

Alien Life (Man to Alien Impregnated Woman TG)

By FoxFaceStories

A Commission for AI

The explorer ship Tiresias is nearing the end of its voyage when it is suddenly rerouted to check out a strange signal emanating from the surface of one of the moons of Jupiter. Liam Macklin is a young engineer on the ship, which has a complement of only six. But when he is the one to uncover a strange artefact, his life is changed forever. Slowly, as they voyage back to Mars, his body begins to feminise, in order to better house the new alien life that is growing within him . . .

Alien Life

Part 1: The Crystal

The crew of the research vessel *Tiresias* knew something funny was up when the Cap called for a meeting at 0300 hours. Not that time meant too much in the vast, cold vacuum of space: three of the five of them were already awake and tinkering about. Still, it seemed an ominous sign as they filed into the shared space that operated as their meeting room, their relaxation space, and their kitchen. The lack of gravity meant that they initially floated to the tube that led to the space, then switched to using the handholds to clamber down properly. The circular centrifugal nature of the room itself meant that they were on steadier feet once at the end of the tube. It ran parallel to the rest of the ship via this arm, and so was one of the few spaces where their bones could feel that ordinary weight, even if it was only half of Earth's norm.

"Come take a seat everyone," Captain Leo Hardigan said as they descended the ladder one by one, adjusting to the return of gravity. "You'll want to be sitting to hear this."

He was in his fifties, silver-haired and gruff, with a slightly pockmarked face from a childhood disease. He had a pragmatic, no-nonsense way about him, but he was generally a stickler for rules, the kind that wanted a job done well and done right so they could all go home. But something about his demeanour told the crew that there had been a complication.

The crew sat, grumbling and sipping from their bulbs of coffee, the kind that wouldn't let the liquid float off in zero-grav. There were only five others on the ship - it wasn't an immense vessel - and all of them were male. The pilot, Petyr Ivanovich, had relentlessly He was a tall, blonde, handsome figure who was an excellent womaniser, when there were women actually around. There was a reason there were numerous pinup posters of

gorgeous half-naked models above his bunk. Even now, he was shuffling his trademark pack of cards with naked ladies on their backing, ready for a poker rematch with the ship's doctor Samwell Katz. The doctor had just woken up and was rubbing his eyes before adjusting his glasses. He looked as if he needed the coffees of every other individual on board to stay awake, but then he always looked tired, even more than the captain despite being in his forties: a full decade younger. The premature baldness setting in was evidence of his workaholic nature.

"What is this about?" he said.

"Yeah, I was having real sweet dreams of returning to Mars," Adam Kim added. He was one of the scientists on board - a geologist and physicist both, and a real joker. He was already tossing Petyr a chip to indicate that chore duties were in the betting pool for the next poker game. "Don't tell me Liam's screwed up the air systems . . . again."

There was a humorous laugh from the group, borne up by Adam's charming smile. He was half-Korean, with dark hair that was somehow always perfectly styled even in the lack of grav. He grinned at the reception to his joke, though Liam Macklin certainly didn't.

"I told you," he said, "that was a filtration issue caused by the Mars mechanics. I was lucky to have caught it. It wasn't *my* issue. Blame them, not me."

Adam just whistled and gave a 'ooooh!', eliciting another laugh from Petyr. Liam scowled. He was used to this treatment, but always hated it. He was the youngest of the crew, and not by a small margin either. He was only twenty four years old, whereas the next youngest was Adam at thirty three, and then Petyr at thirty four. Still, despite being a little bit wide in the face and plain looking with his short brown hair, he was indeed a damn fine engineer and mechanic. He had to be, to have gotten on the ship at his age. It was just a shame that being so young also made him the butt of all the 'baby' jokes.

"Calm down, kiddo," Petyr said. "We're just having a laugh. You'll feel better when we're back in port and you can finally enjoy the touch of a woman for the first time."

"Shut up, Petyr."

Petyr shrugged, and continued to shuffle his cards. Adam whispered something in his ear and the raucous pair laughed, making Liam fume.

It was Abel Rotar who turned the discussion back. He was in his sixties, with a thick grey moustache and a portly manner that had not dissipated much even on their months-long journey. A serious man, he was the leading scientist who had worked to obtain the necessary samples from Europa that was part of his scientific mission. He was, in many ways, the 'money' of the mission due to his connection to the Mars Academy of Science. It also made him quite the grump.

"Captain, can you tell us why we are having this infernal meeting instead of sleeping, before these young bickering fools all give me a headache?"

Captain Hardigan nodded. He had been waiting out their usual fun and games himself. He flicked on the screen on the wall and indicated to the star map it was showing.

“We’ve just received an Override Command from Olympus Base.”

“You’re kidding,” Petyr said. “That never happens.”

“Well, I’m sorry to say it’s happened. You all know the rules. Every spacefaring vessel - public or corporate - is required to investigate a potential anomalous reading within a reasonable distance of its flight path should the government deem it so. It just so happens that we’ve been ordered to turn back and check something on Ganymede. Which means another four months has been added to our trip, since we’ll have to turn back.”

Adam and Abel exchanged a shocked glance. The rest of the crew were understandably annoyed, but for the two scientists, there was something excitable in the air.

“To check out what?” Adam asked, for once being serious.

“A signal of some kind,” Captain Hardigan said. His brow furrowed. “Something possibly extraterrestrial in origin.”

There was a long pause. Doctor Katz nodded slowly, as if taking this all in.

“Well, I suppose we better check those air filtration systems again, Liam. Just in case.”

“Oh, come off it!”

Ganymede was frigid, cold, and boring to anyone that wasn’t Adam Kim, who delighted in being able to see the grooved surface of the ice-rock moon of Jupiter up close.

“I’ve never seen it!” he exclaimed across the comm. “It’s remarkable! Look at these formations!”

“Yes,” Petyr complained on the comm from the ship in orbit. “Lots of hills. Oh, and a mound. Is that a plain? Ah, and rocks. Lots of rocks. God, it’s going to be an extra two months before I see a pair of tits now. What I wouldn’t give to have a fine woman to fuck on this crew.”

“Get off the comm, Petyr,” came the Captain’s voice. “Adam, are you close to the site? We’re getting a bit of interference from the signal.”

Adam checked his readings on the scanner. He wasn’t so used to being kitted out in the full astronaut gear in all its bulk, and neither was Abel Rotar beside him. The pair fumbled about until finally Liam took the device from them.

“I’ll do it,” he said, pressing his helmet against Adam’s. “Thank God you’ve got me here now, huh? No whining about my expertise now?”

“We defer to you utterly, mighty engineer,” Adam joked. “This is your realm, after all.”

Liam knew the compliment was feigned, but he grinned all the same. He had leapt at the chance to prove himself, as he always had. Some might have called it brash, but there were only so many crewmen to spare to check out the signal, and the Captain wasn't as rated for missions like this as he would have liked to have admitted. The doc had erupted into a big argument with Hardigan over his blood pressure readings and likelihood of stroke while doing surface entry without a proper landing pad. It was probably being too cautious, but the captain had relented. By the book it was, and so Liam had his chance to finally throw off the jokes and actually make a difference on a mission.

"We're just three hundred metres away," he said, turning the scanner around. "But getting some interference. Follow with me and try to keep your jumps like mine. We're not dealing with Earth grav here."

"Just make sure to get out of our way when we arrive at it," Abel reminded him gruffly, but Liam ignored this, bounding ahead. This was his moment, he knew. When everything could come together, and he could have stories to swap and tell that Petyr couldn't pivot to talking about all his own sexual conquests or Adam couldn't just turn into some annoying hazing prank. No, he was effectively the leader on this expedition, as far as he was concerned. Abel Rotar may have been in charge, but *he* was the team engineer. *He* was the one keeping them alive on the surface. If anyone had a right to be there when they accessed whatever this signal was, it was him.

"It's in a crater," he marvelled as they moon-bounced closer. The sight of Jupiter above them was brilliant, but there wasn't enough light to illuminate the dark space they saw before them. He switched their lights on remotely and passed back to the captain and crew that they would attempt a descent.

"Well, what's the hold up?" Adam asked. "Are we taking a fiver for a dinner date?"

"Just getting the coils out, unless you want to remain stuck in the crater making bad jokes?"

"Ah. Proceed."

Even Abel snorted. Five minutes later they were descending, their suit lights illuminating the dark space of the crater. It was quite deep, deeper than most craters, and with an impact circumference that was not as wide as it should have been. The scientists remarked on this, Adam especially, and Liam eventually dimmed their comms a little. When they arrived at the surface, it was easily thirty metres down from the lip, a surprising span. The signal was making haywire of their equipment by this point, which only increased the fascination of the three-man team. They spread out, trying to ascertain the signal's source.

What followed was a rather boring disappointment: rather than any immediate discovery, Abel and Adam simply spent over an hour moving from spot to spot on the crater, investigating the slightly anomalous crater surface and trying to see what was causing the

interference. Far from feeling like a team leader, Liam was quickly banished from their presence, having nothing to do but check their oxygen, secure the coils, and otherwise look for anything odd, of which there was startlingly little. After a time, he literally took to kicking the occasional rock, letting them half-float and fall into the distance.

“What an amazing discovery this is,” Petyr said over the comms. “Definitely worth holding off on seeing all the pretty girls at the Dela Veta bar. There’s one there with big, rip-”

“Off the comms, Petyr, now.”

“Aye aye, Captain. Just fantasising, Captain.”

“One more hour, gentlemen. Then we put this ‘discovery’ behind us. Make sure to wrangle the scientists, Liam.”

“Will do, sir,” he said, though his voice betrayed his utter annoyance. He stood, sighing, and continued to check the perimeter. Adam and Abel were in some deep discussion about irregularities in the crater, and some of the metals and seams being formed in interesting ways. It was all very boring, so he went to the edge of the crater opposite them and examined its steepest slope. Liam ran his gloved hand across it, wiping at the texture of the rock. It just felt like that: rock. Rock and nothing more. He continued to walk, running his glove across that rock like a child, impatient and eager to leave. In many ways, he was proving that he was the youngest of the group in this way.

But then he felt something.

His hand stopped. All of him stopped. Moondust spiralled away from his glove on one section of the wall to reveal something crystalline and blue. Something glowing.

“Uh, guys? Adam? Rotar? I’ve found someth-”

Suddenly, the crystal glowed brightly, shining directly into his helmet. A coursing of power emanating from the crystal and seemingly poured into his suit. Liam screamed as the crystal actually *grew* outwards, digging into the wrist of his suit. Air burst from the breach, and the automatic systems within clamped down on his arm, *tight*. His heart raced out of control as the pressure change caused his arm to go painfully numb. The suit sealed, but the crystal shards were still digging in like faintly glowing blue veins. He pulled back, terrified, but in the moment of slow-fall something entered his blood stream, and his vision changed.

Part 2: The News

A bright constellation. A shimmering blue world. Figures walk about, their movements utterly graceful and beautiful. It is another time. A distant past. Enormous spires of grown crystal

and spun rock form immense cities. Ships fly in and out of the atmosphere, with seemingly no source of combustion or pollution. The people here are plentiful and at peace. Prosperous. But then something calls from beyond the void. A new signal. One that they are excited to answer . . .

Liam woke in the medical bay, flustered and on painkillers. He spluttered for a moment, briefly panicked by the strange vision he had just experienced. But then he looked about and realised his surroundings, as well as the fact that he'd been strapped down. There was usually no need - the medical bay was on the counterweight of the living space centrifuge, after all. It was important that blood not float away during surgery. So why was he strapped down?

The answer came in the lance of pain that seared like fire down his right arm. Cringing, he adjusted himself to look at it, only to gasp. His hand and upper forearm was bruised a terrible purple, the blood close to the surface of the skin. The ends of his fingers were somewhat blackened, as if by extreme frostbite.

"Shit. What the fuck? Doc? DOC!?"

He managed to unleash his other arm and find the button to call him. To his credit, Doctor Samwell Katz wasn't far away: he came down the ladder so fast that his spindly frame almost looked like it couldn't take it.

"Good, you're awake," he said. "Don't panic. Of course you'd wake when I was having my lunch."

"What happened?"

"You had a suit breach. Cut it up on some rock."

"There was a crystal-"

"Yes, the scientist pair took some samples. They think it's the source of the signal: some kind of new element. Not exactly alien life, but Adam is over the moon - heh, figuratively speaking. They send their apologies, by the way, though Adam made some stupid joke about it I think he was genuinely concerned. You gave us all a fright. The Captain wasn't too impressed with you breaching your suit directly against a jagged rock, after all."

Liam tried to take this all in. "I wasn't - there was no jagged rock. Check my cam."

A shake of the head. "The signal interference scrubbed up our video, I'm afraid. You're lucky, you know. You're not going to lose the arm, but it will be a week or so before it regains function. There's some damage to the ends of your fingers that will never recover, I'm afraid, but it's a small loss, really."

"Goddamn it."

“That’s what the Captain said.”

“He’s going to kill me.”

“Not at all, but I think a speech about being careful will surely follow.”

Liam rested his head back. “I’m never going to hear the end of this, am I?”

The doc shook his head slowly. “Afraid not, kid. Afraid not. We’ll run some more tests to make sure you’re alright, then get you back out in front of the comedy club, huh?”

Liam sighed, and let the doctor take the bloods and swabs he needed. He was annoyed at himself for the suit breach. He was lucky to not be dead, that much was certain. But he could have sworn that the crystal had come alive and attached itself to him. Injected him with something. But that had probably just been his brain in shock. The same with that strange dream. Right?

The *Tiresias* left its orbit of Ganymede and continued its arcing journey back to Mars. Thanks to the entire detour, the crew could now look forward to a full six months journey, much to their shared annoyance. The only benefit was that the already-impressive shore leave time of months for spacefaring crews was legally extended now for answering the Olympus Override Command.

“I am going to get so damn drunk in that first month of leave that I’ll have to re-attend the academy just to get my spacefaring licence back,” Petyr said.

“And let me guess, lots of beautiful women will also be part of this picture?” Adam replied as they relaxed in the living space. “Save some for the rest of us, big boy!”

“I thought you had a girlfriend, Adam? Don’t tell me you’re stepping out?”

“Not so, my friend. I got the comm message just the other day - she has broken up with me. Which means technically, I’ve been a free man for several weeks now thanks to the time it takes signals to get to us.”

“Ha! Then let us celebrate with a pair of gorgeous twins back on Mars!”

Adam gave a light chuckle, though it was tinged with sadness. “Yeah, fuck her. Damn it. And here I was so excited about discovering a new element and now I’m getting turfed out and upset over this.”

“Alcohol solves all problems, comrade.”

“Ha! Were I not a recovering addict. Ah, and speaking of recovering, how goes it, Liam?”

It had been a month since Ganymede, and Liam’s hand and arm had recovered far faster than even the doctor had expected. He clambered down the ladder easily, feeling an abundance of energy that he almost could have sworn didn’t exist for him before.

“Feeling fine,” he said a little defensively. “Better than fine, actually. A picture of health! I don’t even have nerve damage on the ends of my fingers anymore.”

“Bullshit,” Petyr said. “Those things were black.”

“Check it out.”

He showed them his perfectly healed fingers. Adam marvelled.

“The doc even took pictures and scans, just out of curiosity. Turns out I’m a picture of health.”

“Don’t take this as a lesson to go blowing your suit up against random crystals,” Adam said. “Even if it did lead to us discovering Rotarium.”

Petyr snorted. “I can’t believe *he* got to name it.”

Indeed, the chief scientist had seized right upon it. As the head scientist, he got naming rights, and there was a lot of hot air within the older man’s pudgy body, as it turned out. Adam just rolled his eyes.

“So long as I get co-recognition.”

“He’s become quite the recluse, hasn’t he?” Petyr remarked.

“Oh yes, constant study. Of course, I’m the actual geologist, but he has certain rights, and the Captain wants everything by the book. He can come ask for help when he wants: we’ve got more than enough time. The community back home are already buzzing over the first addition of a new element in over a hundred years.”

“I’ll be,” Petyr said. “A toast to our discoverers! One blustering and accidental, and one about to be pushed out by his egotistical boss!”

Liam reluctantly raised his bulb of coffee, and Adam raised his more eagerly, laughing. They all drank down as the Captain descended.

“What’s this?” he said. “My crew actually getting along? I must be in need of glasses.

“Just commiserating over stolen discoveries and a lack of women, Captain,” Petyr said.

“Ah, two great tragedies. And how are you, Liam? Katz tells me you’ve made a remarkable recovery, but you’ve been feeling a bit odd?”

Liam blushed. “Nothing much, Captain. Just a bit . . . twitchy. Flushed, I guess. Like my system is a bit out of whack. Just jitters, I guess.”

“I keep saying, we need to take the baby to a brothel and make him a man.”

“Oh, come off it, Petyr!”

The Captain smirked, but he put a hand on Liam’s shoulder. “Just make sure to take care of yourself, alright? Tell the doc about anything that seems out of the ordinary, alright?”

“Yes, sir,” Liam said. He raised the coffee bulb up to his lips, and took in its wonderful scent. And then, to the astonishment of everyone including himself, he leapt up, took two

steps, and vomited on the floor. He was so nauseous that the Captain and Adam had to keep him from collapsing.

“Ugghh, I f-feel weird,” he said. “F-faint.”

He fainted.

Liam was feeling better after the initial vomiting incident, but sadly it wasn't the only one. It was as if out of nowhere his stomach had twisted itself up in knots. The dry packet food they had to rehydrate could only be swallowed down in the blandest of flavours - anything that was too strong made him gag, become nauseous, or throw up all over again. One particular disaster happened in the central compartments of the ship, in zero gravity. Far from being taken more seriously after the mission, Liam was now copping jokes from all sides. Even the Captain had a sly joke about needing to grow ‘space legs’, but he was also becoming a bit concerned that there was a more serious underlying cause. He continually checked in on Liam, and instructed him to visit the medical bay often, where Katz continued to take samples and involve himself further in more in-depth tests.

It was the talk of the ship - not much gossip to speak of when news arrives weeks late via comms, after all - and with such a small crew complement, there was a general wariness of potentially catching a bug from Liam.

“I’m telling you, I’m just recovering from a vac-suit leak,” he complained two weeks into his repeated bouts of nausea.

“Yeah, well, I’m not risking it,” Petyr said. “Can you imagine landing for shore leave and then ending up in iso?”

“I’m not ending up in iso.”

“None of us are,” Captain Hardigan said, sliding down the ladder to the more regular grav of the living space, “because we’re all following protocol on this. Until we identify what’s wrong with Liam, we’re all initiating our official distancing policy. That means separation of food, of space - as much as we can - and taking our regular pro and antibiotics. Any reactions or abnormal health situations are to be reported immediately to myself and the doctor, got it?”

“Aye sir,” Petyr said miserably. “This will just add to the fun.” When the Captain left, he turned to Liam, who felt far more miserable. “Thanks for nothing, comrade. You’ve just made a boring journey back home worse.”

He left, irritated. Only Adam and Abel were left at their own table space. They were discussing something about the unusual properties of their crystal-like element, but Adam seemed to give him a sympathetic glance for once.

“Don’t mind him, he’s always whining. We’re all just cooped up.”

“Yeah, and it’s my fault,” Liam said, trying to work up the nerve to eat his food.

“It may represent an opportunity,” Rotar said, speaking up. He looked at Liam in a way that was far, far too clinical. “You may have reaction to the element. Whatever Samwell Katz finds, I demand a copy of the report. We could discover much about the general toxicity of the element.”

“Gee,” Liam said, getting up to leave. “Thanks.”

He scratched his chest on the way out. He hadn’t mentioned it to even the doc due to the embarrassment factor, but his nipples were feeling weirdly sensitive lately, and were stiffening for no reason.

“That was a bit much,” Adam said to Abel when Liam had left. But the older scientist just shrugged.

“He’s already ill, and he touched the sample directly. Its properties are strange, and it bears investigating. Suffering sometimes is the best teacher of all.”

Adam frowned. “I like a good ribbing as much as the next guy, but suffering is a bit much.”

“That’s why you’re the geologist and I’m the head scientist, my boy. We’ll see where this goes.”

Unfortunately for Liam, it went to worse places. His nausea was slowly abating, but a general tiredness suffused his being. His engineering skills were second to none, but increasingly he was having to lie down or retreat to his bunk due to an overwhelming need to sleep. His stomach continued to churn, and his nipples were swollen, to the point where he *had* to tell the doc, especially after Petyr noticed it through his shirt and hadn’t stopped cracking jokes since. Adam, at least, had let up a bit out of concern for the young man. Still, Liam’s hunger has risen even despite the periods of nausea, during which he was eating almost twice his usual fill, much to the annoyance of Petyr, who felt that the best flavour packs were being hydrated and eaten by Liam.

“I can’t help it,” Liam said. “This bug has me damn hungry.”

And because it might be a bug, all of his work on the computing systems and diagnostics were largely conducted alone, and each crewmember was having to keep themselves clean and distant. It made the cramped environment all the more annoying.

But the real bombshell came a little over seven weeks since Ganymede, when Doctor Katz called Liam in for an emergency meeting in sickbay.

“More tests? Again?” Liam, lumbering from the zero-grav to the centrifugal grav.

But Katz' face was serious. "Yes. A lot more. But I think I've found something. I know I have. You're going to want to sit down in the chair for this, Liam. I've talked to the Captain. He's the only one that knows so far, but you need to know first, because soon the whole crew will."

A chill ran down Liam's spine. "Is it cancer? I know I work with radiation a bit, but I've always been careful. Hell, while I was running diagnostics on the starboard engine this morning, I-

"It's not cancer," the doctor said, face serious. "It's like nothing I've ever seen. Not on Mars, not our here, not anywhere. You're a damn anomaly kid."

Liam sat, gulping. "What is it?"

"It's better if I show you. You might remember we took a couple of ultrasounds a week back? I also took some bloods, monitored your hormone levels, checked if there were any changes via x-ray, and so on."

"Yeah, yeah."

"Well, I've been puzzling over them, gathering the data. Here's is what I've found."

He put up an image of something that looked like a little bean inside a small sack."

"Is that my stomach?"

Katz sighed. "That's your *womb*."

"My - what!? I don't have a womb!"

"That's just it, Liam. You do. I'm sending this data to Earth to confirm, but I'm a fully qualified doctor. I've delivered babies before, Liam. I've done my work in obstetrics, even if it was an age and a day ago. You have a womb, and a fully functioning one at that."

"I - what!? What do you mean?"

Katz pointed at the little bean in the centre of the impossible organ on the black and white image. "Fully functioning," he repeated. "Because *that* little thing in the centre, right there? Implanted against the wall? That's a developing fetus."

A long pause followed while Liam absorbed this. "This is a prank, right? Adam put you up to this. Or worse, Petyr."

But the doctor's face didn't even show its dry sarcasm. It was entirely serious, befuddled even. "No joke, Liam. I don't know how this is the case, whether we missed something in your own medical files or something freaky happened down on Ganymede, but one thing is absolutely clear to me. Somehow, you have grown a womb. And even more impossibly, you've become *pregnant*. You're seven weeks along, I'd say."

Liam swallowed. "The same time since Ganymede."

Part 3: The Insult

The signal came, and the people rejoiced. It was their first contact, their dream since they had first launched to the stars. Theirs was a vibrant civilisation, governed by equality and a love for the natural world. The crystals and minerals they groomed and grew could be shaped by their very minds. The signal was distant, but not unreachable, though it would take years to reach the destination. And so the great project began. The path to finding unity in this cold universe. It seemed like such a good idea . . .

The Captain had called another meeting, and it was clear from the seriousness that this was another emergency. Abel Rotar, Adam Kim, Petyr Ivanovich, and Captain Leo Hartigan himself were in the living space, and a heavy silence hung since the captain had stated that he wasn't explaining what the situation was until Doctor Katz and Liam arrived.

"It's about the boy though isn't it?" Abel said, leaning forward and steepling his fingers. "He has a condition courtesy of our new element. We've barely managed any tests on it with our meagre equipment - we were not expecting such a discovery - but it defies categorisation. If he has been affected, this could be a great learning experience."

"The boy may be a total, how would you say, klutz," Petyr voiced, "but let's not talk about him like he's a lab rat, friend."

Rotar rolled his eyes. "Better a lab rat than a wasted opportunity. Captain, if I could have access to him-"

"Not yet," Hardigan said, and his voice was emphatic.

Adam bit his lip. "It *is* something to do with him though, right? Is he okay? I feel kinda bad for all the jokes."

"Regretting that nasty fake vomit gag?" Hardigan asked. "Good. It was damn tasteless. I still don't know how you baked that stuff up, but you've got a week on pantry duty for it."

"Damn, almost not worth it."

But the captain wasn't showing even slight humour, and the crew's attention turned to the sound of two figures descending the ladder to the low centrifugal grav of the living space. The doctor arrived first, scratching his balding head. Behind him was Liam Macklin, looking quite awkward in his work shirt and pants. They were looser than normal, almost too big for him. In fact, they must have been a size bigger, draping over his form. His eyes were sunken in and haunted, and he looked a little sweaty, as if from anxiety. He was wearing a mask

over his mouth, and gloves on his hands. He smelled of sanitiser from the scrubbing chamber.

“Shit, you look terrible, comrade,” Petyr said.

“Yeah, okay, are you alright Liam?” Adam said.

Rotar said nothing, but leaned forward in fascination. Liam didn’t answer. He was barely able to meet their eyes at all. He was trying to ignore the itching and soreness in his chest, and the churning in his stomach.

“I’ll cut to the chase since you’re obviously all speculating,” said the forthright Captain. “This concerns Liam. Are you alright if we proceed, Liam?”

It took the poor man a moment to realise he was being addressed. He nodded slowly. “Might as well rip off the bandaid. I guess.”

Katz put a comforting hand on his shoulder for just a moment.

“Some of your suspicions are correct: Liam has contracted something as a result of contact with the new element: this crystal he discovered.”

“I discovered,” Rotar said, but the captain ignored him and kept talking.

“Simply put, somehow the crystal is changing Liam’s biology. Doctor, can you elaborate?”

Katz nodded, and Liam winced as the older man began. “I have run numerous tests which all confirm that Liam’s body structure is changing as a result of contact with the crystal. His bloodwork shows massively increased amounts of estrogen and greatly lowered testosterone. Ultrasounds confirm the development of a new organ that is entirely consistent with a human uterus. Furthermore, along with the matching symptoms of morning sickness, first trimester fatigue, and increased hunger, and-”

“Wait, wait, wait,” Adam said, parsing his way through this. “Am I hearing this right?”

“Liam is pregnant,” Doctor Katz said. “He is seven weeks along, which lines up with his accident on Ganymede.”

Rotar’s eyes went wide, and he stared at Liam with renewed fascination.

“You’re *pregnant*?” Petyr said.

“Yeah, I guess,” Liam said. Automatically, he lowered his hand to rub his stomach without even thinking. “It fucking sucks.”

Adam exhaled, looking almost sheepish in his shock. “This is not a prank back on us, right? Is this actually for real?”

“I can confirm it all with you,” Katz said. “I’ve already sent word back to Mars and Earth. This is bigger than one government. We’re awaiting instructions on how to deal with Liam’s . . . delicate condition.”

“You mean my pregnancy,” he said in an understandably sulky tone. “And my other changes.”

“Other changes?” Rotar noted.

“He’s developing breast tissue, and his body appears to be changing in other ways consistent with womanhood.”

“He’s actually *becoming* a woman?” Petyr said, marvelling.

“We don’t know that yet, but possibly, yes.”

“Jesus. Wait, is he fucking infectious? I don’t want to become some pregnant woman, goddamnit!”

“There’s no evidence of infection,” Hardigan said, crossing his arms. “But we’re all taking measured steps. We’re continuing our policy until we determine Liam is safe, and he is going to be confined to the medical bay for much of his non-duty time. We’ll organise shifts to keep things separate as much as possible. We’re all in uncharted territory here, so we go by the manual, alright?”

Petyr raised a hand.

“Yes, Petyr.”

“If Liam is non-infectious, and turns out to be a very attractive lady, what is the protocol then?”

Liam balled his fists and stormed back up the ladder. Tears were in his eyes.

“Goddamn it, Petyr, you moron,” he heard the captain say.

The truth of Liam being somehow impregnated by what had to be some kind of alien crystalline device was setting off waves across Earth and Mars. Naturally, the public knew nothing, and wouldn’t know anything until all the facts were in. Still, the Olympus team and members in Washington and Beijing were receiving a lot of data from Katz, and demanding more every day. It was infuriating for Liam, who was already miserable as a result of having to practically live in the medical bay. The continual reminder that his body was betraying him and becoming ever more female only made things worse. Katz was sympathetic, and did his best to give the young man his privacy as much as possible, but it was still important to be transparent, which meant relaying that the pregnancy was indeed progressing.

“One embryo, as far as I can see,” Samwell said, “but it’s hard to be sure at this stage.”

“God help me, if I’ve got an alien litter. Why can’t we fucking abort this thing again?”

Katz gave a weary smile as he took another sample of Liam’s blood. “Because we have no idea what you’re carrying, or how it will affect you, and also I have no equipment to perform an abortion anyway, because we have an all-male crew.”

“*Had*. I’m becoming a woman, remember?”

Liam sagged bag in the medical chair, which was reclining backwards to ensure his comfort. His hand rested on his belly, which just nine weeks in was not showing signs of growth. At first he thought it was just that he was eating more, but it had a tautness to it, a slight slope that was only evident upon feeling it, or when he stood up. But it was there. A pregnant belly.

“A goddamned pregnant belly,” he said to himself.

“Yeah, that’s something else, alright.”

Liam blinked back tears. He had been feeling more and more hormonal lately, like his emotions were unable to be controlled. Between the morning sickness - which wasn’t even in the morning, for as much as that mattered in space - and the constant exhaustion, he felt like he was being ping-ponged between rage and denial, and sheer overwhelming humiliation and sorrow at what was happening to me.

“Why me?” he whined. “Why the fuck is this happening to me? I wasn’t even a scientist on that damn trip. All I did was get bored and touch some rocks. I could barely even see the crystal shit!”

Katz placed a hand on his shoulder, as was his way. “It’s okay, Liam.”

“It’s not fucking okay. I’m turning into a goddamn woman. I’ve got a freaking baby growing in my stomach! What the fuck is up with that? Is it even human?”

“I don’t know, there’s some interference, like with the crystal signal. The eggheads back on Mars and Earth are going to be looking at it with their best though.”

“Goddamn it, so I can’t even know?”

“You’ll just have to rest up and take care of yourself, Liam. Try to keep sane. We’ll do our best here, but it’s on you. One thing is for sure though: you’re a trailblazer.”

Liam wasn’t comforted by that comment. He rubbed his stomach beneath his patient’s gown. It felt stretched. Sore. Like it wasn’t done growing. Which, he knew, was absolutely true. The same feeling was also mirrored in his chest.

“I’ll just focus on the work,” he said. “Keep being an engineer. Try to be normal.”

The doc nodded. “That’s the spirit. Get back to normal, as much as you can.”

It was easier said than done. Most of the crew avoided him like the plague, and shifts had to be organised, hatchways decontaminated and so forth, in order for him to do his vital work without others coming into too much contact. Liam wore baggy clothing to disguise his changes as much as he could, but even he couldn’t fool anyone with what was happening to his face: his skin had softened, and his hair was growing in thicker and longer, even as he kept cutting it shorter. His eyelashes had grown a little too, and his doughy cheeks had

melted in to become more handsome. All in all, he was just shy of androgyny, all thanks to the massive amounts of estrogen being dumped into his system. The others noted it in ways he certainly didn't appreciate.

"Well, well, it's our newest female member," Petyr remarked when Liam had passed his tenth week of pregnancy. "How goes the little one? A boy or girl, do you think?"

Liam grimaced. By this point, his belly had a slight but definite arc to it, though it was easily disguised by a loose shirt even in zero-g. But his chest had grown a little. Less than A-cups, but with nipples that were far larger and more womanly. They occasionally pressed against the fabric, making him wince as they did so.

"What. Did. You. Say?"

Petyr's handsome blonde face contorted into a shit-eating grin. "I was just noting that you appear to be turning into a rather gorgeous young mother-to-be, comrade."

"What the fuck did you just say to me, asshole?"

Petyr shrugged. "Your nipples are pushing against the fabric like little thimbles, young mother. Since you've forced us all into paranoid isolation, I don't think it's a crime to fantasise about whether you're going to grow a big pair of milkers, da?"

Liam launched himself at the other man, screaming. Normally, the fight would have been an easy loss: Petyr was far more used to zero-g than he was, and the other man was stronger. Not to mention Liam was smaller, losing muscle mass, and freaking pregnant. But he had rage, a rage that burned with shame and self-hatred as much as anger at his crewmate. He punched and flailed and kicked, and seemed more like a screaming animal than a man by the time the Captain and Adam Kim pulled the pair apart. Hardigan ordered Petyr back to his station and set a host of other punishments on his head. Liam was sent back to sickbay with Adam as his guide.

"I fucking hate him. I'm gonna fucking kill him," Liam spat. His heart was like a jackhammer in his chest, and it reminded him of the pressure just above it. The twin pressures of his growing breasts.

For once, Adam didn't have a smart comment to say. He walked in silence until the anger had abated a little, then spoke. "He deserved the shit-kicking, at least. Maybe hold off on killing the pilot before we get to Mars, though."

Liam chuckled darkly. "Not a bad idea. Where does he get off on that?"

"Petyr's just nervous. We all are. You know, if it's infectious."

"You're helping me head back right now. You're not scared?"

Adam looked at him. "I'm goddamned terrified, but you're still part of the crew. Besides, I'm terrified not to help you, after the lashing you gave him."

Liam scoffed. "Hopefully that'll be the last he makes fun of me for this."

"Yeah, don't count on it. But he'll do it in moderation from now on."

Liam sighed. It would have to be compensation enough. He thanked Adam when he was deposited back to the medical bay, and he lay down on his makeshift bunk there.

“Cheers for not being a total asshole this time, Adam.”

“Well, I like to mix things up a bit. Besides, I’ve got to be nice if I’m going to write a paper on you.”

“Don’t even fucking joke about it.”

“I am a scientist you know.”

“A geologist. Stick to your fucking rocks.”

“Ha! Like you can talk. You touching rocks got you into this mess.”

Liam surprised himself by smiling. “Just get out of here before these goddamn hormone changes make me start crying, or worse, start kicking.”

“Well, something else will be kicking soon, and you’ll be the punching bag. So get in your fun while you can. Take care, Liam. I’m sorry this is happening to you.”

He left, and Liam reclined, trying to refocus his thoughts. The doc had given him a lot of material on meditation and self-control. He didn’t much truck with it, but he needed something. His life was turning upside down, and people like Adam were being sorta nice while Petyr was doubling down on assholehood.

And then there were the dreams.

“Are they even dreams? Or am I seeing things?” he said to himself. Without realising he was doing it, he lifted his shirt and began stroking his stomach, until finally he fell asleep.

Part 4: The Changes

The great vessel was the result of years of work and passion, one that could take many of their people to the location of the signal. They were captivated by the thought of not being alone in the universe. The blue shimmer rose amongst them, and they celebrated with fervour. The twin suns danced in their loop, bringing the seven seasons in their chaotic orders. The dances had begun. The feasts laid out. And then, on the appointed day, the vessel was launched to great fanfare. Its long voyage had begun. It would seek out new life, and it would come in peace.

The dreams were blurry and easily forgotten. Liam considered that he likely experienced them over and over again until finally each one in sequence became easier to remember while

conscious. He had only idly mentioned them to Katz around the eleventh week mark, and the doctor had spun himself into a frenzy writing everything down to relay back to Earth and Mars. Apparently, the people there were *very* interested in dreams, particularly ones that followed a narrative sequence. From then on, Liam was asked to always focus on his dreams, and try to record them. In truth, it was much easier than focusing on his body, because those changes were far less kind. One in particular.

“Your male organs are getting smaller,” Katz said at the twelve week mark. “Quite noticeably so now.”

“I’m well fucking aware,” Liam said, trying to keep his voice level. It was hard not to be emotional. It was also hard for him not to speak in a higher register now. “Goddamn it. I wasn’t exactly packing enormous before doc, but I wasn’t tiny either! I swear my balls are shrivelling up. Isn’t there anything you can do to at least, I don’t know, slow it down or something?”

“I told you, we don’t have testosterone. Why would we? Hormonal stuff is for transitioning, and we don’t exactly need to do sex changes in space.”

“Except for mine, apparently,” Liam muttered. “I’m losing my cock and balls, and gaining a pair of tits.”

“You might not actually lose your genitals. Most men who undertake estrogen supplements experience something similar. Same with the breast growth. It may be that the appearance of a womb for your, uh, child, is the only actual distinct change. Everything else can be undone with hormone treatments back home.”

His words gave Liam some hope . . . but only for a week or two. That was because as he entered the second trimester, things began to kick into high gear. The journey was long back to Mars, and things were already simmering to a boil with the crew. Earth and Mars were demanding test after test, and the question of infection had yet to be settled. Abel Rotar was constantly wanting access to Liam’s information, and to inspect him personally. He was even less amicable than ever before, and was starting to argue with the captain over even trivial matters, most of them connected to Liam. It put everyone on edge, and it was easy for resentment against the changing man to build, which further isolated Liam. Soon, the medical bay was like a world unto itself for him, and when he did appear before the others, they looked at him funny. It took him a while to realise that while the changes to his body were agonisingly slow for him, he changed dramatically to them between his appearances.

“Holy shit,” Adam had said at one point. “I didn’t even recognise you! You’re, well, changing Liam.”

"I am well aware," he said, wincing as he cradled his slightly larger belly. It was larger than he wanted it to be; he could have sworn it was larger than a woman at the end of her first trimester, which was often not even that visible. "I'm growing *tits* here, after all."

"Yeah, I can certainly see that. Don't let Petyr see them or he'll get all weird."

"Everything is all weird. And I'm not letting anyone see them. I can barely stand them myself. They're so stupidly sensitive. What are you doing standing around talking to me anyway? I was just going up to the tubes to make sure the feeders were all working properly. You should stay away from me. I've got fucking cooties or whatever, remember?"

Adam just gave a comforting smirk. "Well, I was never afraid of cooties. Besides, curiosity got the best of me. You take care, Liam. I know we can be a tin sardine can of assholes packed together, but we actually miss you."

"Yeah, my ass."

"Is that changing too?"

"God, I hope not."

Still, the interaction left him feeling a little better, even if Adam was noticeably glancing at that belly. It wasn't a creepy look like with Abel Rotar at least: the older scientist looked like he was ready to lick his lips and take a bite. As if one famous paper wasn't enough, he was practically getting ready to vivisect Liam. It put him on edge.

But the changes continued over the long journey, and soon it became clear from the tests and general judgement that Liam was not, in fact, going to infect anyone else. Hardigan made sure that some protocols remained in place, but otherwise Liam was allowed to re-enter the crew space . . . just in time for the Captain to also kick him off most of his regular duties.

"You can't do this to me!" Liam exclaimed in a private meeting by the Captain's bunk. It wasn't even away from the others, though they'd all been kicked out. No doubt they were listening by the hatch, though.

"I'm sorry Liam, but it makes sense. We can't have you running full-time hours any more."

"But I've just been confirmed non-infectious!"

"That's not entirely true; we've just mainly ruled it out. We have to take some precautions. Rotar has been clear on this: he thinks there could be carrier elements possible, even if highly unlikely."

"Oh, for fuck's sake, Captain, this isn't-"

But Hardigan held up a hand, then gestured to Liam's changing form. "Macklin," he said, "I need you to take a good hard look at yourself and your situation. I know this is damn tough on you, and you're coping better than others would in your situation, but your mental state is not in a good shape. More than that, you're *pregnant*. I know you don't like having it

discussed out loud, but you *are* experiencing hormonal changes, random emotional outbursts, and frequent bouts of exhaustion, *just like any pregnant woman would*. Only for you, it's worse, because you're used to being a man, so the changes are even bigger. You're clearly tired - for Christ's sake, man, Petyr caught you napping in the ducts the other day."

Liam looked at the floor. "I just . . . needed ten minutes, that was all. I set an alarm."

"Not good enough, and you know it. We need to work around this."

"But I'm the engineer, I-"

"Liam, we're *all* engineers. You can't be a spacefarer without being one. Now, granted, you're the best one we've got, and more specialised at that, but we'll make do and get you out for emergencies. Besides, we can't have you going into the ducts anymore, at all."

"Why not?" Liam asked.

Hardigan raised an eyebrow, causing the transforming male to blush. His hand lowered automatically to his twelve week pregnant belly, which had a defined curve to it now. The answer was quickly obvious.

"Oh. Yeah."

"Yeah," the Captain repeated. "In a couple of weeks, you'll be getting stuck in there."

Liam nodded. "With all due respect sir, this is shit."

"I know. But every day we're closer to Mars, and closer to answers. Just think on that. You go rest up, son."

Liam turned, feeling once more humiliated but at least seeing the Captain's sense. He *had* been getting more tired lately. He'd read once that the second trimester came with a boost of energy for women, and could only hope the case was true for him too. Of course, he'd also read that second trimester came with bigger boobs and more curves, and not just the belly kind. He was not looking forward to *that* possibility. He tried not to think about it, and opened the hatch to leave. He floated down the central space and quickly happened upon the rest of the crew, all looking far too casual, except for Rotar who was taking notes on his pad. He had a mask on. He was always wearing a mask around Liam now, as if he were still a danger, still a lab experiment.

"How did it go?" Petyr asked.

Liam folded his arms beneath his breasts, outlining them subtly. They were almost B-cups now, if not there already. When he was in regular grav they bounced a little. When he floated, they rose like little souffles. It was an alien sensation.

"You were all listening, what do you think?"

"Sorry, Liam," Adam said. "It might be for the best, though."

"Yeah, I hear those words a lot these days."

Adam patted him on the back. "Hey, we still need you, man. No way am I going to be able to go into the ducts without some help."

"Ugh, ducts are the worst," Petyr said. "Are you sure you didn't get yourself knocked up with alien babies just to avoid that space?"

"I always liked it," Liam admitted. "It's cozy in there."

"Ha! Perhaps that will be your nesting space when you're due!"

They chuckled. The humour wasn't so biting at this point, perhaps because everyone recognised how low Liam's mental health was.

"So, what will you do with your spare time?" Petyr asked.

"Oh, you know," Liam said, gesturing to his body, "keep growing a baby, lose my dick, probably get bigger tits."

He was still wearing looser outfits, but not even they could disguise the changes to his form, or how soft and feminine his face was becoming.

"How big are they right now?" Petyr asked, but Adam caught him in the ribs. "What? A man can't be curious?"

Liam rolled his eyes. "Keep it in your pants, Petyr. Even if I do become a woman, I'm not fucking you."

"Ah, you better not become pretty then. That would just be insufferable."

"I promise to become the ugliest woman possible just for you, if I do become a woman at all."

"Here's hoping that's not the case," Adam said. "Hell, it might not even be a baby in there. Isn't there a lot of interference? Has there been kicking?"

"Nothing yet, and hopefully nothing ever. But it *looks* like a fetus from what we've seen. Fuck, if I'm pregnant with an alien spider . . ."

Rotar's voice cut through the slight joviality. He slammed his hand against the wall for emphasis as he spoke. "That's *exactly* what we need to be concerned about, and it strikes me as delusional that you are all standing here joking about this."

"Lay off a bit, Abel," Adam said. "We're just participating in a bit of camaraderie."

"Liam needs to be confined and studied," Rotar continued. "He contains what may be the greatest scientific find of the century - of all of human history - and perhaps the greatest threat of all. Have you considered what might be growing inside him? Is it viral? Is it contagious once born? Will it spread the crystal's influence? Our sample appears completely inert, but what is the life cycle process here, if it is one at all?"

Liam swallowed. He'd thought a lot about such things, especially since he continued to have those strange dreams. Instinctively, perhaps even a little protectively, he took a step back and placed a hand on his belly.

“We’re not confining him in iso for the entire journey,” Adam said. “That would be madness.”

“What is madness is that you’re not taking advantage of this opportunity, Mr Kim,” Abel said. “You could have your name alongside mine, but instead we endanger everything. We cannot trust that an alien influence is benevolent, or even neutral. We need to start treating Liam as an object of study, even if it sounds inhumane.”

“Fuck,” Petyr said. “Rotar, are you hearing yourself? Just because I joke around about Liam becoming a hot missy doesn’t mean I don’t see him as a person.”

The doctor spoke up for the first time. “I won’t allow it either. He’s my patient first, that’s the rules the captain enforces, Rotar.”

Rotar scoffed, turned, and floated away. “You’ll regret it. You’re endangering us all.”

It was like a punch to the gut to Liam. He was about to say something while the others gave their encouragements and assurances, but then he felt something else: *an actual punch to the gut*.

“Um, I’ve got to get back to my bunk,” he said.

“Don’t let him get you down,” Adam said. “Trust me, he’s an asshole, but harmless. We’re here for you, man.”

It was comforting, especially so in Liam’s emotional state, but right now his mind was far from those words.

“It’s okay, I just . . . I need to be alone. Something’s come up.”

He floated away from the group and made his way back to medical bay as fast as he could, even while moving more gently than usual. The entire time he had his hand on his gut. His breathing had quickened, and he was trying to come to terms with the strange feelings within it.

“No way,” he said to himself. “No way that was . . . was it?”

He reached the bay and quickly got into his bunk. He took off his shirt, uncaring that he was topless, his breasts now showing. They had gotten bigger, and were still sore. Normally, he’d lie there kneading them a little just to work out that soreness, but now both hands were placed on his stomach. He slowed his breathing as much as he could, tried to calm his nerves. Something that was almost like *excitement* coursed through him.

“C’mon,” he said. “I know I felt you. I know I did.”

And then he did. A stirring within him. Not a punch, not really. Just a shift. A little movement. A four-months along baby turning around and pressing against the left arc of his slightly-domed belly. It was a revelation.

“Holy shit.”

What else was there to say? It was unlike anything else Liam had ever felt in his life. He’d assumed if he ever felt the baby - if it could even be called a baby - kick, that it would

just feel like a stomach lurch or an incoming bowel movement or painful pressure or something. But this was different. It was actual *life*, stirring inside him. Gently. Almost fragile. He waited, paused, holding his breath in.

And then it came again. Slightly to the left.

“Oh my God. That was bigger.”

The baby moved within him. It was still so small, and it was only lying down without distraction that he could even feel some of the squirming inside him, but it blew him away nonetheless. This was life inside him. *Actual life*. Growing inside him!

“I can’t believe this,” he said. “This is . . . oh God, this is so fucking wrong.”

And yet, despite himself, he smiled a little. A rush of hormones hit him like a freight train, and tears began to well in his eyes. He wiped them away, not knowing what to think. It was all too much. But there was no denying that a small part of him had an almost maternal connection to whatever life was growing in his belly. It was, in many ways, the first time any of it - the pregnancy, the changes - felt more than just a freakshow, and felt like what it actually was: a *pregnancy*.

“Oh God, I’m actually pregnant. Holy shit, this is actually real. I’m pregnant. I’m entering my second trimester with a baby. A baby alien, or a clone of me, or a living rock. God knows. But I’m actually fucking pregnant. Ho-lee shit.”

He laid there, hand on his belly, taking that all in. He stayed there for some time, just experiencing it. There were still changes happening, he knew: his sore breasts were tense with the promise of future growth, and his face felt oddly numb in places where the structure was changing. Even his rear felt a little sore, as if yearning to become softer and rounder. His legs had lost their hair, but were also looking more shapely.

“I’m becoming a goddamn Mom,” Liam said. “What the fuck am I going to do?”

There was no answer, and the prospect filled him with anxiety again. But there was also a sliver of something else, too small to even consciously recognise or accept just yet, but present all the same. A tiny fragment of excitement, of anticipation, had begun to stir alongside the child in Liam’s new womb.

Part 5: The Second Thing

On the advice of the Mars Government, the *Tiresias* slowed her approach as various officials and scientists worked to figure out containment protocols and care for Liam. The crew were not happy about this; it meant that rather than arriving at Olympus Base in two months (six total from Ganymede), they would be arriving in three-and-a-half. Liam was none too happy

either. Not only did he feel guilty to be the cause of the delay, but he was also aware that he would be a whopping seven-and-a-half months pregnant by that point. By human terms, the baby would effectively be viable for delivery. Not to mention how much further changed he would be!

“Surely they can get things organised by then?” he said wearily to the Captain.

Hardigan was gruff about it himself, sipping away at his bulb of coffee. “One would think. But the situation’s political. Powerful people on Mars *and* Earth are jockeying over this. And as much as our own Dr Rotar’s anxieties are rubbing us all the wrong way, some of his concerns are not entirely wrong. We don’t know what’s in you, Liam, and Katz hasn’t had much more luck getting readings on your womb. We’ll have a transfer of better scanning equipment and maternity supplies on connection with a joining Mars-Earth ship, but they don’t want anyone else ‘exposed’ to you, just in case.”

Liam sighed, rubbing his belly slightly. The child within him was sleeping at that point, or at least not stirring. He almost wanted it to shift again. The sensation, oddly, calmed him. Made him feel like it wasn’t a monster he was growing, but something innocent instead. A small consolation, of sorts.

“I’m not a danger,” he said. “I know I’m not.”

“I suspect you’re not too, son, but would you risk an entire planet’s safety on a suspicion?”

Hardigan had a point, so Liam conceded it.

“Permission to return to work then, sir?”

“Permission granted, provided it’s a half-shift. We want you relaxing plenty, okay?”

“I know, I know. I’m a *‘growing gal’*, as Petyr keeps telling me.”

“Well, permission granted to throw something durable at his head.”

Liam chuckled before moving off to his duties. As he did so, he passed Abel Rotar. The man was no longer wearing a crude face mask, but had unearthed a proper sealed oxygen mask for emergencies. He glared maliciously at Liam as he floated passed, not saying a word. It sent a chill down Liam’s spine. There was something terrifying in the doctor’s demeanour, something paranoid that made him protectively hold his stomach.

“Woah, slow down there Liam!” Adam Kim exclaimed. “There’s only so many rations to go around!”

Liam blushed and wiped his mouth. His lips had become a little fuller lately, and he was aware of it when he touched them.

“Sorry,” he said, sucking up the last of the sludge from the ration tube. “Just so damn hungry lately. Second trimester woes, I guess. The book said this would happen.”

“The book?” Petyr asked.

“The one that Katz downloaded for me. *What to Expect When You’re Expecting, 12th Edition*. It’s . . . pretty useful, actually.”

Petyr smirked. “Whoever would have thought a man on this ship would read a book like that, huh?”

Katz joined them, sitting down. The balding older man gave Petyr an admonishing look as he took some ration tubes for himself. “You need to expand your consciousness a little, Petyr. I myself have read it twice.”

“You have?” asked Liam.

The medical officer smiled. “I have two daughters, Liam.”

“You do?” Petyr said.

“Why haven’t I heard of this?” Adam added.

Katz shrugged. “You never asked. Every man should know what a woman goes through in pregnancy. We men think we’re tough, but when you understand the science of what goes through a woman’s body during that time - the hormonal changes, the physical structural changes, bone shifts, the process of birth, and so on - you realise that we men have it easy.”

“You hear that, Liam?” Adam said, jabbing him with his elbow. “You’re the toughest one here!”

Liam winced. “Damn straight, but please don’t jab me there. It’s starting to . . . blow out.”

He was wearing a loose top that only really pulled tight around his growing breasts and belly, but in response to Adam’s confusion he pulled the shirt to one side so that could see just how big that belly was growing. Sure enough, while Liam’s waistline had thinned considerably to a more womanly dimension, it was now filling out at the sides as his belly rounded out, the amniotic fluid giving it a slight curve at the side.

Adam went bright red. “Oh, damn! Sorry. If it’s any consolation, maybe it shows that I still think of you as one of the guys?”

Liam rolled his eyes. “Yeah, right. Try feeling that way in a couple of months. I can still feel the changes happening. I’m sore in a lot of places right now. Sore and hungry while I eat for two here. Stupid alien artefact knocking me up . . .”

He ate more in response to his stomach growling.

“More changes, eg?” Petyr said. “Including . . .”

“Including my damn new tits, you dog, yes. Seriously, my nipples are on fire right now, so neither of you get to make any jokes at all, got it?”

“Scout’s honour,” Adam said.

Petyr was not so willing. “I reserve the right to make *some* jokes. I would be remiss to mention, comrade, that you are looking a little softer in the face lately too.”

“Go fuck yourself, Petyr.”

He sagged at the table. “Alas, I will have to, thanks to this delay.”

Katz, who had been silent for a time, spoke. “Well, at least we finally have a proper mascot for our ship in our Liam here.”

The others, including Liam, looked his way.

“What do you mean?” the transforming man asked

Katz sighed. “Kids these days, not knowing the classics. And I mean the *real* classics. *Tiresias* is an Ancient Greek mythic character. He was transformed into a woman for seven years by the goddess Hera after displeasing her when he hit two mating snakes with a stick. During this time, he became married and even birthed children, and after those seven years he came across the same pair of snakes again, and this time left them alone. He was turned back into a man. Of course, when Zeus and Hera had an argument over which sex gained the most pleasure from sex, they naturally consulted Tiresias. He said ‘of ten parts a man enjoys one only.’”

“Wise man,” Petyr said. “It’s the one bane of being such a Casanova. Knowing I shall never be as pleased as the women I please.”

“Yeah, right,” Adam remarked. “So that’s where we get the name of our ship? I just assumed it was named after some older ship or something. I never thought to ask.”

“And now,” Katz said, “you know why Liam becoming a woman feels quite appropriate. He is our Tiresias.”

Liam gulped down more rations. “Great. So I can count on ‘only’ being a woman for seven years?”

“Maybe don’t step on the Ganymede snakes next time,” Adam cracked. “Or insulting the moon goddess somehow.”

“I’ll be sure to keep that in mind.”

“At least you get the nine parts of enjoyment as a woman,” Petyr said with a grin. “You can confirm Tiresias’ view in the modern day!”

“Pass. Even if I do even up growing a pussy - which I will do my best *not* to do - I have no plans to use it for anything except to push this alien baby out.”

“What a waste!”

“Of course,” Katz continued over the top of Petyr’s whining, “when Tiresias gave this answer, Hera was displeased again, for she believed a man got most of the pleasure. In anger, she struck Tiresias blind on the spot.”

Adam whistled. “Damn. Harsh.”

“Of course, Zeus took some pity, and gifted him with the power of foresight and prophecy. The ability to see beyond the realms of this world. Fascinating stuff, Greek myth.”

“Yeah,” Liam said. “F-fascinating. I’ve . . . gotta go pee.”

The others looked his way, obviously seeing some strange look on his face.

“What? This thing *moves* now. It’s sitting on my damn *bladder*. I pee a lot now. Don’t make jokes, Petyr.”

“Are you okay?” Adam asked.

“Yeah. I just need a moment. Hormones and shit. Pregnant woman stuff. You wouldn’t understand.”

“I certainly wouldn’t,” he chuckled. “Well, you take care, Liam. I hope the little one isn’t annoying you too much.”

Liam rubbed his belly a little meaningfully. It really did look bigger than a woman’s should after just four and a bit months, but who could tell with alien weirdness?

“She’s not. She’s rather . . . nice, sometimes.”

Liam got up and walked away, heading up the ladder to the zero-grav section of the ship. He heard the thin voice of Petyr whispering as he left.

“Did Liam just call his little alien baby a ‘she’?”

But the transforming man’s mind was elsewhere, caught on other things. In particular, those strange dreams he’d been having. The ones that felt a lot like Tiresias’s foresight. Or, perhaps, simply a look into another realm.

Or another time.

The vessel’s journey would be long. It carried with it the legacy of their civilisation. The knowledge. For years on end the twin suns of their world danced in orbit, and the people below the blue shimmer speculated on the signal from the stars. When would they hear from their vessel? What would the vessel encounter? Would the universe remain lonely, or would it be filled with the dance of a new partner with new ideas and new ways of being?

The people received their answer. They had sent their vessel in peace, and now it was returning. But something was wrong. It did not respond to hails, nor was its trajectory as expected. Behind it was a blur of other vessels, their appearance strange upon the scanners. Their number was legion, and they were moving fast.

When the great vessel breached the atmosphere of the world that had birthed it, it was on fire. The sky itself followed soon after.

More days, more changes, more tests. Liam's pregnancy continued to advance, keeping broad pace with that of a human woman's gestational period, as far as Katz and the eggheads back on Earth and Mars could tell. The *Tiresias* briefly docked with the joint-medical science vessel *Oblant* and took on a number of medical devices and supplies for further monitoring the changing man's condition, but the other crew were all in Hazmat suits, and swiftly disconnected from the ship afterwards, wishing them good luck. A couple of them had a quick look at the 'pregnant man', but none of them had signed up to stay, though apparently Earth's side had tried to pressure them. It reminded the crew that in many ways Liam was still a biohazard, just like Rotar kept saying.

But at least proper recording equipment had arrived. Liam was five months along by this point, and it was shocking how quickly he was growing. He could have sworn his pregnancy was advancing more rapidly now, though his book also told him to expect the greatest surges of growth in the second trimester. Morning sickness was behind him, as was a lot of the tiredness. In fact, he'd begun begging Hardigan to hurry up and let him get back to work in full-time hours, something Hardigan reluctantly agreed to since that surge of second trimester energy was inescapable.

"Thank God," Liam had said. "Seriously, I feel like bouncing, even though in my condition that's not a good idea. I need to be doing things!"

"Nesting instinct!" Petyr called.

"Oh, shut up."

Of course, he couldn't fit in the ducts any more. His stomach was rounded, stretching some of the shirts uncomfortably tight. The same was true of his breasts, much to an even greater embarrassment. Liam had, if not accepted, then at least understood that his belly would become full with this alien child. What he hadn't expected was to grow a pair of breasts that were increasingly so . . . obvious. It was difficult to tell how big they would end up being, given that they were often sore with the promise of continued growth, but for now he had a letter of the alphabet to officially assign them, since the *Oblant* had even been given a variety of women's attire to pass over to him.

C-cups.

Full, round, occasionally bouncy C-cups. Quite bouncy, actually, when Liam was working out or in the centri-grav areas of the ship. When he wasn't, he instead had to wear a well-fitting bra now just to contain them, since they sort of 'floated' upwards a little. His nipples had also grown, and were obviously female now, complete with expanded areolas. It was very strange having a pair of breasts, and even more having people look at them. Once, when he'd been overheated after some hard work on a panel fixture, he'd unzipped the front of his new 'maternity wear' engineering suit. When Adam came by to chat, both he and Liam

had been embarrassed to realise the scientist was getting a peek at Liam's now not-unimpressive cleavage.

"Oh God, this is humiliating," he'd said. "Hang on, I'll zip up."

"No need! I'll, um, keep on walking."

"At least you weren't Petyr."

"Yes, I'd watch out for him. He'll be drooling."

"Ugh, bad enough to grow breasts, I have to share a ship with a man obsessed with them."

Adam just grinned. "All men are obsessed with breasts, and women too. I bet you enjoy them a little."

"Not even."

"A little bit?"

Liam shook his head. "*Not. Even.*"

Adam shrugged and got the conversation back on track. What he didn't know was that Liam was lying. It was a ship of men. They all masturbated at times, though obviously in private and it was never talked about. Given that he practically resided in the medical bay now, Liam had a lot more privacy these days. And while his larger breasts were sore, they were also increasingly sensitive. Worse, he'd also begun feeling hormonal rushes that presented themselves as deeply arousing. His dick was smaller everyday, the slight formation of future labia already enclosing around his tiny cock, but he was still able to stroke himself there when the horniness came over him. But it was his new chest that was the best source of pleasure now. He teased and rubbed his nipples, groped the wonderfully soft flesh of his chest, and moaned softly as the bliss came. It didn't take long for him to cum, though there wasn't any actual sperm coming out of him anymore. Instead, his body simply shook, and afterwards his baby would usually wake, and Liam would lie there, feeling more pregnant and rounded than ever, whispering to his child.

"It's okay. Daddy's here. Or Mommy. Whatever I am. You go back to sleep now."

Even his voice was more ambiguous, though if he had to be honest it was far more female than male already. It had a sweetness to it, an elegance that had overtaken the boyishness, and while he didn't like it - particularly when Petyr made fun or Katz smirked - it at least seemed to calm his baby. It shifted within him, kicking lightly, and he almost cooed.

"Stupid maternal feelings," he sighed. "Why am I starting to like you? I should hate you! But . . . you're a little innocent, aren't you? None of this is your fault."

His belly was quite large now, and it was making life in general more difficult. Zero-grav areas were increasingly a lovely retreat to keep his belly buoyant, but Katz had him on a strict regimen to stay mostly in centri-grav, since it was important for a child's bone development.

“That’s what I assume at least,” he said. “We have no idea what this thing is.”

“None? Even with all the new ultrasound equipment? With the 3D scanners? You poked me with a micro-camera, doc! That hurt!”

“Yeah, and I’m still apologising over that. Look, whatever is going on inside your body, there’s certainly an alien nature to it. Your womb is pretty resistant to us digging around in there, and a lot of our traditional methods are throwing up too much static and interference, much like the original signal itself.”

Liam leaned his head back against the rest of the medical bay bedding. The bed was slightly raised, allowing him to clutch his stomach and rub it as he talked, which was habitual to him now. He shifted some hairs behind his right ear; he’d given up on hair cuts for a while, since his hair was growing so fast at this point.

“Is there anything we can get from this?”

“Well, there is one thing,” Katz said, “but I want you to brace yourself for it. It’s something the folks on Olympus noticed when we sent the latest scans to them.”

Liam winced. His baby shifted around again. God, it was active! Clearly, it sensed his nervousness. “Just lay it on me, doc. I’m already turning into a pregnant woman and losing my damn penis. That’s awful enough. What else could be worse than knowing I’ll be pushing a baby out of a damn cooch in four months time?”

Katz bit his lip, hesitating. “Well, I can name one thing, for starters.”

“Yeah?”

“Pushing *two* babies of your ‘damn cooch.’”

Liam’s eyes slowly widened. “You don’t mean . . .”

Katz held up a fuzzy scan. Even with all the signal interference, two shapes could be made out, vaguely humanoid.

“Congratulations, Liam. You’re carrying twins.”

Liam looked down at his belly, suddenly taking in what was most obvious. How could he have not known? Wasn’t he supposed to have some maternal instincts by this point? The baby had been so active, and his belly so big for this stage, the conclusion was obvious!

“Twins,” he marvelled. “I’m carrying twins.” A small part of him felt strangely in awe of his body, almost *proud* of it. But the anxiety quickly took over. “This is just my luck!”

Part 6: The Shower

Captain Hardigan signed and rubbed his pock-marked face when he got the news.

“Twins,” he said, taking a long, drawn out breath. “Twins.”

“Twins,” Liam said, finding it hard to meet his Captain’s eye, particularly given how far out his stomach now was, not to mention that he was wearing a woman’s uniform that fit quite snugly.

“Twins,” Hardigan repeated.

“Twins,” Katz confirmed.

“Twins.”

“Twins.”

“For God’s sake, gentlemen,” Katz said. “Are we a broken record? I believe it is now established fact that Liam Macklin is pregnant with twins.”

“It’s . . . just a lot to take in, doctor,” the Captain said.

Liam rubbed his belly. It was tight again, and now he knew well why. “How do you think I feel? I’m the one that got pregnant with them, and all because I touched the wrong stupid part of a crater!”

Hardigan gave him a sympathetic look before turning to the doctor. “Does this change anything?”

“Not a whole lot, thankfully, apart from the birthing procedure and how we might have to take care of the babies after.”

Liam placed his hands on his back, which was struggling to take the weight for long periods lately. “Great. Yay for me. I get to push *two* babies out of my pussy instead of one. My future pussy. Just goddamn great.”

“But for now,” Katz continued, ignoring him, “it just means we need to allow Liam to eat the portions his body requires, and to ease back on his work routine. Back to part-time shifts, as well as ensuring he remains comfortable.”

“Hard to be comfortable when you’re growing big boobs . . .”

Hardigan also ignored Liam’s comments, and instead sat back in his chair. “We’ll inform the crew. I’ll tell Rotar personally. He’ll take it best from me. He’s been . . . irritable, as of late. Adam says it’s almost impossible to work with him, even on the new element, despite all its importance.”

“He’s becoming paranoid,” Katz said. “I don’t have psych training, but I’m worried about him, and he makes my patient nervous.”

Liam was about to protest this statement for making him look weak, but decided not to comment. For one, Katz was right. It had been two weeks since the twins theory was confirmed, and only now had the doctor finally convinced him to let others on the ship and not just those back on Earth and Mars know about his multiples pregnancy. Part of his major hesitation was in letting Abel know. Rotar already viewed him as a major threat enough. This would make Liam seem like the coming apocalypse.

“Like I said,” Hardigan reminded them. “I’ll take care of Rotar. You just take care of Liam here, and Liam; take care of yourself, and the babies, whatever they are. The eyes of two major governments are upon the contents of your, uh, new womb there.”

Liam sighed and hefted his weight up. His belly was taut with new growth, and his breasts weren’t much better. More than that, his rear was starting to swell too, much like the subtle shift in his hips. It was getting harder and harder to even attempt to pass himself off as a man, especially since he’d noticed his jaw losing its squareness, and starting to soften. Soon, Petyr would be asking him to do pregnant pinups, the damn ‘comrade’ calling dog.

“I’ll try to keep that in mind, Captain,” he said. “Now if you’ll excuse me, I’ve got to rip off the bandaid and tell Petyr and Adam.”

“Best of luck with that.”

“Thanks, Cap,” he said, moving to climb the ladder - something that was damn harder these days. “God knows I’ll need it.”

He wasn’t wrong. When he told them, Petyr exploded with laughter, and Adam was awkward as all hell. It made two of them, at least.

Liam had just suffered yet another insufferable scan. He was over six months pregnant, and their trajectory was finally bringing them close to Mars, albeit still a month and a half away from being close to orbit. Still, the crew was getting more excited to leave, and he could only hope they were able to. After all, his changes were proceeding apace, and one in particular was making him glum as all hell. He’d known it was coming - how could he not? - but it still felt like a short to the heart when he woke up that morning in the medical bay feeling strangely aroused after a nice dream, only to experience a strange dampness between his thighs rather than a hardness.

“What the . . .”

There were no cameras on, despite Earth and Mars requests. Samwell Katz was too good a man to allow Liam to be constantly surveilled. It’s why he felt okay with pulling himself up slowly using the handholds on his ward bed, and reaching down into his pants to feel his genitals.

They were gone, of course. Just the previous night, his penis had been little more than a nub. A small, pathetic prick that was only useful for peeing and occasionally giving some small pleasure after a hormonal rush of arousal. But while he had been sleeping and having some rather intoxicating dreams, it had reduced to only a clitoris, and the passage that had been slowly tunnelling from his womb to his rising venus mound had finally opened up.

“A pussy,” he said, blinking back tears. “I’ve got a goddamn pussy.”

It had finally happened. He’d tried to prepare for it emotionally, but instead he just felt a torrent of emotions. Already the evidence of his waning masculinity was clear; he had no body hair, not even upon his pubis, and everywhere from his arms to his legs to his chest to his face were quite womanly now. He’d been lucky to have his cock that long, but as he explored carefully with his fingers, he found that even his balls had disappeared, likely shrunken up inside him. Or just melted back into his skin.

“Fuck,” he said, lying back. “Fuuuuck.”

He didn’t even get a minute’s peace to absorb the final loss of his maleness, because his babies abruptly began kicking in different places, including back towards his spine and down towards his new cervix, which were his two *least* favourite places for them to kick *by far*.

“Ngh! Ugh! Can’t you two give me just a moment’s peace, goddamnit?”

More tears bubbled up, and he had to clutch his stomach to shift onto his side. Just being on his back like that was too uncomfortable now with the heavy weight of his womb pushing down on his vital organs. But still they shifted about in him, his two (likely alien) infants competing for space and causing his belly to distend in weird and uncomfortable ways.

“Oof! Just - stop it! Please, just stop it. Just give me some fucking time to process this, you stupid babies! I never asked for you! I never wanted you! I never wanted to grow a fucking pussy just to push the pair of you out in three months’ time! This isn’t fair. It isn’t - it isn’t - it . . .”

He fell to sobbing, rubbing his belly on its sorest side as he did so. The ligament there was a little strained, and only got worse when the twins moved. He already felt so huge and pregnant and hormonal, and now this final insult had come. His longer hair fell in his face, obscuring his vision, and he mentally cursed that too. Cursed every part of his transformation, even the way his now D-cup breasts pressed against one another when he was on his side, increasing their soreness and making him all the more aware of them. They still showed promise of further growth, much to his disgust. He was terrified he’d outgrow the bras the *Oblant* had gifted to him.

“At least I’ll fit the damn panties now,” he mused sadly.

It only made him cry again, the tears coming so much more freely now that he was entirely female. Another thing that he hated, that was for sure. He got so damn emotional now. Who could blame him?

“A goddamn pussy,” he said, feeling it again tentatively. His fingers slipped inside to the moistness within, and he pulled them back immediately. “Goddamn it. Fuck this. Fuck my life! Fuck everything! And fuck both of you for growing in me and changing me!”

He continued to sob, rubbing his stomach as the babies slowly settled again. He remained otherwise silent for several long minutes.

“I’m sorry,” he finally breathed. “I’m sorry. I don’t hate you. You’re not to blame for this. I’ll take care of you. I promise. M-Mommy promises. God, I’m gonna be a mommy. But I’ll take care of you. I will.”

The sensation of them moving within, now with much less agitation, managed to calm the new woman down a lot. Tears still fell, but he was now able to slowly absorb what had happened.

He just wasn’t ready to deal with the strangely arousing dream he’d had. The one with the gorgeous blue-skinned men. The ones in their armour, stalwart and heroic as their world burned.

Their world was burning. The invaders were many, implacable and merciless. Their ships roamed the surface, reducing cities to glass shards, and vaporising entire populations. The people wailed as they tried to reach safe havens, scrambling over one another to reach their crystalline ships. They had not truly explored far across the cosmos en masse, but now they fled to the stars in hopes of being beacons of survival for their species. One by one, they were cut down by the invaders. Only a few escaped, and not in great enough numbers to survive. Those of their kind who lived on nearby worlds more distant from the invaders could only watch in horror and try to plan before their own extinction soon arrived.

There was one final hope. But it would require great sacrifice and great risk. And it would all be dependent upon a light they could fling into the future. A shard of themselves that might one day be rebirthed to unlock their return. It could well fail, and then all would be lost.

What other choice did they have, though?

Liam kept his head down, nervous at the approach of Abel Rotar as the other man floated down the central tube of the *Tiresias*. He was always wearing his protective mask now, and other protective elements on his suit, to the point where he was almost in Hazmat gear. And yet still his expression was clear through the hard, clear plastic of the mask. It was one of obsession and fear. Cruel curiosity mingling with paranoia. Liam tried to float on past, but Abel blocked his path, though he kept his distance.

“So, I hear you are gestating twins,” he said coldly.

Liam touched his belly automatically. His babies had been fairly active that morning, and annoyingly kicking on his bladder and cervix, but the movement was a comfort to know they were okay, at least. But now that protective maternal instinct swept over him.

“Not gestating,” he corrected. “Growing. I’m not some damn lab rat, doctor.”

“Would that you were treated like one,” the man replied, narrowing his eyes behind the mask. “This whole situation is being treated much too lightly. Do you have any idea of the threat you present? What you might be changing into?”

Liam tightened his fists. He made a quick gesture of his body, including the way his blossoming bustline stretched the front material of his shirt as obviously as his smooth, pregnant bump, which now had its bellybutton clearly popped out. He couldn’t look more like a pregnant woman if he tried.

“I think I’ve got a fucking pretty clear idea, doctor,” he said icily. “I grew a damn pussy just a couple of days ago, so I’ve also got a pretty good idea how this damn well ends. So stop intimidating me, because in less than three months I’ll be spreading my legs wide and pushing two babies into the world, something I *never* expected to do as a man. So you can take your petty comments and stuff them where the sun don’t shine.”

He floated past, feeling absolutely triumphant in himself. He’d lost a lot of his ability to stand up to others since then changes first began. It wasn’t some mental change, at least he was sure it wasn’t. He was more emotional, certainly, but it was more the shattering of his male pride and the feelings of inadequacy that had followed him. But he wasn’t going to take it anymore. He’d lost his dick, his very symbol of malehood, so as far as he was concerned there was nothing left to take from him. He was a woman, one who needed to protect her babies, and that was damn well that.

But of course, Rotar couldn’t let it go.

“It’s not petty, Liam. If we should even be calling you by a human name anymore and not a *number*. You just keep yourself clear of my work, and watch yourself. I’m still sane enough to not trust you. We have no idea how those *things* are affecting your mind.”

Liam glared. “They’re not *things*. They’re my babies. And you stay clear of *them*, or I’ll show you how I can still throw a punch, asshole.”

Rotar left his view, and Liam caressed his swollen form. His babies kicked inside, as if they too were angry as their mother.

“Don’t listen to him,” he said. “He’s a weirdo. Come on, Petyr and Adam said they had something for me. Well, Adam did, but Petyr will be there.”

He descended down the ladder, and it became ever more awkward the more he went down as centri-grav too effect. When he reached the bottom he felt utterly exhausted, mentally cursing his weakened female body and wishing he still had abdominal muscles as well.

“Finally, she arrives!” came Petyr’s voice.

“I’m not a *she* in mind, yet,” Liam responded, turning about. “Just in body.”

Petyr was sitting at the desk in the lounge area, grinning from ear to ear. The tall blonde was irritatingly handsome, and it struck Liam that he was noticing the ‘handsome’ part of that equation more than he wanted to. *A lot* more. Enough that it was making him worried, particularly after those strange dreams. Adam was beside him, waving hello, and himself looking just as strangely attractive with his styled hair and handsome half-Korean features.

“So it’s true then, you’ve finally explored the final frontier?” Adam said. “You’re our true *Tiresias*?”

Liam gave a sheepish smirk. After the experience with Rotar just now, he wasn’t in the mood for feeling ashamed. “Let’s just say these two damn rascals finally have an exit strategy,” he admitted. “So I have them to thank for that, I guess.”

They took that very moment to thrash in his belly, and the others could see it.

“Well, it seems they agree!” Petyr said. “And are celebrating!”

“So why shouldn’t we?” Adam added.

Liam cocked his head to one side, causing his hair to just barely touch his shoulders. He had given up on cutting it; why fight the tide of femininity *and* laziness?

“You’re planning something, aren’t you?”

“What would make you think that, young miss?” Petyr said.

“Yes, we’d never take advantage of a pregnant woman.”

“Especially one with such a sweet song of a voice.”

“Oh, fuck you, Petyr. I didn’t choose to end up a total soprano. A kick to your balls will make you sound just as sweet.”

He gave a mock pained expression, causing Adam to laugh. It was the latter who took over.

“Okay, you got us. We did plan something. Well, *I* did. I just roped Petyr in because he damn well owes you after all his teasing. Everyone?”

To Liam’s surprise, the Captain appeared behind him, as did Katz. Both looked a little amused, as if they too were in on this.

“Um, what’s going on? You’re not throwing me out the airlock, are you?”

“On the contrary, this little gift was hidden *in* the airlock while we were making it,” Adam said. “It’s highly against regulation, and pretty messy, and private. So it was the best place. So voila, Liam! Enjoy!”

He pulled something out from beneath the table, and Liam actually gasped. It was a cake. An actual cake, with icing and frosting and everything. It even had a message written on top of its raspberry-coloured surface:

Congratulations on the twins, Liam! Welcome to your baby shower!

“Are you - is that - are you all serious?”

“As serious as I get,” Adam said with a wink. “Take a seat, Liam. We’ve organised a baby shower for you. The best our limited supplies can grant - it’s also why the cake may taste a lot like remixed strawberry and raspberry flavoured ration packs, but a whole lot more sugary!”

Liam could barely believe it. He looked around at the others. After the hostile reception from Rotar he’d just received, it was truly something else to be affirmed by the others, even in such a joking manner. He took a seat as Adam organised a slice on a plate and passed it over. Liam’s stomach growled, making the others laugh.

“Hey! I’m not even eating for two as it turns out. I’m eating for three here!”

“Don’t anger a pregnant woman!” Hardigan said, smirking in his dry way. “And pass me a damn plate. I’m bloody starving.”

The crew ate, and the cake really was delicious, even if only a substitute for the real thing. Liam kept looking at Adam in amazement.

“I can’t believe you did this for me. I know it’s just a joke, but thank you.”

But Adam was oddly serious. “No joke, Liam. You’ve had it harder than anyone, and had to bear our brunt too. You deserve it. Which reminds me. We don’t have much in the way of gifts, but I did organise a few things, as did the others.”

“Gifts?”

“It’s your baby shower, remember?”

Liam blushed. “I feel like I should wear a dress to the occasion. God knows I’d fit in it right now. But I won’t give you the satisfaction of seeing my double-D cleavage, Petyr.”

Petyr sighed, obviously tormented, particularly now that he knew Liam’s size.

“Double D’s? Double-D’s? God, why have you forsaken me this wondrous sight? You lucky man, please at least tell me you play with them, comrade?”

“A woman never tells,” Liam chuckled, as Adam got the presents out. Several others did, and soon Liam was overwhelmed not just with gifts but emotions as well. He rubbed his stomach as he was presented with each one, feeling closer to his crew *and* his unexpected alien children than ever. The crew had works as hard as they could to produce little hats and blankets and toys from various materials of the ship, all with some crude form of the *Tiresias*’ call number on them: *TS1*. Petyr had even made a rattle, while Katz had gone for more sensible options, revealing that he had personally made the order for diapers, bottles, and even creams from the *Oblant*, which he could now reveal. Hardigan’s gift was simple: he was off cleaning duties until well after birth, not that anyone knew what was happening there or Earth and Mars’ plans.

“Think of it as your maternity leave, son. Daughter. Whatever.”

"I'll take it Captain. Thanks. Thank you all, especially you Adam. Jeez, all it took for you lot to treat me like an equal was getting knocked up by an alien artefact, I guess."

"Petyr will have to try it then," Katz said dryly. "No one respects him."

There was another general laugh, and once again, as he had to many times recently, Liam wiped away some of his tears. Several crew members placed a hand on his shoulders, comforting him.

"Thanks you guys," he said. "I - I really needed this."

He looked across the table to Adam, who just gave a nod and a knowing smile, and again Liam was hit with that feeling of closeness. Adam had been the first to comfort him properly after everything had happened, except for Katz, but that was more of a medical responsibility for the doctor. And now the scientist had organised this. He didn't know how to thank him, and he was blushing just by being in his presence.

"You're not bad, Kim," he said.

"Well, you're not bad yourself, Liam. Just try not to change too much more."

"I can't make it a promise. These damn boobs are sore as hell, and these babies are on my bladder. Give me a tic."

He stood up with Hardigan's help and waddled to the only functional gravitational toilet in the entire ship. It allowed him to sit down and pee - a necessity now. It was still a little strange to feel urine trickle from his body from a different place, but the relief was palpable. Liam winced as there was another series of kicks.

"Calm down, both of you! I can't believe I have two of you! And these tits! Are they growing again? Why do they feel weird?"

He massaged them, making them rise a little in his top and show off some cleavage. It was then that he noticed something strange. He pulled his collar out further, and this time his eyes went wide.

"No. No way. What the fuck?"

He had to pull his top off and unclasp his bra - which took some effort still - in order to confirm it. When he did, he said nothing at all. What else was there to say about this latest change? What was there to say at all?

From a point above his top right breast, a dollar-sized area of skin had changed. It had turned blue.

Part 7: The Blue Mood

Liam examined himself in the mirror. *Herself*, really. It wasn't that his mind was changing, at least beyond the estrogen and general prego hormones. It was just that there was nothing male left of him now, visibly or biologically. He looked as female as one could get, particularly holding his bloated belly, his twin babies shifting obviously about with him, his pendulous breasts resting comfortably atop the arc of his dome. In fact, he didn't just look like a woman, he looked like a rather pretty one. Hell, a startlingly attractive one, if he was being honest with himself. His face had 'finished' as far as he could tell. He'd ended up with full lips - not exaggeratedly so, but certainly matching the pinup girls that Petyr displayed on his posters - and an elegant nose. His cheekbones were high, and his cheeks soft, while his eyes now had prominent lashes as well as refined brows. His hair, which had lightened a little, fell to below his shoulders in silky waves. He looked like he could have been a model.

And that was just his face. The rest of him, pregnancy aside, was a total bombshell. Pregnancy included if you were into that sort of thing, given how well his body was carrying it. He had only the faintest stretch marks on the underside of his belly, but otherwise he looked like the very image of gorgeous fertility. His breasts were large E-cups now, and he could only hope they didn't get bigger, because it was the last bra size he'd been given by the *Oblant*. They were full and round and surprisingly pert on his chest, providing an impressive neckline of cleavage that just felt weird to have on display. With their soreness, they certainly showed promise of future milk production as well. Liam's hips were also pleasingly wide, and if not for his belly his hourglass figure would have been *stunning*. He turned to the side and examined his rear: that too had blown out recently, becoming fuller. No wonder Petyr gave him that wolf whistle the other day, and why Adam had also looked even after slapping his friend upside the ear. All blemishes on his skin were gone, and his legs were shapely. Even his ankles only had a slight swell to them.

He really was a beautiful, voluptuous pregnant woman now. It was astonishing to behold, and it ate away the vestigial remains of his male pride and made him feel more than a little self-conscious. But it was, he supposed, something he could deal with, especially since Earth and Mars psychologists were sending him what material they could to guide him through the 'acceptance' stage of his transformation.

Only now he was turning blue.

The patch was larger now, and getting bigger everyday. It now fell over part of his right boob, making it look asymmetrical. Worse, a second patch was now present on his butt, and a third on his left knee. No other changes were occurring as far as Katz or the eggheads back on planet-side could tell. It was just like his pigmentation was changing.

“Please don’t turn into an alien,” he said to himself, rubbing his belly for comfort. “I can do with being a woman. Hell, I can even deal with being a *pregnant* woman, *barely*. But this better be temporary. Please, whoever is out there, make this fucking temporary.”

Otherwise, he might have to really start thinking of himself as a *she*. And possibly as no longer human too.

The great vessel was not their only accomplishment, the signal not their only hope to discover other forms of life in this great universe. To fold space on itself and form rifts from nothing was a recent development, and one that was much celebrated despite its infancy. Now, it would be their last hope. Select members of their species were chosen, even as the invaders rampaged across the known systems, exterminating them all. The enemy couldn’t be stopped, but perhaps they could be fooled.

The process was rushed. Corners were cut. The crystal technologies needed for the process were grown quickly, and there was much danger. The invaders were closing in. There was so little time. The chosen members were gathered and informed of the process, and there was a great weeping that followed. Mothers clutched children, fathers bid farewell to sons. Families were broken up. Those many, many thousands who could not go had their genetic material sampled, so that their essences could be collected into the glyph. And when finally all goodbyes had been said, the rift was opened, and those chosen were placed into stasis within it.

They could not be awoken easily, nor retrieved. None would know of their presence once the invaders finished their work. The only suggestion would be the glyph.

The glyph was everything.

Liam mused on his dreams while quarantine was in effect. He was confined to the medical bay, with only Katz able to see him, and therefore Katz was part of the quarantine as well. The blue skin was still spreading, and now occupied nearly a third of Liam’s body, the three splotches looking like they wanted to link up. It was humiliating to experience, and also terrifying. Katz had to take many photos, including of sensitive places. It was bad enough having had his new pussy photographed constantly, but now there was this!

“Do we have to take any more?” he whined to Katz in his soft soprano voice. It sounded more elegant and princess-like than he’d intended.

“Orders are orders,” the doctor said. “The governments back home are a bit worried now. They thought they’d just get a couple of specimens to study, and you as well for a time, I imagine. Now they’re worried about contamination and alien invasion and whatnot again.”

Liam grimaced. He held his naked belly protectively. His babies writhed inside his womb. It was still such an - appropriately - alien feeling, but one that he increasingly drew strength from. The idea of governments holding his babies . . . concerned him. Even more than them holding him, in fact.

“I still don’t like it,” he said. “And I’m not talking about the photographs.”

“I know, son.”

“Daughter.”

Katz chuckled. “I suppose so! But it can’t be helped; you can’t expect Earth or Mars to risk it. They’ll probably conduct a joint program as they hold the new lives.”

“They’ll never be free. I might not either.”

Katz nodded sadly. “You might not. I won’t sugarcoat it. But hey, I’ve had patients get blue before, but never quite like this! So that’s something interesting!”

Liam rolled his eyes. “Just when I was getting a handle on it all. Now I’m nearing seven months. Jesus, how can I still have two to go? I’m huge!”

“Bigger than my wife was, and our daughters are twins. Some women just carry bigger, I suppose.”

“Lucky me.”

“Liam, if there was a list of lucky people in this universe, you’d be the furthest person from it. You’re coping remarkably well, all things considered. Have you had any more dreams?”

Liam reflected back as Katz took several more photographs of the skin patches and then passed him his medical gown. He was pleased to be dressed again, even if the outfit made him look frumpy. Maybe he was developing some strange pride in his feminine body that hated to look bad in the wrong clothing.

“I’ve had a few,” he said. “Some normal, some . . . not.”

The range of ‘not’ was quite diverse, and he wasn’t planning on sharing those anytime soon. For one, he’d had more than a few dreams involving a shirtless Adam recently, and it had left him waking up with quite the strong arousal, and a distinctly new wetness between his thighs. He’d managed to resist stimulating anything there . . . it was just too foreign at the moment. But those weren’t the dreams Katz was interested in, thankfully.

“I had one about the aliens again. The people that made the crystal. They called it a glyph. It was important. They were being wiped out.”

“You told me. Anything new?”

“Yeah, they hid themselves in a dimension rift or something. A few thousand of them. Or a few hundred. Or maybe way more. I don’t know, it’s easy to forget the dreams. There’s this weird flash of symbols and shit at the end that I don’t really understand.”

“Maybe it’s trying to tell you something? It’s obvious that you’re learning about the history of this species. It could well be that your womb contains the very last members of them.”

Liam mused on this, stroking his belly button idly. “Maybe. In that case . . . it’s cruel to think they’ll just be studied in a facility somewhere.”

“Getting attached to your young ones, Liam?”

Liam blushed and looked away. “Of course I am. I didn’t think I would, but I *grew* them, damn it. I’m still growing them. They move around in me and they’re *alive*. When I’m upset, they get upset. When I’m happy, they kick and get excited. They’re my babies, Doc. I don’t want them to have a life like that.”

Katz smiled and placed a hand on Liam’s soft shoulder. “That’s what makes you a good mother, Liam. I know it probably isn’t the compliment you want, but-”

“No, I don’t mind it,” he said. “I don’t really think of myself as female yet, but I *do* think of myself as their mother. Is that weird?”

“Only as weird as everything else, *daughter*. I’ll do my best to get quarantine lifted, as soon as we can determine there’s no risk. You just keep growing those little miracles.”

Liam nodded. They *were* little miracles, even if they’d made his life a living hell in so many ways. How was it possible to hate something so much but also feel such intense love for the lives that were now part of it? He would snap himself back to maleness in a second if he could, but at the same time he would resign himself to womanhood forever if it would keep his babies safe.

“Stupid hormones,” he muttered to himself as the doctor gave him some privacy. “And stupid blue skin too. Are you both going to be blue as well?”

Quarantine was not lifted, but the crew sent lots of messages of support, even the gruff captain. Petyr made a video call and thought it would be hilarious to ‘rank’ Liam against the other women on his pinup posters. He came out quite favourably, and Liam couldn’t even take offence to it. He *was* quite the looker now, and Petyr was Petyr. The Captain kept him updated on a list of engineering duties they needed his advice for, which he was more than happy to give. He also gave him an update on their progress to Mars. They were only twenty or so days out now, which Liam had guessed since he had crossed the seventh month mark several days ago. Their progress to Olympus had been slightly halted due to the

pigmentation change and new quarantine, but after some concern from planet-side, they had re-engaged their flight path. It was good to hear the Captain treat everything matter-of-factly and not even enquire into his blueness.

But Liam got the most calm talking to Adam, who was the one that messaged him the most, as well as videocalled. Of all the crewmembers since the change started, Adam had been the one to most clearly become his friend, and had done more than anyone to make him feel more normal about his transformation.

“How are you holding up?” he asked.

“Oh, you know. I’m a woman. I’m pregnant. I’m turning maybe into a blue alien. The usual.”

Adam chuckled. “I swear, this wasn’t one of my pranks. Even I couldn’t pull this off.”

Liam gave an attractive little giggle. “I don’t doubt you somehow could, but yeah, this one’s definitely on the aliens, that’s for sure.”

“No tentacles yet, though?”

“God, I fucking hope not.”

“No extra boobs? That’s Petyr’s question, by the way.”

“Tell him to fuck off.”

Adam chuckled on the vid-screen. He turned to the side and shouted down the hall.

“Hey Petyr, Liam says to fuck right off!”

“So no extra tits then? Damn!”

The pair shared an incredulous laugh over their endlessly horny friend.

“These ones are big enough already, I think,” Liam mused, holding them in his soft hands. On the screen, Adam went red and looked away. “Oh, sorry. I didn’t mean-”

“No, it’s okay. It’s just . . . you are very much a woman now. It’s odd to see you in, uh, *that way.*”

“Yeah, I can imagine. I don’t want things to be awkward between us. I’ve . . . really appreciated you lately. Like, having you on my side and helping out and everything. The baby shower and all that. The calls.”

Adam shrugged. “What can I say? I see a damsel in distress-”

“Fuck off.”

He laughed. “But seriously, I can’t imagine what you’re going through. You’re a member of this crew, Liam. We all care about you.”

“Everyone except Rotar. He probably wants to carve me up and send bits of me back to Earth and Mars in jars.”

Adam frowned. “He has been pretty secretive lately. We don’t really work together much. He works on the element with me, but only briefly and to get his own notes to compare with mine. He doesn’t like that I talk to you. He says I should stop.”

Liam felt a lurch in his heart. His babies shifted about, kicking annoyingly back towards his spine, which always felt weird. They sensed his agitation.

"Please don't! I don't want to be lonely. I know it sounds pathetic and all, but you're the one I like talking to the most."

Adam smirked. "Oh, is it my hair, or just my natural male charm?"

"The hair, obviously," he said, giggling in a more girlish way than usual.

"Well, I do put a lot of effort into it. Don't worry, I won't be ceasing calls anytime soon. I like chatting with you too, even if you hate my love of rocks."

"Because they're boring."

"Nothing boring about geology!"

"It could bore my big tits off. I'm pretty sure you lulled my little ones to sleep talking about it the other day."

"Er, that was . . . intentional. Yeah, let's go with that. But I've got the hair at least, right?"

Liam giggled again, and this time he *felt* like a girl, staring at Adam's face through the screen. "It is *very* nice hair."

"I knew the ladies dug it. Ah, but I forget, much to Petyr's upset, you're our resident lesbian now. A cruel torment to our blonde-haired friend."

Liam spoke without thinking. Whether it was the hormones, the sense of trust between them, or just stupidity, he didn't know.

"Actually, this damn change has me attracted to dudes now. It sucks! Seriously, the *dreams* I get alone are making my hormones light up like a damn Christmas tree."

Adam's eyebrows raised. "Oh. Really? I - I had no idea! I didn't mean - wait, are you serious?"

Liam blushed deep red. He panicked, and ended the call.

"You fucking moron," he said to himself. "Now he *definitely* knows you weren't kidding. God . . ."

He lay back, and once more those very hormones lit up. There was something about Adam's presence, his manliness, his confidence and charm. And, admittedly, that square jawline and fine hair. It was enough to make his vaginal passage moisten with arousal. This time, already flush with humiliation, Liam lost all care.

"Fuck it," he said to himself. He lowered a hand down and slipped it beneath his trousers, while using his other to slip up his shirt and begin fondling his large breasts. The sensations were divine, and even more so when he found his clitoris and began to rub it in just the right way.

"Ohhhhh, that f-feels good. God, why did I wait so f-fucking long for this. That's one s-sensitive p-pussy. Ahhhh . . ."

He began to pleasure himself. Pleasure *herself*. When she finally came, it was hard not to moan out in a high, sweet voice. She was picturing Adam naked, his cock large and hard, ready to plunge into her womanhood.

“Ohhhh, f-fuck!” she cried, quivering as several orgasms rolled through her pregnant body. It was enough to briefly still her babies within her. “Ohhhh, Adam . . .”

It was only afterwards, as the glow of post-coital bliss slowly faded, that she lost that sense of womanhood. *He* took stock of what he'd done.

“God damn it. No one is knowing about this.”

The glyph was the key. It carried the memories of their civilisation, the inner light of who they were and what they had lost. But it also carried their genetic codes. When discovered in the far flung future, it would allow a member of the discovering aliens to gestate a copy of their species, and in doing so gain the key to unlock the rift. It was a small chance, so slight as to be infinitesimal, but it was the only way.

If the invaders were finally defeated by some other force, or felled by some other means, or simply left their space, then the glyph would activate. It might take eons for someone to discover it, but if they did, and they were of a compatible biology for the gestational change, then they could be saved and reborn, literally.

The Aesera could be saved.

They will be saved.

They will be saved by you, Liam. But only if you get to safety. You carry within you the future of our civilisation, but all is threatened if you do not get away from those who would harm it and lock it away for study. Now wake up. The threat is nearer than you think.

Liam woke on his bed, still in quarantine. His babies were sleeping within his heavy belly, so big now that resting on his side was the only option. He blinked a few times in the near-darkness, shocked at the dream he'd just experienced.

“Aesera,” he mumbled. “They were called Aesera.”

And they had spoken *to him*. Not just giving him dreams, but literally conveyed some sort of message, somehow. Not just a message, but a *warning*. Something was nearby, threatening him. He got out of the bed with some effort, his huge twin pregnancy making movement difficult here in the centri-grav. His heart beat rapidly in his chest as he looked

around. The door lit up green, indicating someone's entry. He had to tell Katz what he'd just dreamed. He was an ally; he'd know what to do.

But then the door opened, and it wasn't Katz standing there at all, but the portly and threatening figure of Abel Rotar, wrapped in a protective hazmat suit. He had a needle in his hand, one that was filled with liquid, and a metal rod in the other.

"Hello, alien," he said, menacingly. He stepped inside, and the door shuttered behind him. "We have some business to discuss."

Liam stepped back against the wall. A sense of extreme vulnerability hit him all at once. He was wearing nothing more than his panties and a maternity bra. He didn't need the latter just yet, but his nipples were so sensitive that regular bras chafed. Otherwise, he was completely naked, his patches of blue skin clearly on display.

"Rotar, what the hell are you doing here? Where is Katz?"

"Katz is dealing with his own distraction right now," Rotar said, taking another step forward. "And I have my own orders."

"Orders? What the fuck are you talking about? Don't you dare take another step towards us!"

Rotar sneered behind the clear plastic of the mask. "Us? *Us*? My, getting pretty attached to those little alien parasites already, aren't we?"

Liam reached behind him to a shelf, trying to grab something to protect himself. To protect *his children*. His maternal instincts were flaring up, desperate to do anything to keep the contents of his womb safe.

"They're my babies," he said. "I'm their fucking *mommy*. Don't take take another step, Rotar. What orders are you talking about?"

Rotar stopped just for a moment. "From the Earth-Mars Joint Committee, Liam. They're worried. They have good reason to be. I've managed to convince them that dead specimens will be more useful than live ones. Don't worry, you'll live, but you'll be under sedation until we land. We'll learn what we can from the alien tissue when we can."

"You wouldn't fucking dare. They're innocent, you bastard!"

"They present a threat. Viruses alone, not to mention these dreams you've been having. Yes, I've been granted backdoor access to Katz's logs. You're a security threat, Liam, and those so-called 'babies' are a risk to all of humanity. Now stay still. This will only take a moment. I promise you won't feel a thing."

Liam opened a shelf and grabbed something weighty. Time had slowed as the other man advanced. Pregnant as Liam was, weak as his muscles were in his new womanhood, and as scared as he was, his motherly instincts roared in him like a lioness.

"You won't fucking hurt them!" *she* roared.

Rotar lunged forward, needle in his hand.

Part 8: The Turnabout

Liam screamed. Actually *screamed* as the knife came straight towards him. He had one hand on his enormous seven-month pregnant belly, but the other shot out to intercept the needle. It pressed into his hand, the fluid injecting, and all at once Liam recognised the mistake he'd made. He leapt against the traitorous Rotar, still screaming like a wailing beast from some dread pit, his long hair whipping about as he did so. He didn't have strength against this man, nor even manoeuvrability, given the twins in his belly. What he did have was youth, and anger, and the vast reserves of mama bear protective instinct that were coursing through his veins like adrenaline.

"YOU. WILL. NOT. TOUCH. THEM!" he cried at the top of his shrill voice, pounding away at Rotar and knocking off his glasses. He clearly hadn't expected such a violent response, because he stumbled backwards against the wall, cracking his head against the sealed door. He slumped down, and Liam took the time to pluck the needle from his half-blue hand. Only half the sedative was in him, but it would be enough to make him go unconscious soon. In fact, he was already feeling woozy, and his babies starting to kick less and less as it entered their blood systems as well.

"F-fuck you, Rotar," he spat, and he plunged the needle into the mumbling man's arm.

"No!" he gasped. "You can't! I'm just trying to protect humanity!"

But he was clearly faint from the knock on his head, and he slipped under before Liam did. It gave him enough time to scramble against the door. It was locked, and the seal wouldn't even let Katz in. He came up with the idea of grabbing Rotar's security card just as the world began to blur around him. He waved it in front of the sensor, trying to position Rotar for an eyescan, but everything was so difficult, and the world was so bright and dark at the same time. He barely managed to catch himself from falling, and instead sagged to the ground beside Rotar, hugging his belly.

"You c-can't hurt my b-babies," he muttered. "They are Aesera. They are special. They're the k-key to something. I won't l-let you make this change . . . be in . . . vain . . ."

And with that, he fell unconscious. He feared that Abel Rotar would wake first, and his efforts to resist would all be for nought. But there was nothing but fearful dreams to await him for now.

The glyph will make the key in the form of you, Liam. You touched the glyph, and by sheer miracle too. For so long it has lain dormant, covered over by geologic change. The invaders retreated, having slain our civilisation, and destroyed the Aesera completely. Or so they thought. Now you have been blessed with two of our kind. I know you did not ask for this, nor to become a mother. Would it be possible, I would have changed a female of your species, but none came to us, and I could not risk that another might never come.

Yes, Liam, I am the glyph. The living intelligence that waited dormant for so long. I am infused with much of the knowledge of the Aeseran people, and I alone contain the coordinates of the hidden rift that may return them. The invaders are gone. Their civilisation rose to such heights that my scanning powers felt them ever present. I feared all would be lost for good. But even the mightiest empires fall, turning inwards upon themselves and making enemies of those they should not have.

But still I cannot bring back my makers. Only those with Aeseran DNA can do so, and it was imperative that I, as an artificial intelligence, not have that power, lest my protocols be overridden. This is why you must reach the coordinates.

You must save the Aesera, Liam.

You must be the saviour of their people.

Of your people. For you are now the mother of their species' rebirth.

Find the coordinates and reach them, and keep your children safe.

Liam woke. The message in his mind was clear, as was the knowledge of the coordinates. It had sunk into his mind, and could not be dislodged. This was what his entire transformation and pregnancy had been about; a way to save the Aeseran species, with his own body and children as the key. But as staggering as that revelation was, and the knowledge of the history of Aeseran civilisation that flowed through him, his mind immediately leapt to other concerns.

"Rotar!" he exclaimed. He sat up as quickly as he could. He was in the medical wing still, back on the bed, though he was not strapped down at least. The light above was fairly bright, as if he'd been medically evaluated.

"Oh God," he groaned, shifting again to place a hand on his large pregnant belly. "Please no. Please no, no, no."

He could feel the weight of his twin babies within him, but they were not moving. They could just be asleep, but darker thoughts swirled in the formerly-male mother's mind. He took to poking his belly as he got to his feet, his own heart pounding in terror. It was

enough to jolt the children awake, the adrenaline in his body passing on to them. They stirred within his womb, and while they were a little agitated, it calmed him somewhat.

“Okay, now just got to get out of here.”

There was no sign of Rotar. No sign of anyone, in fact. He grabbed a larger medical device from the nearby shelf; the speculum that carried a metallic weight to it. He’d been subjected to it many times under the care of Dr Katz. Now it was going to be used on someone else, for he could hear someone outside the hatch descending the ladder and coming to the room. Liam readied the speculum, heart still beating like a jackhammer, and swung as the individual opened the door.

Adam Kim let out a painful ‘OW!’ as he was knocked backwards into Dr Katz and Leo Hardigan.

“Oh my God, Adam, I’m so sorry!”

He dropped the speculum on the ground.

“Christ, what was that for?”

“I thought - thought you might be-”

It was the Captain that interrupted. Hardigan stepped through and held up a hand. “Abel Rotar is being held in the brig.”

“We don’t have a brig.”

“Well, a makeshift brig. We confiscated his scientific equipment and converted his private quarters to his cell. Don’t worry Liam, he’s no harm to you anymore.”

Liam had to hold onto the side of the bed to avoid tipping over from the relief. His babies calmed instantly, sensing his mood. He placed a hand on his belly to caress it, and noticed that it was almost entirely blue now. He was becoming, if not Aeseran, then half-Aeseran.

“How did you know?” he asked. “Rotar said he’d organised a distraction.”

Leo Hardigan huffed, the Captain clearly embarrassed by recent events. “Rotar managed some sort of override. Not sure how he did it, but it locked us all away, including Samwell here. Petyr caught wind of it and tried to stop him, and got a nasty burn from a surgical laser as thanks - don’t worry, he’s fine now.”

“I saw to that,” Katz said. He was already positioning Liam back on the bed and running some blood pressure tests among other things. “He’s guarding Rotar now. He thinks the scar will catch him plenty of ladies, the mad dog.”

Liam chuckled. “But then how did you get free? I managed to knock Rotar out, but he got me as well.”

The Captain gestured to Adam Kim. “It was our other scientist who helped save the day, though you share plenty of credit. Rotar had a monitor on all our doors, so him being

knocked out was the only reason Adam was able to jury rig it. It seems you being pregnant and having to pass on some of your engineering knowledge to the rest of us paid off, Liam.”

Liam let out a deep breath of cathartic relief. “And so you found me here?”

“He was quite worried,” Katz said.

“I was not!” Adam replied, but there was a deep blush on his cheeks, and Liam strangely found that it made him blush as well. The stupid female hormones were acting up again, making him appreciate Adam’s manly form. There was something about being rescued by a strong protector that was setting off his arousal something fierce. He tried to ignore it.

“Thank you,” he simply said, wiping away several tears. “And my babies? Are they going to be alright?”

Katz put away his equipment and placed a hand on Liam’s shoulder. “They’re going to be just fine. We’re still on course to land on Olympus once everything is approved, and you should be able to safely deliver then.”

Liam shook his head, remembering everything Rotar had told him.

“No,” he said emphatically, cradling his large bump. “I won’t. There’s some things I need to tell you, about what Rotar, Earth, and Mars are all planning.”

It took time for Liam to pass on everything Rotar had said, and more time for Petyr and the Captain to dig up the ship logs, while Adam hacked Rotar’s personal computer and messages. Katz took the medical side of things, viewing what had been passed onto Rotar with what the results would be for Liam. A dark cloud hung over the crew as the full weight of the situation dawned on them. When their findings were all put together in the break room, no one quite knew what to say. Petyr, oddly, summed it up nicely.

“Fuck.”

“Agreed,” the Captain said. “This is a fucking mess, if you’ll excuse my informality this one time.”

“If there was ever a time to be informal,” Adam said, “this is it. I can’t believe they’re going to cut up Liam’s babies. Put him under and study him. Perhaps for the rest of his life.”

“They’re not cutting up my babies,” Liam said emphatically. He’d changed, and once more was wearing the female-issue uniform, albeit one that was several sizes larger to accommodate his belly. Amusingly, his breasts had also grown large enough for it to be tight around the chest. He wished he had the support pants he’d seen some pregnant women wear, but right now discomfort was the least of his concerns.

“Of course not,” Adam said. “We can’t let that happen, right?”

There was a protracted silence. The orders to Rotar had been secret, but they had also been official. Which meant that both the Earth and Mars governments were on board with this. Liam had explained his full purpose and the nature of his dreams to the crew, and none of them seemed to disbelieve him, especially since his ears were becoming more elven, and his hair more pale white. But even with the enormous responsibility of his missions, and his own life and those of his babies at stake, going against the Earth and Mars governments could well mean life in prison. Some, like Dr Katz, had families to get to. A chill ran down Liam's spine as he realised that his very future depended on the four men around him. Surprisingly, it was Petyr that broke the tension, taking a sip from his alcoholic bulb.

"Adam, you are an idiot."

"What?"

Petyr shrugged. "Why even ask the question? You know I cannot resist the call to do right by a beautiful woman, especially one who is a true comrade."

Liam swallowed, and he tried not to tear up. "Th-thank you, Petyr."

"Don't thank me, thank that wonderful bosom of yours."

"You just had to ruin it, didn't you?" Liam said, but he chuckled all the same.

"I swore I would uphold an oath to do no harm," Dr Katz said. "I never imagined it might come at such a cost. But children are precious. My family will understand, if I can get a message to them."

"Thank you doctor," Liam said, tears now flowing a lot more freely.

All eyes turned to the Captain. It would be Hardigan's decision, they knew. He seemed to be mulling over all the possibilities.

"No," he finally said. "We can't just turn on Earth and Mars. We'll be hunted. It would be a fool's errand. And if the coordinates you speak of are past Ganymede, we'll never make it."

"You can't mean that," Adam said, standing suddenly. "She - he - whatever, is innocent in this! Not to mention the babies! And an entire civilisation hangs in the balance on this!"

Liam shut his eyes. Plans whirred in his head. Mutiny? Begging? A spacer's asylum on some rocky asteroid base? What could he possibly do?

"Which is why we do this smart," the Captain said, holding up a hand for others to listen. "Adam, I need you to fog up the engine. Not enough to get us killed but enough to send some worrying signals. Liam, you'll need to assist as much as you can. Direct him if necessary. Dr Katz, you and I will gather up as much scrap material as possible. Petyr, you'll plot us a course to the coordinates, but I also need you to use that charm of yours to forge some new logs. Make it obvious that there was a struggle between us over what to do. Some of us took Rotar's side. A conflict ensued, and in the end the *Tiresias* was destroyed."

The crew was agape. Hardigan gave a cold grin.

“There was just one survivor on board an escape pod: Rotar himself. I’m sure we can make the act convincing enough to give us one very large head start. Space investigations like this take months to conclude.”

Another long protracted silence, and Hardigan clapped his hands.

“What are you waiting for? We need to get to work people!”

Whether the ruse would work or not remained a terrifying ambiguity. Liam couldn’t have been prouder of his crew. The ones that had once belittled and stirred him up about being the baby of the group were now doing everything, risking everything, for him and his actual babies. The course was charted to the coordinates beyond Ganymede, a patch of empty space that *must* be where the rift was secretly located. Meanwhile, Adam forged logs with the help of the rest of them, communicating with Olympus Base about delays in dealing with Liam and that Rotar’s mission had become public knowledge among them. So when Adam got to Rotar and released him from his cell, the older scientist was shocked to find the alarms blaring red and warnings all over the ship about containment breaches. Liam watched the whole thing later, and it was amusing how good of an actor Adam was.

“Abel, we need to get out of here!”

“You traitor! You put the whole human race at risk, what in damnation is going on!?”

“I know that now. Liam, he’s infected the crew! They’re going mad. Look, half the interior’s being torn up!”

Abel had gasped at the interior panelling they had removed rather carefully.

“We need to stop it! We need to put it down, and its spawn!”

“I’m already on it. The detonation sequence has started. We need to get to the pods. I’m sorry I ever doubted you!”

The pair had moved quickly to the pods, and with expert stunt skills - if not acting skills - Petyr had leapt out to grab Adam just as Rotar entered the pod. He even had some blue on his skin to heighten Rotar’s terror, courtesy of the blueberry ration packs.

“Rotar! H-help! Don’t I-leave me! Get him off me!”

They’d all banked on Rotar being a traitorous coward, and he had been sadly predictable. He slammed the door shut and sealed it, starting the ejection sequence. Adam put on an Oscar and Bentley-award winning performance as he grasped at the pod, but then he was pulled back by Petyr, and the interior hatch shut. It was just in time too; even they hadn’t considered that Rotar would be desperate enough to override the startup procedure on the ejection sequence and launch right away. It was a good thing in the end; his pod

would emit an emergency signal and there were plenty of rations for him to subsist off, but he hadn't input a course for the Martian surface. The authorities would have to waste extra days tracking down his pod just to get the story.

When it was done, the next phase of the plan went into action. A remote detonation sequence was activated with a cluster of ship parts gathered around it. The interior of the *Aesera* looked only half built now, though it was still safe unless one cracked a head on a beam, which Petyr did more than once. By the time of the explosion, the *Tiresias* was already forging a flight path to the coordinates, all systems dark for as long as they could reasonably manage in order to mask their trail. Even if Earth and Mars figured out what they were up to, they wouldn't know where they were exactly going, and they would have a good head start.

The crew had done their part, and sacrificed greatly for Liam. Now everything rested on the future mother. He was very aware that he would be giving birth before the trip was even halfway completed.

Part 9: The Alien Labors

The two months of travel after the staging of the *Tiresias*' destruction were filled with a strange mix of palpable tension and continual boredom. It seemed that, for now, the investigation of the 'tragedy of the *Tiresias*' had concluded in its destruction, with even Rotar giving interviews on the subject (albeit the existence of alien features in the story were obviously censored entirely). Which was not to say that the governments might not have their suspicions; the further they got out into the Solar System, the longer it would take news to travel. So instead the crew simply focused on allocating their supplies sensibly, maintaining the ship's function, and doing their best to take care of one another and the ticking time bomb that was Liam.

Adam was the one to check in on the former male most often, and their conversations became increasingly in-depth and off-topic, to the point where Liam found herself wishing for his company more and more. Beyond his mischievous sense of humour, the man had a real passion for rocks that made Liam chuckle with disbelief.

"How can anyone possibly find rocks that interesting?" she asked him at the eighth month mark. By this point, she was starting to think of herself as a woman more and more, particularly since she had startled to waddle when under the centrifugal grav. Her belly had dropped a little, though it was still growing, the kicks now entirely visible to all, much to Petyr's amusement."

“Please, rocks are more interesting than people, once you get to know them,” Adam replied. “They tell a whole history unto themselves, and their compositions can determine the future of an entire region. Plus, they look rather nice on a shelf if you find some good samples. And they don’t try to sedate you and lock you onboard a ship.”

“Ah, not wrong there, I suppose.”

The two shared a laugh, and Liam was interrupted by a series of kicks along her belly. She grunted.

“Must be pretty incredible,” Adam remarked, looking curiously at the little tentpole movements of the babies. “Being pregnant, I mean. Not many guys get to say they’ve gone through that.”

“Not so - ugh! - incredible from the other side, you know,” Liam grunted.

“Oh?”

Liam gestured at his belly. “I don’t have stomach muscles. I struggle to get up after sitting down. Sleep is dependent entirely on these little gremlins kicking away, and my boobs have started to leak.”

“Don’t tell Petyr, he’ll make some awful joke. They are nice boobs though, at least. Very, uh, pert.”

Liam snorted. “You are such an asshole.”

“I’m not joking. I’m just remarking that if you were going to become a woman, at least you became a very lovely looking one.”

It made her feel a bit warm to be described as lovely. In truth, while her large E-cup breasts felt far too big, she occasionally felt a source of pride when Adam looked at her cleavage or their outline in her tops the way he did. Sure, they were bouncy and jiggling and annoying in zero-grav, but they also weren’t exactly *not* fun to play with, in private.

“Well, I won’t look so lovely soon. You know, becoming a frickin’ alien and all. Just my luck.”

“Please, you’re just turning blue.”

“And my hair is turning white! And I’m getting elf ears!”

“The elf ears are a little bit adorable, I won’t lie about that one. Besides, it’s not a bad look. I meant what I said. You’re not exactly growing antennae or a big alien butt or something.”

Again, Liam snorted. “Please, I already have a big alien butt. Well, a bit blue one at least. Seriously, look at this thing. Even since I hit thirty weeks along I swear I’ve blown up like crazy.”

She stood and gestured to her ass, and Adam found himself staring. He swallowed quite obviously, taken aback by what Liam was doing.

“Um, I don’t even know what to say. That is certainly one impressive behind, Liam. Very . . . pronounced.”

“Like a hippo’s ass.”

“Well, let’s be honest here, it’s a perfectly delectable derriere, just for a woman. It’s just that you don’t think of yourself as a woman.”

Liam sat back down, breasts bobbing. “That’s just the thing, Adam. I sort of do now. How can I not? I’m really fucking pregnant with full-on twins. I’ve got tits that are now making milk. My voice sounds like I’m some sort of fae elf lady, and I get these dumb dreams-”

“Dumb dreams? You mean, other than the Aesera ones? What are they about?”

“Nothing. Damn, the babies are hungry again.”

Adam grinned, sensing weakness. “Oh no, you’re not getting away that easily. Besides, I’ve got rations right here, so there’s no need to start escaping. What dreams?”

She blushed. It was more obviously against her blue skin these days. “Goddamn it, this is so fucking embarrassing. Only Katz knows about this, and he’s sworn to secrecy under his oath. You do *not* get to tell Petyr this, under pain of *fucking death*, do you hear me?”

“Cross my heart and hope to see Petyr die.”

“Good enough,” she replied. She lay back against the wall of the living space, trying to find the words that wouldn’t humiliate her too deeply. She wasn’t even sure why she was telling Adam this, only that it seemed . . . right, somehow. She could confide in him things that were difficult to tell others. He had, after all, been so kind to her when the changes were continuing, and ever since.

“Okay, this is gonna be really damn embarrassing. Shit. I don’t know why I’m telling you this, but the changes are more than physical. Especially lately.”

“You mean like the Aesera dreams? Or how you obviously have quite the maternal instinct from how you keep worrying about your babies.”

She smirked faintly as she rubbed her stomach. She was big as a house and annoyed by it, but it was also a good sign lately; it meant her children were growing well.

“Well, there’s that. But let’s just say that I’ve also become a girl in other ways, I guess.”

Adam chuckled. “Yeah, like you’re into dudes now, I bet.”

There was a protracted pause, and in allowing the silence to foster, Liam realised she’d given the game away. Adam’s eyes widened.

“No, wait, really? *Those* kind of dreams?”

Liam bit her lip and nodded. “I can’t help it! It’s the fucking transformation and gender change. It’s got my hormones all twisted about and now my body is into dudes. Don’t make it all weird.”

“Hey, does this mean you look at Petyr and-”

“Nope, no fucking way.”

“Or the Captain? Into older men?”

“Fuck you. As if!”

“Hey, what about me? I work out.”

Liam swallowed. “You . . . don’t look too bad.”

Her response made Adam exhale in surprise. “Well, I’ll take it. Just don’t have any dreams about me. They’d never live up to the real deal.”

“Aaaaand you’re back to being an ass again,” Liam said. “And now I really need to pee. Yes, that’s both true and my excuse to get out of this damn conversation.”

“Well, I’m glad to learn this valuable information today Liam. And since you’re clearly checking me out, I’ll make sure to get a look at that big swaying ass of yours as you head up the ladder.”

“Haha, fuck you.”

But weirdly, Liam didn’t feel as embarrassed as she thought she would. In some ways, it had actually been quite cathartic to admit it to her friend. Of course, ‘friend’ was a difficult category to nail down, when you’d started having sex dreams about them. *That* was something she didn’t tell Adam.

From that day, the man spent even more time with her, even as her body changed more and more. Her pregnancy was nearing its completion as their voyage continued, and the whole crew was on alert on how to help her, just as Dr Katz was giving her every test under the stars in preparation. But beyond the increasing roundness and heaviness of her body, and the bloating in her now-familiar breasts, her own alien transformation was reaching its end as well. She was officially completely blue at thirty six weeks pregnant, something the rest of the crew found rather fascinating and occasionally humorous. Adam called it ‘beautiful’ more than once, and oddly she actually felt a little pretty sometimes; an elven alien with gorgeous blue skin and pointed ears, with silken white hair that fell to the small of her back. Even her face had become a little more elongated, her features more willowy.

“At least we have a hot alien on board,” Petyr said at one point, “though annoying that I couldn’t be the one to get her pregnant. No offence, Liam.”

“Offence taken,” she said in the breakroom, flinging a ration pack at him. “God, I wish at least one other person here was turned into a bloody pregnant woman, just so Petyr could stop staring at my damn boobs. Hell, I wish he’d been the one to be turned.”

“Alas, I am too manly for that, comrade!”

“I’ll concoct all sorts of revenges upon you when I’m lying on my back pushing these babies out, Petyr. Just you wait.”

“A woman scorned?”

Liam grinned. “Exactly. An *alien* woman scorned, to be specific.”

“I’d watch out, Petyr,” Hardigan said dryly, “our Liam may develop laser vision.”

“I can neither confirm nor deny this development,” Katz replied with an equally dry smirk. “Adam may be able to though. He spends the most time with our Liam.”

Adam coughed. “Well, it’s not that much time.”

“I’d rather think you were lovebirds,” Petyr teased. “Adam and Liam. Hmm, not exactly Adam and Eve, is it? Rebirthing a new race, but lacks a certain punch. Plus, ‘Liam’ just doesn’t fit anymore.”

“Actually,” Liam said, sitting up a little more straight and brushing some of her silky white hair behind her ears, “I’ve been thinking about taking on a new name.”

Katz leaned forward. “You don’t have to do that, Liam.”

“There’s certainly no pressure from my end,” the Captain added. “It’s extra work to change the designations anyway. But if you feel it’s important-”

“It is,” she said, a little nervously. “Look, we can all see I’m a woman. I’m pregnant. I’m bloody blue. I’m still me, but I’m not the man I was, and Liam just doesn’t sound right to my ears anymore.”

“And what ears they are!” joked Petyr. “They get their own reception!”

This time Adam flung a ration pack at him, hitting the cad square in the face. He then turned to face Liam, and in his expression she found a sincere interest in what she had to say. “What name are you thinking of taking?”

“Well, I know this sounds strange, but I keep dreaming of the Aeseran civilisation. They had some very, uh, neat names. Beautiful ones, I guess. I don’t know if it’s the hormones or the change or whatever, but one seemed to fit me. At least I think it did. I don’t know, maybe I’m just-”

The Captain coughed. “Engineer? I order you to hurry up and spit it out.”

“Luniara,” she said, blushing a little. “It means ‘future hope’ in Aeseran. “I thought it was fitting.”

“It’s beautiful,” Adam remarked, before taking a bite from his ration.

She melted a little before his gaze.

“And hot,” Petyr said.

This time the Captain threw a ration. Even Dr Katz joined in on the fun.

You are so near, Luniara. The coordinates are not far off. Just a few months to go, and you will be there. You have done well. I am glad I have chosen you, and I hope that you are not too dismayed that your changes are permanent. You will be the one to bring back my maker's race, and they shall never forget your sacrifice, nor that of your crew. But there is a future beyond that as well.

If you wish to take it.

By the time Liam went into labor, he was almost grateful. *She* was almost grateful, would be a better way to put it. Just as with her talks with her crew, she had fully accepted her femaleness. At a week past due her nine months of pregnancy, it was impossible to hold onto any sense of being otherwise, especially now that her colostrum was starting to leak from her breasts. Her hair was past her shoulders, and her maternal instincts and sense of impending motherhood were stronger than ever. But more than even that, her transformation into a being that was no longer fully human made the prospect of crossing the gender divide completely somehow more palatable.

Of course, hers was not the only struggle on the ship. For all his jokes, it was clear that Petyr was going a little mad from lack of human contact - especially female contact. She'd accidentally floated in on him masturbating in zero-g at one point, and from his grunts it was clear he was masturbating to *her*. It had been less shocking than she would have thought. She was very pretty after all, and even fully pregnant had a great figure. Most of all, she was the only woman on the ship; the only woman poor Petyr would see for an entire year. Likewise, the Captain was a hard man and a pragmatic one, but it was clear he was privately mourning a career he loved and regularity of contact with Olympus that marked his calendar.

But the true sufferer was Samwell Katz. The man had never been a stone, but neither had he been an open book. In fact, Luniara hadn't even known he had a wife and two daughters until her own transformation. And now that they had faked their deaths and set course back beyond the Mars Belt, she had come to realise how much he had given up. Naturally, Katz was adamant that he would see his family again, but for now they were mourning him, and he was afraid he might not see them again. In a strange reversal from how they had begun, it was now Luniara who was comforting the doctor, placing her ethereally blue hand upon his shoulder and doing her best to comfort him. He appreciated it, but only because she didn't lay it on too thick. It was funny, but just by touch alone the former human man could sense his moods and thoughts.

“Her name is Julia,” she murmured.

Katz turned, surprised. “How did you know that?”

“Your eldest. The firstborn, I mean. I don’t know, I could just . . . sense it, I guess. Through skin contact. The other day I accidentally brushed Petyr’s arm and it was . . . awkward, what he was thinking about.”

“By God, you truly are picking up some strange talents. Yes, I miss her deeply. So very deeply, Liam. Luniara. I miss all of them. I just wish there was a way I could-”

“Nghh!”

Luniana’s grip on the doctor’s shoulder tightened, and she grit her teeth. Fluid leaked from between her thighs, soaking her underwear and drenching her pants. It was a good thing she was in centri-grav, or else it could have been disastrous. But the implications of what had just happened to her were deeply alarming. She’d spent every day expecting it, dreading it, and now it was finally here.

“Ohhhhh, s-sorry doc, I don’t m-mean to interrupt, but I th-think - ahhh! - I think my water just broke. I think I just had a damn c-contraction.”

The doctor put on his glasses and was suddenly completely professional again. “Well, you’re in the right place, young miss. Let’s get you checked out, and I’ll inform the crew. Let’s hope it’s not a long labor.”

She nodded, breathing heavily as the strange pressure in her belly continued, tight as hell.

“F-fuck. I never thought this would happen! I’m going to give fucking birth.”

The doc smiled softly. “To twins, no less.”

Don’t - ahhh - remind me!”

Luniara howled as yet another contraction rolled through her. Sweat poured over her alien blue skin, and her breasts felt utterly tender, as if ready to release a torrent of milk once her little ones were born. She had been in labor for twelve hours, and Dr Katz was keeping her updated on her contractions, which were getting closer and closer together as she became more dilated.

“You’re doing great!” he said. “Perhaps another centimetre or two and you’ll be fully dilated, I’d guess. The babies certainly want out!”

She grunted, groaning heavily as she was forced to ride out another contraction. All acceptance of being a woman had momentarily fled from her. She wanted to be Liam again. Human again. Male again. Anything to avoid the pangs of labor and the horrifying reality that soon she would be pushing actual babies out of her vagina.

The crew, she knew, were not far outside the medical bay. It had been a slow day - they all were now - and despite how long she'd been putting up with contractions already, no one wanted to miss out on being able to say they were there for the birth of an entirely new species. Every so often, Hardigan entered through the hatch to check on how things were proceeding. He did so at that very moment.

"How are things going with our Liam? I mean, our Luniara?"

"Things are - nnggh! - failing to proceed at all!" she cried. "Damn this! Ohhhh, damn this so fucking hard! Why did this have to h-happen to m-me! Ohhhhhh . . ."

The Captain gave a sympathetic grin. "Is she closer?"

"Getting there," the Doc replied. "Nearly ready to push. I keep telling her that half the human race have had to put up with this since the dawn of time."

"Oh yeah?" she groaned, clutching her belly as another contraction rolled through, practically overlapping the last. "Well I bet m-most of them didn't use to have a dick! God, I miss my d-dick so much right now!"

"I bet!" Petyr called from outside the hatch. "But you're certainly seeing the results of one!"

"F-fuck you Petyr, you asshole! S-someone gag him!"

"Sorry!" he called back. "You're doing great, girl, seriously! A real comrade!"

"Is there anyone you want with you?" the Captain asked.

She thought for a moment. No, not even a moment. Her thoughts flew straight to Adam, and it made her blush even amidst the pain to acknowledge how much he meant to her, and how much she wanted him at her side. But she was in labor, and humiliation meant little when she already had her legs spread wide and her panties off.

"Um, if - if Adam wants to join, I'd really appreciate it. Only if he wants to though, I don't want to make him-"

Adam Kim was already pushing past the Captain to be by her side.

"I'm here, Luni," he whispered, clutching her hand. She clutched it back, smiling through the sweat and pain.

"Thank you," she whispered back.

"And just in time," Katz stated. "You're just about fully dilated. You can push at any time now."

Luniara wasted no time. She bore down, spreading her legs wider. All embarrassment over her fellow crew seeing her pussy had dissipated entirely. The only thing that mattered was her labor, and focusing on breathing as she pushed.

"NNGHHHH!!"

"You can do this," Adam said, still holding her hand, which she could have sworn she was breaking. "Just push, Luni."

"I - aghhh! - I am p-pushing! Oh God, why did this h-happening to m-me! Why me!?"

The question rang in her mind even as she strained. Her womb tensed, and something began to descend. It was, appropriately enough, a truly *alien* feeling. Her tunnel bulged wide, squeezing forth the first of her children. She felt her hips widen just a little as her children descended.

"I can see the head," Katz said casually.

"NNGHHH!!" she cried. "J-just a little m-more! I can f-feel it! Fuck this is so fucking w-weird!"

"You're doing amazing," Adam encouraged. "You can do this."

His words gave her the final strength she needed. She pushed again, and then again, and bore down once more. The ring of pain at her entrance burned fiercely, but then a sudden release occurred as her baby's shoulder came free, and with Katz's aid the baby emerged out the other side, much to her relief.

"Oh God," she managed, lying back further. She took two deep breaths before her strong maternal instincts took over. "Is she okay? Is - is my baby okay?"

Suddenly, a croaking sound. The squall of a newborn child that sent a ripple of emotion through the former male.

"You tell me," Dr Katz said. "Would you like to hold your new daughter?"

He lifted up a small blue thing, still covered in some gunk, slightly bruised from birth, but undeniably a healthy baby girl. She was Aeseran: blue-skinned with adorable little elven ears, and white hair that defied the dark wetness upon her. She had three fingers instead of four, and four toes as well, but otherwise was quite humanoid.

"She's beautiful," Luniara said as she was placed upon her. Katz and Adam helped bare her chest for the necessary skin contact. There was no stopping the wellspring of cathartic release that followed: she began to cry, fat tears falling down her blue cheeks as her child writhed against her full breast. Her little girl stopped crying almost immediately, taking comfort from her, and soon she was already shifting with her mouth. Luniara already knew what to do. She had come far from the young, angry man she had been. She repositioned her child upon her chest and helped her latch onto her large, dark blue nipple. Instantly there was an unburdening of pressure as her daughter began to suckle from her, her milk flowing freely. It felt surprisingly blissful.

Until she was reminded that another child was yet to come. Her womb tensed again and she groaned. Adam helped her steady her child on her chest as she spread her legs wider again.

"Last one to come!" Katz said excitedly. "Blessings of life, my dear."

"I m-may be a w-woman now, but I'm not 'dear' thank you very - OHHHH!!"

Another great heaving push, but this time there was less effort needed. Her tunnel was already extended thanks to the passage of her first daughter, but it didn't mean the pain wasn't present, or that effort was not needed. The hatch opened, and Petyr of all people stuck in his head.

"How's our little mother doing?"

"GET HIM OUT!" she screamed.

He couldn't leave fast enough, though perhaps the sight of a blue-headed baby crowning from her vagina was enough to make him flee.

"NGNHH! I CAN DO THIS!"

And immediate relief followed as the threshold was passed, and she pushed her second child into the world. Luniara fell to gasps as she tried to get her breath back to normal. Katz wasted no time for her second, bringing up the child into view after confirming it was breathing properly. The cord was still attached, just like with her daughter.

"Well done, another girl. Maybe even identical!"

Luniara hadn't stopped crying, but this made the tears flow even more freely. With Adam's help her other girl was secured against her other breast, nuzzling against her and calming. Moments later she was feeding happily.

"Holy shit," she muttered, resting her head back after taking in her children. "I just gave birth. I seriously just gave birth. I went through a whole - ahh - whole alien impregnation and birth thing. Holy fucking sh-shit. I did it, Adam. I goddamn did it."

"You did, Luni," he said, and he actually stroked her sweat-soaked hair.

She relaxed, holding her children against her, and savouring the feeling of Adam's hand upon her. She was now a mother.

Part 10: The Waiting Game

She gave her daughters Aeseran names, but ones that would not sound out of place on Earth or Mars: Arlizi (Lizzie) and Noveris (Nova). It seemed a good compromise, particularly since she was still figuring out her own place as an Aeseran. Or half-Aeseran. Or whatever she was. It wasn't worth thinking too deeply into: in the weeks that followed her main focus was simply on being a mother, which was a role that was at once incredibly natural and incredibly unnatural.

Once the initial joy of the arrival of her daughters had passed, the difficulty of managing two newborns made itself manifest. At first, Luniara was tired and sore, her belly like a deflated balloon and her breasts aching sore with milk. She had to put covers over

her nipples because leakage in zero-g was a genuine risk to the now-exposed electronics of the ship, and it was also important that she keep the children mostly in centri-grav, only occasionally passing them through zero grav in their makeshift carry pouches, because overexposure would affect their bone development. At least, that's what Katz assumed; he was doing his best to study their alien physiology, including their reactions to their environment. Thankfully, there were no issues yet; they cried and wept and wanted their mother, and required changing (something that Katz and Adam were helpful with, and surprisingly the Captain as well, since Luniara found it quite difficult at first).

But the poor hours of sleep, the constant feedings and changings, not to mention the sheer overwhelming fact that she truly was not only a blue-skinned alien beauty, but a *mother* no less, took quite a toll on her psyche. Petyr wasn't always the best of help.

"Getting that stomach back nice and fit there, Luni!" he exclaimed when she had time to relax in the living space away from her daughters. "You could be on the covers of a hot alien magazine soon!"

At this she could only sigh. The annoying thing about having blue skin was that the blue bags under her sleep-deprived eyes were not exactly visible. In fact, something about Aeseran physiology meant she looked damn good and vibrant despite feeling anything but.

"Petyr, can you not be a goddamn horndog for three minutes?"

"What? I thought women liked to be complimented on their looks! Especially their pregnancy recovery!"

"This may surprise you, but I never expected to have to go through a pregnancy recovery. Or to breastfeed."

"Yes, those do look like they've gotten a lot bigger."

"I will seriously strangle you."

He chuckled. "I'm allowed to rib you a little. We're all out here for you, Liam. Luni. Comrade."

She crossed her arms, which unfortunately only further emphasised her breasts. They were so damn big lately, now that they were making endless supplies of milk for her endlessly hungry daughters.

"That doesn't mean you get to perv on me, asshole."

"Yeah, fair enough. I'm going a little stir crazy. I guess we all are, huh?"

She chuckled. "Trust me, no one is going crazier than the girl who used to be a guy who literally has a baby on each tit every two hours."

"Ha! We'll, you've taken to it well. And we're not far from the rift. Maybe everything will turn out well after-"

The alarm sounded, and the pair of them winced.

"You just had to damn well say it," Luni said. "This better just be a test."

It wasn't a test. Hardigan's face was stern and serious, but his eyes betrayed a little bit of panic. Adam was leaning forward, seated next to Luni. It was a comfortable arrangement for the pair of them; she found herself pairing up with him more and more lately, and not just so he could transcribe everything about her new species that she had discovered.

"We've been found out," Hardigan said bluntly.

"Shit," Petyr said.

"How?" Adam asked.

Luni's heart beat quicker, and she grabbed Adam's hand.

"It was my fault," Katz said, taking off his glasses to clean them awkwardly. "I - I tried getting a message to my family. I thought if I sent it as a tightbeam with a simple garbage message that it wouldn't be noticed, but . . . I'm sorry."

Anger coiled up within Luni, anger for the danger he'd put her babies in. But he'd also safely delivered her daughters, Arlizi and Noveris. The latter seemed quite comforted in Katz' presence as well. And if she had such affection for her daughters already, how powerfully affected would Samwell be from being severed from his family and two teenage daughters, who had been his life for over a decade now.

"I'm sorry too, Doc," she said softly. "You gave up so much for me and my babies. I don't blame you."

"Can I blame him?" Petyr said.

"You can, but it won't solve anything," the Captain said. "Earth is too far away currently, but Mars is sending ships to intercept us: Interdictors, by the looks of it."

Petyr whistled. "We're fucked then. Mega fucked."

"Not necessarily. We still have a big head start. Also, we're closing on the rift. If we can boost ourselves we could make it. After that, it's up to Luniara here."

All eyes fell to her. She clasped Adam's hand with great firmness. It was a hell of a lot of responsibility. She realised in that moment that she had wanted to be a trailblazer when she'd been Liam. She'd wanted to be taken seriously, to have true responsibility, and to do something important. Now, she'd gotten what she'd wanted, though she never could have expected her wish to be granted in the form that it had. She looked down at her voluptuous alien body, her stomach much slimmer than it had been, but still occasionally sore.

"I'll do what I can," she said. "But I won't ask you to give up so much. Not again."

"We're with you," Adam said.

"I just want to see the hot alien women," Petyr added. "There better be more on the other side of this rift."

She snorted. "No doubt you'll have some statistical success, Petyr."

"The Aeserans are also our only chance at some form of protection and renegotiation," Hardigan said. "I'd advise surrender under normal circumstances, but we all know their original plans through Rotar for our Liam-"

"Luni," Adam reminded him.

"Yes, our Luni. And call me old-fashioned, but this captain would rather go down with the ship than throw a crewmate overboard. But I'm not giving orders here, this is a negotiation between us. You don't have to make the decision now, and Luni obviously gets a big say. We've all spent time with her little blue ones, and we've all got attachments here, and back on world. This isn't a decision to be made lightly."

"With respect captain," Adam said, standing up. "It is. It's the easiest decision I've ever had to make, in fact."

"Agreed," Katz said. "I made an oath, and I'll continue to uphold it. I put everyone in this position, not Luni."

Everyone turned to Petyr. For a moment, there was an uncertain pause, then he just cracked a charming grin and shrugged.

"What? I already told you my position on things. I wanna see some hot blue babes. Closer to them now than Mars anyway. Full steam ahead, captain."

Luniara hugged him. She didn't even care that his hand hovered over her butt a little. The man had given up a lot. He'd earned it.

The Interdictors were closing. They were always going to, being military-class vessels. The *Tiresias* didn't bother responding to their tightbeam messages or their general hails, other than to reiterate that Liam/Luni was no threat, and they didn't want to hand her over. Separately, Luniara and Adam put together a general widebeam broadcast explaining their situation as best as they could. The audience was anyone in the solar system who would listen, and the hope was that at the very least, it would generate sympathy. Luniara found it difficult to do - many takes were required, particularly since Arlizi and Noveris kept acting up or requiring feedings, but as always Adam was by her side, encouraging her. The final message was simply a collection of footage of her and her daughters, some of the changes she had gone through, and snippets of her crew supporting her. Her final message was simple.

"My name was Liam. I now go by Luniara, because I have been greatly changed by this experience. But I am still at my core human. I have gone from a man to a woman to a mother, one who cares deeply for her daughters and just wishes them to be safe. My

daughters are no threat. I am no threat. I just want to raise my children and find a place to exist that will accept me. I am a medical marvel. I literally am half-human and half-alien genetically, even if I still see myself as human just like you. There is so much to learn about the Aeseran species and what they have to offer that does not require myself and my daughters to be locked up and experimented on. I beg you, please show us the best of humanity, and not its worst. Please, speak out for us onboard the Tiresias. We need all the help we can get."

It was a stilted speech, and it was embarrassing to have footage of her breastfeeding, though Adam assured her it would garner sympathy among many women and families. None of it really felt like her as Liam or Luniara. Far too formal and stiff. But perhaps it would at least get their message out, and let people know some form of the truth.

It didn't stop the Interdictors, though. They kept on coming, and it was a slow advance. However fast they were, their closing in was a progress measured in weeks, not days. But within a certain range they could launch missiles, if that indeed became their resort. Hardigan wasn't convinced, but Luniara had more than a few frightful dreams that left her in tears, and it took the calm of breastfeeding her twins to bring her back down. Petyr jokes around a lot to keep her spirits up, even distracting her deliberately by hitting on her in his own way. He knew that anger kept spirits up much more than fear. Katz did his best too, and the Captain was stalwart in the mission. But everyday had a rising tension, even as Luniara did her engineering magic to push the ship to its limits. She could at least fit in the tubes again. In fact, her body had recovered marvellously well, to the point where it was clear that Aeseran physiology had aided her greatly. Her stomach had only the barest pooch, and no stretch marks. Her breasts were still full, albeit *full*, in the milk-production sense. She'd even let her hair grow out further, so that it now had to be tied in a ponytail or it floated ethereally around her in zero-grav. It felt rather nice to be a full woman *without* a gigantic pregnant belly sticking out in front of her.

Though a small part of her almost missed it. Dreamed of it, even.

They were a single week out from the coordinates of the rift when it all became too much. Luniara had kept to herself and her daughters. They were already showing signs of personality; Arlizi was giggling and gurgling, and much rougher than her sister Noveris, who appeared to deeply contemplate any makeshift toy she was given. They must have sensed their mother's anxiety, for they wanted her presence more often than usual. Katz called it a 'wonder month'. It didn't feel too wondrous. Needy, maybe. But when they had their sleeps - which were longer now they were several months old - she felt so terribly alone. The crew

were so loyal to her, but she felt more distant from them than ever. Responsible. Nervous. Anxious. Fearful.

“Goddamn it,” she said, tears flowing again. “Stupid female hormones. Goddamn post-pregnancy bullshit. God, almost make me want to get knocked up again just so I can get that second trimester high again.”

Someone tapped on the hatch and she wiped away her tears and put her top back on. She didn’t bother about the bra. Who cares if her nipples made themselves known for a bit? Only Petyr would really care, and he was harmless. As for the fact that she was in just her black panties, with her bare blue thighs on display, well, she could put up with that too.

“C-come in,” she said.

The hatch opened, and Adam appeared. He paused, his handsome smile briefly frozen as he realised what a state of undress she was in.

“Oh, uh, sorry Luni. I can come back or-”

“Nah, come on in, man. I’m just in my underwear and having stupid private cry. I’m only missing some ice cream and I’d be a damn stereotype. What’s up?”

“I just thought I’d come see how you’re doing. Y’know, what with several interdictors heading our way and a big sci-fi space rift to open, on top of the whole ‘turned into an alien mom’ thing. I imagine it’s a bit on your plate.”

“Just a bit, yeah,” she said. She swallowed down a pained sob. “Fuck, I just feel so responsible for this.”

“Hey, you never could have known about the glyph.”

“But you’re all out here, risking your lives for me and my babies.”

“By choice,” he said. He sat down beside her, and after a moment’s hesitation placed his hand on her shoulder. “We all want to be here Luni. *I* want to be here.”

She managed a smile, leaning against him slightly. “You know, you’re the only one who actually calls me Luni or Luniara every time, without needing to be corrected. Why is that?”

“I guess it’s because you were always the girl in our group.”

She elbowed him. “C’mon! I’m serious.”

“Well, I’d say it’s because it’s who you are now. I look at you and I don’t see Liam Macklin anymore. I see Luni.”

She kissed him. She couldn’t help it. Her stupid female hormones, and probably some dumb alien mating ones as well, were already in overdrive. Adam’s presence was too intimate, his body too attractive, his words too sweet. She pulled back to see his surprised expression.

“Shit. Fuck. Sorry. I don’t know why I did-”

He took her face in his hands and kissed her back, his lips upon her blue ones, locking perfectly. This time the kiss was longer, more passionate. When they both pulled back she was breathing heavily.

“Holy shit,” she said.

“Sorry also,” he said sheepishly. “I’ve been wanting to do that for a while now, but I wasn’t sure if you were interested. I thought you were.”

“I am,” she said, kissing him again. “What gave it away?”

He grinned, running his hands down her sides. “You liked my muscles. I’ve been wearing a lot of tank tops to test my theory.”

“Bastard! Ugh, this is embarrassing.”

She ran her hands over him, feeling his muscles. Her nipples stiffened, her tunnel became moist and needy.

“We could always stop.”

“Too late! I’m s-so goddamn horny. All these hormones. I want you. Fuck, I want you so bad.”

“I want you too, Luni.”

The babies were sleeping in the adjacent chamber, and hopefully would remain sleeping. Luniara pulled her top off, freeing her large, milk-filled breasts as Adam similarly removed his shirt. When he took off his pants she admired the hardness in his crotch. It was a damn strange thing to be turned on by a dick, but here she was and she wasn’t stopping now. She runned it through his underwear, causing him to grunt. He in turn squeezed her large breasts, causing milk to dribble from them.

“Ooohhh, that f-feels good. I’m - ahhh - so damn f-full.”

“I can help with that.”

She whimpered as he positioned her on the ward bed, leaned over her, and began to drink from her. It was deeply pleasurable, and gave a sense of instant relief, especially as he massaged one breast while feeding from the other, then switched sides to even her out nicely.

“F-fuck. Such relief! Mhmmm!”

She instinctively shifted her bottom, spreading her legs. She lowered a blue hand to pull away her panties, tugging at his underwear with the other. She bit her lip as his dick was freed - it was bigger than she thought it would be - and it made her moan sensually.

“You like me like this, don’t you?” she moaned as he continued to play with big tits and caress her form. “You like my blue skin.”

“It’s hot as hell,” Adam breathed. He kissed her again, felt her pointy ears. “I’m going where no man has ever gone before.”

She giggled. "Get in line, dude. Now hurry up and get inside me before I regret it. I'm so fucking wet. I need you so damn bad."

He obliged, and she helped guide him in with an almost eerie instinct, as if she knew what she was doing. Her eyes widened as he pressed against her passage, the one that had so recently pushed two children out of it. But she was tight and wet again, healed unnaturally quick, and her muscles clamped down upon him, desperate to milk him. Adam began to thrust, working in and out of her, picking up spread. She held on for dear life, her heavy bosom trembling with each thrust, particularly once she began to buck her hips to match his rhythm. She'd never felt anything like this, but she'd certainly dreamed of it more than once, and with Adam no less.

The reality was far better.

"Ohhhhhh, f-fuck!" she cried. "You're s-so big!"

"I can slow dow-"

"Faster! I need you to go f-faster! I'm going to f-fucking cum, dude! I need this! Don't stop!"

He didn't, picking up speed again. He caressed her perfect breasts, groping and squeezing them and nuzzling at her neck. She was so damn close she could practically taste the coming orgasm. Everything in her hormones, in her strange blue alien body told her to mate with this man. To have him cum inside her. She needed it more than anything, a release from the anxiety and fear, an embrace of life itself. Adam lowered his head to drink from her again and his tongue on her large blue nipple finally pushed her over the edge.

"Ohhhhhh, yes! YES! YESSSSS!!!"

She scratched his back with her surprisingly long nails as she came, thrashing and wailing in orgasm. It hit her in several waves, each overlapping the next, and far better than the male equivalent which was one and done. But Adam clearly enjoyed his part, because he grunted heavily.

"Ohhh, Luni! Aghh!!"

His bear-like sounds were music to her ears. His body tightened powerfully, almost *protectively* around hers, and suddenly a warmth entered her at the same time as his long cock throbbed in her passage. Stream after stream of his seed pumped into her, right up to her waiting womb. She shivered in delight, unbelieving what she had done but regretting none of it. They panted together, kissing lovingly, embracing even as pumped several more times. It was only when the post-coital bliss was fading that he slowly pulled out, an act that made her gasp.

"Ohhhhhh, that was . . . that was something else, man."

"It sounded like you liked it, Luni."

"Mh-hmm," she breathed, almost catatonic. "I - shit!"

She looked up, pushing Adam off of the medical ward bed. He fell to the ground but recovered quickly.

“What the hell was that - Petyr!?”

The tall, blond man was at the hatch, eyes wide in shock. He must have just entered, but there had been no mistaking a naked Adam thrusting into the gorgeous alien woman beneath him.

“Just my fucking luck,” Petyr said casually. “Of course *he* gets the girl.”

Part 11: The New News

Things were awkward as they were tense. Petyr of all people had walked in on them together, and he was the worst person possible for keeping secrets. It didn't take long before the entire crew of the aptly named *Tiresias* knew about the affair, and they had some explaining to do.

“It just sort of happened,” Adam Kim said before the half-formal assembly, headed by Captain Hardigan.

“It was my fault,” Luniara said, rubbing her arm in an anxious gesture. “I was feeling lonely, and I have all these female hormones now. And post-preggo hormones. And I'm scared of these Interdictor ships closing in on us, and whether I can bring back the Aesera at all, and - and I just wanted it.”

“Uh-huh,” Hardigan said. “So it just happened?”

“I'm not going into details, um, sir.”

“It's not some alien gland thing, is what I'm asking? I have to ask about this as a precaution, because while we're in this together I just want to make sure nothing is too suspicious. We don't know much about Aeseran biology. Right now you just seem like a blue woman with dark blue hair.”

“It's all I feel like, Captain. Well, I sort of feel things sometimes too.”

His eyebrows raised. So did Adam's. “Explain.”

The former male winced a little. “I don't know. Thoughts. Feelings. Just surface stuff. I can tell you're secretly worried about Adam getting infected and turning into a woman, for instance.”

Doctor Katz whistled. “Well, that's impressive. Minor telepathy? Empathic abilities at the least. It would explain some new formations on the brain that the scanning equipment picked up.”

Adam put a hand gently on her back. “Did you sense . . . ?”

She nodded. It was obvious what he was asking: *Did you sense my attraction to you?*

“But I didn’t realise I was actually feeling your thoughts until after. Until this *dog* walked in on us, and I could sense his goddamn jealousy!”

Petyr put up his hands in a gesture of ‘hey, I’m innocent here, alright?’ No one exactly believed him. “Well, don’t go reading my mind too much, comrade. It’s a dirty place.”

“Oh, we all know that,” Adam said. “No mind reading necessary.”

“Damn straight, friend.”

“There’s no concern over transformation as far as my tests have been able to tell,” Katz said, cutting into the conversation. “But I do want to run a few more, bloodwork and the like, just in case.”

“Hope the alien pussy was worth it, Adam,” Petyr said with a grin. “You might be growing some soon.”

Adam threw a coffee bulb at his head. Luni would have done the same, but she was feeding Lizi, and Nova would need a feed soon. She had long gotten over the awkwardness of whipping out one of her big blue alien boobs to feed her young. Not only were her motherly instincts too strong to ignore on that front, but she could never deprive a baby of its sustenance. It had led to a few unsavoury comments from Petyr about ‘wishing he could be an alien baby’ though.

“Shut up,” she told the man, rolling her eyes.

“Well, so long as it’s all above board now, I don’t care what you do,” Hardigan said. “Though it is unexpected. After all . . . he is a bit older than you, Luni.”

She was about to protest when she realised the captain had actually made a rare joke. His dry smirk caught her, and she began laughing too.

“I’ll be careful around him, captain, I promise. You know these geologist types. Always the cheating kind.”

“Well, he’ll have to travel a few clicks to meet another woman, unless there’s a female captain of one of those interdictors. Speaking of, it’s back to stations everyone. We’re in the final race, and we need to be ready to open this gate, or obelisk, or whatever it is. I hope you’ve enjoyed your, ahem, downtime, because we’ll need every bit of juice this old girl has left in her to arrive without danger.”

Luni nodded, passing off her baby to Adam and zipping up her maternity top. “Got it, captain,” she said. “I’ll feed Nova, and get right to it.”

“We all will,” Adam said. He squeezed her hand. It made her feel more confident.

The time was approaching. The obelisk, the signal, the whatever-it-was that could supposedly bring back the Aeseran people was only days away. The crew had worked overtime to do everything possible to prep the ship, to eke out the slightest extra speed. But now the reverse was true; its anti-burners were in effect, and its trajectory was slowing. Despite her post-pregnancy body snapping into remarkable shape, Luni had been barred from going into the tubes until she had managed to argue down even the Captain. Once eager to prove herself, now the futures of her babies and her crew were paramount. She had put her best knowledge to work in priming the engines, but also done her best to work with Petyr - who was actually doing a good job of not perving on her tits too much - to scramble their location. It wouldn't do a great deal to throw off the Interdictors, but even a delay of hours counted as they closed in.

More and more messages and warnings were coming from the military craft. They were very official sounding, and very scary too. Lots of *'Halt your flight path immediately and prepare for boarding within three-to-five days stellar time. Provocation or prevarication or any kind of delay will result in immediate termination of your ship. We are nearly within missile range.'*

That much was true as well: the interdictors had made a show of prepping their missiles and were not far off from being able to launch them across the distance of space. They could do so now, but a clean kill was hard to confirm in the vastness of space, and after their trick around the orbit of Mars, the military obviously wanted to avoid another false scuttling and achieve the real thing, if the *Tiresias* didn't come in willingly.

"We'll surrender if we can't do this," Hardigan warned Luniara and Adam. "I'm sorry, but this is our last, best hope, and if you can't work your alien magic Luni, then I have to go with the option that saves my crew. I know you'll understand."

"I do, Captain," Luni said. "And thank you. For getting us this far."

"Thank Petyr. He's the one who's living off coffee to pilot us there. He may be a cad, but he's damn loyal."

"I'll make sure to thank him."

"Or wear something nice for me!" Petyr shouted up from the living room quarters, through the tube. "Not that I'm listening or anything!"

Luni just chuckled, as did Adam beside her. It was just Petyr being Petyr.

"I'll do my best to see this through," she said. "I think I'll know what to do when we get there. I know I won't have much time. As long as we can make them think we're stopping to surrender."

"That's the plan," Hardigan said.

It was at that point that Dr Katz approached. The poor man was missing his family terribly, but he hadn't wavered from the mission, despite the repeated warnings not only for

his life, but that his very licence would be revoked. Doing so would remove certain privileges for his family on Mars, privileges they needed.

“Doctor,” Luni said. “I want to thank you as well. Without you-”

He held up a hand. “I swore an oath. They can take my licence, but not my principles. But I’m not here for grand speeches. We need to talk, Liam. Luniara, I mean. You and I, and Adam.”

He gestured for them to follow, and they did so, returning to the medical bay and away from the comfort of zero-g.

Luni blushed purple as she held Adam’s hand. The man was also blushing, going pink in the cheeks. Both of them gulped at the news.

“You’re sure?” Adam said.

“It’s not a difficult diagnosis. I’m surprised she didn’t put it together, given all she’s been through.”

“I just thought I was tired,” Luniara said. “And the nausea was just working in the cramped tubes.”

“You’ve been sexually active as a pair though, right?”

The pair blushed deeper. The fact that they were holding hands as Luniara sat on the medical bay bed gave evidence of the fact that the two of them had been *very* active. In fact, they could hardly keep their hands off each other the past few days, ever since the first copulation where they had admitted their feelings towards one another. A large part of it was genuinely romantic; Adam loved spending time with Luni, and she with him. Their senses of humour gelled, his passion for science was infectious, and Luni’s own engineering specialisation made Adam marvel at times. But the lust was a major factor too. Luni’s new female hormones had her deeply wanting a virile, handsome man like Adam Kim, and he in turn was fascinated by her vibrant blue skin and hair, her delightful curves, her full breasts, her sweet, musical voice. There was also the third element, which perhaps made their copulations all the more frequent, and this was the sense of impending doom hanging over them. Why not throw sensibility and shame over being turned into a female alien to the solar winds when your life could end any day now? Luni still got a little embarrassed knowing that others knew about her actions with Adam, but during the act it felt too wonderful to be penetrated, to feel him inside her. It made the pair of them feel alive, and it was what they both needed. It had, however, led to an unexpected outcome.

“Pregnant,” Luni said, her tone one of disbelief. She lowered her hand to her belly, which had recovered to perfect blue flatness. “Again. God, I’m pregnant again. It’s Adam’s?”

"I believe so," Katz said. "I thought perhaps your body might have been primed for pathogenesis, but this doesn't appear to be the case. Congratulations are in order, I suppose, Adam, you have achieved another first. Not only have you discovered an alien element, but you have also, ahem, conducted the first interspecies, er, *relations*, in human history."

That made Adam cringe in embarrassment. Still, his hand went tight around Luniara's waist, and the pair gazed at one another.

"I'll leave you two to discuss it," Katz said. "It's early days, but things look healthy. And I suppose it's not like our Liam-now-Luni is without experience in such manners. Hell, this one happened the old fashioned way."

He made his exit, leaving the two lovers - one half-alien, the other all human - to be bewildered together.

"I'm pregnant. Holy shit, I'm pregnant. Again."

Adam gave an awkward grin. "Yeah, this one's definitely on me."

"That last one was too! It was your Ganymede mission!"

"That you volunteered for! Hell, you volunteered for this 'mission' too. Repeatedly, as I recall. And I recall you liking it."

She giggled before stopping herself. "Hey, stop that! You can't make me smile over this. I just got done recovering from blowing up all pregnant with twins, and now you've gone and knocked me up! I've only been female for less than a year, and I'm going through *two* pregnancies! This is just . . . even for my life as it is, this is insane. God, my big blue boobs are never going to get a break, and talk about sentences I never thought I would say!"

"Well, I rather like your big blue boobs."

She snorted. "Men. I can't say I blame you though. They are good tits. And I bet you'll like them even bigger when I'm further along. If I get the change: who knows what will happen."

He placed a comforting arm around her, and she relaxed into it. She had always been the baby of the team, the one that was looked down on the most as the youngest and smallest. Now that she even smaller and daintier as a female alien, being seen that way didn't impact her so negatively. She liked the feeling of being comforted. Protected. By the man she considered her mate. Her mind reached out to his, and she could feel that sensation of love flowing from him, perfect and honest. Whatever was between them, it was real.

"We'll make it through," he promised her. "I promise I'll do everything to make sure Lizi and Nova are safe, and whatever baby or babies are growing here."

He placed his hand under her shirt and rubbed her stomach. It was still a lot to take in, but Adam was making it easier. She rested against him.

"I . . . really like you," she said.

"I really like you too," he said. "And I know what 'like' means in this context, and what word is still hard to say."

"You're the best for understanding. You're not even psychic like me and you get me."

"Well, I am a pretty great guy."

"I used to be too. You know, a guy."

"And now you're a pregnant alien. Anything to get out of tube repair duty."

She giggled, slapping him lightly. Together they began talking, almost excited for this latest baby. It was a good way to avoid talking about what was to come.

Any day now.

Part 12: The Grand Opening

Luni was feeding Nova *and* Lizi when she was called up to the deck. It meant going through zero-grav, so she outfitted her babies in their little belts and made sure they were secured against her. They wailed a little, detached from her milk-producing ducts, but she had been waiting for this moment. She moved swiftly and carefully, and Adam moved with her; he had been sleeping with her in the same quarters lately, enjoying the centri-grav of the medical bay while Katz monitored her latest pregnancy. They arrived up to find Captain Leo Hardigan waiting expectedly. He had sweat on his forehead and bags around his eyes. It sent a spike of fear down Luni's back.

"Two bits of news," the Captain said. "We are coming up on the artefact. The one from your dreams. We'll be able to halt by its position in less than two hours."

"The other bit of news?" Adam asked.

The Captain's brow creased. Petyr was in the pilot's seat, and he grimaced, for once without jokes. Katz was present too, folding a bit of cloth over and over again in his hands.

"The closest Interdictor has launched two long-range missiles at our location. They'll hit our ship in approximately four hours."

Luni gasped, holding her babies tighter. As if sensing her distress, they momentarily unlatched and she had to fiddle to get them to feed again. She had no embarrassment of it now, despite once being a man. Her main concern was their safety.

"What do we do?" she asked.

"We can't get them to abort," he said grimly. "So whatever you do when we get to the artefact, you better do it fast, and pray it's enough to save us."

The timer was on, and there were not many grains of sand in the hourglass. Luni's heart was tight in her chest. She had left Lizi and Nova in the care of Dr Katz knowing he would treat them well. She'd even expressed milk so he could bottle feed them - not something she ever expected to have to do, but in case the worst happened, perhaps there was a chance they could go on. She wasn't sure how, but she had to believe it, and not just for them, but for herself, and Adam, and the crew, and for the next little baby that had only just started growing inside her.

"Are you ready?" Adam asked, fitting his suit.

"No," she replied honestly. "My last mission outside the ship ended up with me turning into a pregnant alien lady."

"Well, this one has even higher stakes. Fun sequel, huh?"

She smirked despite the danger, and Adam helped fit her helmet. Her elven-like ears thankfully weren't too uncomfortable inside it.

"Well, I *am* pregnant again, thanks to you."

"I have no regrets," he said, chuckling. "But seriously, I don't. I care for you, Luni. A lot."

She took his hand in hers, despite the weighty gloves they were wearing. "I do too. Thank you Adam, for everything. Even if your pranks suck."

"My pranks are amazing. It just so happens Petyr's are better."

'Speaking of comrades, can you two lovebirds hurry it up. We don't have long until we get scudded by some missiles, and I'd like to see some fireworks before we all become one, da?'

"Roger, Petyr," Luniara said. "Katz, are my girls all safe?"

'Squawking and missing their mother, but doing well. Best of luck out there Luni.'

'Indeed,' the Captain's voice came over. 'Best of luck to us all. I don't often pray. I'm not a religious man. But I hope some divine presence is with us. Godspeed.'

And with that, the conversation ended. Adam and Luniara checked the last of their fittings and made sure their spacesuits were safe for the vacuum, and then they cycled the airlock. The gasp of the tiny remaining air in the lock escaped, and the two were confronted with the sight of the endless stars beyond.

"It's beautiful," Luni said over the comms.

"Yes, you are," Adam said on their private feed.

"Stop it. I see the artefact."

It was, appropriately enough, like a large crystal. It was floating in a wide orbit around Jupiter, keeping close to Ganymede, obviously using some alien tech to do so. They had come full circle, and now were confronting a blue crystalline structure yet again. Only this

one looked to be about twenty metres in height and ten across, a pillar that had numerous sharp crystal formations expanding from it.

“Are you sure we can’t take the children?” Hardigan whispered over the comm as they set off from the ship. *“Your dreams said they would be necessary. That they would be the blueprint to open this thing.”*

“I’m not risking them yet,” Luni said. “I thought we were agreed on that.”

‘Not taking them might be the risk.’

But Luni was adamant. “You might be right, but I don’t think we’ll need Nova or Lizi just yet. Not with a new one growing inside me. I think *that’s* the key. That’s all we’ll need.”

She required Adam’s help. The man wasn’t an expert in space suit manoeuvres, but Petyr’s program aided him. She had less experience, and didn’t want their oxygen cables tangled. So she relied on her partner - the man she felt increasingly drawn to - to bring her closer to the crystal. It loomed menacingly, enormous and alien, and soon they slowed their trajectory. It required finicky controls, but they managed to halt right up alongside some of its sharp ‘spears’, avoiding any suit damage.

‘Not too convenient,’ Petyr said over the comms. *‘Where do we interface? Luni?’*

She regarded it. “I - I don’t have any clue. I thought I would know.”

‘Great. Real great. Well, we’ve only got twenty minutes until missiles hit us. So that’s cool. Not that I’m keeping count of the time or anything.’

Luni’s heart beat in her chest. She tried to remember the dreams, the lessons the AI had taught her. With Adam’s help, she scaled over the structure, moving carefully so as to avoid puncturing their oxygen lines or causing any other issues, such as suit rupture. It was a delicate thing, and all the time they were aware of just how bad things were going to be. Soon it was ten minutes until missile collision. They’d floated some junk debris out to hopefully catch a couple of scuds, but bad news came.

‘Only two missiles caught by the debris,’ Hardigan informed them. *‘Three more inbound. Whatever you’ve got to do, you need to do it fast. Pods are prepped, but this far out it’s a practical death sentence.’*

“Shit, shit, shit,” Luni said to herself over and over again. “I don’t know what I’m meant to do, Adam! I’m just a guy - a girl - that got turned into a fucking alien chick. I don’t have any clue about this, even after all the dreams! I’m going to fail!”

“You aren’t!” he said, holding his helmet against hers so that the sound would carry without the comms. “You can do this. I know you can. You’re brilliant and clever, Luni. And damn eager to prove yourself, remember? So prove yourself!”

“I can’t! I can’t even get this suit working properly. It’s too cumbersome and . . .”

It hit her all at once what she needed to do. At least, she thought so. But with missiles inbound so soon, there was no chance to think it through too deeply. No chance, and no choice.

She began to unlatch the connections on her suit.

“Um, Luni, what are you doing?”

“Just trust me.”

‘Um, what is our crazy alien mother doing?’ Petyr asked over the comms.

‘Adam, what’s she doing?’ Katz asked.

“She’s taking off her suit. Luni, you’ll die!”

“No!” she said. “I won’t. I don’t think I will. I need to touch the crystal. I need to know my DNA, and that I carry an Aeseran baby within me - half-Aeseran anyway. If I do that, it will unlock it.”

Adam went to stop her but it was Hardigan that blocked him over the comm.

‘Don’t! We’re all dead in five minutes anyway. Adam, trust her.’

Adam put up his hands. “I love you.”

“I love you too,” she said.

‘And I love living, so hurry up!’ Petyr cried.

The moment of truth had arrived: Luniara unsealed the helmet of her suit. The cold chill of the dark universe came upon her, and for a moment she was terrified. But then . . . nothing. She couldn’t breathe, but she didn’t need to immediately either. Her mind could sense Adam’s panic, could even sense the concern of her crew. She gave them a reassuring wave and removed more parts of her suit. In just a minute, she was wearing little more than her underwear and bra, her blue body otherwise naked to the vacuum of space. She couldn’t stay like this, but her Aesera biology permitted her to hold oxygen in her cells much longer, and there was a sense that her body could hold itself in this kind of stasis safely to do what needed to be done. She reached out with her mind, trying to give a suggestion to Adam.

‘Take me closer. I need to touch it.’

Four minutes.

He did so, encircling his arms around her. His expression was one of shock, and she also sensed that he was overcome by her ethereal beauty, her dark hair spiralling out in the zero-grav. He took her forward until she was able to press her skin against the crystalline structure, no barrier in the way.

‘It’s me,’ she tried to communicate. *‘The key. The signal. I carry a child within me that is your legacy. Open up. The universe is ready for you to return.’*

Three minutes.

For a moment, nothing happened. Petyr was starting to panic on the radio. Hardigan was silent. Katz was whispering a prayer. Adam was repeating something encouraging over

and over. But her concentration was entirely upon the crystalline structure. She placed herself right against a flat surface of it, her still-ordinary belly against it. She curled herself by the structure, willing it to open.

Two minutes.

And then . . . light. Brilliant blue light sprang from the fissures of the crystal, so luminant that Luni was nearly blinded. Adam sprang back, holding her as well. The entire structure began to crack open, spiralling outwards to form a mighty ring. The entire process took perhaps twenty seconds, but the size of it was larger and larger than could ever be possible. It was rapidly becoming a sort of superstructure, its ring the size of a city block, then multiple city blocks. The *Tiresias* was dwarfed before it, and the immense portal that was contained within.

One minute.

Luni communicated something to Adam, who passed it on.

“PETYR! EVERYONE! GET INSIDE THE PORTAL!”

‘Don’t need to tell me twice!’ Petyr exclaimed. The *Tiresias* jettied forward, melting into the portal. Luni’s oxygen was finally failing, and she clung to Adam.

‘Get us in there,’ she said.

He moved, using his suit boosters. In the distant horizon on the other side of Ganymede, small flares could be seen approaching at lightning speed. They passed through the portal as something detonated.

‘Holy shit,’ Petyr’s voice came over the comms. *‘Is everyone seeing this shit?’*

The other side of the portal was as alien as the previous experience. Far from the darkness of space, they were now floating in a void lit by bright pink and purple hues, like a vibrant evening sky. Stations, all crystalline in structure, floated in this voice, enormous in size, capable of housing not just thousands, but millions, or even *tens of millions*. They were like miniature planets, spherical in nature, but with numerous towers and structures jutting from their surface, or even floating. All were dark, but as Luni was brought back to the *Tiresias*, they could see them beginning to light up, as if they had been dormant for thousands of years. Which, she supposed, they had.

“Get me to the cockpit,” she said once aboard.

“That was an amazing thing you did there,” Adam said. “How did you know it was going to work?”

“I didn’t,” she said, huddling herself. “But I had to try something, right?”

“Well, your psychic powers came in handy.”

“It’s an Aeseran thing,” she said, kissing him on the lips. “Now let’s get up there, and bring my daughters too. I have a feeling we’ll need them.”

It took nearly half an hour for them to be hailed. Obviously there was a technological gap, as well as the confusion over why three 'primitive' missiles had detonated outside the portal. Plus, being in hibernative state for thousands of years probably made for a bad hangover on wakeup. But then the call came in, and Hardigan ordered it to be not just answered, but recorded for later broadcast.

"This is Captain Leo Hardigan of the ship *Tiresias*," he answered. "I belong to a species called humanity, from the planet Earth, third planet from the sun. We found your relic, and my crewmate Liam Macklin was transformed by it. She goes by Luniara now. This is her with me. She has birthed two Aeseran children and carries a half-Aeseran within her even now. It was her that unlocked the gate."

There was silence on the other end. Then, suddenly, a video-screen appeared. The crew gasped, Luni most of all. It was a group of individuals that looked much like her. They were fine clothing studded with crystals and metalwork. It gave them the appearance of being like science-fiction elves or something. The leader was at the centre, and looked to be male. There was a pause before he spoke.

'Nilu artemi s'pin dress'ka gavar hinr ilmo.'

It was Petyr who spoke next, breaking the silence that followed. "Um, I guess it was too much to hope for a universal translator or something? You get any of that, Luni?"

The strange part was that she did. The programming in her mind, the one that the dormant AI in the crystal had given her, allowed her to understand what was being said, just like in her dreams. The alien leader had said, *'At long last are we Aesera free of the scourge? Is it safe for us to return?'*

She gulped, then stepped forward, though Adam stepped with her, still holding her hand.

"It is safe," she communicated to them in Aeseran, surprising the crew around her. *"I am Luniara. I found your message and became one of you. I have born two Aeseran children and carry another already, one that is human and Aeseran. The scourge is gone, but the people that occupy this system are afraid. Humans do not know other kinds, and are fearful that you will be a scourge.'*

'We never would be, great Luniara, saviour of our kind,' the figure replied, even as the people behind him buzzed with anticipation and excitement. *'We would share our technology, our hopes and dreams. We would show gratitude to the species that saved us, until they learned not to fear us. That is all we ever wanted when we heard signals from the stars.'*

The crew of the *Tiresias* exchanged some looks, and a few whispered words were said to Luni.

'Well, um, perhaps you can grant us some asylum while we get this all organised. We'll need to explain this to my people - my original human people. After all, this is going to be quite the shake up.'

'We understand. What a glorious day this is! We were fearful we would never reawaken when we went into cryo-sleep. Now, we Aeserans have a second chance, all thanks to you, and humanity. You will be most treasured, Luniara, for all that you have done. If, that is, you choose to join us. We could learn much from you.'

Again, she shared that look with Adam.

She didn't need to be psychic to know which way he felt she should go, but it helped.

Luni sighed contentedly in the aftermath of yet another lovemaking session with Adam. She never got tired of it, even if occasionally she was quite aware of just how much her tastes in partners and positions had changed. Slowly, she withdrew, gasping a little as his still-hard cock slipped out of her, and then she rolled off of him, her breasts wobbling as she did so. Carefully, she moved to her side. Adam spooned her comfortably moments later, fondling her blue breast for a few moments before lowering his hand down to her full belly.

"Not long now, Luni," he said.

"Mhmmm," she moaned. "Mhm."

"Words too difficult?"

She managed to communicate a simple signal with her mind. *'Need time. Feel too good.'*

He chuckled. "Well, Aeserans are certainly good at sex, because I am so relaxed right now."

"How do you know . . . it's not just . . . me?" she managed, still panting. Her baby kicked within her belly, only weeks away from being due. She was nervous to go through birth again, but the best Aeseran maternity science was there for her this time, and she knew more of the drill too.

"Well, for one," Adam said, "Petyr has been bragging about all the gorgeous Aeseran women he's spent time with."

"That asshole always exaggerates."

"Still, he finally got to be in dock! I imagine he's enjoying New Aesera quite a bit."

"He would. A city half-full of beautiful blue elven alien women? He's in heaven."

“Oh, that reminds me, Katz is coming in next week. He’s bringing his wife and daughters.”

“I’m glad Mars allowed it.”

Adam hugged her closer. “I’m glad they did. We both owe a lot to him. Abel Rotar, would you believe it, even tried to ask for allowance to visit. The Aeseran government denied him. Again.”

She chuckled. “Good. He tried to have me vivisected. Fuck him.”

“Hopefully not literally.”

“Ugh, gross. No, I’ll take my sexy *sa’kir* instead.”

Adam kissed her neck. She loved it when he did that. A *sa’kir* was the equivalent of a married partner in Aeseran culture, and as she had already taken on the role, name, and biology of an Aeseran, it only made sense for the engineer-turned-mother-saviour to adopt more of her new ‘home’ culture. Certainly, she was venerated on New Aesera, which was the now-terraformed Ganymede along with several other stations and moons. It had given the Interdictors of Mars and Earth quite some grief when out of the portal there emerged an entire alien race, and one professing friendship. The Aeserans were no fools though: they knew warfare, and were ready to act if Mars and Earth didn’t get on board with letting them co-exist. Tensions had been high for a time, even scary, but as medical technology helped deal with cancers that humans had never meant to surmount, and bio-engineering technology gave all sorts of immunities and so on, then tensions cooled. Now, there were numerous Aeseran embassies, even student exchange programs and cultural interchanges. Every day was looking more hopeful. But for all that, Luniara was now the most famous individual for both species, and so she decided it was better to live on New Aesera among her ‘own’ kind than be an outsider on Mars or Earth. Besides, she rather felt the clothing and style there fit her own form; she had adopted *some* feminine aspects.

Adam had joined her, of course. How could he not? He was the scientist allowed the most access to Aeseran knowledge and technology. And as the father of her half-Aeseran child, he was also highly elevated as one of the saviours of their kind. All of them were. Hardigan preferred to remain in his regular job of course, as did Petyr, but now they were one of the few ships allowed to ferry goods and trade between humans and Aeserans while relations became more normal. Suffice to say, he and Katz and Petyr never had to worry about money ever again. Not that Petyr planned to retire anytime soon: the man was angling to find ways to visit New Aesera’s ports and spend as much time among adoring blue women as possible. The pig.

“Well, it seems like another day of diplomatic visits. Looking forward to giving a speech?”

Luniara half-turned, struggling with her belly to face her man. “Don’t even get started on that. Fuck, I just wish more of my speeches at least had an engineering focus. Maybe if Hardigan had touched the sigil he would have been a better choice.”

“Can you imagine a pregnant blue Leo?”

She chuckled. “Nope! But I sure as shit didn’t imagine me, the baby of the group, ending up as some venerated saviour-mother either. God, look at me. I’m such a mom now.”

“Well, you don’t have to feel like one quite yet. Lizi and Nova are still in the nursery, and this one isn’t born yet.”

She turned again, aided by him, so that her round blue belly pressed against his crotch. He was hard there, already.

“What are you suggesting, Adam?” she asked.

Her *sa’kir* kissed her on the lips as he stroked her fertile hips. “I’m thinking there’s still a bit of time before you have to give that speech, and a bit of time before this next baby comes. What say you and I, how should I put it, normalise some alien-human relations a bit more?”

“Mhmmm,” she moaned, kissing him back. “Sounds perfect to me, rock man.”

“You know geology is more than just rocks, right?”

“So you keep telling me. But what do you want right now, rocks or a hot blue alien elf wife?”

“Hmmm . . .”

She slapped him, giggling.

“Okay, the alien wife.”

“You know you love me,” she said. “You love the alien life.”

And so did she. For all the embarrassment and shame and anxiety of that initial transformation and pregnancy, she couldn’t imagine being anyone other than who she was now; Luniara. In fact, as she began to mount her lover once more, she began to get a little excited. She was the mother-saviour of Aesera, after all. A mother. Why not get a little practice in for the next few babies?

The End