked, smirking and reaching behind herself to undo her bra. She let it fall, then cupped her own breasts. “Well, then. Hm, so I have you pinned to the control panel—maybe one of your hands slips while you’re scrabbling for balance and you press the broadcast button. And everybody sees us—me on my knees in front of you and you with your neck arched and your pretty blue skin on display, whimpering and moaning and finally thrusting into my mouth until you come.”

“I—” Megamind said, picturing the scene she was describing, “oh god, Roxanne—”

(then the image shattered, came apart, coalesced again—into him, alone, his hand between his legs, fingers tangled with his tentacles, and—them—watching—everybody seeing, and—)

Megamind’s stomach twisted horribly, a cold weight dropping down on his chest, making it difficult to breathe, his heart slamming against his ribs too hard, too fast.

“No,” Megamind managed to choke out.

“What?” Roxanne said.
Megamind shuddered, pulling his knees up beneath his chin and wrapping his arms around his legs.

“No,” he said again, squeezing his eyes shut, pressing his forehead to his knees.

Roxanne stopped, wondering what she had—Megamind had curled up into a sort of protective ball, so something had obviously gone very, very wrong.

“—sorry—I—” Megamind said, his voice muffled and tight with something that sounding like panic, “—code—safeword—I—I can’t—”

“That’s okay, sweetheart,” Roxanne said, keeping her voice calm as she swiftly put her bra back on —her putting on clothes, the visual confirmation that they were definitely going to stop what they had been doing, that should—

“It’s okay; we’re stopping now,” she said, voice still calm, trying to reassure him, “code: safeword, Megamind; everything stops, remember?”

Megamind made a miserable noise in the back of his throat, his shoulders trembling as though he was cold. Roxanne went to pick up his discarded clothes, then hesitated. Prison uniform; would that be upsetting to him, if she handed him that, now? He’d acted, earlier, as though the prison uniform wasn’t a big deal, but—surely it had negative connotations for him—

Roxanne picked up her shirt and put it over his shoulders instead, draping it there like a cape, hoping that would be comforting.

Megamind looked up at her, making a surprised sound. He still looked unhappy, almost afraid.

“It’s okay, Megamind,” Roxanne said gently, “it’s all okay; you don’t need to worry. Would you be okay with me touching you now, or would you feel more comfortable if I didn’t?”

“Please—please touch me, Roxanne,” Megamind said in a small voice.

“Of course, baby,” Roxanne said, cupping his face in one hand and running her other palm over the top of his head. “It’s okay, Megamind; you’re safe, all right? It’s just you and me here and I’m not going to hurt you.”

Megamind took a shaky breath and unfolded his legs, reaching for her and pulling her closer, winding his arms around her waist and pressing this forehead to her hip. Roxanne wrapped one of her arms around his shoulders and the other around the top of his head.

“—just you and me,” he repeated, as if he was trying to hold onto that thought, to remember it.

“That’s right,” Roxanne said, holding him tightly; he was shivering, still; she could feel it. “Just you and me, Megamind.”

“Okay,” he said, “okay.”

He took a deep breath, then let it out slowly, the trembling of his body lessening. Roxanne stroked the top of his head and waited while his breathing evened out.

“Sorry,” he said, pulling back from her, sounding much less near panic but just as unhappy, his face turned away and his eyes on the floor.
“You haven’t done anything wrong,” Roxanne said firmly. “I’m so glad you were able to tell me to stop when you needed to stop, Megamind; you did exactly what you were supposed to do.”

Megamind made a face, still looking at the floor.

“You—must think I’m crazy,” he muttered, “freaking out over something so—”

“I don’t think you’re crazy, Megamind,” Roxanne said, dropping down to her knees in front of him so she could look up into his face. “Can you try to tell me what went wrong? If you feel ready to talk about it. Not because I think you’re crazy,” she added, “just so I know what not to do next time.”

Megamind’s eyes went wide.

“Is—is there—” Megamind reached out hesitantly to touch her face with the fingertips of one hand, “can there still—be a next time, Roxanne?”

“Yes,” Roxanne said, reaching up to hold his wrist and press his palm to the side of her face, “sweetheart, Megamind, yes; there is still going to be a next time if you want it. Always, always if you want it.”

“I do,” Megamind said quickly, “I do want—I—”

He leaned down and pressed their foreheads briefly together, then leaned back to look at her, eyes searching her face.

“You’re—you’re really not upset with me,” he said.

“Not at all,” Roxanne said. “You didn’t do anything wrong, Megamind; you really, really didn’t. The safeword is there to be used if we need it. I am so proud of you for telling me what you needed.”

“Really?” Megamind asked.

“Yes,” Roxanne said, smiling up at him.

“It was a combination of things, I think,” Megamind said in a rush, “that made me—need to stop? You, um, not touching me and the—the thinking about people watching and—just—bad—bad memories.”

“Bad memories?” Roxanne said, frowning now, and shit, Megamind shouldn’t have said that. “You mean—when Wayne and Minion walked in on us? Or—prison?”

“I—I mean—neither of those things were good,” Megamind said evasively.

(they hadn’t been good, but he hadn’t been thinking of—)

“Roxanne, why was the—the idea, it was arousing,” Megamind said, frowning himself, now, “the thought of people watching, the fantasy—but the reality would be—I—I don’t get it. Why did it—why did I find it…?”

“Well, it’s just a fantasy,” Roxanne said, “and—fantasies don’t necessarily have to be something you want to play out in real life, you know?”
Megamind tipped his head.

“They don’t?” he asked.

“No, not always,” Roxanne said. “I mean, the fantasy of people watching was hot for me, too, but I wouldn’t want it to happen for real, either.”

“But sometimes you do want them to happen, right?” Megamind asked, trying to understand. “Fantasies, I mean—I mean, most of—mine are—”

“Oh, yeah, definitely some of them are things you actually want to happen,” Roxanne said. “Remember, I told you I wanted to hear about yours so I could try to make them happen. And—my fantasy of watching you touch yourself; that’s something I actually wanted to happen. I’m sorry if that was part of what upset you, Megamind,” she added.

“Oh—” Megamind said, “I—it was—that probably would have—been okay? If it hadn’t been for the—the rest of it, happening at the same time; it was the combination of—touching myself and—talking about being watched—that was—too much like—” he cut himself off, not wanting to explain any further.

Roxanne was looking at him, still, her arms resting on his knees now, leaning against his legs like she was—like she was comfortable with him, like he was a normal person who—he’d always wanted that, so very badly, always been so terribly envious of the way humans touched each other so much, so easily, so casually. He’d always thought it—he’d always thought that he wouldn’t ever get to have that with—with anyone, and the fact that he did get to have it, that he got to have it with Roxanne—

He stroked his fingers through her hair, watching her expression soften at the touch of his hand, watching her tilt her head slightly as she pressed into the motion of his fingers.

(god, he adored her; did she know how—utterly amazing she was?)

“Can I kiss you?” he blurted out.

Roxanne looked a little surprised and Megamind’s heart gave a small, insecure twist, but—

“Of course,” she said, smiling and rising up on her knees, meeting him halfway as he leaned down.

Megamind put the fingertips of one hand on her cheek as he brushed his lips lightly over hers. He intended it as a quick gesture, but as his mouth slid from hers, Roxanne put her own fingertips on his cheek and grazed him with her own lips, just like he’d done—was she—

Was she mimicking his motions?

Megamind pressed his lips to the corner of her mouth experimentally, and Roxanne did the same to him. He kissed her top lip, and then her lower one, and Roxanne copied that motion, too, and when he kissed her again, parting his lips and licking lightly over her lower lip, she did that to him as well, and something about that—the way she was paying so much attention to what he was doing—something about that made Megamind’s chest feel pleasantly tight, made heat curl in the pit of his stomach.

Roxanne broke the kiss, looking up at him.

“Is this okay?” she asked.
“Hmm?” Megamind asked, stroking his thumb over her cheek, amazed anew at the texture of her skin. “Is what okay?”

“This,” she said, kissing him again briefly, “I’m kind of getting the impression that you want to—continue what we were doing earlier? But I don’t want to take that for granted, Megamind; I don’t want to do something you don’t want.”

Megamind’s thumb went still on her cheek.

(she was so—no one had ever talked to him like this, no one had ever—)

“I want,” Megamind whispered, “as long as—as long as you want to, Roxanne. I don’t want to do anything you don’t want, either.”

Roxanne smiled.

“I want to,” she said.

She bent her head and pressed her lips briefly to his knee.

“Have you got something specific that you’d like, sweetheart?” she asked.

“Oh—um—” Megamind bit his lip. “I could—if you wanted me to—I could touch myself again while you watched?”

He felt his face go hot with embarrassment, but she’d said she liked that.

“You know I’d like that,” Roxanne said, smiling, “are you going to be okay showing me, though?”

“I—I think so,” Megamind said. “As long as we don’t—talk about—other people watching—at the same time.”

He could still feel himself blushing, and his heart was beating a little fast, but—she had said she’d—she’d said she wanted to see him touch himself, said she’d thought about it, that she’d actually fantasized about seeing him—and he found that he did like the idea of her watching, the idea of her looking at him and seeing something—something that she liked, something that she found attractive.

“I—you probably are going to have to touch me eventually, though,” he warned her, “if you—um. If you want me to—if you want me to be able to come?” He made a face. “I’m not going to be able to do it myself; I can already tell. It—it’s like that, if I get—if I get too upset in the middle of—” he gestured vaguely. “I can’t get myself back to the point of—but this—” he made another face as he waved a hand at his own lap, where his tentacles were still out and moving slowly against themselves, “—this won’t go away no matter how upset I get; they take forever to retract on their own, which is—” he rolled his eyes, “—oh what fun, when you’re already feeling miserable and guilty and disgusting, let me tell you.”

“Is that what you were talking about,” Roxanne asked slowly, “that day in my apartment, when you said you mostly try to get it over with as fast as possible?”

“Yes,” Megamind said, “and—well, the guilt is a factor in and of itself, really. It just adds to the whole—general. terribleness. of it. um. Sorry. This is probably the least sexy thing to be talking about at this moment in time; I apologize.”

“Megamind, I asked,” Roxanne said gently, “I wouldn’t have asked if I didn’t want you to tell me.
“You haven’t said anything you need to apologize for.” She stroked her knuckles over his thigh. “I’m sorry it’s so hard for you to enjoy. That—that really sucks. You deserve to feel good; you shouldn’t have to feel guilty about it.”

“I did feel—guilty about that,” Megamind said, forcing himself to keep looking Roxanne in the eyes, “but I also—I also felt guilty—I also felt guilty because I was thinking of you.”

“Sweetheart,” Roxanne said, smiling at him, “you definitely don’t need to feel guilty about that.” Her expression went serious. “Even if I hadn’t turned out to be this—wildly attracted to you, Megamind, you still wouldn’t need to feel guilty about that. Fantasies are just fantasies. They’re just in your head.”

Megamind made an unconvinced face. Roxanne sighed and shook her head, then bit her lip and smiled slightly wickedly up at him through her lashes.

“On a more—personal, specific note,” she said archly, “I think it’s really sexy that you thought about me while you got yourself off.”

“Well, that’s a relief to hear,” Megamind said, feeling himself blushing again. “Because I—um. did. Quite a lot.” He tilted his head. “Huh,” he said, sort of breathlessly.

“What?” Roxanne asked.

“Nothing, I just—I can’t believe I said that to you,” Megamind said, shaking his head. “I always thought it would—I always thought it would be the worst thing ever, for you to find that out. I always thought you would be—disgusted and—scared and—” he clutched at the edges of the shirt she’d draped over his shoulders, pulling it tighter around himself, “—I thought it would—make you h-hate me more.”

“Well, you were wrong,” Roxanne said simply, “I’m not disgusted or scared at all. And—I’ll tell you a secret, Megamind—”

She stood up, then leaned over him, putting her hands on his shoulders and her lips to his ear.

“—I never hated you,” she whispered.

Megamind jerked back in shock as she straightened up again.

“Wh—really?” he asked in disbelief.

He knew she didn’t hate him now (though it was still sort of difficult to fathom), but he’d been assuming that she’d—that this was a relatively new development.

“Never?” he said. “You—you never hated me?”

“Nope,” Roxanne said. “I never did.” She looked at his face, and her own expression went soft. “Megamind, why would I? You know I wasn’t ever scared of you. I always knew I was safe with you. Why would I hate you?”

“I would have thought my personality would be sufficient reason,” Megamind said, baffled.

Roxanne made an a noise that sounded oddly similar to a response to pain.

“There is nothing wrong with your personality,” she said.

Megamind shook his head and decided to let that extremely illogical statement pass.
“And I—well, you knew I wasn’t going to—to hurt you, but—” he flapped his hands agitatedly. “I mean, surely I was still a hell of an inconvenience! The—kidnappings! The ruined plans! The—”

“The last time I went back to my mother’s for Christmas, I spent the entire vacation wishing I was back in the city, dangling over your alligator pit,” Roxanne said. “Now, granted, that definitely says something about my relationship with my mother, but—”

Megamind gave an unwilling, choked laugh and Roxanne grinned.

“Megamind, you are the most interesting, exciting thing to ever happen to me in my entire life. I never hated that. And I never hated you.”

Roxanne leaned down and kissed him, quick and matter-of-fact, as if she hadn’t just entirely knocked his whole world off its axis yet again.

“How,” she added, “toying with the collar of the shirt draped over his shoulders “don’t you have a show to be putting on for me, Megamind?”

She straightened up, pulling the shirt off of him slowly, then let it drop to the floor beside his chair.

“Or maybe you need some inspiration, first,” she said, and smirked at him.

Roxanne stepped back, hands going to the belt she was wearing, undoing the buckle of it, slipping it off and letting it fall, then pulling off the bracelet she was wearing as well.

She smiled at him, then licked her lips and turned slowly, showing him her back. Glancing coyly over her shoulder at him, she reached behind herself and unsnapped the fastening of her bra, then slipped it off and tossed it aside, so that the entire beautiful expanse of her back was visible, all the way from the waist of the blue skirt she was wearing to the graceful curve of her neck.

Watching his face—god only knew what his expression was like—she let her lips part and slowly dragged her fingertips down the side of her arched neck, ending by drawing a single fingertip over the skin of her own shoulder. Megamind swallowed and Roxanne smiled, hands going behind her back again to unzip her skirt.

The blue material parted and fell away from the top of her hips like the curved petals of a flower blooming, revealing even more creamy skin, along with the tantalizing line of what looked to be black lace.

“God, you’re so beautiful,” Megamind said quietly as Roxanne pushed the material of her skirt down off her hips and let it fall.

Roxanne gave him a look that was almost surprised—probably at the tone of his voice; it was too—too serious, too heavy, he shouldn’t have—

“Do you think so?” she asked, turning to face him again, a soft smile beginning to curve her lips.

Did he think so—as though there were any question of him thinking so.

“You are—,” Megamind swallowed as Roxanne stepped delicately over her discarded clothing, her high-arched bare feet moving with easy grace over the cold floor of the Lair.

“—you are the most beautiful thing that I have ever seen, Roxanne,” he said with perfect honesty.

She looked pleased at that, and then she leaned back against his lab table, hands on top of it.
“And do you want me, Megamind?” she asked.

“Desperately,” Megamind said, breathless at the way Roxanne looked, at the way she was looking at him, “constantly. For—for years, Roxanne.”

Her eyes widened slightly at that, and he had a moment of wondering if he shouldn’t have said that, if it had—been too much, but then she bit her lip and looked at him through her lashes.

“Show me?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said.

Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

Thank you all so much for the comments and the kudos; the continuing support for Code: Safeword from all of you really makes me so incredibly happy! (the response to chapter 17 was so wonderful; your non-binary-gendered author thanks you from their heart, readers.)

This story is important to me, and I am loving writing it!

And I love all of you, as well. <3
Megamind's hands shook as he raised them to touch his own throat, heart and nerves and stomach all fluttering, but in a way that actually felt more like excitement than fear.

Roxanne was watching him, watching him with such an intense interest that Megamind found he had to look away.

Only for a moment, though; he couldn't keep his eyes from her for very long. She was—god, she was gorgeous, especially like this, almost entirely naked (leaning up against his lab table, black lace framing the beautiful, full curves of her hips), looking at him with interest and desire.

(Megamind would never be used to the fact that Roxanne Ritchi enjoyed his company, or to the completely and utterly baffling fact that she actually somehow found him attractive.)

He slid his left hand around to the back of his neck and traced up the line of his vertebrae, ran the fingertips of his right hand over his clavicle. He stroked the sensitive back of his head and Roxanne's breath caught, her eyes darkening.

Megamind arched his neck for her, showing her his throat, tracing back down the side of it, and Roxanne made a quiet, approving noise.

(She'd told him that she liked his neck; he wondered if that was all she was thinking, now, or if she understood the significance of the gesture for him—the implicit invitation to touch one of his most vulnerable places: you could hurt me if you wanted to and I trust you not to hurt me.)

He ran his fingers over the edge of his own ear, drew a fingertip over his shoulder, the way Roxanne had done to her own shoulder, when she undressed for him.

Megamind really had appreciated that, not just from an aesthetic point of view—which, fuck, had been extremely goddamn appealing—but the—the way she'd clearly done it to set him more at ease, so that he wasn't the only one not wearing clothing, making this something—something that both of them were doing, together, rather than just him.

God, she was so nice to him, so much kinder and more generous than he deserved.

He ran his palms down the sides of his body, then back up again. Roxanne's eyes tracked the movement and she licked her lips as Megamind rolled his own nipples under each of his thumbs.

Normally, of course, he wouldn't bother with all of this—the soft touching, the teasing—once his tentacles were extended; it had always felt too much like an unnecessary indulgence, like something he didn't deserve. Even when he did give in and allow himself to touch his own secondary erogenous zones while he tried to make himself come, he was—always a lot rougher than this.

But he found that he was able to allow his hands to be gentle, while Roxanne was watching him, looking at him, found that this time he didn't want to hurt himself almost more than he wanted to give himself enough pleasure to get rid of his shameful desire.

Found, actually, that he didn't want to get rid of the desire at all, that he was enjoying the feeling of
the desire, of his hands on his own skin, mimicking the way Roxanne always touched him: indulgent and careful and entirely unmixed with any wish to harm.

She watched him slide his hands down his sides again, her breathing quickened, her lips parted —*show me that you want me*, she'd said, and she was clearly enjoying the sight of him performing his desire for her.

And when Megamind slid his hand between his legs, the pulse of guilt and disgust and self-hatred that always accompanied the physical pleasure of that—

—*it—*

—*it didn't come.*

He—he didn't feel guilty.

He didn't feel guilty or ugly or bad *at all* and the sheer, dizzying, unexpected relief of that made his breath catch in a gasp that was very nearly a sob.

"God, Megamind," Roxanne murmured, "you're so goddamn beautiful."

Megamind almost sobbed again, hand stroking his tentacles, hips pressing himself up into the pressure, tentacles moving slick and insistent against his palm, and *he didn't feel ugly.* With his other hand he touched his own throat, his ear, his collarbones, shivery sparks of pleasure following, *and he didn't feel guilty.*

"Roxanne," he moaned, and how many times had he bitten his tongue to keep himself from saying her name while he did this?

And now she was here with him, watching him like she couldn't look away, like she didn't want to look away.

"You're so beautiful, Megamind," Roxanne said again, eyes still on him, making him shiver beneath the weight of her approving gaze, "god, I love watching you touch yourself; I've wanted to see you like this since the first time you ever told me that you thought of me when you got yourself off."

Since the first time he—?

—he'd admitted that to her that first day in her apartment, the day he didn't use the death ray—

She'd wanted—she'd wanted this for that long?

"Oh," Megamind said breathlessly, hand stroking himself faster, "oh god—Roxanne."

"Yes," she said, "god, yes, like that."

Megamind moaned and spread his legs, tentacles writhing even harder.

"Yes," Roxanne said, and he'd wanted her to say yes to him for so long, had never thought it might be possible, that—but—

But Roxanne—she did want him, she did—she thought that he was beautiful; she meant it; she said that he was beautiful and amazing and good, and if Roxanne saw all that in him, then—there had to be something—there had to be *something* good in him, didn't there, *something—*
"Oh," Megamind said, shocked, as heat spread through his body.

He braced his feet on the floor and let his hips thrust upwards, rubbing at his tentacles, grinding the heel of his hand at their base and tugging at the tips of them with his fingers, clutching at the armrest of his chair with his free hand, pressing the back of his head against the chair back, watching Roxanne watching him, looking at him with so much affection and desire that her gaze was like a caress.

"Roxanne—" he gasped out, in surprise, "I—I think I—actually—might be able to—"

A pleasurable shudder when through him; his words cut off in a moan.

"Yes," Roxanne said, clearly catching on to what he had been trying to say, "go on, sweetheart, yes; come for me, Megamind; show me how much you want me; let me see you; I want to see you—"

Megamind moved his hand faster, eyes sweeping over Roxanne: her beautiful legs and the curve of her hips and way she was leaning forward now, watching him—the pink-tipped shapes of her breasts and the graceful arch of her neck and the flushed bow of her mouth that he'd ached for so long to kiss.

He knew, now, what it was like to kiss her; Roxanne let him kiss her, kissed him back—wrapped her lips around his tentacles and let him thrust into her mouth—god—oh god—

And her eyes; he met her gaze now and she smiled at him.

"Show me, Megamind," she said softly.

"—Roxanne," Megamind said, letting his orgasm crash over him, through him, spine arching, hips straining upwards, his tentacles fluttering and—

—usually, making himself come felt half like a victory and half like loss, like giving in to something wrong, but—

—this—it just felt good, pleasure washing through him, flooding his body.

He collapsed, panting, back against the back of the chair and looked at Roxanne.

"Fuck, Megamind; that was so hot," Roxanne said, looking like she absolutely meant it.

Megamind shivered at the sound of her voice, feeling himself flush.

God, he'd just—in front of Roxanne; he'd gotten himself off in front of Roxanne and she'd liked it.

"Y-yeah?" he asked. "That was—that was good?"

Roxanne smiled at him.

"You were very good," she said, and Megamind shivered at that, too, tentacles writhing a little again.

She laughed, noticing his reaction, and walked towards him, stopping in front of the chair and tipping his face up with one finger beneath his chin so she could kiss him.

Megamind pressed up greedily into the kiss.

His own hands had been acceptable, but he what he wanted was for Roxanne to touch him.
Roxanne broke the kiss, and Megamind couldn't stop himself from making a needy noise of protest. Roxanne laughed again and Megamind felt himself blushing once more, but then Roxanne climbed into his lap, knees braced on either side of his thighs, and kissed him again, and he forgot his embarrassment in favor of wrapping one arm around her waist and burying his other hand in her hair and kissing her back.

She broke the kiss and Megamind pressed his lips to her jaw. She made a quiet noise and tilted her head back so that he could kiss her throat.

"So—ah," she said, "you've—done that a lot, then? Gotten yourself off in this chair while you thought about me?"

"Yes," Megamind murmured, then leaned away to look at her expression.

Her pupils were wide and black, her cheeks flushed, her lips red and parted.

"—would you," Megamind began, and then stopped, embarrassed.

Roxanne moved her hands from his shoulders to cup the back of his neck and Megamind, emboldened by the move, by the—god, the delicious pressure of her hands just there—found that he was able to go on.

"Would you—like to hear—what I, um. Usually think about?" he asked.

(It probably wouldn't be very exciting for her, but—but she had said, before, that she wanted to hear about his fantasies.)

"God, yes," Roxanne said, "tell me how you think about me, Megamind."

"O-okay," Megamind said, "okay, well—we're—I—you—"

His face went hot and he stammered into silence. He glanced away from her eyes, looked back at her, and then had to look away again.

_Oh come on!_ he scolded himself. _This isn't that hard; just tell her—_

"Close your eyes, sweetheart," Roxanne suggested softly. "Try telling me like that."

Megamind closed his eyes.

He could still feel Roxanne in his lap, in his arms, but he didn't feel—quite so overwhelmed.

He took a breath.

Eyes still closed, he turned his head so that he was facing her again.

"You're in your chair," he said softly. "And I'm in mine."

"Am I tied up?" Roxanne asked.

"Yes, of course you're tied up, Miss Ritchi," Megamind said in a mock-scolding tone, raising his eyebrows with his eyes still closed, "this is a kidnapping; don't be ridiculous."

Roxanne laughed, at the words or at his expression, or possibly at both, and Megamind smiled, pleased at having made her laugh, and pulled her closer, stroking one hand down her spine.
"So I'm tied up," Roxanne said, and he could hear that she was smiling.

"Yes," Megamind agreed, "yes, you're tied up. But—but this time—"

He swallowed, the scene coming easily to his mind—he'd imagined it so many times, the mental picture.

"You're tied up," he said, voice quiet, "but this time I didn't tie you tightly enough and you're able to free yourself."

(Roxanne, in his mind, slipped the bindings off her wrists, then her ankles. Roxanne, in his lap, made an interested noise.)

"I'm sitting at the control panel," he continued, "my back is to you, so I don't see you get up."

(Roxanne, in his mind, glanced at his chair, then at the doorway, hesitating.)

(there were places that this fantasy could go wrong, and this was one of them. sometimes he wasn't able to imagine her doing anything but leaving.)

Roxanne, in his lap, traced the edge of his ear with one fingertip, making him shiver.

"You have a chance to leave," he said quietly, "but you don't."

(Roxanne, in his mind, looked back at his chair and walked quietly towards it.)

"—and when I turn my chair around, you're standing over me," Megamind said.

(another place the fantasy could potentially go wrong. sometimes she slapped him, now.)

Roxanne, in his lap, kissed his cheek.

"I'm startled," he said, "I try to get up, but you put your hands on my shoulders and push me back down in the chair."

(Roxanne, in his mind, pressed him down.)

Roxanne, in his lap, moved her hands to his shoulders. Megamind felt his heartbeat pick up.

"—you stay like that for a moment, holding me still," he said. "And then you—smile at me."

(Roxanne, in his mind, smiled.)

He felt Roxanne's left thumb stroke the edge of his clavicle and his breath caught.

"And then you kiss me," he whispered.

(Roxanne, in his mind, leaned down.)

Megamind felt Roxanne brush her lips softly over his and his eyes fluttered open.

God, she was here; she was really here; this was really happening.

"Like that?" she asked quietly.

"Exactly like that," Megamind whispered, and Roxanne leaned forward to kiss him again, lips soft and gentle over his.
"And then what?" she asked, voice hushed.

"Hmm?"

"What happens next?" Roxanne asked. "Do I sit in your lap like this? Do I get undressed?"

"Oh!" Megamind said, "um. Sometimes, with the—the sitting thing, but I don't usually—you being naked—wasn't really—something I—let myself think about a lot. It—the fantasy—goes sort of—ah—blurry? At this point?"

"You never pictured me naked?" Roxanne asked, voice incredulous.

"Occasionally," Megamind muttered, "special occasions. It always seemed—especially inappropriately—voyeuristic. Please don't laugh."

"I'm not laughing," Roxanne said softly. "What did you usually think about, then?"

Megamind glanced at her; she didn't seem to be amused at his expense, and he relaxed slightly.

"I—I thought about—" he slid his fingers through her hair, "—I thought about how soft your hair would be."

He stroked her face.

"—and I imagined what it would be like to touch your skin."

He kissed her.

"—and what kissing you would feel like," he said, and then kissed her again.

"I thought about you saying yes to me," he said.

"Yes," Roxanne said, and Megamind kissed her once more.

"—and I tried to picture—" Megamind whispered as he broke the kiss, "I tried to picture what your expression would look like while you were letting me make you come."

Roxanne took a sharp breath, eyes wide. She looked—he wasn't sure what that expression signified, or even whether it was good or bad, but before he could worry too much that he'd said the wrong thing, Roxanne cupped his face gently in her hands and kissed him.

God, but he loved kissing her, marveled at the fact that he was allowed to, at the way that—it felt almost familiar by now.

(familiar; he had kissed Roxanne enough times that it felt familiar, Megamind thought, and was amazed all over again.)

But yet—even every kiss was always different, always unique and distinct—infinite variations; he could spend a lifetime kissing Roxanne and no kiss would ever be the same—

She made a soft noise into the kiss and pressed closer to him, her breasts against his chest as she moved restlessly in his lap. The lace of her panties scratched roughly over his tentacles in a way that was—really unexpectedly pleasurable, making Megamind gasp and break the kiss.

He moved a tentacle against her experimentally, rubbing her through the material, and both of them moaned.
"God," Roxanne said, closing her eyes and arching her back as he continued to stroke her, "—god, Megamind, yes, please—"

She moved her hips in little circles and leaned back, letting him take most of her weight, and that—her trusting him to keep her balanced—that made him feel so—unbelievably privileged. He pushed the material of her panties aside with two tentacles, slid two more inside of her, slipped the last of his tentacles past the rucked scrap of lace to touch her properly.

"Oh—" Roxanne said, eyes flying open, looking at him, then down at the place where their bodies came together, "oh, that is so neat—"

She looked back at his face again, and some of his confusion must have been showing (what—what did she find so impressive about—?)

"Y-you," she said, "—being able to—you don't even have to use your hands—"

Didn't even have to—oh. Megamind's eyes widened as a thought occurred; what had Roxanne said, that first day, about his tentacles?

(the fact that they're prehensile and capable of independent, controlled movement—really excited about that)

He'd dismissed the comment, at the time, but—it was actually true, wasn't it? If he—was normal, if he had the normal human male genitalia, he wouldn't be able to hold her with both arms and touch her like this at the same time. Wouldn't be able to curl his tentacles inside of her like this, applying the angle he'd figured out, the day she let him make her come with his fingers.

Roxanne arched her back again, leaning into his hands; Megamind twisted his tentacles inside of her and pressed against that sweet spot. He kissed her throat and felt the noise she made in response.

Their position in the chair meant that he wasn't really able to thrust up to meet her as she rolled her hips down onto him; this wasn't really a problem for him—he'd already come twice, so the desperate edge to his arousal was all but gone. But Roxanne made a frustrated sound, grinding down harder against him, so Megamind braced his feet on the ground and tried an experimental thrust.

It was not, strictly speaking, successful; all he mostly managed to do was send the chair rolling back a few inches.

Roxanne clutched at his shoulders, her eyes going wide, and then she laughed in a surprised way.

She bit her lip, then, looking uncertainly at his face, as if worried he was—was she worried that he'd been offended by her laughing?

Megamind grinned at her and then deliberately sent the chair rolling back again, let it slide a foot and a half this time before stopping it.

Roxanne laughed again, so Megamind rolled them once more, spinning the chair at the same time, showing off (it was a little more difficult than usual, with the different weight distribution, but he'd spent enough time playing around with this chair that he didn't need to worry about overbalancing them on accident).

Roxanne didn't seem to be worried, either; she held onto him just a little tighter and laughed, and—
—oh wow, that—that was a really amazing sensation, her laughing while he was inside of her, the rhythmic tightening of her around his tentacles—combined with how much Megamind loved the sound of Roxanne's laughter anyway—

"You are ridiculous, you know that?" Roxanne asked, still laughing.

"I know," Megamind said, smiling up at her.

He spun the chair quickly in the other direction, reaching out with one hand to catch hold of the edge of the lab table, bracing himself there—yes, that would be better; leverage, control—and tried thrusting again.

This time, it was much more successful. Roxanne gasped, fingers tightening on his shoulders.

"I think that must be—something you like about me, Roxanne," Megamind said, sliding a third tentacle into her and setting up a rhythm.

"Wh—what?" Roxanne said, and then moaned, rolling her hips down to meet him.

"My—ridiculousness," Megamind said, grinning at her. "Come on, admit it, Miss Ritchi," he added in a sing-song voice, trying to make her laugh again, "you find my nonsense—weirdly appealing."

"Ah! Yes, I—ohhh, I—really do," Roxanne said, laughter at the edges of her words. "You and your—rolling chair and your alligators and your—bootwheel of death—"

"I'll have you know, Miss Ritchi," Megamind said, with as much offended dignity as he could manage in his current circumstances (it wasn't a lot), "that my—bootwheel of death—was very serious business."

"Oh—very serious," Roxanne said, snickering, "trampled to death by an—artificial kicking machine—why aren't you screaming Miss Ritchi?! I'm fucking sitting over there—trying not to laugh—like—you literally stuck boots—on a wheel—that was the deathtrap. Fucking boot wheel of death oh my god—"

"Title did—leave a lot to be desired," Megamind admitted, "Bootwheel of Death."

Roxanne bit her lip, clearly trying not to laugh.

"Better than the other choices, though," Megamind added, "Boots on a Wheel."

The edges of Roxanne's mouth trembled.

"The Wheelboot of Death."

She started to smile and couldn't make herself stop this time.

"The Wheely-boot. The Bootywheel. That one's probably the worst, actually, conjures up a whole—different mental image—not what I was going for at all—"

Roxanne burst into laughter, her hands on his shoulders, her whole body shaking with mirth. Megamind grinned in triumph, and then she—gasped, her laughter mixing with a sound of pleasure as she started to come and—

"—ah, god, Roxanne—" Megamind said, shuddering through his own orgasm as she tightened around him and laughed in his arms.
(he loved her; this was perfect; she was perfect)

Roxanne, still laughing quietly, leaned her face against his neck.

"The Bootywheel, oh my god, you," she said.

Megamind laughed too, a little breathlessly, wrapping his arms a little tighter around her.

"The Bootywheel," he agreed, which set both of them off again laughing.

Finally Roxanne sat up, smiling, and looked at him. He looked back up at her, smiling as well, feeling so happy that it almost hurt his chest, his heart trembling on the edge of pain.

"Hey," he said softly, playing with a strand of her hair.

"Hey," Roxanne said, matching her tone to his, and then both of them were silent for a long moment.

Megamind brushed Roxanne's hair back and tucked it behind her ear.

"Is it at all like you imagined it?" Roxanne asked, breaking the silence. "Sex," she clarified, at his inquiring expression. "With—with me. You just—you said that you—that you wanted this a long time and I was just wondering if—if it's anything like what you imagined."

"Well, no," Megamind said, "it's much better."

Roxanne looked at him sharply.

"Better," she said, "really? Better than something you could imagine as perfect?"

"Yes, of course," Megamind said, a little thrown by the way she looked like she might not believe him. "I—I mean, there's so much more—detail. You—you have freckles," he said, tapping his fingertips on her hip, where he knew, without checking, that there was a pattern of seven freckles, hidden beneath the lace of her panties. "I never imagined you with freckles."

(it always reminded him of something, that pattern of freckles, but he could never place exactly what—)

Roxanne raised her eyebrows, lips curving in a smile.

"You like freckles?" she asked.

"I like you," he said, "I like that this is real. I like the—the things that I could never imagine or predict, the—the freckles and the—laughing and the— This—this is perfect, much more perfect than anything I could ever—imagine, it's—the realness. The realness is what makes it perfect. Does—does that make sense?" he asked.

"—yeah," Roxanne said, "yeah, I—it makes sense."

She still looked a little uncertain, though, the way she was biting her lip and looking past him—had that been a weird thing to say? Maybe it didn't make sense; maybe she was just humoring him—

"I mean," Megamind laughed nervously, "I never imagined that you would say that you never hated me. That was—that was a. good surprise. to have…"

Roxanne's eyes focused on him again.
"Are you still hung up on the me-never-hating-you thing?" she asked, tone incredulous.

(her expression was affectionate, though, so Megamind allowed himself to relax slightly.)

"Well, it is—a little hard to—believe," he said.

(more than a little, honestly.)

"—you really never hated me?" he asked.

Roxanne rolled her eyes, expression going even more affectionate, even as she shook her head at him.

"No," she said, "No, I didn't."

She leaned forward and pressed a kiss to his temple; Megamind hummed appreciatively, letting his eyelids slip closed.

He felt Roxanne lean back, felt her slide one hand from his shoulder to his chest. She rested it there, her thumb stroking the skin just beneath the hollow of his throat.

"Megamind," Roxanne said, her voice sounding hesitant.

"Hm?" he asked, opening his eyes to look at her.

"I know you never—I know you never hated me," she said, eyes on her own hand, thumb stroking back and forth, "but—when did you stop thinking of me as—just the damsel in distress?"

Megamind looked at her face; she seemed oddly reluctant to meet his eyes. He frowned.

"I always knew you were more than that," he said. "From—from the first time we met, Roxanne."

She did look up at him at that.

"The first time we met—when you kidnapped me?" she said, voice dry with evident disbelief.

"Everybody else ran," Megamind said, "and—and you didn't. I remember thinking how brave you were. And then—and then when I. Well…got set on fire. You helped me put out the flames…"

"Of course I helped you," Roxanne said, "you were on fire!"

"I had just threatened your life," Megamind said.

Roxanne rolled her eyes.

"You had just threatened me with dehydration," she said.

"Yes, and most people would not have been smart enough to catch that detail, Roxanne," Megamind said, "which really just goes to show how—and—and after you helped me, you—you asked if I was okay."

"You had just been set on fire!"

Megamind shook his head, not sure how to sufficiently explain how vitally important that moment had been for him: the very first time Roxanne knocked his world off its axis, made it falter in its orbit and—and start to spin around her instead of—
—instead of around his original conception of supervillainy as a way of achieving his dual goals of fixing his city and dying as young and dramatically as possible.

(he'd told them, that day in Roxanne's kitchen, that he'd made been a choice between suicide and being the bad guy, but Megamind had always known that supervillainy was a good way to get himself killed. It had been one of the attractions of the job, when he first started.)

"People don't help me, Roxanne," Megamind said, "people don't—people don't ask if I'm okay."

Roxanne's expression went a little stricken at that, so Megamind hurried on in his explanation.

"And—and when Metro Man flew over, you yelled at him," he said.

"He had almost set me on fire!"

"And most people would not have noticed that," Megamind said, "they wouldn't have seen it; they wouldn't have let themselves see it. Most people—most people only see what they want to see, but you—you see things how they really are, Roxanne." He shrugged. "And I think that's amazing. I always did. That was one of the reasons, I think, why I always wanted to impress you so badly. Because if you were impressed, then I'd know that it was—really something worthwhile."

She stared at him, expression almost—she looked as though she hurt, somehow.

Fuck, he was just—he was doing this all wrong, wasn't he?

He'd been trying to praise her, trying to tell her how important and amazing and wonderful she was, and all he'd done was upset her.

(had he gotten too close to his—too close to talking about his—his feelings for her? Roxanne had said that didn't matter, but him bringing it up over and over again—well, that probably wasn't good. Probably not particularly comfortable for her. Did it—did it—make her—unhappy, the fact that he was in love with her? Did she—did she feel guilty because she didn't love him back, or some ridiculous thing like that? Did she feel like he thought she owed him that?)

God damn it; he didn't know, didn't know what he'd done, exactly, to put that sad expression on her face, but he knew that he hated himself for it, hated himself for not knowing how to undo whatever stupid thing he'd done.

It had been good, a few minutes ago, when he'd made her laugh, but then he'd gone and said the wrong thing—like he always did—without understanding why it was the wrong thing—like he always did—and now the whole—the whole good thing, the nice moment, had been ruined.

He always did that; he always messed up everything good—you don't deserve to have nice things; you always ruin them.

(there were sticky marks on Roxanne's skin, from where he'd touched himself and then touched her—on her skin and in her hair, and there was a black smudge on her cheek that he'd left there, too—)

"I got you dirty," he said quietly, reaching out to try to wipe the black mark away, and then drawing his hand back before it could touch her.

Roxanne blinked, and then smiled at him, sad expression vanishing.

"I'll take a shower," she said lightly, "you can take one with me."
Megamind—froze, for half a second.

She didn't know—she didn't know what that—what he was pretty sure that invitation would have signified, among his species.

The recording in his pod had been a little hard for his eight-day-old mind to understand completely, but he was fairly certain that bathing together was something like a marriage ceremony on his planet, and explaining that would be awkward now, with Roxanne already possibly feeling guilty about not returning his feelings, but accepting without telling her would probably be very wrong—it would be, wouldn't it? It would be wrong? Even if he wasn't expecting it to—count—for her, just for him, and they weren't on his planet, and she'd said shower, not bath, and the pod recording hadn't accounted for showers at all; showers were probably just an earth thing and so they most likely didn't count anyway, and damn him entirely to hell—

"—I should stay," he blurted out, "and—and finish! What I was doing. Earlier. I'll—I'll take a shower after you're done."

Roxanne's smile—flickered—he thought, maybe, just for a moment.

But he probably had just imagined that, because she kissed him, quick and light, and climbed out of his lap, still smiling.

"Okay," she said, "which way is the shower?"

Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

Thank you all so much for your continued support of Code: Safeword! I love all of the comments and kudos; they really get me excited to write! Set loves you all, dear readers! <3 I hope you enjoyed the chapter!
Roxanne took a deep breath. The bathroom was warm and filled with steam, but somehow she still felt a horrible sort of coldness in her heart. She glanced at her reflection in the mirror over the sink and flinched at the expression in her eyes.

Fuck. She needed to get herself under control, needed to stop being so damn needy and clingy before she scared Megamind off for good.

Tell me that you like me, Megamind; tell me that I’m special, Megamind, she thought viciously at herself. Well, now you know the truth and it serves you right for asking, you idiot.

Special. God. The only reason he had any interest in her at all was because she’d happened to be the first person to show him the absolute minimum amount of human fucking decency.

(when the Plan worked, when Megamind started interacting with other people—smarter, nicer, more attractive people—he was going to realize how entirely unremarkable Roxanne was and she would be lucky if he still even wanted to be friends with her, let alone—)

Tears welled up in Roxanne’s eyes; she wiped them savagely away.

This was why she’d never wanted to fall in love. This was why she made it a goddamn point to only date people who she didn’t really care that much about. She’d never wanted to have to deal with being the one who cared more, hadn’t ever wanted to give anyone that much power over her.

And then her stupid heart had gone and fallen for Megamind anyway, without her permission, without her even realizing it until it was far too late.

(and the fucked up thing, the truly fucked up thing was that she couldn’t even find it in herself to regret it, he was never going to love her back and she couldn’t even make herself regret loving him anyway)

Roxanne turned away from the mirror and stepped beneath the water and pretended that it was only spray from the shower head that ran down her face.

By the time she finished her shower, she’d gotten herself under control again. She finger-combed her hair, wishing that she’d thought to bring shampoo, or at least a brush—of course Megamind didn’t have either of those things.

She looked critically at her own reflection and grimaced. No makeup, uncombed hair, eyes slightly reddened from crying—great. Really appealing.

Megamind had given her an extra toothbrush; she used it and looked at her reflection again.

Yep. Not any better.

Oh well, nothing to be done now, she supposed. She sighed and wrapped herself in a towel, then opened the bathroom door and moved down the hall to Megamind’s room.

She actually should probably just leave, but it was late and Megamind had said she could stay,
after he’d shown her the way to the bathroom and given her the toothbrush.

Before he’d fairly fled from her back to his lab.

She needed to stop making him feel trapped, needed to stop suffocating him with her need. She’d told him, the first time they were together, that he belonged to her, but he didn’t, not really, and he never would. He didn’t want to belong to her; he’d made that clear.

Megamind was evidently still (avoiding her) in his lab; the bedroom was empty when Roxanne went in.

There were pajamas laid out on the bed, though; he’d apparently left them there for her, since he’d put her purse down next to them.

He’d probably been at some pains to find something that would fit her; she’d worn his pajama shirt that morning, but it had been rather tight, and not exactly comfortable enough to sleep in. The black sweatpants he’d left her were only a little snug, when she put them on. The oversized orange sweater—the sleeves ragged on the ends, the collar cut out (so he could get it over his head, of course), and the hemline reaching halfway to her knees —was one of the ugliest pieces of clothing Roxanne had ever seen, but it was surprisingly soft, and comfortingly warm, as were the fuzzy gray socks he’d left her.

There was a hook on the back of Megamind’s door; Roxanne hung her towel there, then glanced at the bed, hesitating, biting her lip.

It felt—it felt weird, getting into Megamind’s bed without Megamind there. Not just—it wasn’t just that she wanted him there with her, it was—it probably would have felt less weird if she had been naked, or if she’d at least been wearing a sexy nightgown, or something. Wearing pajamas like this (ugly and comfortable and his) felt shockingly domestic in a way that made Roxanne’s chest ache.

Was he going to come and sleep, too? Or was he going to spend the whole night avoiding her?

He’d said he’d take a shower after she was done, but that might easily have been a polite lie. Maybe he was hoping she’d fall asleep so he wouldn’t have to talk to her.

No; surely, surely that wasn’t it; Megamind did at least like her, he’d said that they were friends. He had fun with her; he’d had fun earlier, when they’d made love in his chair and laughed together —

—had sex in his chair, Roxanne corrected herself sharply. Not made love, had sex.

She’d never been with someone who she could laugh with like that during sex. Roxanne had been worried that he would be offended, the first time she was surprised into laughing.

But he hadn’t been offended, had actually seemed to like it, had spun her around in the chair and teased her and made fun of himself until she laughed again, until she came, laughing, in his arms.

Roxanne knew sex was meant to be enjoyed; she’d been the one to tell Megamind that, the first time they were together, but she’d never enjoyed it like that before: silly and imperfect and wonderful.

She wrapped her arms around herself, feeling cold in spite of the warmth of her borrowed pajamas and the relative warmth of the Lair.
(he’d changed the temperature for her, had set out clothes for her to wear, and how had someone so honestly thoughtful and sweet ever believed that he was evil?)

Roxanne climbed into his bed, pulling the scratchy sheet and the blanket over herself. It was a very small bed, but it still felt too large, without Megamind in it with her.

At least, she told herself again, you know he does have fun, with you. What had he said to her, grinning up at her—that he thought his ridiculousness must be something she liked about him? She’d been more than a little distracted, at the time, by the maddening, sharp edges of his smile, just begging to be kissed, by the way his eyes sparkled with mischief, by the sensation of him thrusting up into her, tentacles all moving, but he had said that, and it struck her, now, as significant. Definitely a hell of a change from his previous insistence that there was nothing she could possibly like about him.

Yes, that was—that was good; it was really good, and it was really very good that he’d had enough confidence to be okay with her laughing during sex. Her—her continued presence in Megamind’s life was having a positive impact on him, even beyond the Plan, and so it was okay, wasn’t it, that she showed up at his home late at night while he was working and bothered him, and it was okay that she begged him to talk to her on the phone for hours when he should have been sleeping and—

That was okay. It was—her neediness was forgivable, as long as she kept it under control.

Roxanne pulled her purse towards herself from the foot of the bed and opened it up, fishing around in it until she came up with the spare key that she’d found earlier, before leaving her apartment for the Lair.

She went to put the key down on the bedside table, then hesitated.

Shit. Was this—she’d just promised herself that she’d keep her desire for closeness to Megamind under control, and this—this was probably a not-so-under-control thing, wasn’t it; giving him a key to her house.

But.

(but she wanted to)

And she’d already told him that she was going to, so it would be such a big deal, right? She’d given him a standing invitation to break into her house if he wanted to, for fuck’s sake; a spare key was probably not any more obviously desperate than that.

Plus! It would doubtless be nice for Megamind to have a key, so he could—feel like he was trusted.

Yes.

(also she just wanted to give it to him.)

Roxanne put the key down on the bedside table decisively.

As she did so, a book that also rested on the table caught her eye.

It very battered paperback with a half-torn cover. She picked it up and opened it, reading the title on the inner page.

The Blue Castle, by L.M. Montgomery.
Her lips quirked in a smile. Blue, of course. Then she frowned, head tilting thoughtfully. L.M. Montgomery—wasn’t that the name of the author who wrote Anne of Green Gables…? Interesting.

(she heard the sound of the shower kicking on again and breathed an internal sigh of relief. so he hadn’t been telling her polite lies and he would be coming to bed.)

There was a Metro City Library stamp on the inner page, and a library card, but the last date it had been checked out was 1996, and Megamind had written his M-and-two-lightning-bolts insignia beneath the Library stamp.

Roxanne turned to the first page of the book and started to read.

Valancy wakened early, in the lifeless, hopeless hour just preceding dawn. She had not slept very well. One does not sleep well, sometimes, when one is twenty-nine on the morrow, and unmarried, in a community and connection where the unmarried are simply those who have failed to get a man.

Roxanne dropped the book as if it had suddenly grown teeth and bit her.

Well, fuck.

Get it together, Roxanne scolded herself mentally.

She eyed the book with distaste.

It had fallen open, quite naturally, to a page near the end; there were clear signs that this part of the book had been read and re-read enough times to permanently crease the binding at this particular page.

Roxanne, cursing her own incurable curiosity even as she did it, picked the book up and cautiously read the section that Megamind evidently found so fascinating.

“I can’t believe you care for me,” she said helplessly. “I know you can’t. What’s the use, Barney? Of course, you’re sorry for me—of course you want to do the best you can to straighten out the mess. But it can’t be straightened out that way. You couldn’t love me—me.” She stood up and pointed tragically to the mirror over the mantel.

Barney didn’t look at the mirror. He looked at Valancy as if he would like to snatch her—or beat her.

“Love you! Girl, you’re in the very core of my heart. I hold you there like a jewel. Didn’t I promise you I’d never tell you a lie? Love you! I love you with all there is of me to love. Heart, soul, brain. Every fibre of body and spirit thrilling to the sweetness of you. There’s nobody in the world for me but you, Valancy.”

Hmm, so there was, at least, a happy ending.

And Megamind liked the happy ending—if he was the one who had creased the binding like this; it was possible, Roxanne admitted, journalistic integrity kicking in, that the book had been like that before he got it.

But still—he must have found something about this book interesting, since he had it by his bedside.

Did Megamind like old-fashioned romance stories? That was adorable.
Roxanne turned back to the beginning of the book and began to read again. She carefully skipped over the passages talking about how the main character was an old maid at twenty-nine (younger than Roxanne, and yes, different time period and all that, but—well, Roxanne just didn’t feel like reading that right now)

She went on to the next part:

she lay there, a huddled, futile little figure, listening to the rain pouring down outside and watching, with a sick distaste, the chill, merciless light creeping into her ugly, sordid room.

She knew the ugliness of that room by heart—knew it and hated it. The yellow-painted floor, with one hideous, “hooked” rug by the bed, with a grotesque, “hooked” dog on it, always grinning at her when she awoke; the faded, dark-red paper; the ceiling discoloured by old leaks and crossed by cracks; the narrow, pinched little washtub; the brown-paper lambrequin with purple roses on it; the spotted old looking-glass with the crack across it, propped up on the inadequate dressing-table—

Roxanne stopped reading and looked around Megamind’s bedroom—the bare concrete walls, the mismatched and crooked bookshelves, the cheap and torn poster of the ocean tacked on one wall—and decided right then that she was going to buy him some nice things, goddamn it.

Then she turned back to the book and started to read again.

After a while, the bedroom door creaked open and Megamind came in, closing the door after himself. Roxanne looked up.

He was already in his own pajamas, the same ones from the other night (which was a shame; Roxanne would have loved to see him with just a towel on) and his skin looked damp and faintly flushed from his shower.

(god, he was beautiful)

She smiled at him and held up the book she had in her lap.

“Did you steal this book from the library?” she asked.

Roxanne was bemused to see something like scandalized shock cross Megamind’s face.

“What?” he said. “No! Of course I didn’t steal it from the library!”

Roxanne blinked.

“I don’t steal from the library,” Megamind said, sounding as though she’d just accused him of something akin to blasphemy.

“It’s got a library stamp,” Roxanne pointed out.

“Yes, I got it from the library, certainly; that’s where I got all of these,” Megamind said, waving a hand at the battered books that crowded the bookshelves. “But I didn’t steal them; these are—rescue books.”

He turned his head to look at her again, meeting her inquiring glance.
“They’d been weeded,” Megamind explained.

“Weeded?” Roxanne asked, moving over in the bed, making room for Megamind.

“Yes, librarians—go through the shelves regularly,” Megamind said, climbing into bed to sit crosslegged beside her, his hands moving illustratively as he spoke, “and discard books that are—you know, outdated or physically damaged, so they’ll have room for new material.”

Roxanne frowned.

“What happens to the books that get weeded?” she asked.

“Well, some of them—you know the free book table, at the front of the library? Most of them go there, first, and hopefully get picked up and taken home by someone.”

“And the ones that don’t?”

“Sometimes they—have to be destroyed.”

Roxanne felt her eyes go wide.

“That’s—awful,” she said.

“Well—it—sounds bad,” Megamind said, reaching out to stroke his fingers down the spine of the book in Roxanne’s hands, as though the book was a living thing that might get upset at hearing about this—it was an automatic gesture, she thought; he didn’t seem to be aware of making it.

“But,” he said, “it—it is necessary. You have to—there simply isn’t room for libraries to store all of the books they would have on their hands if they didn’t weed. And a book that’s—so damaged it can’t be read—there can’t be any point in keeping. And books that provide outdated information can actually be actively harmful to have available like—”

“Well, yeah, but they’re still—part of the historical record,” Roxanne argued. “If people just destroyed—oh, I don’t know; every single outdated medical book, for example—we’d lose all kinds of information on the history of medicine.”

“Yes, and that’s what museums are for,” Megamind said, “to preserve the history of things, but libraries aren’t museums. They aren’t meant to be museums. Libraries are supposed to be—libraries are a part of the community, they’re meant to be accessible and useful to people in the community in their everyday lives. Libraries have to change with their communities; they have to be—they’re not supposed to be—mausoleums for books, not supposed to be a shrine to dead literature; libraries are supposed to be alive.”

Roxanne tilted her head.

“Do you dislike museums?” she asked curiously.

“Wh—oh no, of course not! Of course not,” Megamind said, “I love museums too—though it’s probably pretty obvious that I prefer science and technology museums or—art museums—to history museums, but—I do—I love museums,” he said, “I just love libraries more.”

“That,” Roxanne said breathlessly, telling herself sternly that she was not close to swooning, “that is the nerdiest thing anyone has ever said to me.”

Megamind blushed and laughed a little self-consciously, looking away from her face and fiddling
with the edge of his pajama cape.

“—sorry,” he said, “I—know I get, um. Worked up. About weird things.”

“Hey,” Roxanne said gently, reaching out to tap him on the knee. “I said it was nerdy; I never said I didn’t like it. I just—I didn’t know you were so passionate about libraries. I think it’s cool that you are.”

Megamind glanced up at her face as if checking she wasn’t mocking him, and then smiled shyly, his fingers releasing the edge of his cape and reaching out to touch her wrist softly.

(something about the gesture reminded Roxanne of a plant unfurling its leaves in sunlight)

“That,” he told her, still smiling, “is the nerdiest thing anyone has ever said to me.”

Roxanne laughed and Megamind’s smile widened into a grin.

“I might be biased in favor of libraries, though,” he said, “I did live in the Metrocity Library for a while.”


“When I was a teenager. After I—ran away from home?—broke out of prison?—for the second time,” Megamind said, “I’d—realized after—with the first time, that Minion and I needed somewhere safe that we could stay. There’s a little—empty space between the ceiling of the top floor and the roof, in one of the corners of the building; that’s where we slept. And at night I had free run of the entire library.”

“I think I might actually be jealous,” Roxanne said. “I would have loved to run away from home and live in a library as a teenager.”

Megamind smiled.

“Perhaps it’s fortunate, after all, that we didn’t go to the same school,” he said, voice teasing, “If seducing you into a life of supervillainy would have been as easy as that.”

“As easy as giving me a library to live in? It really really would have been,” Roxanne said, laughing. “There’s a reason Beauty and the Beast is my favorite disney movie, you know. Give a girl a library and you’re pretty much set.”

Megamind laughed, too.

“I thought I was the only one who felt like that!” he said, and then added, “I love the way the library smells.”

“God, yes,” Roxanne said, “I love the way old books smell. New books, too—that fresh ink and paper scent.”

“I’ve never actually had a new book,” Megamind said.

“What, never?” Roxanne asked, a little appalled.

“—er, no,” Megamind said, “I mean—I’ve always gotten my books from the library, after they were—weeded.”
“But why?” Roxanne asked. “I know you said you don’t steal from the library, but surely you never had a moral objection to stealing from bookstores?”

“Well, no, but—” Megamind gestured, “honestly, though, most of the—the theft I did was—when I was first starting out, when I didn’t have money to pay for the things that Minion and I needed. But these days, I have—really, actually quite a lot of money. So it wouldn’t be—fair—to steal when I didn’t need to. That’s—that’s one of the rules—my rules—for—for people doing crime in Metrocity—you don’t steal from people who have less than you.”

Roxanne blinked, turning that over in her mind. That was—really very interesting. But—

“Well, since you do have money,” Roxanne said “and a disguise watch, why haven’t you ever gone out in disguise and bought new books? And not just books, Megamind, you could—you could buy yourself all sorts of things—”

“I buy things,” Megamind said, “I told you! And—remember what Minion said about the—tesla coils and the blinky dials and the outlet store in Romania?”

Roxanne shook her head.

“I don’t mean things for your work,” she said, “I mean things just for you. Things for you to enjoy. Books and movies and furniture and clothes and—nice things for you.”

“Oh,” Megamind said slowly, as if she’d just suggested something that he’d never even considered before, “I mean—I suppose I—I could buy things—like that. It just—well, it’s just—it never really felt like something that I—”

He cut himself off, shaking his head, looking away from her.

“Deserved?” Roxanne asked gently.

Megamind nodded, still avoiding her eyes.

“Oh, sweetheart,” she said sadly.

“Sorry,” he said in a small voice, “I’m—really sort of massively fucked up, aren’t I?”

“Hey,” Roxanne said, nudging him gently, “you don’t need to start beating yourself up about not being nice enough to yourself. That is—a horrible vicious circle of self-hatred and it’s not going to help anything. Also you don’t deserve it.”

Megamind looked up at her, smiling a little tremulously.

“Thank you,” he said, and then added, in a lighter tone, “do you know, every time I hear ‘vicious circle’, I always end up picturing one of those—you know, the old-fashioned video game with the bitey circles that eat things?”

Roxanne blinked.

“Pac-man?” she asked, laughing.

“Yes, that one! Pac-man, the vicious circle!”

“I always—pictured it more like an ouroboros,” Roxanne said, “but I’m never going to be able to think of it the same way again, now.” She shook her head, grinning. “Pac-man, the vicious circle.”
Megamind grinned back at her.

“So this book,” Roxanne said, holding up the volume for him to see, “have you read it already?”

“The Blue Castle?” he said, eyes lighting up, “Ooh, yes, that’s one of my favorites!”

“It’s a romance book, right?” Roxanne asked curiously, “I wouldn’t have figured that was your thing. I would have thought—science fiction? Or fantasy?”

Megamind made a wry face.

“Science fiction is—well, there’s a lot of ‘and now for a detailed description of the violent defeat of the invading aliens’, which—I tend to find upsetting for—obvious personal reasons. Fantasy is usually—better. Nicer? I don’t—but romance is my favorite. It’s—they’re—I don’t really know how to explain but—the way that romance writes the world is—better. A world that—that centers around love.”

He blushed and shrugged, looking away.

“I like that,” he said, “I like happy endings; I like—the idea that love could be the most important thing.”

Roxanne bit the inside of her cheek and told herself that she was not going to cry, she wasn’t.

“I like romance novels, too,” she said, keeping her voice happy and casual. “I think I probably lean more towards the erotica side of things than you, though. This,” she gestured to the book, “seems a little, ah—tamer than what I normally go for.”

“Romance books with sex in them are—occasionally all right,” Megamind said, “but I tend to be a little—cautious. About them.” He made a face. “I came across a few too many ‘no means yes’ scenes, which—” he shuddered. “Ugh. No no no. Sometimes those scenes were even with the hero! All of the no. And! Even when there wasn’t that sort of problem, you still have a lot of really terrible ‘heroes’. I mean—” he gestured excitably.

“—this one book I was reading, yes, it was a historical romance—and the hero was rich and the heroine was poor and the first time they went to bed together, they had an entire discussion—an entire discussion, mind you!—about how she only had one chemise, how she couldn’t afford anything more, how she’d had it for so long and she’d had to mend it carefully over and over again when it got damaged—”

Megamind flung his arms wide, a look of almost comical exasperation on his face.

“And then! After they had an entire discussion about this—an entire discussion!—the so-called ‘hero’ proceeds to tear her chemise off! Just rips it right down the middle! Tears it off of her! I ask you!”

Roxanne choked a little on laughter.

“You don’t think tearing someone’s clothes off can be sexy?” she asked, tone teasing.

“Yes, but not when it’s their only piece of clothing!” Megamind said. “She didn’t have another chemise! That’s all she had to wear under her clothes! What was she supposed to do, run around for the rest of the book without any underwear on?”

“Is that what she did?” Roxanne asked.
“I don’t know!” Megamind said, “I was so angry I stopped reading after that!”

Roxanne laughed.

“Oh my god, Megamind, you are adorable; do you know that?”

“She only had one chemise! And he ruined it! And also, ugh, no I am not!” Megamind exclaimed, and then flopped dramatically back on the bed, covering his face with the pillow.

Roxanne poked him in the side and he made a squawking noise, moving the pillow from his face to glare at her reproachfully.

“Adorable,” she said smugly, and poked him again.

“No, I am—stop that! I am not adorable! I am—quit poking, Roxanne!—I am very very evil!”

“You are a marshmallow,” Roxanne said, grinning at him as he tried to slap her hands away, “One of those melty ones that have been sitting in hot chocolate until it’s gone all gooey.”

“I am not a marshmallow!” Megamind said, sounding outraged. “And! And that doesn’t even make any sense!”

“Marshmallow,” Roxanne said, and then gave a squawk of her own when Megamind hit her with the pillow.

“Ha! Take that!” Megamind said.

“Wait; wait! No!” Roxanne said, laughing as she tried to ward him off. “You can’t have a pillow fight with only one pillow! I’m unarmored!”

“I told you I was evil!” Megamind said dramatically, “I warned you, Miss Ritchi, but you wouldn’t listen! You have only yourself to blame!”

Roxanne threw herself at him and Megamind, laughing now, too, let the force of the impact send him tumbling backwards onto the mattress, Roxanne on top of him. He grinned up at her and Roxanne snatched the pillow away, then pressed a swift kiss to his forehead. Megamind made a contented sound.

“Marshmallow,” Roxanne murmured, and Megamind laughed.

Roxanne smiled and moved to lie more comfortably atop him, pushing the pillow aside in favor of lying with her head on Megamind’s chest and her leg thrown over his hip, one of his arms around her shoulders and the other around her waist, his fingers stroking idly up and down her spine. For a few moments, they lay like that in comfortable silence.

“I like this,” Megamind said abruptly, “this is nice. Is this what it’s like?”

“What’s like?” Roxanne asked, head still on his chest.

“Having friends.”

Roxanne tightened her arms around him without meaning to.

“Yeah,” she said, keeping her voice light, “this is—sort of like a sleepover, isn’t it. Ha, we even already had a pillow fight! Even if there was only one pillow, you cheater!”
“Ee-vil,” Megamind told her with lofty distain, making her laugh. “So pillow fights really—are something that happen at sleepovers?” he asked, voice curious.

“Well, yeah,” Roxanne said, pushing herself up on one elbow so that she could look at him.

Megamind turned slightly, so that they were facing each other and Roxanne sighed sadly, seeing his expression of genuine, innocent interest.

“You really missed out on a lot as a kid, didn’t you?” she said.

Megamind’s expression clouded over with something that looked like worry, so Roxanne pulled herself together and made an effort to lighten her own mood.

“Pillow fights,” she said in a tone of pretentious academia, “are, in fact, an essential part of any sleepover experience. Other foundational elements of a proper sleepover include prank calls, the eating of unhealthy snacks, and a distinct lack of anything like ‘sleeping’.”

“Prank calls?” Megamind asked, eyes lighting up with mischief.

“We’re not doing that,” Roxanne said, shaking her head and grinning.

“Aw,” Megamind said, pouting.

“You can play with my hair, though, if you want,” she said, with the air of one making a concession.

“Oh, yes!” Megamind said eagerly, sitting up.

Roxanne laughed and laid her head in Megamind’s lap.

Megamind froze for a moment, looking down at Roxanne. She’d—she’d put her head in his lap.

That felt—that felt incredibly important, similar to when she’d leaned their foreheads together, only instead of a sensation of ‘you-and-I-we-together’, this felt like ‘I-trust-you-completely’ and—and —

—oh, stop with the—the alien overthinking and the reading-into-things-that-don’t-mean-anything, Megamind, you ridiculous overemotional hopeless romantic. This is just a thing. That people do.

Stop trying to make it into something important.

He lowered his hands to stroke Roxanne’s hair, hoping she couldn’t feel the way he was shaking.

Her hair was still damp from her shower; strands of it clung together in a really fascinating way. He twisted part of it gently and it stood up in a sort of spike for a moment before slowly drooping down and falling apart again.

Ooh, spikes—

“Is it weird for you?” Roxanne asked.

“Is what weird?” Megamind asked, making another spike with Roxanne’s hair.

“Me—having hair,” Roxanne said. “Does it, you know— weird you out? Like I’m some sort of—I don’t know—furry animal or something?”
“What?” Megamind said, baffled. “No, of course not! Your hair is wonderful,” he added, brushing a strand of it behind Roxanne’s ear and telling himself not to shiver at the sensation. “Does it—bother you that I’m bald?” he asked uncertainly. “And that my head is—you know, the wrong size?”

“I like your head,” Roxanne said, as Megamind threaded his fingers through her hair, “it’s—I think it’s—really attractive, honestly. I sort of figured that—that my head was the wrong size for you.”

Megamind made a shocked noise, putting his palms protectively on Roxanne’s head, holding it. “You have a beautiful head,” he said fervently.

Roxanne made a pleased, humming sound, and Megamind resumed playing with her hair.

“So what else would we do?” he asked, breaking the momentary silence. “If—if this was a sleepover, I mean?”

“Mm,” Roxanne said, “well, we could paint each other’s nails and talk about guys. Or we could make out to ‘practice’ for when we actually dated people,” there was a half second pause, and then she added, with a laugh that sounded just a little odd to Megamind. “Although I guess we’ve already been doing that, huh?”

Megamind forced a laugh, hoping it didn’t sound as artificial as it felt.

(he must have gotten too close to talking about his feelings for her, earlier, if she felt like she had to remind him that this wasn’t real.)

“I painted my nails a few times when I was younger,” he said, voice deliberately light and conversational, “but I work with my hands so much, it always ended up wearing off rather quickly.”

Roxanne made an interested sound.

“And I never—I never thought particularly one way or the other about—guys,” Megamind continued.

Roxanne turned slightly so she could look up at him with a curious expression.

“I mean—I always—I’ve always found—male and female—people—” Megamind said, waving one hand in slightly nervous illustration, “—to be approximately—equally aesthetically pleasing?”

(it was ridiculous that he was nervous about this, Megamind told himself. Roxanne had already told him that she was bisexual—and he’d told her about not knowing his own sex or gender, and she’d been fine with that. He just—he wasn’t used to this—he wasn’t used to this being a thing it was okay to talk about.)

“It is just—an aesthetically pleasing, though,” he said, “not—I don’t really normally—find people to be—sexually appealing?”

Roxanne frowned.

“At—at all?” she asked.

(shit; he shouldn’t have brought this up; it was weird; it was too weird; it was—)

“N-not really?” he said, with a nervous laugh. “I mean, it’s—sort of like looking at—oh, I don’t
know—an exceptionally beautiful sunset. You do want to—to look at it, to keep looking at it, but there’s no—desire to, well…touch, or—do anything—with it…” he trailed off, looking down at Roxanne. “Does—does that make sense?” he asked hesitantly.

“Yeah, that makes sense,” Roxanne said, and Megamind breathed an involuntary sigh of relief.

“I never knew if that was—bisexuality, or just—disinterest,” Megamind said, watching her face.

“Oh—” Roxanne said, “well, I mean—you might be bi, too, but it definitely sounds like you’re probably somewhere on the asexual spectrum. That’s what that’s called, not being sexually attracted to people. You—” she bit her lip, looking worried, “you are—sexually attracted to me, though, right? I mean, from what you’ve said—”

“Oh, yes, to you, definitely,” Megamind said, with a laugh that actually wasn’t forced, “but that’s because I—”

(love you)

“—know you,” he finished, after nearly biting his own tongue off, “like you—trust you. Is this still a thing that makes sense?” he blurted out.

Roxanne’s frown smoothed out.

“Yes, that still makes sense,” she said, putting an arm around his waist and stroking his hip reassuringly. “It does sound like you’re probably somewhere on the ace spectrum, which is—that is absolutely within the range of normality.”

“R-really?” he asked, “this is—this is normal? I—I always sort of—I thought I must be broken,” he admitted in a rush. “I thought there must be something wrong with me. Or that—that it was because I w-wasn’t human—”

Roxanne sat up without warning and threw her arms around him, holding him tightly. Megamind startled, then wrapped his own arms around her.

“You are not broken,” she said, voice fierce, still holding him. “There is nothing wrong with you.”

Roxanne pulled away slightly and looked him in the face; Megamind was surprised to see that there were tears in her eyes.

She smiled at him, though, and put her hands on either side of his face.

“And there are things—this isn’t one of them, but there are things about you, Megamind, that are different because you’re not human.”

Roxanne smoothed her hands along the oversized curve of his head.

“But that doesn’t make them wrong things, Megamind,” she said firmly. “It doesn’t make them wrong things, and it doesn’t make them bad things. And they don’t make you wrong or bad or—or broken, either. Okay?”

“—okay,” Megamind whispered, the word catching in his throat.

He lifted his hands and put them on either side of Roxanne’s head and then carefully leaned forward and pressed their foreheads together.
(that inhuman, alien jolt of emotional reaction—you-and-I-we-together—but she’d said—she’d said that was all right, that the difference of him was all right, so he took a shaky breath and gave himself permission feel it this time.)

He let go and leaned back after a long moment, then smiled at Roxanne.

“Thank you,” he said.

“For what?” she asked, smiling back at him and shaking her head slightly.

“Existing,” Megamind said, with complete sincerity.

Roxanne’s expression went—odd and unreadable at that, something almost like pain, but not exactly—but Megamind wasn’t able to examine it any closer, to see if he could figure out what it meant, because she leaned forward and kissed him.

The kiss was—it wasn’t desperate or hurried or hungry, or anything he could categorize like that, it was—Roxanne kissed him like she wanted him to be very, very certain that he had been kissed. Like she was trying to make a point, or—like the kiss was the point. She was very—thorough about it, and when she finally broke the kiss, Megamind was more than a little breathless.

“Here,” she said, smiling at him again as she moved backwards to sit crosslegged with her back against the headboard, “switch me places.”

Switch her—? Oh, she wanted him to—

“You—do realize that I don’t—have any hair for you to play with, right?” he said in a joking tone, stalling for time.

(she wanted him to put his head in her lap? oh—oh god—)

Roxanne rolled her eyes.

“Yes, thank you, Megamind, I do realize that,” she said, with exaggerated patience.

Megamind hesitated.

Roxanne, seeing his expression, looked suddenly uncertain.

“You—you don’t have to if you don’t want to,” she said.

He did want to, though; that was the thing.

It was a little disconcerting, honestly, how much he wanted to, how much he loved it when she tied him up, how much he loved hearing her say that she wanted to uncover all of his secrets. He’d spent his whole life building up protective barriers between himself and the entire rest of the world, but when it came to Roxanne, all he wanted to do was to surrender to her completely.

Was it wrong, to want that? Megamind usually assumed that anything he wanted had to be wrong but—

But Roxanne was certainly worth surrendering to.

Megamind untied the knot that held the cape of his pajamas, let it fall from his shoulders and slip down onto the bed, and laid his head in Roxanne’s lap. She seemed surprised by the move. She held very still for a moment, after he did it, and Megamind tensed instinctively—had he hesitated
too long; had she decided to retract the invitation, had—

Her hands settled on his body, one at his waist and one on the top of his head, and Megamind let himself relax slightly. Roxanne drew the fingertips of the hand atop his head slowly over his brow—he was frowning; he hadn’t realized until he felt her smooth it away. Her fingertips slid gently down the bridge of his nose, then back up again. Megamind sighed and let his eyes slip closed.

God, but this was even better than he’d thought it would be, this—affectionate-touching thing. The affectionate-touching-without-sex thing—he knew already how wonderful it was, having Roxanne touch him while they were in bed together. Not that they weren’t in bed together now, in the strictest sense, but—this felt different. The touching now, without sex. It felt—just as intimate, but in a different way.

(the kind of way that made his heart hurt with the desire for—things he was never going to get to have with Roxanne; things she was never going to want to have, with him.)

Roxanne’s fingertips began tracing random patterns over his scalp, which felt—really shockingly good. He made a contented noise. Roxanne’s other hand pushed up his shirt slightly and slipped between the material and his skin and began to draw the same sort of patterns on his back. Megamind curled one hand around Roxanne’s knee and heard himself make one of those embarrassingly alien noises—this one sounded somewhere between a coo and a purr.

Roxanne laughed, soft and affectionate.

“You like having your back drawn on?” she asked.

“Evidently,” Megamind murmured, flushed face pressed to Roxanne’s leg.

The motion of Roxanne’s hands stopped for a moment and Megamind made a quiet, involuntary noise of protest. She resumed drawing on his back and head.

“Nobody’s ever done this for you before?” she asked, sounding a little sad. “I thought—Minion? Or the Warden, when you were a kid?”

“Minion’s a fish,” Megamind explained, relaxing under the motion of Roxanne’s hands. “The touching thing is—not so much, with Minion. Sometimes, when he remembers, but—well, he doesn’t have the same—instincts. For touching. And the Warden—and my—my uncles at the prison—”

Roxanne pushed the material of his shirt a little higher, giving herself more more of his back to work with.

“I grew up fast,” Megamind said, “much faster than a human child. They held me—until I didn’t need to be held anymore. And then they stopped.”

He shrugged.

“—they forgot how young you were,” Roxanne said, a touch of disapproval in her voice, “didn’t they?”

“To be fair to them,” Megamind said, “I don’t think any of them anticipated getting stuck raising a hyperactive, destructive alien child. It wasn’t like they were prepared.”

“You’re always so worried about being fair to other people,” Roxanne said quietly, “nobody’s ever worried about being fair to you.” She sighed. “Megamind, people always need to be held.”
Megamind opened his mouth to argue.

“Non-fish people,” Roxanne corrected herself before he could say anything. “mammal—people—mammal-people always need to be held. You are a mammal, aren’t you?” she asked after a slight pause.

Megamind laughed.

“I—probably roughly mammalian, yes,” he said. “And probably partially aquatic. I can hold my breath for a very long time, and I can actually respirate underwater for short amounts of time.”

“Wh—really?” Roxanne asked, sounding delighted.

Delighted. Of all fucking things. God, but he loved this woman.

“How?” she asked. “You don’t have gills; I definitely would have noticed.”

“Cutaneous respiration,” Megamind said.

“Like amphibians?”

“Mm-hm. Did you wonder why my neck and the whole—surrounding area—is so sensitive? Most of my skin is thicker than yours; harder to break. But the skin there is thinner, thinner even than yours—more nerve endings, and more blood vessels, allowing for cutaneous respiration to occur when I’m underwater. If I had to take a guess,” he continued, “and it is just a guess—at the evolutionary history of my species, I would say that we probably used to be more aquatic, and we probably had external gills there. But like I said, that’s just a guess.”

“Wow,” Roxanne breathed, “you are—so much more alien than I expected.”

Megamind laughed at her tone; he had to.

“You say that like it’s a good thing,” he said.

“It’s a really damn cool thing, is what it is,” Roxanne said. “Oh my god, six-year-old me would be so impressed if she could see me now!”

Megamind laughed again, feeling almost dizzy with amazement. He looked up over his shoulder at Roxanne, grinning.

“Is there anything else you’d like to know?” he asked.

Roxanne bit her lip.

“Oh, come on,” Megamind teased, “nosey reporter—I know you have questions!”

Roxanne looked at him through narrowed eyes, and then her features sharpened into that expression of intent and focused curiosity that Megamind so adored.

“Knew it!” he said triumphantly, grinning at her. “Ask.”

“Is your heart in the same place as a human’s?” Roxanne asked.

Megamind blinked at her, and then he laughed, turning over completely so he could look up into Roxanne’s face.
“You do go right for the kill, don’t you, Miss Ritchi?” he teased.

She glared at him, but she was trying not to smile; he could tell.

“My heart’s on the left side of my body, like yours is,” Megamind told her, “but it’s a little higher up in my chest.”

He took one of her hands and pressed it to his chest, over where he knew his heart was.

“Here,” he said.

“Why don’t you have scars?” Roxanne asked, keeping her hand on his chest. “You said your skin is harder to break, but I’ve seen you bleed before. And after a lifetime of fighting someone with superpowers, you should be covered in scars.”

She stroked her thumb back and forth on the material of his pajama shirt.

“I don’t scar,” Megamind said, “Not like you do, anyway. My skin heals differently.”

(there had been a lot of interest in that, when—)

“My bones don’t break as easily as yours,” he continued, turning the subject. “And they heal faster, too. And I don’t have just one set of permanent teeth. If I lose one, I grow another. I tend to be careful about my teeth anyway, though; it takes months for them to grow back and it hurts—ugh, so, so much.”

He shuddered, closing his eyes, remembering that particular pain.

“The healing thing was very convenient,” he said, “the way someone with Wayne’s powers was never able to do any visibly lasting damage to me—it did wonders for my reputation as a supervillain, let me tell you!”

He opened his eyes again and smiled up at Roxanne, who was looking down at him with an expression of uncertainty.

“Megamind,” she said, “would you—would you tell me how it works?”

“How what works?” he asked curiously.

“—being the Overlord of Metrocity,” she said.

And Megamind’s breath caught, because she had sounded serious when she said that—

She had sounded serious; there had been no mockery in the title she’d given him, in the way she’d echoed his pronunciation of his city’s name.

“Because you are, you know,” Roxanne continued, in a low, oddly intense voice. “I never knew it before I started doing the research for the Plan, but—all those times I mocked you for saying you were going to run things in this city someday, and the funny thing—the really funny thing is, you already do, don’t you?”

Megamind sat up slowly, keeping his eyes on Roxanne’s face the whole time.

“Do you have any idea,” he said quietly, “how long I have wanted to hear you say that?”

“What,” Roxanne said, arching an eyebrow, lips quirking into a mischievous moue, “me calling
“No,” Megamind said, still rather breathless with wonder, “no—although that’s—” he shook his head, laughing, “—that’s very nice, too, of course, but I meant—you, asking me how it works.”

Roxanne’s lips parted.

“I have wanted to hear you ask that for—years,” Megamind said. “God, yes, of course I’ll tell you, if you want to know, Roxanne. Okay—ah—I—”

He took a breath, mind whirling—what would be the best way to—this was important, he had to explain this right; this was his only chance at getting to show Roxanne what he—what he had—the best thing, the—the point of him.

“Okay,” he said, “okay, so I’ll—I’ll start at the beginning.”

Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

notes: quotes are from The Blue Castle by L.M. Montgomery.

Thank you so much for all of the reviews! They make me so happy and I appreciate them so much! I hope you enjoyed the chapter.

Set loves you, dear readers. <3
“So the first thing that you should understand is what the city was like before I began my career,” Megamind said. “The criminal side of things and the—not exactly criminal but—let’s call it morally questionable side of things. I know you lived here as a child, but I don’t know how much of that you would have known about—” He glanced at her inquiringly.

“A little,” Roxanne said, “My dad worked as a public defender and he’d talk about that sometimes. But like I told you, he—left—when I was pretty young.”

“All right,” Megamind said, “well, crime in Metrocity was not particularly organized at that time. You had one true old-fashioned gangster, who had been recently convicted—Lou Nowicki.”

Megamind smiled reminiscently.

“I learned a lot from Uncle Lou,” he continued, “Though we didn’t exactly see eye to eye in terms of scope of vision. He accused me once of trying to make crime into some kind of public service. I don’t think he realized how right he actually was. He tried to pull a double cross on me, a few years ago—an attempted coup, I suppose you could call it.”

He gave a short laugh.

“Really, he did me a favor,” he said, “when word got out that I’d ‘killed’ Lou Nowicki, most people in the criminal underworld decided that they’d be better off not messing with me. He lives in Florida now,” Megamind said, glancing at Roxanne with a wry smile. “I do have some experience with helping people fake their deaths. Not that Wayne would know that, of course.

“So—” Megamind continued, “you had Uncle Lou, and Uncle Lou’s people—some of them still functioning even with Uncle Lou incarcerated. And you had a good number of your basic territorial gangs; and also various assorted criminals ranging from small-time to medium-time, unaffiliated with the gangs. In addition to all that, you had a handful of superpowered villains—again, not affiliated with anyone—who caused a lot of trouble to everyone. There was, in short, a lot of crime. Lots of drugs, lots of guns, lots of violence. A lot of very—disorganized crime.”

“Yeah,” Roxanne said, “that was one of the reasons my mother decided to move back to Wisconsin when I was twelve—she was always going on about how dangerous it was, here. She’s still always going on about how dangerous it is here, actually,” she added. “Won’t listen to any of the statistics; won’t listen to me.”

She made a face and Megamind gave her a look of sympathy. Roxanne gave him a smile that was half grimace and gestured for him to continue.

“So,” Megamind said, “that was the actual criminal side of things, before I started. The morally questionable side—back when you and I were children, the factories in the industrial section of the city—they mostly they made cars, and parts for cars—those were still in the process of closing down, leading to a spike in unemployment.”

“I do remember some of that,” Roxanne said, frowning. “I remember people were angry.”

“Yes,” Megamind said, “people were angry. Real estate values went down dramatically during this
time, allowing large chunks of the business and residential portions of the city to be bought up by one wealthy family.”

“The Scotts?”

“The Scotts. Like I said,” Megamind continued, “this was already underway when Wayne and I both landed here—we’re from the same star system, actually; we landed at the same time, in pods.”

“So Wayne is an alien!” Roxanne said, “I mean, I always figured he might be, but everybody acts so cagey about it! Even when I asked him straight out, in interviews, he always dodged the question.”

“Yes,” Megamind said, “I imagine that’s probably down to—PR concerns, for one thing, and probably—ah—safety? Superpowered humans are definitely more acceptable to the general public; you know that. But I would—by now, he must know I wasn’t lying when I—back in shool, I told him about our planets. He didn’t believe me then, and that—that whole conversation went rather badly, but surely, by now—”

“Maybe we’d better ask him, the next time we see him,” Roxanne suggested.

“—yes,” Megamind said, “Well—”

He waved one hand in a dismissive gesture.

“Anyway,” he continued, “with the factories closed, lots of people were left without jobs. And then—the Scotts opened a series of brand new factories, on the other side of town. Scott Technology. Has it ever struck you as odd, Roxanne, that abrupt—technological leap forward? A corporation that historically manufactures cars—and then suddenly they’re producing engines for airplanes better than any other engines on the planet, amazingly innovative computer tech—”

“You think they used Wayne’s pod,” Roxanne said, “you think they reverse engineered the tech from the pod.”

“I know they did,” Megamind said. “I broke in and saw it. Well—as far as I’m concerned, the Scotts—and humanity—are welcome to the tech from Wayne’s pod; it’s certainly not mine; it’s not even from my planet and there’s no sense in letting it just go to waste. My problem with Scott Technology was the fact that they were paying their employees a wage so low it should have been criminal. And the Scotts, furthermore—”

“—owned half of the city.” Roxanne said, understanding dawning visibly in her expression. “All those people that worked for them—they owned their houses, didn’t they?”

“Their houses, their apartments—tenements is probably more accurate. Pay the people just enough money for them to pay their rent—back to you—and to keep them alive and working—for you…”

“While you profit off the goods that they produce,” Roxanne finished.

“Exactly,” Megamind said, “meanwhile, the city is falling apart, so it’s time to add in some gentrification, to the tune of wouldn’t this be a nice neighborhood if it didn’t have so many poor people living in it, followed by a rousing chorus of yes especially since so few of them are white.”

“God damn.”

“The Scotts ran this town, Roxanne,” Megamind said, “they ran this town and they ran it straight into the ground. And I decided that I was going to take it away from them and fix it. So—the first
step was to gain control of what they didn’t own: the criminal underworld. Uncle Lou was a very valuable asset, when I was first starting out, but I had to be careful how I used him—had to be sure that everyone understood who was really in charge.”

“Did you start calling yourself the Overlord, then?” Roxanne asked, lying down and propping herself up on one elbow, her hand beneath her chin.

Megamind laughed.

“I did, actually. Uncle Lou and the others thought I was crazy—I suppose I probably was. I mean, I was sixteen and nobody even knew who I was—you make a claim like that, and you’re going to get laughed at and then somebody’s going to decide that you need taught a lesson.”

He shrugged.

“Well, I’m used to being laughed at, but—” he tilted his head and regarded Roxanne thoughtfully, “—you’ve never really seen me fight, have you?”

Roxanne laughed.

“What are you talking about? I’ve seen you fight Metro Man probably a thousand times!”

“Not that,” Megamind said, waving a dismissive hand, “that’s practically stage fighting by now. I meant—well, anyway, I’m very good at it.”

Roxanne looked him up and down, a thoughtful expression on her face.

“Yes,” she murmured, “yes, you’d have to be, wouldn’t you?”

Megamind gave her a wry half smile.

“Yes,” he said.

He laughed.

“I had a whole—introductory speech that I did, actually,” he said. “I’d come in and they’d say ‘who the hell are you?’ and then I’d say—”

He straightened his spine and looked down his nose at Roxanne with a sneer.

“My name is Megamind. But you may call me Overlord.” He smirked, still looking down his nose at her. “I will, additionally, permit you to address me as Sir, if you wish. Boss is also acceptable.”

He laughed, dropping the pose.

“You did this as a sixteen year old?” Roxanne asked incredulously. “How are you still alive?”

Megamind shrugged.

“I told you,” he said, “I’m good at fighting. And I had Minion and the de-gun—remember, no one had seen the de-gun in action before at that point in time, so the de-gun was actually was a pretty big deal. And I had backup from Lou’s people. I did take precautions, as well—my suit; the design wasn’t as complex in those days, but even then, it functioned as armor. And—tell me, Miss Ritchi, why do you think I put spikes on the things that I wear?”

Roxanne raised her eyebrows.
“To look cool?” she asked teasingly.

“And I do look very cool in them,” Megamind agreed, with all of the old supervillain bravado—Roxanne laughed—“but I’ll tell you a secret about my spikes, my sweet, sarcastic Miss Ritchi—they exert a forcefield with enough energy to stop a bullet.”

Roxanne’s mouth fell open. Megamind looked at her expression with shy gratification. God, Roxanne looking at him like she was impressed—he could never get enough of that expression on her face.

“I created the first prototype in school,” he continued, “a helmet to wear when we played dodgeball.”

Roxanne blinked.

“You needed a bullet-stopping helmet to play—how the hell did you play dodgeball at your school?”

Megamind made a face.

“—ah,” Roxanne said flatly, a wealth of understanding in her voice.

“—anyway,” Megamind said, “I—gradually, of course—gained control and began organizing crime in Metrocity. Now, crime—profitable crime, can be divided into three main categories.” He ticked them off on his fingers, “Theft, illegal sales, and illegal intermediary movements of money or goods. Murder, of course, can be profitable, but only usually to the murderer themselves, and, usually, only once or twice. It’s hard to make a business out of murder. Though—there are people in Metrocity who kill for money.”

He hesitated, but Roxanne didn’t say anything, just nodded in comprehension.

“Well,” Megamind said, “as I said, profitable crime can be divided up into three categories. The first is theft. This includes burglary, mugging, grand theft auto, robbery, pickpocketing, forgery, and so on.

“Under my leadership, all citizens of Metrocity choosing to engage in any kind of theft are required to register with one of the city’s six official gangs, and to give a portion of any money they make through illegal means to the gangs.

“This money is then used by the gangs to help take care of people and public property in their territory. All gangs are required to keep accurate financial records. A small amount of the money is sent to me as Overlord—people would be suspicious if I didn’t seem to be profiting noticeably from my place at the head of the underworld.

“White collar criminals are also expected to register with the gangs, although most of them aren’t lucky enough to know the rules before they commit their crimes. I can’t tell you how many smug rich idiots I’ve had to sit down and explain things to.”

Roxanne laughed.

“You scare the shit out of them, didn’t you?” she asked.

“You may not have ever found me frightening, Miss Ritchi,” Megamind said, with a sharp, crooked smile, “but I assure you, most people do not have your courage.”
“Do you threaten to throw them to the alligators?” she asked.

“Ha! I never needed to. Most people aren’t as hard to impress as you. The alligators and deathtraps were all for you, my dear.”

Roxanne felt herself flush, wondering if the warm glow spreading through her was due to how weirdly flattered she was by Megamind saying that his alligators and deathtraps had only been for her—or if it was more due to hearing him call her my dear.

He’d never used any terms of endearment for her before. The way he called her Miss Ritchi sometimes was almost an endearment, and sometimes he said my dear Miss Ritchi, but he’d never—he’d never actually called her—

Megamind, no doubt completely unaware of her internal agitation, was still talking.

“The amount that registered thieves are required to give to their gang depends on their overall income, as well—the more illegal money you make, the higher percentage you’re required to give. You should see their faces when they hear about that!”

He laughed, and Roxanne laughed, too, telling herself she needed to calm down and not make a big deal out of this. If she wanted him to ever call her my dear again, she needed to not be weird about it.

“So that’s theft,” Megamind said. “The next category is illegal sales. This includes drugs, guns, and sex work. The city’s sex workers were among my first and best allies when I was attempting to take control of the underworld—they had the most to gain, you see, from the new way of doing business. You know Psycho Delic?”

“Yeah, of course,” Roxanne said, blinking a little at the sudden change of subject, “minor villain; psychoactive smoke powers with various different effects, purple skin, walks with a cane. He’s involved in the drug trade, isn’t he?”

“He is now,” Megamind said. “In the old days, he mostly kept brothels. I threw him out the window of one.”

Roxanne felt her eyes go wide.

“He lived, obviously,” Megamind said, “it wasn’t a very high window. And it was what he used to do to the women under his control when they displeased him. They all seemed to think that his own defenestration was only fair payback. Sex work in Metrocity now functions in a way similar to theft, but there’s only one registry, and it’s run by a woman called Madame La Roux. Exotic dancers are encouraged to register, but not required; a good portion of them do end up registering because of the benefits—"

“Benefits?”

“The Sex Workers Association has regulations for fair wages and treatment. The Association provides free—mandatory—health screenings to members, as well as birth control options, healthcare—especially healthcare pertaining to occupational hazards: pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, personal injuries, and so on. And during times when members find themselves unable to work, the Associate provides financial support. There’s also a retirement fund. And the Association keeps a superpowered villain of their own employed—Hot Flash—along with Hot Flash’s thugs. Any customer mistreating a member of the Association is taken care
“And the members pay into the Association’s funds,” Roxanne said, “like registered thieves pay into the gangs?”

“Exactly!” Megamind said, “Exactly, yes; and the amount they’re required to give depends on their income, just like for thieves. The Association isn’t required to give me as large a portion of their profits, however; what I mostly get from them is information. Which public officials are cheating on their wives or husbands; what members of the police force are open to bribes, and so forth. Blackmail material—always good to have on hand.”

“Is that where you get most of your information?” Roxanne asked.

“Well—not most, but certainly a good portion,” Megamind said. “I also employ various spies in different gangs, the brainbot patrols bring back information, and the city’s homeless population has been especially eager to help since the—the thing with the hostile architecture—that was a—a rather pleasant surprise, really; I hadn’t expected—”

He shook his head.

“So, that’s the Sex Workers Association. Then there’s the gun and drug trades—those are a little more complicated, especially the drug trade. The actual illegal sales of guns and drugs are handled by dealers that, like thieves, register with the gangs.”

Roxanne nodded her understanding.

“Drug manufacturers,” Megamind continued, “are also required to register with the gangs, and they have to meet workplace safety requirements and purity standards—the gangs do regular inspections, and so do I.”

“Do you give them prior warning?” Roxanne asked, “Or are they surprise inspections?”

“Both,” he said. “Now, when the drugs are gotten from outside the city; when they’re smuggled in instead of made here, they’re mostly brought in at certain official smuggling points—guns are smuggled the same way. Again, anyone wishing to smuggle in drugs should already be registered with a gang, and even if they’re planning on doing all the selling themselves, they still have to pass purity standards. Even if they’re bringing the drugs into the city without going through the official smuggling points, they are still required to notify their gang and submit to purity testing.

“Failure to comply has severe penalties, especially if, after they’re caught, the drugs they’re selling turn out to not pass the purity tests. Gangs mostly handle infractions in their own territories, and if the person selling the non-regulation drugs crosses over into more than one territory, the gangs know I expect them to work together to deal with it. They’re also to notify me when infractions occur.”

“How is Psycho Delic involved in the drug trade, if the gangs handle most of it?” Roxanne asked.

“Psycho’s is a licensed dealer, but he’s also a manufacturer; he uses his smoke to make custom drugs and drug mixes. A while back, he wanted to get big into producing and smuggling his custom smoke mixes out of Metrocity, but I dissuaded him.”

Roxanne raised her eyebrow.

“Did you throw him out of a window again?”
Megamind laughed.

“No, there was—remarkably very little violence involved in that particular conversation! It—really it was mostly me pointing out that using his smoke powers requires effort on his part, that his business associates outside the city would demand bigger and bigger batches from him as demand increased exponentially—because most of his smoke mixes are extremely addictive—and that he would eventually end up overtasking his powers. I also pointed out that he’d be bringing himself and his powers to the attention of—let us say—scientifically-minded, unscrupulous people. If they came for him at a moment when he’d overtasked his powers—and they would come then; that’s when they always come for people like us: when we’re vulnerable—then he would probably wind up in an underground lab for the rest of his life.

“Besides, as I told him, he can make plenty of money with much less effort by deliberately keeping the supply low. Psycho’s custom smoke mixes are a luxury item now; they’re a status symbol, and they cost you a correspondingly large amount of money.”

“Did you do that on purpose?” Roxanne asked, narrowing her eyes at Megamind, “Because of how addictive and dangerous they are?”

Megamind gave her an affectionate half-smile.

“You always did understand the way my mind works, Roxanne,” he said.

Roxanne felt herself blush, almost as much as she had when he’d called her my dear.

“Why do you have so many things running through the gangs?” Roxanne asked, hoping Megamind hadn’t noticed her blushing. “Why not keep everything separate, like with the Sex Workers Association?”

“The idea,” Megamind explained, “is to give the gangs a sense of responsibility for their territory, and for the city at large. It allows them to feel pride in their work, in the way that their Overlord trusts them to manage their section of the empire. You’re always going to get gangs, in a city, but this way they are held accountable for their actions.”

“And you keep the Association separate from the gangs because—”

“Sex work,” Megamind said, “is usually viewed—even by other people involved in criminal activities, sex work is often viewed as demeaning, and sex workers as—somehow less worthy of respect than other people. Not in Metrocity, though,” he said, shaking his head. “Keeping the Association separate gives them power; it makes it very clear that they are absolutely worthy of respect; it demands that the other members of the underworld treat them accordingly. And it’s about—it’s about making sure nobody owns anybody else in my city. All members of the Association, even those that work at a club or brothel, have the right to refuse service to anyone, at any time, and for any reason—or for no reason at all. That’s essential.”

Roxanne reached out and squeezed Megamind’s hand; he looked surprised at the move.

“How is it,” she asked, “that you understand all this—but you never found out so many things about sex?”

Megamind blinked at her hand on his, then looked at her face.

“Well, I—” he said, “I never—we never—talked shop; I never asked about their—about the details of their work; there wasn’t any—there wasn’t any reason for me to do that.”
He looked worried, now, as though he was afraid she disapproved, somehow, so Roxanne gave his hand another reassuring squeeze and then picked it up and pressed a quick kiss to the center of his palm.

“What about the sale of stolen items?” she asked.

“Oh!” Megamind said, looking up from their joined hands, “—stolen—stolen items are re-sold by licensed fences; that registry is run by a man called Big Jack Cartwright. I set it up—I set that up like that because—while it is important to give the gangs responsibility, it’s also important to make sure that no one single group has too much power. Since thieves are run through the gangs, fences are separate; they’re welcome to work with any thieves from any gangs they want. Checks and balances.”

Roxanne laced her fingers with Megamind’s and moved a little closer to him, so that her arm was draped over his leg, their joined hands resting comfortably on his knee, her other arm curled beneath her head so that she could look up at his face.

“I also—I also try to play the different groups off of one another, to a certain extent,” Megamind said, “the goal—I want them to work together, to be on friendly terms, but— A certain level of mutual suspicion between all of the different groups helps to prevent them from banding together to overthrow me.”

“Makes sense,” Roxanne said.

Megamind gave her a half smile.

“Although—if they did manage to band together to overthrow me, it might be a sign that the city had finally started functioning fully,” Megamind said, “I did consider that. But—”

He sighed, and rubbed at his face tiredly with his free hand.

“But I’m afraid that they’d just end up splintering after they got rid of me. People are so—they’ll work together on a single goal, but when the goal is accomplished, they inevitably start squabbling! It’s *maddening*.”

Megamind made a face and waved his hand.

“So,” he said, “That’s illegal sales. Next it’s—illegal intermediary movements of money and goods. We’ve already talked about smuggling—and about fencing, which is really actually sort of somewhere in between illegal sales and illegal intermediary movements—so what’s left is money laundering and illegal gambling.

“Most of the money laundering in Metrocity is handled by a woman who goes by the name of Mrs. Palmer. She heads up a conglomerate of discreet accountants—these accountants are actually employed at various legitimate firms throughout the city; by spreading the illegal activity out, Mrs. Palmer is able to avoid undue scrutiny of any one specific firm. I do my own money laundering, though. Mrs. Palmer and I have had a few disagreements about that over the years, but I have explained to her that I believe it is important, as Overlord, to keep myself slightly aloof from the ordinary criminal population of Metrocity, lest people get ideas.”

Megamind shot Roxanne a conspiratorial smile.

“Also,” he said, “I just flat-out don’t trust people.”

Roxanne smiled back at him, tightening her fingers around his slightly.
(He’d said he trusted her, though. She felt a fierce sort of possessive pride at the remembrance of that.)

“So! Gambling,” Megamind said. “Gambling is organized differently from other forms of crime, here; bookies mostly work in groups—one group handles bets at the Wolverines stadium, there’s another group at the hockey arena, another at the football stadium and—you have a question?”

“Oh!” Roxanne said. “Well, it’s not about gambling, really, but you mentioning all the sports made me think of it—ticket scalping? Is that—you probably don’t have them working with the groups of bookies, right? There wouldn’t be any real reason to.”

Megamind smiled at her.

“And what do you think is the most logical place for ticket scalping in the empire’s organizational structure, Roxanne?” he asked, looking eagerly expectant.

Roxanne frowned thoughtfully.

“Well—they’re technically illegal sales, right? But I can’t imagine that—I can’t imagine that there are enough people making a—significant enough amount of money just doing ticket scalping alone…I can’t imagine enough people having ticket scalping as their only or even as their main source of income to warrant a ticket scalping union. I would think they would—mostly have to be people with other jobs, either illegal, or legal. So I’d say the best way to run them would be through the gangs, too.”

Megamind’s smile widened.

“And that’s what I do,” he said.

“It seems like you’ve got a lot of varied types of people being gang members,” Roxanne said, “People who normally wouldn’t gravitate towards being part of gangs.”

“Oh, yes, definitely!” Megamind agreed. “And really, I think that’s helped to—inegrate the gangs into the fabric of the city. And it makes the members who come from the usual gang demographic feel—respected by their fellow citizens in a way that doesn’t relate directly to violence, do you know what I...? A respect that—doesn’t come from force, but from—establishing them as leaders through their intelligence and problem-solving abilities. Because I do make very, very sure that, although there are gang members from different social and economic backgrounds, the actual leaders of the gangs come from the classic gang member demographic. I’ve never wanted the gangs to feel as if I was taking something away from them, you understand. I want to—”

“Lift them up,” Roxanne said, “instead of pushing them down.”

“Exactly!” Megamind said, gesturing excitedly with his free hand, “exactly, yes! I’m so glad you understand—”

He reached down and brushed a strand of Roxanne’s hair behind her ear and she smiled up at him.

“But!” he said, “We were talking about gambling.”

“Gambling, yes,” Roxanne agreed.

“Well, as I said, the bookies work in groups; they don’t infringe on the territory of other groups. Then of course, there are gambling establishments; those register and then send in a certain percentage of their income to the gambling union, just as the bookies do. And all of the bookies are
allowed to take bets on anything that doesn’t fall under the jurisdiction of another group—I understand the outcome of my battles with Metro Man is a very popular subject for betting.

“Actually,” Megamind continued, “gambling is far and away the least stringently regulated branch of my criminal empire. There’s plenty of unreported gambling all throughout the underworld, but I don’t bother with dealing with it. I make a point, actually, of pretending not to notice.”

Roxanne frowned.

“People like to feel as if they’re getting away with something,” Megamind explained. “It makes them more likely not to fight you on everything else. And gambling is, comparatively speaking, one of the less harmful vices. Not like drugs or weapon sales.”

His thumb moved back and forth on the back of Roxanne’s hand.

“Do you—do you have more questions?” he asked.

“—well,” Roxanne said, “earlier, you said something about it being against your rules for people to steal from people with less than them—I was wondering if you could tell me more about that?”

“About the rules?”

Roxanne nodded.

“Of course. The first rule is that I am Metrocity’s one and only supervillain.”

Roxanne opened her mouth to argue; Megamind shook his head.

“You’re thinking of the other superpowered villains, of course,” he said, “but they are just that: villains. Not supervillains. The distinction is terribly important.”

“What’s the difference?” Roxanne asked.

Megamind grinned a sharp-edged grin.

“Presentation,” he said.

Roxanne laughed.

“You laugh!” he said, laughing with her, “But really, it’s true, Roxanne; the difference starts with presentation. The smoke, the lights, the sound effects—supervillainy is about the show. And it’s about the scope of the goals. A villain’s goals are relatively small: robbing a bank, spreading some mayhem, etcy-tera. Whereas a supervillain—tell me, Miss Ritchi; what are my usual demands?”

“That Metro Man leave the city,” Roxanne said. “And that control of the city then be turned over to you. Okay, yeah, I see what you mean.”

“Yes,” Megamind said, “so. I am Metrocity’s only supervillain. The other villains are not to try to claim this title; they’re not to attempt to fight Metro Man. Only I do that.”

Roxanne nodded her understanding.

“And the second rule is, of course,” Megamind said, “nobody touches Roxanne Ritchi.”

Roxanne felt her mouth fall open a little.
“—come again?” she said.

“Well, of course I had to make sure you were safe,” Megamind said, voice matter of fact. “I couldn’t risk you getting hurt by some member of my empire trying to impress me. So yes. Rule two is nobody touches Roxanne Ritchi. Honestly,” he continued, “you mentioned your mother being worried about you living here, but Metrocity is really probably the safest place in the world for you. I mean—the entire criminal underworld knows you’re off-limits.”

“Oh my god,” Roxanne said faintly, “oh my god—two years ago, some guy tried to mug me—and—and halfway through, he handed me my purse back and said he hadn’t recognized me and then he apologized, oh my god Megamind—”

“Yes,” Megamind said, “like that. Really—the damsel in distress bit is my thing entirely, as supervillain. I had to have a talk with one of my villains a few years ago—Lady Doppler; she kidnapped a reporter—really! a little originality, come on! I broke it up before it could go too far, explained to Lady Doppler that she needed to keep to her own arena of crime, had her take the girl back home and—”

“Connie!” Roxanne said, “Oh my god, that was Connie; she does the weather at KCMP; she said she got kidnapped by Lady Doppler once!”

“Right?! She even worked for the same news station as you!” Megamind said, “Like I said; imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but there is only one reporter Damsel in this town, thank you very much!”

Roxanne giggled; Megamind looked at her.

“What?” he asked.

“You’re so indignant,” she said.

Megamind’s lips twitched, but he shook his head.

“The Supervillain/Damsel routine is our thing, Miss Ritchi,” he said. “No one else’s.”

Roxanne laughed in earnest and then leaned forward to kiss his knee.

(It still hit her sometimes, how very wonderfully strange this whole thing was: lying in bed with Megamind, listening to him tell her earnestly that they were the only Damsel and Supervillain in the city. She had certainly never expected her life to take this particular odd twist, but she was so glad it had.)

“Now, obviously,” Megamind continued, “there were some problems inherent in outright stating that you weren’t to be touched—anyone wishing to actually challenge me might see you as an easy target. So I generally make a show of pretended weaknesses—have you read the Evil Overlord List?”

“Wh—uh, yeah,” Roxanne said, laughing. “Have you? I mean—you don’t follow it—the goatee, the maniacal laughter, the hostage-in-a-trap schtick—”

“Now wait a—“

“The dramatic posing, the monologuing about the evil plans—”

“You—!”
“The gloating, the—”

“Anyway!” Megamind said loudly, sending a mock glare in her direction. “The entry that I was
talking about, Miss Ritchi is the one that advises you to make up a fake weakness to distract from
your real weakness. So that’s what I do—for you and for Minion, and for—other—important
things. Every six months or so, I allow a conspiracy against me to set itself up. I pretend not to
notice that, either. But really I keep them under very close scrutiny—once—” He snickered
wickedly. “Once, I even used the disguise watch to join! Oh, it was so much fun! I was the most
annoyingly incompetent secret society member ever; a month in and my fellow conspirators were
spending more time plotting to murder my fake identity than my real one!”

He shook his head, still laughing a little.

“So distraction is a useful tactic,” he said, “but I’ve also always made sure you showed to the best
advantage, during kidnappings. Really I didn’t have to do much, though; you did most of that
yourself.”

“Showed to the best advantage?” Roxanne asked.

“Yes, you know—the way you never screamed, no matter what I threatened you with, that
certainly helped,” Megamind said, “and also your intelligence, and the fact that you are dangerous
—”

“Dangerous? What are you talking about?” Roxanne said, laughing uncertainly.

(dangerous? she wasn’t dangerous—)

“Definitely dangerous,” Megamind said. “Remember how many times you contributed to my
defeat? Noticing some fatal flaw in the plan and then calling it out just in time…”

“Well, yeah, but—wait,” Roxanne said, stomach dropping, “was that—was that on purpose,
Megamind? Was that you—was that you just—”

(—just letting her win, as if he was playing cards with a child, and she’d been so proud, every time,
too, had always felt like maybe this time, this time Megamind might see her as an equal—)

“Not all of it,” Megamind said, “and—not always on purpose, not exactly, but—I would throw
things in sometimes, to see if you would—to see if you would catch it? Pick up on it? It was like—
having a conversation with you…”

“Oh,” Roxanne said, feeling very small and very human and very stupid, all of a sudden.

“And even the things I did consciously add for you—” Megamind said, looking down at the
blanket instead of her face, the fingers of his free hand tracing random patterns on the cloth, “—
even those things seldom turned out the way I expected. I mean—do you remember the time—do
you remember the time I used the Brawnbots?”

“—yeah, of course,” Roxanne said.

“That was back when I used to tie you with your hands in front of your body, remember?”
Megamind said. “And you jumped out of your chair and tore the control gauntlet for the Brawnbots
off of my hand?”

“Yes,” Roxanne said.
“I was standing at the console, pushing buttons,” Megamind said, “how’d you know to go for the gauntlet instead, Roxanne?”

“—well, there was a little—there was—one of the joints on that glove,” Roxanne said, “it was gold. None of the other joints on either glove were gold. And you had just—you’d referenced Lord of the Rings, before that—so I thought…”

She trailed off.

“You wanted me to do that,” she said, feeling more stupid than before.

“No! That’s what I mean! I—I wanted to see if you’d catch the reference, yes!” gesturing with his free hand. “I wanted to see if you’d read the—but you weren’t supposed to actually yank the glove off! The electrical charge—I’m fortunate you weren’t seriously injured; you might easily have been! You were just supposed to tell Metro Man what to do. But you—”

Megamind shook his head.

“You,” he said, “nearly gave me a heart attack, Roxanne. That’s when I realized I needed to be tying you more securely.”

“—oh,” Roxanne said.

(because she might hurt herself. she’d thought he’d started tying her up more securely after that because he’d been angry that she’d managed to ruin his plan herself, but really—really he’d been worried she wasn’t intelligent enough to keep from injuring herself.)

A tense, uncomfortable silence stretched between them.

“W-well—anyway,” Megamind said, biting his lip. “The rules—there—there are lots of rules—like I said, no stealing from people who have less than you; children are not to be harmed—that’s more strictly enforced than rules about theft.

“Also there’s—rules about acceptable places for violence. Gang violence is to be kept out of residential areas—except when we’re using it deliberately to combat gentrification. That’s mostly for show, though; and they’re not meant to actually hurt any of the—hmm—invading people. Just scare them so they leave, which, if it happens enough times, drives the property values down, so that the new owners will sell, either to me, or to people that the gangs themselves hire as fronts.”

Megamind ran the edge of his thumbnail over the blanket, creasing the fabric.

“I also use supervillainy in that way,” he said. “Obvious, repeated shows of force in certain areas, calculated property damage—that’s the way I broke the Scotts’ stranglehold on the city. I gave the occupants of their tenements prior warning, found them places to stay, and then I called out Lord and Lady Scotts’ precious golden boy hero and forced him to be complicit in the destruction of his family’s own property.

“And when they didn’t want to waste their money rebuilding, I bought the property myself, or helped other people do it.”

He looked at Roxanne.

“And I sponsored the unions, too,” he said, “helped them to strike for a better wage at Scott Technology, for fair hours and treatment. Made sure to attack at the factory while they were striking, so the strike got lots of media attention. And I forced Metro Man—Wayne Scott—into
saying publicly how much he cared about these people.

“I called the strikers ‘mindless drones undeserving of a paycheck’, you see,” he said, “so the only possible response Metro Man could make was a heroic speech about fairness and the glory of the workingman and so on and so forth.”

Megamind smiled a small, tight smile.

“I made sure that everybody heard him, too, made sure that the cameras were rolling. God, I was laughing in the squad car as they drove me back to prison; it was the funniest fucking thing I’ve ever seen. Scott Technology acceded to the unions’ demands that same night; it was the only thing they could do, after the superhero son of the company’s president publicly promised the protesters he’d see to it they were treated right.”

He shrugged.

“Well—anyway—real gang violence is kept out of residential areas, which is helpful, but the most helpful development in that regard is—well, it’s a sort of—it’s a sort of social alteration to the usual order of things. That I’ve—nudged along. You see, in Metrocity—in Metrocity, the most popular way of settling differences now, between members of the criminal underworld, especially gang members, is a public one-on-one confrontation. One calls the other out, they set the terms, decide the place and time—“

Roxanne blinked.

“Megamind, have you—” she said, “—are you telling me that you’ve re-popularized dueling?”

“…more or less, yes. Though I flatter myself that what they’re modeling it most after is my fights with Metro Man.”

“Oh my god,” Roxanne said, letting go of his hand so she could sit up and face him, “are you—are you serious?”

“Lead by example, you know,” Megamind said. “People watch and cheer the fights—banter is considered an important aspect. Sometimes the fights go on until somebody bleeds, sometimes they go on until somebody yields. Sometimes—in the most severe cases—they go on until somebody dies. Sometimes the fights are actually banter only—no physical violence at all.

“An entire gang can challenge another gang for territory, too. If the second gang accepts, then they both choose a champion, and the champions fight. Whoever loses can challenge again; this can go on for however long both gangs can continue providing champions—though there is a danger of a third gang seizing the right moment, challenging, and winning the territory themselves…”

He trailed off.

“These fights,” Roxanne said, “you watch them, don’t you, as Overlord?”

Megamind hesitated.

“Some of them,” he said at last, avoiding Roxanne’s eyes, not wanting to see her face as he admitted this, “Challenges—there are—certain days, challenge days, when most of these fights happen. Those are really a—an event, for the entire underworld. Sometimes, if the case is extreme or tempers are running too high, the fight happens immediately, but—usually, when they’ve decided to fight, they wait until the next challenge day. Like I said, challenge days are—it’s like a sporting event; people watch and cheer and bet money and eat snacks and—look it is barbaric, I
know it is, but—"

Megamind bit his lip, wishing he could—wishing he could find the words to explain, to excuse—

(the way that everything he’d done was built on lies and corruption and violence; moral compromises and blood, so much blood)

He couldn’t find the words, though.

Silence spun out into the space between himself and Roxanne, and he didn’t know how to break it.

“I know,” he said at last, “I know it’s not—good. What I did. With the city. How I did it. It’s not—it’s not what a good person would have done.”

Laid out like this, for Roxanne—

He’d always told himself, each time she called his plans worthless, each time she told him that nothing he did ever worked, each time she looked at him with that expression which was somewhere in between pity and distain—

He’d always told himself if she knew—if she knew this one thing he’d done, if she knew the one good thing he’d ever managed to accomplish—

—maybe, just maybe, she wouldn’t look at him like that.

But.

“If I had been a better person,” Megamind said quietly, “I would have found a better way.”

But laid out like that, for her—put into words for Roxanne, it was painfully obvious, how inescapably flawed it was, so completely clear that what he’d managed to do with his city—

It wasn’t good enough.

The best thing he’d ever done, and it still wasn’t good enough.

“I did the best I could,” he said, looking down at his own hands.

Fuck.

He’d dragged this—this—out in front of her and he’d expected her to be impressed?

“—Megamind,” Roxanne said, “Megamind, that is—what you’ve done is—what you’ve done is amazing.”

Roxanne reached out and touched his hand. Startled, he did look up, then.

“Really,” she said, her expression soft-edged with—

(wonder? affection? amazement? why was she looking at him like that?)

“This—“ she said. “This is—this is amazing. You are—you are absolutely amazing.”

Megamind twisted his fingers in the sleeve of her sweater. Roxanne seemed to understand the gesture for what it was, because she put her other hand on his knee and squeezed it, smiled at him reassuringly.
“—really?” he asked, voice small.

“Really,” Roxanne said.

“And—and are you impressed, Roxanne?” Megamind asked hesitantly.

“Megamind,” Roxanne said, looking into his eyes, “Megamind—I have never been more impressed in my entire life.”

“—oh,” Megamind said, drinking in the expression on her face, memorizing the moment.

He reached out and two fingertips lightly on her cheek, not really conscious of the reason for the gesture.

(checked that this is real)

Her skin was warm, and she turned her head slightly, brushing her lips over his fingertips in a kiss. Megamind’s breath caught and she gave him a quick smile as he pulled his hand back, his fingers curling protectively into his palm, as if her kiss was a physical thing he could hold in his hand and keep.

“Can I ask you a question, sweetheart?” Roxanne said.

Megamind’s breath caught on a disbelieving laugh this time.

(as though he could deny her anything when she called him that. As though he’d ever refuse to let her ask him a question.)

(She wouldn’t be Roxanne if she ceased to ask questions.)

“Always,” Megamind said.

Roxanne gave him another swift smile, and then her expression turned serious.

“Why—why did you do it like that?” she asked.

Megamind tilted his head, frowned.

“Like what?”

“Why did you—I mean I get—what you were—trying to accomplish, with the city,” Roxanne said, “What you have accomplished, and I see—I can see why you would automatically turn to crime as a way of achieving your goals. I mean, you were raised in a prison, for fuck’s sake; that’s definitely going to skew your perception of normality, but…”

She was frowning now, wearing her I-am-thinking-furiously-expression.

“I don’t understand why you decided to go with supervillainy,” she said. “It just seems like an—odd leap of logic to make; I don’t get it. The stuff with using supervillainy against gentrification and to support the unions; was that planned from the beginning? Was that why—”

“No,” Megamind said. “No, I—it’s been—it’s developed—over the years. I didn’t really—I didn’t have everything planned out; it’s changed as I—learned. I mean it’s—”
He gave a short laugh.

“It’s not as if I knew what I was doing,” he said.

“So why, then?” Roxanne asked. “Why supervillainy?”

Megamind sighed.

“There were—there were multiple reasons,” he said. “I mean, there are always…multiple reasons for a decision, but—the real reason, the first and fundamental reason why I chose to be a supervillain is —Wayne Scott was always going to be a superhero.”

He saw the surprise register on Roxanne’s face.

“But I always thought—”

“—that it was good rising up against evil?” Megamind finished. “That I became a supervillain and then he became a hero to stop me?”

He gave her a small, bitter smile and pulled his legs up beneath his chin, wrapping his arms around them.

“No,” he said, “no, it wasn’t like that.”

He took a breath, let it out.

“Wayne Scott was always going to be a superhero,” he said, “his parents were very clear about that; the city was clear about that—Wayne was clear about that, himself. Ever since we were children. By the time we were in high school it was an accepted fact. They had him working as a junior Defender, then, even. Wayne Scott was always going to be a superhero—and his parents—they owned the city,” Megamind went on. “Are you—are you beginning to see the problem, Roxanne?”

“You think they were going to use him to control people,” Roxanne said.

“To keep them in line, yes,” Megamind said. “Their own private superhero—no strikes for pay raises. No protests about—anything. No questioning Authority, because Authority has an attack dog who can fly, who can shoot lasers out of his eyes, who can hear what you’re saying from across the city. And he’s the Hero, which means he’s Good by default, which means if you’re fighting against him, that makes you the Bad Guy and everybody knows what happens to bad guys, don’t they? Everybody knows what they deserve.”

“Oh,” Roxanne said.

“And—even leaving all that aside, Metro Man is massively overqualified for the position of Defender, do you realize that?” Megamind said, “Historically, people filling the role have just had minor powers—or no powers. And they’ve dealt with ordinary criminals or villains with the same level of minor powers, and so everybody has been, for the most part, relatively safe. There have been a few accidental deaths, but nothing—”

Megamind closed his eyes briefly, took a shuddery breath.

“But Metro Man,” he said, “oh, Metro Man needed a supervillain. Because if he’d just been facing ordinary people, ordinary villains? People were going to get killed. A lot. Back then—I told you, our fighting is practically stage fighting by now, but that’s because of practice. Early days? He didn’t have that control. He—he barely had control at all. There were—there were accidents, when
we were children, when we were teenagers, times he—thank fuck he was mostly focused on dealing with me; I’m harder to hurt than people are—"

“Humans,” Roxanne said quietly.

“—what?” Megamind said, looking over at her.

“Harder to hurt than humans,” Roxanne said. “Humans. Not people.”

Megamind made a dismissive sound in the back of his throat, waved his hand.

“Semantics,” he said.

“No,” Roxanne said, voice still quiet, “no, I really don’t think it is.”

Megamind swallowed, feeling his eyes burn. He looked away again, down at the blanket.

“In—in any case,” he said, “I’m harder to hurt. And. And Metro Man needed a supervillain. I think the Scotts must have known that, too—their newspapers were always very—supportive of my claim to supervillainy. Even that first newspaper, when I was expelled from ‘Lil Gifted—and they never…”

He reached down to brush his fingertips over the blanket.

“I mean, logically—” he said, “I was causing a great deal of financial damage to their family business. One would think they would have—attempted to bribe me or—god, even hire me. They’re a tech company, for fuck’s sake; no matter what they’re getting out of that pod over the years, the things I could make for them would be—”

He cut himself off, shaking his head. He looked at Roxanne.

“But they never tried,” he said. “So I think they knew, too, that it was—necessary, that it was—what I was meant to be. What I was for. My destiny.”

“No,” Roxanne said, face twisting into an expression of—stubborn anger. “No, Megamind, that is not your destiny.”

Megamind frowned. Didn’t she see—? Maybe he needed to—maybe he needed to explain this differently.

(he could tell her—)

no.

(he could, though. he could tell her about the bridge.)

no. no; he didn’t want to talk about that; didn’t want Roxanne to hear the details of all the ways in which he was massively, inescapably, irreparably fucked up.

(she’d understand, though, wouldn’t she. if he told her about the bridge)

Megamind looked at Roxanne, still gazing at him with her mouth set and her eyebrows drawn together. He took a breath.

Roxanne looked at Megamind, watched his face—didn’t he get it, yet? Didn’t he see how he’d
been—trapped and screwed over and forced into this?

“When I was sixteen,” Megamind said slowly, deliberately, “I almost killed myself.”

Roxanne took a sharp breath. What—

“I told you I think better, sometimes, in high places,” Megamind continued, “that’s why I went to the bridge, originally. It was only when I was already up there, looking down at the water, that it occurred to me to jump.”

Roxanne bit the inside of her cheek. Megamind frowned.

“What I remember best,” he said, “what I remember best was how reasonable it seemed. I remember thinking—*if the cumulative effect on the world of your continued existence is negative, do you not have a moral duty to remove yourself from it?*”

Roxanne pressed her hand against her mouth.

“And of course, put like that,” Megamind said, “I knew—I knew the answer had to be yes. And—realizing that, deciding to jump—oh, it was such a relief.”

Roxanne pressed her hand harder against her mouth.

“It was the brainbots,” Megamind said, “that kept me from doing it. The first brainbot. That’s probably pretty awful of me. I mean, I knew Minion would be sad if I died, but—the eventual—the outcome of—he wouldn’t have had to take care of me anymore; he would have been—free. But.”

Megamind’s lips twisted.

“The brainbot—there were some problems with Zero’s programming; I’d figured out how to fix it, but I hadn’t thought to tell Minion. So if I jumped—Zero wouldn’t get fixed. So. So I told myself—tomorrow. You can kill yourself tomorrow. Just wait until tomorrow. One more day.

“And I climbed down from the bridge and went back home to the library. And—god—it was so hard.”

Roxanne reached out a hand and wrapped her fingers around one of Megamind’s wrists. Megamind looked down at her hand on his blankly.

“It was while I was at the library that the—alternative option presented itself,” he said. “Storytime for children at the library is on Saturdays at nine. There was an air duct in the library’s attic that led down to the floor of the children’s area. I used to lie next to it and listen. It was Saturday, the day I decided to put off killing myself. I had finished reprogramming Zero. And I was lying on the floor next to the air duct, waiting for it to be tomorrow.

“They were reading—I don’t even know the title of the book. Something, anyway, and one of the children thought the villain was scary. And I remember—I remember another child telling them—telling them not to worry. *Bad guys always lose,* they said. *It’s what they’re for.*”

Megamind’s eyebrows drew together pensively.

“And it occurred to me—it occurred to me, for the first time—that evil—a conscious, visible, controlled kind of evil—could have a purpose. That it could be used to create a cumulatively positive effect on the world.”
Megamind looked into Roxanne’s face.

“Metro Man needed a supervillain,” he said. “The city needed someone to be the bad guy. I was there. I was evil. It was destiny. So that’s what I did.”

A quiet, wounded noise tore itself from Roxanne’s throat. She moved forward and threw her arms around Megamind. He started, and then held statue still as she hugged him.

“Megamind,” she said, “oh, god, Megamind; I am so—I am so sorry.”

He was silent for a long moment.

“—that’s all right,” Megamind said finally, voice stilted, still making no move to embrace her.

Roxanne tightened her fingers in his shirt, tightened her arms around him.

“I am so sorry that you had to go through that,” she said.

“—it’s fine,” Megamind said, holding himself stiff and aloof in the circle of her arms.

“It is not fine,” Roxanne said, running her palms down his back, feeling the tension in his spine, “It is not fine, and I am so sorry. I am so sorry that they made you think you were evil, sweetheart. You are not—”

Megamind made a sound of frustration and pulled away from her.

“—they?” he said. “‘They’? That’s—you still don’t get it! Why don’t you get it? It was never—it was never about any ‘they’! Shool, Wayne, newspapers, people—all of that was—is—unpleasant, that was awful, but it wasn’t—”

“—Megamind—”

“It wasn’t about that,” he said, making a slashing movement with his hand. “It has never been about that—it has never been about the things people say about me, because all the things they say about me are things that I already know about myself. Supervillainy was a choice, but being bad—there is something wrong with me, Roxanne. Some fatal flaw in the design, something—not just broken, but defective. When I hear people say that I’m evil? All they are doing is confirming what I already know. Proving that everybody else can see it, too, that—”

“No,” Roxanne said.

“No, what?” Megamind snarled.

“No, everybody else does not fucking see that!” Roxanne said. “I don’t see that!”

Megamind made a scornful noise. Roxanne growled and climbed into his lap, put her hands on his shoulders before he could push her away.

“You told me,” Roxanne said, tightening her grip, shaking him slightly, “you said—that I see things how they really are, do you remember, Megamind? Do you remember that?”

Megamind’s head moved in a jerky nod and Roxanne caught his face in her hands.

“When I look at you,” she said, “I don’t see anything evil, Megamind.”

Megamind flinched, but Roxanne didn’t let go of him, didn’t look away.
“When I look at you, Megamind,” Roxanne said, “All I see is good.”

Megamind made a low, angry sound in his chest.

“Megamind—”

“I don’t understand how you can say that!” he burst out, knocking her hands from his face. “How can you say that? I don’t—I don’t understand how you can even bear to touch me!”

“I love you!” Roxanne cried. “God, Megamind, of course I want to touch you!”

Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

notes: *screams quietly*

I really hope you all like the chapter! I appreciate all of your kudos and comments so very much; they are very dear to my heart!
Megamind flinched like she'd struck him, hands jerking from hers.

Oh god no; she thought she needed to—she thought she needed to lie to him again?

"Don't," he whispered, feeling sick at heart and panicked and unclean "—don't do that; don't do that—"

"Don't do what; don't tell you that I love you?" Roxanne said.

He tried to turn away, to move away; he needed to get away so she could—so she didn't have to keep looking at him and forcing herself to touch him, forcing herself to say that she—

Roxanne caught his face in her hands again, making him freeze..

"Listen," Roxanne said, voice low and intense, hands still on his face, "I know that this bothers you, and I'm not going to—to keep bothering you with it, but I think that right now, this is something you need to hear. I love you—"

"I don't want to hear that!" Megamind cried, jerking his face out of her hands.

(god, he didn't want to hear her lie to him any more; please no more—)

Roxanne shoved him, with enough force to make him fall backwards onto the bed and the pillow.

"Excuse me," she snarled, eyes blazing as she looked down at him. "I don't think I fucking said want, did I? No. I didn't. I said need. You need to hear this right now, Megamind. So just this once, just this one time, you are going to have to listen to me say it."

She bowed her head a moment, hair falling into her face. Then she looked up at him again.

"I love you," she said fiercely. "I love everything about you. I love how excited you get over things—you light up, did you know that? All my life, I thought that was just some stupid thing that people said, some silly made up meaningless cliche, but when you smile, Megamind, it's like you're shining, like you're filled with so much happiness and enthusiasm that your body can't contain it all, and god, watching you be happy is the best thing in the entire world."

Megamind stared up at her, scarcely breathing. She couldn't—this couldn't be—it wasn't real; he couldn't let himself think it might be real; he wouldn't be able to survive it—

Roxanne leaned down, body curving over his, and pressed their foreheads together.

"I love you," she said, voice low, and Megamind made a sound of pain, squeezing his eyes shut.

(she couldn't mean it; couldn't mean it, and he knew that, he did, but it sounded so real, and—)

"I love your mind," Roxanne said, forehead still pressed to his, "I love the way it works, the things you create—I know I tease you about the giant robot thing a lot, but seriously? The technology that those involve is absolutely off the charts incredible. And that's nothing compared to Minion's suit—it's a neural interface, isn't it—a neural interface! My god, Megamind! And the brainbots—"
Roxanne sat up again, eyes shining as she gestured enthusiastically, and Megamind could not breathe, could not look away from her.

(not real; not real)

"God, the brainbots are amazing! They're cyborgs, right? Canine brain tissue, obviously, and also clearly a lot of artificial intelligence, because they're much smarter than ordinary dogs, capable of understanding complex instructions and concepts—oh, and the de-gun! The de-gun is fantastic; the one you made me is literally my favorite possession, and I love it and I love you; I love you so much."

Roxanne smiled at him, and Megamind felt himself trembling, felt that in a moment, he would shatter and burst apart into a thousand sharp-edged pieces.

"I love how brave you are," Roxanne said, "Because you are brave, Megamind, even though you don't think so; you are so brave—and I love the way you never give up, not ever, even though—even though I know you—I know you wanted to, sometimes. There is a—a core of strength to you that refuses to be conquered, and I am absolutely awe of it, all right?"

She moved her hand to his chest again, carefully put it exactly over the place where he'd showed her his heart was and Megamind felt as though his chest was breaking open, hairline fractures in his fragile heart splitting apart and shattering like cold glass heated too quickly, and—)

"And I love your heart," Roxanne said. "You are so good, Megamind. You have such a good heart. I love you so much."

Her eyes filled with tears, but she smiled at him through them.

"I love you," she said, "and I know you don't love me back, Megamind, and that's all right. It is entirely all right; you don't need to feel—bad or guilty about that. Just—just let me love you, okay? Just let—let yourself be loved."

She reached out to touch her fingertips to his face, softly, gently, like he was something delicate and precious and rare.

And—

And Megamind—

Megamind—

Megamind believed her.

Roxanne felt the tears in her eyes spill over; she did her best to laugh apologetically as she reached up to wipe them away with the sleeve of the sweater she was wearing, but the sound wound up sounding much closer to a sob.

God, she couldn't do this; she couldn't cry in front of him; couldn't make him feel guilty—it wasn't his fault he didn't love her back.

She wanted to curl up in a ball around the pain in her chest but she needed to get herself under control—
”—sorry," she said, voice wavering stupidly, as she climbed out of Megamind's lap, "I—I'm fine, really, just give me a—"

”—Roxanne—"

Megamind sat up, catching her shoulders, stopping her from turning away. Roxanne choked down a sob, closing her eyes, turning her face from his, not wanting to make him see her cry.

"Roxanne, did you say—are you—are you actually under the impression that I'm not in love with you?" Megamind said.

Roxanne's eyes flew open, flew to Megamind's, and at his expression, Roxanne felt a sob claw its way from her throat.

"—oh," Megamind said, "oh, Roxanne—sweetheart, no. Roxanne, I've been in love with you for years."

Roxanne stopped breathing, felt as though her heart stopped beating. Megamind cupped her face gently in his hands, and Roxanne burst entirely into tears, reaching up to grab for Megamind as he wrapped his arms around her and pulled her close.

"Shh—oh, Roxanne, I'm so sorry," Megamind said, "I—I thought you knew. I never meant to make you cry; I'm sorry; I'm so sorry; I love you; I love you so much."

Roxanne tightened her fingers in the material of Megamind's shirt and pressed her face to his chest and cried.

"No," she sobbed, "no you d-don't, Megamind; you c-can't—"

"Shh; I do; I told you; I've loved you forever," he said, holding her tightly. "Forever, Roxanne; I'm so sorry—"

Roxanne made a soft, wounded noise.

”—oh, Roxanne, I'm so sorry; I'm so sorry; don't cry—"

"T-tell me—" she managed to say, "—tell me again—"

Megamind pulled her even closer.

"I love you," he said.

She felt him pressing kisses to her hair.

"I love you I love you I love you," he murmured almost feverishly.

He leaned his cheek against the top of her head.

"I love you; I love you—"

”—k-keep saying it?" Roxanne begged in a small, fragile voice.

"I love you, Roxanne, I love you completely. I love you so much—"

”—p-promise?" Roxanne whispered, voice trembling.
"I promise," Megamind murmured, "Oh, Roxanne, of course I love you. Of course I love you; how could I not—you're perfect—I've loved you forever; I've loved you for years; I think I fell a little in love with you, the very first time we met—"

He pulled away enough to brush their lips together, and then leaned his forehead against hers.

"I love you," he said softly. "I love you Roxanne."

Roxanne took a shaky breath, and then another. He stroked his fingers through her hair and kissed the corner of her mouth, then her cheek, then the tip of her nose, startling her into an unsteady laugh.

Megamind brushed his fingertips over Roxanne's mouth, feeling her laugh, feeling her lips curve up into a smile, then pulled back enough to look at her face.

(there were tear stains on her cheeks and her eyes were swollen from crying, and her hair was wild from where he'd dragged his fingers through it, and his breath caught at how unbelievably beautiful she was.)

"You—you really love me?" he said, fingertips still pressed lightly to her smile.

"Yes, Megamind, you utter idiot," she said, and kissed his fingertips. "Of course I love you."

Megamind's breath caught again.

"God, Roxanne," he said wonderingly.

"How could you not know that?" she murmured, putting her hand atop his and leaning her face into his touch. "I told you I loved you weeks ago, Megamind; how could you not—"

Megamind's eyes went wide.

"You—you meant that?" he asked. "You've—you've loved me that long?"

Roxanne laughed again, breathlessly, tears at the edge of it.

"Longer than that," she said. "Since the cat thing, at least—maybe longer; I don't know. That's—that day, the day in my apartment—that was the day I finally figured it out, though." She frowned. "You didn't—you thought I didn't mean it?"

"No. No, I—I thought—I mean, you—you t-told me that you'd do anything I asked," Megamind said, flushing, "a-and I asked you to—to tell me that you loved me…so I thought you were just—playing along…"

"Playing—? Oh my god," Roxanne said with a groan. "I was so worried that I'd made you feel uncomfortable—you acted so weird afterwards—"

"—I thought I must have—made you uncomfortable—because of course you had to know that I l-loved you, after I asked you for that—how could you not know, after I asked you for that?"

"—I thought you just needed to hear someone say it," Roxanne said, reaching out to stroke his face, her fingers and voice trembling slightly, "I thought it—didn't matter who, that it didn't need to be me, specifically—"
"Fucking hell, Roxanne," Megamind said, "it's always been you, specifically, for me, always—I just didn't think you could mean it—"

"—was going to tell you that I did mean it, in my room afterwards, but you stopped me—"

"You were—? I—I thought you were going to tell me that you hadn't meant it; I thought you were trying to let me down easy—"

Roxanne groaned again and leaned her head on his shoulder briefly, shoulders shaking with laughter.

"—I thought you weren't going to even want me anymore, after you realized—how I felt about you," Megamind said. "I thought—but you said it didn't have to matter, it didn't have to matter that we didn't feel the same way—"

"Oh my god, Megamind, I was talking about my feelings for you!" Roxanne said. "I meant that you didn't have to feel pressured or guilty about—oh my god, we are—such a goddamn catastrophe; how could we both be so—so fucking stupid—"

"So stupid—" Megamind agreed.

"Very stupid," Roxanne said, "the stupidest."

"Bad science," Megamind murmured, kissing her. "Very bad."

Roxanne looked inquiringly at him when he pulled away.

"Bad science?" she asked.

"Ah—I mean—I think we were both—" he kissed her jaw, "—mmm, working under a confirmation bias?" he kissed her forehead "—it's where you—" he kissed her chin "—end up interpreting all the new data you get as—" he kissed her lips, "—as supporting the conclusion you've already previously come to."

"…and you had already decided that there was no way I could love you—" Roxanne said.

"—ages ago—" Megamind nodded.

"—so you ended up twisting everything that happened in your own mind so that it fit that conclusion," Roxanne continued. "And I'd decided that there was no way that you could love me, so I wound up doing the same thing…"

"Exactly," Megamind nodded again. "Very—bad—science," he said, punctuating each word with another kiss.

Roxanne laughed; Megamind smiled at her a little bemusedly and gave her an inquiring look of his own.

"You," she said, "you would have an explanation for this—complete ridiculousness—that involves science!"

Megamind laughed, too.

"Well, yes," he said, "it's me."

Roxanne kissed him.
"Yeah," she said softly, when she pulled away. "It is. And I'm—I'm so glad."

Megamind leaned in to kiss her, one hand cupping her face and the other slipping around her waist as she wound her own arms around his neck and kissed him back. One of her hands went to the back of his head, sending a jolt of pure pleasure all the way down his spine. He made a soft noise into the kiss and tightened his arm around Roxanne, pulling her closer, all the way into his lap, now.

Roxanne made a sound of approval and nibbled lightly at his lower lip while shifting in his lap in a way that made him gasp, heat blooming in the pit of his stomach at the friction.

She broke the kiss, licking her lips and looking at his expression with satisfaction, and Megamind couldn't stop himself from smiling, ridiculous and wide and so, so happy. Roxanne laughed, smiling back at him.

"God, you're so incredible, Roxanne," Megamind said, looking at her.

Roxanne gave him a look that seemed almost shy.

"Do you really think so, Megamind?" she asked, as though this was a real question.

He laughed.

"I know so," he told her.

Roxanne smiled like sunlight and let him tip her backwards, so that she was lying on the bed. He followed her down, kissing her again. Roxanne smiled still, into the kiss, her hands on his chest, slowly undoing the buttons of his shirt.

(He'd thought that kissing Roxanne was amazing before, but this? Kissing Roxanne when he knew that she loved him? It was—it was beyond anything else.)

Roxanne finished unbuttoning Megamind's shirt and slid her hands beneath the sides of it, the skin of his torso and back like cool silk against her palms.

He made a contented noise as she scratched her nails lightly down his back, and another as she slipped her hands back up his chest to push his shirt off his shoulders and down his arms. Megamind broke the kiss, sitting up to slip his shirt the rest of the way off. Roxanne followed him up, sitting up, too, and he slid his hands beneath the hem of the shirt she was wearing. She smiled, lifting her arms to let him take it off of her.

"Beautiful," Megamind murmured, eyes sliding down her body, and then up, like a caress.

"You saw me naked less than an hour ago, Megamind," Roxanne said, her stomach flipping over pleasurably at his expression.

"Mmm," he said, leaning forward to kiss her. "And you were beautiful then, too."

Roxanne let herself lie back on the bed again and Megamind kissed her neck.

"So—" he kissed the hollow of her throat, "—very—" he kissed her shoulder, "—beautiful."

He moved to lie on top of her, their bodies pressed together, and kissed her again. Roxanne arched her back, pressing her breasts to his naked chest, glorying in the sensation of so much of his skin on
hers.

They were both still half-dressed, but it still felt incredibly intimate, somehow, lying in bed like this with Megamind, kissing him—the weight of his body and the taste of his mouth and—

—the way Roxanne felt, for the first time, as if she didn't have to hurry to take what she could get before he changed his mind. The way that—for the first time, this didn't feel to Roxanne like it was going to be the last time.

Megamind gentled the kiss into a series of smaller kisses, until their lips were just brushing together lightly, and then he moved away to hook his fingers beneath the waistband of her sweatpants. She lifted her hips to let him pull them off of her.

"God," he said, looking at her.

Roxanne grinned at him.

"The socks really complete the look, yeah?" she said.

Megamind laughed and lifted one of her feet, pulling the sock off and tossing it aside. He pressed his lips quickly to the arch of her bare foot.

"Absolutely," he agreed.

"Dork," Roxanne said affectionately, toes curling.

He grinned at her and pulled off her other sock.

"Ah-ah-ah," Roxanne said as he started to kiss his way from her knee up her thigh. "Your pants first, Megamind. I want to see all of you."

He stopped, eyes fluttering to hers like he was still surprised at that. Roxanne licked her lips and smiled at him, and Megamind's eyes flicked to her mouth, his own lips parting. He met her gaze again and Roxanne let her smile widen at his expression.

Megamind went up on his knees, hands going to the waistband of his pajama pants. He paused for a moment, hands going still, and Roxanne looked inquiringly into his face, wondering if something was wrong.

To her delight, though, he bit his lip and gave her a coquettish look from beneath his lashes, his thumbs stroking over his own skin, just atop the line of fabric.

"What a beautiful tease you are," Roxanne said, and his face lit up at the praise.

He pushed the pajama pants down off his hips, dropped fluidly to sit again, legs curled to the side, and stripped the pants the rest of the way off his legs.

God, but Megamind could be so fucking graceful when he felt confident. Roxanne loved seeing him like this: entirely naked, the seam of his sex flushed and slick with arousal, the unselfconscious beauty in his pose: leaning on one hand, his legs half curled beneath his body, the line of his throat long and elegant as he looked down at her.

The best thing, though—the best thing was his expression. He looked at her like she was the most amazing thing he'd ever seen, like she was artwork, like she was the beautiful one here.

"Come here, sweetheart," Roxanne said, smiling at him, and Megamind did.
And oh—it was even better like this, fully naked, all of their skin pressed together as they kissed and kissed and kissed.

Megamind tangled one hand in her hair and stroked her side with the other, curled his arm around her hip, pulled her close. Roxanne wound her arms around his neck and her legs around his waist.

"—ah," she gasped, back arching as his tentacles slid out, inside her and against her, "—yes—god, yes, Megamind—"

She reached up and framed Megamind's face in her hands, thumbs stroking over his cheekbones wonderingly as she looked up into his eyes.

"Roxanne," he said, the motion of his hips and tentacles like waves breaking over her, pleasure washing through her.

"I love you," she said, "I —love you so much, Megamind—"

Megamind made that sweet, sharp sound in the back of his throat, the one that was like birdsong. He turned his head to press a kiss to the palm of her hand.

She really had been wrong before, Roxanne realized, when she'd called having sex with Megamind in his chair making love. This—this was what it felt like to make love to Megamind—to let herself love him without fear, to touch his face and know herself loved.

Roxanne felt—she felt so safe, and so much closer to Megamind than she ever had, before, closer than she'd ever thought people could be, like it wasn't just their bodies that were tangled up with each other, but their minds, or their hearts, or maybe their souls.

Megamind was watching her, still, looking at her like he'd forgotten everything but pleasure and her—looking at her like he loved her, and he did love her.

Megamind—wonderful, impossibly clever Megamind, with his superhuman grace and his sweet, shy smiles and the way his laughter never failed to make her want to laugh, too—he thought Roxanne was worth loving.

Roxanne felt incandescent with the way he was looking at her, incandescent with the fact of his love.

"I love you, Roxanne," Megamind said, looking into her face, "—I adore you—I love you; I love you; I love you—"

Roxanne cried out, her climax bursting through her body, and Megamind cried out, too, bending his neck down to press their foreheads together.

"—love you, Roxanne; love you—"

She kissed him, wanting to pull his love into her lungs like breath.

(he loved her; Megamind loved her; it didn't seem possible but it was true—)

Megamind gasped, breaking the kiss, and looked down at her, his eyes fixed on hers.

"—Roxanne—god, Roxanne—"

The motion of his hips was harder now, less controlled, his tentacles twisting and coiling inside her. Roxanne smiled up at him brilliantly.
"Yes—oh, yes—" she said, hands stroking his face, his ears, then going to cup the back of his neck, "yes, Megamind, sweetheart, yes; you're—ah—so amazing; you're so good; I love you so much—I'm so happy, Megamind."

"Please," he begged, "please, Roxanne—tell me that you love me, Roxanne, please—"

Roxanne kissed him, hard and deep, then pulled away to look into his face again. She smiled.

"Of course I love you, Megamind," she said, looking into his eyes, "Of course I do."

Megamind gasped, hips snapping against hers, tentacles pulsing. Roxanne watched his face as he came for her again, memorizing the way his eyelashes fluttered, the way his lips parted, the way he gasped for breath.

"Roxanne," he said, dropping his head down, pressing his forehead to the pillow beside her. "God, Roxanne—I love you—so fucking much—"

A shudder ran through his body, almost like the tremor of tears. Roxanne clutched him close and turned her head to kiss his jaw.

"I love you, too, Megamind," she said, "god, I love you, too."

They stayed like that for a long moment, both their breathing calming.

Roxanne closed her eyes, smiling as a glow of contentment lit up her entire body. She stroked her hands up and down his back, taking pleasure in the texture of his skin, in the way his body moved with his breath.

After a long moment, Megamind pushed himself up on his elbows and looked down at her.

"Oh," he said, voice filled with wonder. "Oh, that—that was amazing, Roxanne."

She smiled at him.

"Yeah," she said, "it—really was, wasn't it."

"Oh, yes," Megamind said, "I mean—it was—being with you is always amazing but—I never—"

He shifted so that he's lying beside her, instead of atop her; Roxanne curled up against him, as close as she could while still being able to see his face.

"—before," he continued, "it—never felt—like it meant as much as I wanted it to. You know?"

"Mnhm," Roxanne murmured, stroking her thumb idly over his chest. "It was good, always, but—there was—something sad. At the bottom of it, every time.."

"Yes, yes exactly," Megamind said. "That's it, exactly."

Roxanne pressed herself closer to Megamind's side, pressed her face against his shoulder.

"I'm really glad you love me back, you know that?" she whispered.

"How could I not?" Megamind said, voice soft. "You're perfect, Roxanne."

Roxanne smiled and kissed his shoulder. Megamind made a contented humming noise and Roxanne yawned.
Megamind laughed quietly, then yawned, too.

Roxanne let her eyes slip shut, shifting to a more comfortable spot on their shared pillow. Megamind's fingertips trailed up and down her hip slowly.

"—oh," he said quietly. "Oh, I—I figured it out."

Roxanne opened her eyes and turned so she could see his face.

"Figured what out?" she murmured.

"What the pattern of freckles on your hip reminds me of," Megamind said. "I knew it reminded me of something, but I could never think of what, before. But—it's—there was a constellation."

His fingers sketched a shape over her hip; connecting the freckles together, Roxanne thought. He raised his hand and drew it in the air in front of her.

"On my planet," he continued. "When you looked up at the sky at night, you could see it. My parents took me stargazing on the beach when I was a few days old. I remember them talking about the stars—naming the constellations."

His hand went to her waist again, fingers brushing over her skin. Roxanne looked at his expression; it was soft-edged, his eyes a little distant.

"—Alte-re," he said, "that's what that one was called. It was the brightest one—the easiest to see. Like Ursa Major, here. Alte-re was supposed to be the Queen of the Stars. She—was a goddess, I think."

"You remember this happening?" Roxanne asked, matching his quiet tone.

"Yes," he said. "Yes, I remember—my mother was holding me, and leaning back against my father. They were sitting on the sand—it was—sort of silvery gray, and it sparkled. There were three moons—they named the stars for me, and then they walked into the water with me in their arms, and swam."

"You could understand what they were saying, when they talked?" Roxanne asked.

A slight frown appeared between Megamind's eyebrows.

"Not perfectly," he said, "—it was—I understood—not all of it, not all of the words, and not all of the concepts, but… It was—I definitely understood some of it. I was learning to read, a little, even, by the time my parents put me in the escape pod. There was—this thing. On my crib."

Megamind reached out his hand.

"Sort of like a computer screen, but the pictures hung in the air," he said, "More like holograms, I guess?"

He let his hand fall, frowning slightly in thought again.

"There was a program, I remember, that was designed to help with language and cognitive development. It would give you part of a sentence and let you touch the pictures of the letters to build the missing words. But it wasn't—there wasn't just one right answer, it was more open ended…it would read the sentence out to you, after it was complete, and it would show you images to go with it. It was like a reward. And as you got better at the program, the sentences got more
complex and you ended up making up actual stories…"

"That sounds amazing," Roxanne said softly.

"Yeah," Megamind said, "yeah, it was."

"Could you still speak the language, do you think?" Roxanne asked.

Megamind flashed a smile at her.

"I'd have a very limited vocabulary and an extremely shaky grasp of grammar," he said, "but yes, I could say a few things."

"Can you tell me how to say I love you?"

Megamind's expression went startled, almost frozen.

"—it's okay if you don't want to," Roxanne said hurriedly. "You don't have to if it makes you uncomfortable at all or—"

"—no," Megamind said, still looking shocked. "No, it doesn't make me—I just—that's. Not something I ever expected anyone to ask me. Especially—it's not—I never thought it was even in the realm of possibility, you asking—it's—not something that it ever even occurred to me to want —"

"—hey," Roxanne said, stroking his arm soothingly. "I want, okay, Megamind? I want that, with you."

"So do I," Megamind said, sounding shaken. "God, Roxanne I want that so much. There—ah—there are different ways. Of saying it. Depending on the intensity of the feeling and on—what kind of love you mean, but—I think what you're looking for—ssshssss,"

The sound was a drawn out, sibilant sort of hiss.

"—ssshssss?" Roxanne tried.

Megamind's eyes went wide wide wide and his hand flew to cover his mouth.

"Oh god," he said. "Oh god, Roxanne."

"Am I saying it right?" she asked softly.

He nodded his head, hand still in front of his mouth. Roxanne smiled at him, slow and gentle and reassuring. She caught his face in her hands.

"—Ssshssss, Megamind," she said softly, "Ssshssss."

Megamind made a choked sound, like half smothered tears.

"Ssshssss—Roxanne-alte—"

He pulled her closer and buried his face in her hair.

"Roxanne-alte?" she said, stroking his back soothingly, "…If Alte-re was a goddess, wouldn't that be blasphemy, Megamind?" she added, trying to keep her voice light.
"Probably, but I don't care," Megamind said, voice muffled. "I'm also not completely sure if the sentence structure works, but I don't care about that, either. It means brightest. And that's what you are, Roxanne."

Roxanne tightened her arms around him and turned her head to press a kiss beneath his ear.

Megamind gave a breathless sort of laugh.

"It's funny," he said, "It's—been a long time since I thought about—all of this. It's been a long time since I remembered anything but the last day, on my planet—the panic and the fear and the sirens—and—"

He pulled away a little, arranging himself so that they were looking at each other again, then reached out to stroke her cheek.

"—and that was awful, that last day, the memory of—of the end," he said, "—but—but I had—eight whole days of happiness, first. And I—that's—thank you, Roxanne. For—for helping me to—remember that."

He smiled at her.

"Of course," Roxanne said, reaching up to touch her fingertips to his cheek. "Of course, Megamind. Anything—anything you want to tell me, about your planet, I am—I am happy to listen to. Always, all right?"

Megamind turned his head, kissing her fingertips.

"Thank you," he said, lips moving against her fingers as he spoke.

Roxanne smiled at him, her heart aching. Eight whole days of happiness, he'd said. As though eight days was a long amount of time.

"Are you sorry?" Roxanne asked. "That—you remember it, I mean? I can't imagine what that must be like."

"No," Megamind shook his head, "no, I'm not sorry I remember. It's—hard, remembering, but—but it would be so much worse if I didn't remember."

Roxanne nodded.

"I'm—I'm so sorry that it happened," she said, throat tightening, "but—I'm glad that, out of all the planets in the universe—I'm glad you ended up here."

Megamind laughed quietly.

"Yeah," he said, "so am I. Because this planet is the one that has you."

Roxanne found herself speechless and blinking back tears. Megamind smiled at her, his lips trembling a little.

"I wouldn't—ever want to live anywhere that didn't have you," he said.

Roxanne didn't know how to answer. She leaned forward and kissed him, instead of trying to speak. He kissed her back, almost desperate, at first, but then calmer, as she pressed close to him and continued to kiss him.
"—but I suppose," Megamind murmured, as their lips parted at last, "—even if—it—hadn't happened, maybe we still could have met, somehow."

Roxanne looked up into his eyes and smiled, her chest feeling tight.

"—you could have flown here in your spaceship and abducted me properly," she said.

Megamind laughed.

"Oh, I'm so sorry if my previous abductions haven't lived up to your expectations, Miss Ritchi!" he said in mock offense.

"Listen, Ziggy Stardust, I happen to have standards," Roxanne said, smiling wider as Megamind laughed again. "It's spaceships or nothing."

"I'll keep that in mind," Megamind said, grinning.

"Honestly, you should be ashamed of yourself," she went on, "no spaceships, no crop circles—come on, tell the truth; have you ever even stolen a single cow, Megamind?"

Megamind laughed again.

"I—have to admit that I have not ever stolen a cow, no!" he said. "Which is a bit of an odd oversight, considering all of the things that I have stolen."

Roxanne snickered.

"And you call yourself an alien!" She shook her head. "Sad, very sad."

"—I did make a crop circle, once, though," Megamind said.

"What?" Roxanne laughed. " Seriously? When did you make a crop circle? Why would you make a crop circle?"

Megamind pulled a face.

"I was—all right, so—when I was a teenager, I got. Sort of obsessed. With the whole—crop circles and abduction stories and—conspiracy theories—thing. It was…not good; Minion tried to pull me out of it, but I—well, you've seen how I can get, when I get hung up on an idea. Anyway…I got…rather intoxicated one night and stole a tractor. Trying to, uh. Contact the…the others."

"Oh, no," Roxanne said, torn between horror and laughter.

Megamind gave her a sheepish look.

"Yeah, that went well, as you can probably imagine."

"Are there?" Roxanne asked. "Others?"

Megamind sighed.

"Not that I've ever been able to find," he said. "I mean—logically, in a universe as vast as this one, there has to be—someone, out there. But, well—in a universe as vast as this one, the likelihood of finding them is…not high. Really, just the fact that my parents were able to locate this planet is pretty damn amazing."
Roxanne rubbed her thumb over Megamind's sternum and some of the shadows in his eyes retreated as his gaze focused on her again.

"I thought about it, you know," he said, "building a spaceship. Around the time of the whole—crop circles obsession. Minion and I discussed the possibility of—leaving earth to look for other people. But like I said, in a universe the size of this one...we could fly for a thousand years and never find anyone at all." He gave her a slight smile. "Spending an entire lifetime alone in space with just me for company..."

He shook his head.

"I couldn't ask Minion to do that. And I considered the idea of rigging up something like hypersleep chambers for us—based on the dehydration technology, programming it to wake us automatically from time to time. But even then, and even if I figured out a faster-than-light drive... there's still no guarantee that we would ever find someone. And I didn't like the idea of—being so vulnerable, during hypersleep. So that plan never really went anywhere. And—so. I...never went anywhere, either."

"I'm sorry," Roxanne said.

Megamind smiled at her swiftly.

"I'm not," he said. "I haven't been, for a while. Not—not since I met you."

Roxanne felt her eyes go wide.

Oh—that was—

"—Megamind—"

"I can't believe you didn't know I was in love with you, Roxanne," Megamind said, brushing her hair back from her face, his expression so soft and filled with adoration that it took Roxanne's breath away. "I love you so much. There aren't—words or concepts sufficient to describe the way that I feel about you."

"I love you, too," Roxanne said, and had to reach up to wipe away her tears.

She laughed a little shakily.

"—we should sleep, I think," she said, "before I start really crying again."

Megamind laughed.

"Me, too, yes, with the—possibility of more crying," he said. "And sleep sounds good. You'll—you'll stay, right? You'll stay with me? I—I want you to be here when I wake up, Roxanne; I want — to see you in the morning. I always—I always want to see you in the morning."

"Of course I'll stay," Roxanne whispered. "I'd love to stay. I always—you—you can always see me in the morning, Megamind."

He smiled brilliantly and kissed her.

The kiss went gradually softer and slower, until he leaned back with a contented hum, his eyes still closed and a sweet smile on his lips.

Roxanne let her own eyes drift shut and listened to his breathing even out and deepen as he slipped
into sleep.

She smiled to herself, eyes closed, lying in Megamind's arms. He loved her.

Roxanne felt giddy—like she was floating, or falling, or drunk on champagne—incredibly tired, but too happy to sleep just yet.

Megamind—god—Megamind was in love with her.

Roxanne held that thought up in her mind like a delicate glass bubble, admiring the way it shone. Megamind was in love with her.

He thought she was perfect; he called her by the name of a goddess and found stars on her skin and he loved her and—

\( \text{(perfect)} \)

He—

\( \text{(thought she was perfect and—)} \)

The thought was like picking up a rose and being pricked by a thorn.

Roxanne opened her eyes.

Of course—of course he didn't really think that she was perfect. Not—really. That would be—unreasonable and an—an unsustainable illusion—she'd never be able to maintain the—

No.

No no no.

She was being ridiculous; she was falling into another—what had Megamind called it?—a confirmation bias. She was just falling into a confirmation bias, but she was wrong, because he did love her; he said so, he said—

\( \text{(—that you were perfect, and you know that you're not perfect; you're just ordinary. he's built you up in this mind to be this flawless goddess—)} \)

\( \text{(Roxanne-alte; no no—)} \)

\( \text{(—but you're not anything like perfect, and when he finds out—)} \)

Stop it, Roxanne told herself, stomach dropping, heart twisting around the sudden sharp pain. Stop thinking like that. He loves me; he does—

\( \text{How long do you think it'll take, for you to fall off of that pedestal he's put you on? her mind asked, the voice relentless, remorseless, and so very reasonable. Months? Years? Maybe you'll get really lucky and he'll marry you before he figures it out.} \)

Stop, oh, stop—he didn't have her on a pedestal; he didn't.

\( \text{(of course I love you; how could I not; you're perfect)} \)

No
No. Why couldn't she be happy? Why couldn't she just be happy?

(\textit{because you know it's not real,} that horrible, reasonable voice said.)

It was real!

He loved her. He hadn't put her on a pedestal, his talk of goddesses and perfection notwithstanding. Megamind knew her; Megamind had known her for years—

(I think I fell a little in love with you, the very first time we met—)

Oh.

(\textit{perfect})

Oh no.

(\textit{perfect})

Oh, god, please, no.

\textit{What was it you thought he saw in you? asked the reasonable voice. You were the first person to show him kindness; you're reasonably attractive, reasonably intelligent—nothing compared to him, of course, but clever enough to be entertaining. He was lonely, he was desperate for affection, desperate for someone to love, and you?}

\textit{You happened to be there.}

\textit{So be happy now, Roxanne, by all means, be happy while you can. He'll figure it out, sooner or later.}

\textit{Sooner or later, he'll realize that he doesn't really love you.}

Shut up, Roxanne thought, squeezing her eyes shut tightly. Shut up; shut up; he loves me; he does—he does—

The voice was silent.

Roxanne opened her eyes.

No. No, the stupid confirmation bias voice was wrong. It was \textit{wrong.}

Megamind loved her. He did.

He loved her.

But somehow, the thought didn't seem to shine as brightly as it had, before.

Roxanne lay awake for a long time, staring blankly at nothing, but, last, without noticing, she slipped into sleep, and into fitful, broken dreaming.
...to be continued.

Thank you so much for reading and reviewing! I really appreciate all of the reviews, and I very much hope that you enjoyed this chapter of Sex and Angst and Social Justice!

Also, hey, guess what? Today is my birthday!

And to celebrate, I'm planning on publishing an update to one of my stories (or a new story) every day this week (feb. 12th-18th). I'm also going to put up a new piece of megamind fanart on my tumblr every day this week! (I go by setepenre-set on tumblr, if you want to check it out)
Minion blinked groggily, frowning as consciousness slowly dawned.

What in the world…?

His bleary eyes focused on the brainbot in front of him—number 98, he thought. It tapped once more on the glass of Minion’s sleeping tank, and then, seeing that he was awake, retracted its arm and bobbed excitedly in the air.

“Bowg,” it said, eyestalk moving rapidly.

The brainbots behind 98—quite a small flock of them, really, echoed the sound.

Minion glanced at the clock on the tankside table—six in the morning, no reason for the bots to be up and agitated this early unless—

Oh no, was Sir working this early again? If so, that meant he wasn’t sleeping properly—but then, that wasn’t really a surprise, Minion thought bitterly. The—fixation on Miss Ritchi, and the way she’d decided to tell him that his feelings didn’t matter, the way she seemed determined to keep stringing Sir along for as long as possible—well.

“Bowg—”

“Yes, yes, all right,” Minion said, calling his suit over to the underside of the tank so he could transfer to it. “I’ll handle it; don’t worry.”

There were more brainbots in the hallway outside his bedroom—what had Sir been doing to get them so excited?

The moment after he wondered this, Minion realized what the bots were so agitated over.

Because a ripple of laughter floated faintly out from the kitchen and into the hall.

Feminine laughter. And then distant sound of Sir’s voice, saying something to—

Miss Ritchi. She was here.

Minion narrowed his eyes, working his jaw from side to side in anger.

What was she doing here? If she didn’t want Sir, then she should at least have the decency to let him be.

Sir had ordered him not to interfere between him and Miss Ritchi, but really, this went beyond the bounds of acceptability. She shouldn’t be here, keeping Sir awake when he should be sleeping; it
was hard enough getting Sir to take care of himself without her making things worse.

“Bowg bowg.”

Minion stomped down the hall towards the kitchen.

“Minion!” Miss Ritchi said when he stepped into the kitchen, having the audacity to look pleased to see him.

“Minion!” Sir said, looking happy, too. “You’re awake!”

(of course, he looked happy now; it was later that the misery would hit him, later after Miss Ritchi had blithely gone on her way)

“Yes,” Minion said, “Sir. The brainbots woke me. They seemed agitated.”

Sir and Miss Ritchi were seated at the kitchen counter, both of them in pajamas. Both of them in Sir’s pajamas. More brainbots were hovering around the two of them. Number 228 was hovering especially near to Miss Ritchi.

Miss Ritchi laughed.

“Yeah, I don’t think the brainbots used to having me around, yet,” she said.

(yet?! yet?! ohhh how dare she)

“Yes, I’ve been meaning to update their programming,” Sir said, gazing at her with an expression of adoration that was absolutely painful to look at.

“Sorry they woke you up, Minion,” Miss Ritchi said, and took another bite of toast.

Sir had made the toast, Minion was fairly certain. It had that sad, singed appearance, and the butter was all clumpy from when he’d put it on after the toast had already gone too cold to melt it.

Minion smothered the automatic urge to offer to cook her something a little more edible. She deserved to eat that piece of toast.

“What are you doing awake this early, Sir?” Minion asked, pointedly ignoring Miss Ritchi’s apology.

Sir, who had been staring at Miss Ritchi, jumped.

“What?” he said. “Oh—ah!—Roxanne—has to go to work.”

Miss Ritchi made a noise of agreement and put down her toast, wiping her hands on a napkin.

“I should probably go get dressed, actually,” she said, standing up and taking a quick drink from her coffee cup—probably to wash down the burnt taste of the toast. “Otherwise I’m going to be late.”

Her gaze flicked over to Sir and she raised her eyebrows just slightly, a smile playing around the edges of her mouth.

Sir stood up quickly.

“I’ll come with you!” he said.
Miss Ritchi smiled and led him past Minion and into the hall.

Bot number 98 hovered in place near the elbow of Minon’s suit.

“Bowg-bowg?”

Minion growled under his breath in frustration and went to clear the table with dark thoughts in his mind.

Megamind shut the bedroom door and Roxanne immediately pushed him up against it, kissing him with a force and urgency that made his knees feel weak.

She broke the kiss.

“I really,” she said, “wish I didn’t have to go to work right now.”

“So do I,” Megamind said breathlessly.

Roxanne’s gaze flicked down to his mouth and she made a sound of frustration, almost a growl. (Megamind felt his knees go weak again.) She stepped back and turned away, pulling the sweater she was wearing over her head and dropping it onto the bed, picking her bra up from the floor and slipping it on.

“Help me with this?” she asked, looking over her shoulder at him.

( help her with…? )

“Oh—” Megamind said in pleased surprise, realizing what she must mean.

He took a step forward and reached for the sides of her bra, hooking the clasp for her. She smiled at him over her shoulder and he leaned down to press his lips to her shoulder.

Roxanne made a low humming noise.

“Tease,” she murmured.

Megamind bit his lip, smiling, and stepped back from her to sit on the edge of the bed.

It was—it was very—exciting, watching Roxanne get dressed. Not exciting in the way that watching her get undressed was exciting, but still—it felt—

—it felt sort of like it had felt last night when she’d let him play with her hair, when she’d drawn on his back, or when they’d eaten breakfast together this morning. Like something—

Megamind gave a breathless laugh. Roxanne, slipping on her skirt, looked at him inquiringly.

“—we’re dating,” he said in amazement. “We actually—we—”

Roxanne took a quick breath and then a slow, small smile started to curve her lips.

“Yeah,” she said softly. “Yeah, we are.”

“I get to be your boyfriend,” Megamind said, pressing a hand to his cheek, feeling how wide his own eyes must be. “—oh my god, Roxanne; I am so happy.”

Roxanne took another of those sharp little breaths and swallowed visibly.
“I’m glad,” she said, “because I am—I am so happy that I get to be your girlfriend.”

Megamind made a noise of sheer, overwhelming joy and fell back onto the bed, closing his eyes blissfully.

His sweater, the one that Roxanne had worn, was on the bed, still, half underneath his body. Megamind glanced at it as he sat up.

Roxanne was buttoning her shirt now, still smiling a little to herself. Megamind looked over at the sweater on the bed beside him again and then touched the material, stroking his fingers over it. Roxanne had been wearing this, just a handful of moments ago, and maybe he was imagining things but he could swear that it was still a little warm from the heat of her body. And he definitely wasn’t imagining the way her scent clung to the sweater. (god, that was intoxicating) He wanted—

—and he could, couldn’t he? He could do that; he was allowed—

He unbuttoned his pajama shirt quickly and slipped the sweater on instead.

When he finished pulling the material down over his head, Roxanne was looking at him again, her head tilted questioningly.

Megamind ducked his head, feeling himself blush.

“—it smells like you,” he said shyly.

Roxanne’s lips parted. For a moment, she was very still, just looking at him, and then she crossed the distance between them in a few swift strides and took his face in her hands, tilting it up as she bent down to kiss him firmly. Megamind reaced up and wrapped his hands around her wrists as he kissed her back. After a long moment, she broke the kiss, leaning her forehead against his.

“—I love you so much,” she said. “And you are making it very difficult for me to get to work on time.”

“I love you, too,” Megamind said.

Roxanne kissed him once more, swiftly, then let go of his face and straightened up. She gave him a mock stern glance and Megamind gave her his best look of innocence. She laughed and started to put on her shoes.

“I left your key on the bedside table, by the way,” she said.

Megamind blinked and then moved to lie on the bed again, on his stomach this time, so that he could reach the bedside table. There was a key there; he picked it up and turned it over in his fingers.

“To your apartment?” he said, breathless again as Roxanne made a wordless noise of confirmation.

She had given him a key to her apartment. They really were dating.

“—the Lair is coded to your genetic signature,” he blurted out, realizing he’d never actually told her that. “The entrances—they’re set to let you in, specifically. It’s not a key that you can—hold in your hand, but—”

“I figured it must be something like that,” Roxanne said, finger-combing her hair. “Just—just out of curiosity, when did you re-set those?”
“…uh,” Megamind sat up, folding his fingers around the key, feeling the sharp edges of it, feeling himself blushing. “They…were sort of…always like that? For you?”

Roxanne’s hands went still in her hair.

“Wait, always-always?” she said. “Kidnapping-always?”

“W-well—well it was easier that way!” Megamind said quickly, giving her the excuse that he’d always given Minion. “Not having to—not having to go through any security protocols—when we were bringing you inside the Lair for a kidnapping—”

Evidently Roxanne was harder to fool than Minion, because she gave him an unconvinced look, arching an eyebrow. Megamind winced, dropping his eyes, holding the key tightly in one hand, twisting the fingers of his other hand in the sleeve of the seater.

“—I used to imagine—” he swallowed. “I used to imagine that someday you’d—you’d be—interested enough—to find the Lair. And that you’d—that someday I might look up and—and you’d be there…”

He looked up at her, now; Roxanne was looking at him with an expression of such sheer affection that it felt like a bright knife, cutting to the soul of him.

“Is this another one of your fantasies?” she asked, voice gentle.

Megamind made a face.

“Sometimes. Sometimes with the—but sometimes you’d just…just be—” He ducked his head, then looked up at her again, through his lashes, and smiled wryly. “—I just really wanted you to like me, Roxanne.”

She moved to him again, bent down to take hold of his wrist, and then pulled him to his feet.

“I do like you,” she said, and kissed him, chaste and gentle. “I like you—love you—so much. I think—” she kissed his cheek, “—that you are—” she kissed his other cheek, “—amazing.”

She kissed his lips again, the hand that wasn’t holding his wrist going up to cup his face, and then pulled back, rubbing her thumb over his cheekbone.

Megamind took his free hand and placed it over her hand on his cheek, leaning into her touch.

(a key to her apartment was in his other hand; she’d given it to him, and she thought that he was amazing.)

“—I—I believe you,” he said wonderingly.

(she actually thought that about him. she actually loved him.)

Roxanne took an uneven breath, her fingers tightening on his wrist.

“Good,” she said, voice soft.

She leaned their foreheads together, and Megamind felt—

(centered anchored safe she loved him)

“—don't think this means that I’m going to stop telling you, though,” she said after a moment,
leaning back to look at him, and he laughed.

Roxanne squeezed his wrist and then let go, and he let her step back from him.

“You,” he said, watching her, “are so incredibly, perfectly fantastic, Roxanne.”

Roxanne, bending over to pick up her purse, paused from a moment before straightening up, a serious, uncertain expression on her face.

“—Megamind—I—you—last night—,” she said, “—what you said last night, about—”

She stopped and Megamind tipped his head and made an inquiring noise.

“—ah, about—” she she looked away for a moment and ran one hand through her hair, “—about—the unions.”

“The unions?”

“Yeah, what you said about—about you helping them strike at Scott Technology,” she said, “I was wondering if anyone at the unions actually knew about you helping.”

“Oh—a—a few of them knew,” Megamind said, “some of the leaders. I had to make sure, you see, that I was able to coordinate my attack with their strike—make sure they didn’t run when it started—”

“And they knew it was you?”

Megamind frowns, blinking.

“Knew it was…? Oh! Oh, yes, they knew, yes; I hadn’t invented the disguise watch yet, so I—had to approach them as myself.”

“Excellent,” Roxanne said. “Could you give me their names? I want to interview them. They’d still be around, right?”

“Most of them are retired, now, but they’re all still alive,” Megamind said. “I have their current addresses on file somewhere; I make it a point to keep tabs on them…”

“That’s perfect,” Roxanne said. “Send those to me after I leave?”

“Of course.”

Minion glared balefully at Sir and Miss Ritchi when they returned to the kitchen. Neither of them noticed, though, as Miss Ritchi put one hand on Sir’s shoulder and leaned in to kiss him, quick and casual, like he belonged to her.

“I’ll see you after work,” she said, smiling at him, and then she stepped away and turned to Minion with a smile. “See you later, Minion!”

Minion didn’t answer, just folded the arms of his suit and watched Sir watching her go.

Sir didn’t even notice Minion’s disapproval, staring after Miss Ritchi as the sound of her footsteps faded. There was the distant sound of her stepping through the holographic entrance and then there was a long silence.
Minion cleared his throat pointedly.

Sir just continued to stare in the direction that Miss Ritchi had gone, looking a bit like he had a concussion.

“Sir. Sir.”

“Mmm,” Sir said absently, still not looking at him.

“Sir,” Minion said sharply, voice loud enough that Sir jumped and finally turned towards him.

“Huh?” he said, still looking dazed.

“I really disapprove of this, Sir,” Minion said, voice stern.

“—this?” Sir said, blinking at him.

Minion made a noise of frustration.

“Miss Ritchi,” he hissed. “She was here. And she was wearing The Sweater.”

(Sir’s favorite sweater, an ugly orange thing that he refused to let Minion throw out, no matter how ragged it got. Sir was terribly attached to that awful sweater, and he’d given it to Miss Ritchi to wear and this was very. very. bad.)

“…sweater?”

“Yes! The Sweater! The sweater that you are now wearing right at this very moment; come on, Sir! I need you to at least try to think about what you’re doing because—”

“Wh—no! No no no!” Sir said, flapping his hands. “No! Minion! Minion, you were right!”

Minion stopped.

“I was right?” he said slowly.

“Yes!” Sir said, “Minion, you were right! I was—less right—” he laughed, suddenly, “—wrong,” he said, “I was—I was wrong, I was so completely wrong!”

He laughed breathlessly.

Minion blinked at him.

“Wrong about…”

“Wrong about Roxanne! She does love me, Minion; she said so!”

Minion’s fins moved in an involuntary flutter of surprise.

Miss Ritchi said—?

“…and did she say why she told you before that she didn’t?” he said cautiously, not wanting to give into false hope.

“She didn’t!” Sir said, face absolutely lit up. “She didn’t say that, that wasn’t what she meant, before; I misunderstood—she misunderstood what I—we were both—we were both confused about—”
Sir cut himself off with a laugh and wrapped his arms around himself.

Minion’s fins fluttered again; he felt his eyes going wide.

“What—really, Sir?”

“Really! She loves me!”

Sir laughed, lifting his arms up and spinning in a quick, blissful circle.

“Sir—Sir that’s wonderful!”

“I know! Ohhh, I have never been so happy to be wrong in my entire life,” Sir said, hugging himself once more. “And she’s coming back! After work! Ah!—brainbots; I need to reprogram the brainbots so that they know she’s—and! And Minion, did you know that there are more than just two genders; did you know that?—oh! I need to tell the brainbots, that, too; I’ll add that to their programming—need to look something up for Roxanne, first, though—”

Sir gave one last laugh—almost an evil cackle, except much, much happier, and bounded out of the kitchen, the brainbots trailing after him in an interested swarm.

Minion closed his eyes for a moment.

Things were—things were going to be all right.

Sir was happy; he was happier than—than Minion had ever seen him. And Minion was—

—well, he felt more than a little guilty now, for letting Ma’am eat that terrible toast Sir had made.

But! But she was coming back; he could make something special for dinner tonight!

“—knew it might be illegal, of course,” Bob Hays said, giving the camera a defiant look. His wrinkled, callused hands tightened into fists on the armrests of his chair. “But we were desperate, and we knew that, every time the union had struck before, the Scotts had broken the strikes—so when he offered to help us—well, we figured we didn’t have anything to lose—”

“—gave some money, to hold the workers over during the strike,” said Harry Welsh, and shook his head. “Figured it was a trick, but they voted me down—glad that they did, way things turned out—”

“—made us agree to hold the strike demonstration that day, insisted that we promise not to abandon the strike no matter what,” said Joe Conner, with a laugh. “We all thought—well, to be honest, I think we all thought we were gonna be a distraction, so that he could be somewhere else, doing something without being noticed.” He laughed again. “Could’ve knocked me down with a feather, when that big robot suit came crashing in.”

“So Megamind specifically planned the battle at Scott Technology around the strike and the demonstration, then?” Roxanne said, and Harry Welsh nodded. “It seems a bit odd, though, after going through all this, that he started off the battle by insulting the striking workers…”

Harry laughed.

“He knew what he was doing. Him saying that is what made Mr. Wayne Scott give that nice speech of his, about what hard workers we were, and how we should be treated fair.” Harry grinned at Roxanne. “Oh, yes, I reckon he knew just what he was doing.”
“Are you okay?” Palak asked, watching Roxanne gratefully attack the iced coffee and doughnuts she’d brought to the table for the whole team. “You seem kind of…”

She trailed off and hesitated, obviously not completely sure what Roxanne seemed.

(Roxanne didn't blame her; Roxanne didn’t even know how she was, really; she—)

Happy. She was happy, damn it; she was. She was happy and she was dating Megamind and she was not at all freaked out about the fact that he apparently thought she was a perfect, impossible-to-live-up-to ideal.

She was—she was being irrational. And surely he couldn’t really mean it the way it sounded, couldn’t—

She’d almost said something to him, that morning in his bedroom, when he’d watched her while she got dressed—when he’d taken off his own pajama top and traded it for the sweater that she had been wearing because it smelled like her. She had tried to make herself say something to him, when he told her again how perfect she was, had tried to make herself say—

(Megamind I’m not perfect not really)

or—

(when you say that I’m perfect it scares me because I know I can’t live up to that)

or—

But she couldn’t do it. The words stuck in her throat and she couldn’t make herself say them, and so she’d ended up just asking him about the union leaders instead.

(Roxanne didn’t want to have to fall off her pedestal, didn’t want to have to face Megamind’s inevitable disappointment and heartbreak and shock.)

Palak was staring at her, Roxanne realized. Actually they were all staring at her, watching her out of the corners of their eyes like they were afraid she was going to shatter into sharp pieces and shrapnel at any moment.

“I’m fine,” Roxanne said, giving them her best and most unconcerned smile. “Just—didn’t get a lot of sleep last night, you know? Probably should have asked you to get me a bigger coffee.”

None of them looked—really convinced by that, but they did let it go, so Roxanne counted it as a win anyway, and half-listened to Lisa describe the really terrible date she’d gone on last night—

“—three drinks in and she’s telling me all about her ex-girlfriend, which, you know, okay,” Lisa said, “I’m just thinking ‘please, god; don’t let her start crying’, but then—but then!—”

Roxanne finished her doughnut as Lisa’s story wound up to the conclusion, “—so it turns out the ex-girlfriend wasn’t quite as ex as this girl thought, and it was all a misunderstanding, but I didn’t get punched in the face and least her girlfriend paid for my drink.”

Everyone laughed; Roxanne wiped her fingers on one of the paper napkins, picked up her coffee, and stood. Lisa, Karen, Palak, Connie, Katie, and Xavier, all of them not even close to finished, looked up at her.

“I think I’m gonna take a walk around the block, the rest of break,” Roxanne said. “If I stay sitting
too long I’ll probably end up crashing.”

She raised her coffee to them in lieu of a wave and walked towards the door, avoiding their eyes.

The walk, of course, was just a ruse.

There was a little bookstore, just a couple streets over from the KCMP building; Roxanne strode there rapidly, finishing off her coffee.

She’d thought this through already; had actually thought of it on the drive from the Lair to her apartment, this morning. So she already knew what she wanted, as soon as she walked in; she just had to ask the girl behind the counter to point her in the right direction. The shop even had gift wrap.

The purchase only took about five minutes total, and then she was stepping out of the bookstore and ducking into an alleyway, out of sight of any passersby. She looked around swiftly, checking that she was, in fact, alone, and then pulled her de-gun from her purse and quickly dehydrated the packages. Then she stuffed the cubes and the gun both back in her purse and arranged her compact and her various lipsticks to hide them.

She ducked back out of the alleyway and took off walking in the direction of the station.

The painting in the window of the tiny art gallery a few shops down caught her eye as she was walking past, and she stopped to look at it.

It was—intensely compelling: layers of deep blues—nearly black at the bottom of the painting, brushstrokes in different directions to suggest a frenzy of movement—and then grayish blues slashing down diagonally from the top of the canvas. And on the left side of the canvas, bright against the dark blues, was a small speck of white with a kind of hazy halo around it, like a light seen from a distance.

(and something about it reminded her of—something…)

Roxanne stepped into the art gallery.

There was a girl with pink hair working behind the counter; she smiled at Roxanne when she came over.

“Can I help you, ma’am?”

“Yes,” Roxanne said, “that—that painting in the window, the one with all the blues…”

The girl’s smile went less professional and more genuine.

“Lighthouse in a Storm?” she said.

“—is that what it’s called?” Roxanne asked.

“Yeah,” the girl said, “it’s—one of mine, actually; I did it a few weeks ago.”

(the cheap poster tacked to the wall of Megamind’s bedroom, the one of a lighthouse; that was what the painting had made her think of)

“It’s gorgeous,” Roxanne said, “and if it’s for sale, I’d like to buy it.”
“All right, so what have you got for me?” Roxanne said, leaning against Karen’s desk.

“There’s a couple more people who have called to request interviews,” Karen said, “but—”

She hesitated and Roxanne gave her an inquiring look.

“—but there’s also something that I found,” Karen continued, opening her desk drawer and pulling out a file. “After the interview with Met—Wayne Scott, I did a search for Megamind’s early records. I found juvenile offense records, paperwork for his name change—his name is actually legally Megamind, did you know that?—and I also found—”

Karen put the file on the desk and flipped it open, turning it around so that Roxanne could see the contents.

“—this.”

A newspaper clipping.

“Hometown Boy Makes Bad,” Roxanne read the headline.

And below that, a photograph of—

Roxanne took a sharp, appalled breath.

“Oh my god, but he’s a child,” she said, shocked. “What kind of person publishes something like this about a—he can’t have been more than nine.”

“Yeah,” said Karen, “and there’s more of them, too.”

Roxanne flipped the clipping to the side. There was another beneath it.

Metro City’s Bad Boy Sets School Suspension Record

Megamind was a young teenager in the picture that accompanied this article. He was looking—glaring, really—at something out of the picture, his head turned so that his face was half in shadow.

(Jesus, he looked so young; no facial hair and the soft angles of his jaw and chin.)

Roxanne flipped through the rest of the contents of the file—article after article, all of them detailing incidents from Megamind’s teenage years, all of them written to make him sound as bad—as dangerous—as possible.

“There’s that time gap between the first one and the second one,” Karen said. “I looked up the records; he was listed as homeschooled during that time. The articles start up again after he begins high school. And they’re all sort of—there’s this—they seem—”

Roxanne shut the file and looked up at Karen, whose face was troubled.

“—wrong,” Karen said. “They seem—wrong. Somehow. I don’t—”

“Because you don’t write stuff like this about a child,” Roxanne said, feeling hot and cold at the same time. “He hadn’t even been arrested yet, for most of these. He was a child.”

“There’s another gap in the articles,” Karen said, “from when he was fifteen. And a missing person’s report. And then the articles start up again about two months later. He disappears again
when he’s sixteen, and then four months later there’s that first article about him being a supervillain: Battle of the Century. Roxanne, I think there’s—I think there’s something wrong here.”

“Yeah,” Roxanne said. “There is, isn’t there.”

“If this was just one newspaper doing this, I’d wonder if it was somebody with a personal grudge,” Karen said. “But all of these newspapers? I mean, I don’t want to get all conspiracy-theory, but…”

(Metro Man needed a supervillain. I think the Scotts must have known that, too—their newspapers were always very—)

(—when I was expelled from ‘Lil Gifted—)

(—the Scotts—)

“So do me a favor, would you?” Roxanne said, pushing the file back towards Karen. “Look up who owned all of these newspapers, when these articles were being published.”

Karen nodded.

“…yeah,” she said, “yeah, I can do that.”

Roxanne stopped by her apartment on her way back from work, just long enough to pack a change of clothes for tomorrow. She had one more shop to visit; luckily it was on her way to the Lair. Roxanne dehydrated the last of the packages when she got into her car. It would be easier to carry that way, and she really wanted to surprise Megamind.

When she stepped through the holographic entrance and into the Lair, Roxanne could hear the brainbots’ mechanical barking; it sounded like a very large group of them, all in one place. She followed the noise to the workroom and—

—caught her breath.

Megamind was standing in the middle of a swarm of brainbots, still dressed in the orange sweater, his hands upraised and his face upturned. He was smiling and laughing, apparently unaware of Roxanne’s presence. The brainbots were moving in a graceful, swirling cloud around him, the electricity in their braincases flashing, their glowing eyestalks shining as the whole swarm of them spun around Megamind like—

(like a galaxy spinning around its center)

“Bowg.”

Roxanne’s gaze shifted over to the brainbot that had broken from its brethren to fly over to her.

“Hey, 228,” she said, recognizing the shape of its spikes and fins.

“Bowg!”

228 gave an excited little wriggle in midair and Roxanne laughed and reached out to stroke its braincase.
“Yes, I’m happy to see you, too,” she said, petting it.

228 gave another little wriggle beneath her hand, but the move was more controlled this time—it was trying to be careful with its spikes, Roxanne thought.

“—actually, 228, I wanted to ask you to do something for me,” Roxanne said.

“Bowg?”

“Maybe you could ask the other bots, too—Minion said you have an auto-record function,” Roxanne said, “and I was wondering if maybe you could try to find some really nice footage of—of your daddy for me.”

228 moved to hover in front of her, its eyestalk held at an inquisitive angle.

“Nice footage,” Roxanne repeated. “Videos of—of your daddy being nice; could you do that for me?”

228 hovered in front of her for a long moment, its metal jaws working like it was thinking, and then, very clearly, it moved its eyestalk up and down for her—a nod, Roxanne though.

“Thank you,” Roxanne said, and 228 took off, bowging, for the brainbot swarm.

“Roxanne!”

Roxanne’s eyes shifted down to Megamind again; he was looking at her, smiling even brighter than before.

(Roxanne’s heart did a sweet, painful little flip at the sight of his smile)

She laughed and half-ran towards him, the brainbots parting to let her through. He caught her waist as she reached him, laughing too, and then he picked her up and spun her around in a circle.

Roxanne threw her arms around his neck and kissed him.

“Hi,” she said breathlessly when she finally pulled away.

“Yes,” Megamind said, sounding just as breathless.

She laughed.

“I—I mean—! Yes, oll—he-lo, yes,” Megamind said, laughing with her.

Roxanne give him another quick kiss, both of them still smiling.

The clanking sounds of Minion’s suit made her look over Megamind’s shoulder.

“Hey, Minion,” she said, grinning at him.

“Hello, Ma’am,” Minion said, looking almost as ridiculously happy as Roxanne felt. “Dinner should be ready in about an hour.”

“Ooh, you cooked?” Roxanne said.

Megamind, still holding onto her, turned them so that they both were looking at Minion, now.

“Yes,” Minion said dryly, with a pointed look at Megamind. “I cooked, this time.”
“The toast I made for breakfast was completely edible!” Megamind protested.

Minion rolled his eyes affectionately and ducked back into the hallway.

“Yes,” Roxanne said, patting Megamind on the shoulder indulgently, “you did a good job with the toast.”

Megamind gave her an amused glance, clearly able to tell that she was being overly generous. Roxanne laughed and let him go, stepping back so she could hop up to sit on the nearby lab table.

“So what did you work on today?” she asked. “Did you update the brainbots?”

“Ah! Yes, all updated on their behavioral programming as regards to you,” Megamind said, hopping up to sit beside her on the table, his body half-turned towards hers. “And I also updated the gender section of their informational matrix, based on the discussion that we had last night!”

Roxanne turned towards him, too.

“The—gender section?”

“Oh, yes,” Megamind said, gesturing. “Their previous programming was based on my assumptions about gender; I wanted to make sure they knew the real full range of options—”

Roxanne blinked.

“Do the brainbots…choose their own genders?” she asked.

“Gender and names, yes,” Megamind said, “although even with all of the options, most of them still choose ‘it’. And most of them—you look surprised.”

“Oh!” Roxanne said. “Well—well, I mean—I always just sort of figured that you’d made them all boys, with the one pink one as a girl…”

“Oh, no,” Megamind said, shaking his head. “No, I don’t make them anything; I wouldn’t feel comfortable forcing—that’s why I call them numbers, to start with; they’re meant to pick out their own names.” He made a face. “But most of them just end up picking the numbers I give them anyway; I’m not sure why—”

“Well—you get used to answering to something,” Roxanne said. “Do some of them pick out names?”

“Occasionally, yes,” Megamind said. “Spikeless, Edgar, Teacup, Pinky, Tribble—”

“Pinky is—”

“The pink one, yes,” Megamind said.

“Is Pinky a girl?” Roxanne asked, reaching for Megamind’s hand so she could play with his fingers.

Megamind’s fingers twitched in surprise when she picked up his hand, but he let her do it, spreading his fingers obligingly so that she could toy with each one in turn.

“No, it turns out Pinky is a they,” he said. “They were very excited about the informational matrix update, by the way; thank you for that.”
Roxanne laughed quietly and Megamind gave her a curious look.

“What?”

“Nothing, just—you told the brainbots,” she said.

(he was so sweet it made her heart ache)

“Of course I told the brainbots,” Megamind bemusedly, tipping his head. “I explained it to Minion, too, when he made us lunch. He wasn’t as excited, though; Minion doesn’t really—care so much about gender divisions, you know?”

“Mm,” Roxanne said, lacing her fingers with Megamind’s. “What gender is number 228?”

Megamind’s eyelids flickered for only a split second—sorting through all of the bots and their genders, Roxanne realized, and she’d never even questioned that he would know them all.

“228 is a they, too.”

“If Pinky was never meant to be a girl,” Roxanne said, “then why did you make them pink?”

Megamind grinned at her.

“Pinky is the distraction bot,” he said, and then added, at Roxanne’s questioning look, “They’re the fastest bot, the one with the quickest reflexes. And their bright coloring means that everyone is automatically looking—and aiming—at them, which keeps the queen bot safe.”

“Queen bot?” Roxanne said. “Queen as in chess, or queen as in bees?”

Megamind gave her a look of gleeful adoration.

“I love your mind so much,” he said. “Queen as in bees. The brainbots interface with each other constantly, and the connection goes deeper when I need them to do more complex, coordinated tasks. The queen bot is the one who runs the communications network interface, and the additional processing requirements tend to make their reflexes slower. Hence Pinky.”

“The queen is a they, too?”

“Hm? Oh! No, no, they—the brainbots actually take turns being the queen; it’s a position, not a name.”

Roxanne made a noise of understanding, then tipped her head.

“The communications network interface—is it like a hive mind?”

“No, it’s—each bot definitely has its own separate, private thoughts,” Megamind said. “It’s more like—the interface is more like an extra layer of communication, like—like how body language is an extra layer of communication over verbal interaction for humans! Only it’s more—detailed than that, and like I said, when groups of the brainbots are engaged in highly coordinated, complex tasks, the interface layer gets—louder? For them? Pushed to the front of their minds, instead of the back of their minds. Does that make sense…?”

“Less like the Borg and more like a Vulcan mind-meld,” Roxanne said, nodding.

Megamind laughed delightedly.
Roxanne grinned at him. Megamind’s laugh—his real laugh, not his evil one—was so beautiful.

“Only less about sharing emotions,” she added, “and more about exchanging information.”

Megamind nodded, still smiling.

“Exactly.”

Roxanne rubbed her thumb over the back of his hand, enjoying the texture of his skin.

“What do you do,” she said curiously, “when a bot doesn’t want to do its job?”

Megamind looked surprised.

“Oh, I don’t assign them jobs,” he said. “Not—I give them a chance to try different things; some of them like helping Minion around the Lair, some of them enjoy assisting me in assembling machines—the ones that patrol the city and the ones that help me fight Metro Man do it because they think it’s fun. I wouldn’t ever make them fight if they didn’t want to.”

Roxanne raised his hand to her lips and placed a quick kiss on the back of it. Megamind’s fingers twitched in hers and she smiled at him.

“And some of the older bots are sort of—mmm—retired, now,” he continued. “They just—stay around the Lair, mostly, and play a little, nap a lot of the time…”

Older bots…Roxanne took a sharp breath.

(—if I jumped—Zero wouldn’t get fixed.)

“Do you—do you still have—the first one?” she asked.

Megamind went perfectly still for a moment—of course he could probably tell what she was thinking—and then he took a breath.

“Yes,” he said. “Would you—would you like to meet her?”

Roxanne swallowed, feeling tears start in her eyes, pushing them down.

“Yeah,” she said, “yeah, I would.”

Megamind held her hand as he led her through the maze of his inventions, through the oddly shaped shadows cast by giant spikes and gears and oddly-shaped machinery. He stopped in front of something Roxanne thought might be the Lair’s electrical generator.

“Zero,” Megamind called softly. “Zero; would you wake up for a minute? There’s someone here who wants to meet you.”

For several moments, the two of them just stood there, waiting, and then a brainbot emerged from behind the generator and hung in the air, looking down at them, its mechanical eye moving over them slowly.

Zero was a little smaller than the current brainbots, Roxanne saw—her braincase and her mechanical jaws both. The teeth of her mechanical jaws fitted together perfectly, unlike the teeth of the current brainbots, and her four mechanical arms seemed longer and thinner than the arms of the new models. They reminded Roxanne of the tentacles of a jellyfish. She didn’t have any spikes or
fins on her braincase, and her mechanical eye was just a bit larger than that of the newer brainbots.

“This is Roxanne Ritchi,” Megamind said, voice gentle, looking up at Zero. “She wanted me to introduce her to you.”

Zero’s mechanical eye focused on Roxanne, looked her up and down slowly. Roxanne had the distinct impression that she was being judged. And then the bot floated down slowly to hang regally in the air before them. The shutter of her mechanical eye closed in a long, slow blink, like the eyes of a pleased cat.

“Zero,” Megamind said, “this is Roxanne Ritchi. Roxanne—this is Zero. Bot Zero-Zero-One, to be exact.”

“Bowg,” Zero said, inclining her eyestalk gracefully.

“She has so much personality,” Roxanne said said. “Ohh, you’re beautiful, aren’t you? Such a pretty lady—”

“Very pretty and very spoiled,” Megamind agreed, reaching out to run his free hand affectionately over Zero’s braincase. “Aren’t you, Zero?”

Zero narrowed the shutter of her mechanical eye and nipped lightly at his fingers. Megamind laughed and stroked over her braincase again. She pushed up into his hand, blinking in that slow, pleased way again.

“Can I pet her?” Roxanne asked.

“She might let you,” Megamind said. “Hold out your hand.”

Roxanne held her hand up, palm up, showing Zero, who looked over at it, and then at Roxanne’s face.

And then she moved her braincase beneath Roxanne’s hand.

Roxanne stroked her hand over the glass, watching the electricity crackle beneath her palm. Zero blinked her shutter slowly and Megamind made a pleased noise.

Tears pricked again at the backs of Roxanne’s eyes.

“Thank you,” she whispered to the brainbot.

“So if you were working on the brainbots’ programming all day,” Roxanne asked casually at dinner, “does that mean that the giant robot for my last kidnapping isn’t finished yet?”

She glanced sidelong at Minion, who, sure enough, was getting ready to answer.

Megamind made a noise of outrage.

“Minion! Do not answer that!”

Roxanne laughed and Megamind turned to her, gesturing threateningly with his croissant.

“You! You are a terrible, devious woman, Miss Ritchi! The evil plot of the final kidnapping is a surprise!”
“Come on, Megamind; not even a hint?” she asked, looking at him and widening her eyes, leaning a little closer to him.

“Temptress!” Megamind said, laughing and trying to glare at the same time. “I already told you about the molecular composition for the new fuel I invented for the machine, and that is all you are getting!”

Roxanne turned appealingly to Minion. He grinned at her.

“Sorry, Ma’am,” he said. “I guess you’ll have to wait.”

Roxanne laughed and took another bite of lasagne. Megamind made a startled noise and she looked over at him; he was staring off into he distance, his fork held loosely in his hand, as if he’d forgotten it.

“What?” she said.

He jumped and looked at her.

“Ah! The—the mechanism for the—I just realized I need to fix—”

He cut himself off, shaking his head and glancing away from her, the fingers of his other hand twitching restlessly against the tabletop.

“Do you need to work on something after dinner?” Roxanne guessed.

He looked at her again with a guilty expression.

“I don’t mind, sweetheart,” she said. “You work on things; I do know this.”

“It—it shouldn’t take long,” Megamind said, still looking uncertain, “it’s something small; it’s just that—” he made a noise of frustration, “—I know if I don’t fix it, then it’s going to drive me crazy all night and I want to be able to concentrate and enjoy being—”

“Hey,” Roxanne said, touching the back of his hand reassuringly, “really, Megamind; it’s okay.”

“I should just let you see it,” Megamind muttered, his mouth twisting. “I’m being stupid.”

“No, you’re not,” Roxanne said firmly, and he looked at her. “It’s nice that you want to surprise me, Megamind. I was just teasing before; I don’t mind waiting.”

“…are you sure?” Megamind asked.

“Very sure,” Roxanne said. She smiled at him, remembering the dehydrated cubes she still had in her purse. “I’ve got something that I need to work on, too—a surprise for you, actually.”

Megamind’s eyes went wide.

“I—I have a surprise?” he asked.

Roxanne bit her lip, smiling.

“Yep,” she said, “but you don’t get to see it until after you’ve finished fixing the mechanism thing.”

She raised her eyebrows teasingly and Megamind’s face lit up.
“Ooh! Ooh, do I get a hint?” he said eagerly.

Roxanne laughed.

“After you wouldn’t give me a hint? I don’t think so, Megamind!”

She turned to Minion as Megamind spluttered indignantly.

“Fair’s fair, right, Minion?” she added sweetly.

Minion grinned at her.

“Minion!” Megamind said.

“I’m afraid I’m gonna have to side with Ma’am, this time,” Minion said.

“Betrayed,” Megamind lamented melodramatically as Roxanne snickered. “Betrayed by my own Minion!”

He sighed pathetically. Roxanne rolled her eyes at him and stole his croissant.

Megamind hurried through fixing the regulator mechanism on the final kidnapping battlesuit. He didn’t want to keep Roxanne waiting any longer than necessary, and—and! She said that she had a surprise for him!

(was it—was it a sex kind of surprise? he didn’t think she would have mentioned it in front of Minion, if so, but he really wasn’t sure how this—he wasn’t sure how dating worked.)

Megamind put away the tools, wiped his hands on a work rag, and went to go find Roxanne.

He looked in the kitchen first; that was where he’d left her and Minion both. Only Roxanne was there now, sitting at the kitchen table. She was typing on her laptop, a cup of tea at her elbow, and Megamind stopped in the doorway, arrested at the sight of her.

Roxanne looked—she looked comfortable; she looked like she belonged here. She—

You are dating Roxanne, Megamind thought again, for about the thousandth time today. The thought wasn’t any less amazing and unbelievably wonderful this time around.

Roxanne looked up at him and her face lit up in a smile.

“Hey,” she said, shutting her laptop and standing.

“Wow,” he breathed, without meaning to. “I—! I mean—um—”

Roxanne laughed, moving towards him.

“You’re such a dork,” she said affectionately, and leaned forward to kiss him.

Megamind kissed her back and then broke the kiss, skipping backwards quickly.

“Sorry! I’m—kind of dirty, with the whole—mechanism—thing; I should—”

“Let me take a shower with you?” Roxanne suggested, smiling slyly. “And then I’ll show you your surprise after.”
Megamind froze.

Roxanne’s smile turned uncomfortable and she stepped back.

“It’s—okay if you don’t want to,” she starts, “I—"

“It’s not that I don’t want to!” Megamind said quickly, hating that look on her face, hating that he’d make her look like that. “It’s—it’s just that—okay, so full disclosure, on my planet, bathing together was kind of a marriage thing so I feel weird doing that without telling you. Sorry.”

Roxanne blinked at him.

“Bathing together was a marriage thing,” she said slowly.

Megamind winced.

“Sort of—I think so—yes,” he said.

“Like a—like something you only did together if you were married?” Roxanne asked.

“Um. Yes, but—also like—also like getting married?” Megamind ran his hands over the top of his head in frustration. “I think, anyway, but like I said, the information I got was—very incomplete—”

“Okay,” Roxanne said, “and so showers together had the same function?”

“I don’t—I don’t know; I’m not sure showers even were a thing, there,” Megamind said miserably, fingers curling around the edges of his sleeves in one of his stupider nervous gestures. “They just seemed—I don’t know; they just seemed too similar for it to be okay for me to—to do it without telling you.”

Roxanne’s eyes flicked down to his hands and Megamind felt himself flush with embarrassment. He dropped his own eyes.

(god, he was so ridiculous, pathetic, didn’t deserve—)

“Thank you,” Roxanne said, “for wanting to make sure I knew, Megamind.”

Megamind looked up again at her. She was looking at him a little uncertainly, biting her lip.

“Is it—is it just that you were worried about me not knowing?” she asked. “Or does—does the idea of showering with me make you uncomfortable? It’s okay if—I’m not—I’m not going to be upset with you if it does make you uncomfortable—”

“It doesn’t,” Megamind said quickly. Roxanne still looked a little unsure, so he added, “I—like I said, it’s not even that—showers weren’t even a thing, I just—I just worry. About doing things—I don’t want to do something without your—without you knowing.”

Roxanne’s expression changed from uncertainty to something soft-edged and filled with love. She stepped forward again and reached for his hands, curling her fingers around his, still twisted in the material of his sleeves.

“I do know, now,” she said, looking at him steadily. “Okay?”

Megamind took a breath, and then another, and then he loosened his grip on his sleeves, sliding his fingers between Roxanne’s instead.
“Okay,” he said, “okay so—would—would you like to take a shower with me, Roxanne?”

She smiled at him.

“Yes, I would.”

Chapter End Notes

…to be continued.

I hope you all enjoyed the new chapter! Thank you for all of the wonderful reviews; I really appreciate them so much.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Roxanne turned the shower on, adjusted the temperature, and then turned away. Megamind was standing in the middle of the room, still, looking like he wasn’t sure what he was supposed to be doing, so she smiled at him and started to unbutton her own shirt.

His face cleared, and he pulled the sweater he was wearing up and over his head. He placed it carefully in the hamper that stood next the wall. Roxanne, having finished taking off her own shirt, tossed it gently at him. He caught it with a surprised laugh and put it in the hamper, too. Roxanne grinned and took off the rest of her clothes as Megamind slipped off his pajama pants. With a small smile on his face, Megamind stepped forward to take her clothes, and dropped everything into the hamper.

Megamind had already found towels for both of them, and hung them up, so Roxanne stepped into the shower, underneath the spray, gesturing at him to follow.

He hesitated for a moment before stepping in after her and closing the shower door. Roxanne could see that he was looking nervous again, so she gently took hold of his wrist and pulled him beneath the spray with her.

And he was—

God, Megamind was honestly just so gorgeous; she realized yet again. The water from the shower slid over his skin in rivulets, bringing all the lovely curves and angels of him into sharp relief, making the blue of his skin seem deeper, somehow, with the way it caught the light.

“You are so beautiful,” he murmured, looking at her.

Roxanne gave a soft laugh.

“That’s funny,” she said, reaching out to place her free hand against his chest. “Because that’s what I was just thinking about you.”

Megamind blinked, looking surprised, and then a sweet, shy smile began to curve his lips.

Roxanne leaned forward and kissed him.

The warm water falling around them made everything feel intense, every sensation heightened, their mouths sliding together, Megamind’s hands slipping into her wet hair, Roxanne’s hand stroking wetly over the slick skin of his chest and shoulder to hold the back of his neck.

Megamind made a noise of pleasure at that and Roxanne shifted so that she was pressed more closely together, her breasts against his chest, her thigh between his legs, pressed against the line of his sex.

He made one of his more alien noises at that, a cooing, humming noise that vibrated against her lips, so Roxanne slid her other hand around to the small of his back, holding him in place against her body. Then slowly, she moved her hips, grinding her thigh gently against his sex.

Megamind broke the kiss, gasping, his hands twitching in her hair and his hips jerking forward
slightly.

His eyes were wide, slightly unfocused, and his lips were parted. Roxanne kissed his chin and nipped lightly at the tendon of his neck before rubbing against him again. He made a soft noise, his forehead dropping to press against hers, and moved his hips with her. Roxanne made an approving sound and ran the fingernails of one hand lightly over the back of his neck, using her other hand, the one on the small of his back, to pull him forward, urging him to grind against her.

He moaned quietly and Roxanne tipped her head up to kiss him.

She kept the kiss light and shallow, flicking her tongue teasingly and then pulling back, keeping the motion of their hips together slow and gentle, too. The sensation of the water, the sound of it in the background, made Roxanne feel like the rest of the world had fallen away, like nothing else existed at this moment besides the quiet sounds Megamind was making and the slick texture of his skin against hers.

Roxanne ran her fingers over the back of his neck, half-teasing, half-soothing, then reached up to cup the back of his head, to stroke her fingertips over the edge of his ear.

Megamind shivered against her, making that birdsong sound. He pressed closer to her, making a needy noise as he pushed into the kiss. Roxanne deepened it obligingly, and he shuddered again, grinding against her more insistently. She tightened her grip on the back of his neck and moaned, and Megamind moaned, too, his hands moving from her hair to grab her hips, holding her tightly. Roxanne moved her hand from the small of his back to wrap around his waist, pulling him closer and Megamind gasped, breaking the kiss as his hips jerked against her.

“—ah—”

Roxanne kissed him lightly and his body went taut and then pliant against hers. He made a quiet noise and Roxanne pressed a kiss to his jaw, loosening her grip on the back of his neck and stroking it lightly again.

He shivered again and Roxanne relaxed her hold on him more, intending to shift back and step away. But he slid one arm around her waist, stopping her. His other hand moved to her face, tipping it up slightly so that he could kiss her. Then he trailed his fingers down her throat, moved his hand to cup her breast.

Megamind broke the kiss gently and looked into her face as though checking to see she was pleased, so Roxanne hummed in satisfaction and smiled at him. He rolled her nipple beneath his thumb and a bolt of pleasure sang through her. She shifted her weight so that she was the one rubbing against him, now, moved her hips in slow circles as Megamind’s thumb moved in slow circles on her breast.

The friction was delicious, but when Megamind slid his hand down from her breast to her clit, it was much, much better.

She moaned, her hand moving from Megamind’s waist to wrap around his shoulders as she pushed herself up and into the pressure of his fingers.

Megamind was looking at her still, she realized, his eyes on her face and his expression almost hungry as he watched her gasp in pleasure.

“—oh,” Roxanne said, as his fingers pressed against her at the exact angle she needed, “—oh.”

Her climax came in a bright burst, making her cry out quietly and clutch at him.
When it came to an end, she gave a sigh of languid satisfaction and relaxed against him. He was practically holding her up already, she noticed; between his arm around her waist and her arms around his shoulders, he had nearly all of her weight. It didn’t seem to be causing him any difficulty, though. Roxanne took her time unwinding her arms from him and stepping back.

She stretched her spine, hands moving through her wet hair.

Mmm; she felt so wonderfully relaxed; there was really nothing like the combination of hot water and an orgasm.

Megamind made a soft noise and she looked over at him.

He didn’t look especially relaxed—but then, he wouldn’t be, after just one orgasm. Roxanne licked her lips and looked over at him; his pupils were wide and black, the skin of his sex flushed deep blue. His fingers were twitching like he wanted to reach for her, or touch himself, but he didn’t. He just looked at her.

Roxanne smiled at him, slow and wicked.

“Come and help me wash my hair, sweetheart,” she said.

Megamind jerked at her words. Help her—?

He didn’t know whether to be more dismayed or excited. The single climax she’d given him had left him aching for more. Even the spray of the shower, hitting the sensitive skin of his sex, was sending little sparks of desire through him. His tentacles twisted restlessly against each other inside of his slit; he hadn’t even let them out yet and he could feel them crying out for Roxanne’s touch.

But Roxanne wanted him to help her wash her hair, and that felt terribly—

(—wonderful, important, precious, and—)

—and she was teasing him on purpose, he realized, looking at her expression. This was another game.

He relaxed just slightly at that realization, even as it sent another pulse of arousal through him. He liked playing Roxanne’s games. There was no reason to worry; she would take care of him eventually.

She arched her eyebrow at him as if in challenge and Megamind stepped forward. Her smirk deepened as she turned around, tipping her head back, letting the water run through her hair.

Megamind reached up to run his fingers through it, too, pressing his lips to her ear.

“You’re a cruel woman, Miss Ritchi,” he murmured.

Roxanne laughed.

“Shampoo first, Megamind,” she said.

Megamind glanced over at the shower shelf. Usually it just held soap, but Roxanne must have brought her shower things from her apartment, because it now held several bottles as well.
He picked up the bottle with the appropriate label, then reached out and stroked his fingers over the wet skin of Roxanne's back—oh god, that was amazing.

“How do I do this?” he asked.

“Put a little bit in your hand,” she said, her eyes still closed. “You won’t need much.”

Megamind opened the bottle and poured some cautiously into the palm of his hand. It looked like liquid soap, but it was a bit thicker than normal soap, opaque white instead of clear, with a pearlescent shimmer to its surface.

“It’s pretty,” he said, surprised.

Roxanne opened her eyes and looked over her shoulder at him.

“The shampoo?” she asked.

“Yeah, the—” Megamind put down the bottle and tilted his hand, showing her. “See; it’s all shiny.”

He touched it with the index finger of his other hand, swirling the pearlescent shimmers together. Then he glanced up quickly, flushing. Roxanne was looking at him with an arrested expression.

“Sorry, is that—that’s probably a weird thing to say,” he said.

“No—” she said, “No, you’re right; it is pretty. I just—I just never noticed that, before.”

Megamind relaxed a bit.

“Do I just put it in your hair, now?” he asked.

“Hmm? Oh! No, you’re going to want to get it a little wet, and then work it up into a lather, first.”

Megamind did as directed, rubbing his hands together.

“Now you can put it in my hair,” she said, turning her head again and tipping it back for him.

He slid his fingers into her hair, working the shampoo into the wet strands, the bubbles getting bigger.

—ooh, this was fun!—it made her hair stick together even more than it had when it was just wet!

And she was letting him touch her head, letting him massage her scalp all over and making quiet noises of pleasure and encouragement as he did it; Megamind felt absolutely delirious with happiness, his arousal at the back of his mind now, not nearly as important as Roxanne letting him do this.

“Mm, rinse, now,” Roxanne said, shifting so that she was standing in the spray, her head still tilted back.

Megamind stroked his hands through her hair as the shampoo ran out of it.

“Conditioner next,” Roxanne murmured.

Megamind picked up the bottle labeled conditioner.
“Same technique as the shampoo?” he asked.

“Ah, no—same amount, but it’s going to be thicker than the shampoo; you don’t need to lather it before putting it in my hair.”

Megamind squeezed a bit of the conditioner into his hand.

It was thicker than the shampoo; sort of—creamy. No shimmer like the shampoo, sadly, but the texture was quite enjoyable. He put down the bottle and worked the conditioner into Roxanne’s hair.

Roxanne made a pleased noise.

“That feels nice,” she said.

“That’s fortunate,” Megamind said, kissing the base of her neck. “Because I am really enjoying this, Roxanne.”

She laughed.

“I thought you might,” she said. “Help me rinse again? It makes my hair look greasy if I leave it in too long.”

She stepped under the spray again and Megamind ran his fingers through her hair until the slickness of the conditioner was gone.

Roxanne turned to him slowly, smiling, her eyes half-lidded.

“Hand me my body wash, would you?” she asked.

Megamind picked up the third bottle and gave it to her, then picked up his own bar of soap.

“—actually—you can use some of this, instead, if you want,” Roxanne said.

Megamind looked at her; she was holding up her bottle of body wash in one hand.

“All right,” he said, putting the soap back on the shelf and holding out his hands.

Roxanne smiled and poured some body wash into his hands.

“Ooh!” he said delightedly, seeing it.

She laughed.

It was even shinier than the shampoo; the liquid was a rosy golden color, with swirls of deeper gold shimmering over its surface.

He dipped his fingertips in it and rubbed some of it over his arm experimentally. It left a trail of shimmer in its wake.

“Most of the sparkle fades when you rinse it off,” Roxanne said. “But you might be kind of shiny for a little bit, even after you get out of the shower; so—fair warning.”

“—I really don’t see how ‘kind of shiny’ is something to be warned about,” Megamind said, rubbing his hand over his other arm, fascinated at the texture and the way it made his skin glitter.
Roxanne laughed again and stroked her hands down his chest, leaving a twin trails of glitter in the wake of her touch.

“Oh, wow,” Megamind said, looking down—he could see a record of where her hands had touched him; it looked like she’d painted his skin with sunlight.

(it looked how it felt, having her touch him; it looked like she’d made him shine)

“Oh my god, I am so glad you made that comment about the shampoo being pretty,” Roxanne said breathlessly. “I wouldn’t have thought of this, otherwise.”

“You are brilliant,” Megamind said, stroking his own hand over her skin, from one shoulder to another.

(—oh—oh that was even more amazing; seeing her shining everywhere he’d touched her—)

He ran his hands over her chest, her sides, her arms, her back. She glowed; she was so beautiful—Roxanne was running her hands over him at the same time, like she wanted to touch him everywhere, her hands stroking slick and lovely over his skin. He felt—he felt so happy; he felt—loved. He felt loved.

“So gorgeous,” Roxanne murmured, looking at him, and Megamind caught his breath at her expression.

He dropped to his knees in front of her, running his hands over her legs. She reached out and smoothed her hands over the top of his head, the back of it and he took a sharp breath as desire pulsed through him.

God, he wanted her so much, wanted—

He leaned forward to kiss her between her legs.

Roxanne moaned, her hands cupping the back of his head now, instead of stroking.

The angle of it like this, with her standing in front of him, was a bit challenging. When she leaned back against the wall of the shower, though, he was able to nudge her legs a little wider, so that he had a bit more room to work.

Still less than usual, though, so he focused almost entirely on her clitoris, alternating between licking and sucking at it, holding her hips to keep her balanced, gradually increasing the pressure of his mouth, taking his cues from the sounds she was making, from the clutch of her hands on the back of his head and his neck, from the way he could feel her hips trembling.

He could tell when she was close and adjusted his grip on her waist accordingly, making sure to hold her more securely, making sure she didn’t fall.

“(—ah—Megamind—god—yes—)”

Feeling her come was fucking amazing; it was always amazing; the way she fluttered against his mouth, her hands on the back of his head and neck clutching hard, sending pleasure down his spine.

She panted, her grip on him loosening gradually. Megamind looked up at her. She smiled down at him and moved one hand to rub her thumb over his lower lip.
“Come here, sweetheart,” she said.

He stood up slowly, and she kissed him, then stepped back and picked up the bottle of body wash again, poured some into her palm.

She slicked both hands and then stroked down his ribcage, over his hips and thighs.

“Turn,” she said.

He turned for her, and she rubbed her hands over the back of his neck and shoulders, down his back, then over his ass—okay, that was—really interesting in a new kind of way.

“Turn,” Roxanne said again, her lips against his ear.

He shivered and obeyed, and she must have noticed his reaction, before, because she actually grabbed his ass and pulled his hips against hers.

Megamind made an involuntarily alien noise, a mix of startlement and pleasure that came out sounding a bit like a warble.

“Thought so,” Roxanne said, sounding deeply satisfied with herself, her hands still holding his ass.

It felt—it felt—really enjoyably possessive, the way she was holding him, and when she kept her hands there and ground her hips against him slowly, Megamind had to put his hands on her shoulders for balance.

She gave him a biting sort of kiss and then let go of him. Megamind whimpered in disappointment, the noise turning into a gasp when she stroked her hands from his hips nearly to the edges of his sex, her fingers stopping just short of the seam. She ran one finger down one side of his sex, sketching around it, never quite touching where he wanted—and then ran her finger up the other side. Megamind made a noise of frustrated desire and then she stepped back into the spray of water.

“Roxanne, please—”

“Soon,” she said, pulling him forward into the spray of water. “We just have to rinse off, first, baby. And then we’ll go to your room and I’ll show you the first part of your surprise.”

Megamind made another noise of frustration and Roxanne arched her eyebrow at him. He narrowed his eyes at her and stepped into the spray after her, letting it rinse him.

“So it is a sex kind of surprise, then?” he asked, watching the soap and the golden shine wash from Roxanne’s skin, leaving only a faint suggestion of glimmer behind.

“Mm—I mean…not…exactly,” Roxanne said, “not necessarily a sex kind of surprise…” she laughed, “cheater,” she added.

He blinked at her, confused.

“Getting me to give you a hint after all,” she said.

Megamind gave her his best supervillain expression—arched eyebrow, wicked smirk.

“Ee-vil,” he said, voice sing-song and mocking.

She laughed and turned off the shower.
Roxanne fluffed her hair with her fingers and glanced over at Megamind. He was even more delicious than she’d imagined, dressed in just a towel. Especially since—

“Hey,” she said, “come here.”

Megamind moved towards her, and she put her hands on his arms, turning him to face the mirror. The steam had faded from it, everywhere but the edges, so he could see his reflection in the glass.

“—oh,” he said, voice surprised. “I look—”

Maybe it was the color of his skin, letting the glitter show up better than it did on hers, but there was still a definite shimmer to his skin, golden against the blue.

“Like the night sky,” Roxanne murmured, watching his face in the mirror as she kissed the side of his neck.

He swallowed visibly, his eyes meeting hers, a flush coming up on his cheekbones and the tips of his ears, turning them lavender-pink beneath the shimmer of gold.

“Come on,” she said, trailing her hands down his arms, “I want to show you your surprise.”

Roxanne made him close his eyes as they stepped into his bedroom, and then she kissed him, turning him around and walking him backwards towards the bed. She unwound the towel from around his waist as they walked, and let it fall; Megamind let her do it.

When they reached the edge of the bed, she pushed him lightly, and he fell back onto the mattress for her without opening his eyes.

She’d pulled back the blankets already, so what he fell on were the new sheets she’d bought him, and the texture of them must have surprised him because he opened his eyes.

“—oh,” he said, lying back on his elbows looking down at the violet silk of the sheets, running his fingertips over it, his eyes wide, “oh that’s—it’s so soft.”

“Do you like them?” Roxanne asked, watching his face.

Megamind looked up at her and smiled, his whole face lit up with joy.

“I love them,” he said, and then let himself fall back completely onto the bed, eyes half-closed in bliss. “Ahh—it feels almost like being in the water!” he said, stretching his arms over his head and arcing his back luxuriously.

“—holy fuck,” Roxanne said blankly, watching him.

(Megamind stretched out naked on violet silk sheets the faint sheen of gold on his skin and the way he was moving and he had no idea what he was doing to her, did he?

He looked up at her, eyes wide again, his head tilted at an angle of curiosity.

She saw the moment that he did get it, the split second of surprise that flashed in his expression before he smiled at her, slow and teasing, and stretched again—the movement more drawn-out this time, deliberately sensual.
Roxanne unwound her own towel and dropped it on the floor, and then pounced.

Megamind, laughing, didn’t even try to get away, let her straddle his hips and pin his wrists to the bed and kiss him hard. He squirmed underneath her—not because he was even pretending to attempt to free himself, Roxanne realized, breaking the kiss to look down at him—but just because he was enjoying the texture of the sheets, still.

She let go of his wrists to brush her hair out of her face, tucking it behind her ear.

“You really do like them,” she said.

“Mmm, yes, definitely,” Megamind said, looking up at her and smiling, heat smoldering in his eyes.

Roxanne grinned at him, relieved. Visiting that last shop before coming to the Lair really had been a good idea, then.

“Good,” she said, climbing off of him, “then I want you to lie down on your stomach.”

Megamind blinked at her, looking surprised, but he didn’t hesitate to comply with the instruction. He turned over, his head pillowed on his arms, and looked up at her over one shoulder.

“What am I doing on my stomach?” he asked curiously.

Roxanne stroked her fingers down the length of his spine, feeling him shiver in response.

“I told you I was going to give you a massage one day,” she said, placing her hand flat on the small of his back, her fingers spread. “I thought today might be a good day for that.”

She let her voice go up slightly at the end of the sentence, though, making it something between a statement and a question. He’d been very patient for her, in the shower, letting her tease him; if he didn’t want more teasing now, she certainly wasn’t going to insist.

“Ooh, like when you drew on my back, before?” he said, sounding eager.

“Sort of,” Roxanne said, “but with more—pressure.”

She leaned her weight slightly into her hand, kneading with her fingers to demonstrate.

“—ohh, I am—really liking this already—” he said.

Roxanne grinned and put her other hand on his back, too.

“Excellent,” she said, “Let me know if the pressure’s too much.”

She started with his lower back and worked her way upwards slowly, taking her time with him, enjoying the feeling of having all of him underneath her hands like this. The muscles of his back didn’t feel exactly like a human’s would; they were less bulky and somehow more—responsive, more elastic. It was no wonder he was so flexible and resilient; he was built like a willow sapling.

The sounds he was making for her started off quiet, barely sounds at all, really—little sighs and quick breaths. When she stroked her palms firmly over his shoulder blades, he made a soft humming sound of what seemed to be contentment. She moved her hands to knead at his shoulders and he gasped in pleasure.

“—ah—”
“Tell me what this feels like to you,” Roxanne said, working her way slowly across the expanse of her shoulders, towards the base of his neck.

“—oh—it’s—ahh—oh god it’s like—melting,” Megamind said, pressing his forehead to his wrists, giving her better access to his shoulders and neck. “Oh my god, Roxanne this—this is—amazing—ah—”

Roxanne moved her hands to massage his neck and he moaned, the sound starting deep in his chest and drawing out into a sweet, inhuman warble. She slowed down her hands even more for his neck, lavishing attention on every bit of it.

He was squirming by the time she reached the back of his head, clutching at the sheets and grinding his hips against the mattress so unselfconsciously that Roxanne was pretty sure he didn’t even realize that he was doing it.

She let her hands go still against his skin and he made a whistling sound of dismay like birdsong. Roxanne leaned down and brushed her lips over the back of his head in a soft kiss and he cried out.

“Roxanne—” he moaned, and she could hear the alien harmonics in his voice as he said her and god that was just the best thing she’d ever heard in her life.

“Come here, baby,” she said, moving to sit with her back against the headboard.

Megamind sat up. Confusion warred for a moment with the desire in his expression as he looked at her position, obviously wondering how he was supposed to fit together with her like this.

“Lean back against me,” Roxanne said.

He didn’t look any less confused, but he obeyed, moving so that he was positioned between her legs, his back pressed against her front. Roxanne wrapped one arm around his waist and pulled him close, kissing the side of his neck. He arched it for her, gasping, and she kissed it again, moving her arm so that it wrapped around his chest instead of his waist, her palm pressed over his heart.

“You’re so beautiful,” Roxanne murmured as he reached up with one hand to grasp at hers. “I love you so much.”

She slid her other hand between his legs—god he was so wet—and pushed two fingers inside of him. Megamind cried out, his grip on her hand tightening, his other hand grabbing at her thigh, as if he was trying to anchor himself. Roxanne tightened her arm around him in response, the fingers of her other hand thrusting in and out of him.

“—please—please—”

“You’ve been so good and patient for me,” she said, kissing his ear. “I love that you let me do this to you.”

She kissed his neck again and again, pressed her nose to the soft skin beneath his ear.

“Such a good boy,” she murmured.

“—Roxanne—”

She added a third finger to the two already inside of him and bit carefully at his neck.

“—ah!”
“You’re such a fucking gift, Megamind,” she whispered, lips against his ear, and he cried out in ecstasy, his body fluttering around her fingers as he came.

She pressed soft kisses to his neck as he came down, soothing little brushes of her lips against skin. He panted for breath, taut muscles gradually relaxing, until he was leaning back against her, his head on her shoulder. Gently, she slipped her fingers out of him.

He made a noise that sounded surprised.

“What?” Roxanne asked.

“—‘interesting,’” he said, lying bonelessly in her arms still, “—apparently—reaching climax—multiple times with my tentacles retracted—makes the arousal dissipate—even without extending them. Huh.”

“You don’t need to extend them now?” Roxanne asked in curiosity, shifting slightly so that she was holding him more comfortably.

“I don’t, actually,” Megamind said, still sounding surprised.

He tilted his head to press a languid kiss to her jaw.

“Did you want me to?” he asked. “If you give me five minutes and let me go down on you, I’m sure I could.”

Roxanne laughed.

“You almost wore me out in the shower, already,” she said. “Another orgasm and I think I would fall asleep on you, sweetheart. Here, sit up; I want to show you the rest of your surprise.”

“Oh my god, there’s more?” Megamind said, sitting up and letting her slip from between him and the headboard. “How can there possibly be more?”

Roxanne leaned over to retrieve Megamind’s still-dehydrated presents from the bedside table. Behind her, she heard Megamind make a distressed noise. She looked back at him. He was sitting cross-legged on the bed now, the top sheet draped over his shoulders and wrapped around him like a cape. Seeing her look, he made a face.

“—sorry; I kind of got the new sheets—sort of sticky,” he said.

“They’re sheets; they’re meant to be used,” she told him reassuringly. “Besides, I got another set.”

She put the cubes down on the floor and dipped her index finger in the glass of water she’d put on the bedside table, letting a droplet fall onto the first cube.

Package—no—that wasn’t the sheets—

She rehydrated each of the cubes in turn, finally coming up with the second pair of silk sheets. She picked them up and turned to Megamind, who was leaning to peer over the side of the bed, his mouth and eyes both round with wonder.

“I couldn’t decide between the purple and the dark blue,” she said, handing the sheets to him. “So I got both.”

Megamind took them from her and put them down in his lap, picking up one corner of the cloth to look at it, his other hand stroking the material.
“Also a high thread count cotton pair, in case you want a break from the silk,” Roxanne added, putting them on the bed next to him.

His eyes went even wider and he reached out to touch them, too, feeling the texture. Which was definitely much better than the scratchy things he’d had before, Roxanne knew for damn sure.

She put the rest of the packages onto the bed and then climbed back up herself. The mattress was so small that everything barely fit, with her and Megamind both on the bed as well.

“After the plan is done, I really want to take you mattress shopping,” she said.

Megamind looked at her like he was having difficulty parsing words.

“—mattress shopping?” he repeated.

“Yeah, that way you can pick out one you like,” Roxanne said, and then laughed, picturing Megamind in a mattress shop. “Also, I think you’d have fun; they let you try out the mattresses.”

“…they let you try out the mattresses?” Megamind said, eyes round. “Do—do you—do they let you jump on them?”

Roxanne laughed again.

“Sadly, no,” she said. “But after we get one and bring it home, I will definitely jump on it with you if you want.”

Megamind looked positively awestruck at that.

Roxanne grinned at him.

“These are presents for you, by the way,” she said, gesturing at the packages.

“…presents,” Megamind said, like he couldn’t quite believe it. “Presents for me? All of these are for me?”

Something about his tone, his expression—shock, edged with disbelief—it made Roxanne’s heart twist in her chest painfully.

“Yeah, Megamind,” she said gently, “they’re all for you.”

And oh—the way his face lit up at that, slow and shining, like the sun rising—made her heart twist again. He picked up the smallest package, turned it over and over in his hands. Carefully, so carefully, he unwrapped it, then set the wrapping paper aside to look at the book.

“Ooh, it’s a romance?”

Roxanne smiled at the clear delight in his voice.

“Yeah,” she said, “I really like this one, and it’s newer, so I figured you might not have read it. The hero is bisexual; it’s really great. Also there’s a whole subplot with bicycles being slightly scandalous.”

“That sounds excellent,” Megamind said, grinning at her.

He opened the book, lifted it to his face, and inhaled deeply.
“They do smell different when they’re new,” he said wonderingly.

Roxanne laughed as he put down the book and picked up the second package. He opened this one a little faster than the first, hands eagerly pulling the paper off, and then—stopped and went perfectly still, looking down at the book.

For a long moment, he didn’t say anything.

“—so I, um, looked at your bookshelves when I was getting dressed this morning,” Roxanne said, a little nervously, “and I saw that you had the Flowers of Society series.”

(Roxanne had read some of them, herself—Guilding Lily, The Wallflower, Forgetting Rosemary—they weren’t quite as tame as The Blue Castle had seemed, but they were still definitely on the sweet side of romance. Megamind’s copy of Shy Violet had looked particularly well thumbed.)

“And I figured—” Roxanne continued, “I figured you might not know the author came out of retirement and wrote a new one? Um. Recently? Which is what that is,” she added pointing to the copy of Winning Laurel that Megamind was holding in his hands.

Megamind looked up at her at last.

“This is my favorite series,” he said blankly. “It’s my favorite. And I thought—there weren’t going to—be any more—I think I’m going to cry.”

He pressed his hand to his mouth, giving a breathless laugh as tears rose in his eyes.

“You are amazing, Roxanne,” he said.

Roxanne flushed at the undeserved praise, then gave a slightly awkward laugh.

“I didn’t write the book, Megamind,” she said, “I just bought it.”

Megamind shook his head, putting the book down reverently at his side.

“I wouldn’t even know about it, if it wasn’t for you, Roxanne,” he said. “And now I have—I have a brand new copy of it. You’re amazing.”

Roxanne bit the inside of her cheek to keep herself from arguing.

(don’t ruin this Roxanne)

“If you say so,” she said.

“I do say so!” Megamind said, laughing as he unwrapped the painting she’d bought him.

He looked down at it and his lips parted.

“It’s called Lighthouse in a Storm,” Roxanne said uncertainly. “It—I know you have that print of the lighthouse hanging up already, and it—sort of reminded me of you anyway, so…”

“This is—this is fantastic,” Megamind said, voice awed. “I can’t believe you—I can’t believe you bought this for me.”

“That one’s just a frame,” Roxanne said, gesturing at the last unopened package. “I got it for the lighthouse print you already have; I didn’t want you thinking that—that I was trying to get you to throw that one away.”
“Roxanne—” Megamind pushed the gifts aside and moved towards her, threw his arms around her. “You are—I love you. So much. Thank you for—” his voice wobbled and he stopped for a moment, his arms tightening around her, “—thank you for everything. Thank you so much—”

Roxanne hugged him back, closing her eyes against the sudden tears that threatened to rise. “You’re—you are entirely welcome, Megamind.” she said softly, “and I—I love you too.”

(he did mean it, she told herself. he did. she wasn’t worried.)

(she wasn’t.)

There was no answer from the rest of her mind except a skeptical silence.

Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

notes: the Flowers of Society series is a product of my own imagination (it’s the series that Megamind likes so much in Old, New, Borrowed, and Blue), but the first book that Roxanne gives Megamind, the one with the bicycles and the bisexual hero, is a real book. It’s called Her Every Wish, and it’s written by Courtney Milan. It was suggested to me by Mollyscribbles as a book that Megamind would enjoy.

The scene with the shiny body wash was inspired by All That Glitters by Displacerghost, and by my own headcanon that, for the M’ega, helping someone decorate their skin was a bonding experience often engaged in by couples.

Roxanne buying Megamind a proper painting was suggested by an anonymous commenter on FFN.

Thank you all so much for the wonderful comments! I appreciate them so much; they are really inspiring and encouraging. I hope you all enjoyed the new chapter!
Brainbot 228 hovered near the ceiling of the Lair, moving in a slow, absent spiral, their braincase electricity dancing furiously with thought.

They replayed the recording of

Designation: Roxanne Ritchi
[ status update daddy’s partner ]
Request:

[ maybe you could ask the other bots too minion said you have an auto record function and I was wondering if maybe you could try to find some really nice footage of your daddy for me nice footage videos of your daddy being nice could you do that for me ]

228 wasn’t entirely certain that they fully understood this request. ‘Nice’ was a very subjective descriptor; they wished they’d been given more specific criteria.

They bowged worriedly to themself. Designation: Roxanne Ritchi had entrusted them—them! specifically!—with a complex request; it was important to get this right!

Of course, they could ask the other bots, but 228 didn’t have much confidence in the others understanding the full implications of ‘nice footage videos of your daddy being nice’, either. Not in the way that organics like Designation: Roxanne Ritchi and Designation: Megamind [ daddy ] would understand it.

If they interfaced with all of the others about this, it was likely they’d end up arguing for hours and 228 wouldn’t be able to complete their assignment in a timely fashion, which was clearly unacceptable! Designation: Roxanne Ritchi would be so disappointed!

And yet trying to come up with the answer themself wasn’t working, either.

It was no good; they’d have to interface. Not the whole swarm, but a small group, maybe just one other bot. A really brilliant bot, who understood organics and—

[ !!! ]

An idea sparked in 228’s circuitry.

They reversed their flight direction, moving downwards and across the Lair, towards the electrical generators, quietly bowging to themself with excitement. This was a good idea!

As 228 wound their way through the paths between Daddy’s old machines, though, they found themself growing a little nervous.

Zero-Zero-One hardly ever interfaced with any of the other bots anymore, and she was known to be rather snappish when disturbed for insufficient reason. Maybe this hadn’t been such a clever
idea…

No! No, they had a request to fulfill! A very important job! 228 flew on with renewed determination.

They came, at last, to the generator.

“Bowg?” they said quietly, sending out a polite pulse of

[ apology / request attention ]

in the direction of where they sensed Zero’s consciousness in the Network.

For a long moment, there was no answer, and then, very slowly, Zero-Zero-One rose from behind the generator.

228 moved their mechanical tendrils in a nervous, uncertain way.

[ sleeping ] said Zero, rather caustically [ demand explanation ]

228 moved submissively in the air, letting themself drop a little lower than Zero-Zero-One.

[ apology ] they said [ request interface ]

The shutter of Zero’s eyepiece narrowed.

[ request interface why ] she said [ sleeping ] [ request interface denied ] [ go away or will bite ]

[ apology ] [ ! ] [ request interface ] [ ! ] 228 said, their tendrils moving rapidly in agitation. [ urgent 001 specific request interface ] [ ! ]

Zero blinked her eyepiece slowly and moved in a slow, languid way to settle atop the generator, mechanical tendrils curled gracefully beneath her carapace.

[ zero specific ] [ ? ] she said, sounding, for the first time, interested. [ zero specific why ] [ ? ]

228 moved down to hover cautiously in front of Zero-Zero-One, out of reach of a sudden lunge.

[ zero is oldest ] they said [ first ] [ cleverest ]

[ zero is first ] said Zero, sounding pleased, preening [ zero is cleverest ] [ zero is best number ] [ most important ] [ necessary for algebra ]

228 bobbed enthusiastically.

[ algebra ] they agreed.

They sent a recording from one of their earliest memories, back when Zero had still sometimes led the bots into battle as queen. She had led 228’s first battle, during which several things had gone wrong at once—there had been two simultaneous explosions and a fire, and Daddy had been injured and unable to communicate. The bots had nearly panicked and broken ranks, but Zero had reacted instantly, splitting them up into groups to deal with each problem. And she had actually
sent 228 to distract Metro Man by biting him! 228 had never been prouder! And when Daddy had fixed their broken jaws, he had told them they were a good bot!

[ 228 greatly admiring Zero ] they said shyly as the memory replay recording came to an end.

There was an electric, wordless ripple of amusement/pleasure in Zero's mindvoice; 228 gave a little shiver of delight. Pinky and the other bots always thought it was creepy when Zero did that, but 228 had always been fascinated at the way her mindvoice was able to express laughter like an organic.

[ zero best understanding of organics ] 228 said, and dared to move a little closer to Zero, who watched the move in a tolerant way. [ request interface ] [ ? ]

Zero gave a long, slow blink of her eyepiece, looking at 228.

[ request interface accepted ] she said.

““It looks so nice,” Megamind marveled, after he and Roxanne had put up both his new picture and his old picture in its new frame.

He flopped down on the bed next to Roxanne, unable to stop himself from smiling, or even to want to stop himself from smiling. Roxanne smiled back at him.

She was dressed in a pair of soft purple pajamas—her own, sadly, but then the sweater she’d worn before was definitely dirty now.

“I’m glad you like it,” Roxanne said, turning towards him and shifting closer to him, so that their legs were tangled together and his chin was resting on the top of her head.

Megamind put his hand on her waist and hummed in contentment.

“Thank you,” he said, “and thank you for guessing that I would want to keep the old picture, too. It’s—important. To me.”

Roxanne made a wordless, inquiring noise.

Megamind curled his fingers in the soft material of her pajamas and closed his eyes.

““It always reminded me of you,” he said. “The lighthouse.”

Roxanne shifted at that, moving away slightly to look at his face, a small line appearing between her eyebrows.

“Because that’s what you did for me,” Megamind explained. “When I was—when we met, I—I had decided not to commit suicide, by the time we met,” he said, “but I was—I had always planned on dying young. I mean—I always knew being a super villain was a lifelong commitment; I just hadn’t—anticipated it lasting this long,” he added, with a nervous laugh.

She took a sharp breath at that, an inhalation like a reaction to pain.
"I hadn’t been planning on making it happen,” he went on, words coming a little faster now, “but I had been planning on—letting it happen. I wasn’t—very careful. With myself. I was hoping that—well, anyway.”

He lifted his hand from Roxanne’s waist for a moment to gesture dismissively.

“But then I met you,” he said, “and you were so—so utterly fascinating and—and you treated me like—and so I wanted to make sure that I—that I got to see you again, got to talk to you more, got to—so that’s—that’s why—”

He gestured again, at the old print of the lighthouse.

“I was drowning,” he said, “and you were the lighthouse.”

Roxanne made a soft, pained noise. There were tears rising in her eyes, Megamind was dismayed to see. Oh no—he shouldn’t have brought this up—

“I’m so sorry, Megamind.”

Megamind blinked, confused. Why was she apologizing?

“Sorry?” he said.

“I’m sorry you were—I’m sorry you were so unhappy,” she said, “and I’m—I’m sorry I didn’t—I’m sorry I didn’t help you.”

Megamind frowned, really confused now.

“But you did,” he said. “I told you. You saved me.”

Roxanne shook her head, her lips pressed together in a line.

“I didn’t, though,” she said, a bitter note of what sounded like self-recrimination in her voice, “I should have noticed. I should have—I should have talked to you.”

“Well, it wasn’t like I was going to tell you this then, Roxanne,” Megamind said, reaching out to touch the hard line of her mouth, tracing over her lips until they relaxed and softened beneath his touch.

Her mouth moved in a little moue of—disagreement, he thought, or frustration.

“I didn’t trust you yet,” he said.

He moved his hand to touch the little beauty mark below her mouth—god, how many times had he imagined doing that? And now he could.

“But I do, now,” he said, “I trust you. And that’s why I’m telling you. You saved me.”

Her mouth moved in a frustrated way again.
“No,” she said. “I didn’t—I didn’t do anything, Megamind.”

“I—I mean, maybe not directly,” Megamind said, frowning, “but—that’s what I meant about—about the lighthouse. Saving people isn’t always going out in boats and pulling them out of the water; sometimes it’s—being the light and showing them that there’s a shoreline.”

Megamind reached out and stroked her cheek. Roxanne turned her head and pressed a kiss to his fingers.

“Does that—does that make sense?” he asked. “Do you see what I mean?”

“Yes,” Roxanne said, “yes, I—that makes sense.”

She looked up at him again, and just for a moment, there was something in her expression, something—

(sad and terribly fragile)

And then he blinked and it was gone.

Megamind curled his hand around her hip.

Had he—surely he hadn’t imagined that expression on her face. Why would she—was she still sad because she thought she hadn’t helped him enough? He’d tried to explain—

“I bought it because it reminded me of you,” she said quietly. “The painting. The colors, of course, but mostly—the light. The way it’s—surrounded by darkness but still shining. It just—it reminds me of you.”

Megamind’s breath caught.

She thought—that was how she saw him?

That was—

“Oh,” he said, the word trembling at the edges.

She tilted her head up and kissed the edge of his jaw and the tiny point of contact, her lips against his skin, seemed to go all through him, as if she’d touched her lips to the surface of a still pond, sending ripples spreading in ever-widening circles, making the water tremble in the wake of her touch.

He swallowed.

(the light. it reminds me of you.)

He felt—as if, instead of pressing her lips to his jaw, she’d kissed his mind, like her love had lit up his soul, like maybe he was shining.

(the light.)
Like maybe he could be that, for her, because she loved him.

“—oh,” he said again.

(Roxanne loved him she loved him she loved him)

“—that poster was the library’s, originally,” he said, “It used to hang—on the wall next to the romance section, actually, and I never even really looked at it until after we met, but afterwards—you were all I could see in it. And I’d always gone to the library, to get rescue books and sometimes just for the quiet, but after that—I used to sit against the shelves and look at it and I was so sure you’d never love me back; I was so sure that I’d never get the chance, even, to tell you that I loved you, and god, Roxanne, I love you so much.”

Roxanne’s arm tightened around him.

“I love you, too, Megamind,” she whispered. “I love you.”

Megamind closed his eyes.

This. This was happening. Roxanne loving him back was actually a thing that was happening.

They stayed like that for several minutes, lying quietly together. Megamind, his eyes closed, felt his body relax, felt himself beginning to drift towards sleep.

Roxanne made a soft noise and shifted slightly. Megamind made an inquiring sound.

“Megamind, I’ve—I’ve been thinking,” she said, voice quiet.

Megamind waited for her to go on.

“—about you being the Overlord of Metrocity,” she said at last.

And—he opened his eyes. Blinked.

That was—odd.

Because he had—he had the strangest sensation that she hadn’t been going to say that, at first—

“About what that means for the plan,” she continued. “I mean—if you go from being the supervillain who runs the criminal underworld to the superhero in opposition to the criminal underworld, isn’t that going to cause—panic? I—I’m worried that I’m screwing this up, Megamind. Like I should have—I don’t know. I didn’t know about—everything you explained last night—I don’t know; I feel like maybe I should have approached this whole thing differently, somehow, but I don’t even—”

“No,” Megamind said, reaching up with his free hand to take the hand that Roxanne had on his chest. He laced their fingers together. “No, you’re—the plan is—it’s a good plan, Roxanne. If it—if it doesn’t work, it’ll be because of—”

(me)

Of course it would be because of him; Megamind knew that he had always been the weakest link in
the plan. He couldn’t be trusted with nice things, couldn’t be trusted to interact properly with
people, couldn’t be trusted in general; his tendency to fuck things up really could not be overstated
and—

Roxanne wouldn’t want you to say that about yourself, a quiet voice said, from somewhere inside
the swirling vortex of dark thoughts.

The unexpectedness of that thought made the rest of his mind go silent and still for a moment, out
of sheer shock.

She wouldn’t. She wouldn’t want him to say that about himself.

(and maybe—maybe—was it possible, then, that it wasn’t completely true?)

“—if it doesn’t work, it won’t be because of anything you did or didn’t do,” Megamind went on,
pulling his mind back to their conversation with an effort. “And I have thought about this,
Roxanne. I’ve been—I want to talk to you about it.”

Roxanne took her head from his shoulder, pushing herself up on one elbow instead, looking at him
with a serious expression. Megamind shifted to mirror her.

He swallowed nervously.

(she was still holding his hand; he took courage from that. he could tell her this. he could trust her.)

“If I do this,” he said, “then I’m going to have to do this as myself. I—I won’t be able to do it like
—like someone who—like someone who’s a real hero.”

Roxanne’s fingers tightened around his. She scowled at him.

“You are a real hero,” she said, “you already are.”

Megamind made an involuntary face and Roxanne gave him a fierce look.

“Everything you’ve done, Megamind—”

“Yes, exactly,” he said, “everything I’ve done. Even the—the good that I’ve done; it isn’t really
the right kind of good, is it? It’s not the kind of good that they give you—medals for, applause for.
I’m never going to be able to be a—a shining example, some sort of—flawless hometown hero. I
can’t try to pretend to be that.”

Roxanne’s frown took on a different quality, less angry, more…concerned?

“I don’t want you to pretend to be someone else,” she said. “I wouldn’t ever ask you to—”

“I know,” Megamind said softly, giving her hand a squeeze, “I know you wouldn’t, Roxanne.”

(and god, he did know. that was a thing he knew. Roxanne wanted him, loved him—as himself
and, incredibly, for himself)

“That’s why I’m telling you this,” he said. “Because—if this plan works and we do somehow
manage to make me the city’s Defender, I’m still going to be the Overlord as well.”
There was a moment of silence; Megamind watched Roxanne’s face closely.

“How?” she said.

Megamind took a sharp, ragged breath, relief welling up from his heart and rushing all through his body.

(how. only Roxanne. only Roxanne would ask him that in response to that declaration.)

“God, I love you,” he said, voice rough to his own ears. “All right, so—I’m going to tell them—the leaders of the underworld, and as many people as I can get to come to a meeting—I’m going to tell them that the plan is to get me declared Defender.”

Roxanne was frowning again.

“But how is that going to help?” she asked. “It’ll just be a panic now instead of later; I don’t see—”

“No,” Megamind said, “no, it won’t be a panic at all. Not if we phrase it right. I’d—really, Roxanne, I would very much appreciate it if you would be there, if you would help me with this; I want to make sure to get it correct. Because if we do, then there won’t be a panic at all. You see, I’m not going to be the superhero in opposition to the criminal underworld. I’m going to be the superhero who’s on their side.”

Roxanne’s mouth shaped itself into an O of understanding; he gestured with their linked hands.

“This city doesn’t need a superhero to bust small time drug deals and arrest sex workers. This city needs a more reliable public transport system, better educational programming, more official aid for people below the poverty line—I can do those things! I’ve been wanting to do those things for years, only I’ve never been able to as a supervillain!”

“Philanthropy,” Roxanne said slowly, “things like that.”

“Exactly! The criminal underworld is functioning fine now; it’s mostly self-sustaining. I’ll still expect them to report to me, and as long as people follow the rules, they won’t have to worry about getting hauled off to jail by the city’s resident superhero. Occasionally, in cases where the rules have been broken, I’ll officially and publicly take a hand, but otherwise, no.”

“But is that going to be—I mean, if supervillainy is about the show,” Roxanne said, “then being a superhero has to be, too, right?”

“Yes,” Megamind agreed. “Especially since tourism focusing on my battles with Metro Man is such a large part of Metrocity’s economy these days.”

Roxanne laughed.

“It really is, though, you know,” she said.

“Oh, I know,” Megamind said, grinning. “I’ve seen the brochures. ‘A chance to see heroism in action! Up close and personal!’ It’s basically street theatre, really.”

She gave him a curious look, smiling at him.
“You don’t mind that?” she asked.

“Ha, no!” he said, “I love an audience!”

She laughed again.

“And I do think that people will be entertained enough by watching me dealing with out of town villains,” he said.

Roxanne looked interested at that.

“Out of town villains?”

“Oh, yes—I know Metro Man hasn’t had those kind of problems, but—well, supervillain turned good? Betraying evil? There’s going to be all kinds of other villains out to get me. And besides, I’m not—particularly popular among my peers, now. I’ve gotten plenty of invitations to join forces with various villains, to ally myself with them, but I’m afraid none of them ever lived up to my… well, my standards of evil, shall we say? And villains tend to hold grudges.”

“‘Standards’,,” Roxanne murmured, looking amused, her lips twitching like they wanted to smile. She shook her head. “I’m pretty sure the word you’re actually looking for here is ‘morals’, Megamind.”

He gave her a wry smile but he didn’t contradict her.

“There’ll be heroes too, probably,” he said, “that try to attack. Metrocity’s Defender would be an extremely enviable position for any roaming, city-less hero. And they’ll have the excuse of not believing my reformation’s genuine. Convenient for them.”

Roxanne made an indignant noise. Then she looked thoughtful.

“All of that will probably settle down, though, won’t it?” she said. “In a few years, I mean. That ‘not a genuine reformation’ excuse will be looking pretty thin after a while, and I imagine most of the out of town villains will get the point of accepting that going up against you is a bad idea.”

Tipping his head curiously, Megamind looked at her.

“You’re… very confident that I’ll be able to defeat them all,” he said.

Roxanne rolled her eyes at him.

“Please,” she said, “of course you will. If you hadn’t been so preoccupied with defeating Metro Man all these years, you probably could have conquered the world by now.”

“—if you had been with me, we could have,” he said, too surprised to make it sound like a joke, to shocked to say it with anything but the perfect sincerity that he felt.

Roxanne blushed at that; he saw it happen; it was perfectly fascinating, especially this close to her, seeing the heat and the color sweep over her skin.

“—anyway, things will settle down in a few years,” Roxanne said, “and we’ll be left with the
problem of keeping you in the public eye as a superhero.”

Megamind felt himself grinning in what was probably a very ridiculous way.

Years. She was talking like this was going to be—she was talking like she planned on keeping him.

“Yes, I haven’t really thought that far ahead,” he admitted. “But—up to that point, Roxanne, do you—do you think it could work?”

Roxanne bit her lip, her eyes going far away and thoughtful.

“I do, yeah,” she said.

Her eyes focused on his again.

“That’s a really good plan, Megamind,” she said.

Megamind caught his breath in delight.

“Do you really think so?” he asked.

She smiled at him, laughing a little, probably at his excited expression.

“Yeah,” she said, “yeah, I do.”

Megamind made a quiet joyful noise and lifted their joined hands so that he could kiss hers—the back of it, then her wrist. He turned her hand over so that he could press a kiss to her palm.

“Hmm,” she said, sounding intrigued.

He looked up at her questioningly.

“Hero training,” she said, “like you were talking about doing for whoever Wayne picked out, remember?”

“Of course; hero training—what about it?” he asked. “Oh! You mean as—”

“—as a long term possibility for superhero presentation, yeah,” Roxanne said, her face alight—god, but she was beautiful when she was scheming. “Something to keep in mind at least, right? Or —do you think there might eventually be other villains wanting to reform?”

Megamind blinked, thinking.

“That,” he said after a moment, “that is really a very interesting idea. I—I think there actually might! I mean, you know Lady Doppler retired a few years back—she got a serious girlfriend, apparently, and decided the risks of villainy outweighed the fun after all—not exactly the same thing as what you’re talking about, training villains to be heroes instead, but it does seem… promising, wouldn’t you say?”

“It wouldn’t even have to be just villains from Metro City!” Roxanne said, “If you set up a training program, you could get villains from all over!”
“Yes, especially since—” Megamind paused for a moment, his mind veering off in another direction, “—you know this is going to be a—a very big deal, Roxanne, if this plan actually works,” he said. “Not just for me, or even just for Metrocity, but—nobody’s ever done what you’re trying to do before. Not the way you’re doing it, or on this kind of a scale.”

Roxanne frowned.

“There have been villains that reformed before,” she said.

“Yes, but all of them were relatively small time,” Megamind said, letting go of Roxanne’s hand to gesture, “they weren’t supervillains; there really is a difference, and besides, none of them ever became their city’s Defender! If this plan works, then people are going to notice.”

“Do you think it might?” Roxanne asked. “Work, I mean,” she added, when he gave her a questioning look. “You said before that you were sure it wouldn’t, but now you’re saying ‘if’. Did you change your mind?”

Megamind took a breath, let it out. He reached between the two of them and brushed his fingertips against the material of Roxanne’s pajamas, feeling the texture of it, feeling the slickness of the buttons and the movement of her body as she breathed, centering himself with the physical reality of her here, with him.

(this was real. she was real and here and she loved him.)

“I feel—oddly hopeful. About it,” he admitted. “Which is rather terrifying, really. Being certain you’re going to fail is much less frightening than thinking you might have a chance at success. And I do. Think that it might have a chance.”

He gave a quiet, shocked laugh.

“It sounds like absolute insanity,” he said, “hearing myself say that, but then—” he reached up and brushed Roxanne’s hair behind her ear, “—but then, I never thought I could have this, either.”

Roxanne smiled at him and he trailed his hand down her jaw.

“And you were wrong,” she said.

“Yes,” he said a bit breathlessly, “I was so, so wrong.”

Roxanne’s eyes flickered away from his for a moment, and again Megamind saw in her expression something—

“I’ve—I’ve also been thinking,” she said, laying down on the pillow, one arm curled beneath her head, her other hand lying on the pillow between the two of them.

“Yes?” Megamind asked, looking down at her, watching her expression.

“More about the brainbots,” she said, looking up at him with a smile.

(and again he had the strange impression that she hadn’t been going to say that originally)

“What about the brainbots?” he asked.
“—okay, so the brainbots interface with each other through the queen,” Roxanne said, looking up at him. “But how do you communicate with them?”

“Oh! There are several different ways—during battles, a lot of times their responses are due to training exercises that Minion and I design for them,” Megamind said, gesturing. “The brainbots know that certain circumstances warrant different reactions on their part, and they perform their part without me needing to communicate with them in that moment.

“That’s part of what I meant, about updating their programming in regards to you,” he went on, “Unexpected presences in the Lair trigger an ‘alert’ response in the brainbots. That’s why they went to go wake Minion. But the—hmm—the severity of the unexpected presence is what determines the intensity of the brainbots’ alert response. And because I was with you, and they’ve seen Minion and I interacting with you before, during non-kidnapping times, their alert response was relatively mild. A different unexpected presence would have caused them to give an alarm and move to detain the person.

“My guess is they were more confused, this morning, than anything else. Sometimes if one bot encounters an issue that they’re not sure how to resolve, they’ll interface with other bots. Sometimes if they have a large enough group interfacing, they’ll even set up their own queen without me!”

“They’re so smart,” Roxanne said, admiration in her voice, and Megamind preened a little on behalf of his bots.

“I know; aren’t they?” he said, smiling proudly. “And—so the disguise watch also functions as a communicator; you know that. Usually it’s Minion and I who use it to communicate with each other, but there’s also a setting on the watch that allows me to verbally call the brainbots—it doesn’t come out as sound waves on their end, though; my instructions go straight to their neural processing units. Which, interestingly, actually allows them to respond faster than if they had to parse the words as sound waves!

“They do understand verbal instructions, though; during direct interactions, I just talk and they comprehend. Sometimes during a particularly intricate battle, if I need to be giving them instructions, I’ll wear a wire that picks up small sounds—I’ll click my teeth together; Morse code—well, not actual Morse code; it’s a system that I made up, so that even if someone else overhears the clicks, they won’t be able to decipher what I’m saying. Hmm, what else—ah! a program I can use to communicate with them electronically, by typing. Sort of like—texting, or email, I suppose. And they send me information the same way.

“I tried teaching them to speak themselves, too, but that plan failed. I honestly can’t tell if the problem is some sort of mental disconnect for them, or if they just don’t want to learn to talk; they can be very stubborn sometimes.”

Roxanne made a humming sound of comprehension; Megamind looked down at her, at her face.

He was convinced now that he hadn’t been imagining it, those flashes of unhappiness in her expression, those moments of hesitation in which she decided not to say what she’d been originally planning. She’d done it that morning, too, he realized. He hadn’t been really consciously aware of it, but looking back now, he remembered the way she’d paused before asking him about the union leaders. Paused because she’d originally wanted to ask him something else.
She was worried about something—about something, he was fairly certain, to do with him.

Which was a rather dismaying realization, the thought that he’d already managed to screw this thing between him and Roxanne up, that he was already doing this wrong, that she was already regretting—

With an effort, he swallowed down his rising panic.

(confirmation bias, he told himself forcefully. she just told you that she loves you. you have no evidence that you’ve done something irrevocably awful.)

“Do you—have any more questions, Roxanne?” he asked, hoping that if he gave her an opening, she’d tell him what was wrong, tell him so that he could fix it—

“About the brainbots?” Roxanne said, “or generally?”

“Either, really,” Megamind said, “You can—ask me anything you like.”

Roxanne raised her eyebrows, a smile playing at the edges of her lips.

“And you’ll tell me anything I want to know?” she asked teasingly.

“Yes,” Megamind said with complete seriousness. “I will.”

Roxanne looked up into Megamind’s face. There was little line between his brows; she reached up and smoothed it away, wondering why he looked so serious all of a sudden.

(ask me anything you like; I’ll tell you anything you want to know)

That was a hell of a promise, did Megamind realize that? Especially considering what kind of overly inquisitive person she was, the kind of person who wanted to pry and pry until she knew everything.

“What was your name,” she asked, “before you changed it to Megamind?”

He blinked at her, like he’d been expecting a very different sort of question.

“It was Syx,” he said.

He didn’t pronounce the word quite like the number, the word slid from the s to the x in a strangely smooth way.

“Syx,” she repeated experimentally, “why Syx?”

“It was what my parents called me,” he said, “strictly speaking, I don’t think it’s actually a name in my language. Means something like ‘my love’ or ‘my dear’; I don’t think you’d really name a child ‘my dear’.”
“Because it’s like ssshsss,” Roxanne said, “right? Like how to say ‘I love you’. The s-sound must be ‘love’.”

Megamind went still when she repeated the ‘I love you’ phrase he’d taught her.

“—ssshsss,” he said, “yes—that’s right. The s-sound is love; that’s why it sounds like ‘syx’.”

“How did the warden know to call you that?” Roxanne asked, “I mean, you said you were eight days old when you landed.”

“Oh, I could say a few words,” Megamind said, “that was the one I said most often, so he insisted they call me that.” He laughed. “I remember Dr. Kelley didn’t want to. ‘It could mean anything’ he said, ‘it could mean mother or hello, for all we know’.”

“You remember this?” Roxanne asked.

Megamind’s powers of memory really were quite extraordinary. Really very—fascinatingly alien, just as much as everything he’d told her about being able to breath underwater, about being able to heal without scars.

“Oh, yes,” Megamind said, and then grinned. “Dr. Kelley suggested they name me ‘John Walker’.”

Roxanne sat up and tilted her head thoughtfully.

“John makes sense, I guess,” she said. “John Doe, or—the warden’s name is John, isn’t it? But why ‘Walker’?”

Megamind sat up, too, still grinning.

“Nickname,” he said, “think about it for a minute.”

Nickname? The nickname for ‘John’ would obviously be ‘Johnny’, but she didn’t see—


“—Johnny Walker Blue,” Roxanne said, “oh my god, Megamind, that is the worst thing I’ve ever heard—”

Megamind laughed again.

“That’s what the warden said! ‘We are not naming the kid after your favorite alcohol, Len.’ Personally, in retrospect, I think it’s pretty funny.” he gave her a sly look from beneath his lashes. “My species called themselves the M’ega, by the way.”

M’ega—

“You made your name a pun?” Roxanne said, “Megamind, you are so—” she stopped, laughing and shaking her head.

“Well, why not?” Megamind said with a grand gesture at his own cranium. “It already had the double meaning of ‘large head’ and ‘very intelligent’! It was just too good to pass up!”
“You are ridiculous,” Roxanne said.

He gave her another smile from beneath his lashes, this one a little sharper, more wicked.

“And you love that about me,” he said, “don’t you?”

“I really, really do,” Roxanne said.

She leaned forward, putting her hand on his knee, and quickly kissed that impish smirk of his. He went still again at that, like he still hadn’t quite expected her to kiss him.

“And I love your name, too,” she added, leaning back but leaving her hand on his knee. “You wouldn’t be you if you’d chosen something ordinary.”

He looked surprised at that, and then gratified.

“Did the doctor think it was funny when you chose it?” she asked.

Megamind’s eyes dropped from hers, his smile disappearing.

“—ah,” he said, “no, Doctor Kelley had—left. By then.”

“Oh,” Roxanne said, taken aback by the sudden change of tone. “I’m—I’m sorry.”

Megamind looked up at her and gave her a tight little smile. He waved a dismissive hand.

“It’s all right,” he said, “It doesn’t matter.”

“Megamind,” Roxanne said, catching his hand and holding it gently between both of hers.

She swallowed, looked down at his hand in hers.

(This wasn’t about her; she didn’t need to make it about her, but maybe Megamind needed to hear —)

“Megamind, it always matters when your father leaves you,” she said quietly.

His hand jerked in hers, his shoulders twitching sharply, too, as though an electrical shock had gone through him. Roxanne looked up at the movement.

“Father?” he said, “He wasn’t my father.”

“—I’m sorry,” Roxanne said, “yeah, you probably don’t want to call him that, now; I should have thought—I just mean—even if he and the warden weren’t able to legally adopt you, it still counts emotionally, Megamind. You’re still allowed to be upset about—“

“What? What are you—it was never a matter of ‘weren’t able’,” Megamind said, the fingers of his free hand curling tightly on his knee, “it was a matter of ‘didn’t want’. I—they were never going to —there was never any possibility of them adopting me.”

Roxanne stopped and stared at him for a moment.
Megamind gave her a look of impatient incomprehension.

Oh. Oh no.

He didn’t know. They hadn’t told him.

He didn’t know.

And of course she wasn’t—she was never going to keep something like this from Megamind; she couldn’t, but how in the hell was she supposed to tell him?

This wasn’t something he should be hearing from her; she shouldn’t be the one to tell him this—

(the sick twist of envy in the pit of her stomach)

(at least he had someone who—)

(stop thinking that stop feeling that what’s wrong with you Roxanne)

—god, Megamind deserved so much better than this, so much better than—

(hers)

“The warden,” Roxanne said, words spilling out too quickly, like maybe if she said them fast enough they wouldn’t hurt so much, “when I was talking to him, before I interviewed him, he said that he’d wanted to adopt you with the prison doctor when you were a kid, but that Dr. Kelley had been afraid that people would—well, that they would think they were gay and use that as excuse to take you away from them completely and didn’t they tell you any of this?”

Megamind stared at her, his breathing quick and shallow, his face getting paler and paler.

Roxanne let go of his hand to gesture wildly.

“I just—I mean, I assumed he’d told you! He really didn’t tell you?”

“No,” Megamind said, “No, he did not tell me that; he never told me that; neither of them—why didn’t they tell me?” he asked, voice rising. “I thought no one—why wouldn’t they tell me?”

Both of his hands were twisted in the sheets now, his fingers balled up into fists. Roxanne reached out and hesitantly touched the back of one hand; Megamind’s breath hissed between his teeth and he let go of the sheet to grab her hand instead, clutching at it desperately, as if they were out to sea and he was afraid they’d be swept apart if he didn’t hold on tight enough.

Roxanne put her other hand over his, hating the way she didn’t know how to make him feel better.

“I’m sorry,” she said, “I’m so sorry that you had to find out like this. From me.”

He gave a short, rather strangled laugh.

“No,” he said, “no, don’t be sorry; I’m glad, because it sounds like I probably wouldn’t have found out at all, otherwise and Roxanne, do you think you could hold me for a minute?”

“Yes, of course,” Roxanne said immediately. “Here—”
She shifted the two of them, moving to lie down and tugging Megamind’s hand, pulling him down with her, so that her arm was around him, his head on her shoulder. Megamind took a shuddery breath and turned more towards her, pressing his forehead to the side of her neck, one of his hands tucked beneath his chin, the other clutching at the material of her shirt. Roxanne wrapped her other arm around him, too, and held him tightly.

Roxanne just—she just kept finding more ways that the world had hurt him and it made her so—sad, yes, it did make her sad, but mostly what it made her was angry.

She closed her eyes and pressed her cheek to the top of Megamind’s head.

I love you so much, she thought. Fuck each and every person who ever hurt you; fuck them individually and specifically.

(he’d asked her to hold him, actually asked; that felt—he was so—Megamind was just so trusting and open and incredibly sweet, and Roxanne knew she didn’t deserve that, but god, she wished she did.)

For a moment, they just stayed like that, as Megamind’s breathing gradually slowed and became more normal.

“Sorry,” he said, voice quiet.

“You haven’t done anything you need to apologize for,” Roxanne said, her voice just as quiet. “I love you, Megamind. Holding you is something that I want to do.”

Megamind gave a breathy kind of laugh that brushed against the skin of her neck and stirred her hair.

“That’s—that is really incredible,” he said, “I just—I ask for a lot from you; I feel—I don’t know, I feel like I should apologize.”

“For needing help?” Roxanne asked. She shook her head slightly, careful not to dislodge Megamind. “Everybody needs help. And we’re partners, Megamind; I want to help you.”

Megamind shifted, so that he was lying next to her, their arms around each other. He looked closely at her face, studying her expression.

“And you wanting to help me—it’s really not because you feel sorry for me,” he said slowly, carefully, as if he was speaking a foreign language for the first time. “It’s—because you love me. You want to help me—because you love me.”

Roxanne’s heart pulsed in her chest, almost painful with a fierce sort of joy.

“Yes,” she said, feeling tears rising in her eyes as she smiled at Megamind, “yes, that is exactly why.”

Megamind gave her a quick, fluttering smile. His eyes dropped to her mouth and he reached up to touch her mouth, light and quick. Then he looked up into her eyes again.

“I want to help you, too, you know,” he said. “Because I—I love you, too, Roxanne. And we’re—partners. Like you said. And so I want to help you, too. You do know that, don’t you?”
“Of course,” she said reassuringly.

Megamind frowned, looking frustrated. Roxanne stroked his side soothingly and he sighed, relaxing a little.

“Why wouldn’t he tell me?” he asked, voice quiet. “The warden, why wouldn’t he tell me that?”

“I don’t know, sweetheart,” Roxanne said. “It—might have been that he was worried that telling you would hurt you worse. Offering something you wanted so badly and then immediately taking it away. But I don’t know for sure. You can ask him, if you want to. It’s understandable to want an answer to that. I’ll help you ask if you need me to.”

Megamind took a sharp breath.

“Oh,” he said, as though he’d just figured something out.

He reached out and touched her face, his fingertips gentle against her cheek.

“Is that what you’re doing?” he asked, voice soft. “Are you worried it’s going to hurt me? Is that why you aren’t telling me what’s wrong?”

It seemed to Roxanne that her heart froze in her chest. She went very still.

“What?”

Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

Thank you for the reviews; I very much appreciate them!

I'm so glad to hear that so many of you loved Zero! She’s based off of my much-beloved cat, so hearing that other people love her makes me very happy.

Megamind talking about how he communicates with the brainbots was inspired by a question from Elotaria.

The line where Megamind compares Roxanne to the lighthouse in the first picture is from something Displacerghost said. Ghost, thank you so much. And another thank you to Ghost for beta-reading this chapter! I’ve never had a beta before; this is very exciting.

I hope you all enjoyed this chapter!
“I can tell, Roxanne,” Megamind said. “I can tell you’re worried about something.”

Roxanne didn’t answer, just stared at him, her face pale.

“You don’t have to tell me what it is,” Megamind said. “But I—I really wish that you would. I mean—” he smiled at her, raised his eyebrows, trying to get her to smile back, trying to make her laugh, “—remember what a catastrophe it was, the last time we didn’t talk about something?”

Roxanne did give a choked laugh at that, but then her face crumpled like she wanted to cry and Megamind’s heart twisted anxiously.

“Please,” he said, “won’t you tell me? I want to help you, too.”

Roxanne’s expression changed, going hard and almost angry. She pulled away from him, out of his arms, and sat up. Megamind sat up as well, more worried than ever.

“Roxanne—” he said, reaching out to touch her arm.

She jerked her arm away.

“Don’t,” she said in a tightly controlled voice, “don’t touch me. I won’t be able to tell you if you’re touching me.”

Megamind pulled his hand back, looking at her anxiously. Roxanne’s own hands were on her knees, curled tightly into fists. She didn’t say anything for a long moment, just looked at him, fury in her expression, but with something very like despair beneath it. Then she closed her eyes for a brief moment before opening them again.

“You don’t love me,” she said.

Megamind blinked, shocked.

“—what?” he said.

He didn’t know what he’d been expecting her to say, but it certainly wasn’t that.

“Of course I love you,” he said.

(how could she possibly doubt that? loving her was—doubting that he loved her would be like doubting the existence of gravity. it didn’t make any sense.)

“No,” Roxanne said. “No, you don’t. Not really. You’re in love with the idea of me. With this—”

She shook her head.
“You talk about me, Megamind, like I’m some sort of flawless goddess painted with pastel colors and light, but that’s not me. The Roxanne you think you’re in love with is a—a figment of your imagination. You don’t love me.”

Megamind stared at her. What was she—who on earth would she think—

“Pastels?” he blurted out incredulously. “Seriously? Pastels? You’re a lot of things, Roxanne, but pastel is not one of them.”

Roxanne made an angry noise in the back of her throat.

“What could possibly make you believe that I think that about you?” Megamind asked, utterly at sea.

“Perfect,” Roxanne spat the word out like a curse. “You say that I’m perfect.”

“You are perfect,” Megamind said, still bewildered, and then something clicked together in his mind.

“Oh,” he said, feeling his eyes go wide. “Oh, I get it. You think—” he shook his head. “Roxanne, when I say that you’re perfect I don’t mean without flaws.”

Roxanne glared at him as if she wanted to rip his throat out with her teeth.

“I know you have flaws, Roxanne,” Megamind said, “It’s just that I love them.”

“Then you are not seeing the real flaws!”

Roxanne shoved herself out of the bed and to her feet. She glared down at Megamind, who looked up at her with a sweet, crooked smile that made her want to scream.

“You have a terrible temper,” Megamind said, with so much affection in his voice that it took her a moment to register what he was saying. “It makes you reckless and sometimes it makes you cruel—”

“You don’t love me,” Roxanne snarled. “You’re just fixated on me because you’re hopelessly naive and I happened to be the first person who showed you any sort of kindness. You just don’t have enough experience with people to realize it.”

“—yes, like that,” Megamind said gently. “Cruel like that.”

Roxanne yanked at her own hair.

“Romantically, do you mean?” Megamind asked.

“What?” Roxanne said.

Megamind’s head was tipped to the side, now, his eyebrows drawn together.

“You’re worried that I don’t have enough experience with people romantically? Because I have an entire criminal underworld at my command, Roxanne; I interact with people. I’ve just never fallen in love with any of them. Because none of them are you.”
“Oh, right, yes, because I’m so fantastic,” Roxanne said with bitter sarcasm. “What the hell is it that you imagine you see in me, Megamind?”

Megamind blinked at her, honest confusion in his face, and Roxanne wanted to scream and scream and scream.

“I don’t imagine the things I love about you, Roxanne,” he said. “You are fantastic. You’re brilliant and fascinating and brave and you’re such a good person—”

Roxanne gave a wild, incredulous laugh.

“Megamind, I am a complete fucking bitch.”

Megamind jerked in place as though she’d slapped him.

“Don’t say that about yourself,” he said sharply.

“Why not?” she said, with another wild, bitter laugh. “It’s true! And the sooner you realize that, the sooner we can end this farce of a relationship!”

Megamind sucked in a breath, his heart plummeting.

“You—you want to break up with me?” he said, his lips numb, his voice fragile to his own ears. “After we’ve—after we’ve only been—”

(—only been dating for a single day; she couldn’t stand you for more than a single—)

“I am breaking up with you,” Roxanne said. “This is me, breaking up with you.”

She paused for a moment, looking down at him with glittering eyes.

“Tell me again how nice I am, Megamind,” she said. “Tell me again how much you love me.”

Megamind noted distantly that he couldn’t seem to breathe. He felt as if the world had fallen away, as if he was falling down into a bottomless chasm.

(this. this is why you should never hope.)

He’d been able to live with knowing that he’d never have Roxanne, that she would never love him, never be with him. He’d—gotten used to that pain. But to have had her love, and then to have it ripped away like this—

What had he done? What had he done wrong; how had he ruined this? Not five minutes ago, she’d talked as if she wanted to keep him; what had he done to change her mind?

She’d been worried this morning and she’d been worried tonight; she’d been worried about this but she hadn’t seemed like she wanted to get rid of him. Not until—

—not until he’d asked her about this, insisted that he loved her—told her not to call herself a bitch
How could any of that have been wrong? He was just—he was just doing what he thought she would have done, had their places been reversed.

_You don’t love me_, she’d said. Was that—

Had he just not been clear enough; did she just—was it that she didn’t believe him?

If—if that was—

He could fix this; he could fix it.

Megamind swallowed down the panic that was threatening to claw its way out of his throat.

“I love you,” he said. “You can break up with me, but I am not going to stop loving you.”

Roxanne stared at him for a long moment.

“What the fuck is wrong with you?” she burst out.

The panic felt as if it was trying to claw its way out of his chest, now.

“A lot of things,” he said with a tearful laugh, “but being in love with you is not one of them.”

Roxanne made a noise of scorn.

“You’re not in love with me,” she said. “You’re infatuated. And, to be quite frank, Megamind, no, you do not have enough romantic experience to understand the difference between love and a silly little crush.”

Megamind reeled back.

“What I feel for you,” he said, “is not a crush.”

Roxanne’s lips curved into a cruel smile that didn’t reach her eyes.

“Loving you,” Megamind said, “is the best part of me. There were a lot of days when it was the only part of me that I liked. What I feel for you is not silly. And it is certainly not little. I don’t understand how you can even say that; I told you how much it meant to me—”

“Yes, that you imagined me as a lighthouse,” Roxanne said, and her dismissive tone cut at Megamind’s heart like a knife. “And I’m glad that helped you, Megamind; I’m glad that at least your imaginary version of me did you some good since the real me was worse than useless, but this is the real me. I cannot live up to the image of me you have in your head—”

“What? No!” Megamind said. “That’s not—you don’t have to live up to it, Roxanne; you’re better than anything I could ever imagine! Because you’re real; you’re you—”

“What was it that you said you think you love about me?” Roxanne interrupted, voice scathing, “That I’m nice?”

“I never said nice,” Megamind spat, “I said good. They’re not the same thing.”
Roxanne made a humming noise like she was humoring him.

“And that I’m—‘brilliant’, is that right? Was that it?”

“Yes,” Megamind said through gritted teeth. “You are brilliant. You’re the smartest person that I know.”

“Oh, please,” she said, “I’m like a bright little monkey compared to you; I’m pretty sure we both know that, Megamind.”

Megamind stared at her.

“You cannot seriously think that,” he said. “You can’t. I don’t even—you are every bit as intelligent as I am, Roxanne!”

She made a sharp, impatient gesture of negation.

“I can’t decide if you’re lying to me or to yourself,” she said.

“I am not lying!” Megamind shoved himself to his feet. “It is the truth! You are so brilliant—”

“Oh, yes; I’m so brilliant!” Roxanne said, her voice rising, “I’m so brilliant that you had to tie me to a chair to make sure I didn’t hurt myself! So brilliant that you had to drop hints and give me cues and let me win just so I could feel like I was playing, too—“

“What are you talking about?!” Megamind said, gesticulating wildly. “That is not—that is not how any of that went, Roxanne!”

“You’re the one,” Roxanne said, “who told me all of that!”

“I didn’t say that!” Megamind said, “I never said that! I never said I let you win! I said some of it I did on purpose! And I did! It was like a chess game; laying a trap for your opponent! But other times you derailed everything and it came out of nowhere and—”

Roxanne made a noise of scorn and disbelief.

“How can you not know that you’re smart?” Megamind said. “I mean, you do realize, don’t you, Roxanne, that what we’re doing? The entire plan of turning me into a superhero? That’s your plan! Yours! You are the one who came up with it!”

“Yes, and I’ll feel much better when it’s done!” Roxanne said. “Because then you’ll be able to interact with people besides me and get some normal social development and get over this ridiculous idea that you’re in love with me!”

“I told you; I already interact with people!” Megamind cried. “Why won’t you listen to me?”

“Because you don’t know what you’re talking about!” Roxanne said, the volume of her voice matching his. “This isn’t some fairytale, Megamind! This isn’t one of your romance novels! This is reality, and love at first sight isn’t real!”

“What the fuck are you talking about?” Megamind said. “Who the hell said anything about love at first sight?!”
“You did!” Roxanne shouted. “You told me that you fell in love with me the first time we met!”

“What?” Megamind said. “No; that’s not—I fell a little in love, then, yes; it did start the first time we met, when you asked me if I was all right and treated me like a person! That meant a lot to me; I’m not going to pretend it didn’t!”

“Yes, and love at first sight isn’t—”

“You’re not listening!” Megamind said. “It wasn’t—it started the first time we met; I did think you were fascinating and amazing the first time we met, but you continued to be fascinating and amazing every time after that!”

Roxanne made an angry scornful noise and turned away. Megamind grabbed her shoulders, turning her back.

“I might have started falling in love with you the first time we met,” he said, his fingers tight on her shoulders, “but I fell a little more in love with you every time after that.”

Roxanne’s lips twisted; Megamind kept talking, trying to make her understand, make her see.

“And it’s still happening,” he said, “I think it’s always going to be happening. I think I’m always going to be falling a little more in love with you, Roxanne.”

Roxanne laughed, the sound hard and not happy at all.

“You—you actually think you mean that,” she said “How can you—”

“I do mean it!”

“Oh, how would you know?” Roxanne said, pulling her shoulders out of his grip.

“Why won’t you listen?” he said. “You’re not listening; why aren’t you listening? When are you going to listen to me and stop treating me like a child?”

“When you stop acting like one!” Roxanne said.

Roxanne realized what she’d said a moment after she said it, a moment after Megamind reeled back from her as if from a blow, his green eyes wide and filled with tears.

Oh god. Oh god, she sounded just like—

“—you—you don’t know what you’re talking about, Megamind,” she said. “You don’t know—”

“—about love?” Megamind said, his voice trembling, tears trembling in his eyes. “Do you think I don’t—do you think that I don’t know how love feels? Do you—do you really think I don’t know how to love, Roxanne?”

Roxanne froze.

(men like that aren’t capable of love)
Oh god.

*(stop treating you like a child when you stop acting like one)*

Oh god no.

*(her mother’s voice in her head, her mother’s words in her mouth.)*

Megamind drew back from her, his arms wrapped around his chest, his eyes round and wet.

“I know how to love,” he said.

The tears in his eyes spilled over, slipping down his cheeks.

“Roxanne—” Megamind said, “if—if you didn’t want me, why—why would you tell me that you l-loved me?”

And Roxanne—

(cold; she felt so cold)

—Roxanne knew exactly what to say to end this, to make Megamind leave her, the words it would take to drive him away and—

*(I lied; I only said that because I felt sorry for you; I said it to make you feel better; I didn’t think there was any fear of you imagining you were in love with me; I didn’t think I’d be stuck with you like this, and—)*

—the words it would take to drive him away and—

(she felt so cold)

—and break his heart.

Megamind stared at her, looking terribly fragile, looking like he might shatter at a single wrong word.

And Roxanne knew all the wrong words, the words to make him shatter, the words to break his heart—because it would be breaking his heart; she knew that.

Deep down, she’d always known he was telling the truth when he said he loved her.

She knew that he loved her.

(can’t imagine why; cruel and cold and hard and controlling; don’t deserve it; don’t deserve him; don’t deserve love—)

She had a choice, Roxanne realized, the knowledge settling over her heart like a thin layer of frost.

It was—a very simple choice. She could say the words, lie to him, and walk away—

(no, be honest, Roxanne, not walk—run)
—or she could stay.

(*run run RUN*, Roxanne’s mind screamed at her, harsh and loud and terrified but—)

—Megamind.

(the most interesting and exciting thing to ever happen to her)

—hurting him like that, never seeing him again, never getting to make him laugh, never watching his eyes light up as he talked about one of his brilliant ideas—

Roxanne clenched her hands into fists, tight enough to make her nails bite hard into her palms.

No. No, I will not do that to him; I will not give him up; I refuse.

“I don’t understand,” Megamind said, voice rising again, tears sliding down his face. “I love you, Roxanne. I love you so much. I don’t understand why you won’t believe me!”

“Because I’m not worth loving!”

Megamind took another half step back from her, his eyes wide with surprise, and Roxanne clawed a hand through her hair.

(*tear myself apart, tear out all the wrongness*)

She yanked at her hair again, with both hands this time, and started to pace.

“Certainly not the way you love,” she continued bitterly. “Saying that you see me as this—this beautiful saving light. Megamind, there is nothing like that in me; there is *nothing* in me!”

She stopped in front of his lighthouse poster, the one he’d said reminded him of her, and gestured at it wildly.

“You can peel back as many layers of me as you want,” she said, “you can search as long as you like, but you are never going to find any *light*!”

“I don’t need to search for it, Roxanne; I already see it—”

Megamind moved towards her, reaching out for her, but Roxanne moved a step back, out of his reach.

“—that is what I am trying to tell you, Megamind; what you see in me isn’t real!”

“Who the fuck made you think that you’re not worth loving, Roxanne?”

Roxanne made a sharp, dismissive gesture.

“No one,” she said. “It doesn’t matter. After a while the evidence just piles up and you have to accept—”

“—that you’re evil?”
Roxanne went still.

She looked at Megamind, who looked back at her, his mouth flat and hard and his eyes furious.

“—what?” she said. “Wh—no! It wasn’t—it wasn’t like that; it wasn’t like what happened to you.”

“Are you sure?” Megamind said. “Because it sounds a hell of a lot like that me.”

“Nobody told me I was evil!”

“No?” Megamind said, narrowing his eyes at her. He tilted his head. “What did they tell you, then? Were you too smart for them? Did they tell you that you were conceited about it; did they say that was why you didn’t have any friends? Did they tell you that if you were just nicer, then people would be nicer to you? That if you just tried a little harder to fit in, then people would like you more?”

“I—that’s—”

Megamind didn’t look away from her; Roxanne felt caught in his gaze, stripped bare, as though he could see everything about her.

“They didn’t say evil,” Megamind said, his eyes on Roxanne’s. “but then, they didn’t have to say it, did they? You filled that blank in for them.”

Roxanne stared at him, her face pale, and god, Megamind had always felt an affinity with her, but he’d assumed it was mostly surface level and wishful thinking. He’d had no idea the similarity between them ran this deep, had never suspected that the world might have looked at brilliant, amazing Roxanne and called her the same kind of wrong as it had called Megamind.

“What did they say,” Megamind said, furious enough to burn the entire world for her, “what did they say if they didn’t say evil? I’m guessing that ‘bitch’ featured prominently, based on you calling yourself that, earlier. What else? Pushy? You’ve said that about yourself before, too.”

“—manipulative,” Roxanne said, too shocked for anything but honesty. “Cold. Heartless.”

“They were wrong,” Megamind said. “You are not anything like manipulative. Knowing how to turn a situation to your advantage is not a moral failing of any kind. It is a strength. And you are the most passionate person I have ever met.”

Roxanne smiled at him bitterly, wrapped her arms around her chest.

“That I care more about ideas than about people,” she said, “that I care more about things being correct than I care about people. That I act like other people don’t have feelings.”

“What, because you’re naturally blunt and gifted with intelligence and insight?”

“Because I’m cruel,” Roxanne said.

How could Megamind, of all people, not realize this about her? All the things she’d said to him, over the years, all—
“It drives people away,” she said, “I always drive people away; I always—the things I end up saying—”

“Things like ‘this is a poorly thought out evil plot’?” Megamind said. “Things like ‘you’re good at being overdramatic, Megamind’?”

“I—”

Megamind watched Roxanne’s hand flutter to her throat. She actually looked surprised. Didn’t she know that he remembered everything she said to him? Did she think he had forgotten or somehow failed to notice such an important aspect of her personality?

“I told you; I know what you’re like, Roxanne. I like the way you are.”

Roxanne stared at him.

"You have a mind like a knife, Roxanne,” Megamind said. “I happen to like dangerous things.”

Roxanne took a sharp breath.

Oh. Megamind’s heart twisted. Oh, she really had thought he didn’t know, that he hadn’t noticed—that he had been seeing her as someone she wasn’t.

“I know you, Roxanne,” Megamind softened his voice.

Roxanne swallowed. If he knew her, if he knew what she was like, then how could he still love her; how could he—

“Who told you these things, Roxanne?” he asked, voice gentle. “Who made you hate yourself like this?”

Roxanne took a half step back in shock.

“I don’t hate myself,” she said, “I just—I just have a realistic understanding of myself.”

“Roxanne,” Megamind said, his eyes wide and worried, “Roxanne, this is really not realistic.” He shook his head, his eyes still on hers. “You see everything else so clearly, but it’s—it’s like you don’t see yourself at all.”

Roxanne’s chest ached.

(empty. so empty.)

She wrapped her arms around her chest as if that might make the emptiness hurt less.

“What’s to see?” Roxanne asked.

“—Roxanne,” Megamind said, reaching out for her.

She took a skittish step back, out of his reach. Megamind’s hand dropped to his side, but his eyes did not drop, remained on hers. For a long moment he just stood there and looked at her.
(how could he look at her like that? how could he look at her like he loved her?)

(how could he love her?)

“Who told you those things, Roxanne?” Megamind asked again, voice quiet.

(who had done this to her, made her feel this way, made her see herself so utterly wrong?)

Roxanne took a sharp, uneven breath. Megamind didn’t look away from her.

“Everyone,” she said simply, and burst into tears.

She covered her face as quickly as she could, tried to turn away, not wanting to cry in front of him, not wanting to force him to witness any more of her ugliness.

Megamind caught her shoulders and wrapped his arms around her.

(everyone.)

Damn this entire fucking planet.

Roxanne twisted her fingers in the material of Megamind’s shirt and pressed her face to his chest, wanting to hide from him, from herself.

“I’m sorry—I’m—” she said, “I’m so sorry; I’m sorry I s-said those things; I’m—”

(how could she have said those things; how could she have hurt him like that; what was wrong with her)

“It’s okay,” he whispered. “It’s okay, Roxanne; I’m not angry.”

God, she wished he would be angry with her; that would have been easier to bear. Didn’t he understand that he should be angry; didn’t he understand that was what she deserved?

“—and they weren’t true,” Roxanne said, “the things—they weren’t—I know you know how to l-love—I’m so—sorry, Megamind; I’m so sorry—”

“Shh,” Megamind said, “shh; it’s okay, Roxanne; I forgive you. It’s okay.”

I forgive you.

Roxanne buried her face in the crook of his neck and cried.

Megamind held Roxanne tightly; her body shook in his arms as if she might shatter from the force of her violent sobbing.

“—I’m—so—sorry—” she said, “—so sorry—”

“Shh,” Megamind said, wishing he knew how to comfort her properly, how to fix this, how to make this right. “Shh. It’s all right.”

The bed; he’d be able to hold her more fully there—
Megamind shifted his weight slightly, intending to lead the two of them towards the bed. At the shift of his weight, though, Roxanne made a terrified sound and clung to him even more desperately.

“—I’m sorry—” Roxanne said frantically, “—I’m sorry; I’m so sorry—please—please don’t leave me; I don’t want you to leave me—”

Megamind went still, and then he tightened his arms around her and pressed a kiss to her hair.

“I don’t want to leave you,” he said. “I’m not going to leave you, Roxanne; I promise.”

Roxanne relaxed very slightly, and he kissed her hair again.

“I promise,” he repeated. “I love you.”

She went nearly limp at that, the sound of her sobbing going jagged with relief.

The bed would definitely be better, though he certainly didn’t want to make her cry harder by moving away from her again—what should he—

Oh, to hell with it.

Megamind picked her up, sweeping her off her feet and into his arms, and moved to the bed. He sat down on the mattress, Roxanne still in his arms, turned sideways in his lap, her face still pressed to the crook of his neck.

“I love you,” he said. “I’m here. I’m not leaving.”

Roxanne didn’t say anything in response, just cried. Megamind held her, stroked her hair and her back, and eventually her sobbing eased and finally stopped.

Megamind stroked her hair gently; Roxanne closed her eyes and pressed her face to his shoulder, shame and embarrassment starting to roil in the pit of her stomach.

God, Megamind must think she was a complete and utter wreck, having hysterics all over him like that, and then panicking and begging him not to leave her.

Roxanne gritted her teeth and sat up.

“Sorry,” she said, voice still a little ragged.

“I told you,” Megamind said. He reached out and stroked her hair out of her face, gave her a soft smile. “You don’t need to be.”

Roxanne sniffed and wiped at her face—probably a lost cause, no doubt she looked absolutely terrible after all that crying.

“No, not about—” she gestured vaguely, then let her hands fall. “I mean about—being such a disaster.”

Megamind raised his eyebrows at her.
“What,” he said, “is only one person in a relationship allowed to be a disaster?”

Roxanne gave a startled laugh and Megamind grinned at her.

“Besides,” he said, “I don’t think that was such a disaster.”

Roxanne made what was probably an extremely unattractive snorting noise of disbelief.

“Seriously?” she said.

He shrugged.

“You’re still here,” he said. “Personally, I’d say that’s an unequivocal success.”

Roxanne’s heart flipped over.

An unequivocal success. How was he so—

God, she’d come so close to leaving, come so close to losing this.

To losing Megamind.

“Honestly, Roxanne,” Megamind said quietly, “I am so relieved that you told me. Imagine if you hadn’t. That really would have been a disaster.”

Roxanne made a face.

“Well,” she said, “I’m glad you still want me around, anyway.”

She shifted to sit beside Megamind. He shifted, too, turning to face her.

“Of course I want you around,” he said. “I always want you around.”

Roxanne swallowed the sudden lump in her throat.

“Yeah,” she said, “but I mean—I know you weren’t expecting me to be this—emotionally unstable.”

Megamind gave a wry laugh.

“I am well aware,” he said, “that I live in a glass house when it comes to—emotional instability. I’m not going to throw the first stone!”

Then he frowned, tipped his head thoughtfully.

“You’re really worried about that,” he said in a more serious tone.

Roxanne winced. She looked down at her own hands, curled into fists on her knees.

“I just—I must be such a disappointment to you,” she said in a small voice. “The—reality of me must be such a disappointment to you.”
“Never.”

One of Megamind’s hands covered hers. Roxanne looked up into his face.

“The reality of you could never be a disappointment to me,” he said. “It is the reality of you, of—this—which is so—incredibly precious to me.”

He squeezed her hand, then picked it up, held it between both of his.

“You asked me before,” he said, “if the reality of having sex with you could really be better than something I could imagine to be perfect, and I told you that it is. Roxanne—the reality of everything with you is better than something I could imagine to be perfect.”

He gave her a small, crooked smile.

“That?” he said, “That argument that we just had? That was better to me than any perfect fantasy of being with you that I could ever imagine. Because it was real.”

He lifted her hand to his lips and kissed the back of it, quick and matter of fact.

Roxanne’s heart felt like a frozen thing in her chest, cracking against the suddenness of an unexpected warmth.

“Why are you so wonderful?” she asked helplessly. “Why do you still want me when I’m such a mess?”

Megamind sighed, his eyes suddenly sad.

“Roxanne,” he said, “it’s just like you told me. You—thinking that you’re not worthy of love isn’t—a character flaw; it isn’t something I have to overlook or forgive you for.”

He squeezed her hand.

“I’m just—so sorry,” he said, “I’m so sorry that you feel like that, too, because it’s awful. I’m—I’m really sorry that what happened to me happened to you, too.”

“It wasn’t—” Roxanne started.

“Wasn’t it?” Megamind gave her a sad smile.

Roxanne swallowed and looked down again, at their joined hands this time.

“It wasn’t exactly the same,” she said quietly.

“Some striking similarities, though, I’m thinking,” Megamind said.

Roxanne was silent, fighting the instinct to deflect, to deny, to say it hadn’t been as bad—

“Sh—school?” Megamind asked.

Roxanne sighed and looked up at him.
“It was,” she admitted, “it was like you were saying earlier. I didn’t really have any friends. A few, when I was—really little. Kind of. Girls whose mothers were friends with mine, but—other kids didn’t really like me.”

“You were too smart for them,” Megamind said. “Weren’t you.”

Roxanne grimaced.

“I’m not very good at being conciliating,” she said, “and I’m not very—tactful.”

“About pretending to be less intelligent than you actually are?” Megamind said. “Yeah, fuck that.”

Roxanne gave a bark of surprised laughter.

“God, being around you always was such a fucking relief.” she said. “You’ve—really never gotten mad about me pointing out your mistakes, have you?”

“No, of course not.”

She laughed again.

“Yeah,” she said, “well. Other people do. So, yes, school kind of sucked, and there was a lot of—you’d have more friends if you weren’t such a smug little know-it-all—that you were talking about.”

“Ah, yes,” Megamind said grimly. “One of my personal favorites.”

“Most of my teachers liked me, or at least tolerated me, though,” Roxanne said. “So I didn’t get into trouble. Until high school,” she added. “High school was a different kind of awful.”

Megamind made a noise of agreement. Roxanne hesitated for a minute, debating whether or not to say—

But Megamind—Megamind deserved—

After all the things she’d convinced him to tell her—he’d practically turned himself inside out for her, had told her that he’d answer any question she asked, that he’d tell her anything she wanted to know—

Roxanne didn’t know how to match that kind of beautiful honesty and trust, didn’t know how to deserve it, how to deserve him, but—god, she was going to try.

“I’m still not very good at—friends,” she forced herself to say. “Or at—people in general, really. I told you when we started this thing that I never really cared about Evan, but the truth is, I don’t ever date people I care about.

“It hurts less, that way,” she went on, “when they find out that I’m bisexual and decide that I must be secretly straight or that I must be cheating on them, or when—when they find out what I’m really like and they realize that they don’t like me after all. It’s better if I—don’t let people close enough to hurt me.”
“But I am,” Megamind said slowly.

“Yes,” Roxanne said. “Yes, you are, Megamind, and I’m going to be honest with you; I am terrified. I am terrified that if I—let you stay this close, you are going to see what I am really like, and you are going to stop being in love with me.”

“I know what you’re like,” Megamind said.

“Yes, well,” Roxanne said, “it’s not just the—me being bisexual and kind of mean, it’s me being—emotionally unstable, I told you. The—earlier, the hysterical crying; that’s not—that’s not something that I do in front of people.”

She saw the moment that Megamind understood and braced herself automatically.

“Oh,” he said, “you were—you were much more worried about that than I assumed, weren’t you?”

Megamind saw Roxanne let out a breath.

(oh hell, she’d even been worried just now about telling him that she’d worried over crying in front of him, hadn’t she?)

“Being this close to you is a privilege,” he said, “the fact that you’re—letting me be this close, letting me see the—the things you’re worried about—thank you, Roxanne.”

Her hand twitched in his.

“This,” she said, clearly forcing herself to speak, “this, right now? This is another thing. That scares me. Telling you that I’m—like this.”

“Telling me that you’re afraid scares you?” Megamind asked hesitantly, trying to understand.

“Why would you—”

“I’m afraid,” Roxanne said, biting the words out, “that if I tell you I’m scared you’ll stop loving me—that—you’ll think that I don’t trust you, and that will make you stop loving me. But that’s not it, Megamind; it’s not that I don’t trust you; it’s that—it would be reasonable for you to stop loving me.”

Megamind’s heart twisted.

“It would not be reasonable,” he said. “I still love you, Roxanne; I don’t feel mistrusted.”

Roxanne’s breath hissed through her teeth.

“No?” she said, like she was having a hard time believing it.

“No, I—I spent a long time,” Megamind said, squeezing Roxanne’s hand and putting his free hand on her knee, “I spent a long time wondering what you would be afraid of; I never imagined that it would be—anything like this. I never imagined that you’d be afraid of losing me.”

“I am,” Roxanne said, putting her free hand on top of his. “I am very afraid of that.”

“It’s wonderful that you love me so much,” Megamind said, around the lump in his throat. “But I
wish you didn’t feel afraid. You don’t have to be afraid. I’m not going to stop loving you. Does my saying that help at all?”

“It helps a little, but honestly I’m going to have to tell you everything that’s wrong with me before I can really believe you,” Roxanne said, words coming quickly. “Sorry.”

*Everything that was wrong with her.* Oh, Roxanne—

“You don’t need to be sorry,” Megamind said softly. “I just want you to feel better. Tell me.”

Roxanne pressed her lips together; for a moment she looked almost angry—but that was what Roxanne did with her fear; she turned it into anger. She attacked.

And that’s what this was, wasn’t it? This was her furiously throwing herself towards what she feared.

Megamind’s heart gave a painful pulse.

God, she was brave.

Roxanne let go of Megamind’s hands, pulled away from him, and curled her empty hands into talons at her sides.

“*Friends,*” she said. “I don’t really have them. Ever notice the way I was always conveniently alone when you came to kidnap me? The last person I was really friends with was my college roommate. Well. I thought we were friends. Then she found out I was bisexual and asked the university to give her a different roommate. I came back from Christmas break and she had already moved.”

She paused—Megamind looked as if he might say something, but then he shook his head very slightly and remained silent.

“Before that, in high school,” Roxanne continued, “I had Sara—I told you about Sara; she’s the girl I dated. Sort of dated. Mostly we just made out and argued about me calling myself bi instead of a lesbian, and when we broke up, I assumed we would still be friends, the way we were before, but she said ‘I’m not friends with straight girls who play around with my feelings for fun’. And after that I went back to not having any friends again. So—”

“Roxanne,” Megamind said.

His voice was quieter than hers, but it still broke through. She fell silent.

“You being bisexual,” he said, “is not something that anyone has the right to have a problem with. I am certainly never going to have a problem with it. Anyone who does have a problem with it—that’s something wrong with them. It’s not something wrong with you.”

Roxanne dug her nails into the mattress.

“What about me not having friends?” she said. “Don’t you think that’s sad and pathetic?”

Megamind raised his eyebrows.
“That would be rather like the pot calling the kettle crockery,” he said dryly. “Don’t you think?”

Roxanne winced.

“God, I’m sorry,” she said. “I always—”

“I’m not offended,” Megamind said gently. “Do you think I’m pathetic because I don’t have friends?”

“No, of course not!” Roxanne said. “Of course not; I mean, I wish you—I wish you had friends; you’d be happier if you did, but you’re not—you’re not pathetic, Megamind; I don’t think you’re pathetic.”

“No,” he said, “no, I didn’t think you did. But you do see, Roxanne, don’t you, that you are much harder on yourself than you are on other people? Why is it pathetic for you but not for me?”

“It’s different,” Roxanne snapped, scowling at him.

“Why?”

“Because—”

Roxanne stopped.

She—

She didn’t actually have an answer.

Not a—a logical answer; it’s just different wasn’t a logical answer, and when she tried to come up with something else, all her mind presented her with was the conviction that she didn’t deserve—

(kindness, understanding, love, anything.)

Fuck.

That was—

She really did sound like Megamind.

“You do see,” Megamind said softly, seeing understanding flash in Roxanne’s expression like lightning, “don’t you?”

Roxanne’s lips parted, and a terribly—open and uncertain expression came over her face.

“I—I do dislike myself,” she said. “I didn’t—actually know that.”

Megamind reached out and touched her knee lightly. Roxanne closed her eyes for a moment, swallowed visibly.

Roxanne opened her eyes, looked at Megamind, fought against the automatic urge to push him away, against the feeling that the comforting touch wasn’t something that she deserved.
“I still love you,” Megamind said. “If you were worrying.”

“I don’t know why,” Roxanne said wildly, “I don’t! Nobody else does!”

Her self-control broke; she pushed his hand away. Megamind pulled his hand back, fingers curled like he was holding onto the memory of the touch, and Roxanne wanted to tear herself to pieces—for pushing him away like that, for not being good enough, for wanting him to reach out for her again, for being—this.

“My father left,” she said abruptly, “I told you that already.” She laughed mirthlessly. “I should have warned you how fucking boring this was going to be. Just another girl with daddy issues; take a number and get in line—”

“Don’t,” Megamind said softly, “don’t talk about yourself like that.”

“Of course,” Roxanne said with a bitter smile, “to be fair, him leaving did fuck my mother up, too. After he left, there were some days my mother would barely get out of bed, and sometimes she’d go into these—crying fits, and she’d go on and on about how my dad had left us, how he didn’t love us anymore. And I know that sounds like she was just—projecting onto me, but—”

She gestured sharply.

“—but,” she said, “it’s not as if she was actually wrong. He didn’t even try for custody. He didn’t even really—try to see me after that.”

She raked her hand through her hair.

“Anyway, my mom dated a whole bunch of guys after that, and none of them were—they were all—not good, but some of them were—really, really bad. I think that’s why she’s so convinced that you must hurt me.”

Megamind blinked.

“Does your mother know that we’re together?” he asked.

“I—”

Roxanne looked uncertainly at him. They hadn’t ever really talked about telling people about the two of them—but he didn’t seem upset about the possibility of her having told her mother, just—just surprised.

“Not—for sure,” Roxanne said. “She called me; she’d seen the broadcasts and could tell that I—she asked if I was sleeping with you. I didn’t—I didn’t say yes, but I didn’t exactly deny it, either.”

She kept her eyes on Megamind’s face, but he just nodded.

“—well, anyway, we went to Wisconsin when I was twelve,” Roxanne said. “It was supposed to be just for the summer. To visit my mother’s family. And I was—”

She laughed bitterly, remembering.

“I was actually excited about it. About having a family.”
She shrugged, a quick, sharp motion of dismissal.

“And then I got there and of course it was awful. I’d—I’d gotten too used to being in charge of myself, to taking care of myself, to—being by myself, and I didn’t really know how to play with other kids.”

She gave Megamind a tight, forced smile.

“I think I forgot how to be a kid, to be honest,” she said. “Or maybe I never knew how in the first place; I’ve always—there’s always been something subtly off about me, something—it’s like I don’t know how to be a person the way that other people know how to be people. Like I’m missing a page from the instruction manual or something. I think that’s part of why I always liked you so much, really. You’re missing a page, too.”

Roxanne realized what she’d said and flinched. Oh god, why had she said that? Thoughtless; cruel; she really didn’t deserve—

“Fuck,” she said, “I’m sorry; I shouldn’t have said—”

“I’ve always thought of it as being defective,” Megamind said. “missing a page from the instruction manual is a much kinder way of thinking about it. I like that.”

He smiled at her, and Roxanne’s heart gave a painful little twist. He reached out for her again, taking her hand this time. Roxanne curled her fingers around his.

“I find it very interesting, too,” Megamind said, “that we both came up with mechanical metaphors to describe it. I used to wish that someone would take me apart and put me back together again right.”

“—I used to wish I could steal someone else’s instruction manual,” Roxanne said.

Megamind laughed, and Roxanne smiled shakily at him.

“That’s kind of what I did, actually,” she said. “I watched other people and figured out what they did and how people reacted. So I could learn what to do to get the effect I wanted. I—I think that’s what people mean when they talk about me being manipulative.”

“I think it’s incredibly impressive that you learned how to do that,” Megamind said.

Roxanne made a face and shifted position, tucking her legs to the side.

“Well, I hadn’t learned yet, back then,” she said. “And everything was—god; I hate that place so fucking much. I never fit with anyone there; definitely not with my mother’s new family, with—my stepfather and his kids, and my mother said ‘if you would just try’, but the thing is, I did try. I tried —so hard, and I still couldn’t make myself right for them.”

Megamind squeezed her hand and Roxanne tightened her fingers in his. She swallowed.

“And even my mother’s actual family didn’t want me; the only one of them who maybe liked me a little bit was Great Aunt Rachel, and even she—my cousins only stopped teasing me because I started hitting them. The adults said that I was moody and standoffish and disobedient, and finally I
just started avoiding everyone. I had a whole range of hiding places. In closets and under beds, and out by the lake, and—"

Her lips twisted bitterly. Megamind brushed his thumb back and forth over the back of her hand.

“I remember I was—” Roxanne said, “—I was under the porch, that first summer, hiding, and my grandmother and some of my aunts were up on the porch drinking lemonade and talking. I liked to listen to people, even then; you call me nosy, Megamind, but you really don’t even know the half of it. They were talking about—something; I don’t remember. And then—then they—they started talking about me.”

She stopped, struggled for composure.

So ridiculous—it had happened years ago; so stupid that she felt like this, still.

Megamind shifted closer to her, put his free hand comfortingly on her thigh. Roxanne swallowed.

“They started talking about me,” she said again. “And my—my grandmother said ‘I don’t know what Linda is going to do with that girl; she certainly can’t manage her’ and one of my aunts suggested that my mother should send me back to live with my father, and my grandmother—my grandmother said that she’d already suggested that idea to my mother.”

Megamind made a soft, hurt noise, and Roxanne felt a sob rising up in her throat, threatening to choke her, and repressed it as furiously as she could.

“Anyway,” she said. “Anyway, I thought that—that even if they hated me, at least I wouldn’t have to stay there so much longer, but—but then the summer ended and my mother decided that we were going to stay there so she could marry her old high school boyfriend, and it was—god, it was awful; it was like that place just—folded itself around us and I was trapped there, suffocating, dying in slow motion—”

Roxanne jerked her free hand through her hair.

“—prayers before every high school football game and people line dancing at school dances and I nearly got suspended when I tried to make the science teacher talk about evolution. And then there was the thing with Sara and so my mother—decided to take my grandmother’s advice after all. Well. She tried. She called my dad, and—”

Tears made her vision waver; Roxanne gritted her teeth against a sob.

“You know,” she said, “you know how—with those old home phones, if someone was talking on the phone in one room, you could pick up another receiver in a different room and hear what the people on both ends of the line were saying?”

Megamind nodded, and Roxanne gave a forced little laugh and gestured, hand fluttering.

“Yeah. That,” she said. “I—I told you; I’m too fucking nosy. I picked up the phone in the other room and I listened to my parents talking about me and—and when my mother said she wanted to send me away to him, my dad said no.”

The tears in her eyes spilled over; Roxanne wiped at them angrily.
Megamind took his hand from her thigh and reached up like he wanted to catch her hand—and then he stopped, hesitated as if he wasn’t sure she’d let him.

Roxanne wanted him to catch her hand, wanted him to pull her into his arms and hold her close, wanted—

She took a ragged breath and reached out for his hand. He caught it and lifted it to his lips, pressed a kiss to her palm. Roxanne did sob then, a single sob. She swallowed hard, forcing the rest of the sobs back down.

“He said—he said that it wasn’t his fault I was so fucked up,” she said, words spilling out. “He said that he wouldn’t take me, that he had a life to live. And my mother said ‘so you get to live your life while I’m stuck raising your goddamn kid’ and—and my father s-said that she wouldn’t be stuck with me if she had just been a little more careful and hadn’t gotten pregnant, and then they argued about whose fault I was; not just whose fault it was that I was so messed up, but whose fault it was that I existed—”

A sob clawed its way out of her throat in spite of all her efforts not to let it.

“—and—my stepbrother and stepsister s-started—calling my mother ‘mom’ before—before her and m-my stepdad even got married,” Roxanne said between sobs, “and the l-last time I went there for Christmas, one of my—mother’s uncles—called me ‘Linda’s stepdaughter’ and w-when my dad got remarried, his—new stepdaughter was the flower girl—and—and th-they didn’t even invite me, and—when my dad was t-telling me about it later, h-he said the wedding was—really small—just family—”

Crying too hard, now, to continue, Roxanne took her hands from Megamind’s and covered her face.

God, she was crying again; he had to be tired of watching her cry, had to be tired of her—

Megamind folded his arms around her, and Roxanne twisted her hands in the material of his shirt and pressed her face to his chest.

“I’m so sorry,” he said, holding her tightly, “Roxanne, I am so sorry that—I am so sorry that happened to you.”

Roxanne, still crying, couldn’t answer.

“You didn’t deserve that,” he said, “you didn’t deserve any of it.”

“Wh-when I—had to—t-tell you—about the warden—and the d-doctor,” Roxanne sobbed out, “when I realized that—that you—d-didn’t know they—wanted to adopt you—”

Megamind moved one of his hands to her head, began to stroke her hair.

“—I was j-jealous,” Roxanne said between sobs, “because at—at l-least you had someone who—who w-wanted you—”

“Oh,” Megamind said, still stroking her hair, “oh, Roxanne, sweetheart—”

“I’m—so—s-sorry—”
“You have nothing to be sorry for,” Megamind said. “You were so good to me, when you were telling me about that, and I don’t blame you for feeling—oh, Roxanne, you deserve to have a family that wanted you, too; of course you do—”

Roxanne sobbed harder and, face still pressed to his chest, shook her head.

“Yes,” Megamind said forcefully, “yes, you do.”

He stopped stroking her hair and wrapped his arms tightly around her.

“My own—family—couldn’t love me,” Roxanne sobbed, “how could—how could I expect you—”

“I do,” Megamind said, “I do love you Roxanne. And just—just because other people didn’t—didn’t treat you right, didn’t love you right—that doesn’t mean that you aren’t worth loving. And I do love you, Roxanne; I love you so much; I promise.”

He pressed a kiss to her hair.

“And I swear to you, I am going to try my best to—to do this right. And maybe I won’t always—get things right, but you’ll tell me if I don’t, won’t you? You always tell me when I get things wrong, Miss Ritchi,” he added, and dropped a kiss in her hair.

Roxanne gave a tearful laugh and he kissed her head yet again.

“Of course you do,” he said, and she could hear the smile in his voice. “And I want you to, Roxanne. I want you to tell me. Because I love you.”

Roxanne swallowed, trying to convince her fingers to unwind themselves from Megamind’s shirt. She couldn’t, though, just as she couldn’t stop her sobs from starting again.

“I’m—I’m sorry,” she said, “—stupid—crying again—”

“You’re not stupid,” Megamind said, “and I don’t blame you for crying. You can cry as long as you need to, Roxanne.”

Roxanne gave in and let herself cry.

Megamind held her the entire time, and when, at last, she stopped, he kept holding her.

Roxanne leaned against him as her breathing slowly returned to normal.

Megamind stroked Roxanne’s hair. She seemed calmer, at last; that was good.

Roxanne shouldn’t ever have to cry like that. Roxanne shouldn’t ever have to feel like that.

*I’m not worth loving.*

And her family had made her feel like that. That was—

Megamind had always longed to be a part of a family, had always thought of family as something
based on—on love. Roxanne’s family had twisted that around entirely, made her feel unloved, made her feel as though she was unlovable and unworthy of love.

What kind of family did something like that?

Especially to someone like Roxanne; didn’t they know how incredibly goddamn lucky they were?

They’d made her afraid of love.

Roxanne had said that she never dated people she cared about—it was no wonder she’d been so worried about dating him; he wasn’t very good at subtlety or restraint when it came to—

Well, he wasn’t very good at subtlety or restraint when it came to anything, to be honest, but especially when it came to love and to Roxanne. It must have been like going from dying of thirst to drowning. Of course she’d been terrified.

Megamind stopped stroking Roxanne’s hair to cup the back of her head protectively.

It was unfathomable that she thought herself unworthy of love.

I love you, he thought fiercely. I am going to love you the way you deserve, I promise.

They stayed like that for several minutes, and then at last Roxanne let out a deep sigh and sat up, wiping at her face.

“Thank you,” she said.


Roxanne gave a damp kind of laugh.

“Yeah,” she said.

Megamind kissed her quickly on the brow and climbed out of bed.

“I’ll be right back,” he said.

“—can I come with you?” Roxanne asked uncertainly, feeling silly for asking, but also too fragile to be alone right now.

Megamind stopped.

“Of course,” he said, holding his hand out to her with a soft smile, “I think we have ice cream in the freezer.”

Roxanne took his hand and let him help her out of bed.

“Ice cream sounds good,” she said.

Megamind held Roxanne’s hand as he led her through the darkened Lair to the kitchen, only letting go of her when she sat down at the kitchen counter island, on one of the tall chairs.
Minion and the bots were all asleep by now, of course, but Megamind was certainly capable of handling water and ice cream.

He got Roxanne her drink first, not in one of the matching pieces of glassware that Minion was so fond of, but in the speckled pink glass that Megamind had convinced Minion to save from when they still lived in the library. He got himself a drink as well, then opened the freezer to check for—

“Ha!” he said, reaching into the freezer, “ice cream!”

He turned away from the refrigerator to open the door of the cupboard, then stood on tiptoe to reach the top shelf.

“Do you want sprinkles on yours?” he asked.

He turned to find that Roxanne was smiling at him.

“What?” he said.

“You,” she said. “Just you. Yes, I would like sprinkles on mine.”

Megamind smiled back at her bemusedly and brought the sprinkles and the ice cream over to the kitchen island. He scooped Roxanne and himself each a bowl of ice cream and covered each bowl of ice cream liberally in sprinkles. He pushed Roxanne’s bowl across to her, and then moved around the counter to sit in the chair beside her.

“Any better?” he asked, after they’d both taken a few bites of ice cream.

“Mm,” Roxanne said, and shifted in her seat. She smiled at him and kicked her feet up and propped them in his lap. “Yes.”

Megamind smiled back at her and rested his free hand on her ankles, then turned back to his ice cream.

“Thank you,” Roxanne said, her voice serious now.

Megamind looked over at her again. Her expression was serious, too.

“For listening to me,” she said. “I think maybe I kind of—” she then looked down at her bowl of ice cream, “—kind of needed to talk about—that.”

Roxanne stared down into her bowl of ice cream. She stirred her spoon in her ice cream and sprinkles, making the rainbow colors swirl around.

“I’m glad you told me,” she heard Megamind say.

Roxanne looked up at Megamind and smiled at him.

“You’re a really good boyfriend,” she said softly.

Megamind lit up like she’d given him the most profound compliment imaginable. Then his expression went a little uncertain.
“Did you—I mean, we don’t have to talk about it if you don’t want to,” he said, “but I was—wondering—why do you still talk to them, Roxanne?”

He gestured, a quick one-handed motion.

“I—that’s not me—criticizing you or—anything like that,” he said. “I just—it doesn’t sound like they’re very good to you at all.”

Roxanne sighed.

“I don’t really talk to my dad any more,” she said. “He doesn’t live anywhere around here, now, which makes that easier. But the rest of my family—”

She put down her spoon and leaned back in her chair to look at Megamind, who looked back at her with wide, worried eyes. Roxanne gave him a reassuring half smile, then let her smile fade as she ran her hand through her hair.

“The thing is,” she said, “is that there are good memories mixed in with the bad. My mother—when I was little, on her good days, she could be really fun. She used to take me for bike rides in the park, and sometimes she’d put on music and we’d dance around in the living room and sing the lyrics wrong on purpose and laugh.”

She swallowed and looked down at her hands in her lap. Megamind stroked one of her ankles and she looked up at him.

“And I used to watch baseball with my grandfather—I still do, when I visit during baseball season,” she said, “we both shout at the screen; I’m sure you’re shocked.”

“You like baseball?” Megamind asked.

“Yeah,” Roxanne said, starting to smile. “You?”

Megamind nodded enthusiastically.

“Metro City Wolverines!”

“Definitely,” Roxanne agreed, grinning at him. “We should go to a game together sometime, yeah?”

Megamind took a sharp breath, his eyes going wide.

“That would be fantastic,” he breathed.

Roxanne laughed.

“Yeah,” she said, “it will be.”

She leaned her elbow on the counter, propped up her chin on her hand.

“Grandpa’s team is the Brewers, of course,” she said.
Her smile faded a bit but didn’t disappear. It was—it was hard, thinking about her family; it always was. Pain and love at once, bad memories tangled up with good, too tightly to be separated.

“Grandpa used to take us on bike rides, too,” she said, “and on boat rides and walks in the woods, which was—but I was never—he loved having grandsons best, and I wasn’t quite enough of a tomboy to fit in with them, and I wasn’t—pretty and sweet and ladylike, either. I asked too many questions, you know? It drove him up the wall. It drove everyone up the wall.”

She sighed, looked down into her bowl of sprinkle-covered ice cream again.

“My grandmother would have all of the cousins make Christmas cookies together,” she said, remembering, “she’d have every color of sprinkles to decorate with, and she made so many cookies we each got to decorate a dozen of our own, and once, when I was in high school, I was staying late to work on the school newspaper and I had to skip dinner, and she came by with a whole pan of cinnamon rolls for me.”

The ice cream was melting, Roxanne noted, the swirls of color starting to blend and mix together. She looked up at Megamind and gave him a half-smile.

“One of my cousins punched Bobby Fairview in the face after he asked me to prom as a joke,” she said reminiscently.

“Good,” Megamind said with great feeling.

Roxanne laughed.

“Oh, don’t worry,” she said, “I punched him, too.”

“Better and better,” Megamind said, nodding vigorously.

She laughed again.

“My Great Aunt Rachel did sort of like me, I think.” she said. “She doesn’t really like children very much, but I was a weird kid. She let me hang out in her house sometimes. She had this—gorgeous antique tea set; sometimes she’d let me have tea with her. When she was in a particularly good mood, she’d actually let me handle the teapot. God, I was always terrified that I was going to break it.”

Roxanne smiled and shook her head.

“She tried to teach me to crochet,” she said. “And she had this—enormous collection of romance novels; sometimes she actually let me borrow them. Neither of us told my mother or grandmother; they would have taken them away.”

Roxanne gave a soft laugh.

“That’s what makes me think she must have liked me,” she said. “The fact that she let me borrow her books. Great Aunt Rachel is very serious about books.”

“It sounds like she has good taste,” Megamind said quietly, giving Roxanne a little smile. “In books and in people.”
Roxanne smiled back at him.

“And,” she said, “my stepbrother and stepsister got on my nerves a lot, but I taught them how to play velociraptor attack and they used to beg me to play it with them.”

“Velociraptor attack?” Megamind asked, tilting his head curiously.

Roxanne gestured, grinning.

“Yes, it’s—you all pretend to be velociraptors, with, like, the dinosaur sounds and the movement, and then you stalk someone as a pack and attack them and—ah—pretend to disembowel and eat them?”

Megamind mouth shaped itself into a round O of what looked like wonder; Roxanne laughed at his expression.

“Yeah, well,” she said, “it was that or play house; I hated playing house. I taught them how to play space pirates, too, that was another favorite.”

“Space pirates?” Megamind said, eyes sparkling. “Now isn’t that interesting.”

Roxanne laughed.

“I told you,” she said. “I always was interested in aliens.”

Megamind grinned and leaned back in his chair.

“I actually used to wish that I’d get abducted,” Roxanne said with a slightly embarrassed shrug.

Megamind gasped.

“You did not!”

Roxanne laughed.

“No, I totally did,” she said. “After we moved to Wisconsin, I used to sneak out to the lake by myself at night and look up at the stars. And secretly hope for flying saucers.”

Megamind looked even more shocked and delighted at this. Roxanne bit her lip, feeling heat rise to her face—oh, this next thing was going to be really embarrassing, but he would probably be so unbelievably happy to hear it…

“Okay, so,” she said, “I’ll tell you—something I’ve never told anyone.”

Megamind straightened up in his chair and fixed his eyes on her with a look of intense interest.

“You, um,” Roxanne said, with an awkward little laugh, “you were actually part of the reason I decided to move back to Metro City.”

Megamind’s jaw dropped.

“I mean—I did get a scholarship at the university here, and there was definitely some spite
involved since my mother hated the city,” Roxanne said, “but also—I mean—” she waved a hand.
“Alien supervillain! Alien! Supervillain! What could possibly be more exciting to report than you!”

Megamind just stared at her, his eyes very round, his mouth still open.

“You kidnapping me was honestly really kind of lucky,” Roxanne said, tucking her hair behind her
ear and smiling wryly at him, “but I was always planning on trying to get an interview with you
sometime when you were in prison; I actually—I mean, I had—questions. For you. Ah. In a
notebook and, uh. Alphabetized.”

Megamind’s mouth worked for a moment soundlessly before he finally managed words.

“Why in evil heaven didn’t you ever ask them, then?” he asked.

“Well”— Roxanne gestured, “after the first time, I was going to try to get an interview with you,
but you escaped from prison before I got a chance to go there, and then you started actually
kidnapping me and—you—” she gestured again, trying to find the words to explain, “—and you
just sort of—became—you. To me. You know? Instead of ‘alien supervillain’ you were just
—Megamind. And—”

She rubbed a hand over her face and gave a rueful laugh.

“And, okay, honestly,” she said, “I was always kind of worried that if I showed how interested in
you I was, you’d get bored with me and start kidnapping someone else.”

She winced.

“Which is also a reason why I never let on that I was impressed with any of the evil plots,” she
said, words coming fast. “Which—I, uh—I’ve definitely never told anyone that, either.”

“Never,” Megamind said, looking a bit dazed. “I would never—I could never get bored with you,
and I’d—the kidnapping—the kidnapping only became a feature of the evil plots at all because of
you, Roxanne.”

“Really?” Roxanne said, feeling, suddenly, as if she was glowing. “It was—it was just because of
me?”

“It was absolutely because of you,” Megamind said. “Absolutely—entirely—so much of the way
the whole—the evil plots and the—supervillainy performances—so much of how all of that
developed and evolved was because of you, Roxanne. It ended up—it’s so different from what it
was in the beginning, from how I imagined it being in the beginning. Because of you.”

Roxanne bit her lip, unable to hold back a smile, unable to stop her face from heating.

“Were you really?” Megamind asked.

Roxanne blinked.

“Was I really what?” she said.

“Interested,” Megamind said, not looking away from her face, every bit of his attention focused on
her, “impressed.”
Roxanne nodded.

“Yeah,” she said, “yeah, I was.”

Megamind laughed, the sound bright and joyful, and collapsed back in his chair, arms wrapped around his own chest as if he was hugging himself, eyes closed blissfully.

“It—my opinion—really mattered to you that much?” Roxanne said uncertainly.

Megamind opened his eyes, a wide, bright smile spreading slowly over his face.

“Yes,” he said. “Yes, it does.”

He laughed breathlessly and laid one hand against his face.

“It’s like Give-Megamind-Everything-He’s-Ever-Wanted Day never stopped,” he said. “Oh, my god, Roxanne; oh my god, I’m so happy.”

Roxanne’s heart twisted at his expression, at the words.

“I’m pretty sure I was attracted to you,” she said, “for a—a long time before I was willing to admit it to myself.” She swallowed. “And that I was in love with you for a long time before I was willing to admit that to myself, too.”

Megamind looked even more happy and wondering at this. Roxanne swallowed and straightened up, letting both hands fall to her lap.

“I’m sorry,” she said, guilt settling heavy in her stomach.

Megamind blinked at her, looking bewildered.

“Sorry?” he said, shaking his head in bemusement, “What on earth could you possibly think you need to be sorry about?”

Roxanne pressed her lips together.

“I’m not very good,” she said, forcing the words out, “at being honest with myself. About my emotions. You might have noticed.”

Roxanne clenched her fingers into fists in her lap.

“If I had just—” she said. “I made us both—miserable for a much longer time that was necessary. And I am sorry about that.”

“No,” Megamind said firmly.

“No?”

“No,” he said again. He shook his head. “Don’t be sorry. I don’t regret it, Roxanne. I don’t regret any of it. I am—Roxanne, I am so happy, now. Here, with you, like this. How could I regret any of what led to this?”
Tears rose in Roxanne’s eyes.

“—yeah,” she said after a moment. “Yeah, that’s—I hadn’t thought of it like that.”

Megamind smiled brilliantly at her. Roxanne smiled back at him a little tremulously.

“I want to introduce you to my family,” she said.

Megamind went still.

“I mean,” Roxanne said, “I mean, I know we haven’t talked about—anything like that, about
telling people or if you’d even want to—have this be public or—”

“Yes,” he breathed. “Oh, god, Roxanne, yes, I want—I want that, yes.”

Roxanne relaxed a little, but her anxiety still fluttered in her chest.

“Yeah?” she said. “About—about my family, too? It’s going to be awful. They’re kind of—I told
you what they’re—what they’re like. But they’re still—I mean, it probably seems messed up that I
do still want—”

“No,” Megamind said, “no, I get it. Families are—I still care about the warden and—and Doctor
Kelley, too, honestly and—hell, I still talk to Uncle Lou, and he tried to kill me so—”

He gave her a lopsided smile and Roxanne laughed.

“If you want me to meet your family, Roxanne,” he said, “then I would love to meet them.
Awfulness and all.”

Roxanne smiled at him. He smiled back, and then his expression went more serious.

“But if it ever—” he gestured, “—if you ever decide that you don’t want to talk to them anymore, I
am never going to blame you for that, either. And—and me and—Minion, and the brainbots—”

He bit his lip, a small, anxious line appearing between his eyebrows.

“I know it probably doesn’t seem like much of a family,” he said. “But that’s—I mean, Minion
already calls you Ma’am, and you’re in the brainbots’ programming as my partner, and I just want
you to know that—that this can be your family, too, Roxanne, if you want it to be.”

Roxanne’s breath caught, and for a moment, she found herself unable to answer.

“Am I doing this right?” Megamind asked uncertainly. “Is this—I know we haven’t talked about
how—serious you want this to be, and you said that you don’t usually—date people seriously, so if
you’re not comfortable with—”

“No!” Roxanne said, “No, I want—I want that. With you.”

Megamind’s face lit up slowly.

“Really?” he said.
“Yes,” Roxanne said. She swallowed the lump in her throat. “Yes, I—”

One of Megamind’s hands was on the kitchen counter. Roxanne reached out and placed hers atop it.

“I love you,” she said, “And that—might scare me sometimes but it doesn’t mean I don’t want—”

She curled her fingers beneath Megamind’s palm, and he curled his fingers around hers.

“I love you,” she said again, voice shaking, “I would never be able to be anything but—but wanting-to-be-a-family serious about you, Megamind.”

He smiled at her as if she had handed him the stars. Roxanne swallowed, then gave him a crooked, teasing smile.

“Only ‘partner’?” she said, deliberately lightening her voice. “The brainbots call you ‘daddy’, don’t they? Shouldn’t my designation match?”

Megamind’s eyes went wide.

“Would you let me?” he asked breathlessly. “Would you let me change it so that it matched?”

Roxanne—Roxanne had mostly been joking—or maybe she hadn’t been, she admitted to herself, given the way her heart was flipping over right now.

“I’d like that,” she said.

Megamind smiled radiantly at her.

“I’ll change it tomorrow!” he said, beaming.

Roxanne laughed and squeezed his hand.

Roxanne stood at the bathroom sink with Megamind, the two of them brushing their teeth together.

It was—it was probably ridiculous, how exciting the domesticity of that was to her.

*(this can be your family if you want it to be)*

God, Roxanne wanted that; she wanted that so much.

Megamind, Minion, and the brainbots liked her. She had rather given up on the idea of having a family that actually liked her.

Roxanne rinsed her toothbrush beneath the faucet and set it in the cup on the side of the sink, then looked up and met Megamind’s eyes in the mirror. He smiled at her around his toothbrush and Roxanne’s heart flipped over rather embarrassingly.

As Megamind rinsed his own toothbrush and set it aside, Roxanne shifted her gaze to her own
reflection. Her eyes, unsurprisingly, were still red, and her face was a bit puffy and tearstained. She made a face at herself in the mirror and bent to splash cold water on her face.

When she finished drying her face on the hand towel, she looked up to see Megamind regarding her in the mirror with a slight frown line between his eyebrows. She raised her eyebrows questioningly as she replaced the towel.

“In—in the interest,” Megamind said, “of me—doing this right, does it—bother you that I’m—” he waved a hand, “—rather unsubtle with my, um. Displays of affection?”

Roxanne blinked.

“I mean,” Megamind went on quickly, “I do mean it, Roxanne; I mean the things I say; I really do feel that strongly, but I wouldn’t ever want to make you feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed, so I can try to—you know. Tone myself down.”

He stopped talking and bit his lip, watching her reflection.

“I—” Roxanne shook her head and turned towards him.

Megamind turned towards her as well, and she reached out to take his hand, tangling their fingers together.

“I know you mean it,” she said. “You’re always like that when you care about things. And it’s—I’m not used to that, to people—loving me like that, so it is kind of overwhelming, but it’s—it’s not a bad kind of overwhelming.”

“…are you sure?” Megamind asked, his eyes searching her face.

Roxanne squeezed his hand.

“Yeah,” she said. “I’ve always—”

She swallowed, forced herself to go on.

“I’ve always wanted to be loved like this,” she said. “To be loved—without feeling like there are—conditions attached, or that the person only loves certain parts of me and is really hoping that I’ll change, that I’ll stop being—me. I’ve wanted that for—for so long. It’s just that—”

“—getting what you want is overwhelming,” Megamind finished for her.

“Yeah,” Roxanne said, “That. But I—I like the way you show you love me, Megamind; I don’t—I don’t want you to stop.”

Megamind let out a heavy breath, shoulders relaxing.

“Oh, that is such a relief!” he said.

Roxanne gave a snort of amusement, shaking her head.

“It is though!” Megamind said earnestly, “I absolutely adore you, Roxanne; you are the most perfectly fantastic person in the entire universe, and finally being able to tell you that is such a
relief; you have no idea!"

Roxanne laughed.

“I’m serious!” he said. “Do you have any idea how hard it was, all these years, never being able to say that? Biting my tongue every single kidnapping—”

Roxanne laughed again.

“You are so ridiculously sweet,” she said. “I really do not deserve you.”

Megamind frowned and looked as if he was about to argue, so Roxanne kissed him quickly and then darted out into the hallway.

Roxanne flitted swiftly through the dark hallway in front of Megamind; there was just enough ambient light for him to see her throw him a teasing look over her shoulder, and then she slipped into his room.

Half-laughing, Megamind followed her through the hall, and then stepped into his room after her.

He didn’t see her for a moment when he entered the room; bemused, he closed the door behind himself and looked around for her again.

Roxanne darted out from beside his bookshelf and pounced on him. Megamind gave a squawk of surprise and caught her, only stumbling slightly. Laughing, she wrapped her legs around his waist and her arms around his neck and kissed him.

He kissed her back, laughing now, too, and walked the two of them over to the bed, where Roxanne, with a shriek of laughter, let him toss her onto the mattress. Megamind followed, pouncing on her in revenge for her sudden bookshelf attack.

Roxanne laughed up at him and he bent down to kiss her.

It was—a different kind of kiss than any they’d shared before. Almost playful, like the kiss version of the time they’d had a pillow fight. It didn’t deepen or turn serious, and when Megamind pulled away, Roxanne was still laughing. He kissed the tip of her nose, and then made a noise of surprise when Roxanne bit his chin lightly in response.

Megamind pulled back and mock glared at her before laughing and leaning down to give her a quick kiss. She bumped her nose against his and he sat up.

“I love you,” Roxanne said.

“I love you, too,” Megamind said.

“Mm,” Roxanne said, and flashed a smile at him. She turned to lie on her side, her head on the pillow, “go and turn the light off, would you, sweetheart?”

“Oh—” Megamind climbed out of bed and went to the light switch.

He glanced over at his bed—at Roxanne, curled up in his bed; she was here; this was real, and Megamind’s heart ached sweetly to see her there—and then he turned off the light.
In the dark, Roxanne heard Megamind cross the room again, felt the mattress dip as he climbed into bed with her.

She had curled up facing away from his side of the bed; he hesitated for a moment, she noticed, before moving to lie close behind her. He wrapped his arm around her waist. Roxanne shifted back to lie more securely against him, and he tightened his arm around her in response, just as she’d been hoping he would.

Roxanne sighed gratefully and let her eyes slip closed.

She felt incredibly tired. That burst of energy that had come of teasing Megamind just now had been short-lived. She’d cried too much to be anything but utterly worn out.

And wrung out. Oddly clean and strangely light.

Everything she’d told Megamind—she hadn’t ever told anyone all of that. And coming after that horrible argument—well. He hadn’t been horrible during the argument. Roxanne had been horrible. She’d never meant to let Megamind realize how very cruel she was capable of being; she’d been so afraid—

Roxanne had told herself that she was worried Megamind had put her on a pedestal, but—it wasn’t Megamind who had put her there. Not that she—not that she thought she was better than him; she’d never thought that, but she had thought—

That she needed to be—the strong one. The—stable one. In their relationship, that she was there to—that her entire purpose in their relationship was to help Megamind.

She’d never considered that she might need help, too.

She’d never considered that—that her needing his help might be a thing that was okay. And it—

It was. That was okay. It was—it was okay with Megamind that she wasn’t perfect. He still loved her even though she was so incredibly screwed up.

He still loved her.

Roxanne felt—

—as if she’d been carrying something very heavy for a very long time, so long that she’d stopped noticing the weight of it—and then had suddenly laid it down.

(the unexpected cessation of a pain that she had long regarded as permanent)

If she wasn’t so utterly exhausted, she might have cried again at the relief of it.

“Roxanne,” Megamind said, his voice soft.

She made an inquiring noise.

“What you said—earlier, in the bathroom—what you said about—not deserving me,” he said.

“You know that’s—that’s the way I feel about you.”
Roxanne took a breath, getting ready to speak, to tell him that he deserved more than her, better than her—

“You’ve been—very good to me,” Megamind went on before she could speak, his voice still quiet, “and very good for me. I’ve—I’ve hated myself for a long time, Roxanne. For a long time I thought that hating myself was the right thing to do. Because I was so evil.”

Roxanne reached up and put her hand over his hand that was on her waist, lacing their fingers together. He squeezed her hand and she felt him press his face to her hair for a moment.

“But hearing the way you talk about me,” he said, “hearing you say that I’m—hearing you say that I’m good, that I deserve to be happy, that I deserve to be loved—”

His arm around her waist tightened a little.

“I am trying to stop hating myself,” Megamind whispered, “I am trying—to believe that you’re right about me.”

Roxanne took a sharp breath, her heart twisting with painful joy.

“So will you—please, Roxanne,” Megamind said, “please, will you try to believe that I’m right about you?”

Roxanne turned in his arms to face him twisted her fingers in the material of his shirt and pressed her face to his chest. She stayed like that for a long moment, eyes squeezed shut, focusing on breathing.

Then she untwisted her fingers from his shirt, placed her palm flat against his chest instead, feeling his heartbeat underneath her hand.

“I’ll try,” she whispered.

Megamind took a breath. He tightened his arm around her waist and pressed a kiss to her hair.

“Thank you,” he whispered back.

After a moment, he began to stroke her hair.

Neither of them said anything more as Roxanne drifted slowly to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

Megamind uses a malaphor in this chapter; a malaphor is a combination of two idioms. 'people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones' blends with 'let he who is without sin cast the first stone' to become 'people who live in glass houses shouldn't cast the first stone'. (This is honestly what I thought the saying actually was for years.)
And he also changes the idiom 'pot calling the kettle black' to 'pot calling the kettle crockery'. Which has always made more sense to me. Kettles and pots may easily be colors other than black--silver and copper jump to mind--but they are always crockery.

Thank you all so much for continuing to be interested in this story!

I know this update took much longer than usual; this chapter was really hard to write. I went through an awful period of writer's block and then I actually wrote four different versions of this chapter (versions, not drafts. I *started over* and wrote the *whole thing* completely different four times oh my god). And Displacerghost beta read three drafts of the final version and was amazingly helpful; seriously, Ghost, thank you so much.

Continuing to get comments about the story while I was having so much trouble writing was so encouraging and helped me to feel like all of the struggle was worth it. Thank you all very much.

I very much hope that you all enjoyed the new chapter!
Brainbot 228 disengaged from the interface. For a long moment, Zero simply sat on the generator, eyepiece shutter half closed. 228 hovered nervously. Had they sent too much information during the interface? Was Zero annoyed? 228 had very much wanted to give proper context for Designation: Roxanne Ritchi’s request for footage of Daddy being nice.

And it seemed to 228 that the alterations in the behavioral patterns of Roxanne Ritchi and Daddy towards one another had begun the day that Daddy had cancelled Operation: Death Ray. That had been the day that 228 entered Roxanne Ritchi’s apartment with Minion to find Daddy and Roxanne Ritchi and Metro Man all there, with Daddy and Roxanne Ritchi in a curious state of undress.

So 228 had sent all of their auto record footage of Daddy and Roxanne Ritchi’s interactions, starting with that day. But perhaps it had been too much?

228 gave a midair jump of startlement as Zero suddenly began to laugh, their mindvoice rippling with amusement.

“Bowg?”

[ /inquiry ] [ ? ] 228 said [ does zero comprehend parameters of request by designation: Roxanne Ritchi ] [ ? ]

[ mommy ] said Zero, firmly, but with a tinge of amusement still in their mindvoice.

[ /inquiry ] [ ? ] [ confusion ]

[ designation: Roxanne Ritchi ] said Zero [ status update: mommy ]

228 blinked their eyepiece in bewilderment.

[ incorrect ] they said, hovering anxiously, worried that Zero might take offense. [ designation: Roxanne Ritchi status update: daddy’s partner ]

Zero made an impatient move with their eyestalk, electricity in their branches crackling.

[ zero is aware of update status code change authorized by daddy ] she said [ zero is authorizing own code update ] [ zero suggests status change upload to mindcloud ]

[ /inquiry ] [ ? ] [ /confusion ] [ ? ] [ /concern ] [ ! ] [ 228 is not understanding proposed status change code update ] [ 228 is not understanding relation of proposed status change code update to request of designation: Roxanne Ritchi request for footage ]

[ 228 is not understanding anything ] Zero said caustically.

228 lowered their eyestalk submissively and dropped down in the air to hover lower than Zero.

[ but zero is understanding ] Zero said, clearly relenting. [ zero is cleverest ] [ zero will be explaining ]

[ ! ]
228 will be sitting next to zero now] said Zero.

[!!!] [ /excitement ] [ ! ]

228 flew down to rest on the generator a respectful foot away from Zero, eyestalk held up attentively. Zero made a low, continuous mechanical whirring sound of pleasure.

[ designation: roxanne ritchi and daddy are romantic pair bond ] Zero said. [ 228 is understanding ] [ /inquiry ] [ ? ]

[ /denial ] 228 admitted. [ /apology ]

[ ! ] [ request interface ] said Zero.

[ ! ] [ request interface accepted ] [ ! ]

The low, continuous vibrating sound Zero was making increased slightly in volume as they connected with 228 again.

[[ romantic pair bond ]]

Zero said, into the interface.

A series of images flickered through 228’s circuits—clips cut from some of those old movies daddy liked, black and white footage of a pair of organics pressing their lips together, followed by clips of daddy and designation: roxanne ritchi doing the same thing.

[[ kissing ]]

Clips from the films again, more paired organics, pressing their lips together with greater urgency and beginning to remove each other’s clothing before the screen faded to black. Zero followed these by a clip of daddy and designation: roxanne ritchi, one that 228 had sent her in the previous interface, of the two of them in roxanne ritchi’s apartment in that odd state of undress.

[[ sex ]]

Film clips again—paired organics sitting next to each other, holding hands, talking with their heads close together. Then clips of daddy and designation: roxanne ritchi doing the same things.

[[ companionship ]]

Clips of paired organics laughing together, running towards one another, embracing, then a video from earlier this evening, taken right after designation: roxanne ritchi had made her request to 228, when roxanne ritchi had run into daddy’s arms and he had spun her around and kissed her.

[[ in love ]]

Zero said, and ended the interface.

[ romantic pair bond ] Zero added. [ 228 is understanding ] [ /inquiry ] [ ? ]

[ …processing…] 228 said. [ request clarification: daddy loves brainbots ] [ /inquiry ] [ ? ]

[ /affirmation ]

[ daddy loves designation: roxanne ritchi ] [ /inquiry ] [ ? ]
Zero said. `<in love>` is subset of `<love>`.

…processing…

Daddy’s code update status change] [designation: Roxanne Ritchi status: Daddy’s partner] Zero said. `<in love + partner = romantic pair bond>` [designation: Roxanne Ritchi status update: Mommy]

…processing…] 228 said, then asked [designation: Roxanne Ritchi is in love with Daddy] [inquiry] [?]

`/affirmation` ‘[partner status update + behavioral analysis indicates pair bond is mutual]`

[designation: Roxanne Ritchi loves Daddy] 228 said, becoming more confident.

`/affirmation`

[designation: Roxanne Ritchi loves Brainbots] [inquiry] [?]

`/affirmation` [must love Brainbots] Zero said complacently [loves Daddy]

228 made an uncertain noise and Zero narrowed her eye shutter.

[observe designation: Roxanne Ritchi more closely] [status update activation pending upon results of observation] Zero said.

`/relief` said 228 [/admiration] [zero is cleverest] [zero’s plans are best]

The vibrating whirr Zero was making increased in frequency again.

[228 is not un-clever] she said, then added [228 may be coming closer to Zero now]

[!] 228’s eye shutter widened to its utmost. They lifted themself up into the air and flew closer to Zero, then very carefully lowered themself to rest beside the other bot.

[228 is always greatly admiring Zero] they said, looking up at her.

[zero is accepting admiration] zero said, looking down tolerantly at 228.

Shocked at their own boldness, 228 tilted their braincase so that it rubbed against Zero’s, the electricity in each arcing together in a pleasant way.

`/affection` 228 said shyly.

To 228’s great astonishment, Zero tipped her own braincase and rubbed it over 228’s in return.

[zero is accepting affection] she said.

228 felt a strong impulse to wriggle with delight, but curbed it, not wanting to jostle or annoy Zero.

[inquiry] they said [romantic pair bond Daddy and designation: Roxanne Ritchi relating to footage request how] [?]

[request is part of designation: Roxanne Ritchi’s plan] Zero said.
[228 is not understanding plan] they admitted.

[designation: Roxanne Ritchi loves daddy] Zero said. [wants to make daddy happy] [mindless drones think daddy is evil]

[daddy is Evil] said 228.

[daddy is Evil] said Zero [daddy is not evil] [difference] [Evil is loud/presentation/fun] [evil is mean/bad/harming] [mindless drones think daddy is evil mean/bad/harming] [have to fight metro man] [have to be put in prison] [have to be scary]

/understanding 228 said.

[it makes him sad] Zero said.

228 blinked their eye shutter.

/confusion 228 said tentatively voicing an objection [daddy laughs/Smiles/expresses happiness about battles with metro man]

[daddy’s emotional matrix is organic] Zero said. [complex] [small happiness on top] [big sadness underneath] [always]


/distress/concern [!] maintenance/repair daddy [!] [maintenance/repair mindless drones] [!] said Zero, the electricity in her braincase beginning to dance rapidly. [maintenance/repair metrocity] [!] [maintenance/repair world] [!]

/inquiry [?] [nice footage of your daddy] [nice footage] [videos of your daddy being nice] Zero repeated from Designation: Roxanne Ritchi’s request. [daddy is nice] [daddy is good] [daddy is helping metrocity] [designation: Roxanne Ritchi will show them footage] [make them understand] [make them see] [designation: Roxanne Ritchi’s plan is maintenance/repair world]

[!!!] [/cancellation: have to fight metro man] said 228 excitedly [/cancellation: have to be put in prison] [/cancellation: have to be scary] [!] [affirmation]

[daddy will be happy]

[affirmation]

[!!!] [nice footage of daddy videos of daddy being nice] [/inquiry] [search parameters] [?]

[nice is helping people] [nice is being kind to people] [nice is being good to people] Zero said, then added [228 will call all other bots] [/request swarm interface] [zero will be queen]

[affirmation] [!]
Roxanne was still asleep when Megamind woke up. Which wasn’t really terribly surprising; she must be exhausted after crying so much last night. And they’d spent so long talking that they hadn’t gotten to sleep until quite late.

Megamind actually still felt tired, too, but he always tended to sleep less in general when he was in the final and most exciting phase of a plan.

He sat up as carefully as he could, not wanting to wake Roxanne. She’d set the alarm on her phone last night, and she really did need to sleep as much as possible. He could see dark circles under her eyes.

Roxanne had turned over onto her back in the night; she was taking up most of the pillow, taking up most of the bed actually. One of her arms was on the pillow above her head, the other arm flung out as if she’d been gesturing dramatically in her sleep.

Megamind leaned back against the headboard and looked down at her, smiling slightly.

Roxanne. Beautiful, wonderful, brilliant Roxanne was here with him, stealing his pillow and taking up space in his bed. How could this be something that was happening to him?

Their plan was really beginning to come together, now, was beginning to enter the stage in which he could step back from it and see all of the pieces merging together into a whole, everything that had seemed separate and fragmented suddenly revealing itself to be an integral piece of the bigger picture.

He couldn’t quite see it, yet, couldn’t quite see the image of what this plan succeeding would mean for him—for them, for all of them.

(A hero. Getting to be a hero, getting to—getting to live a life with Roxanne, out in the open, the kind of life that he’d always wanted but had never been able to really imagine having.)

He still couldn’t quite imagine it, not really. Not yet.

But he was getting closer to being able to.

Normally, having woken up early like this, Megamind would have gone out to the lab to work on things—or would have been dragged to the kitchen to eat breakfast first, if Minion was awake to catch him and make force him to eat. He still felt that instinctive urge to work, now, a kind of itch in his fingers and the center of his mind. And even if the plan itself was at Roxanne’s apartment, there was still the battlesuit to finish, and the brainbots’ coding to be changed, all kinds of other little things he could be doing, now.

None of it was as important as this, though.

And not only because he really wanted to stay here and watch Roxanne sleeping in his bed and marvel all over again that she was here because she wanted to be, because she loved him, because they were dating—although that really was just absolutely mind-boggling, still, and Megamind didn’t think he would ever be over it.

But also because he wanted to be here when she woke up. That seemed—important. That he be here, when she woke up.

(please don’t leave me, she’d said last night, when she was crying, and Megamind did not want
there to be any doubt in Roxanne’s mind about how very much he was not going to leave her.)

Megamind jumped slightly as Roxanne’s phone, on the bedside table, began to make a loud electronic beeping sound.

Roxanne made a low, complaining kind of noise and turned over, reaching for the phone. Picking it up, she flipped it open and pressed a button. The alarm noise stopped. Then Roxanne made another sound of annoyance, flipped the phone shut again, and tossed it down.

She turned over, rubbing a hand over her face. Then she dropped her hand and squinted up at Megamind.

“mmm—you’re awake,” she said, voice still rough with sleep.

“I am,” Megamind agreed.

“’s too early to be awake,” she said.

Megamind laughed.

“It is,” he said. “But Minion said yesterday that he’d make pancakes today, though, so there’s that to look forward to, at least.”

She made a groaning noise, but she sat up and rubbed her hand across her face again.

Roxanne looked at Megamind through her fingers.

God, he looked far too pretty for this time of morning. No one should look that good when they’d first woken up. Roxanne, by contrast, felt like she’d been run over and tossed in a ditch for about a week.

—and probably looked it, too, she thought with a quick little pulse of self-consciousness as Megamind’s gaze flicked up to the top of her head.

“What?” she asked, trying not to sound defensive and not completely succeeding.

(the sharp note in her voice reminding her of—)

(last night)

(fuck)

“Your hair,” Megamind said, looking at the top of her head, the edges of his mouth beginning to curl upwards in a smile. He gestured with both hands beside his own head, fingers splayed illustratively, “it looks exciting.”

Roxanne gave a short laugh, well able to believe it. She knew what her hair tended to look like in the mornings, although she’d never thought of it with so flattering a description as ‘exciting’.

(last night; oh god, last night, everything she’d said, everything she’d told Megamind—she’d told him—she’d told him everything.)

Roxanne’s stomach clenched.

(fuck. why had she said all that? she shouldn’t have said all that. she was such a—)
Megamind’s gaze flicked down again, his eyes meeting her own, and his expression changed, his smile fading slightly, his eyebrows drawing together, as though he was seeing something in her face that—

Roxanne felt a twist of panic in her chest.

She turned away from him quickly and busied herself with getting out of bed.

“Pancakes, you say?” she said in a deliberately light voice. “I guess I can endure consciousness if there’s pancakes.”

Megamind laughed. Roxanne turned towards him with a smile, running a hand through her hair, and he grinned at her as he got out of bed, too.

***

Minion was already in the kitchen when they got there, and, true to Megamind’s word, he was indeed making pancakes.

(Minion being there was good; it meant Megamind was less likely to bring up…last night.)

And Minion had made coffee, too, thank god.

“Coffee mugs are in that cabinet there, Ma’am,” said Minion, who evidently knew a person in need of caffeine when he saw one.

He pointed with the spatula and Roxanne opened the indicated cabinet. She took down one of the mugs as Megamind began to set the table and Minion continued to make pancakes, flipping them deftly, at just the right time.

Roxanne, pouring the coffee, gave Minion an envious glance—how did he make it look so easy?

She could make pancakes, but hers almost always turned out either slightly too soggy or slightly too crisp around the edges. She might get one or two perfect pancakes out of an entire full batch, but every single one of the pancakes Minion had piled onto a plate beside the stove were golden brown and flawless.

“Do you guys want coffee?” Roxanne asked, pushing the thoughts of her own unsatisfactory cooking skills aside.

“Yes, please,” Megamind said.

“None for me, Ma’am,” Minion said.

“—wait, Minion, can you even drink coffee?” she asked. “Do you drink anything?”

Minion laughed.

“I can drink,” he said, “but I don’t need to. And it tends to be more trouble than it’s worth, in my opinion—with food, if you accidentally miss and drop it into the tank instead of your mouth, no big deal, but with liquid, if you miss, you wind up swimming in it until the tank filtration system takes care of it, which generally feels kind of gross.”

Roxanne laughed, and Minion grinned a sharp-toothed grin at her.

“I do have a very long bendy straw, though,” he said, “if there’s something that I really want to
drink. Sir made it special, to fit with my suit and headpiece. If I’m just in need of a caffeine pick-me-up, though, I generally just drop a few drops of coffee into the tank itself so I can absorb it through my skin membrane. If the ratio of coffee to water isn’t high, it doesn’t feel unpleasant.”

“But you wouldn’t be able to taste it like that, would you?” Roxanne asked, carrying the two mugs of coffee to the table. “You make really good coffee, Minion; it seems a shame that you don’t get to actually enjoy it.”

“I can taste things during dermal absorption, actually, Ma’am,” Minion said. “It’s very nice of you to worry, though!”

“You can taste things through your skin?” Roxanne asked, fascinated. “So—like, different water types of water taste different?”

“Oh, definitely!” Minion said, and then shuddered. “Don’t ever go swimming in the lake, Ma’am. It is not a healthy or pleasant environment.”

“Oh my god, I’ll bet the lake does taste disgusting,” Roxanne said, making a face. Then she tilted her head—what Megamind had said before, about Minion not having the same instincts for touch as the two of them; was that related to—“So if you can taste things through your skin, being touched is probably kind of—”

“Awkward and intense, yes,” Minion said, fins fluttering illustratively as his robotic body poured batter onto the griddle, “especially skin-to-skin contact. More like licking someone or kissing someone would be for you, I think, Ma’am. Sir always wears gloves if he has to touch me.”

Roxanne, sitting down and picking up her cup of coffee, paused with it halfway to her mouth as another question occurred to her.

“—Minion, do you get sensory information from the suit?”

“Oh!” Minion turned in the suit’s headpiece to face her. “I have sensors that measure things, but I don’t actually process that information as any kind of physical sensations. Sir offered, of course, but it always seemed more pragmatic not to. Considering what we do for a living. Why do you ask, Ma’am?”

“What you were saying, about dermal absorption and touch,” she said. “And because—I think I’ve—I mean, I guess I’ve always conceptualized the suit as—part of you. Less like something you wear or use and more like—like something you are? Is that not accurate, though?”

Minion looked thoughtful as he turned in the suit’s headpiece, his robotic hand wielding the spatula with practiced ease. He completed the turn, facing Roxanne again.

“My suit is very important to me,” he said slowly. “It’s not something I’m in all the time, but it is very definitely mine—I suppose—I suppose how I conceptualize myself depends on the circumstance. If I’m thinking about swimming, I feel like I’m complete without it, but on land like this, I do feel like it’s a part of me. Do you know, Ma’am, I never really asked myself that before!”

Roxanne hummed interestedly as she took a sip of coffee. Next to her, Megamind stirred cream and sugar into his own coffee, watching her with a thoughtful expression.

Her stomach flipped unpleasantly. Shit. Had she come off too much like a reporter giving an interview, just now? When Megamind had eaten breakfast with her at her apartment, she’d tried to get him to tell her about his planet, and he hadn’t wanted to pursue that particular subject. Was she doing it again?
Roxanne generally avoided having breakfast with people she casually dated, and when she visited her mother these days, their breakfast conversations tended to mostly consist of passive aggression and uncomfortable silence.

Fuck.

What did normal people talk about during breakfast?

Roxanne raised her eyebrows at Megamind in a silent question, trying not to betray her sudden anxiety.

“You drink your coffee different ways,” Megamind said, gesturing at her cup. “You’re drinking it black today; you didn’t drink it like that before.”

“Oh,” Roxanne said, relieved. Coffee. Coffee was a safe topic of conversation; they’d been talking about it earlier, before Roxanne had started in with the nosy and possibly invasive questions. “Oh—yeah. I do drink it different ways. We’re already having pancakes today, so I don’t want more sugary stuff. And I really don’t want to dilute it with cream today.” She yawned. “Caffeine,” she added, and Megamind laughed.

“Bowg.”

A brainbot—228—peeked into the kitchen, then did a quick little shimmy in the air.

“Bowg bowg bowg!”

“Hey, 228,” Roxanne said. “Did you find what I asked for?”

228 bobbed excitedly in the air, then swooped into the kitchen and plucked at Roxanne’s sleeve with their metal claws.

“Bowg bowg! Bowg!”

“After breakfast, 228,” Minion said firmly, setting a plate of pancakes down on the tabletop. “Ma’am is eating right now.”

“I will look at it after breakfast,” Roxanne told the bot reassuringly when they turned an imploring eyestalk in her direction. “I promise. I’m very excited to see it!”

“Bowg.”

228 released her sleeve and flew away, out of the kitchen.

“What did you ask them to find for you?” Megamind asked.

“The auto record footage of you,” Roxanne said, buttering herself a pancake. “Minion suggested it, remember? Why are you making that face?”

Megamind’s expression went surprised for a moment, as though he hadn’t actually realized he was making a face. Then he laughed ruefully.

“Ah—bad habit?” he said. “I suppose it just—it just still feels weird. That we’re showing people this stuff.”

He shook his head, waving a hand, as if to dismiss the thought.
“So!” he said, in a different tone, “How are we going to get the footage we do want to show to you at the station? I mean, we can hardly have you just show up there with a brainbot to—” he cut himself off abruptly, his eyes lighting up.

Roxanne waited for him to continue; when he didn’t she glanced at Minion inquiringly.

“Sir’s thought of a plan,” Minion said.

Megamind gave a soft laugh—one of his I-have-a-trick-up-my-sleeve laughs; Roxanne looked over at him, her eyebrows raised.

“Oh, has he?” she said.

He gave another pleased chuckle and steepled the tips of his fingers together as Minion began to serve the pancakes.

“I observed just now, Miss Ritchi,” he said, almost in his old supervillain manner, but with a conspiratorial twinkle in his eye that invited Roxanne to join in the joke, “that we could hardly have you just show up at your place of work with a brainbot.”

“I seem to recall something of the kind,” Roxanne said, playing along.

“Oh, but we’re going to do exactly that!” Megamind said. “You are, in fact, going to simply show up to your office with a brainbot! An apparently malfunctioning brainbot which you have picked up from where it crashed on your balcony—perfectly natural for me, as a supervillain, to have a sent a brainbot to reconnoiter the apartment of my damsel! Especially since she appears to have begun plotting to reveal all my secrets to the entire city. Would you pass me the butter, please, Roxanne?”

“It’s—kind of farfetched, though, Sir” Minion said apologetically, as Roxanne passed Megamind the butter, “the brainbot just happening to malfunction right there, I mean. Don’t you think, Ma’am?”

“It is kind of suspiciously convenient,” Roxanne said. “I can probably still work it, though.”

She reached for one of the three types of syrup on the table, the plain maple one, and poured it over her pancakes. Megamind reached for another container of syrup—white corn syrup, actually, good lord. Talk about sweet.

“Oh, but it didn’t just happen to malfunction there!” Megamind said, gesturing excitedly as he poured the syrup generously over his pancake. “You, Roxanne, had noticed the brainbot previously, hanging around outside your apartment on the balcony. So! You set a trap for the brainbot, lured it in, and incapacitated it!”

Roxanne made an involuntary sound of indignation.

“I wouldn’t do that to a brainbot!” she said. “Especially not if it was just—just flying around, not even attacking me!”

“I know that,” Megamind said, “but I doubt other people will think of it. The brainbots don’t actually feel pain, though, you know, Roxanne,” he added in a reassuring tone. “Since you were asking Minion about his suit, I thought you might—they have sensors that record things like pressure and temperature, but it never gets processed as pain. Their robotic appendages are designed to be easily replaceable, and the braincases themselves are practically indestructible.”
“Well, that’s good to know,” Roxanne said. “And you’re right; it probably would be more convincing than a random malfunction. So I bring in this brainbot—which brainbot, by the way?”

“We’ll ask for a volunteer,” Megamind said.

“So I bring in this volunteer brainbot—how are we going to get the footage from the brainbot, though?” Roxanne asked as he sat back down. “The KCMP tech team is good, but not that good, Megamind. Your tech is going to be way too advanced for them to work with.”

Megamind frowned, gazing off into space, clearly thinking. Roxanne took another sip of coffee. Across the table, Minion dropped a piece of bacon into his suit’s open headpiece and chewed.

“The disguise watch,” Roxanne said, an idea occurring, “we’ll use the disguise watch. I call up a ‘friend’ of mine who is really big into tech, he comes and gets the footage from the brainbot for me!”

“Also a little convenient,” Minion said.

“Niebeski Electric!” Megamind said, and Minion’s expression lit up.

“Ohh,” he said.

Roxanne looked at Megamind questioningly.

“Niebeski Electric,” he said, “it’s a real company that we own—it’s in the phone book and everything. Occasionally we do a bit of real work with it, to lend veri-simile-tude to the company, or because a job happens to be in an area where we need a convincing reason for our presence.”

“Or because someone can’t pay a real company and Sir wants to help them,” Minion put in.

Megamind flushed but didn’t deny it.

“Or—or because of that,” he said. “Yes. Well. But—usually any calls to Niebeski Electric are sent to a voicemail saying the company is temporarily closed for some reason or another, but we can easily arrange it so that, today, the call from KCMP is answered.”

“Ooh, that’s good,” Roxanne said. “I’ll tell someone else at the station to call in; that’ll seem much less suspicious.”

“Minion will go,” Megamind said, to Roxanne’s surprise. Her surprise must have been visible to him, because he added, “Wayne and I arranged to plan the final battle out today. Ah—speaking of which, is it all right if we work at your apartment? Since all of the notes for the plan are there?”

“That’s fine,” Roxanne said. She looked at Minion. “And what is my tech expert friend named?” she asked.

“Mina Pesce,” Minion said, reaching for a dial on the watch he wore. He twisted it, and the holographic image of a large woman with short, curly blonde hair appeared in his place.

Roxanne blinked, a little surprised at Minion choosing a woman as his character.

But then, Megamind had said that Minion didn’t really care about gender very much.

“Mina Pesce,” Roxanne repeated.

“Sir chose the name,” Minion said, his own brown eyes rolling in the holographic face of Mina
Megamind snickered and Roxanne glanced over at him.

“Mina is ‘fish’ in Sanskrit,” he told her, grinning. “And Pesce is ‘fish’ in Italian.”

Roxanne looked over at the image of the blonde woman.

“You seriously let him name you ‘fish-fish’?” she asked Minion, her own lips trembling on the edge of a smile.

“He didn’t tell me it was fish-fish until after I’d already agreed,” Minion said dryly, and twisted the dial of the watch, the hologram of Mina Pesce vanishing.

Megamind laughed gleefully as he reached for the sugar bowl.

“Evil,” Roxanne said, laughing, too.

“Very, Evil, Ma’am,” Minion agreed.

“You should have one, too,” Megamind said suddenly, looking at Roxanne. “A disguise watch. You should have one, too. I’ll make one for you.”

“And what is my fake name going to be?” Roxanne asked. “I don’t think girlfriend-girlfriend is going to work.”

She said it as casually as possible, but watched his face closely out of the corners of her eyes, needing to see his reaction. Megamind flushed in a pleased kind of way at the word ‘girlfriend’, and then he laughed and began to spoon sugar over his pancake. Roxanne breathed an internal sigh of relief.

“I—I wasn’t actually thinking of any specific disguise,” he said. “I just thought—you should have one, you know—generally. Like your de-gun.”

(okay. okay, so that was—things were closer to normal again, then, right? if he still blushed like that at her calling herself his girlfriend, if he still wanted to make her things, still wanted to give her his inventions. she hadn’t made things too weird, hadn’t screwed things up completely last night; even if she didn’t know how to have a normal breakfast conversation, Megamind did still want to date her, right?)

“I’d like to have one,” she said.

“Good! And—offhand, I’d probably say ‘Dawn’. If I was building a specific disguise for you.”


“That’s what ‘Roxanne’ means, you know,” he said. “‘New day’.”

Roxanne blinked.

“I…didn’t know that, actually,” she said. “‘New day’. I like that.”

Megamind smiled at her.

“So do I,” he said softly, his eyes going so soft and filled with love and adoration that, on anyone else, Roxanne would have read the expression as ironic.
Her heart gave a quick, painful pulse—joy or panic; she couldn’t actually tell.

(he shouldn’t be looking at you like that; you don’t deserve—)

Again Megamind’s expression changed as he looked at her, his eyebrows drawing together. He opened his mouth as if to speak—

“—oh, my god, Megamind, are you actually going to eat that?” Roxanne blurted out.

Megamind blinked and glanced down at his pancake, covered, now, in a layer of sugar over the layer of corn syrup.

“How can you eat something that sweet?” she said. “It’s like—cotton candy for breakfast.”

Roxanne shuddered theatrically.

“Sweet is good! You don’t like sweet?” Megamind asked sounding surprised. “How can you not like cotton candy?”

“Ugh, it makes my teeth hurt just thinking about it,” Roxanne said, making a face at him. “Way too sweet.”

When they were finished with breakfast, Minion tried to shoo the two of them out of the kitchen while he cleared the table.

“You still need to watch the footage,” he said. “We don’t want you to be late for work, Ma’am!”

“No, no; you come, too, Minion!” Megamind said.

“Moderation,” he said, as if the word itself was distasteful.

***

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“How can you eat something that sweet?” she said. “It’s like—cotton candy for breakfast.”

Minion groaned.

“Please don’t give him ideas, Ma’am,” he said.

“You don’t like cotton candy?” Megamind asked sounding surprised. “How can you not like cotton candy?”

“Ugh, it makes my teeth hurt just thinking about it,” Roxanne said, making a face at him. “Way too sweet.”

“Sweet is good! You don’t like sweet?”

“I like sweet in moderation,” Roxanne said, eyeing Megamind’s pancake with fascinated horror.

Megamind scoffed.

“Moderation,” he said, as if the word itself was distasteful.

Roxanne laughed and took another drink of coffee.

***

His tone was gently scolding, with an undertone of tolerantly amused affection—a tone Roxanne recognized, although she’d never heard Minion direct it at anyone but Megamind.

“No, no; you come, too, Minion!” Megamind said.

“Oh, Sir, I don’t think—”

“Yeah, it was your idea, Minion,” Roxanne said. “Come and watch.”

Minion looked pleased, and stopped arguing.

***
“Bowg!”

228 was hovering in the hall outside the kitchen. As the three of them stepped out into the hall, the bot swooped forward and took hold of Roxanne’s sleeve again with their metal claws, then began to pull her gently but insistently down the hallway. Roxanne laughed, and let herself be pulled, Megamind and Minion following behind her.

“Okay, 228,” she said, laughing. “What do you have for—“

She stopped talking in surprise as the bot led her into the open lab section of the lair.

A great swarm of brainbots was gathered, flying slowly together in a whirlwind formation. As 228 brought Roxanne into view, they all began to make that mechanical barking noise.

“Bowg!” said 228, tugging Roxanne towards the console beneath the big wall of viewing screens.

“Wow,” Roxanne said to them, “you really got everybody to work on this, didn’t you?”

“Bowg bowg!”

“Zero,” Megamind said, sounding surprised. “Are you in on this, too?”

Zero, resting on the console, blinked her eye shutter at him slowly.

228 let go of Roxanne’s sleeve to pick up a cord from the console. They turned towards Zero, who raised herself into the air. 228 plugged the cord into the bottom for Zero’s chassis and Zero gave herself a little shake.

Roxanne read the words—

[ /connection complete ]

—on the wall of screens in big glowing letters. Huh—so evidently the screens could function together as one giant screen, as well as individual screens; that was really cool.

“Oh!” Megamind said, “wait just a minute, Zero; Daddy needs to do a status update really quick—”

He reached for the keyboard and began to type, fingers moving swiftly, code scrawling over the giant screen. The code scrolled too quickly for Roxanne to really read it, but she did catch sight of her own name at one point, and also the word ‘mommy’.

Ah, of course—the update to the brainbots’ code that would make her status match Megamind’s status of ‘daddy’ for the bots.

The update that Roxanne had…well she hadn’t actually asked Megamind for it last night, but she’d hinted for it very strongly.

(too strongly? had it been—)

Megamind pressed the enter button.

The words—

[ /update cancelled ]
—appeared on the screen.

Roxanne swallowed.

Oh.

Well.

That was—that was okay.

Of course it was okay.

Roxanne should have expected this; she should never have thought—

“Cancelled?” Megamind said. “What do you mean cancelled?”

Zero blinked her eyepiece, glancing briefly at Roxanne before looking back at Megamind again.

Thoughts flickered through her cybernetic matrix quickly, dancing like the electricity in her braincase—Daddy’s expression, Designation: Roxanne Ritchi’s expression, filtered through the library of organic facial expressions that Zero had amassed over the years, cross-referenced with her past experiences, probable outcomes of various replies extrapolated.

If Zero told Daddy and Designation: Roxanne Ritchi that the bots were still deciding whether or not to accept Roxanne Ritchi as status: mommy, the two of them would be upset—hurt—sad.

A very non-optimum outcome. But no way to avoid it if Zero were to answer honestly—ah!

That was the solution!

Zero quickly and secretly activated one of the pieces of code she had built for herself.

(exe. deception_)

[/access denied] she said.

“Access denied?” Megamind frowned.

[/access denied] Zero told him, deception_ program running smoothly. [ daddy has reached current update limit ] [ +++out of cheese error+++ ] she added as an afterthought. [ +++redo from start+++ ] [ try again later ]

Daddy and Designation: Roxanne Ritchi both laughed at that, their hurt expressions disappearing. Zero, watching them, felt a pulse of satisfaction with herself. Following the deception_ program with a humorous reference had been very successful!

“Have I been changing your code too often lately?” Daddy asked her, reaching out to stroke his hand gently over her branches. “Are you annoyed with daddy?”

Zero nipped very lightly at his fingertips, and he laughed again.

“All, right; all right!” he said. “Daddy will give the code changes a break!”

Yes, Zero decided, very satisfied with herself indeed, activating her deception_ program had certainly been the right approach, telling them that it was all updates that were being denied, instead of just this one specifically.
Daddy was always pleased when the bots expressed their independence. And he always did enjoy a certain amount of imperious caprice. Zero had long suspected that was why he liked Designation: Roxanne Ritchi so much.

Zero nudged her braincase beneath his hand once more, to show she wasn’t really very angry with him, then settled back on the console.

She sent 228, who was hovering nearby, a glance, to see if they had noticed her deft handling of the update denial, and 228 bounced up and down excitedly when her gaze fell on them.

[ /admiration ] [ ! ] they said.

Zero half-closed her eye shutter, pleased at this response.

[ Designation: Roxanne Ritchi request: nice footage of daddy / videos of daddy being nice ] Zero said, letting the words appear on the big screen for her audience to see.

Designation: Roxanne Ritchi nodded; Minion and Daddy looked up at the screen with interested expressions.

Zero paused for a long moment, the way that Daddy liked to, just before unveiling one of his big, important evil projects.

The other bots, sensing the drama of the moment, fell silent.

Zero held them all for a moment longer in suspense, looking around at the other bots, at Minion and Designation: Roxanne Ritchi, and Daddy.

And then—

[ /play footage ] she said.

Chapter End Notes

...to be continued.

Thank you all for continuing to read and comment; I really appreciate it!

You may have noticed that I changed the summary of this fic; I'm much more pleased with it now. It fits the story better.

I hope you all enjoyed the new chapter!
static.

static.

static.

static like snow; static that becomes snow, becomes—

—snow silhouetted against the jagged slice of city sky between the brick walls of an alleyway that stretch impossibly high into the sky

bright and dark at the same time, dark with night and bright with light pollution, and the snow falling
to mix with the dirty grey drifts already melting into filthy black water, puddles and rivulets shining like spilled ink, spilled oil

(the colors of everything so strangely distorted that it takes a moment to recognize the dark stain slowly swirling and spreading in the black water as blood)
colors wrong, angles wrong, and a siren wails like a distant scream and

he steps into the mouth of the alleyway and fills up the world.

blue skin washed greyish and un-vivid from the color distortion, blue hands and blue face and wide, wary green eyes

young, so young, heartbreakingly young, the face lacking the black line of facial hair, lacking the shadows beneath the eyes and the hollows beneath the sharp cheekbones that fourteen years of time and supervillainy will carve there.

The sweater he's wearing—orange, but, like his skin, dulled by the distortion of the colors—is far too big for him, the hem reaching down halfway to his knees, the sleeves covering most of his hands, just his fingertips visible, clutching the edges of the material, restless movement and bitten nails and chipped black polish.

The siren screams again in the distance, and a low, rumbling, grating noise joins the sound, discordant and threatening, as the thing that's bleeding out in the alleyway sets eyes on him and growls low in its throat.

Megamind glances down, goes still, the expression in his eyes suddenly more wounded than wary.

Megamind moves forward, slow, unthreatening, fingers uncurling from his sleeves as he holds out empty palms

/ it's all right; I'm not going to hurt you /
The discordan growl increases in volume, a sharper edge to the threat. Megamind crouches down on the ground beside the growing pool of blood and dirty water and slowly reaches out.

The thing in the alley reacts with the vicious desperation of the dying, a blur of claws and pain and anger. A sharply in-drawn breath—and when Megamind pulls his hand back again, he's bleeding, too.

A clatter of noise—metal and weight—at the mouth of the alley, and, without rising, Megamind looks over his shoulder at the hulking robotic form now silhouetted in the alleyway mouth.

(The siren screams, closer now, and the creature in the alley growls its defensive threat.)

/sir we need to get out of here/ Minion says

/it's a cat, Minion/ Megamind says, still kneeling, dirty water seeping into the knees of the jeans he's wearing.

/yes, sir/ Minion says, distraction in his voice, half-turned inside the glass headpiece of his suit, looking behind them.

/somebody hurt it /

/yes, sir/ Minion says again. /now leave it alone; we have to go /

(the snow falls, silent and uncaring. Megamind makes no move to rise.)

/it's hurt/ he says.

/it's dying/ Minion says, turning in the headpiece to look at Megamind again, voice gentle but firm. /and I'm sorry about that, but there's nothing you can do/

(a drop of blood slides from Megamind's hand to mix with the blood and water already swirling together on the ground.)

The siren is louder, now, closer, and the growl from the dying cat is weaker and

(the edges of the picture start to go dark, burning away like paper set to flame, until only the face remains and—)

The blue lips press together in a hard line and the black brows snap down and together and the supervillain that fourteen years of time will make him suddenly flashes in his face.

/watch me./ he says.

(—a gun in his hand and a glowing pulse of—)

bluewhitelightning

and then—

static.

static.
—static threading through a series of confused images and sounds—hands and eyes, darkness and bright flashes of light, noise and silence and—

A face, blue, flickering into view, the image stabilizing into—

/ there you are / Megamind says, voice as soft as his expression. / there; you're awake now; everything's okay /

He smiles and reaches out to stroke the glass carapace of the brainbot.

(green text scrolling, superimposed over the image of Megamind smiling)

[ /brainbot consciousness program : successfully installed ]
[ carapace control : optimal function ] [ limb control : optimal function ] [ flight control : optimal function ] [ sensors : optimal function ]
[ visual input : /facial recognition ]
[ designation : daddy ( megamind ) ]

_program 1_
_daddy loves you
_protocol 1_

A_commands / directives / requests of designation: daddy

( megamind ) are to be obeyed at own discretion

_protocol 2_

—the code flickers, then the image, seeming almost to loop, to repeat. Again: Megamind's face, leaning over, flickering into view, the same expression of soft worry and wonder mixed together.

But it's not the same image; he's got a bruise on his cheekbone and a band-aid on one temple and there's another brainbot hovering over his shoulder, looking down—the clip shudders slightly, the view shifting to that of the hovering brainbot, looking down at the one that's on the table, waking up.

"There," Megamind says, "there, you——"

A horrible screeching sound, and the bot on the table thrashes wildly, eyestalk whipping around, the shutter open wide; robotic limbs waving, metal claws opening and closing, slamming down on the table. The jagged-toothed jaws snap in the air, and then close sharply over Megamind's wrist.

Megamind's breath hisses through his teeth, and his face goes a shade paler as the brainbot on his shoulder swoops down and wraps its own metallic limbs around the other bot.

Even as it does so, the bot on the table is already releasing Megamind's hand. It shudders and falls
back on the table, the shutters of its eyepiece blinking rapidly as it makes a distressed, keening kind
of noise. It shrinks back from the other bot, who chatters threateningly at it before releasing it.

"It's okay!" Megamind says. "Zero, it's—it's okay; they didn't mean to."

Zero swoops over again to Megamind, hovering around him, practically vibrating in the air. The
bot on the table makes a miserable, mechanical noise and inches forward to Megamind. Zero's
makes a kind of hissing noise at it and it goes still again.

"It's okay," Megamind repeats.

He clutches his wounded arm close to his chest, uninjured hand wrapped tightly around his wrist.
Even so, he's bleeding, an alarming amount of blood seeping from beneath his fingers, turning the
sleeve of the shirt he's wearing red.

"Zero," he says calmly, "why don't you go tell Uncle Minion to bring the first aid kit?"

Another shudder as the point of view flips again, the bot on the table watching Zero fly quickly
away, looking up at Megamind.

He smiles at them reassuringly.

"Hey," he says. "Hey, it's okay, Spikeless. It was just an accident; you just got scared. It's going to
be okay. Daddy's not mad at you."

"...bowg?"

The noise is much smaller and much more uncertain than the sounds the brainbots usually make.
Megamind smiles again.

"Promise," he says. "Daddy's not mad at you. Daddy loves you. It's okay. It's—"

He glances over his shoulder as Minion, accompanied by Zero and a small cloud of brainbots, burst
into the room.

The picture wavers, warps, turns into—

—static. static threading through video clips, through—

—Megamind dancing, laughing, while the brainbots fly around him in a cloud—

—Megamind putting up floral wallpaper in a kitchen while he sings along to the radio, then a flash
of him dramatically revealing the wallpapered kitchen to an open-mouthed Minion—

—Megamind throwing a wrench in his workshop, playing fetch with the brainbots—

—Megamind sitting on a couch, watching a baseball game, dressed in a well-worn a Metro City
Wolverines shirt. A brainbot—Zero—is lying on his arm, shutter of her eyepiece half-closed.
Megamind grimaces and starts to shift in his seat and Zero cracks open the shutter of her eyepiece
and fixes him with a pointed stare. Megamind sighs and resettles back in the same position,
reaching up with his free hand to stroke over Zero's glass braincase. The electricity inside crackles,
arcing up to his fingertips, and Zero makes a contented, mechanical humming sound and her
eyepiece closes—halfway—then the rest of the way, blinking to-
darkness
which becomes—

—black boots, seen between through a horizontal crack made between the floor and a mattress, an entire group of brainbots huddled together beneath the bed, lightning crackling excitedly in their braincases and

"Oh, I just can't find my bots!" Megamind says, voice slightly too loud, the words exaggerated even more than usual.

One bot shifts slightly, snaking its eyestalk forward to get a better view—this isn't exactly a *quiet* maneuver, as many of the other bots try to hold it back, afraid, no doubt, of it giving away their hiding place. Megamind, only a foot away, does not even glance over at the source of the noise.

The underside of his bed is filled with so many brainbots that the mattress is bulging upwards, but Megamind appears not to notice this. He proceeds, instead, to look in the most elaborately ridiculous places possible—under the rug, inside a book, in his glass of water by the bedside table.

The brainbots can scarcely contain their glee.

"I can't imagine where they could be!" Megamind says, throwing his arms up as if in frustration.

He glances over at his bed, which is now vibrating with excitement. For a moment, his lips twitch, and then he schools his expression into one of overdramatic disappointment and exhaustion.

"I've been looking for such a long time!" he says, and heaves a sigh. "Maybe I should sit down here and take a break!"

He throws himself onto the bed, and sits there in an attitude of defeat, his head in his hand. The mattress wriggles beneath him. One bot gives a faint bowg of delight before the others shush them.

"I'm so tired," Megamind says, "maybe I should take a nap!"

He flops back onto the mattress; almost all of the brainbots bowg this time, the sound rippling through the group of them like infectious laughter through a group of giggling children.

"Or maybe," Megamind pauses theatrically, "maybe I should...JUMP ON THE BED!"

He leaps up onto his feet, cackling, as the brainbots explode from beneath the bed, all of them bowging loudly, their braincases crackling with excitement. Megamind almost overbalances at the sudden shift of the mattress beneath him, but they catch him as they swarm around him.

They lift him briefly into the air, then let him go; his feet hit the mattress and he bounces up again.

"Oh, there you are! There you are!" he cries, "There's Daddy's clever little cyborgs! I found you!"

"BOWG!"

"BOWG BOWG!"

"BOWG! BOWG! BOWG!"

The bots swoop and dart excitedly around him and Megamind bounces, breathless with laughter and

*The image shifts, sound distorts into—*
—darkness and sirens and another alleyway, and someone running, their feet slamming rapidly on the ground, their breath coming in harsh gasps, someone running around a corner and stumbling into the mouth of the alleyway.

A kid, clearly, silhouetted there against the electric light, wide, terrified eyes visible between the hoodie pulled up over their head and the bandanna wrapped around the lower part of their face. They're carrying a box with a picture of a television set on it, which is nearly half their size, clutching it tightly even as they pant for breath and careen down the alley towards the shadows.

From one of these shadows a black gloved hand seizes the kid's hoodie, hauls them backward into the dark.

The kid gives a half-strangled cry of alarm, eyes going even wider and more terrified, and a second black-gloved hand comes down over the bandanna-covered mouth.

In the darkness behind the dumpster, looking down at the kid, is Megamind.

He's young, still, but older than he was in that first alley, still lacking the facial hair, but the first shadows have appeared around his eyes. His cheekbones are sharper, everything about him more angular, more focused.

It's early enough in his career that he doesn't look exactly like a supervillain yet—a spike-shouldered leather jacket instead of a cape, boots that lace instead of buckle, only the de-gun holstered at his thigh, the lightning bolt emblem picked out in silver and deep blue on the black shirt he has on to hint at the costume he'll wear in the future.

The kid stares up at him, whites showing all around his eyes. Megamind slowly releases him, steps back from him. Raises a finger to his lips, motioning to the kid to be silent, to stay where he is.

The kid stares at him for a long moment—nods, jerky and frantic.

Megamind takes another step back, into the alleyway, into the light, leaving the kid hidden in the shadows.

He smiles, sharp and fast and sudden. The electricity from the hovering brainbot flickers over his face. He draws the de-gun from the holster, smooth and easy, twirls it over one finger, winks at the kid—and takes off running towards the direction of the sirens, laughing, laughter that leaps and burns, like a torch, like a chemical reaction, like a city on fire.

A shift in the perspective, black sky becoming blacktop pavement becoming—

—a school playground, seen at sunset, the dusk painting long black shadows on the cracked blacktop pavement, the shapes stretched, distorted, alien. The sound of rusty chains creaking, creaking, creaking, as one shadow shape slowly moves—forward, backward, forward, backward.

The perspective shifts again, turning away from the shadows to what's casting them. Red-gold sunlight dazzles, the figures silhouetted against the light, almost as dark and alien as their shadows. Until the image resolves itself into a swing set, and three people sitting on the swings, side by side.

This is a more recent piece of footage; the heavy leather mantle, and the years, sit clearly on his shoulders.

The girls wear ill-fitting school uniforms, and the oldest looks over at Megamind, a sharp cutting
sideways glance, direct and almost challenging. The younger girl's expression is strangely unreadable—not vacant by any means, but somehow blank.

It is this girl, the younger one, who pushes her swing back and forth with one dangling foot, creating that rhythmic creak creak creak.

"Didn't think you'd really come," the older girl says, tone as sharp as the glance she fixes on Megamind.

Megamind hums a noncommittal noise and wraps one black-gloved hand around one of the chains holding up his swing. A brainbot swoops silently to hover above his shoulder and the girl scowls at him.

"Latoya," he says, "isn't it?"

"That's right," the girl says, still glaring. "And this is Kendra."

"It's very nice to meet you, Kendra. Latoya." Megamind glances at the younger girl, then looks away again, begins to push his own swing back and forth with one black-booted foot, matching the rhythm of Kendra's movement.

Latoya looks, if possible, more inclined than ever to go for his throat.

"What is it you need?" Megamind asks, voice soft, carefully casual, eyes fixed on the sky, slowly darkening beyond the twisted metal shape of the jungle gym.

Latoya's face darkens, and, for a moment, she looks much older than she can possibly be, mouth bracketed by deep lines, eyes less angry than they are hopeless. She opens her mouth, and—

"Are you going to take us away?"

Megamind and Latoya both glance over at Kendra, Megamind's expression surprised, Latoya's concerned.

"Take you away?" Megamind repeats, tilting his head, looking at the girl.

Kendra looks at him, gaze sliding over his forehead, his jaw, finally settling on his left ear, eyes never quite meeting his. After a beat, Megamind shifts his own gaze to the air slightly to one side of Kendra's face.

"That's what our mama says," Kendra says. "She says if you're bad, Megamind is gonna come and take you away."

Megamind's expression does something fast and complicated—a flicker of something deep and desolate in his eyes, quickly covered with a swift blink and the arch of one eyebrow.

"Ah," he says, "well—"

"I'm bad," Kendra continues, tone unchanged, "I'd like you to take me away, but only if you take Latoya, too."

Megamind's eyebrows draw together.

"Bad," he says. "who told you that you were bad, Kendra?"

"Everybody," Kendra says, still in that same matter-of-fact, conversational tone, still pushing her
swing back and forth, back and forth. "Step-daddy, and mama, and Auntie Melanie, and Mrs. Peterson. Step-daddy especially. It makes him mad. What's your favorite dinosaur?"

Megamind's eyelids flicker briefly in surprise.

"Kendra—" Latoya says quickly, "we talked about this, remember? The Overlord doesn't want to talk about—"

"Brontosaurus," Megamind says.

Kendra frowns, still moving the swing back and forth, back and forth."That's not its real name," she says. "It's Apatosaurus; the—"

"Kendra," Latoya hisses.

Megamind laughs.

"No, she's right," he says. "I was so disappointed when I found out, I refused to read any books about dinosaurs for months. I still hold out hope that they'll change their minds after all. I like pterodactyls, too."

Kendra makes a face.

"Those aren't even dinosaurs," she says. "They're pterosaurs."

"Kendra!" Latoya says again, sounding somewhere between mortified and angry at Kendra deciding to correct a supervillain.

Megamind laughs again.

"You," he says, "are clearly a stickler for correct terminology. I feel like I'm trying to menace Miss Ritchi with an incorrectly labeled dinosaur-bot." His voice trails off slightly at the end of the sentence, a thoughtful, considering kind of look coming into his eyes.

"I like her," Kendra says. "She's smart and she has pretty hair."

"Yes," Megamind says absently, a faraway, planning-out-future-deathtraps look still in his eyes.

"You should ask her."

Megamind comes back to himself with a little jerk.

"Sorry—what?" he says.

"You should ask her," Kendra repeats.

Megamind's eyelids flicker, lashes giving a flutter, uncertain, like moth wings.

(for a moment it seems that a slight purple flush lights up his cheekbones, but that may be just a trick of the dying light.)

"Sorry," he says again, "ah—ask—ask her what?"

"What her favorite dinosaur is."

Megamind relaxes infinitesimally, fingers loosening around the chain supporting the swing, and he
smiles, quick and crooked like a flash of lightning.

"I'm not really sure how I would work that into an evil monologue," he says.

Kendra makes a face which indicates she is not particularly impressed with this excuse.

"You just—"

"Kendra," Latoya says, voice rising, sharpening. "Why don't you take one of the brainbots and show it how long you can hang upside down for?"

Kendra stands up, letting go of her swing to turn towards the brainbot above Megamind's shoulder.

"I'm good at upside down," she says.

The brainbot turns its eyepiece towards Megamind, as if in question. Megamind gives a tiny nod and *bowgs* enthusiastically and swoops over to the jungle gym. Kendra follows, leaving her now empty swing dangling. It swings erratically for a long moment before Latoya reaches out and grabs it, holding it still.

"Thanks," she says, her other hand balled into a fist in her lap. "Lonnie—the dinosaur thing—you didn't have to let her talk like that."

"Lonnie," Megamind says, looking directly at Latoya. "That's your stepdad?"

"Kendra's stepdad," Latoya says. "Lonnie's my real dad."

Her lips flatten out, a spark of anger appearing in her eyes.

"It's bad," Megamind says, a statement, not a question, but Latoya jerks her head in affirmation anyway. "You want to tell me what kind of bad?"

Both of Latoya's hands curl into fists in her lap. She looks out across the cracked pavement of the playground to where Kendra is dangling upside down—*not* from the jungle gym, but from the carapace of the very excited brainbot.

"I tell you—and you're probably gonna say you don't got it that bad," she says, but she glances at Megamind sidelong with something like hope in her face.

Megamind, looking out over the playground at Kendra, presses his lips briefly together.

"*If you're bad, Megamind will come and take you away,*" he repeats Kendra's words softly before letting his lips curl into something that's not really very much like a smile. "I don't think people who *don't have it that bad* regularly request help from boogeymen. Or supervillains."

Latoya takes a sharp breath through her nose.

"He doesn't hit us, really," she says, "just—he yells at her and tells her she's stupid and—and she's *not*, she just doesn't—she has trouble focusing on—on normal stuff, and he hates that she can't look at him straight, and he calls her—he calls her a *retard*, just like those shits at school, and when she gets mad and fights back, she gets in trouble and he tells her she's bad and her mom doesn't stand up to him at all; she doesn't defend her, she just sits there and *agrees*—"

Latoya cuts herself off with gritted teeth, tears sheening her eyes. She looks away again, out across the playground, and swipes a hand viciously across her eyes.
"You, too?" Megamind asks.

Latoya turns and looks at him again, confusion in her face.

"They treat you like that, too?" he asks.

Latoya gives a one-shouldered shrug, jerky and dismissive.

"Yeah, I guess," she says, "I just know how to, you know, keep out of his way, and Kendra can't."

Megamind nods, mouth compressed into a flat line.

"What do you need me to do?"

Latoya uncurls her hands, flexes the fingers, wraps them tightly around the chains of her swing.

"I want to get her away from him—from both of them; all of them," she says. "You take her away and you take me, too; Kendra and me stay together. Yeah?"

She looks sharply at Megamind, fear just below the surface of the challenge in her eyes. He nods—understanding and agreement, and Latoya relaxes a visible fraction. Only a fraction, though; her gaze is still wary—and expectant. She watches Megamind for a long moment, as if waiting for him to say something more. She presses her lips together.

"Well?" she says.

Megamind tips his head, eyebrows drawing together.

"Well, what?"

"Well, what do I owe you?"

Megamind blinks.

"Owe me?"

Latoya rolls her eyes.

"Yeah, owe you," she says. "Everybody knows how it works when you ask the Overlord for help. I wanna know what I owe you."

Megamind's lips quirk sideways—for a split second the expression looks almost bitter, and then his mouth twists up into a wryly amused smirk instead.

"Ah," he says. "Yes. Of course. Well—shall we say—a small favor, to be redeemed at a later date?"

He raises his eyebrows interrogatively, but Latoya is already shaking her head.

"Uh-uh," she says. "I wanna know what I owe up front. None of that 'favors to be redeemed at a later date' bullshit. That's how you get into trouble."

Megamind's eyebrows rise a half-inch higher.

"I…see," he says. "Well."

He shifts his gaze out to the rest of the playground. Kendra is still hanging determinedly upside-
down from the carapace of the brainbot, who is now swooping around with her in slow circles, but
Megamind, his gaze unfocused and his expression faraway, doesn't seem to be watching them play.

After a few heartbeats of silence, Megamind blinks, glances over at Latoya, eyes sharp again.

"I'm going to send you and Kendra to the Metro City Children's Home—don't look so skeptical; the
facility is under my protection, and the brainbots closely monitor all of the staff, volunteers, and
children. If you don't approve once you're there, you can flag down a bot and you will be moved—
no additional favors as payment required. All right?"

"All right," Latoya says. "And? What about this favor, then?"

"There's a boy," Megamind says, eyes on her face, expression completely serious, "at the Home.
His name is Darius. I want you to be his friend."

"...that's it?" Latoya asks, voice and expression incredulous. "Just—be this kid's friend?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because he doesn't have any."

She narrows her eyes.

"What's wrong with him?"

"Nothing's wrong with him," Megamind says sharply. "He just has difficulty making friends, that's
all. Like Kendra."

Latoya, mouth open to reply, pauses, lips pressing together again.

"He's like Kendra?" she asks after a moment.

"Yes."

"...does he have a thing about dinosaurs, too?"

"Currently, I think his main area of interest is Ancient Egypt," Megamind says. "But dinosaurs are
almost always an appropriate topic of conversation. Evil monologues aside. Do we have a deal?"

Latoya blows out a breath.

"Yeah, okay," she says. "Guess I'll start reading up on mummies and shit."

"Excellent," Megamind says, "so—"

His voice fades out as the camera angle changes, the brainbot filming swooping up and into the air,
then towards the setting sun, which flares orange momentarily and—

*static. static.*

*static and*

*silence.*

*silence like the*
humming of a large machine, audible in the background, and Megamind sitting at the console in the Lair, chin propped up in one hand, the array of computer screens looming on the wall above him. He's holding a white drafting pencil in his other hand, sketching in the corner of a blueprint for a giant robot.

Across the screens above him, a program runs, greenish illumination from the computer screens flickering over him like ripples of underwater light. Beneath Megamind's hand, a tiny, detailed flower takes shape—stamens, pistons, petals, stem. Above him, strings of numbers and equations scroll—followed by what is clearly a list of financial transactions.

[ /autopay_annual ] [ donation recipients : metro city public library / metro city children's home / metro city charity hospital / classy seconds thrift store... ]

In front of the screens, Megamind sketches the flower—cross sections and an exploded diagram, as meticulously rendered as the plans for the machine that take up most of the page, and then a sketch of a flower itself, a single blossom on a long stem.

[ /autopay_annual ] [ donations received ] [ autopay_annual : program complete ] [ autopay_single donations : 2003 ] [ donation recipients: … ]

the numbers blur and fade and once more there is static and

"—though, does she never change the batteries on any of these?"

Megamind's voice, and then Megamind himself, holding a screwdriver and looking up—up at the ceiling, where he has the top cover of a smoke detector flipped open. Beyond him, and the stepladder he's standing on, Minion is carrying an unconscious Roxanne towards the doors of her balcony. One of the brainbots accompanying him opens the door for Minion, as Megamind, still muttering to himself, swiftly changes the batteries on the smoke detector.

"—fire safety is really not optional; that woman has the most badly developed sense of self preservation that I have ever encountered; 'oh, I'm Roxanne Ritchi; I don't need to worry about giant lasers or supervillains or common household accidents, oh no, I'm—"

—a click as he flips the cover of the smoke detector on once more, the screen going dark as his voice cuts off into—

darkness and

"—don't try to lie to me any more. It's a terrible waste of my time."

Megamind's voice again in the darkness, but the tone completely different—silky and soft and somehow dangerous, even through the crackle of static that covers the response of whoever he's talking to.

The static, the darkness, recede—into a darkened room with an immense window looking out over the nightscape of the city. Megamind is nearly a silhouette, a black shadow limned in the glow from the city lights, jagged edges of skyscrapers at his back, green eyes oddly luminous. He shifts very slightly, and the light falls on the sharp line of his cheekbone; glints on the spikes on his shoulders, the flash of his teeth.

"I see," he says, "Well. I do hope you and your friends had fun with it, because you're not going to be having any more fun for quite some time. I will cover the missing money, the charity hospital
will go ahead as planned, on schedule, and with no more 'unexpected costs', and you and your friends will all owe me, along with the money, several extremely large favors. I expect you to give me all of the names of everyone involved in this little venture of yours—and I do mean all and everyone. Don't go thinking you can deceive me on that account; you're not nearly smart enough, for one thing, and for another, you're certainly not going to be my only source for this information. This is—"

—darkness and silence washes in again, the city lights fading out into

the city

made of light—

"—the map of Metrocity, showing the the lines of territory—the current lines of territory, I said," Megamind, beside the holographic projection, holds up a quelling hand and sends a stern glance around the other occupants of the room, "we are not here to discuss or debate the proper allocation of territories; you'll all have your chance of that next challenge day."

He pauses, and then, evidently satisfied at the lack of argument, gestures at the holographic map.

"So. What we are here to discuss is the areas of each territory which will be affected during the upcoming battle with Metro Man. These—" he gestures again, and numerous parts of the map light up bright and blue, "—are the targets which, following your requests, I have scheduled for destruction; I'll be meeting with each gang individually to finalize the plans for reconstruction and repurposing. I'll also be needing a plan for relocation and evacuation from each of you. Included in the plans should be your budget requests for both the relocation/evacuation and the reconstruction/repurposing stages. All of you should—"

—holographic lights flaring, blurring, drowning in a snowy burst of static, then

( flickering ) ( flickering )

back into view again, the same city made of light, seen from a different angle, projected in a different place. Megamind

standing

in the middle of the city that glows in the middle of the darkened Lair

Megamind

—wearing that orange sweater, faded by age and wear, now, rather than color distortion. Arms, and a ragged red and black plaid blanket wrapped around his body, a fine, continuous shiver running through him, breath visible in white -white holographic light limns his face like frost.

"—really sure, Minion," he says, and the shiver runs through his voice as well, "I watched Lady Doppler try to shift the storm; I could taste the ozone; she wasn't faking. It just didn't work."

"So…" Minion says. "the blizzard—"

"Is not natural," Megamind says grimly. "And it's only going to get worse."

"This is an attack," Minion says. "You think it's us they're targeting? Or Metro Man?"
"I don't care," Megamind says, almost snarls.

He whirls on his heel, the blanket flaring behind him like a moth-eaten cape, and begins to pace through the hologram of the city, wading through light like luminous water.

"They come into my city, no contacting me for permission before launching an attack, no regard for my authority as the reigning supervillain of Metrocity, no attention to my established rules for acceptable villainous behavior—I don't care if they're aiming for Metro Man, the disrespect alone qualifies it as hostile to us! But that's—we'll deal with that; we'll deal with whoever it is later; that's not the point, Minion!"

"Sir?"

Megamind gives a hissing sound of frustration, crosses with swift strides to a nearby console.

"Look," he says, and flips a switch. "The worst of the blizzard is going to hit Metrocity in two days—"

Above the holographic city, the image of a swirling white vortex of light appears, rotating slowly in place. Megamind resumes pacing as it gradually lowers until it is superimposed over the luminous buildings and streets, all but blotting out their light with its own.

"—and everything Lady Doppler could sense, everything that all of the weather-monitoring satellites I've hacked into say—it's going to stay here, Minion, it's going to stay in Metrocity, for an impossible-to-predict amount of time. And considering the pattern of the way the storm started in the first place, it's only going to get worse—rapidly, exponentially worse."

He steps back into the sea of light as the vortex glows brighter yet.

"People are going to die, Minion," he says. "We can mobilize the brainbots to evacuate the streets, maybe even the lower-income housing areas, where the utilities are most likely to break down first. There's not enough sufficiently safe room for that volume of people, but we could approve the use of mass dehydration—which would be a nightmare to try to deal with afterwards—but."

He hitches the blanket up tighter around his shoulders, rubs at his eyes, at the dark circles beneath them, blue-purple marks of sleeplessness and several-days-old eyeliner.

"But what, Sir?"

Megamind takes his hand from his face, eyeliner on his fingertips, smudged even worse around his eyes. He looks at the city, spread out around him in lines of light.

"I told you, Minion," he says bleakly. "The storm is going to stay. And it's only going to get worse. The first evacuation areas—those are just the sections of the city likely to break down first. If the storm stays as long as I think it's going to, the rest of the city is eventually going to go as well. Bit by bit. Water lines freezing. Power lines going down. Everywhere."

He looks up at Minion again, eyes wide, holographic light shimmering across them like the sheen of tears. Blue fingers twist in the fabric of the blanket he's wearing, and suddenly he looks as young as the Megamind who stood in a snowy alleyway reaching for a dying cat.

"I—I can't dehydrate everyone in the city, Minion," he says, sounding lost. "I—" he scrubs a hand over his face again, quick, harsh, sudden. "—well, I could, I suppose," he says, a bitter laugh edging the words, "but that's Plan Z, or possibly Plan Z Minus, because the League of Heroes really would come after me, then, not to mention Metro Man, who I'm sure
would absolutely believe that the storm wasn't my fault, and definitely buy that I wanted to dehydrate the entire population of Metrocity for purely altruistic reasons."

He begins to pace again, the restless, feverish movements of a half-delirious wild animal in a too-small cage.

"Sir," Minion says softly, "you know the city—they do have an official superhero, not to mention emergency services. This isn't really your responsibility."

Megamind whirls on him, green eyes blazing in his gaunt face like poison fire.

"Yes, it is."

Minion opens his mouth to reply, then sighs and shakes his head.

"Do you...have a Plan A, Sir?" he asks.

"Not yet."

Megamind turns away to look out across the sea of holographic light again, the line of his shoulders sharp and tense beneath the blanket draped over them.

"But I will."

Minion sighs again.

"Right," he says. "Well. I'm going to go make some coffee."

Megamind doesn't answer, and after a moment, Minion turns away, leaving him there.

The brainbot filming moves closer to him, silent for once, subdued as it hovers gently at his shoulder.

Megamind, face in profile, glares fiercely down at the city, brow furrowed, lips pressed tightly to-gether in a down-turned line. For nearly a minute, he simply stands there, silent, unmoving, not even blinking. And then—

His eyelids flicker, and he tilts his head slowly to the side. He blinks again. Almost like a sleepwalker, he moves to the center of the holographic city, where Metro Tower juts upwards beyond the rest of the buildings, its tall spire nearly level with Megamind's heart.

He gazes at it as if entranced, and slowly, he reaches out a hand, touches the tip of one finger to the tip of the spire.

"Zero," he says, standing perfectly still, eyes intent on the tower, "project me the in-progress schematic for the Heat Ray—placement on the top of Metro Tower."

The brainbot makes a soft whirring noise, and a third hologram, a machine sketched in glowing lines of orange and red, appears atop the tower.

"Quadruple the size."

The machine expands.

As it does so, other brainbots begin to silently swarm towards Megamind, circling slowly above him.
Megamind's lips start to curve. He reaches out his right hand without looking and a brainbot is there, holding out an uncapped permanent marker. Megamind takes it, and also the open notebook another brainbot silently hands him.

With feverish quickness, he begins to scrawl calculations across the page, eyes fixed on the holographic tower still. As soon as one page is finished, a brainbot snatches it away, flies off with it. Immediately, Megamind continues writing on the new page.

Again and again the process repeats—pages covered in swift markings, snatched away by brainbots. At some point, Megamind resumes pacing again as he works, the bots following behind him like a shoal of fish. After a while the brainbots, without any verbal direction or gestures from Megamind, begin to thread a webbing of string across the ceiling, weaving it like a spiderweb.

From the webbing, single lines are released, and to each of these lines, a page is attached.

Megamind tosses the marker aside, the ink run dry; even as he does so, he's reaching with his other hand for the replacement marker a brainbot is handing to him.

He resumes writing again, left-handed this time, adding sketches to the calculations. A diagram of a kind of curved lens, with the notation:

\[
\text{ferrofluid suspension}
\]

and

\[
\text{archimedes mirror}
\]

This sketch is taken up by a brainbot, but instead of simply hanging this one up, the brainbots copy it amongst themselves, reproducing it over and over again. Finally, the copying concluded, the brainbots hang the reproduced sketches.

These, though, hang lower, hovering just barely above the holographic city, carefully placed in a formation that blankets the whole thing.

Megamind tears the last page from the notebook himself and hands it to Zero, who takes it not to a string, but to the computer console. mechanical appendages click rapidly on the keyboard, and the hologram of the tower flickers, changes—a giant Tesla coil now stands on the uppermost platform of the tower, flanked on either side, and attached to, the pillars of a great archway. Thick wire coils around both columns of the archway, and the whole thing is attached with another coil of wire spiraling around the spire of Metro Tower itself.

Megamind drops the notebook and marker without looking—both are caught and carried away by brainbots. He takes a few steps backwards, still looking at the tower.

"Zero," he says, "input the calculations for the results of the Heat Ray's destruction by Metro Man's laser vision."

Zero's metal appendages fly over the keyboard, tapping rapidly. She pauses, her mechanical eyepiece swiveling up to look at Megamind.

"Run the simulation," he says.

She presses a single key.

The holographic projection of the Heat Ray blooms like a flame-colored flower, then flies apart in
silent slow motion, pieces of it hanging suspended in the air like parts in an exploded diagram. From the explosion, a dull orange light washes out and upward. Most of it fades out at the edges, disappearing.

But some of it, instead, strikes the lowest pages of the idea cloud, the papers covered with the reproductions of the diagrams Megamind labeled *archimedes mirror*.

The light bounces off of the paper, like light off of a true mirror, reflecting back, downwards, towards the storm, the city. And—

The holographic projection of the storm is destroyed in a blaze of orange light.

Megamind laughs, one hand covering his mouth, the maniacal edge to it closer to semi-hysteria than wicked amusement.

"Brainbots," he says, voice uneven with laughter, "commence)—commence preparations for —*Project Heatwave.*"

"It's not going to last long, you know, Sir," Minion's voice from the edge of the hologram, and Megamind turns towards him, tottering slightly, clutching his blanket cape and grinning madly.

"Oh, but the *effect* will," Megamind says. "Even after Metro Man destroys the Heat Ray itself, the Archimedes Mirrors will keep reflecting enough heat to keep the storm from re-forming. Winter in Metrocity is about to be put on hold, Minion. Which I'm sure everyone will enjoy blaming me for —interference with the environment, natural order, seasonal change, evil evil etcy-tera. I'll make up a suitable monologue."

"And after Metro Man destroys the mirrors?" Minion hands Megamind a cup of steaming hot coffee.

Megamind takes it absently, still gesturing with his other hand.

"Oh, but he won't be able to find them! We're going to use the Invisible Shield tech on them. And they're not *mechanical*, they're electromagnetized ferrofluid, so he won't be able to hear them! Miss Ritchi will locate them eventually, I'm sure; she's clever like that, but it should take even *her* a little while."

He glances over at Minion, who is staring at him with an unimpressed expression.

"Oh, don't look at me like that, Minion! I'm fully capable of evil monologuing without completely giving my plan away; I'll be *careful*! And we'll program Spikeless to bite me if I start revealing too much. We'll have more than enough time!"

"More than enough time for what, Sir?" Minion asks, as if he's not sure he wants to know the answer.

Megamind's eyebrows draw together, his mouth going suddenly flat.

"For me to find whoever it is that thinks they can threaten my city," he says, voice soft, fury unfurling through the words slow and sensual as blood in water, "and show them how very mistaken they are."

His hands tighten on the mug he holds and he glances down at them, at the cup of coffee in them—and blinks owlishly, as if he has no idea how it got there.
Minion sighs.

"It's coffee, Sir," he says. "You drink it."

"Ah," Megamind says. "Right."

He lifts the mug to his lips and the camera angle spirals upwards as the brainbots take flight towards the shadowy parts of the Lair, darkness and jutting bits of metal and then just

darkness and

darkness

and

sunlight

shining through the broken panes of a dirty window, and the ghostly image of the brainbot hovering before it, looking at its own reflection. The image, too, even more insubstantial and unreal, of Megamind, standing above what appears to be a pile of dirty blankets, heaped in the corner of an abandoned building.

"—can't stay here; it's shed-u-aled for destruction," Megamind's voice is gentle, pitched low and soothing.

The brainbot turns, gliding over to hover beside Megamind, who is speaking not to the pile of blankets, but to the man huddled in the pile of blankets.

"Destruction by giant robot," Megamind adds. "We have plans to turn it into a shelter, eventually, but in the mean time, there are several current shelters that would be happy to take—"

The man clutches his blankets tighter, shakes his head rapidly. The tinfoil strips that criss-cross the top of the orange hard hat he's wearing glint silver in the dim sunlight.

He's a big man, bull-necked, hands sized like dinner plates, but he shrinks back from Megamind, mountainous shoulders hunched inwards, cringing and defiant at the same time.

"Nonono," he says. "Not going—not safe. You go to those places and then they get you; I'm not going; I'm not—"

"Get you," Megamind repeats, a line appearing between his eyebrows. "You mean—the shelters? It's not like—it's not like a prison, or like—like checking yourself in somewhere. They can't keep you there against your will; you can leave whenever you like."

A laugh jerks out of the man.

"Say that; don't say that. Say they can't keep you, but you can't trust them; can't—"

"Can't trust who?" Megamind asks.

"Government," the man says, practically spits the word, then looks around, eyes wild, thick fingers scrabbling at the blankets. "Won't go there again, won't go with you—"

"Do I look," Megamind asks, one side of his mouth lifted in a wry smile, "like someone who's particularly popular with the government?"
The man's roving eyes move back to Megamind's face. His lips work soundlessly for a long moment. Megamind's smile fades and his frown deepens again. Moving slow, unthreatening, he crouches down in front of the man, fingertips of one gloved hand resting lightly on the dust-thick floor.

"Again," he says. "What do you mean, 'won't go there again'?"

The man blinks, rapidly, mouth still working.

"—I could do things," he whispers finally. "Used to could do things. Small stuff. Like—"

A large hand skitters over the blankets, seizes hold of an empty aluminum can. He pulls it into his lap, lifts one shaky hand, holds it out, palm down, fingers spread. Slowly, with his other hand, he brings the can up, stops with it in the air, beside his empty, outstretched hand. For a long moment, he stares at the can, swaying lightly in place.

Suddenly he tightens the fingers of his empty hand into a fist. At the same moment, he crushes the can in his other hand.

He looks up at Megamind again, drops the can, and then his hands, into his lap.

"See?" he says.

"I think so," Megamind says slowly.

"Can't, anymore," the big man says simply. "The people in gray came and took me away, and now I can't do that anymore. They put a chip in my head, you know," he adds, tone casually conversational. "That's what this is for." He points at the strips of tinfoil on his hard hat. "Static to hide what I'm thinking, so they can't hear. People laugh, but I know what's true."

He nods again, blinking rapidly as his head bobs. And then he squints at Megamind—Megamind, who has gone very quiet and very still.

"You're not laughing," the man says slowly.

"—where did they put the chip?" Megamind asks, eyes intent on the man's face. "Did they put it behind your—"

"—left ear," the man says in unison with Megamind, as both of them reach up to press fingertips behind their own left ears.

"—buzzsaw sound," the man says, seemingly for no reason, but Megamind is nodding like this makes perfect sense. "ZZZZZZZZZZZ. All the time. Makes it—"

"—so you can hardly think," Megamind murmurs.

"—so I can't do the thing anymore," the man says. "You—you know—"

"—what's true?" Megamind finishes for him softly. "Yes. I do." He holds out one hand, palm up. "Would you like me to take that chip out for you?"

The man stares at him, mouth working silently; chewing on unsaid words, trying to spit them out.

"It would be very safe," Megamind continues. "Minion is very medically skilled. We could use local anesthetic, so you wouldn't have to be asleep for it. And we could set up mirrors for you, so you could watch the whole thing." He pauses, watching the man's face. "How does that sound?" he
asks gently. "Does that sound good?"

The man swallows, quick and convulsive, then nods, a rapid, repetitive series of motions. He reaches out, takes Megamind's hand—his is so large that it all but engulfs Megamind's, but the man clutches it like a lifeline as Megamind rises, pulls him gently to his feet.

"Good," Megamind says, looking up at the man—he towers over Megamind, but he's still gripping Megamind's hand like a frightened child. "Good," Megamind says again, "That's good. What's your—"

"—name, Zero," Megamind says, face coming into focus, framed against a brightdark smear of sunset sky. "You're allowed to change it."

The brainbot makes a low, grinding noise like a mechanical growl which slips fluidly into a higher register, ending on a soft, warbling sound. The view shifts as she moves her eyepiece down to look at the rooftop she and Megamind are both resting on. With one metal appendage, she draws a circle, scratching it into the concrete that lines the roof's edge.

Again, the view shifts as she looks up at Megamind. She reaches out and taps him with an appendage—taps the scratched circle—taps hers own braincase.

"Yes, I know I named you Zero," Megamind says. "But if you don't like it—"

Again the metallic grinding sound, followed by the three taps—Megamind, the circle, herself. Each is delivered with greater force—the one to Megamind, in particular, is more of a jab, than a tap. She follows this up with a repeated tap to the circle, to herself, for emphasis.

"All right; all right," Megamind says, holding up his hands. "I named you Zero; it's your name. But if you feel so strongly about it, then why are you so upset about it?" He reaches out a hand and strokes her braincase lightly, lovingly. "What is it, sweetheart? What's got you so worried, hmm?"

Zero makes a whirring noise and reaches out with an appendage to trace the circle once more, slower, wistful.

She follows the circle with two parallel, horizontal lines, and then stops, fans her mechanical limbs out in a gesture of someone spreading their hands. She tips her eyepiece up to look at Megamind again, then slowly moves it from side to side.

"Ohh," Megamind says. "Oh, Zero—my beautiful, perfect Zero—it's not like that at all. Here—"

He shifts position, bending one knee and reaching down to pull something from the top of his boot. A swift flick of his fingers and twist of his wrist and the butterfly knife unfolds, the fanning blade glinting redly in the dying light.

Holding the knife like a pen, Megamind traces over Zero's circle, then adds a long vertical line coming from the top of the circle. He crosses the top of this line with two short horizontal slashes.

Megamind leans close to Zero, one arm over her, so that she's pressed close to his hip. He taps the
new symbol with the tip of the blade.

"This is the hieroglyph that the ancient Egyptians used to represent zero," he says, voice soft, a father telling a bedtime story to a child. "The throat—" he traces the vertical line downwards, "—and the heart," he traces the circle. "It's called nfr, and it's the same hieroglyph they used for 'beauty' and 'perfect'."

Zero reaches out and traces the symbol with tip of one metal appendage.

"When you're graphing something on a grid—" he quickly scratches a cross in the concrete, arrows at the ends of both lines, a circular mark where the two lines converge. "—or even in three-dimensional space—"

Next to the cross he scratches out a cube, three crossed lines inside the cube, six arrow-tipped rays pointing towards infinity in every direction, radiating out forever from the circular center point at their heart.

"—zero is always at the center," Megamind says. "The starting point, the place where everything converges. Zero is the boundary marker between positive and negative numbers—all numbers, positive or negative, are defined by their relationship to zero."

Zero tips her eyepiece upwards, looking at Megamind, who smiles down at her.

"Zero is the reason algebra is possible," he says, tone reverent. "It's what keeps two and twenty and two-hundred from looking the same—they used to, you know; and it was terribly confusing for everyone involved; you had to use context to guess which one people were writing about, and you can guess how well that went."

Zero makes a sharp noise and Megamind laughs.

"Yes," he says. "About that well."

He flicks the knife shut, replaces it in his boot. Zero shifts closer to him, leaning her eyepiece on his thigh.

"You can't ever divide zero," Megamind says. "You can't break it into fractions or decimals. Zero is always zero, always itself…"

Megamind's voice fades out as Zero blinks her eyepiece—slow—slower—and then—

The shutter opens again, slowly, sleepily.

It's dark now, and, the sky black and the lights of the city visible. Zero looks up at Megamind, who is gazing out at the city below them.

"Look at her, Zero," he says, voice hushed, eyes rapt. "Our Metrocity. Isn't she beautiful? Like a galaxy, stars made of electric light…"

Again the slow blink of the shutter, the fading of the image into darkness. Megamind's voice continues on a little longer, threading through the darkness.

"Streetlamp constellations to guide you home…"
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