

# Strange Bedfellows

## Boy Meets Giant Alien Hydra Girl

Within the confinements of virtual reality, a professor that somewhat resembled a snake shook his head at the sight of his new class.

They came in many different shapes and forms. Like most people in virtual reality, his students had avatars designed to express their personalities. Some of them were outright absurd with glowing red eyes, angel wings, and others decided to take on the shape of dragons and other mythical creatures. Needless to say, this would be disruptive to teaching his online course.

“Hello everyone.” he hissed. “I’m just going to get this out of the way before I make a proper introduction... all avatars are now disabled.”

Suddenly, the colorful assortment of people standing before him became much more mundane. Their avatars shifted back into much more familiar forms of humans and several different alien species. This included what appeared to be a sixteen year old girl turning into a forty year old human man and a large dragon changing into a four foot tall moth-like creature that seemed rather meek and submissive. For everyone else, most of them became noticeably uglier once their true forms were revealed, and a majority were wearing the equivalent of pajamas or they were completely nude.

Immediately, a variety of embarrassed students disconnected from the online course, leaving only around two-thirds of the class remaining as they sat inside of a virtual classroom. Only a few seemed to be wearing any normal clothes.

“Alright,” continued the professor, “I’ve already weeded out a good chunk of the undesirables. If you actually read the online course outline that I so graciously prepared for everyone, you would have known that this was going to happen. No avatars allowed. For the sake of convenience, those present are going to stand at the same height, regardless of the size of your original species.”

He paused to look at his students as this transition occurred. In a matter of moments, all the students were suddenly around the same size.

“Now...” he hissed, “Welcome to my Interstellar history course. In the next solar cycle, we will cover the entire history of the known galaxy and briefly go over its sapient lifeforms. It should be pretty easy.”

These words aroused a chuckle from some of those present. Nonetheless, the professor resumed speaking.

“This might sound odd, but I want everyone to look at a student standing or sitting right next to you.”

As instructed, a young human man amongst the class looked to his left and came face to face with a bipedal creature with fur that reminded him of a fox. Overall, the alien was practically a Kumiho in his mind with her black fur and red eyes.

“Good job.” hissed the professor. “Now, look at another.”

The human looked to his right and saw a strange alien from a species that he failed to recognize. Overall, the creature resembled a hydra with three heads, sky blue skin, and two yellow eyes on each head. This so-called hydra stood on all fours and had a tail that vaguely resembled a flipper, albeit with three fins. Its body was covered in thick yet slick hide similar fine leather with a soft yellow underbelly complete with a pair of large leathery wings. Webbing was present between the creature's fingers and toes, with four digits on each hand and foot, which had what appeared to be gold rings and other jewelry adorned onto them.

As the alien spoke by clicking with a tongue, software translated its incomprehensible alien language into a voice that he could understand. He immediately noticed that the alien sounded like a young woman around his age.

“Hi there!” she chirped.

All three of her heads expressed different emotions, with one smiling, another sheepishly looking away, and another staring at the ground.

He returned the greeting with a smile of his own.

“All eyes on me.” hissed the professor. “I hope you enjoyed getting acquainted with each other because odds are one of the people that you just looked at is not going to be in the class by the time all of this is over.”

The hydra frowned with one head and started nervously nibbling on her claws with another.

“For your first day of class,” he continued, “We are just going to start with the simple stuff. For the next five minutes, I want everyone to take a break to get yourself changed into a more appropriate outfit if you’re not already in one.”

At these words, a majority of the students disappeared to follow these instructions to the letter. The human was already well dressed with a black collared shirt being his most prominent article of clothing. Meanwhile, the hydra didn’t seem to mind being nude.

“As for the good students that were already prepared, I have a fun little treat for you.” He made a catlike smile as he paused to smirk. “Some people find history boring. However, in virtual reality, it can be a lot more invigorating so to speak. Let’s all phase to the area that I have marked on the map.”

With that, the professor disappeared. A flashing notification appeared in the human's vision and what was left of the students vanished, with the exception of the human and the hydra. He was about to join the rest, but he saw that the hydra seemed to be on the verge of tears.

She was frantically messing with a holographic keyboard with one of her heads becoming increasingly furious, another choking back tears, and the last one shamefully looked at the ground.

“...Is something wrong?” he asked.

She looked at him with one of her heads. “I don’t know how to get it to do the thing!”

The human pressed his glasses up and walked over to her. He pointed at one of the holographic keys.

“Do you see the home button?”

All three of her heads meekly nodded.

“Just press it, click on the teleportation tab, and then tap on the marker that the professor gave to us.”

As he instructed, she began this three step process. One of her heads apparently looked back at him for reassurance as he nodded. Eventually, she disappeared. With that out of the way, he teleported himself.

In a matter of moments, he found himself with the rest of the class as they stood near what looked like the Ural mountains of Russia. The first thing he noticed was that the hydra was smiling with all three heads and almost bouncing on the balls of her four feet.

“Thank you so much!” she whispered with one head.

“No problem.” he replied.

The sound of an explosion caused the hydra to jump as one of her heads squealed while the human recoiled. They joined the rest of the class as they watched a battle unfold. It was difficult for the

human to hear, but he could vaguely make out the sound of the professor loudly hissing amidst explosions and gunfire.

“...and what’s left of the Soviet forces are holding out in the Ural mountains against overwhelming odds.”

A large force of Soviet infantry and tanks were entrenched along the mountains and forests. They ignored the students as if they were ghosts and bullets harmlessly passed through the class as the Soviets fired at figures clad in power armor. Their bullets harmlessly pinged and ricocheted against them.

In return, the aliens clad in power armor retaliated with an onslaught of plasma, lasers, and metallic particles. Although it was heavily censored, the plasma easily made people burst or dissolve as it boiled plenty of red blood. Low powered lasers nonchalantly struck soviet soldiers down near instantly while cauterizing the wounds. Gauss fire was by far the most graphic as it turned people into red mist or cleaved off entire limbs.

It seemed that only overwhelming weapons fire from Kalashnikovs could scratch any of the aliens. Otherwise, it took full fledged tank rounds from T-62's to even penetrate their armor.

Not that it mattered. Although the Soviet air force was trying its hardest, the aliens easily had control over the sky. Capital ships bombed infrastructure and human soldiers from orbit and the mountains could only provide so much protection.

The students reacted with either awe or horror, for war was both a terrible and glorious thing. As for the hydra, she curiously watched an MiG-21 get shot down by an alien spacecraft, resulting in the human pilot being ejected from the plane and slowly descending from the sky, thanks to a parachute.

“Although the Soviets were able to hold out,” hissed the professor, “Once communication channels were established, they formally surrendered to the Interstellar Federation. Only soldiers unable or

willing to lay down their arms retreated east into Siberia in order to continue the fight. After that, the federation forced the rest of the planet to join at gunpoint, and that's how the Sol system became part of the Interstellar Federation.”

He slithered to the front and center of the class as Soviet soldiers screamed and charged against alien forces in the background.

“Say what you want about the federation, but their interference in what humans call World War Three stopped humanity from wiping itself out in a nuclear war. Anyway, you can expect lessons in the future to be like this where we witness history playing out before our eyes as I lecture you about it. Most of the time, at least. Let's head back to the classroom.”

After saying this, he vanished. The students present disappeared as well, except this time the hydra was more than capable of teleporting on her own.

Eventually, they were all sitting back in the classroom wearing more appropriate outfits with the other students. Once again, the sound of the professor hissing filled the virtual air.

“Ah, how nice of the other less prepared students to join us. Just so we can break the ice, for our first day, we are going to pick partners and I am going to assign you a random topic to work on together.”

The professor paused as the students mumbled amongst each other. In the meantime, the hydra looked at the human and smiled.

“Don't be shy now. If you can't find a partner, I'll just assign one to you or form three person groups.”

With that, the students began pairing up with each other. Most of them lazily decided upon whoever was sitting next to them. As for the hydra, she happily bounced over to the human with her finned tail swaying up and down.

“Once again, thanks for helping me!” she said with a smile. “What’s your name?”

“William.” he replied with a nod.

“Well met, Will-Yum! My people called me Anahita, but you can call me Ana for short.” One of her heads broke eye contact. “Do you mind if I call you Yums, just for convenience?”

“Uh... sure...?”

All three of her heads made expressions of joy. “As humans like to say, cool beans! Anyway, Yums, you seem like a pretty smart guy. Do you want to be partners?”

With a mouselike demeanor, William nodded in the affirmative. “Sure.”

Anahita swiftly found an area to stand next to him with her tail swaying up and down. Meanwhile, the professor was using what appeared to be a holographic tablet to look at the various people paired up. A notification promptly informed William that he was now partnered up with Anahita and a private voice chat was automatically initiated between the two, silencing everyone else in the room.

She looked around in confusion and fear with her three heads. “What’s happening? I can’t hear anything!”

“It’s just a private voice chat,” he explained, “It mutes everyone else.”

“...What’s a mute?”

William wasn’t sure if she was joking, but based on the way she was looking at him as one of heads blinked and another fluttered her eyes, he assumed that she was serious.

“You did take the virtual reality tutorial, right?”

“There’s a tutorial?!” Her tail stopped swaying and sagged to the ground. “What’s a tutorial?”

In response, he rested his head in one hand and sighed.

“I’m sorry!” she whimpered. “I really hate technology sometimes. It’s supposed to make things easier, but it seems like all it’s done is making things more complicated!”

“Well, I’m sort of a tech guy. I’d strongly disagree with that.” He took a moment to look at her three heads as they made expressions of fear, hopelessness, and anger. “I’ve never seen one of your kind before.”

At these words, she grew a little more cheerful. “Oh! I’m what some people refer to as a Zmaj. We’re kind of rare around the galaxy.”

“...Why is that?” he asked.

“Most of my kind uploaded their consciousnesses onto a... what’s it called... a dyson sphere?”

William was immediately reminded of a strange anomaly. There was a rogue solar system with what used to be a habitable planet and a dyson sphere. Any ships that tried to enter the system were typically destroyed by endless swarms of nanites if they ignored warnings to leave. Nonetheless, Ana resumed speaking.

“Then there was my ancestors. They rejected that kind of technology and went on an exodus as our planet started to freeze over. Afterward, they set up an enclave in the neutral zone to live humble lives as fish farmers.”

“Oh.” he muttered. “So you’re basically some kind of space Amish.”

She was about to ask a question, but he cut her off.



“...I’ll explain what the Amish are later.”

Another notification entered his vision with instructions to write a paper with a randomly assigned topic alongside your partner. The one he received made him raise an eyebrow.

Why did the Kulaks deserve it?

Ignoring this, he resumed speaking.

“So, you live in the neutral zone?”

She closed her eyes with one hand. “Yeah! I live on the free planet of Serenity. It’s such a pretty place... but what about you? Do you live on Earth?”

William broke eye contact as he adjusted his glasses. “No... I also live in Serenity.”

Her eyes shone like three pairs of orbs and one of her jaws went agape. “What a coincidence!”

Their professor looked at them with disdain and butted into the conversation.

“Could the two of you stop with the chit-chat and save it for after class?”

Four heads meekly nodded in return. From there, William and Anahita went through the relatively boring process of pulling up online archive documents about collectivization efforts of the Soviet Union in Ukraine. He did most of the work while she struggled to use an archive browser and a basic word processor. In around an hour, they created a document around half a dozen pages long complete with archive sources about how Stalin did nothing wrong, making it perfect wank material for unironic tankies.

“I’m so glad that I partnered up with a human. Especially when we’re doing a bit of human history together!”

“Yeah, me too.” he muttered.

Their professor looked at one of his wrists as if he was checking the time.

“Alright everyone, that’s the end of today’s session. Make sure your classwork gets properly turned in. Review the syllabus and complete all of your digital paper work. I’ll see you around this time tomorrow.”

He started levitating in the air and phased through a wall in a completely nonsensical manner. Meanwhile, eager students began disconnecting from the session enmasse.

“Hey, Yums.”

He looked at the hydra after she whispered this.

“Do you want to talk to each other after class? I think it would be nice if I made a friend.”

The colors flushed to her cheeks as her heads nervously looked away.

“I don’t see why not.”

His words made her happily bounce on the balls of her feet.

“I’m going to disconnect real quick, Ana. After that, I’ll send you a friend request and we can message each other from there.”

“Okay!”

In a matter of moments, he phased out of the classroom and exited virtual reality.

This led to him opening his eyes back in his bedroom. A tap of a button disconnected his neural implant from a computer, allowing him to safely stand from his chair to stretch. Moments later, he sat back down and used his computer to browse through the profiles of his classmates.

Most of them had intricate descriptions and pictures, with the exception of one labelled Anahita. He quickly browsed through it and discovered that she did not have any pictures of herself uploaded, much less a profile description. It was pretty much just her first name and basic information laid out in a barebones fashion.

He quickly sent a friend request to her.

With that feat accomplished, he left the computer behind and returned five minutes later with a cup of noodles. He was right on time as his request was accepted, allowing him to initiate a text chat...

**Connection active!**

William: hey

Anahita: I finally got it to work! I was going to ask for your help, but I couldn't contact you!

Anahita: How do you know how to do all of this stuff?

William: I grew up with it. Having a bit of intuition and studying information technology helps too. :)

Anahita: How did you do that?

William: do what

Anahita: The face thing!

William: You mean this: :)

Anahita: Yes! Wait... I think I found the thing.

Anahita: 😂😂😂

William: Oh no.

Anahita: 😊😁👉

Anahita: This is so cool!

Anahita: Anyway, what are you doing?

William: Eating noodles.

Anahita: Now I'm jealous. And hungry.

Anahita: 😞😞😞

Anahita: I was thinking of grabbing something to eat from my favorite eateries. Do you like Seafood, Yums?

William: just about anything is good with enough rice

Anahita: Hah! Good to know. I live in district fourteen if you want to join me for dinner.

William didn't type for a few moments.

Anahita: I think it would be so cool if we could meet each other.

William: What, would it be like a date or something?

He chuckled to himself like an idiot for a moment after making this joke.

Anahita: I don't know... do you want it to be?

Anahita: 😏😏😏

His face turned red after reading this.

Anahita: You seem like a decent guy. It can be platonic or something more. Your choice really.

William: Man, I shouldn't have made noodles...

William: I don't see why not. It could be fun, although I've never really dated outside of my species before. Why me though?

Anahita: I just want to talk in person and get to know each other a little better is all.

Anahita: My apologies if I'm being a little too forward! I'm not sure if this is how the courtship process works for humans. 😏😏😏

For a while, William pondered the implications of what it would be like to have a girlfriend with three heads.

William: I'm game. Where's this eatery at?

Anahita: It's a little place called the Fish Factory! It should be right on the water.

Anahita: I'm going to go get myself prepared. If you can't find me, I'll be the one wearing a gold bow.

Anahita: I'll see you there at dusk, Yums! 😊😊😊

William: Alright. See ya there!

**Anahita has disconnected.**

Immediately afterward, William opened his browser and found the location of the restaurant in question. Then out of curiosity, he decided to look up the species Anahita claimed that she was.

Zmaj.

Reading the results made his eyes go wide.

“Oh god.”

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Anahita felt so happy.

Things were finally looking up for her. Not only did she make an alien friend, but it could turn into something more! Maybe these online courses weren't such a bad idea after all.

She made sure her claws were well manicured and her hide was nice and shiny before she placed a gold bow on her central head. After that, she opened her mouths to groom several rows of sharp teeth that resembled that of a shark. She made quick work of picking out meat and removing loose fangs.

From there, she strolled out of her humble home. Then she found herself outside where there was a beautiful blue sky and a metropolis a short distance away, where she easily dwarfed her

surroundings. Considering the fact that she stood over twenty five feet tall and she was around fifty feet long combined with her tail, she was monstrous in comparison.

Anahita took a special pathway to a nearby body of water as her tail swayed up and down in sheer excitement.