

ESRU Files: The case of missing hikers

story by ZedDb & DMFO

"Hikers, why does it always have to be hikers!", Agent Samara muttered to herself. She was growing tired of having to take these long trips out into the wilderness in the ESRU protective suit. However, she was thankful that this time she didn't have to wear a protective helmet. Especially during a hot summer day like this, she would have been a grumpy sweaty mess by the end of this mission.

But at least she could feel the fresh air dashing against her face. When she joined the Extraterrestrial Scientific Reconnaissance Unit, it didn't occur to her that she would have to go out on fetch quests like these.

Samara were more fascinated with the new plants and mutations to the existing flora that had been brought to earth by asteroid Yuria.

Yuria exploded when she entered the earth's atmosphere, particle debris were scattered throughout the world. Over the years, the agency began receiving reports regarding mutated plants.

The most common ones she would run into, on her job, were the strange plants that would generate electrical fields strong enough to jam wireless devices.

Sadly, most of her time seemed to be devoted to rescuing lost hikers instead of studying the plants. And in this case, a senior ESRU agent, Bianca had gotten lost too. The amount of interference was a lot higher than expected. Agent Bianca had lost contact with HQ 4 hours ago. We could not send in drones to look for her due to the high interference in the forest.

Thankfully, HQ had provided her with a new prototype comm system that seem to hold up fine.

"It could be worse though, at least I don't have to deal with one of those face melting plants that my coworkers had to deal with a few weeks ago." She thought to herself. Before she could debate her career choices any further, her earpiece sparked to life.

"Any progress, Samara?" Even the guys over at HQ seemed bored today.

"No, none yet. I bet they are all sitting around and eating hot dogs when I finally find them.", Samara replied.

"Uhuh, your signal is getting weaker so we can't get a good video feed from you anymore. But just voice should be fine. Just don't go wandering off if you lose contact. We don't want to rescue two of our agents from a signal jammer."

"Roger."

Samara took a deep sigh and looked at the trail ahead. She didn't see or smell anything that would indicate a campfire, so she were probably wrong about the hot dogs... After following the winding trail for a bit more she spotted a huge bright pink collection of majestic flowers.

"Bingo, this must be the plant! At least I might be able to get something out of this trip." Samara started to feel a bit excited. She had never seen anything like this before. It must be a new species.

"Come in HQ! Do you read me?" Samara hoped that the comms still worked so she did not have to back out now.

"We read you loud and clear. Did you find Bianca and the lost hikers?"

"No, but I think I've found the source of the interference. It's a large collection of enormous bright pink flowers. No sign of Bianca and the others."

"I see, that does not match anything we have encountered before."

"It seems harmless, no toxic fumes detected from where I am standing. There is only a faint sweet scent in the air. Requesting permission to investigate closer."

"Take a few pictures and then return back. Even if your suit should protect you against most things, DO NOT get too close. It's starting to get late so we will call off the search for today."

"Aww, but I liked wandering aimlessly around the forest..."

"Yeah, yeah. Just get it done. Let us know if you find anything else."

Samara carefully approached the strange plants. The sweet scent got stronger as she got closer. She snapped a few pictures of the huge plants with her head gear and stopped a few seconds to admire the majestic flowers. It wasn't until now that she started to feel tired from the trip. She had not felt this exhausted in a long time. But as she was about to leave she noticed something odd.

"HQ, something not right. The flower seems bigger than before, and the pod like

structures surrounding it has begun pulsating. There's purple-ish roots appearing on the ground! Are you getting this?"

Her presence had somehow alarmed the plant. She noticed some slight movement inside the pods.

"HQ, I think I know what happened to them!" Samara gasped nervously and started to back away slowly from the plant.

"Agent Samara, leave ... area ... and ..." The radio transmission suddenly cut out.

"The reception is getting worse, please repeat that HQ", pleaded Samara. Her conversation was cut short as she was suddenly thrown to the ground.

Before Samara could react, she was pinned down to the ground by her assailant. The sweet scent she had felt before had increased so much that she could practically taste it.

"Bianca?!" After Samara managed to focus her eyes, She noticed that the one that had wrestled her to the ground where the lost ESRU agent.

"Why are you-" Samara suddenly froze as a steady stream of pink drool had started to flow out of Bianca's mouth. It started to pool up on Samara's chest. Bianca's protective suit had be torn apart and only the legs of it was left on her. There were purple vein like structures growing all over her body. The rest of her body had started to change color to pink too. Samara tried to look into Bianca's eyes but was greeted by two pink orbs.

"Ugh, this smell!" The drool had an even stronger sweet smell than Bianca. Samara felt how it was overwhelming her. She couldn't think strait anymore and her body started to feel hot. So much so that her nipples had started to poke out through her suit.

"Bianca, get off of me!" Samara tried to push Bianca off but her strength had left her. All she could manage were some minor shoves that didn't seem to faze Bianca in any way. Samara felt her consciousness slowly leaving her as she was trying to fight off Bianca until there was only blackness...

End?