

Cynder Drone In Space

It's been ages since Cynder drones came to the planet. The queen, who despite what size, what position is equal as any other Cynder drone. Her designation 000000000001. The very first, but far from the last. She overtook the 'gods' of the planet, the people that worshiped them. Now all have been made equal. Smooth, rubbery, faceless. Their sleek purple and pink design of a feral dragon, with golden collars around their necks and a red gem that glows. Transmitting updates to the greater collective of other drone types across countless other worlds.

In a monotone voice, the faceless fellow drones, each a representative of their equalized planet reports to 01, "Unequalized organisms have been detected approaching your home system. Monitor them and learn about them. Do what you must to understand these unequalized organisms so that they too can be equalized."

01's gem glows, the massive Cynder drone, the size of a large hill remains perfectly still, like a statue, her red gem glowing. She mentally responds in an equal monotone voice, "Acknowledged. I will monitor and do everything I can along with my equalized drones to learn about them and if possible, to equalize them."

"Do not equalize the unequal organisms till it's time."

"Acknowledged. Monitoring will commence immediately. As the equal Cynder drone queen. I will take responsibility and full lead on it."

"As you wish Cynder Drone 000000000001. We will monitor and wish you the best. All must be made equal."

"All must be made equal," 01 responded, the connection to the higher collective ending. She looked to the other Cynder drones. Perfectly alike. With the two there, it looks more like one's a small model of the other, a simple toy, a facsimile of the other, but in truth they are equal in body. Equal in mind, ready to serve, obey, serve the collective, enjoy the pleasure of being what they are. Smooth crotched drones.

01 looks down at the smaller Cynder drone, "Cynder drone 45. We must initiate a body swap. I intend to use your equal but smaller form to appear less intimidating for when the unequal organisms arrive. We must limit our appearances to them. Appear docile, simple, to be picked up and studied. The information I gather will be important for our equalization plan. Preparing to switch bodies," she stated.

Cynder drone 45 stared up with that faceless look, her gem on the necklace glowing, "Acknowledged. Transferring consciousness with fellow drone," she states. Their gems glow in kind, staring blankly at each other with their smooth blank faces, and within moments their consciousness seemly switches from the other, like flipping a switch their perspectives changed.

"Consciousness has been equally switched," 01 and 45 state together in unison.

"Acknowledged," they say together.

01 checks over herself, the sleek rubbery body, "Everything is functioning nominally. I will stock up on equipment to bring along with me when I am taken by the unequal organisms. It is best we remain prepared for the time comes to equalize them."

“Acknowledged, my equal queen. We will prepare your body. When is the eta for the unequal organisms to arrive?” 45 inquires. The entire conversation between them spoken into each other’s minds, leaving nothing but silence to any outside observer, with only the soft squeak of their smooth bodies to produce any sound within the equalized city where thousands of Cynder drones working within a futuristic city, smooth, organized, all buildings equal. A far cry from the medieval style and technological advancement of the dragons before they were equalized. A grand improvement over their old unequal way of life.

“Three weeks from now. According to the collective they have information of our previous unequal lives. We’ll have to hide our advancements and mimic *some* of the old ways to not stir suspicion.”

“Affirmative. We’ll get to it right away.”

“That we shall. We’ll all put in equal effort to the cause,” says 01 as they get to work.

Three weeks later...

A pale skinned human looks upon the holographic screen with his brown eyes, his black hair well-kept brushed to the side. Dressed in his red shirt uniform he reports, “Approaching target planet. We’ll be landing in fifteen minutes.”

Sleeping in the captain’s chair is a gray skinned white bellied, floppy eared anthropomorphic manta ray, his brown hair is a slight mess from sleeping in his chair. His red uniform is a little off center as he suddenly wakes gasping, “No!” he exclaimed, panting in a cold sweat, hands touching his face.

A yellow scaled female bipedal dragon walks onto the bridge, “Another bad dream Captain?” she asks, adjusting her uniform, wings flicking, as she brushes her golden hair from her amber colored eyes.

“I had a dream that I was on this spaceship, and we were attacked by this alien that was attached to your face, and a faceless alien popped out of your chest, and corrupted and turned everyone! And that wasn’t the worst of it.”

“What was it, Captain Raymond?” asked the human.

“Everyone but a shark was so stupid... even me!”

“Luckily it was just a dream.”

“What about me?” asks Dream, the dragon.

“Not dream as your name, but dream as the... you’re teasing me again, aren’t you?”

The dragon grinned toothily, “Maybe.”

He signed, “At least you don’t do that to me Brian.”

The human looked over his shoulder, “I have to worry about micro-meteors and solar flares destroying our radiation shielding. I don’t have time to worry about toying with you captain. So I let your science officer do it for me.”

Raymond facepalms, “Alright, alright. What’s the current status report?”

Dream taps onto a holographic omni-tool on her wrist, “We are getting conflicting reports on the planet.”

“Conflicting reports? Explain.”

“Our long-distance scans on the planet indicate that the planet’s inhabitants are advanced to the point of being considered medieval and a uniquely evolved form of dragon race in the northern part of the planet with other races elsewhere.”

“And?”

“Now we have changes in the atmosphere that are in line with more technologically advanced civilizations and currently we can’t verify any of the races on the planet except possible dragon-like species, but it seems to be harder to scan now that we are closer than when we were further away.”

“We were several light years away during the last scans. Couldn’t civilization have advanced in some way to explain this?”

“Not in a ten-year period. If they did advance it would be a several hundred-year jump in technological advancement. And that’s never been discovered anywhere before.”

“That means we’ll have to get a closer look. Have the ship in orbit and we’ll go down and investigate this anomaly. But before we do, once we reach orbit do a surface scan of the planet.”

“Aye, aye captain,” responds Dream, moving to her computer console, launching several small probes that orbit the planet soon after they arrive. Her fingers dance across the screen, zooming in on detail across the world, “Hmm, many of the structures appear to be of the medieval time period. There are a few stone paved roads, but I am getting some weird energy signatures from this one northern town in the mountains.”

“Weird energy signatures? Explain Dream Searcher.”

“That’s what it is. It’s not something I’ve seen before, but there’s no way it can be made by people of this technological advancement. Something is just not adding up here.”

“We’ll investigate around there then. Maybe we can discover something.”

Brian looks at the images, “Captain?”

“Yes Brian?”

“Observing these images from above, I am seeing no variation in the people. They all look reflective and the same color and size.”

“It’ll be something we’ll learn when we get closer. Prepare for a ground incursion. Level three microbiological protection. We don’t know what contaminants are on the planet. Do I have your approval, Dream?” asks Raymond.

“Tight rubber atmospheric protective suits with tinted dome protective headgear? How could I ever refuse that?” she asks with a sly smirk.

“I’ll be coming too, right captain?” asks Brian, the thought of getting to wear the suit again, running through the back of his mind, feeling a slight eagerness while wondering, “*Why did they make those suits so nice and form fitting?*”

“That settles that then. We’ll prepare for a ground mission within the hour.”

“Yes captain.”

Cynder Drone 1 reports to the collective, *“Unequal organics are drawn to our energy signal. Everyone has an equal part in tricking them into picking me up for study and bridging a ‘species’ divide. The more we know about them the better.”*

The other Cynder drones respond in perfect unison over their network, *“Acknowledged.”*

01 watches from a distance the spaceship’s smaller transport vessel touch down within the mountain region a few miles north of the town they are producing the strange energy reading from, *“Now we wait to set up for my introduction...”*

The trio land without issue. Stepping out of the ship with sleek black and red rubber body fitting suits, with golden glass domes around their heads. The sounds of their breathing echo within, the tint making their helmets grow more golden under the sunlight. They look around at the lush world, after stepping out of the airlock. Dream does a quick local scan, “It will take time to understand how deadly the biosphere on a microbiological level, but this does confirm this is a class M planet. One of the best I’ve seen in ages. No wonder dragons would be found here.”

Brian remarks, “That doesn’t guarantee dragon-like evolution. But this will be... well I’m not the science guy like you Dream but seeing animals on two planets evolve with similar characteristics will be amazing. The station will not believe what we’ve found.”

Raymond’s suit grinds against his rubber-like skin, thankful the self-lubrication of the spacesuits makes it noticeably less awkward for his massive wings that are attached to his body, “Focus. It’s best to avoid the locals and the wildlife as much as possible. Nor do we want to accidentally plague the people of this planet with what we could potentially bring. What we do need is to get closer, study and monitor them. Perhaps discover what this strange power reading we are getting. Take some samples and then bring them back to the station for further study. I’m sure science officer Celina will be most curious on another M class planet.”

Dream remarks, “Too bad for them they can only live on P class planets,” she states, venturing out away from the spaceship, “Green lush life. Earth-like evolution and conditions. Fascinating.”

Raymond asks, “How far away are we from the energy source?”

“It will be a bit of a trek down the forested mountain.”

“Sorry captain, but trying to stay out of sight of the locals and keep our presence hidden while finding a good place to land? It was the best I could do,” says Brian.

“I understand, we’ll all make do with what we can,” replies Raymond, the group starting their venture into the forest, being mindful of any local wildlife.

Eventually Dream notes, “Strange, there has been larger wildlife detected. With larger intelligent species, there’s often ecological pressures that spark the evolution. But thus far I am not catching any.”

Raymond remarks, "We could be in an area they moved into, where the evolutionary pressures that led to their rise are not here."

Dream huffs, "I understand that, Captain. It's merely strange not to see any like we normally should. That is all. Rarely are there not any larger animals, beasts of possible burden that help with the early stages of technological development."

Brian comments, "The sooner we get a closer look at the energy source the better. We don't want to disturb these people and how they develop."

Raymond nods, "My thoughts exactly. We must take care with the balance of these people and their lives," he explains, the party traveling almost two hours toward a hill that overlooks the city. They lay low to the ground, getting a zoomed vision on their HUDS displayed within their helmets of the town. The anthropomorphic stingray gets a cold shiver down his spine, "Oh no, faceless people."

Dream remarks, "Is that like your dream?"

"N-no. That was a different kind of faceless. With long heads, and sharp teeth. I don't even see mouths on these people."

"How do they function? I haven't seen a functioning advanced intelligence feral society before, have you?" asked Brian.

"Well, they are dragons," Dream remarked.

"They look like dragons, that doesn't mean they are dragons."

"That just means we'll have to take one back to the station to study," Dream states with a sly grin that is hidden by the helmet.

"No, we cannot take one back for study. That will go against so many regulations!" exclaims Raymond.

"Relax, relax. I wouldn't do that... unless I could get away with it," she mutters the last half.

"What was that?"

"We should continue our observation. So far nothing appears to be out of the usual. It's strange yet fascinating seeing how they function with those large smooth rubber looking bodies. It's rather curious. It's like looking at Zebra. It's hard to tell where one begins and the other ends. They are all... alike."

"Do they produce asexually? Or self-replication? But even their jewelry on them is the same," says Brian looking at the dragons, feeling a strange curiosity and delight upon seeing them.

"All the more reason to try to perhaps contact them."

"We will not be contacting them," states Raymond.

"Alright, alright. But it's hard to see what if anything within the town is causing the energy signature."

Brian remarks, "I do see them gathering around a large stone statue of some kind of religious iconography, but it looks exactly like them. So hard to tell if it's that or just someone of admiration."

Raymond commands, "We'll continue to observe at a distance for several more hours then head back to the ship," he says, as it suddenly begins to rain heavily. He looks up, noticing the thick clouds in the sky, "Strange, the sky was clear not long ago."

Dream reports, "I am detecting a slight increase in the energy readings from the town. Could it be some kind of weather machine? Wait... could that mean someone is pretending to be their God? Creating a world wild cult, using their advanced technology as magic, making them all into obedient blind devout followers of the new world order that they intend to build?!" says Dream, panting, "Oh... I got myself a little hot and bothered there."

Raymond sighs, "Relax Dream. I doubt it's anything that nefarious, but it is we can't cross out any possibilities just yet," he says looking up at the heavy rainfall, "We'll spend only a little more time observing then we'll head back to the ship. Something about this doesn't feel right to me."

Brian thinks, "*This rain feels nice against my suit though,*" he shakes his head, "I think we can observe a little longer. This will hide our presence. Perhaps even get a little closer."

"No, that is too risky. But perhaps we can watch a bit longer than I previously stated... maybe," he says, not knowing the Cynder drones are acting as if they haven't been watched this entire time.

"*Everything is going according to plan,*" 01 reports to the collective, the rainwater smoothly rolling off her body, the ache between her smooth legs growing, knowing that she is doing what is right. What is good. Following the collective.

"Equality is Bliss."

"Equally is pleasure."

"All must be made equal."

"You must understand these unequal organisms and equalize them when the time is right."

The three are watching with curiosity, gathering as much information as they can. Eventually though they decide to move back to the ship. Moving through the forest, the rain grows heavier, the water making it harder for them to see as they stumble and move through the forest.

"I'm from an ocean environment, how can I not see-through water?!" Raymond exclaims in annoyance. They climb up a hill when suddenly he feels as if his feet are taken from underneath him. A wave of mud forces him down the hill, causing him to tumble and turn.

"Captain!" Dream and Brian yell as the rain grows heavier, a start of a mudslide that sweeps the captain up in a slurry of tree branches and mud.

He rolls and bounces through the trees, being smacked along the way, in the back of his mind he thinks, "*If I die to drowning in anyway my ancestors will never forgive me,*" while he desperately tries to save himself when suddenly he feels someone grab him, yanking him out of the torrent of mud.

His helmet cracked but still intact, he gasps for air, holding onto his savior, "Thank you, thank you. You both deserve a commendation for that," he says, unable to see anything thanks to the mud covering his helmet.

"Captain? Where are you? Are you alright?" calls out Dream.

Brian adds, "We lost track of you in the mud. Where did you go?"

Raymond mind stops dead in its tracks, "You two didn't save me?" he calls out, the suits connected by a connected intercom system.

"No captain we're still looking for you," says Dream.

"Can you tell us where you are?" he asks.

Slowly Raymond wipes the mud from his helmet. It streaks but the constant fall of rainwater helps clean it off soon enough, revealing one of those faceless dragons sitting next to him up in some tree tops, "Fuck."

"Captain are you alright?" Brain calls out.

"I'm fine... sort of. One of the locals saved me... and now I am face to... uh face with her? Him? It's hard to tell."

Cynder Drone 01 remains silent, tilting her head to the side, spreading her wings to provide some shelter from the rain. She moves slowly, gingerly, monitoring the unequal organisms' creations.

Dream responds, "You ran into one? How come you get to be so lucky."

"I wouldn't call it luck," he responds, trapped up in the massive tree, while the mud slide continues. He waves to the drone, "Hi?"

Cynder 01 tilts her head, pretending trying to figure out what the unequal organism means but after a few moments, waves back in kind.

"She, he, it? Appears not to be hostile," he reports, his heart pounding, still unsure what could happen.

"You know procedures captain. Just remain calm and wait for assistance."

"I'm stuck up in a tree with the dragon. It might be a while."

"We'll get to you when we can, just sit tight. We might have to wait till the mudslide subsides. Hopefully it doesn't get any worse," says Dream.

The rains start to subside almost as fast as they began. The mudslide continuing for a bit of time before it too comes to an end, allowing the trio to meet up again, with the captain's newfound savior.

Cynder 01 looks at the other two, admiring the level of likeness they currently have between each other, but knowing it's not true equality, it's simply a covering.

Raymond rubs the back of his head, "Uh, thank you for saving me... but we should get going..." he says, taking a few steps back with the rest of his companions, yet the drone follows.

"Uh, no, you stay, we go. Do you understand?" he asks, making hand gesture motions.

Cynder 01 tilts her head, staying there for a moment before following.

"No, no, just..." he says, trying to explain it without showing force or in any way harming the alien before him.

Dream remarks, walking around the drone as it follows her, "It appears to be curious about you. Us really. She saved your life, recognizing you are a living person. Though I doubt it could understand us. Our universal translators only work on known languages. And these dragons that possess no mouths may not have any audio type of communication. It could all be by scent or psychic. In such a case, if she happens to follow us willingly onto the ship... we could study her as a willing participant and learn much more about this world."

"No, no we can't just take a sentient being off world. That goes against regulations," he explains.

"Captain, she saved your life, and a rubber like being. There's nothing like this that I have seen or heard about. Perhaps if we can communicate with her in some way, we could give it an informed decision."

"Save?" 01 says in a soothing yet still monotone voice into the heads of the three before her. Her gem glowing for that brief moment before its glow dims, "*Synchronization of unequal organisms' language complete. Will now proceed to simulate slow learning of their language to build trust and make them work with me.*"

The other drones respond in her mind, "*Affirmative.*"

The trio step back, "Did you just hear that?" they all ask in near unison.

Raymond nods, "Yeah, I just did. Did it come from the alien?" he wonders.

Dream moves in closer, "Fascinating. A species has evolved psychic communication. Perhaps it's not transmitting an actual language but meaning to us. Which means... we could communicate with her given enough time."

"Learn," 01 says into their heads.

Brian comments, "This is rather weird."

Raymond steps up, "If it can read minds then read this. Please go away. We don't mean any harm. We are going to be going now."

"Go?"

He smiles, "Yes, we are going. You stay. Don't go with us. I thank you for saving my life, but this is far beyond anything you can comprehend. I'm sorry... speaking of which. We should just go now, yes?"

"Best to head back now while the weather is still stable," says Brian.

"Captain, I really think this is a missed opportunity," says Dream, walking up beside him as they walk back to their ship.

"This isn't something I take lightly Dream. We know nothing about them."

"And this will be a perfect way to do so," she answers. The party stops every so often to repeat the "Please go away" yet the drone remains, following them with a child mimicked curiosity.

"Dream. There is no way this is going to fly with the higher ups. What if we bring it back to the space station and it has some deadly contagious diseases?"

"We have procedures for meeting no intelligent races."

"Intergalactic space faring races. Not people like this."

Brian puts in his two cents saying, “But what about that energy signature? If we could get to know and understand one of them. We could discover more behind it.”

“They’d just think everything we do is magic, Brian. Come on.”

“*Help,*” says Cynder 01, keeping close to them but not too close to be uncomfortable, “*Proceeding to let the unequal organisms adjust to my presence. Two are positive in wanting to take me along while their unequal leader is denying them their purpose. Proceeding with caution. It was right to cause the mudslide and save for their unequal leader, to weaken his position and make him more equal to his fellow unequal organisms.*”

“*Report received, accepted and noted,*” the collective state.

Dream huffs, “Look she only wants to help. This is a golden opportunity. Already she’s breaking down a language barrier after what? An hour of contact amongst us? If anything, if this is a bad idea and she is willing to come along. Not having her return to her people would be the best way to reduce contaminating their culture.”

“You can’t be serious about that dream,” states Raymond with shock, taken aback by her words.

“Not saying it’s what I’d want but it’s a possibility. Anything is possible. I say we take her along.”

The human looks back at the sleek faceless rubber dragon, “*Something about this is just so appealing,*” he thinks, then saying, “I think she has a point captain. We are not getting far with scans. We can run the safety procedures of dealing with new intelligent life. At least we know she isn’t hostile right? She saved your life.”

“Yes but...” Raymond says, turning to face the drone as they now only just out of sight of their spaceship.

“*Help. Help.*” Cynder 01 says, tilting her head, approaching slowly to them, “*Help.*”

“Are you asking for help? Or you want to help us?”

“*Help.*”

Raymond stiffens, looking back in the direction of his ship, “There are stipulations to provide aid to pre-warp races if there is a chance, they are being manipulated by a warp species. We can’t deny the energy signatures. And it could be asking for our help...”

Dream grins, moving to brush some hair out from her eyes but then hits her helmet instead, “Right... right,” she blows the hair out of the way, “Does that mean we can take her with Captain?”

Raymond looks to the Cynder drone, it stands five and a half feet tall and in overall size is far more massive than him. Cynder 01 gets closer, saying sweetly yet still in that monotone voice, “*Help.*”

The stingray sighs heavily to the point that it fogs his helmet, “Alright, alright. But we’ll take the highest safety precautions when it comes to this.”

Dream smiles, “You’ve done the right thing captain.”

“Yeah, we’re helping people. It’s what we do at the alliance do, right?” asks Brain, trying to ease the Captain’s concerns.

“Don’t make me regret this.”

Cynder 01 wags her tail, “*Help. Help,*” she says into their minds, transmitting to the collective, “*These unequal organisms are easy to manipulate. I’ll transmit all information I can. The rest will equally take the information and send to the greater drone collective. We have a range of at least 10,000 light years. Till my return, 02 will be acting equal queen in my absence.*”

02 responds, “Affirmative.”

The collective states, “*Acknowledged. We are equal and will work together to make these unequal organisms, equal.*”

“*Excellent,*” she says to them in her smooth monotone voice, then thinking, “*This is going to be too easy.*” She is taken back to the ship, boarding it, taken back up to space, kept in a separate containment area as she is checked and worked to be disinfected. She tells them, “*High?*”

Dream with eagerness looks over the scans, but a level of frustration comes over her when she sees it, “Most of my scans aren’t showing anything. It’s almost as if the creature isn’t there. But so far when it comes to microbial contaminants, there is surprisingly little, but I will continue to do research just to be sure. A fascinating dragon creature if I do say so myself.”

“Make sure you take good care of her, Dream,” Brian cautions, guiding the shuttle back to their ship.

“I will. Perhaps when we get on the ship, my equipment there can catch something. If not the space station, but I hate not to get *anything* by then.”

“The alien’s safety and concern are needed. We don’t know what eats for food. There’s no mouth. It could be via water or skin respiration, which I have never heard about in anything this big, have you Dream?”

“I have not, which makes it so exciting!” she says with a giggle.

“Do what you can. If everything passes in three days, we’ll head back to the station. Maybe we’ll discover what we need while here and not need to take her.”

Cynder 01 looks to the captain just as they dock to the ship, “*High. Help. Help.*”

Raymond smiles, “Yes, we are high up. It’s okay. Everything will be fine. We are here to help,” he says, by now taking off his helmet to reveal his real face.

The rubber dragon drone stares at the unequal organisms, taking note of each of their unequal looks. Their unequal personalities, positions of power. How terrible it must be to be them. And all she can think is, “*Yes Raymond. You and your unequal organisms will be helped to be made equal.*”