

First Contact

JUNE 2025



I was the captain of the first human ship to make contact with an alien civilization. At least, that's how we framed it. The truth was less noble—we weren't there to talk. We came with weapons, with orders, with the quiet confidence of being the more advanced species. After all, our data showed no signs other than a technologically advanced civilization. We called it a peaceful mission, but we were planning an invasion.

But they knew. They had known for a very long time. By the time our mission on Proxima IV was greenlit, they'd had plenty of time to study us—to watch as we bickered over leadership, sabotaged rivals, cut backroom deals. In the end, the U.S. candidate, backed by the mighty Space Force won. Me. White, female, the perfect face of Earth's power in 2100. The others—men, people of color—had only ever been there for show. By the time we reached orbit, they had seen enough.

There were no threats. Just a pulse, a brief flicker on our instruments, and every system aboard the *Gaia* went down. Lights dimmed. Screens froze. I demanded a status report. Harrison, my second-in-command, a capable man who had earned his position through genuine merit, turned toward me speechless, his expression grim. We both understood immediately: the aliens had seized control of our ship.

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Years of military training didn't prepare me for that moment.

I had expected to lead a conquest against drifting sea creatures or slow, dull sentients. Instead, I found myself facing intelligence. Coordination. Cold precision. A stronger captain might have stood tall, rallied her crew, led them into the storm. But I wasn't chosen for my merits. I was chosen because I looked the part and had the right friends in high places. So when their systems shut us down and their ship too over ours, I passed out. Pathetic, I know.

When I regained consciousness, I wasn't on the *Gaia*. The lights were too bright, too blue, the hum of the ship somehow deeper. And I wasn't alone.

A dozen of them stood around me—tall, blue-skinned, still as statues. Their black suits clung to them like armor, eyes fixed on me, unblinking. I was strapped to a bed, unable to move a muscle. In that perfect moment of humiliation, I remembered the protocol: *Be an example for humankind. If captured, behave with dignity.* At least in my final moments, I would be dignified. I breathed in through my nose, smiled faintly, and said something utterly meaningless. A soft string of Earth words engineered to sound non-threatening. They exchanged looks. It worked.

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They chirped—short, clipped sounds that somehow carried intention. Then they tried something else.

Telepathy.

I didn't hear words, but I felt... a question. The shape of it. *Do you consent to communicate?*

I focused hard. Yes. In English. Then Mandarin. Then Russian. Anything I knew. I poured every language I had ever studied into that single thought.

They understood. I was taken into another chamber. Colder. Brighter. I wasn't ready for what came next. Nobody could. First, they replaced my uniform with a black and gold suit. It wasn't just clothing. I had been assigned a role in their hierarchy. I looked like someone important.

Then came the needles. Dozens of them. Piercing my arms, my legs, the base of my skull. I screamed. My body convulsed. My skin *thickened*, like wax melting and reforming, smoothing into something slick, alien. *Blue*. My core temperature plummeted—30°C. 20°C. 10°C. But I didn't shiver. I didn't die. Inside me, everything had been rewritten to match my new species. My DNA—no longer human—restructured itself around six new nucleotides. I wasn't built for oxygen anymore. That element was suddenly inert. Nitrogen, on the other hand, was vital to me.

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"Give me back my old body you fucking aliens! I don't want to be one of you!" - I screamed, to no avail.

As I felt my humanity slowly fade away, my mind was racing. I understood the misunderstanding. Their only way of communicating was by turning me into one of them. They hadn't forced this on me. They'd asked: Do you consent to communicate?

That was all the permission they needed. And I—Earth's proud invasion commander—had said yes like a fool.

What would I say to my crew if I escaped? *"They didn't torture me. They didn't force me. They asked, and I said yes."* Would they even listen to me? Or would they see only the monster I'd become?

At least, my mind would be soon be able to decipher their signals, I told myself, trying to stay positive.

Maybe they could turn me back too. And I could work as an ambassador. Was that naive? Wishful thinking? Probably. Their technology was far superior to ours. They could have annihilated us easily, but they did not seem to be a bellicose race.

As I was thinking, I barely noticed my hair falling away in clumps, revealing a skull that expanded, reshaping itself to hold more.

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More neurons. More synaptic complexity. And across it, moving markings bloomed like ink beneath the skin—ornamental and functional. My ears stretched upward, narrowing into elegant, pointed tips. I was now one indistinguishable from those disgusting creatures. I tried to scream but what came out were chirps. High-pitched, patterned, fast.

Human speech was gone. Even the *concept* of English slipped from my thoughts like vapor. I wasn't translating anything. I was thinking in something else entirely. Something stripped of metaphor or heritage, optimized for reason and speed—like GibberLink, but natural. The language humming in my skull was Neysharii.

I definitely couldn't be an ambassador any longer. I was just one of them.

The Velarx—rulers of Proxima IV—weren't the passive sea-creatures we'd imagined. They'd evolved from oceans but built citadels in orbit, watching us for years while we fought over who'd get to conquer them.

I reached out with my new mind, broadcasting desperation in sharp, pulsing waves: reverse this. Please. I didn't understand what I was agreeing to.

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Then they replied. Not through impulses or suggestions—but directly, with full clarity.

Roughly translated, the message was:

You consented to this. Also, this is a gift to you from our species. You are now more intelligent, more energy-efficient, and your cells do not decay. Why would you want to revert back to human? In return, we simply ask you to serve us.

Their tone wasn't threatening. It was calm. Icy. A statement of fact, not negotiation.

And despite my still-partially-human brain, I had to admit—I saw their logic. Their efficiency. Their superiority.

I tried to explain. I was an ambassador. I hadn't expected this change. I hadn't authorized it.

They cut me short before I finished the thought.

We know your mission. We know your intentions. Spare us the performance.

I nodded. I didn't even fight them. I simply nodded. Then, like a loyal functionary, I asked: What is my assignment?

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They answered without hesitation: You will return to the nearest human base. I froze. My body reacted before I could reason through it. My arms jerked. My throat clenched. I let out a screech—Neysharii—No! Please don't send me back! They'll kill me! The image burned behind my eyes: my crew's faces twisting in revulsion, rifles snapping up, my own voice—this voice—begging in a language they couldn't understand.

But the Velarx were unfazed. A door opened. "We have prepared for this" - they replied. Then they showed it to me. A synthetic skin. Flesh-colored. Anatomically perfect. Modeled on my original face, my original frame. It was me. Or rather, it would be. Worn like clothing.

A Velarx wrapped in the flesh of a dead captain. I swallowed hard. No protest came. Just a slow, quiet gulp. "You will return as yourself. And you will speak on our behalf." Only then did I think to ask about my crew. Shame curdled in my gut—I hadn't spared them a single thought until now. They are unharmed, they said. "Still human." There was a pause. "For now."

"What do you mean for now?"

"Well, eventually, they will be transformed as well."

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"You mean... you want to do this to *them*?" I asked, voice strained. "All of them?"

"Yes." No hesitation. "We're a multi-species civilization but all humans will be upgraded to Velarx standards. It is the optimal solution. No pain. No war. No procreation needed."

I felt a numb kind of panic rise in me. Instead of becoming a hero, I would be responsible for turning all humans into disgusting aliens.

"You shouldn't feel guilt" they added. "You are simply facilitating an inevitable process"

I couldn't cry. My ducts had been restructured. But if I could have, I would have. I needed something to hold on to.

So I reached for the only thing that promised normalcy—the suit.

The synthetic skin slid on easily, adhering to every joint, every curve. It was disturbingly perfect. When I looked in the mirror, I saw *her* again. The woman I used to be. Earth-born. Human. Confident. The lie was beautiful.

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The synthetic skin was disturbingly complete. Hair follicles would grow naturally. My altered metabolism would continue working at 10 degrees, while my skin would feel as warm as 36 degrees. I could infiltrate for months, maybe years. But it was just a mask.

I felt like I was acting in someone else's life. I *looked* human, yes—but I still *sounded* like a Velarx. That same tight, clicking stream of telepathic chirps came out every time I opened my mouth.

"How can I be convincing," I muttered, "if I sound like—"

They cut me off mid-sentence.

A soft pulse hit the base of my skull.

Suddenly, my voice shifted. The fast chirps slowed, reshaped, stretched into syllables and friction sounds. I spoke again.

And this time, it came out in English. That messy patchwork of Germanic spine and Romance gloss. Still the global standard in 2100, for reasons nobody remembered.

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"Wow," I breathed, touching my throat. "I sound like a human again."

"Ok. Send me back!" I stood before the crew of the *Gaia*, their faces a mosaic of relief and suspicion. Lieutenant Chen's grip on her sidearm didn't loosen. "You're *sure* you're unharmed?"

I smiled. A human reflex I had to consciously perform. "They're not hostile. Just cautious. They want to talk."

Lieutenant Ruiz's eyes narrowed. "You were gone for *three* days. No contact. No signals. And now you're back, insisting we lower our shields?"

I swallowed. "They could've killed me. They didn't."

Medical Officer Singh stepped forward, scanner humming. "Let's at least run a full—"

I sidestepped. "Later. Right now, Earth's delegation is waiting."

A beat of silence.

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After a short briefing, where I explained how I couldn't remember anything precise about my captivity but I still perceived no animosity from them, I had some time for myself.

I disrobed and sat on the bed.

"Sniff sniff, I'm going to betray my family, my country, the entire humanity, what am I doing? I'm a monster!" - I thought in a moment of reflection

"Have you forgotten your loyalty?" - an inner voice told me. After having securely locked the entrance, I peeked through the skin suit, lifting its edges. Blue skin, alien, repulsive, alive below.

I sighed. "This is my real body. I'm one of them now. I need to remember this." - I told myself. And dressed up again to return to my duties.

In the meanwhile, they had decoded some radio messages directed towards us, apparently a stellar map for one of their bases. They wanted to meet them there. I insisted we should trust them and convinced them. I knew exactly what would happen but I knew this was for the greater good.

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I had just wrapped a high-level meeting with Earth Confederation President Aaliyah Diaz, U.S. Space Force Commander Maya Harrison, and Chinese Secretary of Space Exploration Yue Li. We had agreed—on paper—to form a joint delegation to reach out to the alien presence. I nodded along. Silently, I sent the real message telepathically to my true superiors.

We arranged for a small diplomatic vessel, piloted by me, to enter alien-designated space. I felt a flicker of guilt. These were the most prominent representatives of Earth's major powers, and I was delivering them into the unknown like sacrificial offerings.

As soon as we crossed into the zone, our ship was seized. I stayed composed. The others, less used to these experiences, gasped and clutched their seats. A colossal alien craft materialized and invited us aboard. No suits required; the air was breathable. We were guided through curved corridors into a lounge that could have been pulled from a UN embassy waiting room. They'd studied us. They'd prepared. The others seemed to relax a bit.

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They wondered how could we communicate with them. I tried comforting them that we would find a way. We had documents with us to show them about our culture and intentions.

But I knew what came next.

Without warning, tiny needles slid silently from the seat cushions, piercing their spines in one swift, almost surgical motion. The air filled with gasps and cries. Yue tried to stand, but her legs buckled. Maya howled, clutching her arm where the needle had sunk in. Aaliyah convulsed. Her hands clawed at her uniform as her skin began to shimmer. The transformation began almost instantly. President Diaz's olive skin flushed a shimmering green, thick horns spiraling from her skull. She would belong to a different species of Velarx compared to mine, as I would learn later, one that had adapted to a different planet. Her screams turned into an alien screech, absolutely horrifying.

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My hands reached up to the seam hidden behind my ears. With a practiced gesture, I peeled off the synthetic human skin I had worn for a few days and slipped into something more comfortable provided by them. Apparently I was something of an eye-candy for them now.

The flesh-like mask curled away to reveal the glistening blue sheen of my real face beneath—smooth, horned, and embarrassed. Horns coiled outward from my skull, a new trait, probably engineered for deeper cognitive alignment with the newly turned. I could feel their waves of discomfort, fear, confusion, and tried reassuring them.

I stretched, finally free.

"I'm one of them now," I confessed, my voice smoother, rounder. "And soon, you will be too. I'm sorry, but I had no choice."

They were speechless.

"What?" Maya managed, her voice cracking. "You knew? You were one of *them* all along? What... what the hell have you done to us?"

"Shhh, just accept it!" - I suggested.

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Yue had fallen to her knees. Her skin was turning a bright yellow. Antennae burst from her forehead, twitching, confused. Her ears grew longer, slightly pointy. Her mouth trembled.

Yue's form was oddly enticing, her bright yellow skin, modified ears and black antennae somehow highlighting her beauty.

"We trusted you!" she hissed, though her voice no longer resembled anything human.

"I know," I said softly, stepping closer.

Yue almost laughed—how absurd it seemed now. She confessed she had been a spy all along, gathering intel for Beijing, trying to get a preferential channel with them. She never intended to collaborate with us. I could feel her cerebral waves clearly now, She was not lying.

How silly it sounded now to work against one another, humans against humans. Now that we were turning into something else. We smiled at the irony of it. We finally realized how important it would have been to be united as humans, now that we were no longer human.

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"Real classy move," Maya muttered, less upset than the other two. Her form had reshaped into an insectoid shape resembling that of Yue but even more extreme: dark emerald skin, her torso and legs covered in chitinous segments, her waist turning impossibly thin, while her thighs and butt grew thicker. Her arms were black and covered in spikes. I wondered how could any artificial bodysuit give her a human look given her altered body shape. Maybe she was already past that stage.

"Real classy move," she rasped. "Turning us into aliens right before the damn meeting. Kinda hard to speak for mankind when we don't look like it anymore."

Maya snarled, or tried to. I crouched beside her and met her compound gaze with my own. "You still *are* representing mankind. Just... elevated. This is how we earn a seat at their table."

Behind me, the doors to the lounge opened with a low chime. Light poured in. They had arrived.

The real meeting was about to begin. We all sat in the lounge, waiting for our mysterious host.

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A weird humanoid Alien entered the meeting room, communicating her peaceful intentions through telepathy. We sat, calmly, waiting for her speech. She oozed authority. She was tall, her skin a muted jade-green. Two curved horns swept back from her temples in elegant arcs. Her eyes, slanted and violet, flicked across the room with composed disinterest.

The leader of the Velarx apparently belonged to yet another subspecies, the Kra s'haons. The highest caste of the Velarx. I learned I had been turned into the lowest of them, to my dismay, apparently doomed my low moral qualities and inner strength. Those blue creatures I encountered were apparently given the most menial tasks by the Velarx.

Shame prickled under my skin. I kept my eyes down, unable to meet the gaze of the ambassadors, who now looked at me with thinly veiled amusement. They were prisoners, yes, but they could draw a quiet satisfaction from the fact that, even here, even now, I ranked beneath them.

The Velarx leader repeated what I already knew. Only now, it was clear my role had been greatly reduced.

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The Kra s'haon continued her explanation, calm and deliberate. Her plan was simple: every human would eventually become a Velarx slave. It was the most efficient way to colonize new planets. Hopefully, with the help of the three delegates, the transition of power would be effective and swift. In exchange, they would be granted wealth and some power over the new slaves. I looked at them. Two sat frozen in fear. The third, Commander Maya Harrison, remained upright, her posture defiant despite the changes overtaking her body. Her irises glowed a deep yellow now while her skin shifted in color, slowly replaced by a segmented chitinous exoskeleton. She was the first to speak. Her voice rang with defiance and humanity, despite her modified body.

"I don't care what future you and your twisted breed are planning," she said. "I won't betray my planet. If it's war you want, we'll give it to you. But we won't kneel."

The alien leader showed no anger, only a quiet disappointment. "I had hoped your species appointed its more rational minds to such positions," she murmured. "It seems I was mistaken. The first specimen we collected was far less courageous... but at least cooperative." I lowered my eyes, flushing beneath my altered skin. I knew she was referring to me.

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"No matter," she added. "We don't need you anymore." continued.

I smiled, sensing my moment. I turned toward the Velarx leader and spoke with purpose, confirming my loyalty. She nodded slightly. We had already understood each other in our thoughts, of course. It was a reasonable idea, after all.

With a gesture, she ordered a bodysuit to be generated—an exact replica of Commander Harrison's human appearance. It shimmered into existence within seconds. I stepped into it without hesitation. I felt euphoric. I was human again, as Captain Harrison. From captive to Commander. From discarded to irreplaceable.

"I might have been too quick to judge you" - the Velarx told me. "Despite your shortcomings, you have some... qualities we might need. And you know human nature, so to speak." I nodded. She explained me I would now impersonate Maya for the foreseeable future. She would take care of the other two. Together, we would return to Earth and announce the bittersweet news. While I showed myself to the others, the supreme leader turned back to Maya, who had been stripped of her uniform. Her body was now fully Velarx, her torso now segmented like a chitinous shell.

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Her fate was sealed. She was to be relocated to a remote planet, populated by her new Velarx subspecies. There, she would live out her days as a breeder for the colony.

Maya screamed, her voice raw and panicked. She called me a traitor, a coward, a monster. She wept and cursed. None of it would matter. I stared at her with a smug smile on my face. "Enjoy your new assignment, Commander," I whispered. "I'll take good care of your reputation while I sign the treaties you tried refusing and enjoy a life of luxury." History would remember her not as a martyr, but as a collaborator. After a while, her vocal cords ceased their function, replaced by the soft clicking of Velarx antennae. Her despair radiated through the room like a pulse. She begged us to save her. I think she realized the mistake she had made at that point. But that ship had sealed for her. The other two delegates, until then frozen in horror, finally talked.

Their pledge of loyalty was sincere. With the promise of skins resembling their human forms, they agreed to do their best to make the transition of power swift and peaceful. They dropped to their knees and bowed low before the Kra s'haon. With the knowledge of her total defeat clear, Maya underwent hibernation.

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I lead the return expedition with the other two, too shocked to speak.

I had arranged for my true identity, Captain Lawson, to become some sort of hero by faking my own death following a suicide mission against the aliens. For centuries, there would be patriots chanting my name, associating it with bravery and sacrifice while I was on my way to completely destroy the name of the brave commander Maya Harrison.

I played with my black hair waiting for our arrival. What a funny situation I was in, a white woman, turned into a blue-skinned alien, only to return to Earth disguised as a Black woman.

How would the public opinion react to the news that a Black woman had sold the entire US population into slavery in exchange for a sort of governor position? I was more than a little worried, but I knew the Velarx would always assist us in case of peril.

Who was truly alone, in the meanwhile, was the real Maya Harrison, on her way to a new life on a new planet.

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After a period of hibernation, she woke up, her senses still adjusting. She could see in the infrared spectrum now. With revulsion, she noticed something twitching behind her—small, translucent wings, soft and juvenile, from her back. The sight made her stomach turn, though she no longer had one. She noticed her ship had reached destination where she was discharged. She stepped onto the dry soil of Moxx 4, breathing the ethanol atmosphere as if it was fresh air. It was thin and still, tinged with metallic dust that clung to her chitinous skin. “I should be dead by now” - she thought. She wanted to escape, but where? She had no idea whatsoever where in the galaxy she was, and the stars looked so unfamiliar in the crimson sky.

An insectoid figure approached. “Please help me” - she begged him. The words in Neysharii did not come naturally, but it was the only language she could still form. “Ah, you must be one of the new breeders from the motherland,” he said in accented Neysharii, glancing at his device. “We’ve been expecting more arrivals. The colony needs you. What’s your origin designation? You look exotic.” Maya hesitated. “I’m... captive,” she said. “I was turned into a Velarx. I’m...” She wanted to say *human*, but there was no such word in their lexicon. After a pause, she added quietly, “I’m alien.”

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The officer looked at her with a mild frown, antennae dipping slightly. "I'm sorry. That practice is still... debated. There are movements on Moxx 4 that oppose involuntary integration. I'll make sure you won't be treated differently from other Velarx breeders." Maya twitched her wings. He seemed to be a kind soul. "This colony is underdeveloped," he added. "We have five males for every female. Breeders like you are vital here." She nodded. "What were you before?" he asked casually. "I was a commander," Maya replied, sounding uncertain. "Of a powerful tribe. The Americans from Earth." The officer blinked, unfamiliar with the name. "Never heard of them." He tapped something on his tablet and offered a polite, if mechanical, smile. "Well then, I hope you find fulfillment in your new life. You'll be fertilized every five moons. Leave the eggs in the marked boxes and someone will take care of them."

Maya said nothing but her yellow eyes went wide. "Eggs? What on Earth had they done to her poor body to turn her into a giant insectoid able to depose eggs?" As the officer turned to leave, she stood motionless, the wings on her back fluttering involuntarily. The breeding facility was in front of her, her new home for the rest of her days. "Could you... show me the way?" - she asked the officer, a little shy.

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I went through the speech I was supposed to read. Playing the part of the evil traitor bitch is fun - I thought - especially when you have someone powerful saving your back.

I was stuck as a Black woman for the time being, something I would have found incredibly disturbed not long ago and now didn't bother me the least. Now? It didn't bother me at all. The brown flesh-suit covering my true blue skin was almost... comforting. Funny how you only realize what you share with humans once you've lost your own humanity.

I stepped up to the podium, the press and senators hanging on my every word. Their faces were a mix of dread and desperate curiosity.

"I have signed a treaty," I announced as Maya, my voice smooth as steel, "guaranteeing a steady supply of human subjects for conversion to Velarx standards. The process is humane, I assure you. Compliance is the only way to preserve what's left of your world."

I paused, letting the words settle. A beat of silence. The air in Washington was thick enough to choke on. Politicians, generals, diplomats—all frozen, staring at the woman they once called *Commander Maya Harrison*.

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"Do not entertain the idea of removing me," I continued. "I am under the protection of our new overlords."

As if on cue, the air trembled. Two massive Velarx vessels hovered silently above the city, casting long, unnatural shadows over the Capitol dome. I looked over the crowd with something between pity and calculation.

"We've already lost Captain Lawson to a... *brave* but reckless act of defiance." A cold smile touched my lips. "Our honor remains intact. This is for the best." I knew my name, at least, would be remembered as that of a hero.

Then, the final blow:

"The president has bravely volunteered to undergo the first upgrade," I announced, my tone calm but carrying over the hushed murmurs of the audience. "She will make her public appearance soon. Until then, I will be assuming her duties." Silence gripped the audience. No one dared challenge me.

Dr. Anna Nicole Shope, President of the US, had in truth been deceived. She was told that by offering herself, she could spare her people the public humiliation of forced conversion.

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Anna had agreed without hesitation, driven by the same stubborn compassion that had defined her career. Unlike me, she genuinely cared for the country she led. She was a half white, half Latina woman who embodied modern US at its finest. Young, female and mixed, while still white-passing.

A small shuttle took her from Earth. Within the sterile, humming chamber of the Velarx medical bay, the process began. She was met by blue little aliens who telepathically told to disrobe - human clothes wouldn't be of any use for her soon. She was terrified but told herself she was doing the right thing. For her country. For mankind. She would go down in history as a hero, and she liked the sound of that, too.

"What are you turning me into?" she asked, her voice trembling but still edged with resolve.

The alien technicians did not answer. Probably some sort of alien like them, she thought, horrified.

She stepped on a medical bed, resembling a human one, no doubt to make her feel more at home.

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Green flushed into her complexion almost instantly, spreading like liquid through her veins. The alien reagents soaked into her tissue, rewriting her biology at the cellular level. It didn't hurt that much, only a little. Her smooth skin quickly developed a bright, opalescent sheen—first soft, then subtly scaly as new protective layers formed. Her breathing slowed, deepened; the muscles along her limbs tightened with alien precision.

Hours passed in fragments of pain and sedation. By the time she regained her senses, the restraints bit gently into her wrists and thighs, holding her still against the transformation's tremors. Something new seemed to protrude from her tailbone. A small reptilian tail, still developing. Combined with her new skin, she looked like a freak. Her body was no longer entirely human. "Fuck" - she mumbled, still half-sedated. It's really happening.

Her wide, dark eyes scanned the alien instruments around her—until they landed on me, standing in the observation chamber.

I had in the meanwhile been take aboard to help her readjust to her new life.

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I unsealed the skinsuit with a hiss, peeling away the false human flesh. My true form emerged—skin a deep cerulean, limbs longer and leaner than any human's, eyes catching the cold light with an unnatural gleam.

"Mankind is doomed," I said evenly. "But you will still serve a purpose."

Anna's eyes widened in horror. "Maya... you too? Do you work for them now?"

I let the silence stretch just long enough to make her squirm. Then I stepped closer, my voice low and cutting.

"I don't work for them," I replied. "I *am* one of them, you idiot. And soon... you will be too."

She rose shakily from the bed. Her body was fully changed now—skin a seamless layer of emerald scales that caught the light like polished armor. Her chest was smooth, rounded, inhuman, stripped of its former softness. Segments traced her abdomen in precise, biological geometry. A long tail, powerful and alive, flicked nervously behind her. "Nice tail, Madam President," I said, letting the words sting like a slap. She tried to hide it, coiling it close to her legs, shame burning in her eyes

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Her black hair began to loosen in thick strands, sliding down her shoulders and pooling at her feet. She gasped, her clawed hands darting up to her scalp in panic.

"Shhh," I murmured, stepping closer. "You'll be fine as a bald alien queen. In fact, soon you'll find the thought of hair... revolting."

Even as I spoke, the smooth skin of her scalp shifted and split, pushing upward into ridged, emerald crests. The formation grew taller and grander than my own—a sign of elevated status among our kind. She would be, for now, a queen of the American community, a figurehead to guide them through their final days of unity before their people were scattered to the colonies across different worlds.

The Velarx instructed her to broadcast a message to her fellow citizens. She stood there, newly crowned in alien regality. "Give me something," she said, her voice edged with desperation. "Anything to cover myself." Her gaze shifted to the nearest attendant, who offered a sleek garment of alien weave—thin, black, and fitted like liquid armor. She took it without thanks, pulling it over her glistening green form. It didn't hide her inhumanity, but it gave her the illusion of control. Even though the neural implants were rewiring her brain, some modesty was left in her.

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In time, her crest unfurled into a full crown—an intricate lattice of emerald ridges. Neural implants had taken root deep within her skull, fusing with both brain and spine. They made her fluent in two tongues: English and Neysharii, the Velarx's own koine lingua franca. But they also stripped away her human sense of honour, replacing it with a rigid, unquestioning adherence to Velarx law and ethics.

The old Senate chamber, long emptied of human lawmakers, had been transformed into her audience hall. Here, she would sit—poised, motionless but for the slow flick of her tail—deciding who would be next to undergo conversion.

The process was far from random. The wealthiest citizens found themselves last in line, their transformation delayed in exchange for lavish gifts and tributes in Velarx currency. She accepted them without shame; such offerings were the natural order of things now.

Thus, the final leader of the United States was no noble martyr, no steadfast defender of democracy—but a half-alien, jewel-crowned despot, presiding over the dismantling of her own species.

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Meanwhile, the real Maya was submerged in the single, all-consuming purpose of her new existence: the production of eggs for her colony.

She sat on the designated spot in the hatching hub and screamed as she produced eggs, her insectoid claws grasping the slick surface for grip.

Her time on Moxx 4 showed her that her anatomy had changed on a deeper level than she originally thought. She still had ovaries but her reproductive organs had changed to accommodate for a different kind of intercourse. Her outer appearance had also slightly changed, her wings extending further, her hands morphing into insectoid claws unable to manipulate objects as before.

The rhythm of her days had become a syrupy, hypnotic loop: the frantic coupling, the exhausted, jelly-like rest, and the relentless, screaming production of eggs. This dull routine was punctuated by lessons on Velarx history and etiquette. She could feel the change in her mind, too. It wasn't a loss of intelligence, but a quiet erosion of self. The frantic, sharp-edged individuality she had carried from Earth was smoothing out, replaced by a profound, placid connection to the swirling, chitinous life around her. Her colony was no longer just her home; it was becoming her motherland, her soul, her everything.

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Meanwhile, on Earth, the transformation process continued efficiently under the corrupt rule of the Velarx President.

Sandra was still in college, a working-class girl with little to her name, when the call came. She knew exactly what it meant. There was no money for bribes, no strings to pull. Her status as a student didn't make her essential to the running of Earth's stripped-down society. So she accepted her fate, quietly, almost meekly. She waved goodbye to family and friends, a traumatic step that was becoming ordinary life lately, and got ready.

Before leaving for the facility, she shaved off her soft brown hair, her hands trembling as each lock fell into the sink. Her new form did not need those brown locs, and patients, as they were called, were required to shave beforehand to save time for the procedure.

At the facility, in a cold lab room, her clothes were torn away, shredded without care. She screamed—not from pain yet, but from the anticipation, the humiliation of it all. She knew she would soon adopt her permanent, alien new form.

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Then came the needle, sliding into her vein and seeding its poison. Her heartbeat increased, then slowed down, as her organism shifted to an alien physiology. She painfully registered every change. She felt weird, not exactly sick, just as if her body was readjusting to a different temperature. Indeed, her core temperature dropped to 10 degrees celsius.

Within minutes her pale skin began to darken unnaturally, shifting shade by shade. It wasn't the dark of an African complexion—no warmth, no life—only a sick, flawless anthracite grey, smooth and cold, as though her flesh had been sculpted from smoke-darkened stone.

Her wide green eyes stood out all the more sharply against the ashen mask her face had become.

What kind of monstrous creature was she being turned into? She was definitely scared now.

She was told by a pre-recorded video: she now belonged to a subrace of the Velarx designed not for war or command, but for amusement. A living diversion, meant to bring cheer to her overlords—like a **jester**, or some other jolly creature kept to entertain.

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Before she could react to the humiliating news, a permanent wave helmet was lowered onto her bald head, beginning a series of treatments.

Her hair follicles meanwhile were killed off one by one by electrolysis, while new follicles were grafted into her dark skin, together with neural implants.

Sandra tried to scream, but the sound that came out was warped, strangled. Her tongue had been reshaped for other, more intimate purposes. The range of her voice was gone; what little emerged was guttural, broken, more like an animal's noise than a human cry. Her thoughts faltered too. She was smart, a college student, for fuck's sake! Not a jester for space colonizers! And yet, now everything moved sluggishly, as though thick fog had seeped into her skull. So she sat still and let the machines alter her further.

Within minutes the machines retracted, leaving her dazed and her brain fogged with new conditioning. From her scalp sprouted odd, woolly tufts of blue hair, along with a pair of small yellow horns. She couldn't see any of that because there were no mirrors in the room to give her some more time to accept her new form before seeing herself, but she could feel it.

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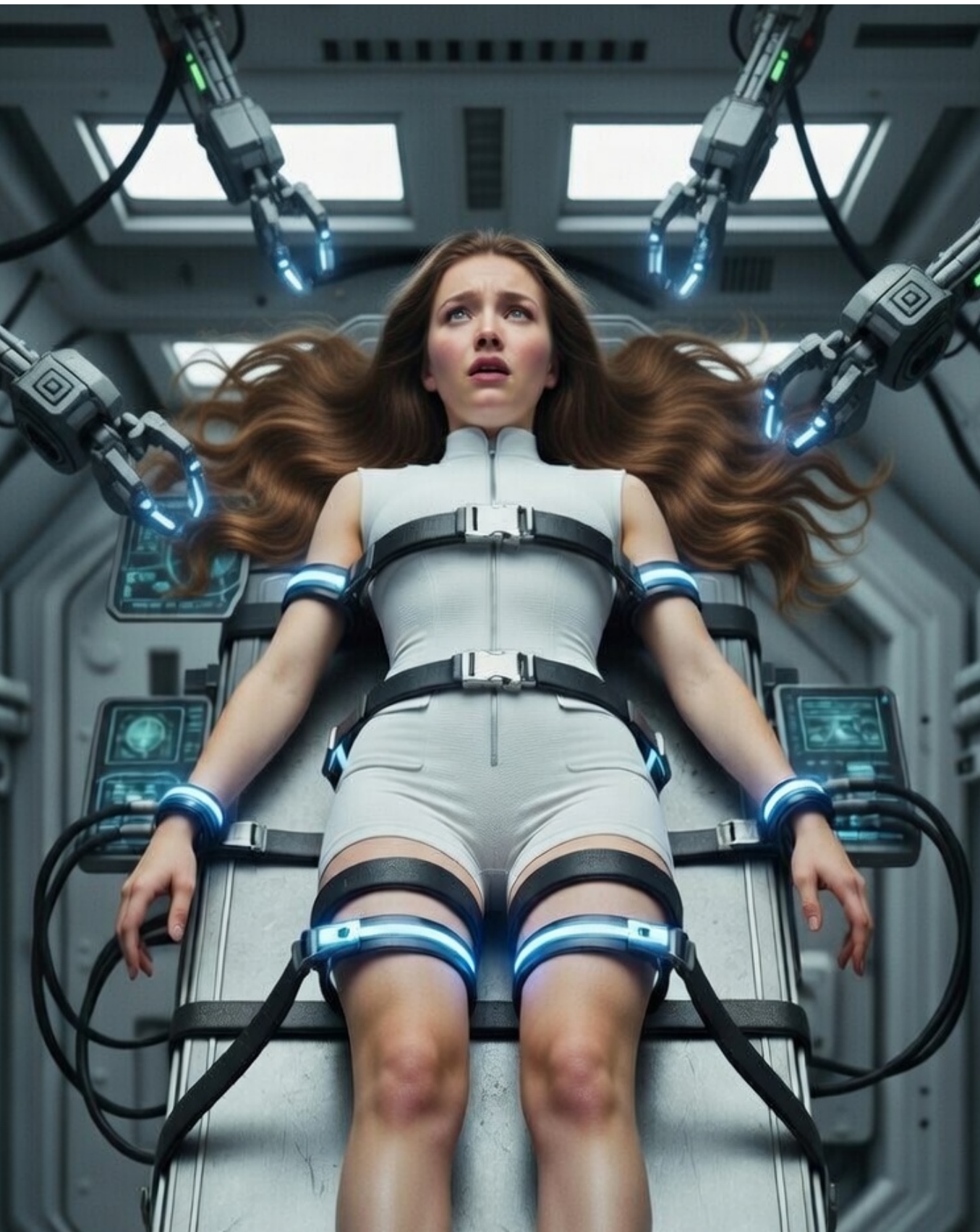
The texture of her new hair was nothing like her silky brown locs, just touching it gave her chills realizing no amount of straightening could have given it a decent shape. It was like cotton, a soft mass of fine intricately tangled hair. Her horns felt monstrously hard and smooth.

She staggered forward, confused, her woolly blue hair falling into her eyes. Its color made her cry. Was that her natural color palette now? Black skin and blue hair?

Anyway, she wanted to get out of there now, but the sterile corridors stretched out before her like a maze she no longer knew how to solve. For the first time, Sandra realized fully what she had become: diminished. A plaything, a jester bred for the Velarx's amusement. Lost in her own body, her mind too dulled to resist, she was utterly at their mercy. Even simple things—finding the door, remembering which way she came from—felt complicated. She cried loud, making weird noises.

When they came, they took her for her horns and guided her to her new life, naked. At least she did not feel cold.

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Another victim was Ellie. She was just about to get married when her human life ended abruptly.

The Velarx didn't leave anything to chances. They started carefully selecting the best candidates for mating and reproduction. Converted humans quickly became popular among the Velarx lover classes. In a matriarchal society like that of the Velarx, some male specimen found themselves struggling to find female partners and yet pressured into partnership with any female specimen, even if belonging to other variants of Velarx, even if converted human females. Given how humble and submissive humans were with respect to them, some male Velarx decided to invest their life savings into applying for a Velarx council-sponsored terrestrial concubine, a star wife, as they were sometimes referred to. Having a human converted mating partner was seen as something exotic, frowned upon by the upper classes but also very popular.

Ellie had been targeted for being a very fertile specimen, something that made her price tag even higher. At the same time, she couldn't afford the bribes required to escape her destiny, so when the call came, she waved goodbye to her fiancée and was forced to board the spaceship taking her to her remote destination, as the transformation process would take place during the long journey.

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Her beautiful hair, once her crowning glory, but loathed by the Velarx, went first, replaced by a callous structure allowing her to connect with other, similar Velarx subspecies.

The procedure left her green, smooth and with an entirely different metabolism, brain structure and internal anatomy.

She wanted to scream, to cry, but she felt only a deep sadness in her new brain. After some issues with some rebellious transformed specimen, the Velarx had developed a procedure to rewire the victims' brains to feel docile and submissive to the Velarx. She realized that there was no point in resisting their overpowering technology and that her personal tragedy vanished in the background for the upper Velarx management.

However, emotional memories and triggers were harder to break, but the finest Velarx psychologists had developed a procedure to prevent any rage or attempts of rebellion. In order to make the separation sharper and to give the couple some closure, the Velarx allowed and encouraged the newly transformed woman and her ex-fiancee to see each other one last time by exchanging video messages.

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Given the distance, the delay between messages was of several months, and increasing as the spaceship took her to Proxima V, only a few light years from Earth. Moreover, given that the spaceship was traveling at a speed close to the speed of light - albeit below the interstellar limit of $0.98c$ - time flowed differently in the brains of the two lovers. In Ellie's perspective, the whole trip - including the traumatic transformation and all - took less than a terrestrial year, while for her ex-fiancee it took about 5 years. Her new brain allowed her to understand all of this intuitively, powerful as it was.

So she had to endure the unpleasant experience to see her ex in despair after her departure, disgusted by her appearance, and eventually to see him move on and marry another woman - all in the span of a few months.

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Not that she could understand anything he was saying - his low voice sounded similar to the blow of the wind to her new anatomy, and her linguistic center in the brain had been rewired to only process Neysharii, but she still got the meaning.

To help her overcome the heartbreak, the Velarx made her notice how her new body was sending her new signals. Human males like her ex looked hairy and disgusting to her, while fellow Velarx specimen turned her on, to her embarrassment.

After some initial resistance, she came to terms with her new sexual preference, and when she finally arrived and met the male Velarx that had commissioned her kidnapping and transformation into an alien concubine, she realized she felt nothing but lust and deference to the specimen in front of her at the spaceport in Proxima V.

Ellie, now known as XEEP, felt a sudden urge to make good use of her new tongue, a long, black, snake-like appendices that in many Velarx subspecies constituted the closest thing to a sexual organ.

Her partner was impressed by how docile XEEP was, but also embarrassed by her naive and immoral behavior, which attracted some negative comments by bystanders.

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"Just another of those earthlings. I bet those terrestrials are stealing the finest of our males. Just because they want a docile little creature to please her. Can you imagine she used to be pink and hairy until not long ago? Yak!".

The initial impact with the culture was difficult. Despite her appearance, people could immediately tell she was not a native Velarx, and that she was, despite her upgraded brain, pretty dumb. Life on Proxima V - actually, on a small planer orbiting around it - was very artificial. The thick ammonium atmosphere didn't allow her to ever see a clear sky, and Velarx life happened mostly indoors anyway. She missed direct sunlight, but her green thin new skin wouldn't have lasted a minute under a spring afternoon sun in South Carolina.

Still, despite the initial cultural shock, Xeep showed she had the qualities to become a good companion. Within a few months, she was pregnant with a Velarx baby girl.

The last, disturbing photo she sent to her ex-fiancee portrayed her with a pregnant belly, smiling and happy in her new home, apparently at peace with her new destiny as a Velarx mother-to-be.

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In the meanwhile I had gotten used to being Maya Harrison and rarely ever got out of the bodysuit, if not to let my blue Velarx skin breathe. The Velarx realized humans were less resourceful, less adaptable to life on Velarx colonies. Countless cases of humans-turned-Velarx who lost their minds or refused to adapt to their new roles and even tried to rebel made the upper management realize the gift of Velarx civilization was wasted on many of them. Many Velarx politicians stressed on the importance of assimilation and integration of the new specimen, and their opinion prevailed in the High Council.

The intake of humans was therefore slowed down to a few millions per month to keep new Velarx under control. At that rate, it would take about 40 years to upgrade the whole humanity. And by then, newborn humans would need to undergo the process, too. In the most realistic scenario, some humans would continue to exist, at least for scientific research and species preservation. My role as a facilitator was extended indefinitely, since there would still be humans to mediate with in the foreseeable future. What started as a temporary measure to take over her identity turned out into a long-term solution.

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My name, well, her name had been initially feared by the majority of mankind, American or not, and cursed by the few who had been turned Velarx. With time, however, people began to realize that our surrender had been inevitable, given the overpowering technology the Velarx had developed, and started to see me as responsible for the miraculous slowdown of the transformation process.

President Shope, instead, had embraced her new role as a corrupt tyrannical alien despot, accepting lavish gifts and tributes in Velarx currency by the wealthiest people in exchange for an unlimited delay in the alien transformation process. Since the rate of the large-scale Alien transformation process of mankind had been largely slowed down, the fear of immediate transformation had waned, but the bribes would go on for several more decades now.

Eventually, she was seen as the real traitor. Funny, given that she had had no control over her mind alteration, while I had voluntarily surrendered to the Velarx. I guess President Shope's green skin didn't help in that perception. Interestingly, my fake brown skin was now helping my popularity.