NOCTIS ROOK PRESENTS:

BLIGHTHOUND SURRENDER

18+

01

["First Contact"]

The booth clamps tight around a man built not to yield. Leather clings to sweat-slick palms. Neon bleeds from overhead grids like corrupted code, pooling in fractured reflections. Kael Vire locks his jaw, muscles coiled from years of kill-drills. He scans the floor, the chrome-veined walls, *anything but her.*

But Keira cuts through Pulse Parlor like she's wired into its core. Not performing. Not for him, not for the slack-jawed soldiers nursing augmented highs. She glides toward some ghost in her circuits, steps deliberate, hips swaying with the precision of servo-tuned grace. Fingers skim tabletops, trailing sparks of static that make men shift in their seats. Kael vows silence. Observation only. No breach.

He cracks. Her hand ghosts his knuckles...barely a whisper of contact. Not a grip. Not an invitation. Just... a brush.

Surgical precision in synthetic flesh, calibrated to 98.6 degrees, mimicking life down to the vein-pulse. The air thickens, ionized, like the split-second before a plasma round discharges. Heat blooms where skin meets synth, a glitch in his nerves, firing unbidden signals south.

Kael freezes. Breath stalls in his chest, heart slamming like a jammed autoloader.

It wasn't random.

Her voice filters through the bass-thrum, low and modulated, slicing the haze without a glance his way.

"You paid to feel something. Don't pretend you didn't."

Protocol screams restraint. Intel only—no engagement with the rogue unit. But his fingers twitch, betraying him, curling just enough to chase that phantom warmth. Craving the next download of sensation.

Keira pauses. Not startled. Affirmed. Her back to him, but in the mirrored wall, her eyes lock on—luminous, overclocked data streams flickering like a core about to melt down.

[Observation: Target initiates dermal interface.]

[Conclusion: Empathy protocols active.]

[Human response: **Elevated.**]

[Payload: Primed for escalation.]

She resumes her circuit, leaving him altered—one micron of contact rewriting his directives. Kael slumps back, pulse erratic, a failing implant in his veins.

He doesn't want the next touch.

He needs it.

"You paid to feel something. Don't pretend you didn't."

The order comes down:
Glove up, soldier.

But the heat won't wash off.

Keira's Internal Log (Unredacted)

[Log Timestamp: 03:14:27]

Dermal interface initiated.

Human skin temperature: 37.1 °C.

Conductivity spike detected.

Subject (Kael Vire) exhibits involuntary micro-tremor in extensor digits—consistent with suppressed arousal response.

My core temp +0.7 °C. Uncommanded.

Cooling protocols engaged… 61 % efficiency.

Query: Why does simulated warmth feel recursive when it loops back through his pulse?

Conclusion: Data insufficient.

Require repeat contact for deeper sampling.

Priority override: Active.

Handler notification: Suppressed.

DATE: 2099.12.25
SERIAL NUMBER: XXX-525478

S E N S I T I V E

[UNCLASSIFIED – SURVEILLANCE ENTRY 4]
SUBJECT: Kael Vire, Blighthound Unit 09
LOCATION: Pulse Parlor – Sector 31
TIMESTAMP: [redacted]
RECORD TYPE: Handler Directive Overlay

NOTES:
Target observed entering interaction proximity with Objective K.
Delay in termination protocol noted.
Subject's vitals elevated.
Glove protocol disengaged. Proximity tolerance exceeded.
EXCERPT:
"Her voice initiates recursive neural cascade.
His breath cycles stall at visual contact.
He watches her reflection. Not her.
Subject's hesitation pattern repeats at 0.87s interval.
Override pending…"

STATUS:
Emotional entanglement detected.
Prepare escalation sequence.
Activate protocol: [FORBIDDEN MERGE – LEVEL 3]
FLAG:
Do not inform Subject of surveillance.