Chapter 3:

The next morning Simon slowly opened his eyes, hearing the sound of birds chirping outside his window and seeing sunlight starting to stream through his window. When he looked to see what time it was he saw a void where his alarm clock used to be and his eyes grew widen when he remembered what had happened to it the previous morning. “Oh no…” he said as he quickly went over to his phone and turned it on. “No no no no no…”

When the screen finally lit up Simon felt his heart sink all the way down to his feet. He only had five minutes before the bus would arrive at his stop and he wasn’t even close to being ready to go. With his heart racing he attempted to put on any clothes he could find that would match and made sure he had his essentials, keys, wallet, and phone, before rushing out of the door, nearly slipping on the empty pizza box that he had left on his floor in the process. He streaked as quickly as he could down the stairs and out onto the sidewalk, but before he could even start to head towards his stop he already saw his bus moving in the opposite direction.

This was no time to be late, he thought to himself as he began to consider his options, he was already on Dr. Malcome’s short list and not being on time would cast even more suspicion on him. Unfortunately none of the rail lines even came close to meeting his needs and a ride share would probably take just as long to get to him, which meant it was either hoof it or just call in sick and hope for the best. There was no way that he was going to let Dr. Malcome be able to use the time to try and bring someone in on his research though and there was a park between him and his work where he could try and run to make up for time. He continued to bounce back and forth a bit before he finally darted off in a run, going as fast as he feet will take him to try and at least mitigate the time since there was a huge difference in penalties depending on whether you are less or more than fifteen minutes late.

Though the sidewalk was hard to navigate with people also walking to their respective workplaces he managed to make decent time, trying to regulate his breathing to keep the pace. He didn’t worry about being sweaty, there were showers at the spire and he always kept a spare set of clothes in case he ever had to pull an all-nighter. As he continued to make his way through he tried to ignore the glares that he had gotten from those that he actually did bump into, trying to keep it to a minimum as he crossed the street as soon as there was an opening. Once he finally did reach the park pathway where there was more open walkways he really opened up his pace and got moving.

As he ran through otherwise empty forest Simon’s panic over work was interrupted a bit by how nice it was to do something like this. Running through the woods, nothing but trees all around him… it was a nice contrast to being indoors all day. Whether he was in the lab or in his apartment or even on the bus he rarely took the time to appreciate what was around him. Even when he was walking home after a particularly late night he stuck to the city streets for fear of what might be lurking in the park when the sun goes down and was always tired. Perhaps this would have to be a permanent change for him…

Simon’s reverie was stopped when he suddenly found himself on the other side of the park, seeing the destination facility on the horizon. He didn’t bother to check his watch at this point but continued to run even though he once more found himself in the light foot traffic of the city sidewalks. He was so close… if he was less than fifteen minutes late then all he would get is a demerit and it would prevent any further disciplinary action. But as he made the final run down the street towards the spire he saw something that caused him to slow down his pace until he was stopped dead.

It was a bus, Simon’s head slowly turning as he watched it rumble past him. He knew it was his bus because of the number on the back and watched in stunned disbelief as he watched it stop a few yards ahead of him to let off its passengers that would normally include his own self. “No way…” he said as the sight prompted him to look down at his phone, his mouth dropping when he saw that it was around the time he would head into work anyway. “That’s… impossible…”

But the proof was right there, and as a scientist he couldn’t ignore the facts any longer. The incredible hunger he’s been experiencing, the auditory problems, the alien sensations and whispers, and now increased stamina to the point where he realized he wasn’t even breathing hard… it all pointed to a possible conjecture. That night the symbiote hadn’t been stolen or destroyed, somehow it had bonded with him to the point where he couldn’t see it on his own body. He was essentially massively infected by an alien organism that he had a hand in creating as his mind once more showed him the symbiote flowing into his compromised hazmat suit.

He looked down at his fingers and squeezed one of them as though he would somehow see something happen to him, but all he got was a pinched digit. He gave his hands a few more flexes and still didn’t see any presence of it, which made him start to doubt if he was correct. It was possible that he had just found a shortcut that allowed him to bypass a lot of his commute to work since the bus couldn’t go a direct pathway, and everything else could be a result of his long hours at work. As he slowly began to walk forward his mind tried to analyze every piece of evidence both for and against this new hypothesis while still making sure that he was at work on time.

*MUFFINS!*

Simon was practically knocked forward as he came in view of the coffee vendor, stumbling a few feet before managing to regain his balance. When he quickly righted himself he saw a few people staring at him strangely and he just tried to feign it off like he had tripped on something. When he got to the cart the vendor asked him if he wanted the same deal as last time, the scientist just sighing and nodding his head. Whether it was stress eating or a symbiote this wasn’t a fight he wanted to have as he took the bag of baked goods and the coffee. Once thing he didn’t noise as he walked into the spire while stuffing his face is that despite running all that way not a droplet of sweat touched his clothes…

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For the next few days Simon dedicated himself to trying to get to the bottom of what was happening to him, trying to document everything about his life. Unfortunately another round of cuts at the spire had started to force him to work even longer hours at the spire and he found his agitation at the situation growing by the day. By the end of the week the one day off that he was normally promised, Sunday, had been taken away with him as well since he needed to double the observation time on the symbiotes after losing one. That meant all he could do was work and sleep, which left him little time to do any proper experimentation on his body.

There were cues that what was happening to him was the involvement of a symbiote; not only had he started to beat the bus even when he left around the same time but the long, stressful hours at the spire weren’t affecting him as much anymore. In fact he found himself no longer needing an alarm clock either as after the first time he opened his eyes the next morning on the second that he was usually awakened. He also required no caffeine to help him trudge through the day and kicked his coffee habit completely over the next few days. If this was the work of the symbiote he was definitely seeing how the benefits would come in handy.

But as the week came to a close there were also showing some very noticeable drawbacks, namely how much food that he was consuming per day. The bag of muffins and extra-large pizza was just beginning, the more he ate the less full he seemed to get and then the whispers would start again. That was by far one of the most surreal things that happened to him yet, finally recognizing the words that he was hearing in his mind didn’t belong to himself nor anyone else. It was also starting to become more… eloquent as time went on, the longer that he was exposed the more the possible symbiote seemed to be learning and growing more intelligent.

When Monday rolled back around once more Simon did his usual run to work, writing down the results to find that he had once more shaved a full minute off his time through the park, and made his usual purchase at the vendor cart. The amount of money he was spending on food was starting to get worrisome but he knew that it was the price for scientific progress. As he finished the last one off while he walked in he was surprised to see Dr. Malcome standing there with another, much younger, man. It was clear the two were waiting for him and Simon quickly brushed the crumbs off himself before going over to the two.

“Simon,” Dr. Malcome said with a nod before motioning to the one next to him. “This is Alex, we’ve brought him on in order to help around the spire with various lab projects and we’d like him to start with you. Since he’s going to be a catch-all I want you to show him everything about your process for the next month or two before he moves on to the next one.”

Simon had to bite his tongue before forcing a smile on his face. “Of course,” he finally stated. “I would be more than happy to train our newest recruit. It will be nice to maybe get out of here on time for once.”

Dr. Malcome chuckled and thanked him for being a good sport about it, then quickly turned and walked Alex out of the building while talking about getting his paperwork squared away. Simon forced himself to stand there and say nothing, but the second the two were gone he let out a yell and punched down on the metal table that was next to him. It didn’t take much to realize that this Alex wasn’t going to be a gopher, he was going to be his replacement. It made sense why he waited until now, if he went to the ethics board now they would chastise him for not coming sooner and his workplace could just say he saw the writing on the wall and tried to sabotage them before he got fired.

When Simon retracted his hand he looked down and saw the imprint he made in the thick metal, then quickly glanced around to see if anyone had seen that. He quickly banged out the dent from the other side as best he could before getting changed and doing his rounds. The entire time he was doing his observations though the only thing he could think about was the smug look on Dr. Malcome’s face when he was introducing Alex. It caused him to seethe, though the longer he spent in the observation hallway the more it cooled him down not just physically but mentally also.

At this point Simon had no compulsion to stay at this place any later than he needed, especially when he had to avoid the screeching of his co-workers who had heard about the new hire. It was annoying, they were annoying, and the entire situation was annoying to all end. The second that the finished up his calculations, which seemed to go faster now as well with him doing a lot of the number work in his head, he punched out and headed home. Normally he would do a post-analysis observation run but he didn’t care, the only thing he wanted to do at that point was just get back to his apartment and sulk.

When Simon did get home he saw that Anthony was there, and unlike usual he was actually cooking for himself. “It’s my main man Simon,” the college student said as he saw his roommate walk through the door. “Just got done with a wicked set and rewarding myself to a helping of protein. If you want one they come in a pack of two and it would be better than just leaving it in the fridge.”

“Yeah, sure…” Simon replied as he sat down, hearing the sizzle of another piece of meat being put down in the frying pan. Even though it smelled delicious he could hardly think about that, his mind still back at his workplace and the fact he had a month to think of what to do before he was essentially replaced. While normally it would be just going onto the internet and updating his resume he had a creature inside him and the only lab with the resources he needed was the one he was working in right now.

A few minutes later the still crackling steak was put in front of Simon and though the first instinct was to dive in with his hands and start tearing at it he had enough self-control to grab his utensils. “You alright?” Anthony asked after eating for a few minutes in silence. “I know you’re the quiet type and all but you haven’t said a word besides thank you and you look like someone just kicked you in the crotch.”

“It’s… work,” Simon replied, unsure of just how much he wanted to share with his roommate. “Things are looking worse than usual and I think that it might be time for me to move on, but the only thing is they’re the only ones doing the research that I want to do. It’s research that they wouldn’t even have if I wasn’t there by the way.”

“Sounds rough,” Anthony explained. “But if it’s your research can you just, I don’t know, take it with you?”

“It’s a little more complex than that,” Simon admitted, trying to not get thrown off by the chuckle that he heard in the back of his mind. “But thanks for the input Anthony.”

“Didn’t I tell you to just call me Tony?” Anthony said with a small smirk.

*I like Tony…*

“You what?” Simon asked the voice, not realizing he said that out loud until he saw Anthony looking at him in question.

“First day that I moved in with you,” Anthony stated as he took his now empty plate and put it in the sink. “You called me Anthony and I said hey, call me Tony.” When Simon continued to look at him dumbfounded it caused him to chuckle. “It was a long time ago, anyway I got to go pound some books so you’ll have a quiet night tonight at least.”

“Oh, thanks again, uh, Tony,” Simon replied with a nod. “You know, for dinner.”

“Don’t mention it,” Tony replied with a wink, walking towards his bedroom before stopping and turning around. “Oh, and if you want some advice you’re going to want to do some more arm and side exercises to balance out your routine.”

“My routine?” Simon asked with fresh confusion.

Tony just rolled his eyes and walked over to him. “Don’t think I haven’t seen the improvement that you’ve made in your physical health,” he explained, taking one of Simon’s arms into his hands and lifting it up. “My guess is you’re doing a lot of cardio and lower body, you’re going to want to mix in some upper body stuff or you’re going to look very disproportional. If you want you can come and work out with me sometime and I can show you, they allow us to bring in a guest at the university gym.”

Simon just nodded and tried not to swallow hard as he felt those fingers press into his flesh, unsure of how they went from speaking occasionally to fitness tips and breaking the touch barrier. Normally he would shrink away from such things but his roommate had caught him by surprise, the researcher not expecting it. Tony continued to talk about the proper way to do things as he lifted Simon’s legs, showing him how he needed to make sure that everything was balanced out. Once Tony was finished he once more offered to help in the future if needed before heading to his room and closing the door.

It took about a minute from Simon’s brain to catch up to what just happened, then shook his head and grabbed his plate. He cleaned all the dishes since Tony was nice enough to not ask him to reimburse him for the stake that he prepared and once he was done putting things away he walked over to his room. The words of what his roommate said still echoed in his mind, not about the various workout routines that he could do but rather the fact that he looked like he was working out. While he had been doing his runs from home to the facility, and then most recently on the way back, it had only been a week since he had started it.

Could the symbiote once more be at work, he thought to himself as he closed and locked his bedroom door behind him. While it had applications to enhance physical and mental attributes he assumed they were temporary, that once the suit would come off they would return to normal. But then again, he reminded himself as he took off his clothes, the symbiote wasn’t exactly being worn like a suit. His body also wasn’t rejecting it like any foreign entity in a human system would and once more the thought that maybe being so overworked finally rendered him insane.

*See for yourself…*

The return of the voice was rather disconcerting at that point, especially since it hadn’t been brought on by hunger. “See what?” Simon asked as he tried to keep his body from trembling. “See what Anthony saw?”

*Strip.*

That time the word had the power of a command behind it instead of a mere parroting of his own mind, and despite Simon’s reservations he found his fingers going to the buttons on his shirt to undo them. He couldn’t believe that he was actually following a disembodied voice that was in his own head as he took off his shirt and let it slide to the floor. “I can’t believe I’m doing this…” he said as he slowly went over to the mirrored door that was his closet. “I haven’t checked myself out in the mirror shirtless since I was twelve, how embarrassing.”

*Tony does not get embarrassed and he wears less than you.*

“Yeah well, Tony has the body for it,” Simon replied before he realized what he was doing and put his hands against his face. He couldn’t believe he was actually arguing with it now… for all he know it was just a voice in my head because the stress finally cracked his brain.

*We are working hard to rectify that, if you do not believe me than remove your clothes and see for yourself.*

Simon continued to mutter that this was crazy as he found himself taking off his pants, tossing them to the side before doing the same with his briefs. He never felt comfortable looking at himself, long hours in the lab combined with poor health early in life left him with a less than ideal physique and pale skin. Another reason for the dislike of his fellow co-workers was that on more than one occasion they called him a ghost, even going so far as to have four of them dress up as the Ghostbusters and take a photo pretending to trap him. It left him with less than stellar self-esteem and he even found himself closing his eyes as though to brace himself before stepping forward into the reflection of the mirror.

When he did finally look what he saw caused him to take a step back. While he wouldn’t win bodybuilder of the year or even be considered an athlete there was definitely a little more there than there was a while ago. His skinny frame actually had muscle on it and despite having eaten more in that week than he had in a month his stomach didn’t show an ounce of added fat on it. Was this really what the power of the symbiote could bring about in a person?

*Horny…*

The word echoed in Simon’s mind and when he looked down near the groin of his reflection he saw that he had started to play with himself. Most days he hadn’t even thought of doing anything sexual in nature, most times he just got home and either worked or passed out. He couldn’t even remember the last time he had thought about that sort of thing and at this moment he was stroking himself while looking at his own body. It wasn’t even that much of an increase, he just looked less sickly than he used to and slightly more toned.

*This feels very good. Pleasurable? Could be better though.*

At this point Simon didn’t know what to say, and when he did open his mouth the only thing that came out of it was a groan. He felt himself moving over towards his own bed while continuing to stroke himself. Why this felt so good he didn’t know, normally the reason why he didn’t even bother with such things is that the experience was mediocre at best and required the use of an aid on his computer. This time no such additional stimulation was needed as his body writhed slightly on the bed covers, in fact it felt like he was doing it for the first time as he bit his lip to try and remain quiet.

*Yesssss….*

With the pleasure coursing through his veins it was hard to tell whether that was the voice in his head or his own internal monologue as he continued to pleasure himself. Either way it didn’t matter to him as his entire focus was drawn down towards the needy tool in his hand and the pleasure it brought him. He felt more and more like when this was new to him, his body bouncing and moving with every jerk of his hand up and down. He even found himself doing something he had never considered before and began sliding his free hand between his legs towards his rear. That was too much though and he settled for just rubbing the sensitive flesh between his legs, furthering his stimulation until he finally came.

It took everything within Simon’s power now to cry out when he did, feeling the pressure release unlike anything that he had ever experienced before. As his own cum splattered on his chest and stomach he managed to give himself one or two more pumps before finally having to let go and grab the sheets for more support. When his orgasm finally did subside he found himself breathing hard, laying on his back feeling the still warm liquid start to drip down his body as he laid there panting. It was one more thing to put in the plus column if he did have a symbiote, and even if it was just him being crazy then at least he had a bit of fun with it before going to the loony bin.

*You are not crazy, see for yourself…*

The voice that hadn’t been present once he had gotten into the act of self-pleasure appeared to be back as Simon sighed. He had already seen himself in the mirror and noticed the muscle gain, what else could there possibly be to prove that he was in fact infected by a symbiote? That thought seemed to raise up his hackles a bit and he just shook his head while he sat up so he could clean himself off and not make a mess on his sheets. When he looked down at himself though what he saw caused him to stop midway up.

While He had expected to see the thick white puddles that normally came from denying oneself for so long he also saw something else floating in them. At first Simon thought that he had ruptured something as he saw the dark streaks in one particularly large puddle, but when he swirled it around with his finger he saw that it was jet black. This was not something he produced… and the more he looked at it the more he could feel his heart racing in his chest. There was little else that could explain what had caused the darkening in his cum, other than…

*It appears we are bonding quite nicely.*

In a panic Simon got up and started to pace, initially going to his computer to try and run tests on himself before remembering that he didn’t have any type of equipment to do so. Plus he started to feel physically tired, his limbs starting to feel like lead even though he didn’t do much outside of having a wank. That was when the voice in his head chimed in and said that it had gotten a little over-excited and that it had stressed both their bodies. Even though he was panicked that this symbiote was really inside him he immediately started to feel a mixture of pleasure and relaxation flood his system.

It appeared the symbiote had some idea of how to control his hormones, Simon thought to himself as he stumbled towards the bed, likely due to the last flood of them when he had pleasured himself. He nearly fell onto the floor before he finally crumpled into the bed, hitting the pillow face first. When he attempted to protest he heard the voice shushing him as Simon’s eyes rolled back into his head. Sleep came quick as he laid there on top of the covers completely naked…