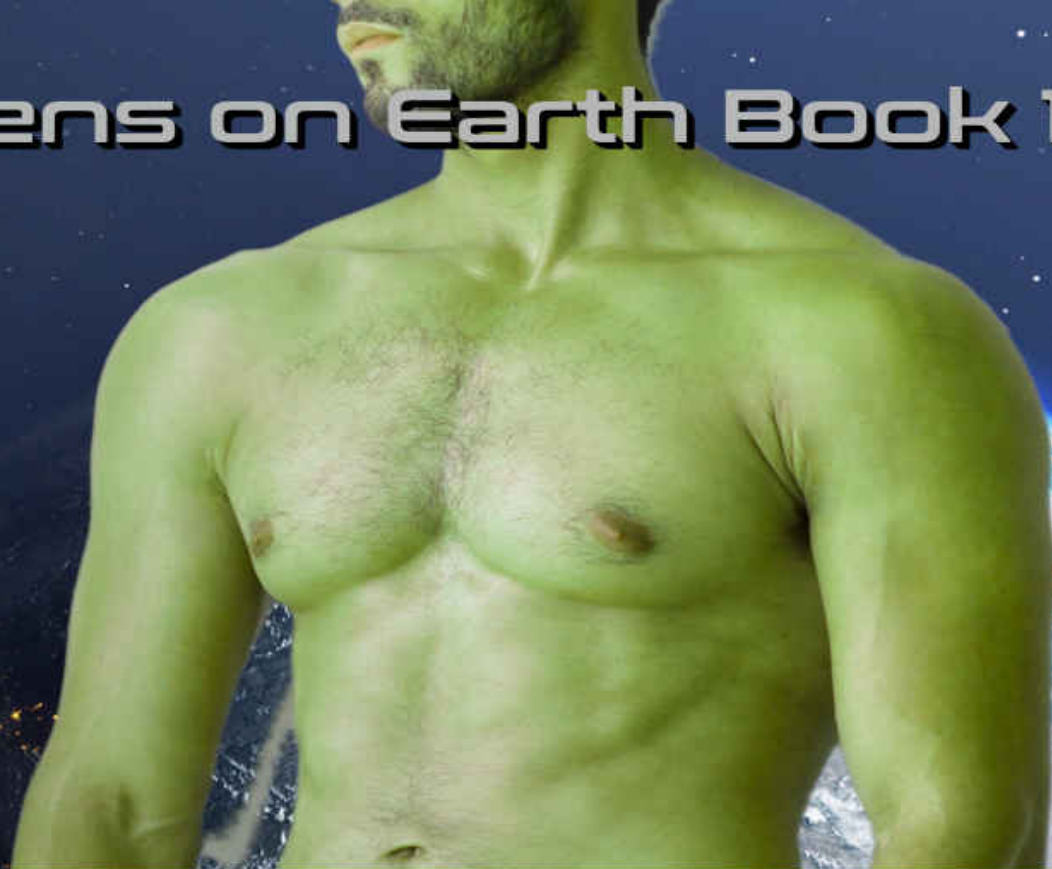


Aliens on Earth Book 10



**The
Bully
Alien**

ASHLYN HAWKES

THE BULLY ALIEN

ALIENS ON EARTH BOOK TEN

ASHLYN HAWKES

CONTENTS

[Get Free Books](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 17](#)

[Chapter 18](#)

[Chapter 19](#)

[Chapter 20](#)

[Other Books By Ashlyn Hawkes](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Special Author Note](#)

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To those who look upon the stars with hope for the future.

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Delana

Most people look forward to college. A way to make a fresh start, a clean state, and all of that.

I need that. In grade school, I was teased. In high school, I was bullied.

All because I look different.

All because I feel different.

When I was three, I was kidnapped. I was playing in my front yard. A guy rolled up in a white van. The door opened, and another guy jumped out and grabbed me.

They held me for three days. Most people don't remember when they're three, but I can recall every second. I was so scared. I thought I would never see my parents again.

I was half right.

They filmed me, showed my parents they had me, cut my left cheek so deeply that I scarred.

They wanted ransom for me. My parents had won the lottery not even two weeks before I was kidnapped.

They got their money, and I was released.

But when my daddy saw the video of my being cut live, he had such a bad panic attack that he had a heart attack, and he died.

The scar was why kids teased me in high school.

I went to counseling. It didn't help much with the PTSD.

And then in high school, I was bullied. There was a bomb threat, and I freaked the hell out. I had a major panic attack myself, and I thought I was going to die, and the kids didn't understand.

How could they understand the panic and terror I felt? They have comfy, cozy little lives without any more worries than who to die, who to kiss, who to go to prom with.

Me? Each day was a battle, and I strove to overcome any adversity I faced, even if the adversity was only in my mind.

I've been working on myself for so long now, and I think I'm finally getting somewhere.

Sun Valley University. I'm here to study space science.

Yes, I so badly want to get away from earth that I'm learning how to become an astronaut.

My therapist thinks it's because I want to escape, and that's part of it. I'm not going to lie.

But when I had been held captive, there had been a window in the ceiling. Not in any of the walls. I would just look up, watching the sun climb and then fall and the moon do the same. The stars were my friends. I would talk to them until my kidnappers came in and told me to shut the hell up, so I then would talk to the stars in my head.

One day, I'll visit the stars. I'll do what I can to leave this world behind. It doesn't matter what the assignment is. I need to go.

But hopefully, here, I'll be able to make a new start.

I'll be able to finally put my past behind me once and for all.

To my new beginning.

First day of classes. I leave my dorm room in plenty of time to get to class early. I'm still not sure of my way around campus yet, and I don't want to risk being late.

The sun is shining, and there's a light spring breeze in the air. I take a deep breath and smile. It's going to be okay.

I walk across campus, taking in the sights and sounds around me. Everything looks so new, so different from what I'm used to. I can't help but feel a sense of hope that things are going to work out here for me this time.

As I make my way towards my class, I hear shouting coming from behind me.

I turn around to see what's happening, only to come face-to-face with the most gorgeous guy I've ever seen. He towers over me, muscular and imposing with piercing blue eyes that seem to bore right into me. He's definitely someone you don't want to mess with. His presence alone is enough to send shivers down my spine.

I try to walk around him, but he moves suddenly, and we slam against each other.

"Watch it," he growls, his voice low, rumbling.

I look up at him. He's tall, with broad shoulders and a confident stance. His dark hair is slicked back off his face, allowing me to make out his strong jawline.

"What are you looking at?" he hisses.

I flinch, glad he at least didn't add "freak" to the end of that question.

"I just want to get to class," I mumble as a bunch of other students come over.

I hurry away, but I can hear him say something to his friends, something I can't make out.

But I can hear them start to snicker.

As much as I tell myself not to look behind me, that's precisely what I do. Sure enough, they're laughing and pointing at me.

Shit! This is will not high school all over again!

Determined not to let him get under my skin, I continue on to my class, not acknowledging them at all. Screw them. I'm tougher than I look, and I'm not going to back down. I'm gonna stand my ground this time.

Until I can soar to new heights.

My mental pep talk has me smiling as I enter my classroom. I take an empty desk in the front row. Gradually, other students come in, taking the other desks until there's only one seat left, the one to my left, closer to the door.

And then who should walk in but Piercing Blue Eyes. He saunters in like he owns the place, and I swear he rolls his eyes when he realizes he has no choice but to sit next to me. Because there isn't a doubt that he recognizes me.

The professor starts talking and everyone starts to settle in, but I'm too distracted by the guy sitting next to me. I can feel his presence like a physical barrier, and it's all I can do not to turn around and look at him.

But eventually, I can't help but spot out of the corner of my eye that he's stealing glances in my direction. I pretend not to notice. He probably thinks I'm just another scared freshman who cowers away from him. Well, we'll see about that!

Every time our eyes meet, I feel a spark fly between us. It's electric and intense, terrifying and tantalizing all at once. I can sense his anger, his frustration that he has to be here today with me. I swear I'm not reading into it that his anger and frustration is directed at me, but why? You can't tell me that a simple bump that might not have even been my fault is the cause of all of this.

The corners of my mouth curl up as the bell rings and I get up to leave. He can think what he wants of me. I know one thing for sure. This is a start of something new, something exciting.

I start to leave when the professor, Professor Jameson, waves me over.

"Delana Crow," he says.

“Yes, sir.”

“You’re the only girl to have space science as your major.”

“I hadn’t realized that.”

“Not even as a freshman. I mean at the university.”

“Wow.”

“Your grades in high school were impressive as was your admission essay. I expect great things from you.”

I beam at him. “Thank you very much. I won’t disappoint you.”

“I expect not.” He nods to me.

I swear I’m walking on air as I leave the classroom.

Except someone is out in the hallway clearly waiting for me.

Piercing Blue Eyes.

His name is actually Wyatt Whitmore. I know because the professor took roll call.

I lift my chin and refuse to look at him, trying to pretend he doesn’t exist, but he falls into step beside me.

“You’re quite ambitious,” he says, though his tone is tinged with mocking. “Space science, eh?”

I make a face. The skin around my scar always puckers when I make a lot of facial expressions, so I try to keep my face at rest as much as possible, but he’s getting under my skin too much.

“You’re a space science major, too, aren’t you?” I ask. “What’s wrong with that? You ambitious, too, then?”

“Space science and archaeology, if you must know.”

Wow, now that’s a combination that surprises me.

“Good luck with that,” I say.

“Bet you think you’re smart,” he scoffs.

I refuse to be intimidated by him, especially since I hadn't been sarcastic with wishing him luck. If I resented everyone who was an ass to me, I wouldn't talk to many people at all. Despite being bullied in high school, I had had a few friends.

So I turn to face him with a smirk on my face and shoot back, "What are you trying to say? That you don't think a 'girl' is capable of being smart?"

"I heard what the professor said," Wyatt says in a low voice. "You do realize that space science is a tough major, right? You'll need to work really hard to make it through."

I stop and finally look him in the eye. His gaze is intense, holding mine for a few moments before I break away, but not before I see a glimmer of respect in his expression.

"I'm more than capable of handling it," I reply as confidently as I can, "and whatever else comes my way."

He smirks at me, clearly unimpressed by my response. "We'll see about that," he taunts me. There's a challenging look in his eyes as he takes a step closer and says in a low voice, "Are you sure you won't be crawling back to Mommy?"

"I crawled so I could learn to walk. I walked to learn to run. And now, I run so I can learn to fly. You can't clip my wings. I have turbo jets."

And I blow past him and don't look back even though, chances are, he'll be in my next class too.

Wyatt

I couldn't be more frustrated.

This space science shit they're teaching? It's shit. Complete shit.

I mean, I figured that would be the case. Earthlings haven't made it far at all as far as traveling in space, but still, to see how far behind their science is up close and personally? And I realize that I'm a freshman, that the courses I'm taking aren't advanced yet, but still, this is beyond frustrating and pathetic.

To say that I'm beside myself would be the truth. I'm not from Earth. I'm a Grolla from Grixulara, and I would like to get back to my home planet.

But I'm screwed. I'm fucked. I'm going to be stuck on this terrible planet for the rest of my life.

And that girl? She thinks she can be an astronaut? Or do something to farther space travel? Not that any of the fools in this program are going to amount to much of nothing. the professors are all has-beens.

No. They're never was.

Fuck!

I need to get out of here. I can't stand this place for another minute.

I storm out of the classroom and head straight for my favorite diner that's not too far off campus. It's how I heard about the university in the first place. Perhaps with some food in my stomach and a chance to clear my head, I'll feel better about the situation, get my head back on straight.

But as soon as I step in, I can feel the aggression in the room. It's almost palpable, like a storm ready to burst at any minute. The tension is thick and heavy, and there are more than a few people with their hands balled into fists, ready to fight at a moment's notice.

Sighing deeply, I make my way toward the back corner and try to ignore all the hostile vibes that seem to be floating around like smoke in an opium den, but it isn't long before somebody spots me and starts hurling words my way like bullets from a gun. "Hey! You think you're better than us? Huh? You've been looking down your nose since you walked in here!"

"I sure don't," I spit out. "Just waiting for a waitress—"

"I'll be right there," a harried-waitress calls as she slaps a guy's hand away from reaching for her ass.

"It's fine," I tell her.

"Don't ignore me," the guy hisses, his breath rank, stinking of beer and body odor.

I grit my teeth. I should've just gone to the cafe on campus instead of eating here. The vibes here have never been like this before, or else I would've have ever returned.

After a loud exhale, I stand and eye the guy. He looks up at me, taking in my stature. I'm taller than most Earthlings, a lot more imposing, too, and the guy takes one look at me and grits his teeth. A sheen of sweat dots on his forehead, and he takes a step back.

"Want me to buy us a round of beers to, ah, smooth things over some?" the guy asks.

"I'm just here for the grub."

The guy nods a few times. "All right. All right."

And he walks away.

I roll my eyes.

Five more minutes pass. Ten. When it's nearly twenty, I'm beginning to think the waitress is never getting over here.

I stand, and just as I'm turning to leave, two guys bump into me from behind, pushing me forward.

I turn around, not in the mood to deal with any of their shit.

"You owe me money!" one accuses at the other, his face flushed red with anger. "You said you'd pay up last week, but here we are, still waiting for our cash!"

The other guy refuses to back down, standing shoulder-to-shoulder in a show of defiance. He hurls insults back at his accuser, the words a bit too slurred for me to make out.

Shaking my head at them, I'm ready to continue to leave, but one tries to hit the other, misses because the one guy ducks, and I'm the one who gets punched.

Fury has me seeing red.

I can feel my blood pumping faster and my heart thudding in my chest. This is not what I need right now.

Or maybe this is precisely why I need because I am so furious about everything. My life is terrible, basically over, and I shove the one guy back into the other one.

The other patrons in the restaurant are silent at first, but then they start to jeer, egging the two guys on to fight like gladiators in a coliseum. Other fists are thrown, more swear words exchanged, and soon it's a full-blown brawl with everyone joining in, chairs and tables tipping over amid a chorus of grunts, groans and curses.

The whole diner is now on their feet. People are shouting and pointing fingers at one another. Punches are thrown, and chairs fly through the air. Glasses shatter, tables are pushed over, and I'm in the middle of it, throwing punches too.

It's as if there's blood lust in the air, and we're all infected by it. Is it helping to relieve some of stress? No, but maybe she of my aggression is lessening.

I really do hate this planet and everyone on it.

One guy tries to headbutt me. I sidestep him, and he rams into another guy. They start to fight, and I eye the gut who started it all by not buying the one guy.

"Do you see this?" I ask him.

He grins at me. His mouth is bloody, and he's missing at least one tooth.

"Ain't it grand?" he asks.

"People are getting hurt, you fucker."

"What do I are?" He chuckles as he heads toward the door.

No way am I letting him get away. I drag him backward by his shoulders. He ends up tripping and falling. So he isn't trampled, I pick him back up again.

I really can't say how long the fight lasts for. People jump on each other and fight for no good reason other than adrenaline-fueled rage. The waitress cowers behind the counter, screaming for help that doesn't come.

Maybe this is a bit much.

Eventually, a few people manage to break up some of the fights, but it only takes seconds before more people start arguing again, each side determined to prove they're right despite there being no real resolution in sight.

"The police are coming!" the waitress cries at.

There's my cue. I slip out of there.

I still need food.

Might as well go to the cafeteria on campus after all.

Delana

I go to the cafeteria to get some food. Dazzling Blue Eyes is in all of my classes, just as I thought, but we don't talk to each other, don't sit near each other, and don't interact anymore. No more staring. Nothing.

Suits me fine. I would rather not have to deal with him anymore and just focus on me and my goals for the year.

Getting high grades. Learning as much as I can. Seeing about getting an internship somewhere, although they might not want freshmen. Maybe making friends. Definitely no goals on the boyfriend front. I've never dated any guys.

Only one guy ever asked me out. I didn't really know him, but he seemed nice, and as far as I knew, he had never made fun of my face, so I said yes.

Later on that day, before I turned a corner in hallway at school, I overheard him talking to his friends about how desperate I was and that he had big plans for me.

So I ghosted him.

The next day, he asked me why I hadn't met him at the movie theater like we agreed.

"I decided I wasn't desperate enough to go out with the likes of you," I said.

His face turned purple, and he said something about how I should eat crows or crows should eat me. A play on my last name being Crow, but I just ignored him.

I didn't tea to anyone else the rest of the year except for teachers and only when I had no choice. I stopped raising my hand because I didn't want any attention on e or eyes on me. I wanted to be invisible.

Could I try to learn to use makeup to hide my scar? Tried that. Maybe a skilled makeup artist could, but I never bothered to learn. Other than lip tint, I don't bother with anything else.

The past is in the past, and I'm going to look forward, and no one, not even Dazzling Blue Eyes, is going to keep me down or hold me back.

It's early to go to the cafeteria to eat, but I'm hungry now, so I stop on by. I go to open the door when I spy someone behind me, so I hold the door open for them.

Who is it but Dazzling Blue Eyes.

He doesn't look good, a bit pale, and he doesn't look at me either, holding his side.

"Thanks," he mumbles.

"Are you bleeding?" I blurt out.

He stops, two steps from walking through the door.

"What makes you say that?" he demands, pinning me with a hard glare.

I tilt my head at the small trail of blue liquid that he's made on the sidewalk. If it weren't blue, I would definitely think it's blood, but...

He follows my gaze and mutters what sounds like a curse, only it's a word I've never heard before.

He spins on the ball of his foot and hurries way, more of the blood falling from him.

I should probably just leave it alone, but what if he has some weird kind of health condition that changed the color of

his blood? I want to be an astronaut, not a doctor, so what do I know.

“Wait up!” I call, running up to him. “If you’re hurt, you should go—”

“No one said I’m hurt.”

“You’re bleeding blue—”

“I’m not.”

I eye him.

“No one has blue blood,” he insists.

I point to his hand that is covered in blue liquid.

“So that’s paint?” I ask dryly. “I have eyes, and I’m not a fool. You might be an arrogant, cocky prick, but you don’t have to be a dumb too. Just go to a hospital. Do you want me to get you an Uber?”

“No!”

“Afraid of doctors? A big guy like you afraid of needles? Never gonna get a tat, huh?”

“Why are you still here?”

“It’s not because of your sunshine personality,” I say.

“Do you always talk so much?” he grumbles.

We’ve been walking this entire time, heading toward the dorms. He’s increased his pace, and with his long legs, it’s getting a little more difficult for me to talk because I have to run harder to keep up with him.

“No, not normally,” I admit.

He halts abruptly, right when we’ve reached a parking lot of one of the dorms. He’s even paler now.

“You don’t want to go to the hospital? Fine, but you should let someone help you.”

“And that someone should be you because you’re able to do anything you set your mind to. You can be an astronaut and a doctor and a surgeon and—”

“Fine. Be a bully. I don’t give a shit bout you.”

I turn to go and take all of two steps when I hear a thud.

I while around to see Wyatt. He’s sitting on the ground, leaning against a car. The color has leached from his face.

Only he doesn’t look gray.

He isn’t pale.

His skin is green.

Green!

I freeze, my eyes widening as I take in the sight. He looks like something out of a science-fiction movie. He notices my gaze and groans.

“Get the fuck away from me,” he mumble, his words slurring.

“Did you have anything to drink?” I demand as I force his hand away. There’s a piece of glass in his side.

“Drink?”

“You know. Alcohol.”

He stares at me, and while he’s distracted, I yank out the piece of glass. More blue blood gushes out of the wound.

“I didn’t realize I got hurt,” he mumbles.

He closes his eyes, and I watch in amazement as his wound heals. The skin knits together.

It really is like out of a sci-fi movie.

I swallow hard as his skin changes color again, from green to the tanned hue from before.

I gape at him.

“You need to go,” he says firmly as he stands with ease, any hint of distress from earlier gone.

“Not until you explain to me why your skin was green and your blood blue!”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he says with a smirk.

“Bullshit! I know what I saw and—”

“Do you know how ridiculous you sound?” he demands. “No one will believe you if you told them.”

I narrow my eyes and cross my arms. “No one will believe me, huh? Afraid I’ll tell people? Is that it?”

“You don’t know anything, Scar Face.”

“I know you’re an asshole, and you’re worried. I know your secret.”

“Oh, yeah? What’s that?”

“You’re an alien,” I say triumphantly.

“Because aliens just walk around on Earth, trying to blend in.”

“That’s what you’re doing. You can change the color of your skin. You were hurt, so you accidentally let me see your true skin color.”

“You’re insane.”

“You’re here, studying space science. Why? Trying to find a way back home?”

My tone is mocking. Maybe that’s wrong considering he had just been hurt a few minutes ago, but I really don’t appreciate how much of a bully he is still being to me.

Wyatt sighs and gently brings a fist down onto the car next to hi with a thud.

My eyebrows lift. “You really are trying to get back home?” I ask.

“You don’t know what’s going on with me,” He says. “If you tell anyone—”

“You’ll kill me?” I ask dryly. “What do I care?”

He blinks a few times. “You want to die?”

“I want to leave,” I snap. “Dying would be one way to. I’m not suicidal, but maybe we have more in common than you think, Alien Boy.”

“Don’t you fucking call me that.”

“Oh, right. Sorry. Alien Man. Is the better?”

“Fuck you.”

I snort. “What a witty retort. You can’t come up with something better?”

He then utters a sound that I’ve never heard before.

“What the hell was that?” I demand.

“Nothing,” he snaps. “You need to stay the hell away from me.”

“Not gonna happen. we have classes together, remember? I sure hope I don’t slip and call you Alien Man in front of anyone. It would be a real shame if others learned about your secret.”

“Why the fuck are you being like this?” he growls.

“Aw, what’s wrong? You don’t like that the tables have turned? Maybe you should’ve thought about that before you bullied me,” I snap. “If you can’t handle it, then maybe you shouldn’t have dished it out.”

“You have no idea who I am or what I am capable of.”

I shrug. “You calmly can’t get off this shitty planet. It’s what I’ve wanted for so long. You’re stuck here, just like I am, and if you think you’re going to make my life miserable, you’re wrong. You’re so wrong. I can make certain that your life is the one that’s miserable. I’ll tell the authorities about you.”

His eyes flush, and a muscle in his jaw jumps.

“Don’t want that, do you? Well, then, maybe you should apologize for the shit you’ve said to me.”

I cross my arms and wait. Not that I expect an apology, and I don’t think I would make good on my threat. he probably

suspects that, too, but if he won't relent... if push comes to shove...

Wyatt

I scowl, furious.

Furious at myself for not realizing I got hurt in that fucking fight at the diner.

Furious at her for being so fucking noisy and figuring out my secret.

I knew I would take a risk by going to college, but I'm desperate to get off this fucking rock, and now I don't think that's going to happen. Ever.

Earthling technology is too primitive. I don't think it's possible for me to fix my ship. I've tried, but... Believe me, I've tried. Coming here is a last resort.

And already, on day one, a fucking Earthling has stumbled upon my secret.

I didn't even feel any pain. Nothing. I still don't, but how out of touch am I with my own body that I didn't recognize the fact that I was hurt to the point that I couldn't control my skin color?

"I knew you wouldn't apologize. Why don't you tell me a little more about yourself, Wyatt? How about starting with your real name? What kind of alien are you? What's your planet's name? Where is it? Why are you here? How—"

That's it. I've had enough of this. I'm done hiding my true form and lying about who I am.

She can try to turn the tables on me and try to get me to grovel, but I won't.

For the first time since coming to Earth, I transform into my true form.

My skin starts to shimmer and glisten as it changes from a light brown color to an iridescent green color with sequin-like scales covering my legs. The air around me begins to feel electric and warm, like the air when you stand near a bonfire on a starry night. My eyes become slits like a cat's eyes, and they glow brighter than any star in the night sky. Four horns sprout from the top of my head, giving me an even more fierce appearance.

The Earthling girl stands shocked before me, and I expect her to scream.

But she doesn't. After a moment, she rolls her eyes.

"You didn't answer one of my questions," she points out. "If you don't start talking, maybe I will."

She reaches for her phone.

Are you fucking kidding me?

I snatch it out of her hands. My fingers are more claws now, and I squeeze her phone, crushing it.

"If you don't buy me a new one, I really will tell everyone," she says, lifting her chin. "I don't care if they send me away for it, but I'll blab until they have no choice but to pick you up, and then they'll find out the truth. Then, you'll be the one locked up as they experiment on you. Is that what you want?"

I let out a growl and stalk toward her. I'm stronger in this form, taller too, and if I'm not careful, I'll be spotted by someone else.

I also might kill her even if I don't mean to.

“Go ahead, revert back to human form. If you applied here, you have funds. You have access to money. Give me enough to pay for a new phone.”

I slowly revert back. “You won’t tell anyone,” I say evenly.

She snorts. “I need more than money to pay for the broken phone to keep my mouth shut.”

“I will not accept this,” I growl.

“You don’t like being blackmailed? I don’t like being judged before you know me, and if you ever, and I mean ever, call me Scar Face again, I’ll cut you myself.”

“Threatening violence, huh?”

“No, promising it,” she snaps.

I take a deep breath and try to keep my cool. Coming to Earth hadn’t been planned, and it has turned out to be even worse than I ever thought it would be.

My home planet is called Grixulara, and while its existence isn’t well known by most other galaxies, it is highly advanced in technology. We have spaceships that can travel through warp tunnels at the speed of light in order to cross large distances quickly and safely and ships that allow us to traverse the stars without being detected by anyone else.

My ship was damaged during a recent intergalactic skirmish, leaving me stranded on Earth with no way back home until I can get the parts to repair it, parts that only exist on Grixulara.

For years now, I’ve been stuck between two worlds, one where I belong and another where I definitely don’t. It’s up to me to make sure I can get back home, and I can’t afford to have anyone get in my way.

I shake my head and take a step back. “Okay. Fine. I can’t have anyone get in my way as I try to return to my home planet, and you don’t want me to leave with the knowledge that you know the truth about me. But I refuse to apologize for who I am or what I’ve done, so let’s make a deal. You keep

your mouth shut, and I'll give you enough money for a new phone and more."

My face is expressionless as we make our deal, but inside, my heart is racing. She's right. If anyone finds out about my being here on Earth, it could spell disaster for all of us, aliens and humans alike. I've learned enough about Earthlings in the years I've been here that I know they will dissect me and rip me apart to study me. I am human, but they won't consider me to have any basic rights.

She shoves the money into her purse. "I didn't expect you to have that much money on you."

"I don't like banks."

Her eyes widen. "How exactly did you come to have this money?"

I flash her my teeth, not smiling. "When will you realize I am not going to answer your questions?"

"You're here for a reason," she says. "You must need something."

"Yes, for you to fulfill your end of the bargaining leave me the fuck alone."

She snorts. "Fine, but don't get in my way either, Alien Man."

"You—"

"Relax. No one else is around us. No one can hear me."

And she actually has the nerve to smile at me.

Honestly, I have a few questions for her. That scar, how did she get it? Why does she not talk to many others? Why does she seem so strong but also vulnerable at the same time? There's something about her, the more time I spend with her, but she's a distraction. I can't have any distractions.

"Goodbye."

"Do you even know my name?" she asks, tilting her head to the side.

“No.”

“You’re that arrogant that you didn’t listen to any of the roll calls during our classes?”

“No.”

“Because you’re only worried about your mission. Which isn’t to get A’s in your classes.”

“You can stop trying to figure out anything about me,” I hiss. “You and I, we aren’t in on anything together. Take your money and run.”

She hesitates, though. “How do I know that I won’t be charged with a crime if I use your money?”

“I earned it.”

“How?”

I flare my nostrils. “You are getting on my last nerve.”

She tilts her head to the side. “You sure use a lot of Earthling phrases.”

“I’ve been here for years. I’ve learned things about you.”

“You don’t think you’re going to be able to leave, do you? Why else would you also be studying archeology? You want to know about the past of Earth’s people. Why?”

“Don’t you have a saying about curiosity killing you?”

“Curiosity killed the cat,” she supplies.

“Yes, that,” I say, gesturing to her.

“Ah, but did you know that satisfaction brought it back?” she counters, smiling again.

My eyes are drawn to her scar.

She flinches. Her body language clearly shows that she’s uncomfortable.

“Brought what back?” I ask.

“The cat,” she mumbles. “We say that cats have nine lives. They don’t, really, but it’s a saying... I’m not even sure where

it came from, but... Maybe because they always tend to land on their paws even if they all from a tall height.”

“Do you often drop cats from tall heights?”

“Not me.” She wrinkles her nose.

“What?” I ask despite myself.

“I have another question that you won’t answer, but it’s not about you. It’s about... science.”

“You can ask. I’m not promising I’ll answer.”

“Fair enough.” She bites her lower lip. “I was wondering about physics and the laws of thermodynamics and if they held true on your planet.”

I groan. “We are not going to talk about my planet.”

“Not even to answer a question as simple as that.”

I grit my teeth. “I think I know you well enough to know that if I answer one question, you’ll ask just one more, just one more...”

“Fine. Have a stick up your ass.” She scowls at me.

I narrow my eyes. “Why do you keep hanging around here? You saw me.”

“I did.”

My teeth clang together. “You’re fascinated by me, aren’t you?”

“You got me.” She clasps her hands together and presses them to the side of her face that she tilts again as she bats her eyelashes. “I’m so fascinated by you! Fascinated by the face that males of all species are still chauvinistic pigs!”

Delana

My chest is heaving. I'm furious. I hate that he has gotten under my skin. I don't care what he thinks about me, but I also want to get to know everything about him, but seriously, why does he have to be such an asshole?

Although he probably thinks the same thing about me.

"You can think what you want," he says. "I don't think anyone here on Earth can possibly help me, female or male."

"Oh, so we're all idiots here. Got it. We might not be able to travel from planet to planet, but we're doing the best that we can. Maybe we haven't been around as other humans, but that doesn't mean you should write us off. If you give us your spaceship, maybe we can—"

"Fuck that."

"I figured you wouldn't be up for that." I snort. "I bet you aren't up for much of anything."

He furrows his brow. "What the hell do you mean by that?"

I swallow hard. Why the hell did I say that?

"Why are you embarrassed by something you said?" he asks. "Why were you referring to?"

I shake my head. "Forget about it."

“Easily done enough.”

My shoulders slump. “I don’t want us to be enemies.”

“No?” He snorts. “You certainly were as biting as I was.”

“Yes, well, I didn’t realize why you were upset. Something made you realize that we can’t help you, and by we, I mean Earthlings. You were upset because you want to get back home, but you can’t. You lashed out. It’s human. We all do it. And I lashed out back because I’ve been getting enough shit my entire life. Mostly because of this.”

I put to my scar.

Now, I never draw attention to it. Ever. Never ever.

He grits his teeth. “I’m going to my room.”

“Go ahead. I’m not stopping you.”

I glance at the dorm. Freedom Hall.

I turn to go.

“Why did you ask if I had any alcohol?” he asks suddenly.

I turn to face him. “I smelled it on you. Got in a bar fight? A little early for that, isn’t it?”

“I went to a diner,” he says. “There was a fight.”

“Did you hurt anyone?”

“Maybe. I was attacked too. I didn’t start the fight either.”

“Well, maybe you should join a gym or something. Study martial arts. Do something to expend your energy instead of fighting people. Even if you didn’t initiate it.”

“Can you be more judgmental?”

“Dude, have you seen yourself in a mirror? You’re strong as a... as an Earthling. In this form. You’re stronger in your... ah... true form. Or are you equally as strong in both? You might kill someone with one punch.”

“I was injured, remember?” he asks dryly.

“You didn’t seem to notice.”

“My side hurt a little, but I didn’t realize the glass was there.” He shrugs, unconcerned about that.

“Well, maybe you got lucky this time. I wouldn’t advise any ore fights for you.”

“For the Earthling’s sake.”

“And yours,” I coo. “You don’t want to have any extra attention drawn your way, do you? No more fights. No more bleeding.”

He scowls. “I don’t need a lecture.”

“No?” I lift my chin. “You still look a little pale.”

“I’m fine.”

“Did you eat?”

“No.”

“Look. I’ll go the cafeteria and get you dinner.”

“And in exchange?” he asks warily.

“Answer some of my questions.”

“No.”

“Fine. Get yourself some food. What do I care if you start bleeding agin? I mean, I did see you skin stitch itself back together, but hey, maybe I’ll forget not to tell anyone that.”

He scowls at me. “I paid you—”

“I sure did, but if I also reached out an olive branch, offering to get you dinner, and all you did was—”

“I’m not answering your questions.”

“Like I said, fine. People usually give and take—”

“Friends don’t.”

I snort. “Do you have friends?”

“Do you?” he counters.

“No,” I say easily enough. “It’s the first day of classes. Everyone is looking to make friends.”

“Not me.”

“You’re doing a bang-up job of that,” I snap.

“Not you either.”

I lift my chin but say nothing.

“And that’s because of you putting up airs,” he says. “You have walls up. Won’t let anyone in because you don’t want to be hurt again, not physically or emotionally.”

I glare at him, hating that he’s reading me so well already.

“Goodbye, Alien Man.”

“You call me that, even if we’re alone, then I’m going to call you that name you don’t like,” he warns.

I wave and then give him the finger before walking away.

But after a few steps, I glance back at him. To my surprise, he’s watching me. His eyes are so intense that something inside me stirs.

I’m embarrassed by his looking at me and then for him catching me looking back at him again, but then something else takes over. Confidence? Curiosity? All of these things swirl through my head and body until I’m finally far enough away that I can’t see him anymore.

I return to the cafeteria, feeling transformed somehow, exhilarated after our fight and my learning his secret.

There is something about Piercing Blue Eyes that makes me feel alive in a way I haven’t felt in such a long time. Is it because of the knowledge that there are aliens out there? That I can maybe one day leave this planet and never return?

I want that. I never thought it possible. I wanted to go to the moon and maybe live there or on a satellite or Mars or something like that, but now, there’s hope for something better.

Alien Man can breathe here. Maybe that means I can breathe on his home planet.

Wouldn’t that be something?

But he's stuck here.

And I'm stuck here.

I have hope, but I don't have faith that leaving Earth can actually happen.

The next day, Wyatt is late to every class, and then he hangs back to talk to every professor so the cycle repeats. I hate that it means he's lost always forced to sit next to me since I always sit up front. Most everyone else hangs out in the back.

During our last class, Stellar, Galactic, and Extragalactic Astronomy & Astrophysics, we're assigned partners for a project already. We don't have a choice who we're with, and as luck would have it, the professor is lazy and picks people based on where we're sitting.

Which means I'm with Alien Man.

Once class is over, I stand. "Don't worry about it. I'll do the assignment myself."

"Fuck that," he snaps. "I'll do it."

"No way. I want to learn."

"This assignment is pointless."

"What makes you think learning about—"

"It won't help me."

"Ah. Of course. It's not worthwhile to learn this because you know it all already." I roll my eyes. "How about this? I'll do the project for us since it's beneath you, and you'll answer a few of my questions?"

"No."

I narrow my eyes. "You're too damn stubborn."

"I'm not giving in to you," he says, his piercing blue eyes shining brightly, almost glowing.

It's mesmerizing.

“Then we’re doing it together,” I insist.

He grits his teeth. “Fine. Come with me.”

In silence, we walk across Camus to Freedom Hall. I’m not at all surprised that he paid extra to have a room by himself. His privacy is important to him.

But I know his secret.

I shouldn’t exploit it, but as we work, he can’t seem to help himself, making snide comments if I have to ask about this or that.

“Excuse me for not being a fucking expert,” I finally snap. “I’m trying to learn here. But you aren’t a genius either, or you wouldn’t be stuck here!”

“You don’t have to remind me about that all the time,” he snaps right back.

I eye him. As much as he’s angry and bitter inside, I understand him. I felt that when I was captured and in the years after, when my PTSD had me in its claws. I lashed out at everyone around me, and my scar on my face? Not my only scar. I always wear long sleeves to hide the cuts I made into my arm. The scars are small, not noticeable unless you look closely. I didn’t really want to kill myself, but there was something about feeling pain, of taking control and giving myself the pain versus someone else doing it to me that made me feel a little bit empowered, feel like I was finally in charge of my life again.

“It sucks being in a cage,” I murmur, closing my eyes so that tears won’t well. “You just want to be free, but everywhere, the walls close in until you can’t fucking breathe.”

“And you just want to roar,” he says quietly.

I open my eyes. “Exactly. I bet your roar is more impressive than mine.”

“You actually would roar?”

I eye him. “That’s a question. If you want me to answer, then you need to answer one.”

“Depends on the question you want to ask me.”

I lift my chin. I feel embolden, and I want to continue to feel more and more.

And maybe I’m crazy, but I want to push him, see what he might do.

Because being rejected by him wouldn’t hurt nearly as much if I tried this with a guy I really like.

“Can you get it up?” I murmur, reaching over from where we’re sitting on the ground next to each other and touching his crotch.

Wyatt

I sit there, crossed-legged, shocked that Delana is touching my groin through my pants. What the hell is she thinking? What the hell is she doing?

Delana's eyes sparkle as she sees the surprise on my face. She slowly moves her hands up and down my thigh, teasing me with each touch. Her fingertips leave me wanting more, which baffles me. We're not friends. I might not consider us enemies, but this... I don't know what to think.

Delana continues to move her fingers, slowly grazing my skin as she reaches for the button on my jeans. It feels almost like an electric current is running through my body as if I have just been struck by lightning. I can feel myself trembling, not necessarily from shock anymore but more out of anticipation and excitement.

She leans in close to whisper in my ear, her breath hot and inviting. "Do you like what I'm doing to you? Is it making you feel good?"

I don't know how to respond at first because I am lost to the sensations of pleasure that are coursing through me.

"You know you want this," she says softly with a smirk on her face.

I must be blushing from head to toe as I stare at her intently with no idea what to say or do next.

She then begins nibbling at my neck and ears, sending shivers down my spine and fueling the fire inside of me even further. She slowly makes her way back up toward my mouth before finally pressing hers against mine in a passionate kiss that left me breathless.

She moves closer still, pressing her body against mine, forcing me to lie down on the floor beside my bed as she kisses along my neck and shoulders.

Her lips find their way back up to mine, and we share another passionate kiss that leaves us both gasping for air. As our tongues explore each other's mouths, her hand reaches down my pants, grabbing hold of something else entirely, my growing cock.

Delana gives me a sly smile, and her eyes begin to twinkle with mischief. She moves her hand in slow, deliberate strokes, sending warm shivers of pleasure rippling throughout my body.

"What do you want from me?" I ask, my voice trembling. My heart is beating faster and faster as I lay there helplessly, entranced by Delana's touch.

"Do you like what I'm doing to you?" she asks again.

I nod.

"Say it," she demands.

"Yes," I manage to whisper quietly.

For some reason, my answer sends Delana into fits of laughter.

"If you want me to continue," she says, her tone no longer quite so warm, "then I want you to apologize to me."

"For what?"

"For you being so nasty."

I snort. "Give and take, darling. We both have taken turns not being the nicest to one another. If all of this is just bluster to try to get me to grovel, you can stop right now. I can finish the job myself."

“Is that right?” she asks coolly.

Instead of removing her hand from around my cock, she squeezes it, and I have to bite my tongue so I don't unleash a groan. She really knows how to torment a guy. I didn't think she could turn me on this much. I didn't think any Earthling female could turn me on. Not like this. Not to the point of almost creaming my pants.

Unbidden, I thrust my hip.

She smirks. “You really like my hand on your cock, don't you?”

“Any hand would do.”

Her eyes flashes. “This is my hand on your cock, not anyone else's. Mine. Don't you forget it.”

I stare her down. “How does it make you feel to know that you're trying to use sex to exploit me into giving you answers I don't want to give?”

“I didn't demand an answer to any of the thousands of questions I gave you! I just want an apology—”

“Or else what? You won't get me off? Like I said, I have a hand and can finish the job myself.”

“No. It's more than just my not getting you off,” she hisses, coming back closer to me, her lips inches from my ears.

It takes everything in me not to grab her and roll her over so that I can shove her clothes aside and have my way with her.

“I want your respect,” she continues.

I snort and take her hand away from my cock. I sit up and glare at her.

“I you want my respect, do you really think this is the way to go about it?”

“It certainly got your attention, didn't it?” she asks smugly.

I lift my eyebrows.

For the first time, she looks a little embarrassed. “It was easier to get you up than I thought it would be.”

I furrow my brow. “Why did you think I wouldn’t be aroused by you?”

She flushes and refuses to make eye contact with me.

Her scar. She’s not just physically scarred. She is mentally too.

I shake my head. “You can’t expect me to just go ahead and apologize when you should too.”

“You first.” She lifts her chin.

I laugh. “Why me first?”

“You started this between us.”

“Is there anything between us?” I challenge.

Her eyes narrow. “I know your secret,” she hisses.

“And you’re going to hang that over my head despite my paying you. I see how it is. I see the kind of person you are.”

“And what kind of person is that?”

“One who is desperate and over her head.”

Delana is fuming.

“If you won’t tell me about your home planet, maybe I’ll...”

I glare at her. “You’re really going to go there?”

She throws up her hands. “Why can’t we work together? If you don’t think anything you can learn here is going to help, why don’t we just try to figure out your spaceship ourselves?”

“You’ll only get in my way,” I growl. “That’s what I was afraid of in the first place.”

“Just me? Because I’m a female?”

“Not just you. You aren’t that special.”

Her expression turns stricken.

Shit, that came out wrong.

“I didn’t mean... Any of you. All of you. The students and the teachers,” I mumble. “You’re all... Earthlings in general aren’t...”

“We just a stupid fucking race, aren’t we?” she snaps. “We aren’t good enough in your eyes. You think we’re lazy and backward, and we aren’t advanced enough. We aren’t civilized, and I guess I didn’t help with that, with this... stunt... but I just... I went about this all wrong. I just wanted an apology, and I would like some answers, but you don’t intend to give me anything. I et it. I’m just a blip on your radar, a bug you would squash if you could get away with it. I’m nothing and worthless and no good and—”

“I never said any of that,” I say mildly.

“You didn’t have to! You’re actions and your words... You’ve hinted at it. we can’t help you, but we didn’t ask for you to come here. You can just fuck off, Wyatt. You can just go off and leave us alone. We didn’t want an alien to come here and pretend to be a human.” She hesitates. “How many ore of you are there?”

“Do you mean my particular species?”

Her eyes widen. “You men there might be other alien species than just your kind here, walking among us?”

I nod.

“Is that a guess on your part, or have you recognized others who aren’t human?”

“I know that for a fact.”

“Well, blow me over like a fucking leaf. You actually answered a question. Think you deserve a blow job now?”

“Why are you so bitter?” I ask.

She closes her eyes, and there is so much tension in her body that I grow tense too. She’s in pain. Any idiot can see that.

She wants respect. She’s probably been fighting that for a long time now. I bet she’s been bullied a lot because of that

scar. Whatever happened to give it to her must've scarred her too, not just the bullying. That's just another layer to it.

And I added to it.

But her pain isn't an excuse to try to hurt me back. Yes, she deserves an apology, but she should give one back too.

She's proud, though. She'll never apologize first, and I bet she's trying to act all tough because of my pushing back at her, by not answering her every question. Yes, I paid her, but I did destroy her property, and it wasn't my finest moment, and she does have me by the balls.

Even if her hands are in her lap.

"I really would hate to tell the world about you," she threatens quietly, not meeting my gaze.

Are you fucking kidding me?

Delana

I lift my chin. My mind is racing. I shouldn't be threatening him. Even sitting, even as a human, he's a hugely powerful guy. He could easy crush me.

Kill me.

But I don't think he will.

I also don't think he'll cave and tell me anything unless I push him.

So I'm pushing him.

I sneak a peek. He's glowering at me, his hands fists, and I wince.

Instantly, he relaxes some. I think he might be forcing himself too, and he's breathing in and out heavily, not because he's still turned on. He's gone soft.

Wyatt follows my gaze, and he shifts to tuck himself back into his pants. "The money isn't enough, huh? You really going to extort me to get answers."

All of the blood has to drain from my face.

Extortion.

Blackmail.

He doesn't deserve this.

I've gone way too far.

I've completely lost who I am as a person. I can't believe I've done this to him. I don't even know who I am anymore.

"You don't have to tell me anything," I start.

"I'm a Grolla from the planet Grixulara," he spits out. "You already know that I can change the color of my skin and my height and size."

"Yes, but can you tell me things I don't already know?"

He scowls, and I force myself not to look away. I hate that he's not telling me any of this because he wants to, but then again, he hasn't shared much new information at all.

"I didn't want to come here. I never intended to. There was a skirmish."

"Between..."

"We were fighting the Xarillians. They live in a planet near ours called Rilla. I swear, every decade or so, we would have to fight them off."

"You have a never-ending war with another planet?"

"It could be worse."

"Worse?" I gape at him. "That doesn't sound very fun to me."

"No, not fun. I never said I was war-hungry. It's the Xarillians who want to enslave us. They're as destructive as you Earthlings. The history I've learned, the wars you've fought... At least my people fight together to save our planet."

"Yeah, we're all war-hungry here." I roll my eyes.

"If you don't stop it—"

"How can I stop it?" I demand. "I'm only eighteen!"

"You have to force your politicians—"

"I can't force anyone to do anything."

"Isn't that ironic?" he grumbles.

I swallow hard. "So you were in a fight..."

“My combustor was shot. I had no choice but to hyper-jump away. It was risky, because my ship could’ve exploded, but if I stayed, I would’ve been a sitting duck. I would’ve died.”

“So you jumped here?”

“I didn’t have time to worry about coordinates beyond making sure it wasn’t an asteroid field or a planet or star. I landed too close to your atmosphere, though, and got sucked in. The damage to my spaceship got worse and worse as I freefell through the atmosphere, but at least I was able to make sure that I didn’t die.”

“How on earth was your ship not picked up by radar or something like that? Someone must’ve seen—”

“No one saw.”

“But how—”

“Our ships can traverse the stars without being detected.”

“That’s... that’s amazing, but the others... they fought you in your spaceships, didn’t they?”

“At times. Sometimes, they have managed to land on our planet, and we would have to fight them on foot.”

“That sounds brutal.”

“Life is brutal.”

I close my eyes briefly and try not to cry.

“Yes,” I murmur. “It can be very brutal. Even here on Earth and it’s nothing like that, not what you’ve gone through.”

He says nothing.

I hesitate and then ask, “What did you mean that it could have been worse? What’s worse than fighting another planet on and off for years?”

“Consider yourself lucky,” he says.

“How so?”

“Being backward might keep you under their radar.”

“Under whose radar?” I ask, unable to prevent myself from growing frustrated. He’s talking in riddles, about something I have no knowledge of.

He crosses his arms, and his gaze shifts to our laptops, where we have up research for our project.

“That is a waste of time,” he says.

“Then why go to school at all?” I ask him.

“I hoped for... It doesn’t matter what I hoped for. It’s not happening.”

“Can I see your ship?”

“No.”

“It’s not completely destroyed, is it?”

“I don’t want to talk about my ship.”

“What do you want to talk about?” I ask.

“How about you do some talking?” he counters.

I shake my head. “That’s not—”

“Why not?” he demands. “Why should I have to talk? You’ve asked me some questions that I didn’t want to answer, but I did. Your turn. Either start talking, or else I will ask you questions you don’t want to hear.”

I blow out a breath, knowing what question he’ll ask first. It won’t be enough to not answer it. I don’t even want to hear the question.

“I love the stars,” I say. “I always have. Since meeting you and learning what you are... I don’t want to go to the moon. I don’t want to go to Mars. I want to go out there and see as many planets as I can. I want to explore the universe—”

“Universes,” he comments mildly.

“The universes.” I grin.

“It’s not going to happen.”

I grit my teeth. “We can make it happen.”

“Don’t you understand? I am serious—”

“I am too.”

“You’re the one who is stubborn,” he snaps.

“And we’re back to you talking like you’re better than I am.”

“At least I don’t extort—”

“And you stop using that word!” I shout.

“Am I using it incorrectly?” he asks in a tone that suggests he knows full well that he isn’t.

I grit my teeth.

“Why don’t you like that word?” he asks.

“Not a topic I’m willing to discuss.”

He snorts and rolls his eyes.

“I don’t care if the spaceship isn’t usable. I really want to see it.”

“I don’t give a shit what you want to see.”

“I’ll give you a blow job after you take me.”

“Do you really think I’m going to let you put my cock in your mouth?” he growls. “I don’t want you mouth anywhere near my cock.”

I lick my lips. “Are you sure about that?”

“You think way too highly of yourself.”

“I sure got your cock’s attention earlier.”

“Not sure that’s saying much considering I haven’t been with a woman in years.”

“Any earthling women?” I ask.

He shakes his head.

“Why not? Why be celibate?” I ask.

Wyatt says nothing.

“I mean, you aren’t a bad-looking guy, and...”

I swallow hard as I recall the weight of his cock in his hand. I hadn't really looked at it, too shocked and amazed at how easily I turned him on and the fact that I was touching him, that I got him hard in the first place...

"You tell me," he says evenly.

I lift my eyebrows. "Tell you what?"

"Would my cock be too big?"

I swallow hard. "Ah... I have nothing to compare it too," I mumble.

He blink a few times. I'm not sure he catches my meaning.

I bite my lower lip before admitting, "I never had sex before. I never even touched a cock before. I... I never even kissed a gut before."

"Bullshit."

I furrow my brow. "Excuse me?"

"There's no way in hell you never kissed a guy before."

"I swear. I..." I lick my lips just because I'm uncomfortable. I rub my arms and then cross them, wishing I could get away from him because this is all way too much. "I'm telling the truth."

"I find that impossible to believe."

I meet his gaze. "You... You aren't just saying that?"

He shakes his head.

"But you only got hard because of friction. Not because you actually wanted me. It was just a natural physical response to stimuli." I swallow hard and wish there wasn't butterflies in my stomach.

"Maybe. Maybe not."

I grit my teeth, hating that response.

"I'm so much bigger than Earthling females," he says. "I... I wouldn't want to hurt any of them, rip them, make them bleed..."

“You... You’re shorter than your, ah, true form. Can’t you control your...”

“My cock size? Yes, to some extent.”

“What do you mean by some extent?”

“I mean that when I’m excited, I tend to lose myself, and I can’t control what I look like as much, and I might not remember to keep my cock smaller.”

“So... what size would your cock be when hard when you’re... in your true form?” I ask.

He snorts. “You’re never going to find out.”

Wyatt

I watch as Delana nods.

“Good. I don’t want to know about your true cock anyhow,” she says.

I snort. She’s not fooling anyone.

I lift my chin in her direction. “Why are you celibate?”

“I’m not... not by choice.” She looks away.

“No?”

“I... One time, a guy told me he was willing to have sex with me, but only if the lights were off and the blinds shut and I had a brownbag over my face.”

“What an asshole,” I all but roar.

She shrugs. “I didn’t want to have sex with him anyhow, but...”

“Is there a guy you want to have sex with?” I ask.

“I don’t see how that’s any of your business,” she says in a rush.

I shrug. “Maybe not, but I was curious. A natural question given the topic of our conversation.”

“Yeah, yeah.” She eyes me and then purses her lips. “Fine. I didn’t really choose to be celibate. It wasn’t something that

happened overnight or even something I thought was necessary. I think... I think I respect... I understand the power of touch and sex, and I want to be sure that if I decide to enter into a relationship, it is with someone who cares about me as much as I do them. I don't have friends. I don't... I have never been in a relationship, and it's not because I think that no one is good enough for me. I don't trust people. I don't trust their motives. I've been bullied a lot, tormented, teased... I've been made the butt of jokes, and I don't trust anyone with my heart or with my body, and... and I know that all of this makes me sound like a giant hypocrite because of what I did to you. I... I'm sorry."

I gape at her.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" she grumbles.

"I didn't expect to hear that."

"Which part? All of it?"

"The apology."

"Yeah, well, what I did was wrong—"

"Maybe not entirely underserved. I was an asshole to you."

"Yes, but I was an asshole back. Maybe I was even worse."

"Oh, so now we're comparing dicks, huh?" I joke.

"No way I can win that contest," she jokes back.

I grin at her.

She starts to smile and then looks away.

"Why do you do that?" I ask.

"Do what?" She still won't look at me.

Figuring she won't answer, I change the subject. "I can take you to see what's left of the ship."

"You will?" Her eyes widen, and she jumps to her feet and then continues to jump. That's how excited she is.

"Sure."

"Why?" She narrows her eyes, suddenly suspicious of me.

I have to laugh.

“What’s the catch?” she demands.

“Like I told you, there’s no way to fix it,” I warn her.

“I want to see your spaceship!”

“Which one?” I ask as I climb to my feet.

She blinks a few times.

“The one out there or the one in my pants?” I joke.

She slaps my arm. “The one out there!”

I just laugh and laugh and laugh.

I hope she’s going to keep in mind that the spaceship doesn’t work, won’t work, can’t fly, hover, do anything at all as I drive her to the location of my spaceship. what’s left of it anyway.

We arrive at the site, and she stands agape. Wreckage is scattered everywhere, it’s almost like a graveyard of forgotten dreams. I can feel her sorrow in her heavy silence.

The sight is both depressing and captivating at the same time, so we sit there in silence for a while before getting out to explore it more closely.

We start at the cockpit area. Bits of wires hang from consoles like autumn leaves, though instead of colored orange or blue these are multihued shades of grey and silver. A control panel is smashed to pieces and scattered across the floor, its buttons like colorful gems against a backdrop of darkness.

I point out every detail, like the broken hull of the ship, which has been scorched and dented from its crash landing; the pieces of debris scattered around us; and the array of broken gadgets inside, which are all that remain of what was once my prized possession.

She starts exploring, picking up pieces of metal and running her fingers along the broken wires.

“There’s no way at all we can try to fix this?” she asks. “The wires—”

“The wires are the least of our worries,” I say.

“How so?”

“Because.”

“Because?” she echoes, thunder in her eyes. “That’s all you have to say?”

“Yes.”

“Are you kidding me?” she snaps.

“I brought you here to see it. Don’t you think that if I could fix it, I would’ve already? If I could fly away, I wouldn’t still be here on this fucking planet.”

“It really does suck here, and if I had the means—”

“There’s no means.” I shake my head. “There’s nothing I can do.”

“You’ve really tried everything you could’ve possibly done?” she presses.

“Why wouldn’t I have? I fucking hate it here.”

“Why?” she demands. “Because we’re all so fucking stupid?”

I say nothing.

“Have you talked to an engineer?” she suggests. “What about going to a scrap yard? A junkyard? Maybe you can tweak—”

“You don’t have the technology here on Earth for what I need. I can’t stress that enough. Half of the equipment that is necessary for the ship to fly is destroyed.”

“How? Did you crash land?”

“Basically.”

“Did you have to heal yourself?”

“Yes.”

“Is that automatic?”

“No.”

She gapes at me. “Seriously?”

I shake my head.

“I would’ve thought that your skin would’ve just known...”

“Does your skin know how to heal?”

“Well, yes, but not like yours does!”

“We’re able to control our bodies on a level that Earthlings haven’t been able to.”

“Do you think one day we could evolve to do that?” she asks.

“How should I know?”

“I don’t know.”

“That’s fair,” she says quietly. “How many aliens are there?”

“You mean different human species?” I ask for clarification.

She nods.

“As many as the stars.”

“That’s not a number,” she says dryly.

I snicker.

She narrows her eyes at me. “I really...”

“I told you not to get your hopes up.”

“I know but... seeing this... I really want to leave.”

“Because of asshole bullies.”

“More than that,” she mumbles. “You still haven’t said why you want to leave so badly.”

I say nothing.

Her eyes widen. “Do you have a girlfriend back home? A wife? Kids?”

“No.”

“Friends, though.”

“Of course.”

“You must really miss them.”

“I do.”

“And your home planet.” She pauses. “Do you think you could tell me what Grix... Grix...”

“Grixulara.”

“Grixulara?”

I nod. “Not bad.”

“Can you tell me what Grixulara is like?” she asks. “Or would that be too painful?”

I take a deep breath. Honestly, she’s correct. It’s painful, extremely painful, to even think about my home planet, but to talk about it... I haven’t had the possibility of doing that until now. I never intended for an Earthling to learn about my being an alien, but here we are.

“Grixulara is... It’s beautiful in a way that Earth could never be. The atmosphere is clean and pure, the air crisp and clear, and the sky is filled with stars that twinkle like diamonds in the night. The plants are lush and full of life, with some reaching heights of up to one hundred feet. There are vast oceans full of creatures that inhabit its depths—sharks, dolphins, and sea turtles but also so many different kinds of species we’ve never seen here on Earth.” I pause for a second as my mind drifts to my home planet. “The people there are kind and generous, always looking out for each other. We live in harmony with each other and our environment. Grixulara has been around for generations. It’s not only our home but an important part of our heritage. It will always hold a special place in my heart.”

I hesitate as I remember the way the grass used to ripple with every step I took or how each evening the sky would transform into a stunning array of oranges, purples, and pinks. It was like looking at a painting made by some sort of magical being.

“The fauna is diverse, some creatures shimmering in bright blues and yellows, others blending into their surroundings until they can hardly be seen at all. The planet is surrounded by an aurora borealis that never fades away. During sunrise and sunset, the mountains cast shadows across the valleys and rivers that line them like ribbons. The cities are filled with tall buildings made from metals that look like marble but have been infused with crystals and gemstones to make them shine in the light. The people there are some of the most advanced civilizations in all of the universe, having decades ahead when it comes to technology.”

“No wonder you want to go back so badly,” Delana says wistfully.

“Yes, no wonder at all.”

Delana

The picture in my mind of his home planet... I so want to see it for myself. I want to go there and be amazed by all of its glory.

“The other... What are you again? I’m sorry. I forgot.”

“I am a Grolla,” he supplies.

“The other Grollas, they sound a lot more welcoming than you are.”

“Well, when you consider where they live and in peace...”

“Not all in peace,” I say.

“You don’t have to bring up the a sore subject,” he grumbles.

“But even despite the war, they’re happy?”

He nods.

I grimace. “I was happy.”

“You make it sound like you were only happy once ever.”

“That’s about right.”

“And when was that elusive time?”

“Before I met you.”

His nostrils flare.

“I was so excited for college. A new start. A chance to start over. I so badly want to be an astronaut, to get off this planet, to get away from people... Now I learn there are other planets, that there’s been traveling between planets, that there are places where there is mostly peace... I want that peace! I want a chance to see the world! And this... all of this...” I fling my arm out toward the wreckage. “This is just a damn shame. It’s a fucking tease, and I can’t handle this. I just can’t! My life has been nothing more than one fucking disaster after another, one disappointment... It’s a fucking tragedy, and I just can’t catch a break. Meeting an alien should’ve been the best day of my life, but it’s nothing more than another fucking disaster!”

He snorts. “I appreciate that.”

“Look, you want your money back? Here.” I reach for my wallet.

“I don’t want the fucking money.”

“Yeah, well, it’s probably counterfeit or drug money or something.”

“Do you honestly think that?” he demands.

“No.”

“You’re back to being a—”

“Bitch?”

“I was going to say bully,” he says mildly.

I snort. “I just...”

To my horror, my eyes are welling with tears.

“Fuck,” he grumbles.

I snort and almost laugh. “Don’t tell me that you don’t like to see even Earthling females cry.”

“Yeah, that might cross species,” he mutters. “Don’t cry. I thought bringing you out here would be a good thing, not upset you more.”

“I know. You were trying to help, and I... Thank you. And thank you for telling me about your planet. You didn't have to, especially with how I've been treating you.”

“I was the one who plowed into your first.”

“I thought so!”

He blinks a few times.

“I wasn't sure if I walked into you or if you had me, but I thought it was you, and... It doesn't matter. None of the past matters.”

“That's not true, and you know it,” he says mildly.

I wince. “Why can't the past just die?”

“I wish, but I'll never forget my home planet. I'll never forget my people.”

“They have no idea you're here.”

He shakes his head and then holds up a finger. He crosses over to an area of the spaceship that we hadn't explored in depth. Then, he comes back over, holding something that is definitely FUBAR'd.

“What's that?” I ask.

“A communicator.”

“Let me guess, that's how you communicate?”

“Yes.”

“It can't reach across galaxies and universes, can it?”

“Sure it can.”

“It can!”

“Yes, but it's broken, remember?” he reminds me.

“But that it's possible...” I can't help beaming at him. “Why don't you work with top scientists to get this technology here on Earth?”

“I can't.”

“You can't? What do you mean you can't?”

“I mean, there’s an intergalactic decree that all Class B planets are not to have access to our technology.”

“Class B planets!” I cry.

“At least you aren’t Class C.”

“What the fuck is Class C?”

“No intelligence at all.”

“Fuck you and fuck that intergalactic... Who the hell even has the authority to make an intergalactic decree!”

He sighs. “Don’t shoot the messenger.”

“Don’t shoot the messenger, he says,” I mock. “You’ll use any Earthling saying you can to try to get the blame off of you and others like you!”

He makes a face. “Look, I know you’re upset.”

“You don’t know anything about me!”

“Maybe not, but I’m in pain, and you’re in pain—”

“Please. Let’s not talk about pain.”

“We don’t have to talk about anything. How about that?” he snaps.

I wince and walk away from him, not toward the wreckage but beyond it. We’re in field that seems to be completely off the grid. I bet it is. I swear there’s some kind of power in the air that keeps animals and Earthlings way. There aren’t even any insects here as far as I can see, no bugs, no birds, nothing.

It’s unnatural. It’s eerie.

It’s unsettling.

And it’s terrible. This place, seeing this wreck... My heart is breaking all over again.

It’s not fair. Why should I have been given this knowledge that the universe is nothing like I imagined, that there are so many more aliens and planets out there than I ever thought, that traveling to them is possible...

Only we’re too stupid to have the technology.

“Why?” I ask softly.

“Why what?” he asks, sounding far closer to me than I would’ve thought.

“I glance over my shoulder. He’s right there beside me.

“Why aren’t Class B planets to be given the technology required to fly from one universe to another?”

“Because, without fail, all of the planets that haven’t developed that technology themselves, it’s been because...”

“Because why?”

He sighs. “Please don’t make me say it.”

“Is it because we’re too war-hungry to work together to develop it ourselves?” I suppose.

“Precisely.”

I eye him. “I’m surprised you didn’t say bingo.”

“Isn’t Bingo a game you play?”

“It’s also a word that basically means spot on.”

“Well, then, bingo.”

I close my eyes. “I can understand why you were so disappointed when you came to college and looked over the syllabus of our classes.”

“Yeah, it’s pathetic. In general. Not you.”

“Yeah, well, it’s like I said before. I can’t make a difference. I’m just one person, and I’m not smart enough to change the world, to change our knowledge of the stars.”

“Getting into the space program here isn’t easy.”

“No.”

“So you are smart.”

I snort. “Now he admits it.”

“I was an ass.”

“You still are.”

“Why? Because I got your hopes up?”

“Basically.”

He rolls his eyes.

I want to apologize. I want to admit that I was wrong, but my heart hurts too much. I can't say anything.

There's pain shining in his eyes. It's echoed in my heart. I don't know if I can handle any more disappointment. All I want is to leave.

That's all he wants too.

And if he ever does manage to figure out how to get this ship up and running again, I'll probably be dead and gone. He probably will live a lot longer than I will. Or, if he does fix it before I die, he won't invite me along for the ride, and why should he? I basically bullied him into this. I'm no better than is.

we deserve to be stuck in this hellhole.

Fuck. I'm crying again.

“Don't do that,” he says.

“Don't fucking tell me what to do,” I say angrily as I wipe my tears away, infuriated that I'm crying, that he's seeing me like this.

“There's no reason to cry.”

“How the fuck do you know whether or not I have a good reason to cry?” I demand.

“Crying doesn't help any.”

“Releasing your emotions can be good for the soul,” I snap. “Do you even believe in souls?”

“I do.”

“Well? You've never cared? Maybe you wouldn't have such a stick up your ass if you would just cry already. Our dreams are both dead,” I say. “Maybe if we're lucky, we'll make it to the moon. How does that sound? Shitty, right?”

We're stuck here forever. Isn't that great? It's fucking wonderful. Just dandy. Terrific. It's spectacular."

"Life's just grand, ain't it?" he asks.

I snort a laugh. "Yes. Yes, it is, and then you die."

Wyatt

“We’re never going to be friends or partners,” I say.

“No. Never.” She still has her wallet in her hand, and she yanks out the money I gave her. “Here. I don’t want it.”

“I don’t want it either.”

“So flush with cash you don’t need it?” she asks, rolling her eyes. “Unreal. You’re a fucking alien, but you’re loaded. How did you manage that?”

“Not by dealing drugs,” I snap.

“Just making sure. I lived next to an opium den for a bit. That... wasn’t fun. Strung-out guys would ask me all the time about...”

“They were bigger assholes than me?”

“No,” she says, but she’s almost smiling.

I grunt. “You know, I had made peace with never leaving this planet, and then I heard about the space program at the university, so I did what I had to do to get in.”

“I’m sorry things didn’t work out for us.”

“Well, maybe it can work out for us in one aspect,” I say.

“How so?” she asks curiously.

“You gave me fucking blue balls.”

“Oh, that’s right. I suppose I did.”

“You gonna do something about that?”

“Only if you make me.”

I groan. “I’m not going to make you do anything you don’t want to do.”

“And what if I want to bite you?” she whispers.

She saunters over to me, and she kisses me. Before she draws back, she captures my lower lip in between her lips, and she doesn’t so much as bite as tugs. Hard.

And I feel a shot straight to my groin.

“Fuck me,” I murmur.

She laughs softly. “Isn’t that the point, Big Boy?”

“I think I like that nickname better.”

“I prefer Alien Man.”

“Do you?”

My eyes widen as I consider asking her if she would rather fuck Alien Man, but considering I’m just happy she’s going to give in and finish what we started earlier, I’m not about to rock the boat.

Fuck her hard? Now that I’m down for.

So I take her face in my hands and kiss her. Earlier, it had all been a tease on her part, and maybe I’m a little angry about that. I don’t know, but there’s passion too. Angry passion.

I feel myself harden instantly as the kiss deepens, intensifying with every passing second. She knows it, too, because she’s exploring me as well, touching my neck and shoulders with her fingertips as we make out feverishly.

Our fingers intertwine, and I can feel the heat radiating from our bodies as we become more intertwined with each other. The overwhelming desire that was left unspent from earlier is now being satisfied between us in the form of moans and touches that become more intense by the second.

I take off my shirt, and I feel her eyes roam over my body. She licks her lips, and she runs her fingers over my muscles. Delana traces the tattoo on my chest, a star with a rocket ship in the middle, a reminder of how much I wanted to leave this planet.

“Turns out a big guy like me isn’t afraid of needles after all,” I say. “What do you think?”

“I think it’s beautiful,” she says as she continues exploring me with her hands.

Her touch is electric, and I can tell that she’s enjoying herself as much as I am. My body is alive from the sensation of her exploring me like this. It’s like we’re both discovering each other for the very first time.

Actually, we are. Earlier was just a giant tease. This is gonna be the payoff.

And from the size of my thick cock, that I swear is bigger and thicker than I have ever let it be before.

My desire for her grows with every second that passes, but I hold back because I don’t want to rush things or make it all about sex. This is about pleasure and exploration too.

It’s also about letting out our anger.

At each other.

And at our situations.

we need time to savor each moment together because this isn’t going to happen again.

I reach for her shirt and take it off. In return, she removes my pants—I never wear boxers or briefs—and lets out a low whistle.

“Like what you see?” I ask with a smirk.

“I don’t have anything to compare it to, but that...”

“One word to describe it,” I goad.

She rolls her eyes.

“Come on. Don’t overthink this,” I coax.

“Massive.”

“Damn straight.”

I reach for her skirt, but she steps back and slowly shimmy out of them and her panties. My gaze rakes over her body. Her hands clench and unclench, and her posture suggests she's uncomfortable.

But then she meets my gaze and gives a cocky little shake of her head, and my cock stirs even more. She can be downright sassy when she wants to be, and I don't think she realizes just how fucking sexy she can be.

I do, however, notice that when she comes up to me, it's from the side that conceals her scar.

I reach for her and run my hands up and down her naked body. So much better than over her clothes as it had been before.

She sinks further into me, accepting everything from me, and I take it a step further. My moves become more daring as I take one of her nipples between two fingers and roll it between them until she moans in pleasure. This only serves to fuel the fire within me more, so I keep going, moving my hand lower until it eventually comes to rest between her legs where I can feel how wet she is for me already.

I lean in closer until our lips meet again. She responds eagerly, wrapping her arms around my neck as she presses herself against me even tighter.

My touch seems to be soothing her unrest, and I even notice the tension in her body start to dissipate.

My fingertips trace circles on her skin as I feel the outline of her waist, hips, and thighs. She leans into my touch as if she wants more, so I keep going, exploring every inch of her now-naked body with my hands until she starts purring with pleasure beneath me.

Delana closes her eyes and moves against me, creating a sensual dance between us that somehow, despite everything, feels like it could last forever but eventually comes to an end

when we both become too overwhelmed with pleasure that needs to be released.

“I don’t want to hurt you,” I say. My balls are aching, and I need to enter her now.

“Just go ahead already,” she says impatiently.

Does she want to hurry up and get this done and over with? Is she having second thoughts?

“Come on,” she says, lying down. When I don’t immediately move to follow, she sits up and grabs my cock. “You aren’t having second thoughts, are you? Just because I’m a virgin—”

“You said you were waiting,” I blurt out.

Her grip on my cock tightens. “Maybe I’m sick of waiting. Haven’t I made that abundantly clear? Have something about virgins? Because I have pleased myself before, and I have a dildo and a vibrator, so I’ve had things shoved up me before. Nothing as big as you, no, but...”

I grit my teeth and try to concentrate.

“Are you trying to make your cock smaller?” she asks, incredulous.

“I don’t want to hurt you.”

“Fuck that. Give it to me. All of it,” she demands.

And she lies back down and spreads her legs.

Fuck me.

No. Fuck her. That’s what I’m about to do.

Unreal. I never thought I would, but I kneel down and then slide forward to press my body along hers. She wriggles beneath me, and I shift enough for her to be able to grab my cock again. She guides the tip against her opening and then nods vigorously.

“I’m beginning to think you’re a virgin too,” she says.

I snort. “Definitely not.”

“Then go ahead. Show me ya skills.”

I ease the tip of my cock inside her. She gasps, and her eyes grow real wide.

“You want me?”

“Yes. Give it to me!”

But I try to enter her slowly, trying to stretch her out and not make her bleed.

But then she whispers three words that send chills up my spine.

“Fuck me hard.”

“Are you sure?” I ask, almost sputtering out the words.

She nods. “I’m not gonna say it again.”

“But, Delana...”

“Is that the first time you called me by my name?”

“I think so.”

“Huh. Well, Wyatt, fuck me hard. Now. Don’t make me wait.”

I push my cock deeper into her faster. She winces but keeps on nodding, and once I’m all the way in, she sighs.

“Go for it,” she taunts. “See if you can make me come.”

I’ve always been one to rise up to meet any challenge presented to me, and I take the bait here. I kiss her, suck on her neck and then her nipples. Then, I hold down her hips and ram into her. She reaches around me to rub her hands up and down my back and then drags her nails down. Despite my hold, she lifts her hips some to meet my thrusts, and I get lost in it.

Lost in her.

And I swear my cock almost explodes. That’s how violently I come inside her.

And she moans so damn loud that I think I’m deaf for a moment.

“How was it?” I ask, breathless, my cock still buried inside her.

“Not sure,” she says, just as breathless as I am. “Nothing to compare it to.”

That woman. She’s fucking unreal.

Delana

The next day, I honestly don't know what to think.

But I do know what I'm feeling.

Sore.

Incredibly sore.

When I roll out of bed, I can't walk right. My legs... my pussy... All of it.

Angry sex. Bitter Sex.

That hadn't been out of love at all.

Hate sex.

It had been so damn pleasurable. More pleasurable than I would have ever thought.

Had it hurt some? Yes, of course it had. I knew it would just looking at the size of his cock.

But it had always made me feel things I hadn't ever before, and I make use of toys regularly. Hey, a girl has needs, too, you know.

But fucking Wyatt or, more accurately, his fucking me, well, that just makes me want to turn the tables around and be the one to fuck him. I want to ride his cock and know what that feels like.

But that won't ever happen because it was a one-time thing.

I don't regret it. Not at all.

Although I can't help but think that he's ruined me for cocks on Earthling guys because I really do think that once we got into it, once it was hot and heavy and hard, Wyatt made his cock grow longer and wider to fill me entirely, to even stretch me out and force me to accept more than I should've been able to.

Shit, just thinking about our fucking is making me wet.

I shower and refuse to give into temptation. I don't dare touch myself, and I make it to class.

Only, Wyatt isn't in class.

Whatever. I'm not going to worry about him. Maybe his kind needs to sleep for a long, long time after sex. He had seemed really tired afterward.

No, we hadn't cuddled. I caught my breath, pushed him off me, and got up and got dressed. We returned to campus, and that was that.

He's also not in our next class, the alien. Why is he up to?

Despite doing my best to put Wyatt out of my mind, I can't concentrate on what the professor is saying. I'm too distracted by Wyatt's absence. I still think that can't possibly be his alien name, his true name.

Regardless, no matter how hard I try, I can't stop thinking about him. About his deep piercing blue eyes that seem to look right into my soul. His strong body and his powerful thrusts. The way he made me want to scream out in pleasure until I couldn't anymore.

I want more of what we had, even though it was angry sex, and for the first time in my life, I'm feeling something alien-like myself.

I shake my head. Alien-like? Who am I kidding? I'm more a freak than an alien. People look at me and then look away, or else they'll stare at me like I'm a hideous monster they can't

look away from. Inwardly, for far too long, I was a mess, fractured, broken.

Honestly, I still am. After that shitty stunt by that one guy who asked me out as joke, I figured I would always end up alone, that I would never be willing to let anyone in. I haven't let Wyatt in, even if his cock has been inside me. Still, how fucked up am I that I might have more in common with an alien than I do other Earthlings?

And my letting myself have sex with Wyatt, that's saying something too. I'm not sure what all it would say or what my therapist would think. Refusing to even think about dating an Earthling and yet not dating an alien but being willing to spread my legs for him.

I've heard others talk about make-up sex before and how great angry sex is.

It really is. Now I know from first-hand experience.

I think, despite choosing to be celibate, I always was curious about sex, about the connection between two beings.

Sex really is about more than just the physical aspect.

Which is why we can't ever do it again.

But that one time... Fuck. I really can't stop thinking about him.

His eyes, his smile, his cock... It's all branded into my mind.

And the way he moved when we were fucking... He was strong and gentle in equal measure, and I felt like I could tell him anything as our bodies rose together. which is why I barely talked. I sure moaned a lot, but I didn't dare say too much for fear of what might come out of my mouth.

I don't tend to talk a lot. I sometimes have that whole open-mouth, insert-foot thing going for me, which just makes me even more awkward than normal, but the last thing I wanted as we fucked was for me to, well, fuck it up.

But once we started, the kissing, the fumbling... I didn't feel self-conscious at all, which shocked the hell out of me. I

could tell just how much Wyatt was enjoying everything I was doing, and I kind of let myself do whatever felt good. He enjoyed it... I enjoyed it...

Finally, I can't take it any longer. After class ends, I walk to his dorm room and knock on the door. He's still not there.

I feel a flutter of disappointment in my chest and turn away from the door. That's when I see a small piece of paper stuck to the wall next to his nameplate. Picking it up, I find that he has left me one final message:

Delana, you were incredible last night. I hope you remember me fondly.

I'm stunned and more than a little aroused by his words as reality finally hits me. He is gone for good now. No matter how much I want him, no matter how hard I try, he won't be coming back for more.

But how can he be gone for good? There's no way he could have flown away.

Unless he lied.

But I saw the spaceship. It's incapable of flight.

He's been trapped on Earth for years. Is he really going to give up?

No. He can't. He won't.

I won't let him.

I snort to myself as I shake my head. It's not like I will be able to help in any way or be able to motivate him.

For so long, I've been on my own. Wyatt's been alone even longer, completely shut off from his people. I don't know how he's been able to without going insane.

Honestly, knowing what I know now about him and his background, I completely understand his anger, his bitterness, the way he lashed out at me. Hell, I even understand why he got involved in that fight that let me learn his secret.

Sometimes, you just want to snap. You reach the breaking point, and either you break something or else you break

yourself.

I've been there.

It's not fun.

I'm not sure where Wyatt's gone off to, and that note... Remember him fondly. Not if he leaves Earth without me.

He might be where the spaceship is, he might not, but that's where I go to now.

And he is. Sitting in the middle of the wreckage, hands covering his face, not moving.

He's hit rock bottom. I can tell just by looking at him.

Most likely, he wants to be alone. Who wouldn't when you're at your lowest?

Tough shit. He's the only one stopping himself from leaving this planet. There has to be something he can do.

I stay quiet, but I take a few steps closer to him. He still doesn't look up, and his posture looks like he's trying to disappear into himself.

"Wyatt," I say softly, hoping not to startle him. "It's all right, you know."

He shakes his head. "No it's not." His voice is gruff and rough, but he's not trying to sound tough anymore.

"Yes, it is," I insist gently. "You flew here despite incredibly odds. You survived. It has to be for a reason."

He snorts. "And what's that reason? To fuck you?"

"No. To get the fuck out of here. Back into the stars where you belong. You hate it here. You aren't going to let yourself die here, are you?"

He looks up at me then. His eyes are blazing with emotion - a mix of anger, desperation and determination all rolled into one. It takes a moment for him to process my words before he speaks again.

"Why should I even bother?" he asks in a low voice that cracks slightly on the last word.

“Why not? Unless you have given up on life. Was fucking me really that terrible? I thought you wrote that it was amazing.”

“I didn’t want you to come here.”

“I know. You wanted me to abandon you.” I grit my teeth. “Look, stop being a fucking coward. You need to get up. You can’t stay here in the middle of this mess forever.”

He doesn’t move or respond, so I continue.

“Come on, Wyatt, you have to try again. There’s no way that ship is going down without a fight. Nothing worth having is ever easy, right? You’re too strong and resourceful to give up now. When no one else believes in you, you have to believe in yourself.”

In the silence, I reach out and gently place my hand on his shoulder, feeling his muscular frame trembling beneath my touch.

I don’t think he’s frightened.

I think he’s given up.

And honestly, that frightens me. Because if he isn’t willing to try, we’ll be stuck here. Sure, I can study and graduate and maybe become an astronaut, but the thought of going to the moon or Mars is no longer enough for me.

I want it all.

And the only way to get that is through this alien.

If I can’t get him to get his act together, I’m going to be stuck here, and I refuse to have that.

He gave me hope for something beyond my wildest dreams, and I will not allow him to yank that out from under me.

“Don’t be scared. Don’t be anything but determined. You got this.”

“No, I don’t.”

“Not with that attitude,” I snort.

He takes a deep breath, his voice barely above a whisper. "What's the point? The ship's broken beyond repair."

"What's the point of living at all if you're going to give up when it gets tough. Have you looked in a mirror and seen yourself? You're tough, right? Mr. Tough Alien Guy. Prove it. Get up off your sorry ass and do something to change your circumstances." I lift my chin. "Go on. I dare you."

Wyatt

I grit my teeth. As if her daring me is going to make a bit of a fucking difference.

“I’ve tried for years to fix it,” I snap. “I’ve taken apart what I can to try to rework and salvage what I can, but it’s not enough. The pieces I would need to replace what’s broken and unfixable so it can fly... They’re on my home planet. Nothing here on Earth will ever help to fix it. I’m grounded forever. I held out hope that maybe you Earthlings were closer... You aren’t. You’re fucking light years away, and I’m sorry. I’m sorry we met and that you got your hopes up because nothing is ever going to change. This.. all of it... I should just burning it.”

“Wow. I didn’t realize you were a fucking quitter. I never should’ve fucked you. Should’ve held out for a winner.”

I jerk to my feet and tower over her. “You regret it?” My voice is low.

Deadly.

I’m trying to hide just how hurt that makes me.

How fucking furious I am.

Because I hadn’t thought I would ever sleep with an Earthling, and I gave in. I caved. And it had been amazing, incredible, just like I wrote, but I knew it had been a one-time thing.

Still, I hoped we would move on past this anger that's always been there between us.

Anger that has been misplaced.

But I also thought I wouldn't see her again.

Naive, maybe. Stupid, yes.

She lifts her chin, defiant as other, her eyes shining. That scar makes her look like a fucking warrior or a goddess. Something more than just a boring, regular Earthling, and I hate myself for not having the courage to reach up and caress her face, to touch it, to trail my finger along it.

Her scar doesn't define who she is, but it makes her almost too beautiful to look at.

Whatever or whoever hurt her did a lot of damage, but she's strong. Doesn't she realize that? She's still fighting.

Fuck. Maybe I should be fighting to.

I'm done feeling sorry for myself. I don't need her approval to do shit, but I want it. I really fucking want it.

So despite my reservations and fears, I try once more to repair the ship and make something from nothing. It's a long shot, but if anyone can do it, it's me, an alien with superhuman powers, at least compared to the Earthlings. I'm stronger than all of them, have more endurance too. My speed is greater than even their fastest athlete.

Naturally, I already have all kinds of tools, not just the ones from my home planet but also screwdrivers, hammers, and wrenches.

My heart is pounding in my throat as I start to take apart the ship's broken parts. I feel a fierce determination bubbling through me as I get stuck into my task.

I do my best to ignore Delana. She hovers around, not in my way, watching carefully. I can sense her questions, her curiosity, and I find myself talking as I work, explaining what each part of the ship is, what it does, and why it is vital.

Despite all my reservations, I try to repair the ship. Even though I know it's futile, I can't help but hope that something will click into place, so I take apart one of the panels and start digging around. To my surprise, I find some pieces that look like they could fit together with what's already in place. As if fate is giving me a chance, the pieces fit perfectly and, after some tinkering and testing, they hold firm, and I fix some of the wiring.

While this console is important, it's also not strictly necessary. Deep sleep helps when you are traveling for a long duration, especially when you don't have enough food for the journey, and the essenmaker is busted beyond repair, but it's not the engine or the hyperdrive or any of the seriously crucial aspects of our flight.

"Do you often travel via deep sleep?" Delana asks.

"Hardly ever. I prefer to remain awake."

"I don't think I could fall asleep on a spaceship," she says, a tinge of awe coloring her tone.

"I could easily. I just choose not to, and if you opt for deep sleep, it's chemically induced."

She shivers. "How would the machine even know how to deduce how much is necessary for an Earthling compared to a Grolla?"

"It would be able to. Algorithms along with taking note of your height, weight, measurements like that."

"Of course," she murmurs.

"The computer should also be able to detect any allergies one might have to different components and make alterations based on that."

"Really? That's marvelous!"

"Yes, well, I have to take medication every day that I am here."

"You do?"

“It’s an alien planet to me,” I remind her as I start to look around for another part of the ship to tinker with. I hadn’t bothered with attempting to fix the deep sleep mechanism before because I hadn’t thought it necessary. Nor had I checked to see if the beds required for deep sleep were intact. Like I said, it’s not strictly required, but a win is a win, and it’s giving me confidence, even if it might only turn out to be false hope.

“Of course. You must not be able to tolerate everything.”

“Not without medication, but I’m managing. It took me some time to be able to learn how to tolerate your vegetables. They gave me tremendous gastro issues at first.”

“Do you even like them?” she asks.

“I try to eat healthy,” I say.

“Diner food is so healthy,” she retorts.

I snort. “You can find healthy options anywhere.”

“I suppose,” she says, her tone turning a bit wistful.

I eye her curiously.

She looks away. “I don’t eat out.”

“Never?”

Delana shakes her head and grins her hands.

I’ll bet anything that it’s because of her scar. People stare, whisper, make her feel uncomfortable, and she would rather hide away than deal with that.

I would instead snap at them to look elsewhere.

Hell, I would do that for her if we ever went out eating together.

Not that we will.

I sigh and return to work. The engine is going to be the hardest part to tackle, and I opt to at least look it over. The cylinders are half-burned, eroded away from the heat of the atmosphere, and I truly do not know how to fix it. The metals

we use, the materials, simply aren't found on Earth, and I do not think any of their metals will make for a solid replacement.

But I might as well try. If I fuck up the engine, am I truly any worse off than I am now?

So I head to the junkyard with Delana, and we strip out as many engines as we can. I bring them all back to the spaceship, and I see if there's anything I can salvage from them and try to see if anything at all might help.

Nothing is viable. Nothing at all.

I eye her. "I need to sneak onto a naval base."

"A naval base?" Her eyes widen.

I nod.

"Why?"

"A mine engine is so much stronger than a car engine."

"That makes sense," she murmurs. "Wouldn't it have to be used constantly at full power just to move the ship at all?"

"Precisely."

"But how are you going to manage that?" she presses.

"I have my ways." I activate the sensors in my skin and alter my appearance to look like one of our professors.

Her mouth drops. "That's..."

"Stay here," I tell her.

She grimaces. "I don't want to."

"Please. I'm going to be stealing a marine engine. I can't risk any distractions. I can't change your appearance, and how can we make it like you belong there?"

"Fine, but hurry back."

"I'm going to take my good wolf time," I tease her.

She flips me the bird, and I laugh.

Three hours later, I return not only with the marine engine but also two salads from a different diner.

Delana accepts the salad, but she doesn't eat until I sit down to eat. She's almost too excited to eat, I can tell, and I have to admit that I'm thrilled too. I can't believe I hadn't thought about a marine engine before, and I can't say what made me think of it now either, other than being willing to consider every option.

Because of her.

If I get off this rock, I might have to debate taking her with me.

Once I finish, I return to work. The marine engine is delicate, and I mentally debate whether or not to use that as the base of the engine from Grixulara.

The military engine is powerful, although not as powerful as the one from Grixulara. Still, if I can try to combine the two, it should improve our chances of actually escaping. It will not be an easy task, though. Mixing the two engines might prove to be a recipe for disaster. There are parts that might not be compatible no matter how much I try to tweak them, and if I don't get it right, then we could end up stranded here forever.

I take the measurements and balance them with the parts from the military engine. I start to take apart the engine, trying to piece together different parts and pieces. I assemble pistons, valves, and rods from both engines, but they don't quite fit snugly. I try to force them into place as best as possible, but the engine still won't work correctly. I spend hours tinkering with it, but as I start to piece it all together, I realize that something is off. The engine cannot handle the strain, so I try to make some tweaks and adjustments.

In a last-ditch effort, I reach for a pair of pliers from my tool kit and push back against a frayed wire connected to one

of the coils. Nothing happens at first until suddenly there's a spark and an alarming hissing sound that quickly fades away.

Throughout all of this, Delana has been quiet. This isn't her really of expertise.

Honestly, it's not mine either. I'm a flier, a fighter, not an engineer.

Not an engineer from Grixulara. I did, however, work for a long time under an Earthling engineer. I studied under one hailed to be a master, a genius, and that is how I made so much money over the years. I hoped to learn all I could to help with the spaceship, but it had proven worthless as the technology between the two planets did not equate.

But mixing the two, this might actually work if I keep trying.

Or I could still fail.

It's starting to get late now, but I keep working, unbothered by the sweat on my brow. Finally, it looks like it should work.

Should.

What a damnable word.

It's time to try to rev it up.

So I do.

And a spark catches fire upon one of the cylinders, causing an explosion.

I stand there in shock for a moment before stepping away from it. It's a mess. The entire engine is now unusable. I've wasted a lot of time and energy in vain. I can only hope that some other solution exists so that I can fix this ship and get off this rock for good.

But I already know that's not the case.

I'm fucked.

Delana

“**Y**ou just fucked it all up, didn’t you?” I ask, speaking up for the first time in hours.

As soon as the words leave my mouth, I know I shouldn’t have said them, but it’s too late now.

Wyatt whirls around, his pricing blue eyes blazing, burning a cool fire that is going to burn me to the core.

If looks could kill, I would be dead a million times over.

“I’m fucked because you had to keep pushing me. You couldn’t leave well enough alone!”

“Oh, so this is my fault?” I snap. “If I hadn’t pushed you, you never would’ve known if it was possible or not. Wasn’t it worth it to try?”

“No, it wasn’t,” he bites back. “If you hadn’t rushed me, I could’ve taken more time to think—”

“I didn’t rush you!”

“The hell you didn’t!”

“Don’t you dare blame this on me!”

“I do!”

He’s marched closer to me as we’ve shouted at each other, and I can feel the heat radiating off of him. His intensity and anger is enough to make my heart race and my skin flush.

I want to look away but I can't, and instead, I just stand there as he stares me down. We're locked in an intense gaze that seems to last forever, our words forgotten as we get lost in each other's eyes. Suddenly, the air between us crackles with something else entirely, an energy that feels explosive.

My breath hitches in my throat as realization dawns on me. Despite the anger, despite all of it, there's something else here that we both feel, a connection so strong it almost hurts to be this close.

Before either one of us can take a step back, Wyatt surges forward and his lips are on mine.

The kiss is like nothing I've ever experienced before; hot yet tender, passionate yet gentle all at once. He takes what he wants from me, even more than I want to give, and I'm hopeless against him.

And yet, I take back from him as much as I can, unwilling to let him win in any facet.

I break off the case, breathing heavily, knowing that if I don't back away, we're going to end up in a situation I'm not prepared for.

Only I'll never be prepared for.

I step away from him and cross my arms. "You can't blame me for this, and you now it."

"Maybe. Maybe not, but you... You came into my life like..."

I can't help smirking. "Like a wrecking ball?"

"You certainly smashed it to smithereens," he mutters.

"Well, go ahead then. Smash the rest of the fucking spaceship to smithereens. You know you want to, so go ahead. Go ahead and do whatever you want."

He looks at me for a moment, his eyes softer now but still blazing with the fire of hate. His lips part slightly as he takes a deep breath before stepping closer to me once again. His hands come up to cup my face gently as he leans forward until our lips meet in a passionate kiss that sets all my senses on fire.

It's like nothing I've ever felt before—the perfect mixture of passion and anger, fury and hate, intensity and vehemence.

But fury wells within me. He's touching my face. Both cheeks.

He's touching my scar.

I bite his tongue, not hard, and maybe he realizes he's overstepped because he immediately drops his hands to my shoulders.

Instantly, I relax enough to allow our tongues to battle each other as we explore one another's mouth, pushing and pulling against each other in an attempt to knock the other down so that we can be the one who is on top. Neither of us give in, neither fall, and we move around one another like two waves crashing upon the shore during a violent storm.

When we break apart, we glare at each other, neither of us willing to back down. Our faces are so close together I can feel the heat radiating off his body again, and it makes me hot and bothered all over, and yet I'm shivering, trembling even. Fuck! I hate how he makes me want him even as I'm sizzling with hate for him. I'm so angry and frustrated that I want to punch something... or someone.

Without a second thought, I do the only thing that comes to mind.

I get down on my knees, yank down his pants to free his giant cock, and kiss the tip.

“Fuck,” he hisses.

“Lie down,” I tell him.

For once, he doesn't fight me, and he drops down to the ground.

I lick the length of his shaft, but instead of taking his cock into his mouth, I continue to lick up his chest, along his neck and then kiss him again. His lips move against mine in a passionate frenzy and it feels like our anger is dissipating into the kiss and turning into something else entirely.

That thought terrifies me, but I refuse to back down, to cower from him, from this.

Somehow, our environment fades away as we explore each other with an intensity that can only be described as hate sex. I rub my pussy against his cock, and I want to take that next step, to do what I wanted to do before, to ride him, but I don't know if it'll be any good.

“Fuck me already,” he groans.

“Of course you want me to do all of the work,” I murmur.

He groans again. “You're going to make me fucking explode all over me,” he snaps. “Either put me in or let me be on top.”

“Oh, so you're giving me permission, huh?”

He smirks. “Don't tell me you're afraid.”

“Don't tell me you think that shit is going to make me do what you want.”

“What is it you want?” he asks even as he moves his hips beneath me, clearly trying to maneuver himself into position to enter me.

I swallow hard. Inside, I'm a storm of emotions. As much as I want to give into pleasure, I'm slowly becoming more confused than angry, and if I lose that anger, can I dare to keep this up?

Because if this isn't hate, angry sex, what is it?

I don't want to know.

Ignorance really is bliss.

I glance over at the ruined engine, and the thought that we really are stuck here on Earth for the rest of our lives fuels my angry all over again.

I reach down, and I grab a hold of his cock. I swear it's larger and thicker each time.

Gritting my teeth, I align my opening with the tip, and I push down. It's... It's not easy to fit him in. It hurts, albeit in a

good way, and I slowly lower myself down farther and farther until he's pressed inside me, buried deep within me.

He grasps my hips, pushing himself inside me even deeper. I moan out loud and arch my back as pleasure courses through me. Up and down, I ride him, him thrusting up to meet my every downward grind, harder and faster, and I can feel his body shaking against mine. Our movements become faster and more urgent as we both get closer to climax.

I fall forward, our chests smashed together. His breath is hot on my neck, the sweat glistening on our skin blending together in a way that further fuels the intensity of this moment.

I grab a hold of his shoulders, digging my nails deep into his skin and using him for leverage as I thrust against him with a force that is almost animalistic.

My entire body is shaking from the force of my pleasure. His hands are cupping my ass tightly, pulling it down hard against him with every move that I make.

My breath hitches, and my eyes close as I realize just how deep he is. I've never felt so full before, and my walls tighten around him.

My breathing becomes shallow and ragged as I reach the pinnacle of my pleasure then explodes in a long, drawn-out scream that mixes with his own as he follows me closely over the edge.

I am no longer angry at him, instead all I feel is pleasure, a pleasure so strong it borders on pain, but then again maybe they are one in the same because it feels like each thrust brings us together even tighter. Suddenly all I can think about is him and how good it feels being with him like this. The intensity of our orgasms linger in the air around us, and we remain still for what feels like forever until finally everything begins to slowly return to normal again.

We lay there panting next to each other. I don't know about him, but I am both utterly exhausted but also satisfied in a way I have experienced before.

Wyatt

I must have dozed off after we fucked because when I next look around, I realize I'm alone.

I don't know how to feel about that, but all of it... it is what it is.

We're fucked.

And if we keep fucking each other, we're going to end up more fucked.

Because I don't see how this can continue onward. Us. This fucking ship.

My hope.

It has fucking died.

The sun is rising, though, which means I slept for hours. It's early, around five in the morning, but I don't bother to go back to sleep. With a groan, I stand and put my clothes back on.

My gaze falls on the communicator. It's the one device that I tried first to fix, but I failed.

I have no faith at all that I can get this to work, but that doesn't stop me from picking it up and examining it. It's shot.

If I want to get it working with Grollian technology.

What if, instead of plasma-induced energy, I try to make use of electricity and Earthling technology?

It takes me hours to try to find a way to bypass the system and infuse electricity. The power source is so much less, and I honestly don't see how I can get the signal to reach outside of this solar system.

But there is a signal. That's a start.

How to boost it, though, without risking another explosion?

It takes me two more trips to the junkyard, but finally, I think I'm getting somewhere. Maybe having some backward technology isn't completely useless after all.

It still takes another two hours before I think it's actually a somewhat decent signal, capable of reaching two solar systems away. Not a big reach at all, not compared to Grollian standards, but for Earthlings, this is massive.

I keep making tweaks and then listening to the frequencies, even sending out a few messages just to see if anyone can hear me.

It's not until around eleven in the morning that I receive a message back.

"Wyatt? Is that you?"

My heart skips a beat. "Franx!"

"No frackling! It is you, Wyatt! What the frackling are you doing way out there?"

"Where are you?" I ask.

"Beyond light years away from you."

"How soon can you pick me up?" I demand. "I have to get off of this rock. I need to get to Grixulara ASAP."

"ASAP?"

"As soon as possible."

He laughs. "Where did you learn that?"

It is so damn good to hear Xular, our language. I didn't have to learn English or Spanish or any language here on Earth. I have a chip that enables me to speak and understand other languages. I'm surprised Delana hasn't asked me about that, but maybe she thinks I learned from all of my years here.

"I'm on Earth."

"That backwater hole?"

"Yes," I say impatiently. "How soon can you come here?"

"I can't."

"You can't?"

"I'm grounded."

"What? Why?"

"I'm on Halio."

"Halio? Why?"

He says nothing.

"Why aren't you on Grixulara?" I ask, my heart sinking.

"You don't know."

"I don't know what? Don't tell me those fucking Xarillians took over our planet," I growl.

"No." He pauses. "Not them."

"Then who?"

"The Grots."

A ringing sound starts in my ears. I don't need to hear more to already know that this is the worst possible outcome that could have ever happened to the Grollas.

The Grots. The most warmongering human species there is in the entire universes.

They destroy entire planets. Leave them ruined and uninhabitable. And that's after they kill every single one of that human species on the planet.

"No," I utter. "That... That can't be."

“It is,” Franx utters sorrowfully. “I was scheduled for a run to Halio. My ship was hit when I fled, and... The government here has decided that I’m a refugee. I can’t live. They’re afraid that if I do and the Grots learn a Grolla is still alive and was on Halio, that their planet will be next. They won’t let me go, and I couldn’t use my ship to fly from here even if I wanted to risk it. It was too heavily damaged. Their aircraft are so foreign to mine that I would have to convince one of their pilots to come with me to fly it, and I just don’t see that happening, but, frackling, is it good to hear from you! I’m not alone after all!”

I’m dead inside. Everyone I know, everyone I left behind, everyone I so desperately wanted to see again, they’re all dead.

My entire planet is dead.

Franx keeps talking, and I force myself to answer him, but it’s not easy.

Even my soul is dead.

Delana

Wyatt's not in school the next day. I don't bother to go and check to see him. He might be working on the ship some more, and I don't want to distract him. From watching him the other day, it's clear enough to me that I know absolutely nothing that can help. He doesn't need to hold things in place, and he doesn't even trust me with screwdrivers or a hammer.

But when Friday comes around, and he hasn't been in classes the rest of the week, I decide to head to his dorm. I know he doesn't have a roommate, but maybe someone has seen him, and there is a chance, albeit a small one, that he might be in his room, holing up there.

I knock on his door.

No answer.

I try the knob.

It's locked.

I sigh. I doubt I can pick it. I've never tried to before, and there's some traffic in the hallway, so I'm not about to even attempt it.

I rub a hand down my face. I guess I'll head out to the spaceship after all. Deep down, I figured he was out there all along, but I guess I kind of want him to just move on and accept reality.

Like I have.

Life sucks, and then you die.

There's no escape except death.

We'll die here, him and I, the only two on this planet to know the truth, that the world out there is so much vaster than anyone else does, with so much more potential than there ever can be here on Earth.

A throat clears behind me, and I turn around to see a guy. My hair is long on purpose, so when I turn around, I make sure my hair covers my scar.

"Are you looking for Wyatt?" he asks.

"Yeah, actually, I am. Do you know where he is?"

The guy shrugs. "Nah, sorry. I live next to him." He points to his door, not that I turn around to look at it.

"When was the last time you saw him?" I ask.

"Two, maybe three days ago," he says. "I haven't heard anything from his room in all of that time either. Not sure what he's up to, but maybe he found himself a girl to get lost in. I know that I would be willing to get down for that."

"That so?" I ask, rolling my eyes and purposely tucking my hair behind my ear to reveal my scar.

His eyes widen, but he brings his gaze back to my eyes quicker than I would've thought he would. "Sorry I can't help you with Wyatt. If he turns up, do you want to leave me your number so I can give you a call?"

"Nah. I think I know where he might be."

"Hmm." He nods slowly and then shrugs. "I can't compete with him, huh?"

"Excuse me?"

"He's all strong and muscular, and... I'm not."

"Don't compare yourself to him," I say with a laugh. It's ridiculous for him to. Wyatt's an alien, for crying out loud! Not that the guy knows that, though.

The guy grimaces. “Yeah, I’m a laughingstock compared to him.”

“What? No! I didn’t mean to suggest that. He’s a freak. That’s all. Like me.”

The guy furrows his brow. “Why do you say that?”

“He’s... He’s a bodybuilder,” I say, not knowing how axle to explain his size without the guy getting a complex.

“No, I mean you. You aren’t a freak.”

I grimace and look around. “I should—”

“You mean your scar?” the guy asks bluntly.

“Don’t—”

He rolls up his sleeve to show off a port-wine stain the is massive.

“No one is perfect on the outside or the inside,” he says.

I snort. “Easy enough to say when you’re able to hide it so easily.”

“Maybe, but... We don’t know what anyone else is going through.”

I tilt my head to the side. “You aren’t an ass.”

He laughs and then furrows his brow. “Wait, you act like every guy you’ve met here is an ass.”

“Some have been.”

“I try not to be an ass until we’re friends and you’re stuck with my ass,” he jokes.

I burst out laughing. “I see.”

“I’m Brain,” he says, holding out his hand.

“Brain?” I repeat, shaking his hand.

“Brian but my friends call me Brain because I’m smart.”

“Ah. Yes. I can see the connection,” I say dryly.

He laughs. “Are you sure you don’t want to give me your number?”

“To call if Wyatt comes around?”

Brain hesitates. “Or to maybe talk about anything and everything?”

I hesitate. “You seem really nice...”

“But Wyatt’s the one for you.”

I make a face. “What! No! Ah...”

He snorts and then winks. “Sure he isn’t. It’s all right. If I swung that way, I would have the biggest hard-on for him. Alas, the first girl I’m willing to show my stain and she’s not the one.”

“I do appreciate you showing it to me,” I say softly.

“Enough to at least tell me your name?”

“Delana.”

“Love it. It suits you.”

I grin. “Thank you. See you around, Brain.”

“Take care, Delana. You’re welcome anytime.”

I walk away and realize I just made a friend. It feels strange. And good. Strangely good.

Maybe life isn’t quite as bleak as I feared.

I arrive at the site of the spaceship a short bit later.

Sure enough, he’s there, but he’s just sitting, hands on head, utterly dejected.

He doesn’t even react as I approach him. It looks like he’s tried to work on the ship some, but I can’t tell if he’s made any progress or not, but without an engine, the ship can’t fly no matter what he does.

“Hey, Wyatt,” I say softly as I squat beside him.

He doesn’t look at me.

“You haven’t been to class.”

I figure that should get him to at least say fuck class, but nope. He maintains his silence.

With a groan, I sit beside him. “I’m still sore, just so you now. From the fucking. Not that I mind. It’s a good soreness.”

He turns to look at me. I swear the light has all gone out of his eyes. They aren’t piercing anymore.

“I met a guy who is apparently a genius,” I say. “maybe we can bring him out here and—”

Wyatt leans over and kisses me. I should be pissed because I know he’s doing it to get me to shut up, but then he forces me to lie down, and he’s shimmying down my pants and pulling down his, and before I know it, he’s shoving himself deep inside me, driving me into the ground, ramming into me harder and harder.

It’s all I can do to hold back my screams as he hits all the right places and his thrusts become faster and harder. I can feel myself getting close to climax, my body shaking uncontrollably, but he keeps going and going, relentless in his pursuit of pleasure.

My fingers dig into his shoulders as he pounds me, my hips lifted up to meet every thrust. He must be getting close because his breathing increases and I can feel him trembling above me.

He breaks the kiss and buries his face in my neck as he speeds up, grunting with each motion. I’m not sure why, but it’s pretty clear that he’s trying not to make too much noise. I don’t share that need, so instead of fighting to keep quiet, I let out a loud moan of appreciation, loving the way he’s being almost animalistic with his thrusts.

His body, hot and hard and sweaty, presses down on me, and for once, I forget about all my worries and fears. All that matters is his movements against mine and the blissful pleasure coursing through my veins.

His arms wrap around me tightly, holding me close while his hips continue to thrust into me, the intensity of sensation

only increasing with each movement. He's so deep inside of me it almost feels like we're one being, our bodies melting together in a fit of ecstasy that neither of us can contain.

My moans become louder and more desperate as I'm driven higher and higher. The orgasm builds inside me slowly at first, then suddenly explodes like fireworks throughout my body. I'm lost in the sensations, clinging to Wyatt as if our lives depended on it.

After a few moments of silence, we both collapse into each other's arms, completely spent but still holding each other tightly.

Eventually, Wyatt moves away from me and sits up.

"Needed some release, huh?" I joke quietly.

He eyes me, and his eyes have regained their piercing quietness.

I smile at him, still lying down, and I close my eyes, falling asleep almost immediately.

Wyatt

Looking at Delana, watching her sleep... she looks so peaceful. Like an angel.

She deserves to be set free.

She's had her wings tied back her entire life, and now, I've basically clipped them.

I've grounded her.

All because I blew up our one chance at getting out of here.

I fucking hate it here.

And yet meeting her might not have been the worst thing that happened to me.

Running into her, I should say.

And then ramming my cock into her.

Again and again and again.

I lie down beside her, and she sighs softly. I shift enough to see that she's still asleep, and I go to close my eyes when I feel her head on my chest.

Again, I look. She's still asleep as far as I can tell.

With a shrug, I hold her against me, and I sleep like that, embracing her with one arm.

And it's fine.

Maybe more than fine.

But when I wake, my emotional fields are gone, and I realize I'm crying.

Delana draws back, sitting up, her eyes wide with alarm. Her expression is all panicked, which makes the skin around her scar pucker. "What's wrong?" she asks urgently.

"I don't want to talk about it." I sit up as well and try not to look at her. I hate the compassion shining inner eyes, the worry, the fear.

"Is it because of the spaceship? Look, we can just move on with our lives. Or, like I said, we can see if Brain—"

"Who?"

"Your neighbor. The guy who lives next to you. The next dorm room over. He seems really nice, and he is a genius—"

"A self-proclaimed one."

"Maybe, but... You don't want touring him onboard."

I grunt. I never intended for her to be onboard, but I am not involving anyone else.

There's no point.

"We aren't getting off this rock."

"I know," I say.

"No, you don't understand. It's over."

"I do. I was there when the engine blew up, remember?" she asks dryly.

I grit my teeth and shake my head. "It's not just that. It's... I'm basically a refugee now. I can't risk being discovered, so even if I could figure out this blasted hunk of junk, I'm fucked."

"What do you mean you're basically a refugee now? What's happened?"

“I mean that I and one other Grolla are all that’s left. The others are all dead.”

“What?” Her eyes widen with alarm, and she grabs my arm. “How do you know that?”

“I got the communicator to work. I managed to connect with the other Grolla. A friend of mine. Franx. He hadn’t been there when it happened.”

“When what happened?”

“I told you there was something worse than the Xarillians.”

“Yes, but you didn’t go into details about them.”

“The Grots. Another human species. Far more war-hungry than any other species. They’re killed and wiped out fr too many human species, destroyed their planets...”

“Wait, they have the technology to destroy planets?” Her face is as white as can be.

I nod grimly.

“Why hasn’t anyone stood up to them?” she asks.

“No one can withstand against them.”

“But together—”

“But nothing. It can’t be done, but you don’t have to worry. We’ll be fine here. Safe enough. Earth isn’t in danger from the Grots.”

“Because we’re Class B,” she mumbles.

“Yes. It actually saves you, but you see, if the Grots hear about a Grolla being on this planet or that one, they’ll come after me to finish the job. I’m grounded here and not just because of my spaceship.”

“I am so sorry, Wyatt,” she murmurs.

She goes to hug me. I tense up but don’t draw away.

I also don’t embrace her back.

“It’s not your fault,” I tell her.

I try to explain, though it is hard for me to talk about.

“Franx gave me details. Not all humans bother to try to fight the Grots when they show up. What’s the point? But the Grollas did fight. They fought and fought and fought, but it didn’t matter. The Grots always win. When they make it their mission to eradicate a particular species, they accomplish that goal.”

“But why?”

I grunt. “Fuck why.”

We’re quiet for a moment. She reaches over to touch my back, and I stiffen. She withdraws her hand as if she had been burned.

“My parents... I’m sure they were very brave, but... just like all of the other Grollas, they ended up being sacrificed in a war that had nothing to do with them. Not really. No one wants to go up against the Grots.”

“I hate that there’s evil out in the universes like that,” she murmurs.

I grunt. “My father was a brilliant scientist who devoted his life trying to harness the power of nanotechnology for benevolent purposes. My mother was an artist whose works celebrated the beauty of nature through forests. She would use the forest as her canvas. It was amazing what she would do the trees, to plants, to the ground, the grass, all of it. People from all over Grixulara would come to admire her artwork.”

“That’s terrifying.”

I eye her.

She flushes. “Not your parents and their accomplishments. They sound amazing.”

“They should still be alive. If I hadn’t been shot down by those fucking Xarillians! I don’t even know if the Xarillians are still alive. The Grots might’ve gone after them next, or maybe they bypassed them. Who the fuck knows which species they decide to go after next. I can’t... I just can’t.”

“Maybe if we bring this equipment and technology to the government—”

“So we can have more bull’s-eyes on our backs? More reason for other human species to think of the Earthlings as a threat? If you have advanced technology that you don’t develop yourself, others will come for you, not just the Grots.”

“Fine. So we stay here. You stay safe.”

“I’m one of two Grollas.”

“The other is...”

I frown at her, not sure what she is asking.

She flushes all over again and looks away, embarrassed.

“Female?” she finally asks, the word very, very quiet.

“No. Male. We’re dead and gone anyhow. If I could, I would fix this fighter and go after the Grots myself.”

“The would be a suicide mission,” she protests.

I turn to look at her. That would be the entire point.

Her face turns even redder. “You can’t just throw your life away!” she protests.

“The fuck I can’t.”

“Brain—”

“Brain can go fuck himself,” I snap. “If you dare to tell him about me or bring him here, I will kill you.”

“Sure you will.”

“Don’t tempt me,” I growl.

“I won’t bring him here unless you want me to,” she says, “but I am here. Let me help. Tell me what to do—”

“Shut the fuck up.”

She nods a few times. “You’re hurting. You’re upset. The more you talk about your feelings and don’t hold back—”

“What the fuck? Why does it sound like you’re trying to be my therapist?” I demand.

She clears her throat.

“You’ve had a therapist,” I guess. “Why? Because of...”

“Because of what?” Delana snaps.

I’ve pissed her off. I’m hurting so badly that I don’t care that I’m hurting her.

A shitty move on my part, I know, but I can’t help it.

“For years, all I did was want to return home. It was all I thought about. I hoped gain enough knowledge and money and agency to figure it out myself. I’m not an engineer, not by Grollian or Earthling standards, but I tried anyhow. Tried and failed, and I’m worthless. My life is forfeit.”

“Your life can still have meaning,” she argues.

“No, it can’t. I couldn’t protect my people against the Xarillians. As a result, I wasn’t there for them when they needed me the most. Neither of my parents were fighters, but Franx had been able to keep a line of communication open with another friend who fought the Grots, and my parents, one a scientist and the other an artist, climbed into fighter ships. They strove to kill the Grots. They shouldn’t have had to. I’m a fighter. I should’ve fought for them. I should’ve saved them.”

“You didn’t fail,” she says softly.

“The fuck I didn’t,” I growl.

Delana

I ‘m not sure when it happened, and it probably doesn’t matter when so much as the it happened at all, but Wyatt and I don’t have to be enemies. We haven’t been for a bit now, and I don’t think either of us really realized it.

“There has to be some way I can help you,” I say, “even if it’s not related to the ship.”

“There’s nothing you can help me with,” he snaps, physically pushing me away from him. “You couldn’t even help yourself.”

I stiffen. “What do you mean by that?”

“I mean, I saw that you have more scars than just the one on your face.”

I say nothing.

“Those were self-inflicted,” he says. “You hurt yourself enough to delve a physical scar. If you can’t stop yourself from doing that, what can you do?”

I lift my chin. “You can go ahead and try to put me down, but I don’t care. You’re hurt, so you’re lashing out. Say what you will. Go ahead and let me be your punching bag. I can take it. I’ve heard it all before.”

He scowls and looks away.

I touch his shoulder. I want to be there for him. He's hit rock bottom.

I've been there.

Alone.

Afraid.

Scared.

Worried.

Not knowing what to expect next.

Maybe another day, his words would have hurt me, but I know he doesn't mean them. He's lashing out to lash out. I've done that, only I did it with a razor blade to my own skin.

The least I can do is show him compassion.

"You should go," he says.

"Why? So you can wallow in misery alone? So you can cause another explosion, one that will blow yourself up?"

"I don't..."

"You don't want to die. If you get off this planet, you'll find a way to hunt down the Grots and kill them, won't you?" I ask.

"I... I can't leave so it doesn't matter what I might do!"

"It does matter," I argue. "Why wouldn't it? You never know. Besides, if you're right that there are other aliens walking around and masquerading as Earthlings, why don't we just find one and see if they have a spaceship? Maybe there's another one out there who needs a ship and only has an engine. Together, you would have a working ship, and we can all leave ___"

"No."

"No? I really thought that was a good idea," I say mildly. "What was so terrible about it?"

"I'm not. I can't."

"You can't what?" I ask softly.

But he just shakes his head.

I sigh and touch my scar, my gaze on him. He slowly meets my gaze and watches my fingers.

“I was kidnapped when I was young. My parents won a lot of money, the lottery, and I was kidnapped because they guys wanted money. They sent my parents a live video of them cutting me. My dad had a heart attack and died. My mom paid them, and I was released, but the real damage had been done inside, but the kids in grade school... they treated me differently. They wouldn't talk to me anymore but would whisper about me all the time and not just behind my back. In high school, the bullying was terrible. I had to see a therapist, and... My mom got cancer when I was fifteen. She knew she was dying, so she helped to get me emancipated. Do you know what that is?” I ask.

Wyatt nods, and I slowly lower my hand from my scar to my lap.

“I inherited money from her, what was left from her winnings, which wasn't much. The kidnappers took most of it, and now, they weren't ever found. They probably fled the country with the ransom. I finished high school and came here. I had that therapist for a long time, and she thought it wasn't healthy, my choice I'm major. She thought I wanted to run away instead of face my issues. Maybe that's some of it, but I want to be free of everything on this planet. Nothing good has ever come of it. My mom hardly let me live at all because she was afraid I would be kidnapped at all, and since my social life was shit, it didn't matter. I didn't have a reason to sneak out. I was stuck. I was miserable.”

His gaze shifts to my arms.

“Yes, I thought about ending it all a few times. I never cut nearly deep enough, not long enough either. I just... It wasn't really about actually killing myself. Feeling the pain meant I was alive. I felt numb after my mom's diagnosis and then again when she died months later, and it was a way to feel again. Shouldn't I have felt pain at her loss instead of numb? I don't even know if my feelings are normal or not. I'm all

fucked up, Wyatt. I hate to break it to you, but I'm the one who learned your secret, not someone else, not something better."

We're silent a long time.

"I... I was numb at first," he mumbles. "I still am. I don't want to accept it, but Franx wouldn't lie. It's the truth. I just... I can't handle it."

"I know. It's hard. It's unbearable. It's fucking wrong, what happened to your people."

"What happened to you."

"All we can do is put one step in front of the other. Try to survive. Keep on keeping on." I snort. "It sounds like bullshit, but it's how I get by. For better or worse."

"Isn't that in your wedding vows?" he asks.

"Oh, I'm never getting married."

"No? Just like you were going to die a virgin."

I eye him and say nothing.

"I'm glad."

"What makes you glad?" I ask.

"That you didn't die a virgin."

"Yeah? Being celibate for a few years too many for you?"

"I wasn't a whore back on my home planet," he protests.

I smile. "I'm just glad you're talking to me some. I don't want to keep rambling on about my past. It's not a happy time for me."

"Yeah, well, it's better than talking about my lack of prospects for the future."

I snort and shrug. "It's not like I have anything great going for me."

"You can still be an astronaut."

"After learning about all of those planets out there?" I shake my head. "The moon isn't going to cut it for me

anymore.”

“You can say that all you want, but you aren’t going to get more.”

“Well, maybe I’m fated for the stars,” I say lightly. “I met one alien. Maybe I can meet another.”

“And he can take you off here.”

“I won’t go without you,” I say lightly.

He snorts. “You aren’t going to go at all. It’s not happening.”

“I don’t understand you. Why give up? Well, okay, fine. I do understand a little bit. One day. That’s all you get. You get one day to be sad and—”

“I’m not just sad,” he spits out. “I learned that my entire species is on the verge of extinction. It’s just me and Franx, and even if we had kids, it wouldn’t matter. Two of us can’t repopulate an entire species. Our kids would keep marrying non-Grollas, and the Grollian bloodline would become so diluted that we’ll be extinct one day. The Grots will win.”

“You know how they win? By this. By you refusing to live the rest of your life. I know it’s hard. Believe me. I really do know. I lost my dad when I was three.”

He jerks back. “You were three when you were kidnapped?”

I nod. “I remember the room they kept me in. It was in a warehouse. Cold. Damp. Metal walls. They kept pillowcase over my head a lot of the time. I wasn’t potty trained yet, and they hardly ever changed me. My butt became so sore. Just as well I had the diaper on, though, because I peed myself every time they came near me. They didn’t threaten me much at all, so when the one came at me with the knife and then actually cut me...”

“You remember all of those details?” He sounds horrified.

“I do. You tend to remember traumatic experiences. That was beyond traumatic.”

“How did you manage?”

I laugh. “That’s my secret. I’m still managing. Every day, I’m managing. You’ll get there one day... if you want to. It’s okay if you don’t right now. It’s not easy. It’s difficult and painful, and I can’t imagine what you’re going through.”

“I can’t imagine what you went through.”

“Just goes to show that maybe you and I were both in the wrong for bullying each other,” I admit.

He eyes me.

“I’m sorry for the hurtful things I said to you. I was upset, but that’s no excuse. I need to stop letting others get the better of me. My anger... It’s all right to be angry, but I shouldn’t have outbursts.”

Wyatt squeezes his eyes shut. “I apologize too.”

“You don’t have to—”

“I apologize because there’s nothing I can do for us,” he says. “I fucked up, and we’re stuck here, and it’s probably for the best because of the fucking Grots, and I just can’t. I never understood before when Earthlings would say that they can’t even, but I fucking can’t even.”

He huffs and puffs air in and out, and I rub his back for a long while, but he says nothing else, and I can’t think of what else to say, and eventually, I leave, my heart aching for him and his people.

But mostly for Wyatt.

Wyatt

Delana left me. We didn't have sex for once, and I think that's a good thing.

Because I am so fucking confused.

And yet, I'm not.

It's not confusion, not when it comes to her at least. I know precisely where I stand with a line drawn in the sand.

I love her.

I do.

She's fierce and driven and smart. She's a fucking warrior. A fighter.

She deserves so much more than the life she'll have on this planet.

But here, she'll be safe.

Here, she'll never have to worry about the Grots.

Here, she'll live. She's learned how to live again despite the horrors in her life, and she'll keep on surviving.

I have nothing to offer her.

Besides, if I can get off this rock, I'm not stuck like Franx is. There's nothing to keep me on Earth. I can leave without

fear, and so long as I avoid the Grots, I can try to see if there is another Grolla somewhere out there, a female one.

Don't I owe it to all Grollas to try to find a female one?

I can't be selfish.

I can't doom an entire race all because I feel in love with an Earthling.

But it hurts, the thought of leaving her, and I don't even know if that's possible or not.

I need to find a way to get off this planet.

And I need to find a way to say goodbye.

Goodbye first.

I wait until it's nighttime to finally make my way back to campus. Based on the campus directory, I know which dorm is hers, and the security guard isn't the most amendable to telling me which room is hers until I slip him a twenty.

I know it's late, that she'll be asleep, that her roommate will be there, but I can't help it. I have to see her.

I have to say goodbye as much as it'll hurt us both.

But she'll get over it.

Get over me.

I knock on her door.

She opens it almost immediately, still dressed, her hair in a messy bun.

"Wyatt, come in."

I enter her room, but my gaze remains fixed on her. "Your roommate..."

"She's at a party. She won't be back tonight."

"No?" My heart sores, and I cup her face and kiss her.

Before, when I did that, she flinched, and I let go. Her scar doesn't bother me, but it does her, and I respect that.

This time, she just moves her lips against mine, kissing me back with equal fervor.

When I draw back, I risk touching her scar. Her eyes widen, but she nods, and when I finish tracing the scar, I then kiss it.

She sucks in a breath, tears forming in her eyes. I kiss each tear that falls when she blinks.

And then when we kiss, it's different than every other kiss we've shared. It's not just a peck kiss, or a quick kiss, or a promise of a kiss. It's not fueled by anger or hatred.

It's a kiss.

A kiss of meaning and truth and light.

A kiss of love.

And not just my love either.

I feel it. I taste it. I fall into it. I become it.

I draw back, and she sighs before looking up at me with wonder in her eyes.

I wink at her, and she laughs.

"You."

"What about me?" I ask lightly.

But she shakes her head.

Damn. I wanted to hear those three words...

But maybe it's better that I don't.

She eyes me, biting her lower lip, and then desperation seems to be racing through her as she reaches for my shirt. I let her undress me, and before I can move to do the same, she grabs my cock and starts to stroke me. A groan slips out of me. The things this woman makes me feel... it should be illegal.

Delana slowly moves her hand away from my groin and trails it up my chest, tracing my abs on her way up. She places

one finger on my chin and gently tilts my face toward hers.

“I want to make love to you,” she whispers breathlessly, her voice smooth and hypnotic like honey.

Her lips are mere inches away now, and they brush against mine ever so lightly.

A most teasing kiss so full of promise that I want to grab her and promise her the moon and stars and planets.

It amazes me that our every kisses are no longer angry or full of angst. They are tender and passionate, filled with love and longing for something we can only find when we're together like this.

Our tongues dance together like old friends reuniting after a long absence, and the thought is almost sorrowful enough to cause tears to fill my eyes. I close them, trying to give into this love, the pleasure of our love, and not think about the separation I hope that will occur.

My fingers slip over the fabric of her shirt, feeling every inch of her body beneath it. With each stroke of my hand, I'm struck by how beautiful she is, a goddess made from fire and light who has been sent down from on high to ravage me with pleasure.

I lift her shirt up over her head and slowly undress her, wanting to savor this. I worshiper body with my fingers, my lips, my tongue...

And my cock.

She brings me over to her bed, and we tumble onto it, both of us laughing and sighing and grunting in pleasure as we explore each other's bodies. The feeling of her skin against mine is like nothing I've ever experienced before. It's like sex with an angel, and I feel as if I'm soaring through the stars.

Our movements become more frenzied, and soon, it feels like time stops around us. My cock is deeper in her than ever before, and I funnel more and more blood to my cock so that it can swell and fill her as completely as possible.

My heart is pounding faster than ever before, like a drumbeat rising to a crescendo of pleasure that takes over my entire body until I'm just a shell of myself. I give her every part of myself, and I swear I die in her arms, and yet we move together in perfect harmony like two parts of one entity striving for something beautiful and greater than ourselves.

Neither of us wants it to end, but eventually, we reach the peak.

"Delana," I cry out, my lips moving to form more words that I cannot bring myself to utter aloud.

"Oh, Wyatt," she echoes on a sigh before moaning loudly, almost screaming at her own release.

Panting and trying to reclaim our breath, exhausted from our exertion, we remain clinging to each other tightly. I so wish and hope that this moment will never pass.

As the afterglow fades away, we lay together peacefully in silence. I lay with her, content to just be together without saying a word. Soon enough, sleep finally takes her, and I linger, watching her sleep, wishing my life could be different.

But my life has been nothing but pain since that day my fighter had been shoot nearly out of the sky and I had to crash-land on Earth. Yes, here I found love.

And here is where I will leave my heart behind.

But I am a Grolla, and I cannot forsake my people, even if we only number too.

Franx is stuck. He cannot try to find another of our kind, and so that task is up to me, even if I wish it different.

Delana

Things changed during that last time we had sex. I know it did.

We didn't fuck.

We also didn't just have sex.

We made love.

And I want to do that again.

But when I open my eyes, he's gone, and somehow, somehow, I think I know the truth.

That was goodbye.

He tried to tell me goodbye, with that note. Maybe because it didn't keep me away, he didn't bother with a note this time, but that doesn't stop me from hopping in the shower, washing up, drying my body and hair, getting dressed, and heading out to track him down.

For the hell of it, I head to his dorm. After all, he had been on campus last night.

With me.

In my bed.

Yes, we had sex outside several times now, but doing it in a bed...

Magical.

Pure and utter magic.

I find myself humming as I enter his dorm. I hurry to his floor.

Before I can knock on his door, the next door opens.

“You’re back!” Brain grins at me.

“How are you?” I ask.

“Not too bad. You?”

I point to Wyatt’s door. “Looking for him.”

“He was here for a bit and then rushed out about a half hour ago. He seemed ridiculously excited about something.” Brain lifts his eyebrows. “I thought maybe he had asked you out.”

“We... We aren’t exactly together,” I say carefully.

“You don’t know where you stand with him?” he asks.

“It’s complicated, but when isn’t life complicated?” I hold up my hands.

“That’s the truth.”

I tilt my head to the side. “Do you happen to be studying to be an engineer?”

“No, sorry.”

“What are you studying?”

“Nuclear physics.”

“Oh, wow. You really are a genius.”

He chuckles. “I actually want to be a rocket scientist. I think it’ll be impressive when I try to meet ladies at parties, and I introduce myself as Brain, and they’ll ask me if I’m a rocket scientist, and I can say yes.”

“You do realize that’s...”

“Lame?” He chuckles some more. “Yes. How they react to that will tell me a lot about them, and I can judge from there if

it's mission failure or success.”

“Please tell me picking up women is not why you want to become a rocket scientist.”

“Of course not,” he assures me. “Are you off now to find lover boy?”

“He’s not a boy,” I say, my cheeks on fire.

“Ah, I didn’t hear you deny the lover part.” He wags a finger at me and winks. “Go get ‘im.”

I smile shyly at him and hurry off, driving over to where the spaceship is.

To my shock, I can just faintly see something in the air. Wyatt is walking away from whatever that is, and he’s working on the ship.

Another ship. He’s being given parts to fix his!

I hide, watching as he works.

Why am I hiding?

Honestly, I don’t know.

Actually, I do.

If I’m right and that sex was to say goodbye, then that means he intends to leave with me remaining on Earth.

Fuck that shit.

Plus, I want to see if he really does intend to leave without me or not.

After some time, the other ship that I can barely see seems to be gone. Flown off, I suppose. Which means Wyatt must have whatever else he needs for the ship.

For hours, he works, and when I don’t think I can’t stay any longer, I sneak onto the ship and head to the part where the bedchambers for the deep sleep are situated, figuring he won’t have to come here to check on it. I can hear him as he works.

It’s possibly I doze off because it takes so long, but then the ship moves. There are a few beeps, and then the ship

definitely is rising.

Holy shit! He did it!

He got the ship to fly!

And he really had been willing to leave me behind, the fucker.

Fury has me climbing to my feet, and I hurry forward, out of the room and trying to make my way toward the cockpit. The ship doesn't seem to be the most stable, but maybe Wyatt is just out of practice flying.

His fingers are flying over the console, touching buttons and pulling or pushing or moving levers. he slides one thing up and another down, and then he turns around.

“Delana,” he says in a tone I haven't heard for some time now.

The bully tone.

I lift my chin. “You were going to leave without me.”

“How did you—”

“Don't you dare act like you were the one wronged here,” I cry. “You were going to leave me behind!”

He looks away from me, his expression sad. “I'm sorry,” he sighs. “I thought it was for the best.”

“The best for who?” I demand.

He doesn't answer for a moment, instead just turning back to the controls and continuing his work. He's silent, but I can tell he's thinking deeply about something, some plan that he's concocting in his head.

Finally, he takes a deep breath and turns to face me again. “Delana,” he begins slowly. “I... care about you very much, more than I ever expected to care about someone.”

He runs a hand through his hair, clearly trying to keep calm, which I appreciate, but why is he being so emotional? What is he trying to hide?

“But I don’t want to limit your potential by being together yet,” he continues quietly. “You have so much ambition and drive. You could do anything you set your mind to.”

I snort. “Not with Earth being a Class B planet.”

He flushes. “I’m going to have to live on the run, remember? The Grots will always be a threat to me, and... That kind of life is no place for a girl like you.”

I let out a long, slow breath and tilt my head back to look up into his eyes.

“You don’t get to decide that for me,” I tell him firmly, “and you certainly don’t have the right to leave me behind just because you think I’m too good for this life.”

I take another step forward and reach out, resting my hand on his arm with as much gentleness as I can muster considering how angry I am at him right now.

“Don’t you realize how much you mean to me?” I ask softly.

He winces, and I can see raw pain in his eyes. Why is he hurting me? Hurting himself? I can’t be that wrong about his feelings for me?

Can I?

“I don’t know if it’s possible for us to have kids,” he says haltingly, “but if we can... if we do... The Grots...”

“It’s possible I could already be pregnant,” I point out.

“You aren’t on birth control?”

“Why would I be?”

“You never mentioned condoms...”

“You could’ve gloved yourself, if you thought about it. I could be pregnant right now, but you would leave me and possibly my baby for me to fend for ourselves while you’re off, doing what exactly?”

And then my heart breaks because I think I figured it out, and it’s devastating.

“You don’t love me,” I say, hating the way my voice cracks. “You can walk away because you have hope. You already found one Grolla. You’re hoping to find another one, somewhere out there, a female one so you can go and fuck her and have a family with her, and I’m the selfish one for wanting you to be with me, but... I... I guess I understand... No. No, fuck that. No, I don’t understand. I love you, Wyatt. I love you, and even if my being with you meant that there wouldn’t be anymore Earthlings, I would still pick to be with you. I love you. You’re enough for me, but clearly you don’t feel the same way.”

“That’s not fair,” he spits out. “I don’t want to be with anyone else, but it’s my duty—”

“Who was that?” I ask.

“Who was what?”

“I saw... something... a ship, right? That’s how you got the parts to fix this ship. Who brought that ship? Why did you fix this one instead of going on that ship? Oh, right. Let me guess. You can’t risk leaving behind any alien technology.”

He scowls, but I get the feeling it’s geared toward himself. “Franx.”

“Franx?”

“He took a huge risk by leaving Halio. If he’s found...”

“How did he get access to a ship?” I ask.

Wyatt squirms.

“He fell in love with a human from Halio, didn’t he? She helped him, so if there are to be more Grollas, it’s all on you now. Even though you found love too. Am I right?”

Wyatt winces and hangs his head. “I miss my people. I miss my planet.”

I nod. “Fine. Turn back around. Land. Let me go—”

“No.” He groans and runs a hand down his face. “You came... I can’t. I can’t leave you. The entire time I spent fixing this ship, all I thought about was you and how much I

love and adore you, and I want you. I want you to be my wife. To be beside me always. I am frightened of the Grots. That's the truth."

I believe him on that point at least.

"I lost years on Earth in misery. I don't want to have to spend the rest of my life trying to find a woman who will Neve hold a candle to you. She can go find love with someone else if she even exists. She very well might not, but you do. You're right here, right now, and I love you too. Will you take me back?"

The look he's giving me with those dazzling blue eyes of his...

I lift my chin. "Maybe if you grovel," I say.

He drops to his knees so fast that I have to grin.

"Whatever you want, I'll do it," he says.

"Hmm," I murmur, ruffling his hair and then rubbing my hand along the stubble on his cheeks. "I think I like you on your knees."

Wyatt

I take her hand and kiss it and then press my forehead against it as I look up at her. My voice is soft and sincere as I utter, “I love you so much, Delana. You are the only one for me in this universe, and I cannot imagine life without you by my side. Please forgive me for being so foolish and not seeing what was right in front of me all along. Our love is strong enough to last forever. It matters more than anything else. Even if there is a female Grolla out there, I’d still choose to be with you because there’s nobody else I want to spend eternity with. You are an incredible woman who challenges me, who brings out the best in me, who makes sure I stay honest with myself.”

My hand slowly reaches for her stomach.

“I hope you already are with child,” I say. “I never thought about that. I... I’m a fool in so many ways, but there’s no doubt that I’m also a fool for you.”

I take her hands in both of mine, and I grip them tightly, never wanting to let go.

“I truly am sorry for everything. For being a coward and leaving you here alone with your fears, for not caring about your feelings, for ignoring my own... for not trusting that we can make this work.”

She kneels down too, and I press my forehead against hers.

“Please forgive me,” I say softly. “I love you and only you with all of my heart. I don’t want anyone else but you by my side. I don’t want any other family but one with us together.”

“What if you can’t get me pregnant?” she asks.

“It certainly won’t be from lack of trying.” My smile is small and tight. “Will you forgive me?”

She tilts her head to the side, staring at me. “I know you’re scared,” she says gently, “but you don’t have to be. I’m here for you, and I love you, no matter what.”

Tears prick at the corners of my eyes, but they aren’t tears of sadness. They are tears of joy.

“I love you so damn much,” I say, my voice thick with emotion.

We embrace each other, and I lift her up into my arms, cradling her close to me. She smiles against my neck as I carry her to my bed on the ship, laying her down gently before joining her.

I move my hands to her face, cupping it gently in my palms as I bring my lips to hers and kiss her tenderly. She deepens the kiss, and it feels like we are melting into one another.

I can feel her love, her passion, and the intensity of our connection. I want this moment to last forever because it is magical and perfect.

Her skin is so soft and inviting against mine as we join together in a passionate dance that transcends all time and space.

Our movements are slow but full of promise and desire, each touch deepening the connection between us until it feels like there is no longer a separation between two individuals, only one single being who knows no bounds or limits.

We kiss and touch each other like we never have before, exploring every inch of the others body with a worshipful reverence.

We explore each other's bodies with tenderness and longing, our movements becoming increasingly passionate as our hearts beat together in perfect unison.

The kisses we share become more urgent and frantic as the intensity of our lovemaking builds until it feels like we are about to be engulfed in an all-consuming fire.

Our movements become faster, more frantic until at last we both reach our climax at the same time, an intense, dynamite finish that leaves us both panting and clinging to each other still. The explosion of pleasure that overtakes us both leaves no doubt that we will never be the same again.

As I pull Delana close to me, I smile against her lips and whisper once again, "I love you."

"I love you more," she whispers back.

We lie entwined in each other's arms, basking in the glow of our love.

"No matter what life throws at us, I will always be there for you," she murmurs.

"And you will never be alone," I tell her.

Her eyes fill with tears, and she kisses me deeply before lying her head on my shoulder again.

"I know what true love is about now," she murmurs.

"What's that?" I ask.

"Unconditional commitment."

"You have that with me, yes."

"Empathy for one another."

"Definitely another checkmark there," I say, and she laughs. "Anything else?"

She pulls away to beam at me. "Never-ending passion."

And the way she kisses me makes my cock stir again, and we share that passion with each other all over again, a moment that will remain etched in my memory for as long as I shall live.

She will be the only one for me from now on and for always.

No matter what happens from now on, no matter what lies ahead for us, one thing is certain—our love for each other will stand strong through it all.

We take a deep breath, and with renewed strength, we get up from the bed on the ship and make our way to the bridge. My arm around her waist, I stare out the window, mesmerized by the stars. We are about to embark on an adventure of exploration.

My heart has never been more full.

“Are you ready?” I ask her.

Her eyes glitter with delight. “You know I am!”

I nod and sit down to take the controls, having her sit on my lap so I can start to teach her how to fly.

Our ship hums to life beneath us, carrying us through the dark void of space with a newfound sense of purpose. We have each other now. Neither of us is alone in this vast universe.

Despite our being different aliens, we found love together.

A love that will never die.

The spaceship thrums gently beneath us as we fly closer and closer to our destination. As we approach a new planet I have never been to before, a beautiful sight meets our eyes, that of a mysterious globe filled with swirling colors of blue, green, purple, and white that shine like jewels in the night sky. Beauty and wonder... this planet certainly has that, and I cannot wait to see it up close.

We ease into orbit around the planet, marveling at its unique terrain of mountains and valleys covered in lush vegetation that stretches across miles of breathtaking landscape. A feeling of awe washes over me as I contemplate

this new world with excitement and anticipation for what lies ahead. A quick glance at Delana tells me she feels it too.

The ship descends swiftly, and I lower the ramp.

“Are you sure you’re ready?” I ask her. “There is no human life here. We can breathe here, though, without equipment, and it should not be too hot nor too cold.”

“There is now,” she says confidently.

“And if we love it here?”

“We can live here, but we can still go off and explore other planets and come back.”

“You do realize that others might one day come here?”

“And if they do, we will handle it then, but for now, stop stalling and come on!”

She grabs my hand and yanks me out of the seat, and I laugh as she drags me along. I share her excitement, trust me, but she is the true treasure.

She is all I live for.

As it turns out, this planet has no human presence for a reason. The landscape is beautiful but deadly. No matter. We find other planets to explore, and in a few months, we discover Delana is pregnant. We opt to head to Halio even though leaving might prove a challenge, but I miss Franx, and I wish for him to meet my wife.

Yes, Delana and I wed in a small ceremony. I say small but it was only the two of us. We shared our vows to one another beneath the stars, and it is beneath the stars on Halio that she gives birth to our son.

And I know that I am truly pleased.

“No one is ever going to bully you,” I catch Delana whisper to our son before she passes him over to me.

“You plan on telling him one day about how I bullied you, aren’t you?” I ask her.

“Maybe. But I did bully you back.”

“Who knew what would come from that.”

“Who indeed.”

She kisses me, and then we both kiss our baby, and there is nowhere I can go where I will not be at home for these two are my home forevermore.

Please consider writing a review. Thank you!

Next up is actually another Novan story! I missed the Novans too much and will add at least 5 more to the series, starting with [Beloved by the Alien Bodyguard!](#)

Please sign up for my [newsletter](#) for updates on new releases, giveaways, excerpts, and more!

~Ashlyn

OTHER BOOKS BY ASHLYN HAWKES

Aliens on Earth

The Monster Alien

The Cowboy Alien

The Police Officer Alien

The Fireman Alien

The Mafia Boss Alien

The Dragon Alien

The Teacher Alien

The Biker Alien

The Christmas Alien

The Bully Alien

The Novans

Chosen by the Alien Commander

Selected by the Alien Scientist

Bought by the Alien Breeder

Picked by the Alien Pilot

Ordered by the Alien Overlord

Captured by the Alien Captain

Overseen by the Alien Officer

Dominated by the Alien Driver

Solicited by the Alien Scout

Bartered by the Alien Builder

Grabbed by the Alien Guard

Smitten by the Alien Soldier

Woody by the Alien Warrior

Honored by the Alien Hunter

Prized by the Alien Pirate

Beloved by the Alien Bodyguard

Claimed by the Alien Chef

Hired by the Alien Hunter

Possessed by the Alien Player

Adored by the Alien Ambassador

The Kurians

Ravished by the Alien Raider

Taken by the Alien Traveler

Detained by the Alien Discoverer

Enchanted by the Alien Explorer
Dazzled by the Alien Daredevil
Mesmerized by the Alien Mercenary
Wanted by the Alien Wanderer
Visited by the Alien Voyager
Needed by the Alien Nomad
Hypnotized by the Alien Hero

The Alien Captors

Kidnapped by the Alien
Stolen by the Alien
Taken by the Alien
Captured by the Alien
Whisked Away by the Alien
Imprisoned by the Alien
Seized by the Alien
Carried Off by the Alien
Abducted by the Alien
Detained by the Alien

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ashlyn Hawkes has always been fascinated by the stars, so it's no wonder that when she started to write romances, she gravitated to big, strong, muscular heroes... with blue skin. Aliens. They need love to, right? And she plans to play matchmaker with as many aliens as possible. Who wouldn't want to be chosen and claimed by a handsome brute of an alien?

Oh, and Ashlyn has a [newsletter](#)! Please sign up for updates on new releases, giveaways, excerpts, and more!

Email Ashlyn at ashlynhawkes@gmail.com. She loves to hear from her readers! Happy reading!



SPECIAL AUTHOR NOTE

Hi, readers! I noticed that a few of my reviews mention editing and proofreading errors. I do have an editor and proofreaders (yes, two!), but it seems things are falling through the cracks.

That's where you come in.

If you email me at ashlynhawkes@gmail.com with errors from any of my books (honest typos and not style choices), you'll be entered to win a \$5 Amazon gift card! As long as there's one entry, there will be a gift card given. Not only that, there will be one per book each month!

Thank you in advance for your help!

Oh, and when you email me, if you feel that any of the characters deserves their own story, please let me know in the email too!

Finally, if you would like to join my beta reader team or my ARC team, let me know!

Until next book,

~Ashlyn