

The familiar woosh of the chamber opening was enough for Eli to wake from his deep sleep, as much as lingering dreams kept nagging at his mind. He hated trying to parse through the dreams caused by hypersleep, figuring it was best to prioritize a heaping helping of black coffee to take up. A little shake of his head was the best he could manage for now as he blinked a few times, reaching for his glasses as a reflex.

Resisting a yawn, hating the smell of his morning breath, Eli sat up in the chamber, looking around at the other five crewmen who were serving on board the *Aurora*. They had been in hypersleep for six months, on a survey mission for a new planarity system was a somewhat habitable planet, rich in resources. Well, resources to make the company heads rich, but that was the way of things, even with all the technological advancements over the past 50 years. At least the pay was worth it, and Eli didn't have anyone waiting at home who would resent him taking an extended work trip. That was the case for most of the crew, save for Jeremy and Dan, who were both here as a couple.

“Man, it always takes so long to wake up after hypersleep,” Eli eventually said, br among the silence in the room.

“You said that the last two times, too,” Alister said, standing up and stretching. Eli took a moment to enjoy the eyeful. Alister was a little on the learner side, muscled from a rigorous gym membership ship, and easy on the eyes. Alister didn't make eye contact, though made a show of stretching and flexing that did not go unnoticed by the rest of the crew. It was well known from their last mission together that Eli had a thing for the man. Alister didn't reciprocate, being a little vague on his sexuality, but he certainly loved to tease, keeping Eli on the edge and leading him to need some ‘me time’ in his quarters more than once.

“1 hour and we meet in the mess hall. Briefing will take place directly after!”

“Sounds good!” Jeremy responded, standing up. He wouldn't have minded getting the lab set up the way he'd wanted, not having the chance to do so before departure. Not that it was in dire straits or anything, by the man was rather particular, and in the event of an emergency, it was better to air on the side of caution, as he'd said before. Dan put his hand on his lover's shoulders as the two of them made their way to their lockers, trying to be quick about it. They would at least have time to shower, though little else, something likely welcome after six months of hypersleep.

“Damn, this never gets easier. Back to bed as soon as we can!” Isoroku commented, stretching and yawning. He'd hoped to get some shut-eye after making orbit, before leading the shuttle down to the planet's surface.

“No rest for the wicked,” the captain said, getting to his own locker. “You’ll have some time before tomorrow. That is if anyone can get a damn wink on this thing,” he muttered, making Eli chuckle. Like himself, the captain was ex-military, but he wasn’t a hard ass like so many he’d worked with. Considering half their crew was civilian, it was appreciated. He was gruff, to be sure, but friendly, and got along with Eli well enough. At least he looked past the crew’s idol flirting, something that a traditional man might have scorned.

Reconvening within the hour, Eli was the first one there, pouring himself a generous cup of coffee. He was also the make-shift chef, having cooking experience and loving to do so. Not that there was much to do to prepare the dehydrated dishes that were standard issues on long voyages. But with his own personal flare to add to each crew member’s dishes, his care was welcome and appreciated.

Slowly, the rest of the crew filed in, Jeremy and Dan being the last two, which wasn’t a surprise. It was a civilian ship, after all, though while they were on the job, the captain was lenient about such things. So long as the ship was running and everyone got home alive, with assets intact, that was all that concerned him.

“So are we getting that bonus the company promised this time?” Alister inquired, a little annoyed the company had short-changed them last time. Though given the urgent timetable of this mission, and the fact the same crew had been successful, the company had put forth a fair chunk of capital for their second voyage. A rather generous amount up front as an incentive, enough that none of the crew would be looking for work in quite some time if they were inclined not to be frivolous.

“They better,” the captain said, taking his own cup and sipping slowly. “Good stuff,” he said, raising it in his XO’s direction. Eli grinned, eager to have pleased.

“I know I’m going to be taking a long vacation. Getting back planetside for a few good years,” Isoroku commented.

“What, so you can sleep?” Alister ribbed him a little, to a chuckle from everyone else.

“A vacation sounds good,” Jeremy said, rubbing his boyfriend’s hand a little as Dan grinned.

Eli was sure the two of them might not need much capital after this, wanting to take time to focus on hobbies and such on Earth. And other activities, of course, though Eli wouldn’t tease them about it in public. Still, he was sure Jeremy loved the idea of being part of planetary

exploration and was a competent medical staffer besides. And his boyfriend knew how to keep the ship running, even if he'd rather be on earth relaxing at the end of the day and a fat paycheck.

He had no reservations about making his own desires known, however. "I'm going to make sure I get laid, that's for sure!" He said, much to the collective groans of everyone.

"You don't need over a million for that," Alister said, giving him a wink. Eli blushed despite himself. Alister always had a way to get to him, Eli sure he wasn't getting any on this trip, as much as he might have been open to the idea. Still, his romantic endeavors haven't been fruitful as of late, and he was looking forward to having the time and resources to get out there and meet up with someone special, having a few prospects online that might appreciate his in-person visit.

"Alright boys, meet back in ten. We have a planet to survey."

"To make our million so the company makes its trillions?" Jeremy said, snarky. He was thankful the ship didn't record audio, at least outside of the necessary functions.

"That do be the way of things," Eli said, though for the moment was at least hoping for his own crumbs, larger than what he'd made in quite some time.

Within the next fifteen minutes or so, the crew reconvened in the meeting room, a hologram of the planet and their intended trajectory on the screen. "Initial scans have shown the presence of high traces of minerals. We just need to ensure the composition is pure, and that there won't be any major hindrances weather-wise for the full-scale expedition," the captain said, the usual for such a mission.

"Or anything else?" Jeremy asked, to a collective groan from everyone else.

"No aliens to shoot," Dan teased, though it was hardly the only reason Jeremy had been excited.

Life in the universe, while abundant, was limited largely to microorganisms. Nothing intelligent, certainly, though hardly anything in its evolutionary way either. Jeremy was eager to grab some samples, though would have to wait for Eli's team to set up and make sure it was safe for their medical officer to be planet side. Alister had experience with mining operations, hired on as the company's primary consultant. He, too, had some security experience, though it was hardly needed in such situations. The crew had worked well together last time and it was sure to be a fruitful expedition as they took their readings and paved the way for a large-scale mining operation.

Still, there was always the chance that life could persist on the planet, though it was unlikely given the atmospheric composition. Not immediately fatal, though not advisable to keep one's helmet off for too long. Many such planets were too hazardous in that regard, though this one showed promise, at least as far as long-range scans were concerned. And that did bring with it the chance for life, albeit microscopic, most likely. Jeremy always held out the slim hope there was something he could put his name on, hence his reason for qualifying for space travel. At least he could add to the library of knowledge, in whatever limited capacity that might look like.

“Why this planet, though? Aren't there any closer? We came quite a ways out here,” Isoroku commented, giving the rest-pause. Not something that had occurred to the rest of them, it was a good point, leaving them to wonder if there was something unexpected to wait for.

“Don't know. Didn't ask. I don't work with the company, just for them,” the captain said, and as annoyed as the rest were, they figured there was no point in pushing the issue.

And it didn't matter, so long as they were successful with the mission and got their pay. At least a sizable sum was paid upfront, though they still had to complete the mission and get back successfully. Space travel was relatively safe these days, but they were in relatively uncharted space, and surely there were dangers out there they had no way to prepare for. Thankfully, they were a team of professionals, and each felt comfortable trusting their safety and lives to each other.

“Alister, Eli, and Isoroku will head down to the planet at 0:700. Get your equipment set up, take a look around, and head back. Don't go out of your way, but if you see a sample for the lab,” he said, gazing over at Jeremy whose eyes lit up at that.

“Dismissed,” Alexio said, and with that, the small crew filed out to attend to their various duties. Most of the systems on the ship were self-sufficient, though required regular inspection to ensure proper function. And they had some hours to make sure nothing was out of sorts during hypersleep. The ship was designed to alert the crew in the event of a situation that required their attention, but there was no harm in thoroughness, after all.

“Sleep well, cutie,” Alister said with a wink as he passed Eli at the door. “See you in the morning.” Eli groaned at that, though in truth was flattered by the attention. He wouldn't mind a man like that and was hoping his bounty from the mission would finally allow him the chance to. And, for now, he was free to dream with the mental images Alister so eagerly planted in his mind with every tease...

Morning came too soon, Eli spent his time making sure the command functions and security systems were up to standard. He was late getting to bed as a result, though some well-focused thoughts and some personal time helped him pass out. But he never did sleep well in space, tossing and turning on the very standard issue bed. Still, with sufficient caffeination, he was able to regain his faculties enough for the mission, and met with Alister and Isoroku at the shuttle bay, to make the descent to the planet.

“Not the first time I've set foot on a planet before anyone else,” Isoroku commented as he got into the pilot's seat, preparing for the preflight sequence. “Mind if I exit first?”

“Go for it, man,” Alister said, getting into his seat. He wasn't much for status symbols himself, to be honest.

Eli cared little himself, wanting to do their job and get back safely. It was almost pleasant to feel the shuttle lift off, thrusters propelling them out into space and letting the planet's gravitational pull draw them in at the expected angle. Eli hated the next part, the shuttle shaking as they passed the planet's atmosphere. As much as they were able to scan its composition, it was always a worrying prospect to travel down to a planet for the first time, in the case of something unexpected. Though, thankfully this descent was rather stable, all things considered, a little rough but sure to be worse in the hands of someone else. This had been about the dozenth or so time he'd been in a shuttle with Isoroku, and he found he wouldn't feel safer with anyone else. It still didn't help quell the nervousness from the shaky ship, but Alister's hand on his was a nice enough gesture, enough to allow him to breathe deeply as they passed into the lower atmosphere.

“Bleh. Not much to look at,” Isoroku commented, and Eli looked past the screen to see little more than gray wasteland through the sparse patches in the clouds. It didn't have to look pretty, hardly a candidate for colonization. Still, Eli didn't really care much about these types of worlds, having been on several now each as desolate as the last.

“Makes you wonder what the point of all these planets is just to look like this,” Eli commented. He was starting to see things from Jeremy's point of view, wishing there was something down there that wasn't lifeless rock or some mineral composite that the company laid claim to.

“There isn't one,” Alister said, deadpan. Eli knew he was right, that such things were as they existed and were unlikely to have a higher purpose. Still, there was no use in philosophizing when they had a job to do, safe for idle chitchat. Eli found his thoughts more focused on how he planned to spend his money and his free time once the mission was over. Sure, that would be about six months from now, but if he was asleep for most of it, then what did it really matter?

Landing smoothly, the three of them exited the vehicle, allowing Isoroku to step foot on the planet first. They figured there was a grin on his face, but it was hard to tell through his helmet. At least the gravity was relatively similar to that of Earth, leaving it to their proposed site to set up their equipment. Alister brandished his weapon, though all three were armed in the event they required it. It was always a better to-be-safe than sorry scenario, and thankfully that wasn't something that had come up in their past missions. Given the stark nature of the landscape, it didn't seem likely they would be encroached upon by some alien life form. Still, Alister stayed vigilant, not wanting to get caught off guard.

They were quickly setting up their equipment, with no issues with his functioning as the light flashed in a sign they were successfully recording. Their data would be transmitted to the ship in orbit as well, though there were certain things that were best examined directly from the source, to cover their asses. Things like mineral composition, atmospheric composition, and a myriad of other data that a mining team would find invaluable. Not least of which was the presence of sufficient quantities of minerals to make their mining operation worth it.

Job finished, and the three returned to the shuttle, needing to move some kilometers to set up their second site. They would only be surviving a portion of the planet, four well-spaced sites that had been planned out beforehand. Eli would have thought more sites would have been more effective, but the equipment was rather expensive, and he chastised the company for being frugal over something so necessary.

Three sites set up, Alister fake yawned, before saying "Damn, this is boring. I mean, it's not bad but...boring, you know?"

"Man, we're on a new planet for the first time! How can you be *bored*, man!" Isoroku declared as they returned to the shuttle for their last site.

"You've seen one planet, you've seen them all," Alister said, before going to board.

Taking one more glance around, something in the distance caught Eli's eyes. Pulling out his binoculars, the gleam of something metal against the backdrop of the landscape was clear. "I bet you've never seen *that*," Eli said, calling back to his crewmates.

Going to join him, the two took turns, neither able to determine with any sort of certainty. "It's your call, boss," Alister said, and Eli quickly made his decision.

"We're making good time. Let's do it," he said, and the three made the short flight.

“Anything?” Eli asked as soon as they were in the air. Alister was examining the equipment, trying to get a read on what they had seen. “No. Nothing out there. We all must be blind.”

“If we're blind, then...fuck...” Isoroku trailed off, looking out the front. From the distance, the long metallic structure seemed more like the side of a mountain. But from above...

“It's not one of ours, is it?” Alister asked, already knowing the answer.

“Unless the global Alliance has been holding out on us...” Eli said, whistling. It didn't take an expert to tell the massive ship below them wasn't of Earth origin. Nothing they had seen could match the oblong object. Its perfect structure defied anything that had been observed in the known universe, giving credence to the notion it was made with intelligent design. And while its status as a ship was still in question, there was little chance it was naturally formed or had been built here where it had been left.

“We must all be hallucinating. There's nothing out there as much as this damn machine can tell,” Alister grunted, clearly annoyed. “Not a read on the material, not a power source, no...life signs,” Alister said, hesitating on that last part. It was of little relief from the implications of what sat below them raced through their heads, each more terrifying than the last.

“Any signs of openings?” Isoroku asked, looking for a place to land. The scope of the thing, at least miles in length, appeared to be entirely uniform, nothing so much to indicate a bridge, engines, living quarters, or any other purpose they could discern from an outside observation.

“There's no sign of...anything...” Alister muttered, scanning his instruments as much as turning back to the window to confirm with his eyes what should not have been there.

“Wait, no, I have something. There's a break in the landscape. Like a cave, or something. Part of that...*thing* is embedded down there. Maybe it made an opening?” Alister suggested.

“Are we we want to do this?” Isoroku asked the first note of caution aloud.

“How can we not? This is the greatest discovery in the history of mankind. Or a really, really bad joke...” Eli said, giving him a look. “What happened to that spirit of adventure? You wanted to be the first one on an alien planet. How about the first on an alien ship.”

“If that's what this thing is...” Alister added.

“True enough,” Eli replied, but it was impossible to keep his excitement out of his voice. “We still have to get that last instrument set up, and this is way beyond our paygrade but...” he paused a moment, considering his words. “The company needs to know of any potential threats from the planet. We’re obligated to check it out, at least.”

Truth be told, Eli’s inner child was too excited by the prospect of what might be below their shuttle. The notion of alien life, something intelligent and able to create its own wonders, was part of the reason he’d left the service for expedition vessels. Not that there was any chance of that, as quiet as it was out here. But now, with even the possibility of finding such below him, and being the first one to do so...it was more than he could have ever imagined, and walking out of the shuttle felt more like a dream as their lights illumined the side of what appeared to be a cave, adjacent to the obelisk and a potential point of entry.

The click of a rifle being cocked drew Eli’s attention, and while it was a little jarring, he concurred with Alister’s caution. He pulled out his own weapon, turned on the light, and revealed the path within. Isoroku reported there was little difference in the atmosphere within, but that was to be expected. Save for what their eyes told them about the structure above them, nothing they could detect could confirm its presence within objective reality.

The depression in the earth was reality shallow, all things considered. Isoroku commented it might be a sign the *thing* had landed some long time ago, and the planet’s weather had dug into it over hundreds of years. It was enough that after only a brief descent, it opened up to a rather spacious chamber, one that had an air of static as they traced their flashlights over its contours. The most noticeable feature was that one of the walls seemed comprised of the same material as the obelisk, perhaps why the onboard instrumentation reported a cave larger than what they had come upon.

“Don't touch anything,” Eli said, making a motion in Alister’s direction.

“I'm not that dumb,” he responded, taking the jab in stride.”

“Well, you are the muscle,” Eli retorted, though kept his focus on the material along the way, playing his flashlight over it for any sign of an opening, or even a disparity in the smooth material. It was flawless as best he could tell, the material lining the actual cave not sufficient to penetrate the material. Eli was almost tempted to take off a glove and touch it, but such would be a foolish endeavor. Instead, he focused on his data recording, as futile as it was. Nothing of the obelisk’s design was even detectable by anything they had at their disposal. If not for word of mouth, they had no proof of what evidently collapsed on the planet’s surface, regardless of how it had got here.



“Damn, this is insane...” Isoroku muttered, flashlight scanning the scope of the obelisk, as though digging for any sign of... anything, really. So little information was presented that the trio could speculate for millennia to no avail. It was almost frustrating with their want to know what they were looking at, somewhere between their deepest dreams and a dud. In the end, with so little they could glean from the scenario, there was little point for them to stay there, leaving the obelisk’s presence as a footnote in their mission report.

“Now that looks like something Jeremy might want,” Alister mused, his own flashlight exploring the rest of the cave. Sat some feet away from the ship’s surface was a series of oblong ovals, glistening in the light as though slick with some sort of mucus. Their composition wasn’t evident, but it was clear they didn’t match anything within the cave or the ship itself. There had to be a dozen or so, sitting there in sequence as though they had been placed there with intent. The sight of them, in any other context, drew mental images of some sort of egg, but the likelihood of such was impossible. Still, the resemblance was uncanny, sending a sense of unease between the gathered crew.

“That organic enough for him?” Alister said once more, each of their flashlights playing over them. Like the rest of the cave, it seemed the eggs did not give off a signature that their instruments were able to detect. There was every chance they were part of the landscape, though their disparity left much to the imagination.

“No idea. I wouldn’t touch them though. Just in case. Even if they do look like, eggs?” Eli commented, reiterating what they were all thinking.

“I think we’re being a little over-cautious,” Isoroku commented, though it seemed he was no further inclined to move toward them.

“Maybe. We can’t get a read on them. Might be best to let the captain know. He can contact the company directly. Not sure how one secluded cave with some egg-like things will impede their mining operation. No, really, no idea. Best to ask them. Let’s head back,” Eli said, moving away. Even if there was no obvious danger over what they were seeing, something primal within told him to stay as far away from those egg-like things as they could.

Isoroku followed suit, though not before playing his flashlight over them one more time. For a moment, the beams had been separate before now, but in a moment of happenstance, all three converged on a singular egg, just for an instant. No level of caution could prevent such a convergence, and in reality, it lasted only a few milliseconds. Yet, as their three beams moved to part, each crewmember was privy to the sight of something moving under the surface, as though a living being was within. And even under their suits, the slick sucking sound of the apex parting echoed in their ears, drawing their lights to the surface. Liking an orange being peeled, four

blossoms raised from the tip, parting to reveal a fleshy membrane within. And that being within seemed to squirm rapidly, sensing the opening above and the freedom it served to represent.

Without a moment to react, the squirming being burst through the membrane, flying through the air with a spring that defined its position within an egg. The motion was so quick that none had time to shine their flashlights in the direction, much less given any warning as to its direction. It wasn't until a thud against Alister's helmet drew their attention, that their other two flashlights were in time to see a grotesque, spider-like being wrapping its limbs around the surface and holding on for dear life. Alister was quick to cry out and try to grasp the thing, though no amount of grip through the gloves could gain purchase over the being's body. Struggling as he was, Alister had no ability to resist a thick, muscled tendriled tail wrapping its way around his throat, preparing to cut off his oxygen at a moment's notice.

"Shoot it!" Isoroku called out, though Eli didn't need to try to aim to know there was no chance of getting a target without risking his friend. He could only watch helplessly as the thing dug into Alister's suit, piercing the material and releasing a hiss of air that made the remaining two shiver in fear. If it had punctured his suit, there was little time to get him to the shuttle before the atmosphere crushed his lungs, regardless of whatever the being itself was trying to achieve.

Alister, dripping his own weapon, tried desperately to grip the being assaulting him but was unable to get a grip. Even with his gloves on, it was obvious the thing's muscles were far too stiff for him to pull the thing away from him. And given the way the clawed tips were pressing into his suit, trying to get rid of its presence might cause his death from exposure. Still, Alister could do naught but struggle, trying to get it off before it caused permanent damage.

The hissing of gas escaping his suit was secondary to the sound of slopping against his mask as Alister continued to writhe and struggle. He couldn't see through the viscous fluids oozing over his helmet, but it seemed that the creature was trying to press something firm and hard against it. Alister couldn't be sure, but it seemed to be forcing its way toward his face, as much as such seemed obscene. Still, no amount of struggle could get rid of it, and he was forced down on his knees, pulling without success to remove the alien organism. It was the hissing of his helmet dissolving that truly scared him, the material thinning as though the creature's fluids were enough to penetrate its surface.

Worried that the rush of air from the planet would overwhelm him, it was a slick, sulfurous stench. A grotesque sucking sound was followed by something firm but slimy, and the force of it was enough to penetrate the mask and start rubbing over his face. Happening as rapidly as it was, Alister barely had time to react as the tendril shoved its way into his mouth, throbbing violently the moment it did so. Alister could not gag, could not struggle as the growth worked its way to the back of his throat, pulsating as though excited. It was far too firm for him

to expel any pressure, and his mouth was forced painfully open, at the mercy of whatever the thing would do.

Wrapped as tightly as it was around the suit, there was no getting it off. And with his windpipe so tightly clenched, little energy remained for him to even attempt to struggle. He was left there, legs weakening as he fell forward onto his knees, trying to call out but only able to elicit a wet gurgle against his assailant. Vision whitening out, he was only vaguely aware of the frantic throbbing within his mouth, as though the creature was excited and preparing for something.

Eli and Isoroku could only look on in horror as their crewmate was assaulted. Eli aimed his weapon, but there was no shot that wouldn't risk his friend's life and could only look at it in horror. Pulling out a combat knife, Isoroku rushes forward, trying to maneuver it to cut at the tail squeezing Alister's windpipe. Yet, no matter how much he struggled, the knife's edge seemed to have no effect on the creature's exoskeleton, to the point that his efforts caused the knife to violently snap in two.

“Fuck!” He called out, trying to grasp the creature to no avail. Anything he tried to do was in vain, and all they could do was try to move their friend, hoping there was something in the shuttle that might save him.

The thick, throbbing tube within Alister's throat continued to open him further, and its warm, moist length drew a particular mental image, even as Alister struggled to stay awake. He had never been with a man, of course, but he couldn't quite help but view the violation as a penis of sorts. As its pulsating length started to widen impossibly wide, and the sensation of several hard ovals seemed to be pushed through it, Alister was drawn toward identifying the thing as an ovipositor of sorts. That was the last thought he harbored as one of the ovals was force-fed down his throat, followed by another and another. The pressure of such was almost too much for him to bear, and Alister's mind whited out then, falling on his back against the arms that were trying to carry him.

“We have to get him on board,” Eli said frantically, pulling with all his strength as Isoroku worked from the other side. They were making some headway, but with his suit punctured, it was likely Alister's life was already forfeit.

“What if it's a biohazard?” Isoroku asked though he wasn't inclined to let go of his crewmate, knowing what Eli would say regards.

“We have to try. I'll take the blame,” Eli said, moving with all the energy in his body. A surge of adrenaline was enough for them to move the body, Alister's heaving body enough

motivation to know they might still have time. Neither noticed over their panic as Alister's throat throbbed, something being force-fed down his gullet and into his stomach, beginning a process beyond their understanding and more horrific than anything the galaxy had yet revealed.

Though it felt like an eternity, the two were able to bring Alister's body to the ramp, pulling it onboard. Yet, a sudden heave and a rush of his chest nearly made them drop him in panic. The two looked on with shock as the thing attached to his throat pulled out with a wet sucking sound. As though its body had gone limp, the creature fell from Alister's head, rolling over with its many spindly legs positioned over his body as though dead.

The immediate concern was not the state of the creature, however. While the atmosphere wasn't immediately deadly, a human couldn't survive more than a few minutes, and it had been more than ten since the creature's appendage had penetrated his mask. Two pulsating sacks on the creature's sides had been pumping constantly since it had attached, and Eli was drawn to the conclusion that it might have been taking over his respiratory functions. It was the only way he could have survived that long, but now it has released him, Alister had only seconds.

Pulling him inside and closing the door, the shuttle's life support systems allowed for a human-friendly atmosphere that finally prompted Alister to draw breath. The moment he did so, Alister started coughing violently, throwing up as though trying to expel something. Bringing up only bile, Alister's eyes immediately fluttered open, and he backed up against the bulkhead, screaming as though traumatized.

"Hey, hey stay with me! You're safe now!" Eli said, putting his hands on Alister's shoulders. It took him a few moments to calm down, eyes shifting wildly as though preparing for an attack. With nothing there, he finally slowed his breaths, taking them deeply in an effort to prompt his body to relax. Such was a gradual affair, though Alister was eventually able to manage it. His eyes continued to dart around the room, as though waiting for the creature to spring out from any corner and assault him again.

"It's dead," Eli assured him, though he had no basis for that, only hoping it hadn't been able to move from the site. It didn't matter. He made sure to look out the window to see the faint outline of its prone form, in the off chance it might have received and clung to the hull. Not that it would survive the atmospheric ascent, but there was no telling with what might well have been the first complex alien organism discovered by humankind.

"Fuck..." Alister managed to mutter, hands free of his gloves as he started rubbing his face. The slime or goo seemed to have congealed over his face, and he was sure he would want to retch several times once he was allowed back on board and in a shower. It was disgusting, but

Stunned as he was Alister could hardly do more than sit there, shivering from an experience he did not fully understand.

Hands soon traced over his chest and belly as well, mind vaguely aware of what the creature had done to him. It had been a total, complete violation, though there was nothing he could do to resist. And it would take him some time to come to terms with what had been done to him, and probably more than a little therapy. But even in his stunned stupor, Alister couldn't deny the sensation that something had been implanted in him, that the *thing* had left something within him, whatever that could be. He wanted a full workup, feeling dirty and needing whatever was in him removed.

"It's time to let the captain know," Isoroku, a hint of regret in his voice. Eli knew he had done the right thing in bringing Alister back on board. It was not the first time he had lost someone he had been friends with. But during his service had been one thing, Eli able to largely put things out of his mind in the heat of the moment. On a survey mission...the loss of a crewmate would be tragic and demoralizing. Whatever that thing had been was an anomaly, perhaps humanity's first interaction with an alien lifeform. And there would have been some precedence to take it back to the ship for further study. But its further investigation was not worth the loss of a man he considered a friend, and Alister's health came first. And, if it came to Eli's decision, he would return to the cave and light all those eggs aflame to prevent the possibility of another attack.

As was protocol, the captain required them to undergo decimation, Alister needing to be isolated before Jeremy could look him over. Alister was Ok with that, still rubbing his chest as though fearing something was inside. "I heard. Fuck, man. It's going to be OK. If there's anything wrong, we'll get it figured out," Jeremy said through the com before entering the chamber, clad in protective medical garb. Alister could only watch as Jeremy took his readings before moving to more conventional methods like checking his heartbeat and blood pressure. Alister did his best not to worry about what the results would be, but the feeling of something being pumped down his throat was not something he could forget. And he went to tell Jeremy such, before Jeremy took a scan, asking Alister to remove his shirt and checking for external anomalies.

"Hmmm, well, good news and bad news," Jeremy remarked as he moved over to his console and brought up Alister's vitals.

"Bad news first?" Alister asked, not sure he could handle it but needing to know it all the same.

“It’s the same news, sadly,” Jeremy chuckled, removing his helmet, much to Alister’s surprise. “No sign of any foreign DNA. You must have removed all the, well, secretions during decontamination. And as much as I can figure, you haven’t ingested anything foreign. I can’t be sure without some more tests, but I think you’re safe to go back to quarters. I would advise you not to go back to the planet. Fuck, I would advise none of us to go back to the planet. Best to leave it there for us. Come back with the proper materials and such. We aren’t set up in case of contamination and I don’t want to get stuck out here with no backup. Call me paranoid, but I watched too many horror movies growing up. As much as I wish aliens were real, I’m not keen to poke ones that eat through your face shield and latch to your throat,” Jeremy said, moving back to take a blood sample.

“I’ve got a few tests to run but I don’t think I’ll see anything. Just want to be sure is all. Take it easy,” Jeremy ordered, and Alister rose, wanting to shake his hand or even give him a hug. Sure he was going to die, Alister couldn’t believe he had come out on the other side alright. And, in fact, he felt rather fine, all things considered.

With that, the captain ordered them to get some rest and prepare for a debrief in the morning. Eli was fine with that, figuring it was best to take the night to process. It had been a while since a situation on the job left him so rattled he needed a drink afterward. And as much as the captain chastised him, he didn’t outright ban alcohol on the ship. Much to Eli’s relief, as much as he didn’t want to wake up with a hangover.

Jeremy, setting up his samples, was not expecting the captain to enter, face flushed. For a moment, Jeremy was sure he was going to bring down his wrath for clearing Alister safe to return to the ship. But the next words out of his mouth were somewhat more alarming.

“The company wants one of the eggs brought up. Several, if we can manage. Do you have anything onboard that can act as containment,” he asked, shaking as he did so. It was obvious he wasn’t keen on the idea, and neither was Jeremy if he was being frank.

“Umm...even if I did, no?” Jeremy responded, not willing to entertain the bizarre order. Not used to a structured chain of command, he had no qualms about letting the captain know what he thought about it.

“No, you don’t or no you won’t?” The captain asked though the hesitation in his voice was rather obvious.

“Both, probably,” Jeremy responded plainly. “We have no idea what those things are or what could contain them. Whatever it was secreting ate through one of our suits, right? I have no idea what they are made of. I couldn’t even get a clear sample after they cleaned up. Maybe if we

looked at the dead one, but that's assuming it's still down there or we could find it. And we aren't equipped for that kind of mission, regardless. What do they want them for, anyway?"

"Like they'd fucking tell me. The bonus they offered is nice, but after what happened to Alister, I don't like it. I'm not a military captain and I'm not putting you guys at risk if I don't have to. See what you can find. Your man has to refuel the shuttle, so we can't go planet side until morning, anyway," the captain said before heading out. Jeremy sighed, ignoring the order and going back to his work. It was going to take him several more hours to run through all the tests, but there was no denying the urgency of such. He wasn't sure, but there was a feeling something was wrong, and he needed to do everything in his power to find out what it was. Not only for Alister but perhaps the entire mission, as well...

Alister had done as suggested, not bothering to even grab something from the mess hall as he headed back to his bunk. He figured Eli would be there, downing a drink or two, and while he owed the man his life, he didn't want to bother him. Eli would insist on cooking him something, waiting on him hand and foot, and Alister didn't have the mental facilities to handle such pestering right now. And if he was being honest with himself, he was dead tired, of the shock of finding not only something alien on the planet but being assaulted and nearly killed by an unknown life form. And, despite what Jeremy had told him, he couldn't help but think he had been infected, that there was something foreign within him that he simply could expel, and perhaps change his life forever if it did not end it.

Surprisingly, Alister was quick to fall asleep, errant thoughts not enough to keep him awake. His body was burned out beyond belief, as though it was fighting off something and needed rest. And Alister would have welcomed it, had his rest not been plagued by a wave of bizarre dreams, each more alien than the last. It started with the thing that had attached to his face, a horror show of sorts as something was forced down his gullet as he gagged on a phallic-like object and fought for his life. But then came a sensation of pleasure, as though the act was sexual in nature and something Alister might welcome. It came with it a rather surprising erection, one that against his better inclinations caused him to expel his seed several times in his sleep. It was as though his entire testicular content had been ejaculated all at once, coating his groin, leg, and belly with the sticky fluids. Yet, lost in his dreams as he was, Alister could not be brought to wake. In fact, the more the dreams carried on, the more he wanted to indulge, as though the siren song within his mind went beyond fulfilling...

Soon, rather than being choked by the alien phallus, Alister was eager to suck on it, causing it to tense and release its gift down his throat. It went beyond his understanding, though a certainty told him that receiving its blessing would make him something more. He would become greater, *more*, and once he had cocooned and changed, he could spread his gift to others. Bringing all others into his fold...such made little sense, but to his lust-addled mind, Alister

could find no fault in what the foreign thoughts were conveyed to him. In fact, he longed to bathe in the afterglow of the notion, horny as hell and wanting to share this feeling. As much as he didn't wish to leave this fantasy he had wrapped himself in, eventually, it would be time for him to leave, and bring his fantasies to reality...

A sickly sweet scent in the air made Alister throw off his blankets, aware of how sticky his sweat was. Rubbing the skin, Alister was met with a bizarre texture, sticky and pulling away with his hands in strings. It was akin to semen, though far more vicious, and the seminal stink on his groin was enough for him to tell the difference. As gross as it felt against his skin, Alister couldn't help but feel a sense of elation. The smell relaxed him somewhat, making him sure that everything was in place for...what? The confusion spread by his humanity was overridden by that primal excitement, one that seemed to surpass understanding. With it came a sense of confidence not unknown to the man, but dialed up in the wake of what had happened. It was not only the most erotic experience for him in hindsight but one he wanted to share with those on his ship. He *needed* to bring them here, one by one, and show them the secret he held within. It was one he barely understood himself, but one that was sure to come to light if only he asked on his wildest impulses.

Though the latent arousal from his dreams had burned into his mind, for some reason, Alister found he couldn't get hard again, as though he had spent his entire testicle contents on the sporadic dreams. It didn't matter. He was sure he could lure his crewmates in here one by one, first of all, the one that had a crush on him. He would be easy, and Alister's new proclivities felt certain whatever he had in mind for the man, Eli would welcome it readily. Regardless of what his sexuality had been prior, his lust toward his all-male crew was palpable, and it was all he could do not to race out into the hall and drag him back. These new inclinations, however, saw it fit to draw the man to him, that it would work best to work his will over him here. And all it took was a single call to lure in his target.

"Eli...come meet me in my quarters...I'm feeling so much better...and I think it's only fair to thank you for saving my life...in person..." Alister whispered huskily, enough that had it come from any other man, Eli was sure it was a come-on.

Hanging up and taking a long swig of his drink, Eli stood, realizing he was a little buzzed from the few drinks already. How strong had he made them, anyway? It didn't matter. Alister was surely fucking with him, but that was fine. Eli was over it now, and besides, he figured it was a thank-you tease of sorts, even if it didn't mean sex. It was a little bit of a walk to get there, and Eli was sad to discover his drink was a little stronger than he'd wanted to, stumbling a little on the way. Eli was rather inclined to make a game of it, swaying and adjusting his hips in a somewhat seductive manner, before buzzing the door and wanting be to allowed in.



Alister wanted to open the door right away, eager for the presence of his crewmate and friend. Yet, a strange sensation was slowly enveloping him, his skin feeling moist and sticky all over. That sickly sweet smell seemed to perforate the room, though Alister found it more elating than anything. It was easy to ignore, and even the slight concern harbored at the back of his mind was not enough to deter him. There was no denying the sense of urgency that came with his actions, and the notion of achieving some higher purpose from moving forward was enough that he opened the door, waiting for Eli to enter.

Yet, something was wrong. The moment the air from the hall hit his skin, Alister fell over, a sudden pain resonating through his entire body. He was shivering, as though something under the skin was pulsating within, eager to get out. He tried to speak, but only a hiss of air escaped his lips, as though his lungs were being compressed within. The sight of his prone body drew Eli to rush in, calling out with a “What’s wrong? Alister?!” Moving toward him to try and stabilize him, Eli’s hands came away with more of that sticky fluid, confused as he raised it to his hands. It had evidently oozed through the skin enough that covered him all over, making it impossible to feel the skin underneath. But in the moment, it was hardly the biggest concern he was concerned with, and bracing himself as best he could, Alister called out. “Command override, lock the door to my quarters, no release.”

Eli’s eyes went wide as the door closed, trapping the two of them within. He wanted to run, but more than that knew he had to take Alister out of here and to the medical bay. While it took some moments to realize where the texture had come from, it looked more akin to the creature on the planet than anything he’d seen before, raising no small bit of alarm. And the implication of which terrified him to the core.

As much as he wanted to check on Alister, he needed to get in contact with the medical bay first and foremost, running to the wall and trying to reach the bridge. Yet, to his shock, communication had been cut off, not only from the room as well as his own badge, as though a dampener had been placed over the room. Alister had the means to do so, but in his current state, Eli could barely fathom what his goal was. All he knew was that he was effectively trapped, with no way to escape unless the door was secured from the other side.

By this point, Alister’s body was shaking violently, sweat and viscous fluids oozing from his body and filling his nose with more of that pungent stink. Feeling suddenly confined in his clothing, Alister reached to remove them, finding them stuck to him from the copious fluids he was secreting. With an unexpected force, Alister reached down to rip off the rages, exposing more slick muscled skin as his body continued to shake. His pants, too, were quickly shed, exposing his underwear and a massive erection within. Those, too, were torn away, and Alister felt a sense of calm rubbing over him, as though the stage was set for...what, exactly?

Of greatest importance was tending to his erection, hardly concerned with Eli's presence. The man wanted to move toward Alister, though could only stare in stunned horror at the sight of Alister's rather sizable erection. Even in Alister's lust-addled mind, the size of it was not human, something that his body could not have supported naturally. Yet, he was hardly concerned with that reality, rather eager for his pleasure. A strange airless hiss escaped his lips as he began to massage his rod, and both men could not deny that the fluids leaking from the tip were thicker than pre-cum, more akin to what his skin was oozing than anything human. It was hardly a deterrent to Alister's pleasure, rubbing his body as an expression of pleasure became plastered over his features.

Yet, his hands were soon drawn from his cock as they started to twitch violently, afflicted with some bizarre force. The skin seemed darker, though Eli wasn't sure with the light in the room. Yet, as Alister uncontrollably clenched them, it was obvious from the steady cracks that the bone and tendons were breaking apart, his digits stiffening as they enlarged before Eli's eyes. He stared, transfixed as the tips extended into clawed talons, the ooze surrounding them settling into the skin and creating a hard, glistening sheen that looked more akin to insect chitin. While his thumb persisted in some form, it was obvious what remained of his hands were growing far larger than what his human body should have been able to manage, twitching and writhing and mutating beyond Eli's understanding. The oozing resin seemed to fuse two of the fingers together, though his bones were at least separate bones within. The same was soon to happen to his other fingers as well, Alister tensing them as though experimenting with their new abilities. Hell, Eli was sure the crack along the side of his hands proceeded the birth of another digit, these ones more akin to new thumbs than anything. The process should have been painful, though Alister retained a stoic expression, more aroused than anything as his fingers continued to extend and warp into dangerous appendages.

Eli's call of terror was largely ignored as Eli once more reached down to rub at his member, his larger hands more suited to rub the size of his new member. A small part of his mind was aware he should have been terrified, that nothing in his experience could explain the changes. Yet, through the sheer arousal of the process, Alister could not muster the ability to feel concerned, but rather elated by the surge of growth in his body. He was changing, growing, becoming something *more*. And every iota of his being told him it was good, right, and powerfully arousing to the point Alister wished to will it into being.

Trying once more to express his ecstasy, Alister was surprised only a hiss escaped his lips, as though his vocal cords had been removed. It seemed evident his lungs were absent, his chest no longer rising and falling as he would have expected. Yet, he was no worse for wear from the prospect, as though he no longer needed to breathe in such a way. It was of little matter, Alister's cries more akin to ecstasy than any attempt to communicate. His mind was awash in new instincts, and the desires excited him beyond any fear of his changing hands. He desired to

infect, to dominate, to *fuck*, though the last one should have been the source of some alarm. It mattered little with the pleasure the notion seemed to give him, and Alister could only continue to jerk his cock, hissing his pleasure and willing his changes to overtake him.

The changes were not without pain, however, the cadence in Alister's hiss altering as his clawed hands moved to his head in reflex. The fluids he had excreted seemed to have solidified over his arms, congealing as the skin underneath turned thick and crisp. The divots and ridges seemed immobile as they formed, and Eli couldn't help but attribute the sight of such to some form of insect chitin. Such was something he was mostly ignorant of, a form of complex polysaccharide that made up a skin firmer than anything known in nature. Cracks continued to poke from his arms as though the bones within had shifted, black chitin firming over the human skin with a series of patterned protrusions, moving toward his shoulders and back now. They seemed as motile as his arms had been, Alister hugging himself as several lumps started to pulsate over his back, moving down the bare skin toward his ass.

The twitching seemed to center in his skin, Alister shrieking in that haunting tone as something violently burst out of the base of his skin. It was a thick, bladed protrusion, though its birth didn't seem to injure him in the slightest, given the lack of blood. The bones of his spine seemed to ripple under the skin as what seemed to be a serpentine tail pushed it out ridge by ridge. It seemed to twitch against Alister's prompting, waving wildly as though each obvious segment was a point of articulation. Eli couldn't help but want to stay still, fearing the thing and what it might do to him if Eli gave it a target. Alister might not hurt him, perhaps, but the same could not be guaranteed for the being he was becoming...

The primal screams echoing from Alister's mouth caused his cheeks to vibrate, as though the muscles and bones within were starting to pulsate outward. Yet, it was the sight of the viscous drool dripping from his mouth that had Eli disgusted, the consistency sticking to the floor as Alister's maw continued to drool. The sight of it was repulsive, and Eli wanted to get out of there for fear of his life. Yet, the sight of his rather prominent erection had a perplexing effect on Eli's mind, one that stirred something within his own pants. Be it his slight buzz or the strange sickly sweet scent in the room, Eli couldn't fully control his reaction, the contrast maddening.

Through the agony of change, Alister managed to look into Eli's features, a hunger there that terrified Eli to the core. It was akin to a serpent looking at a mouse, and Alister continued to drool profusely, as though wanted to devour him. And something within Alister spoke to that desire, though not to consume him directly. It was rather a sexual desire, one causing his penis to leak its hybrid fluids as well. As much as Alister's new inclinations made him crave contact, there was a part of his mind that feared for what he might do. Yet, the force changing him went beyond anything the human he had ever experienced, far too strong for his human morality to possibly subvert. He wanted to fuck this man, his friend, yet before that, there was something

else he needed to do, something that didn't make sense yet, but would surely in the next few moments...

The force of growth within his jaw started to increase in intensity, mouth painfully pushing forward as his eyes rolled back in his head. A series of cracks responded through his face as it pushed out just slightly, making him wish to raise his alien hands to try and stabilize it. Yet, the ache within his mouth grew too intense for him to handle, as though his very tongue was being torn apart within his mouth. The muscle tore violently from the bottom of his jaw, its base connected to some part of his pulsating throat and further down than Alister could even fathom. Had his face not been pushed out slightly, it might have fallen from his mouth, though its thickening contours felt too large for his mouth. The cavern of his lower jaw seemed to collapse on his tongue, though it was steadily becoming far too engorged to be contained for long. Alister had no reprieve but to hiss his pain, holding his face as his drooling maw covered his hands his viscous ooze.

The writhing mass of his tongue barely looked human any longer, rather being reformed into something black, comprised of the same chitin that made up his arms and was working its way over his chest and back. With that, the growth started to vibrate, inflating and pushing its way out of Alister's mouth as he crossed his eyes with some terror. It was out of a nightmare, the tip of the hardened structure opening and dripping more ooze as serrated edges took place. A hollow tube ran the length of his gullet, but all Alister's focus was on the quivering ass, as what looked like a separate, deadly mouth opened from within what had become a pharyngeal jaw. And one that pulsated with intent, triggering that primal urge to take what it wanted, leaving Alister along for the ride.

Terrified, Eli could only stare in horror at what had become of his friend. Alister, too, had his eyes wide open in fear, though seemed unable to close his jaw as his secondary mouth moved in and out, as though exploring the range of its abilities. It looked for all the world like Alister was trying to mouth something to Eli, perhaps a warning. Eli could see it in the man's eyes, as though willing him to run away before the unthinkable happened. Yet, there was no where to go, and Eli barely had a moment to react before Alister rose up, leaping on the man with a strength that far surpassed his humanity. Helpless, Eli hit the floor hard, the creature on top of him and waving its massive tail, as though daring him to make a move. Eli felt frozen, terrified, yet still erect from either the scent or the sight of the creature's erection. It was such a powerful contrast within his mind, and yet Eli could do nothing but wait to see what his assailant would do to him, hoping for the best but fearing the worst.

For now, the creature towered over him, as though Alister within was conflicted over what exactly he wanted to do with his victim now that Eli was effectively trapped. He was changing all the while, the skin pulsating as more of his oozing sweat crystallized over his skin

to form the basis of his chitinous armor. Yet, much of his skin was still human, and perhaps alarmingly the skin of his chest and belly that was rubbing against Eli's own body. And much to his dismay, Alister's amply hairy pits and pubes were in range of Eli's skin, the scent burning into his nose. It was something he'd perhaps fantasized about before, maybe sticking his face in to sniff in a more romantic setting. Surely, the scent was ultimately overridden by the thick reek of his alien musk, and was nothing like the human smell Eli wished to sample. And he was almost been tempted to sample them, despite the likely chance these would be his last final moments...

The pain of alien claws digging into his skin forced Eli to cry out his pain, though such was to be to his detriment. Without missing a beat, Alister lowered his head as though to take the man in a kiss. Eli was sure he was to be killed, especially with how deadly his new tongue seemed to have become. Viscous drool fell onto Eli's face, stinging the skin and making him wish to pull away. But the creature Alister was becoming was strong, and he pushed his mouth against Eli's mouth, shoving his tongue inside. The pharyngeal jaw was far too strong for anything Eli could resist, and it forced itself to the back of his throat, making him wish to gag. It opened him up painfully, and part of Eli's mind couldn't help but draw comparisons to oral sex, though nothing he had taken could match the horror of the situation. And worse of all, it continued to ooze its alien fluids, making Eli sure he would be drown.

All of a sudden, Alister's body started to gyrate violently, as though spasming from something thick being forced upward. It was not emanating from his stomach, though rather through the formerly used trachea no longer required for his new anatomy. It almost hurt to force them through his throat, though a pleasure worked its way to his loins, as though the act was erotic on its own. He was unsure what was happening, and part of his mind was sure he didn't want to do this against Eli's inclinations. But that voice had been playing through his thoughts all the while, and there was no denying the urge to take the man like this, to force whatever his body would do to him. It gave him so much pleasure, so much certainty, meeting some deep-seated instinct that had burrowed into his mind. In the moment of passion, any human morality was steadily eliminated, leaving him with only excitement and lust. His penis was oozing fluids all the while, and making him excited for what was to come, even if he didn't fully understand what the end goal was. All he knew was how good it felt, and how much he needed to hold position as whatever he did his body dictated.

Copious fluids were leaking into Eli's gullet, sure to suffocate the man but Alister couldn't bring himself to cease. He was nearly vomiting from the force of his throat, but it felt right as his gullet forced up what felt like thick, rounded ovals. It was hard to hold his prey in place, though the skin around his cheeks suddenly tore, two fleshy flaps that held Eli's face in place as Alister's throat rippled from the force of his ejection. With a wet sticky sound, his tongue opened up, the oval moving down the tube and into Eli's throat without any way for him to vomit it back. It was almost too large for Eli's throat, though the fluids Alister was oozing

somehow made the descent into his gullet slick and possible. And given the violent convulsions from Alister's body, not to be the only one.

At no point in his life did Eli feel more helpless as his body was forced some sort of alien orb. And not to be one, Alister's pulsating body working another through his phallic tongue. The way it was throbbing within his mouth, Eli was reminded of a thick penis, though the taste being forced in his mouth was repulsive, stinging and numbing his senses. He was thankful for that, the pain of being used in such a way sure to be excruciating. And he would have wished for death or unconsciousness, though the way Alister's massive phallus rubbed against his own loins left him somewhat aroused. The contrast was even more than he was able to handle as a third oval was forced down his throat, followed by another and another as Alister's body heaved from the force of it. They were impossibly large as they forced their way into the pit of Eli's stomach, though left it to bulge for only a moment as they were instantly dissolved. A fleeting part of his mind wondered if he'd seen the same happen to Alister while the alien had attached itself to him. The similarities were striking, though Eli hardly had the energy to focus on it further, weakened by the action.

Eventually, Alister felt he was finished, and let the man go, his new growths trailing resin from Eli's face. Eli was left gagging and sputtering, though there was nothing he could do in the face of such an attack. He was alive, at least, and still somewhat erect, much to his shock. His body was sore and heavy, and in his exhaustion, there was nothing he could do to move. But there was an odd sense of satisfaction, thinking that the best was yet to come, and if only he waited a little longer, then it would be worth it. He wanted to speak, wanted to moan, though a budding instinct in his mind left him to pause for a moment. As much as he wanted to protest, to fight back, if only allowed Alister to continue, then...