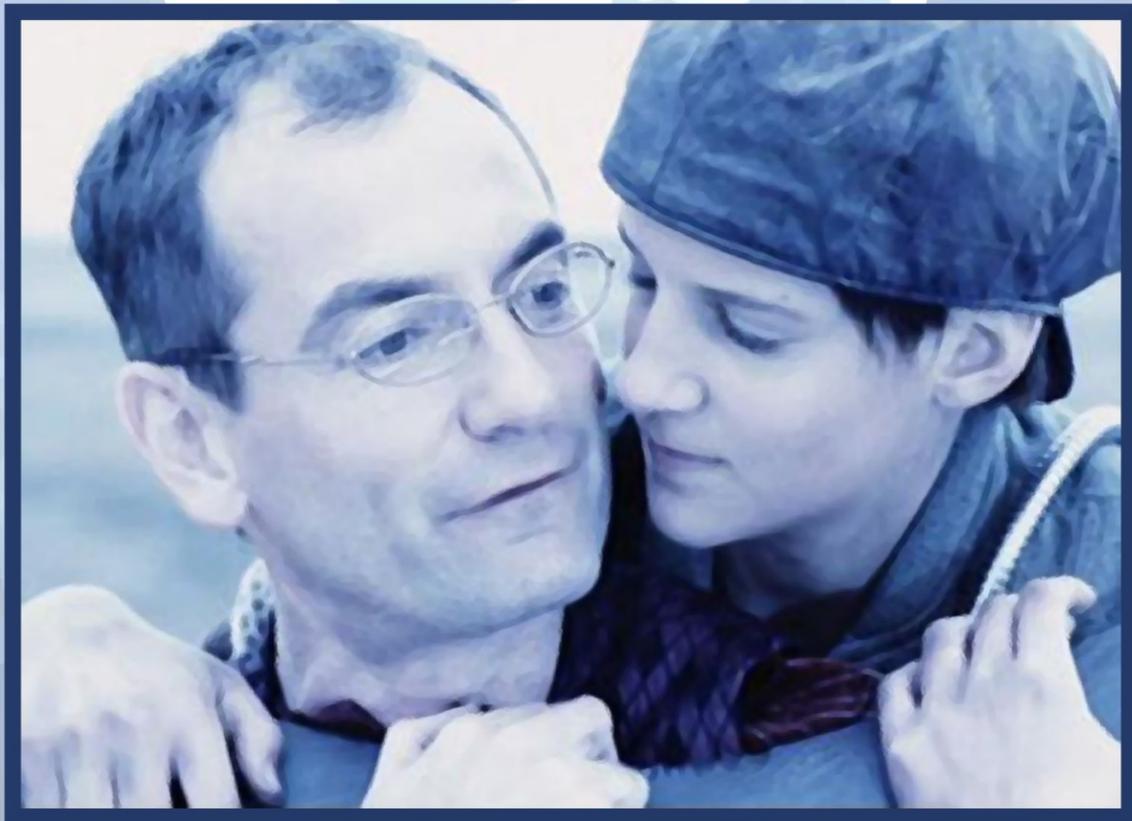


PREV



BY ARDATH REKHA

Prey

By Ardath Rekha

Synopsis: When you're the littlest in the herd, and the predators are out, you'd better not act like prey...

Category: Fan fiction

Fandom: *Pitch Black*

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Challenges: None

Rating: T

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Warnings: Mild Violence, Harsh Language

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1.

Pounce

She could tell by the way he moved, casually and with abandon, that he didn't hear her. Her stealthy approach was masked by the desert wind and his own ineptitude. It made her smile a little as she crept closer. He would never hear her coming, and that was a very nice thing to know.

I'm a predator now, she told herself, stealing closer.

"You comfy up there?"

Jack froze, certain for a moment that the voice was addressing her. Caught!

"Yes, well it's amazing how you can do without the necessities in life, provided you have the little luxuries." Paris's fatuous answer made her relax. Zeke was talking to *him*, not her. She was still unseen. She took another careful step closer, amazed at how completely witless their sentry was.

Shoulda put me in charge of the damn watchtower, she thought with annoyance. Paris was damn useless. *You don't even know there's a kid sneaking up on your skinny ass...*

Fuckin' grown-ups. She knew better than to really trust any of them, but still... she'd been helping out nonstop since Zeke and Shazza busted her out of her cryo-tube, and they still wouldn't give her any *real* responsibility, something to keep her anxieties at bay. They looked at her and saw a kid, trying to feed her fairy tales of imminent rescue and safety when she more than knew better, refusing to let her do anything *useful*. Even seeing her as a boy they still weren't going to trust her... and *she* wasn't the one being sneaked up on here. If Riddick actually came back, everybody would be easy pickings.

Even me. It galled her, but at least she knew she wasn't the weakest in this herd. Still, she had to do something about Paris... and boy did she ever *want* to.

If Jack had ever had a pet, she might have recognized herself. She was creeping up on Paris with all of the intensity and excitement of a half-grown kitten that had spotted a vulnerable bird. Closer and closer, and he wasn't suspecting. Zeke was turning away beneath them, having given Paris a strongly-worded admonition to pay attention to his surroundings... an admonition Paris still wasn't heeding.

"Yes, well, you dig the graves, I'll hold the fort, old boy—"

Jack flashed her right hand out, grabbing the scruff of Paris's neck and pulling him back. Her left hand was in motion, too, arcing the boomerang around to press it against his throat as though it were a knife.

"*Christ!*" the effete man shouted, struggling to keep his wine from spilling.

Oh for God's sake! There was something just *offensive* about that... that he was so soft, so naïve, that even now he was more worried about his *wine* spilling than his *blood*. Their eyes met and as Paris began to relax, Jack hissed at him, half mocking and half genuinely angry.

"He'd probably get you right here, right under the jaw. And you'd never hear him coming. 'Cause that's how *good* Riddick is!" And how good *she* was. A *flatulent rhino* could sneak up on the man.

The idiot laughed, trying to regain his over-privileged aplomb. "Tell me something. Did you run away from your parents, or did they run away from you?"

To him, it must have looked like she gave him a smile. But it was a sneer. *Asshole*. She didn't bother to answer him, just took her boomerang and moved away, palming an unopened can of something expensive as she did. She let him hear her footsteps as she headed back down the crippled ship's hull toward the ground.

Asshole. Effete creeps like him had no idea what it was like to walk through the front door of your house and be greeted by gouts and splashes of blood everywhere. To not even be able to figure out whose body parts you were *looking* at. To know with adamant certainty that you'd be next

unless you ran *right now*, fuck taking money or clothes or your beloved stuffed bear, because when it's a choice between your life and your *life*, there's an animal inside that has only one answer.

Well, at least she'd hopefully made an impression. He looked warier now, probably less of Riddick than of the next prank she might decide to pull on him. Whatever kept his eyes open.

Damn, they were wide as saucers for a second there! She had to forcibly restrain a girlish giggle that wanted to burst forth. That had been fun. That had been encouraging. The ability to take even a pushover like Paris with that much ease was still an accomplishment. She was no longer the weakest in the herd.

Jack B. Badd grinned to herself. She was one step further away from being Prey. And that... was all that mattered.

Author's note: I honestly don't recall where I was going with this, but I may continue it soon.

—Ardath Rekha, Spring 2022