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Miranda Bennett has taken off her suit jacket, baring freckled shoulders. She's reaching across the conference table, to take a hold of Tom Wreke's hand. His hair is untouched by white and grey, a dark brown through and through. Tom's body language is tight, mouth set into a firm line. His fingers remain limp in her grasp, as she strokes the back of his knuckles like petting a kitten.

**MIRANDA BENNETT**

You know- Tom, may I call you Tom?

Miranda pauses expectantly. When no answer is forthcoming, she continues on with her sentence, voice low and sultry, heavy with implication.

**MIRANDA BENNETT**

There's a little birdie that's told me that- some of the other members of the board, have held your recent pushes for new legislation pertaining to the 'humane' treatment of artificial intelligence in Research and Development in contempt. They think you're trying to incite something- and you're not an instigator, are you, Tom?

Tom shakes his head slowly. Miranda smiles.

**MIRANDA BENNETT**

No, see... I knew that Emerson picked you out because you caught his eye. It isn't only his that you've captivated, thankfully for you- and it's been left to my shoulders, coincidentally, to determine what ought to be done to- correct your course. Find a fitting retribution.

She tilts Tom's head upwards to look her in the eyes, one finger pushing his head up and back slightly. She stares down at him intently, with the eyes of an apex predator. Tom tries not to quiver.

**MIRANDA BENNETT**

I'm sure that we can reach a suitable arrangement- to our mutual *satisfaction*.

Miranda's tone is smug- purred, as if she knows that she has his back against the wall. Tom's tone is clipped, carefully controlled- tight around the edges. Beneath the table, his leg bounces anxiously, knee rattling the underside of the wood. His words are stilted, slow to come forth.

**TOM WREKE**

I'd find that... amenable.

**MIRANDA BENNETT**

Oh, I'm sure you will, sweetheart.

Tom flinches visibly at the pet name, the endearment curled on her tongue like something precious. She lets him go- but reaches for his hand again. He tries to pull away- but Miranda closes her hand slightly around his, the tips of her nails digging into his skin.

**MIRANDA BENNETT**

I'm sure that you'll enjoy yourself.

She smiles, then- eyes half lidded. Tom freezes for a moment, as she leans in- and presses a lacquered kiss to the back of his knuckles. It's a gesture straight out of a fairytale prince's playbook.

Tom's mouth twitches like he wants to laugh- only it comes out as a smile with frightened eyes, bright with near hysteria, as Miranda draws away again.

She smiles back, all bared white teeth and stark red lips- and for a moment, Tom understands why it's a near universal threat display in the animal kingdom.

**MIRANDA BENNETT**

I'll see you Sunday, honey.

Miranda pushes her chair back, the wheels catching a little against the carpet. It doesn't do much to muffle the click of her heels as she walks out, hips loose and swivelling slightly with her strut.

Tom leans against the back of his chair, head tilted to look towards the ceiling. His eyes are scrunched closed, mouth pulled in a grimace. When he finally whispers his reply- his is the only set of ears it falls upon.

**TOM WREKE**

...See you Sunday.

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