



Manny for the Alien (Alien Mates)

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Category: LGBT+

Description: Marco

Im desperate for a job, to pay my rent, and get a boyfriend. Not necessarily in that order. Thats why when I come across a sexy blue guy on the Alien Mates app who is searching for a nanny for his kids. I jump on the opportunity.

Hyacinth doesn't want me to be his play thing the way I want him to, and he certainly doesn't want me for forever, but the longer I spend with him and his family, the harder it is getting for me.

I want love, and this one comes with an entire family who I adore. The problem is, I dont want to just be the nanny anymore. I want to be the second parent and Hyacinths other half.

Hyacinth

I have been searching for someone to raise my children with me. Marco is the best person I could have found in any galaxy. The moment I meet him, I am taken by him and ready to fit him into my life and the lives of my children.

But Marco keeps me at arms length. At first, I think he needs time to get to know me, but now Im starting to realize that Marco thinks hes only here for the children.

Well, I am going to have to change his mind and show him that I am a worthy partner, because Im not willing to let him go now that Ive found him.

Total Pages (Source): 7

Page 1

Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 3:19 am

Chapter One

MARCO

My heart sank as I scrolled through the available job listings.

I'd seen all of these already. I'd seen them every day this week to be exact. I had the website set to alert me every time something new came up, but my email was silent. That didn't stop me from checking religiously, of course.

I needed something now, even if it was temporary. Even if it paid like shit. I would basically take anything.

Sighing heavily, I forced myself to shut the browser just as my phone pinged .

For a split second, I fooled myself into believing it was an email with a new possible job, but no, that was one of my dating aps. Alien Mates , to be exact.

It seemed I'd matched with someone.

A little flutter of hope went through me as I opened the message.

Meeting someone right now would be great. My romantic side hoped for the most—a long-term boyfriend, companionship, love—but then a dick pic came through.

I was taken aback for a full minute, staring at the thing which was distinctly not human. It was kind of shaped like a big, fleshy pear. Would that work ..?

“No, Marco!” I told myself, shaking my head.

I didn’t need any weird alien sex that might lead to an ER visit. Not unless the guy wanted more...

Another message came through before I could decide how or if I should respond.

Hey

I rolled my eyes.

And if the dick pic wasn’t enough to turn me off, the lazy message was.

I shut my phone, releasing an even heavier sigh and moved from my desk to my bed where I could dramatically collapse with enough room so as not to hurt myself.

My bed bounced under my weight as I threw myself onto it, groaning loudly.

Here I was at twenty-nine, months from my next big birthday with nothing to show for it.

I’d lost my job months ago. My savings were just about gone. I was on the verge of losing my apartment and probably having to move back in with my parents and I was so desperate and lonely that I had briefly considered trying to get to know pear-dick alien a minute ago.

This was where I was in life at the moment. Lucky me.

I’d managed to keep my chin up most of the time. After all, I had realized accounting wasn’t for me ages ago. I had loved it less and less as the years had gone by. I just hadn’t known what else to do with myself. Lying here now though, with no prospects

whatsoever, hopelessness hit me hard.

“What was I going to do?”

My phone pinged again, another message from pear-dick alien, I presumed, so I didn't get up to check it.

I was open to aliens, I didn't discriminate to be honest and some of them were super hot. Of course, I was on all of the other ones too. At the end of the day, they were more or less all the same, but I would meet someone in any way I needed to.

It had been far too long since I'd had someone to curl up on the couch with or whisper to in the middle of the night. My last proper boyfriend had dumped me about five years ago now. Again, at the time I hadn't minded. We had already drifted apart and didn't have much in common. It hadn't bothered me much and casual dating had suited me.

I was sensing a theme; me, ungrateful for what I had until it was long gone. At this point, I would kill for my old job and old boyfriend back, if only for the comfort of knowing them.

Eventually I convinced myself to stop moping, to get up and wash my face and brush my teeth before I fell asleep.

Maybe I could watch a bit of TV before bed. It wasn't that late yet.

On my way to the living room, I remembered my phone and grabbed it, swiping it open to Alien Mates to see what new nonsense my match was sending me.

I paused when I saw the message though and it took me a minute to realize that it was from someone else.

Thank you for matching with me. I see that you enjoy cooking.

Huh. Someone who had actually read my profile and was trying to start a conversation. That was always nice.

I swiped to his profile, walking into the living room to get comfy on the couch while I looked at him.

Hyacinth. I remembered him. A pretty blue skinned alien with what looked like wings behind him. It was hard to tell. He'd only put up one picture and it was a bit dark, but I remembered his profile; Planet Sanctity, six-foot-three, anesthesiologist, single dad...

I practically ran back to the chat, quickly replying because I'd already left him on read for a few minutes and I definitely didn't want him to think I wasn't interested because I was. A tall, sexy single dad who worked in healthcare?! Sign me up even if he had a pumpkin dick!

I love to cook. What's your fav meal?

There is a dish from my home planet I have been fantasizing about.

His reply came instantly, and I grinned. I could only imagine what it would be.

Do you know the recipe? Maybe I can make it for you.

The flirtation banter at the start was always my favorite. I was on the edge of my seat, waiting to see if he was interested enough to set a proper date.

I don't know if Earth has the ingredients...

To be honest, much of Earth's food is very bland...

Oh. Damn. Either he didn't get that I was flirting or he just wanted to chat, but I couldn't help but try again.

Can you describe it? Maybe I can come up with something similar.

It is a grain dish, filled with large nuts and steamed in the leaves of a common tree back home.

Huh... okay, maybe I couldn't help with that. I didn't think I'd tried anything quite that exotic. I'd been hoping it would be something closer to Italian food.

I should let you go sleep now. You must have work in the morning as most humans do.

Jesus. This guy was a bit on the dry side. I knew there was a cultural difference though, and I didn't have anything to wake up for, so I tried to keep the conversation going if only for a bit longer.

No, I am looking for work at the moment.

It took him a minute to reply while I chewed my fingernails in anticipation.

What are you looking for?

Literally anything.

I'm this close to losing my apartment. Got let go from my job almost four months ago but can't find anything else.

What are your qualifications?

I laughed out loud at the turn of the conversation. Who was this guy?

Why? Do you have a position for me?

I paused, realizing how it sounded, but just as I was frantically typing that I wasn't looking for a sugar daddy, he sent another message through.

Possibly. I have been searching for someone to take a position in my home but am having very little luck. Are you good with children?

Good with children? For a moment I went completely blank, wondering why he'd ask that, and then I remembered that he had kids. Was this Hyacinth looking for a babysitter? Hell, it would be better than nothing while I looked for something else.

I'm not bad with them. I used to babysit my little sister growing up.

Weak resume, but it was all I had.

And I already know you can cook their meals too. Would you like to come discuss details? I'll have time tomorrow if you're free.

My heart started pounding. The idea of meeting him for a potential job—even a small part time gig, made me nervous after months of trying to find something.

Sure thing.

We spent a few minutes going back and forth about the time and then Hyacinth politely bid me goodnight and that was it.

So much for flirting and getting a cute, reliable boyfriend, but hell, at this point a job had to come first. Hopefully he would like me.

I wasn't sure where I'd been expecting an alien immigrant to be living, but Hyacinth's house was a normal one on the east end, which basically meant that he was pretty loaded. Seriously. A house in the city?! Who could afford that?

I had gone on exactly one date with another alien about a year ago and aside from that, rarely met them. But I knew that you never knew what to expect when it came to aliens. The array of planets and cultures out there was infinite.

He'd seemed pretty normal, if a little formal, through text, but I was still nervous as I lifted my hand and knocked.

He was expecting me already but for a moment I was sure that no one was home until I could hear footsteps from within and finally the door swung open.

I opened my mouth to say hi, but the words dried in my throat as I landed eyes on Hyacinth. Holy hell. He was so hot.

He was blue, which I already knew, but for a moment I was sure that he was the model used on the Alien Mates billboards and ads. His skin seemed to glisten and his dark, exotic features were alluring.

And I was staring.

I blinked, tried with all my might to shut my gaping jaw and failed miserably because he shifted and wings lifted up behind him.

Like two ethereal butterfly wings that caught the light in every iridescent shade of blue, purple, pink and green.

“Wow,” I breathed.

Then finally, I caught the way that the poor guy was looking at me. Like a deer in headlights, like he didn’t know what to say or do.

“Fuck,” I muttered. “Sorry.”

I clapped a hand over my mouth as I remembered that this was supposed to be an interview to work with children. His children.

“Oh my god, I wouldn’t swear in front of your kids, I promise.”

He still didn’t seem to know what to say and for a split second I considered just turning around walking to the nearest grocery store and buying a tub of ice cream, and using the rest of my savings on booze to drown myself in. I finally had an interview and this was how I acted.

But Hyacinth seemed to recover before I could do anything.

He offered a polite smile and moved out of the way for me to enter.

“Please, come in.”

Heart racing, I stepped forward, immediately swept up in a beautiful floral scent as I entered into his home.

Page 2

Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 3:19 am

Chapter Two

HYACINTH

The human, Marco, seemed to calm down once he entered. The papilionoidean pheromones effected humans the same way that they affected our own kind and I had doused the doorway in my most welcoming scent upon moving into this residence. It was best to avoid conflict and start on a peaceful foot when someone came to visit and was common practice back home. I hadn't given it much thought growing up on Sanctity; it was just one of our many customs.

But here on Earth, their behaviors and customs sometimes made me nervous, so I had started to rely on my home planet's traditions more and more since moving here.

For example, I was sure that Marco's staring for so long was not the way that humans normally behaved coming to someone's home. I was used to the opening pleasantries after living here for two years now. His stammering meant that he was nervous. I thought that was quite sweet considering that my stomach had been in knots all morning with the prospect of having someone new watch my children.

Then there was the fact that when I'd opened that door and seen the man I'd been considering, maybe even hoping, to date, I'd been at a total loss for words myself.

He was of average height, and I supposed average brown hair and eye color. Even his skin was the same medium brown-peach that many humans had. But he was such a lovely creature with expressive eyes and freckles across his nose. He was so exotically human. Like he was earth, whereas I was air.

These romanticized thoughts had a way of distracting me lately.

I cleared my throat and tried to remember how to socialize like a normal person.

“Thank you for coming,” I said. “It’s nice to meet you. I am Hyacinth.”

“Marco,” he said, smiling and offering his hand.

I took it, immediately taken by his warmth and shook.

“This way,” I said, indicating the doors into the kitchen.

Marco followed without saying a word, accompanying me at the table with a tentative smile.

“I like your house,” he informed me. “It’s so normal.”

His cheeks reddened when he said it and he grimaced.

“Not in a bad way, it’s just, you know, because you’re an alien.”

He visibly winced.

“I’ll stop talking now, sorry.”

I had to bite back the urge to laugh. His fumbling was rather adorable.

Marco seemed sweet... and he looked just like his pictures but even nicer in person. His personality shone through his eyes. He was probably the type who couldn’t keep any of his feelings hidden. I liked that.

“Thank you for coming today,” I started. “You said that you have experience with children, right?”

“Uh, kind of,” he said, blushing. “My sister is ten years younger than me and I used to babysit her.”

“I see.”

“I do like kids,” he went on quickly. “I also used to volunteer with the kids soccer team at my high school...”

I nodded thoughtfully.

“The way you are with them matters more than your experience. I just need someone to care for them and treat them kindly while I am at work. Our previous help moved away to attend college and the children miss her dearly. Of course, I do too. I need the help.”

“A single dad with kids and a demanding job, I can believe it.”

I smiled warmly.

“Would you have a problem with staying here?” I asked. “Your food and accommodations of course, will be free. I would prefer live-in help, especially for the youngest.”

He considered and then nodded.

“I don’t mind moving in. But, um, how many of these kids are there?”

“Three,” I informed him. “Azalea is in the first grade. Iris is three now, and Aster is

one. The two of them stay home and require the most time... Would you like to meet them?"

I watched his reaction carefully. It was clear that he was nervous about caring for such young children. If it was too much for him, I would be able to tell straight away, but after a moment, he nodded.

"Yes, is she home?"

"Yes," I said, standing. "Follow me."

I led him up the stairs and down the hallway to the nursery my youngest shared. The moment I opened the door, his breath caught.

I glanced back, catching him looking around the room in awe. Our previous nanny had reacted in a similar way. It was unusual, I supposed for humans to see so many plants in one room. But for our kind, it was important to mimic our natural environment as much as possible in the early years of life. It was important for their development to be surrounded by the scents and sounds that would help them to be healthy. There were vines hanging, moss on the walls, two fountains gently trickling water and a mist in the air from the humidifier.

Against the back wall, a hammock hung, and in it, my sweet girl had been napping.

It seemed that she was awake now, though, as the top of her messy dark hair lifted into view, followed by two round green eyes peering out at us.

"Good morning sweetheart," I said, approaching. "Were you waiting for daddy to come get you?"

She reached her arms out in answer and I reached in, scooping her out.

Her small pink dress was all rumpled from sleep and her hair was standing on end, but she was as cute as ever, and Marco's bright smile when I turned and looked at him showed that he thought so too.

"Well, hello there," he said. "I'm Marco. You must be Iris."

She stared at him for a long time and then nodded, and then looked at me as though she was expecting an explanation but before I could say anything, our talking woke Aster.

His bedding began to shake first and a loud wail followed.

"Sorry, Aster," I said, approaching the small bed, tucked beneath Iris'.

I bent, lifting him into my other arm and he huffed, kicking his chubby arms, his still fuzzy dark hair in worse disarray than Iris'.

"They're adorable," Marco said, and they both turned and looked at him, clearly wondering what was going on.

"Remember how Justine had to move away?" I asked.

Iris nodded, while Aster listened.

"Yes," she said, still looking confused.

"I'm trying to find someone else who can watch you when I'm not home, and maybe if you like Marco, it can be him."

Her brows rose dramatically and then she suddenly wiggled until I was forced to set her down or else risk dropping both of them.

Without hesitation, she walked over to Marco, reached up for his hand and took it.

He gave me an amused look as she dragged him out of the room.

“Dis is da bafroom,” I heard her say as I followed.

By the time they reached Azalea’s room, I realized that she was giving him a tour.

“Dis is where Zalea sleeps,” she said. “But sometimes she sleeps in daddy’s room when she’s scared.”

“Oh, really?”

“Uh huh. Come on, I’ll show you da playroom.”

I followed like a shadow, just watching as she showed him around the house, eventually reaching the spare sitting room which had been taken over by an abundance of toys and games.

Unlike with the other rooms, she led him inside and immediately began showing him how to build her blocks up in the best way.

That was when Aster decided he’d had enough of me and wriggled until I set him down, promptly crawling to the other two to stack with them.

Marco didn’t seem to mind. In fact, he seemed to lose track of time and the reason for his visit, which was to talk to me, not the kids, although I had wanted to see them together.

He never complained and simply followed her lead, laughing at her silly jokes and offering both her and Aster the pieces they wanted.

I leaned against the door frame, smiling as I observed them, and a feeling of peace and positivity washed over me.

Marco was lovely, inside and out. He was the perfect type of person to be a caretaker to my children. Perhaps even the perfect type of man to be my partner too. After all, that was what I had initially been seeking.

Perhaps we could get to know each other organically if he was here. We could talk, form a friendship and maybe more... I hoped.

The human way of dating was very convenient and very frustrating. I could meet ten people in one day and by the end of the day have had no conversations and lots of disappointment. I wasn't looking for a one night stand, I was looking for the one. Surely that fact meant it deserved time and attention and care with the people being considered. Very few on this planet seemed to agree with my papilionoidean sentiments though, so I never pushed it.

But if Marco was on the same page as me, surely we would see that while seeing each other every day. I could only hope so.

Finally, he lifted his head and glanced back, seeming to only just remember that I was there.

When our eyes met, he blushed and gave me a shy smile and a shrug.

"You probably want me out of your hair," he laughed. "I'm sorry, I got completely distracted."

He pushed to his feet, bent and patted Iris and Aster on the top of their heads and then came over to me.

“Is there anything else you wanted to talk about?”

I nodded.

“Yes, when can you start?”

Page 3

Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 3:19 am

Chapter Three

MARCO

Starting my first day at Hyacinth's house was not completely different to starting my first day at previous jobs.

I was worried, scared they wouldn't like me and filled with hope for the future. I hoped they would like me and I was relieved that I officially had a place to stay with a roof over my head and all the security that came with that.

Of course, it had been a strange feeling to pack up my apartment. Selling the big items was easy since I listed them for such cheap prices, but it had made this move feel extra daunting.

I was uprooting my life for this. I just hoped that it was worth it. That I liked being there and that I got along with the kids. It didn't have to be forever, but it was certainly a means to an end for me and I had to remember that. This was literally my only job offer. I had to take it.

And so, I showed up at Hyacinth's house with three big suitcases filled with all of my belongings, nervous but ready.

When Hyacinth opened the door to greet me, my breath caught in my throat. Over the week preparing things, I had fooled myself into thinking he wasn't as gorgeous as I'd made him out to be, but no, he was stunning.

Even in plain blue scrubs the man was transcendent.

“Good morning Marco,” he said warmly. “Please, come in.”

He stepped out of the way to allow me the room to enter.

“The kids are in the kitchen. I know I said you would have until this evening, but I was called into work early. I hope that’s okay.”

“Oh—uh, sure. Can I just take my things upstairs?”

“Of course.”

He bent, picking up the two heavier of the bags and leading the way.

The sounds of the kids carried down the hall. I already recognized Iris and Aster’s sweet voices. The more mature, slightly bossy voice that rang out saying “Daddy’s going to be really mad if he sees you doing that!” I took to be the eldest, Azalea.

Hyacinth glanced back suspiciously, but didn’t veer toward the kitchen to see what the kids were up to, instead continuing to lead me upstairs to my new bedroom.

The shimmery black ends of his tails swished back and forth, but that didn’t stop my gaze from drifting down despite myself, and watching the sway of his ass. Lord help me. He was perfect everywhere.

Swallowing, I forced my eyes up to the back of his neatly trimmed dark hair as we reached the second floor.

After seeing the nursery, I was curious what my room would look like, but when he opened the door, I was surprised to see a plain, spacious, spare bedroom. It had a

double bed against the wall, a wardrobe and beige walls and carpets. On the far side, a door led into a washroom.

It was a relief to see that I would have my own space. I would need that, I was sure, since I had never even lived in a house with four others, let alone with my boss.

Finally, I realized that Hyacinth was waiting for me to respond, perhaps worried that I didn't like it.

"It's perfect, thank you."

He looked relieved.

"Great. I'm glad this will do."

There was a loud shout from downstairs, followed by "Daddy!" hollered at top volume and he grimaced.

"I will meet you downstairs," he said.

"I'll be right down," I reassured.

He left hastily and I stood there for a moment, looking around. I wasn't exactly going to unpack right now. Not when he needed me to start as soon as possible.

With a fortifying breath, I turned and went after him.

The scene I met in the kitchen was basically exactly what I would expect to find when three small children were left unattended. There was orange juice all over the floor, Aster's entire body seemed to be covered in peanut butter and jam and Iris was eating cheerios off the floor, first dipping each one in the spilled milk.

“I thought I already made you a sandwich!” Hyacinth said, exasperatedly.

“I wanted cereal,” Iris pouted as he lifted her back into her booster seat.

“I would have poured it for you,” he sighed.

“I tried to tell her,” Azalea said. “But she wouldn’t listen to me.”

“Next time, you listen to Azalea,” Hyacinth told Iris sternly and she preened.

Out of all the children, she looked the most like Hyacinth. The other two were paler, Iris was almost pearly white, but Azalea had the same shining blue skin and almond eyes as her father. Even her wings glittered with the same colors. But when she glanced over her shoulder and saw me standing there she glared.

“Aren’t you supposed to be cleaning up instead of my Daddy?” she demanded. “You do work for us now, right?”

I’d never been chastised by someone so small and nearly jumped out of my skin because she meant business with that tone.

“Right. Sorry,” I muttered, cheeks heating as I bent to take the towel from Hyacinth’s hands.

He let me have it but straightened and gave Azalea a hard look.

“You be kind to Marco,” he said sternly and she pouted, turning her attention back to her breakfast.

Hyacinth sighed heavily.

“She’s supposed to be at school in fifteen minutes,” he said. “Normally I drive her, but I don’t have time today. I ordered her a car, but she can’t go alone. It’ll be here in about ten minutes. Will you be able to take her?”

I nodded, already feeling flustered.

“Great. The car seats are all in the closet by the front door,” he said. “Her friend lives around the block and her mother usually walks them home.”

He went to each of them as he spoke, taking the time to place a kiss atop each child’s head before heading for the doorway where he paused and looked back at me.

“Thank you and good luck. Call me if you need anything. ”

I barely had a chance to nod before he was gone, running off to do some important medical work, probably saving lives.

For a moment I stood there, feeling so overwhelmed as I took in the sight of the messy toddlers and imperious child.

They all expected me to take care of them. I didn’t think I could do it. I’d made a huge mistake.

“Marco!” Iris said, drawing me from my thoughts and I looked down to find her offering me a soggy cheerio.

I took it, heart warmed as though it was the most thoughtful gift I’d ever received.

Then I took one of the kitchen cloths, wiped Aster down while he tried to chew on the fabric, picked him and Iris up, took them to the front door and then went back for Azalea.

“Ready?” I asked her.

She nodded.

“You have your school bag somewhere?”

She lifted it off the back of her chair.

“Lunch inside?” I asked.

She nodded again.

“Great.”

Somehow, when the driver arrived, we were all outside, wearing shoes, car seats ready.

Watching Azalea run off to her school friends, made me feel like I’d accomplished some amazing feat. Like I could do anything in the world.

Even coming home to the mess wasn’t so bad.

I found markers and coloring books and Iris and Aster colored happily while I straightened out the kitchen.

They took a lot of entertaining. We played in the playroom, watched a bit of TV, ate a quick lunch and then went back to playing.

By the time Azalea came home, accompanied by a school friend’s mother, I was tired but proud.

“How was your day?” I asked.

She shrugged.

“Fine.”

Without saying much more, she went into the living room and a moment later I heard a kids show start playing.

Choosing not to push it, I set the other two on the couch with her and went to the kitchen to start dinner.

Hyacinth had said that he didn’t like human food very much, but I still wanted to make something nice for him and the kids, especially after a long day at work.

Since the kids were occupied, I searched through the cupboards until I found enough ingredients to put together into a vegetable curry.

When it was ready, I set the table with a spot for each of the kids and then went to get them. To my chagrin, both Aster and Iris were fast asleep.

When I couldn’t rouse them, I looked at Azalea.

“Um, it’s dinner time.”

She gave me a look.

“Can’t I eat in front of the TV?”

I frowned.

“Does your dad let you?”

“Uh huh.”

Forcing a smile, I turned and get her plate from the kitchen, returning and giving it to her.

“Do you know when your dad is done work?” I asked.

She shook her head.

“He works different shifts all the time.”

“Right.”

I stood there for a moment as she took her fork and started to eat off of the plate in her lap, let attention back on the TV.

Feeling awkward, I ended up bending down and lifting Aster off the couch to take him to his bed, then I came down and took Iris to hers.

I ended up eating alone in the silence, suddenly feeling like I was doing everything wrong.

I had wanted to share a meal with Hyacinth too, but the evening went on and he didn't come home.

I knew hospitals workers did long hours, but I was still twiddling my thumbs. Eventually, I googled what time six-year-olds were supposed to sleep and then went to Azalea.

“Do you need help with any homework?” I asked.

“I don’t have any today,” she said.

“Okay, then... Bed time, I guess. It’s late.”

I expected resistance, but luckily, she stood up without complaint. I followed, feeling a bit awkward.

Who knew a six-year-old could be so intimidating.

I made sure she brushed her teeth and then got into bed, wishing her a goodnight to which she sleepily replied ‘ you too ’, before I closed the door.

That wasn’t so bad , I told myself. I’d made it through an entire day with three kids and with no idea what I was doing.

Now what ?

I didn’t feel at home here, not yet. Not enough to go relax and watch TV or something.

Instead, I went to my room and slowly began to unpack my belongings.

As I did, I couldn’t help feeling like I had done something wrong today but couldn’t quite place my finger on it. Maybe it was just from being so overwhelmed and out of my depths.

Just as I was setting my alarm clock on the bedside table, the rest of my stuff spread around the room, there was a gentle tap on my door.

My heart leaped at the sound, excited, despite myself to greet Hyacinth.

When I opened the door, he looked tired, but smiled.

“Sorry to disturb you. I just got back and wanted to check in.”

“It’s fine. Come in.”

He entered my bedroom and stood, looking around at all of my things for a moment, smiling softly.

“You made the place your own,” he said. “I like it.”

He wiggled his toes into the fluffy carpet and then came and sat down on the bed next to me.

“How did it go today? Were the kids good to you?”

“Yeah, they were great. Azalea’s friend walked her home like you said. They all went to bed pretty early.”

“Great,” he said, sighing and leaning back on his hands. “It was a busy day so I didn’t have much time to check in.”

“That’s okay... What do you do exactly?” I asked.

“I help with surgeries mostly. I can put people to sleep for any duration with mypapilionoidean powders. I can also calm people and help deescalate situations. Sometimes its scheduled procedures, but lately they want me to jump in more in various departments.”

“I’ll bet,” I said, impressed. “It must be really handy to have you there.”

He smiled ruefully.

“I think so, and that makes me want to help as much as I can, but I miss a lot of time with my children.”

He rubbed his face tiredly and my heart went out to him. I wanted to touch him, rest a hand on his arm or pat his back but that felt like crossing a line. I had just started working here. I didn’t want to make my boss uncomfortable.

“Did they eat dinner?” he asked suddenly.

I grimaced.

“Well, Azalea did. The other two fell asleep in front of the TV before I was done cooking.”

He frowned.

“Oh, did they have trouble napping today?”

I frowned.

“Napping?”

He looked at me for a long moment but I couldn’t read his expression.

“Well, yes, they are very young. Both Aster and Iris need to nap for at least one or two hours in the afternoon.”

My heart sank.

“I didn’t realize,” I said, regretfully.

“That’s alright...” he said, but it didn’t sound like he meant it at all. “You didn’t know. I should have taken the time to discuss everything with you this morning. I should have told the hospital that I couldn’t come in on such short notice.”

I found myself shaking my head even though I couldn’t argue with that. Maybe I needed a schedule or something.

“Was Azalea well behaved?”

My cheeks heated with a blush but I nodded.

“She was fine. She just sat in front of the TV.”

“For the whole day?” he asked, looking concerned.

“Uh...”

I swallowed, all of my concerns being proven right in one conversation.

Hyacinth shook himself and sighed.

“I’ll write a schedule for you,” he said kindly, “and we can discuss everything in the morning.”

I nodded, feeling like I was the biggest idiot ever. Of course a six year old couldn’t watch hours of TV like that. This was such a face palm moment that I was seriously questioning my intelligence.

Hyacinth stood and I did the same automatically.

“Thank you for stepping in today,” he said.

I shook my head.

“It’s fine. There’s food in the fridge for you, if you’re hungry.”

“Thanks, Marco,” he said, and paused at the door. “Goodnight.”

“Night,” I muttered as he shut the door behind him.

I stood there for a moment and then flopped back onto my bed with a groan.

Apparently today hadn’t gone as well as I’d thought it had.

Page 4

Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 3:19 am

Chapter Four

HYACINTH

I had failed everyone today.

My youngest two had missed having naps and dinner, Azalea had gotten away with watching television all evening and poor Marco had been left to try to figure everything out on his own.

He had even told me that he hadn't watched kids of such a young age before, but I'd still left him to fend for himself.

Guilt stirred inside me.

It was still early and yet he was locked up in his room, looking tired and worn. If I hadn't been so tired myself, perhaps I would have thought to disperse some relaxation into his room so that he could get a good night's sleep.

Sighing, I went to the kitchen, finding a plate of food saran wrapped in the fridge with some left overs in a container.

It looked interesting. Some sort of stew or curry. Whatever it was, my mouth started to water at the smell while it was heating up.

The taste lived up to my expectations once I took the first bite.

I had to hold back a moan as my eyes drifted shut.

Wow. Perhaps I was wrong about earth's food. Perhaps I was just eating the wrong things.

Surely if Marco could cook a meal so filled with flavor, he wasn't the only one. That must mean there were others who enjoyed an abundance of taste the way that my people did.

It wasn't anything like papilionoidean food, but it was filled with warmth, spice that infused each mouthful and filled my body with warmth.

When I was done, I felt full and sleepy and relaxed, my mood lifted.

Despite the early hour, I ended up going to bed as well. Normally, this would be the time I pulled up the Alien Mates app and tried to find someone worth talking to, but I didn't even think of it tonight.

Instead, I picked up the book long forgotten on my night stand and started reading it over again.

I couldn't pay attention to the words for more than a chapter though, my thoughts preoccupied by the man in the room next to mine.

Setting the book down and switching off the night light, I laid back onto my pillows, subconsciously looking at the wall between us. The house was silent. He was probably already asleep... I just hoped he would be happy here.

Tomorrow, I will make things right, I silently promised.

I woke up from a deep sleep to an abundance of light in the room, which was strange

and disorienting. I always woke up early, while it was still dark, so for a moment, I thought I was somewhere else entirely.

It took me far too long to realize that I had slept in.

Shaking myself, I crawled from bed, went to my washroom and quickly showered before hastily getting dressed as sounds echoed up the stairs.

I followed them down to the kitchen, where to my surprise, everyone was already up. Aster and Iris were in their chairs, eating breakfast. Well, Iris was eating it. Aster appeared to be playing with it. Azalea was sitting at the island. Marco was on the other side, holding a piece of paper and reading to her.

“Two times five,” he said.

“Ten,” she answered.

“Good. Two times six.”

Azalea paused long enough to count.

“Twelve!”

“Great! You’ve got this!”

She beamed—a complete turnaround from yesterday, I thought—and then finally, Marco glanced over and noticed I was standing there.

“Oh, good morning,” he said, smiling shyly. His eyes flickered over me but he quickly looked away, turning to the stove. “Want some breakfast?”

“Sure,” I said, entering. “What’s going on? Do you have a test?”

“Yes, I forgot to study!” Azalea pouted.

“That’s because you were watching TV all night,” I chastised, coming up behind her to place a kiss on top of her head.

Marco glanced back at us, biting back a smile.

“She was in a panic until I said I would help her,” he said, turning around with a plate laden with breakfast food.

He set it in front of me and I took it to sit down next to the other two so I could give them some attention too.

“Come sit and eat with us?” I asked.

Marco paused, looking surprised and shook his head.

“I actually ate already,” he said, blushing. “The little ones woke up early, they were hungry.”

He looked genuinely embarrassed, clearly taking responsibility for that even though the blame surely fell upon me.

“You should have woken me,” I said. “I was home.”

He shook his head at once.

“That’s what I’m here for, right?”

“I suppose so...”

It was true, yes, but I still felt strange about it. I didn't want to completely stop parenting. I did need help though. That was part of why I had been looking for a nanny and a significant other. Not that I wanted a partner just so that they would watch the kids, but because it felt like my family was incomplete. I was ready to have someone to love in a different way.

Biting my tongue, I turned to my breakfast which was tasty, but plain, exactly what I'd come to know of human food. Eggs, toast, butter.

“What was that curry you made last night?” I asked.

“It was just something I threw together. Indian-ish, I guess. Why? Did you like it?” Marco asked at once.

“It was amazing,” I told him sincerely. “I hope there are leftovers.”

“Can I have some for lunch?” Azalea added and Marco beamed.

“Of course!”

He went to work, packing her lunch bag while I helped Aster get some food into his mouth.

“We played puppies,” Iris informed me. “Marco was daddy puppy.”

I grinned at the image of the three of them crawling around the playroom and shook my head.

“Then who am I supposed to be?” I teased.

“Other daddy,” Iris said easily and my heart warmed at the thought.

I glanced over at Marco. He didn’t acknowledge us but his ears were adorably pink so I knew he had heard. I wondered what he thought of that idea...

If only I had arranged for a date instead of a nanny. But at the time, getting home help had seemed more pressing than finding a partner. Now that Marco was in my house though, he was stirring unavoidable feelings and it had only been one day.

“What time is Azalea’s car arriving?” Marco asked, breaking me from my thoughts.

“I’ll walk her there today,” I said, glancing at the time.

Azalea groaned.

“I don’t want to walk.”

“Sorry Hun, you need the fresh air, and it’s a beautiful day.”

The morning was in fact a little bit chilly, but once we got moving, we both warmed up.

It was a nice day, but truthfully, I had wanted to speak with Azalea alone and driving wouldn’t allow us enough time.

Glancing down at her little blue form as she held on to her backpack and skipped over the sidewalk cracks pulled my heartstrings. She was so sweet, but I knew that this transition to a whole new planet had been very hard for her.

Reaching out, I placed a hand on her shoulder, giving her a half-hug while we walked.

“How do you like Marco?” I asked.

She paused and didn’t look up and then shrugged, not answering.

“At first I thought you didn’t like him, but then you were being nice this morning.”

She sighed dramatically.

“I didn’t not like him,” she insisted. “I just... Is he going to leave like Justine did?”

I frowned, realizing the issue at once.

“Do you miss Justine?”

“I liked her and she just left.”

“It was only meant to be a temporary job for her for the summer, but that doesn’t mean she didn’t like you. She loved you three and promised to visit when she’s on break.”

“I know,” Azalea said quietly.

I didn’t know how to keep the conversation going. Clearly she was worried about getting attached. I understood that. We had left everyone she knew back home just over a year ago and then her second most constant person had left and a new guy had moved in like it was nothing.

“Marco was nice today,” she said. “He helped me with my homework.”

“He’s a nice guy,” I said, relieved that she had gone on. “You can still miss Justine, of course, and Marco might not stay forever, but let’s just see what happens...”

She nodded, sniffing and swiping at her eyes just as we reached her school grounds.

“Come here,” I said, crouching down and pulling her into a tight hug. “I love you.”

“I love you too, daddy,” she mumbled, her small arms tight around my neck.

When she finally released me, it was because one of her friends shouted her name.

“Okay bye!” she shouted and skipped off excitedly.

I stood, shaking my head and watching her go for a minute.

This parenting journey was filled with so many ups and downs. I had wanted them desperately, the cuddles and the sweet little faces. I had wanted to have this family, that was why I had fertilized those eggs and I didn’t regret it in the least. They were my pride. But goodness was it overwhelming at times.

I hoped I was doing the right things for them...

Page 5

Source Creation Date: July 17, 2025, 3:19 am

Chapter Five

MARCO

When Hyacinth returned from his walk with Azalea, he looked thoughtful and a bit distracted.

That didn't stop him from writing me out a detailed explanation of the routines and rules that the kids needed in order to be 'happier and healthier'.

I managed to take it in stride this time. There was no point in beating myself up over things that I hadn't known.

He took the kids to the living room after that, letting me know that I was welcome to join, but I was still a bit tired and knew I would have to take over soon, so I went to my room instead and watched videos on my phone.

Eventually, when I knew I would have to get back to work, I stood, stretching and went back down to face the demanding toddlers and their far too gorgeous father.

He was sitting on one of the couches, a child on each knee, reading them a story book. There was already a pile of them spread out around him.

For a while, I stood there, watching them, smiling.

Hyacinth was a good storyteller. He didn't hold back from doing all the character voices and read each word with full engagement. I couldn't blame the kids for being

enraptured, he was hard not to look at or listen to in general.

Sensing me, he glanced over his shoulder and paused at once, smiling warmly.

“Come sit with us,” he said.

I didn’t know why, but I was instantly nervous. Still, I came over and sat next to them.

Hyacinth continued the story but I could tell that his attention had shifted onto me rather than the words he was reading.

He kept glancing at me and I feared I was going to get the wrong idea if he did it one more time.

There was no way that he was interested, right?

“I don’t have to work until noon,” he informed me, “so I’ll show you how to put Aster and Iris down for their naps.”

“Great, thanks.”

I glanced at the time, realizing that it was already late enough for them to have their naps. After reading his instructions plus browsing videos on toddler care in my room, I was surprised that they had both done so well yesterday in my inexperienced hands. We had had fun, but no sleep and no snacks should have equaled a meltdown. Apparently I had been lucky.

Hyacinth pushed to his feet with a kid in each arm and led me upstairs to their cozy, wilderness bedroom.

It was simple enough, but he showed me how to soothe Aster in case he was struggling or resisting sleep, and then let me take Iris and try it with her.

She gazed up at me from inside her little hammock, and my heart melted as her eyes drifted sleepily shut and her breathing evened.

A hand landed on my back as I gazed in at her.

Glancing over my shoulder, meeting Hyacinth's warm gaze, my heart melted even more.

"You're a natural," he told me in a whisper. "I know the kids will all be very happy with you here."

I felt my cheeks heat and shook my head, flattered despite myself.

"Thank you," I whispered back. "I appreciate it and I'll do my best."

"I know you will," he agreed.

God, these warm fuzzy feelings were a little overwhelming after so long living on my own with minimal love and affection.

In just one day too. I wondered how much I would love this little family as time went on. The thought in itself was intimidating.

"Do you want to have some lunch with me before you go?" I asked as soon as we were in the hallway. It would be nice to get to know each other since we were living under the same roof now, that was all. Nothing sneaky about that, right? Even though the two of us alone eating a homemade lunch, staring into each other's eyes across the table... well, it instantly made me think of a date.

But Hyacinth's eyes filled with regret and he shook his head.

"I'm sorry, I really should get going."

"Oh, it's fine," I said, brushing off his regret and trying to hide my disappointment.
"Next time."

He nodded.

"Yes, next time."

His hand landed on my shoulder briefly, a strong, warm grip that seemed to leave an imprint when he pulled it away.

It may have been in my head, but after learning that things were supposed to be more difficult, that there were sleep schedules and snack schedules, everything got harder.

On one hand, Azalea had almost completely dropped the attitude and was easy enough to handle. In fact, she was sweet in a guarded way.

On the other hand, Aster started to fuss as soon as I was a minute behind in giving him something to eat and Iris was such a natural rascal that she would run giggling like mad anytime I tried to catch her for bed.

Naps were a struggle without Hyacinth there. I didn't blame the kids, his soothing presence was far better than my frazzled nerves.

Twice during the week, he was home for their naps, and once, he was home for their bedtime routines, but aside from that, I was left to figure it out on my own.

It was so exhausting that on the occasions when he was home to take over, I was too

tired to watch on, or even to try to catch a word with him afterwards.

I so badly wanted to get to know him, but was quickly learning I wasn't cut out for the stay at home parent life. Seriously, I was freaking impressed by those that did this full time.

If I didn't get my feet under me soon and figure all this out, sadly, this arrangement wasn't going to work out.

But that thought alone sent me into a weirdly dark zone that was hard to address. Leaving the kids just as I was starting to get to know them... it felt like I was letting them down and that...

A lump formed in my throat at the thought of it and I had to physically shake it off.

No. I could do this. I just had to figure out the rhythm. Azalea up first, then the other two. Then breakfast for all three while they were conveniently strapped into their chairs with toys to distract them, and so on until the day was done.

"Are you okay?"

I started and glanced over, realizing that Azalea had entered the kitchen and was watching me cook with a frown on her face. Her normally big wide eyes narrowed suspiciously.

"I'm fine," I said. "Are you done your homework?"

"Uhuh."

I glanced over at the other two.

Iris was still coloring—on the table now, rather than the coloring book, but I would deal with that later. Aster was still chewing on the carrot I had given him. Everything was fine, peaceful, even.

“It’s just that...” Azalea went on, pausing and chewing her lip thoughtfully. “You’re kind of oozing something bad.”

I frowned.

“Bad?” I asked, sniffing myself.

“Well, Mrs. Stanley says that it’s something called stress and anxiety.”

“Delightful,” I sighed. Even the six-year-old could tell I was freaking out. “Wait. What do you mean oozing ?”

“Oh, I can just sense peoples’ strong feelings,” she said nonchalantly. “Daddy says that humans can’t smell it, but we can.”

I froze.

“You can smell my feelings? And your dad can too?”

“Not all the time. Only if they’re very strong. Mrs. Stanley says people need to take a walk when they smell like you do right now.”

I shut my eyes and considered for a moment before responding.

“Maybe I will when your dad comes home,” I suggested.

She smiled, looking satisfied by that and before anymore could be said, to my

chagrin, the front door opened and Hyacinth's voice carried into the house.

"I'm home!"

"Daddy!" Azalea cried, running off to greet him.

The other two joined in a chorus of Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, until he entered the room.

His steps faltered in the doorway and his gaze flew to me. Immediately, I knew that Azalea was right. Hyacinth knew how stressed I was and that was unnerving. Luckily for me, he didn't say anything that would make me feel awkward, instead going to greet the little ones with kisses and sweet words.

He spent a few minutes asking them about their day while I attempted to keep my attention on the food.

I was just waiting on the air fryer to finish though so there was nothing to keep me busy except my thoughts.

And that was when Hyacinth slipped up behind me, close enough to give me the wrong idea.

At the feeling of his scrubs brushing against my back, I jumped and turned around, finding myself closer to him than I'd ever been, only inches separating us.

"I'll take it from here," he said gently and his breath brushed my cheek.

"Huh?"

"You go relax," he said softly, his hands landing on my arms and stroking them gently. "Have a bath, or take a nap, or watch a movie..."

“I told him to take a walk,” Azalea piped up.

“Great idea,” Hyacinth agreed.

“Oh.” Right. This was for my mental health and nothing more. He was kind and comforting. It was kind of his thing.

I chuckled, looking away.

“I guess being thrown into the childcare life is a bit much all at once,” I admitted.

“Of course,” Hyacinth agreed sympathetically.

“Maybe I will go take that walk,” I said, forcing myself to move away now before I moved closer without intending to.

“Take your time,” he said, and that was that.

He let me go and I walked away, nearly in a daze, half sure that he had done something to me. Something gentle and soft and lovely.

The outside air cleared my senses a little bit and I strolled down as far as the park where I took a seat in front of the water, thinking about nothing in particular. The feeling of hyacinth’s large hands on my arms still lingered, making me shiver.

How had I gone from feeling so stressed to now feeling almost like my brain had taken a short vacation? I couldn’t even bring myself to think about all the stuff that had been on my mind.

I was absently watching a duck drift by when I remembered that same peaceful feeling upon entering the house that first time and now that I thought of it, every time.

Holy shit.

Was Hyacinth actually doing something to calm me down? Was that what he did at the hospital too?

Why hadn't I thought about how odd it was that an alien from a different planet was working in a human hospital so soon after his arrival? Surely he hadn't had time to finish getting his equivalency in a human college in the year he'd been here.

I stood, suddenly filled with irritation and eager for answers as I began to head back.

By the time I arrived, the sun was dipping low over the horizon and the house was quiet.

I entered, feeling the calm rush as I did and even my annoyance faded a little. Not completely, but a little.

I went by the dark living room and then to the kitchen, because I had skipped dinner.

When I turned on the light, I froze.

The table was set, not for the kids, but for two adults, with plates and silverware already out on each side and the high chairs pushed against the wall. There was even a bottle of wine sitting chilling in the middle of the table.

"I thought we could eat together," Hyacinth said behind me, making me jump. "We've barely had any time to get to know each other."

I swallowed and nodded, stepping into the room to allow him to enter behind me.

"Sit down," he said.

I went to one of the seats and lowered nervously into it, watching as he began to warm up the food.

“God, now I wish I made something fancier than fish fingers, fries, and coleslaw,” I said nervously.

“It’s perfect,” he said nonchalantly.

It wasn’t. He liked fancy flavors, extra spices, things like that. He just didn’t know how to cook, that was all—or at least, he didn’t know what to do with human ingredients.

I bit my tongue though and let him serve me the basic dinner I had made. I even took the offered wine and filled a nice big glass all the way up.

“So, what do you think of this arrangement so far?” he asked.

I nearly choked at the sudden question. Luckily, I hadn’t taken a bite yet.

I cleared my throat and took a big gulp of the wine trying to buy myself a few minutes to think of what to say.

“Honestly, it’s a lot harder than I thought it would be, but I really like your kids, and I want to keep trying for now.”

He considered for a moment, looking somber.

“You know, I don’t usually work so many hours. One of my coworkers is on maternity leave though and they need the extra help. If you can make it for two months, I’ll be here a lot more to do my part.”

That was actually very relieving. It gave me a little glimmer of hope. I would be a child expert by the end of two months.

“And you’ll have time for more of a private life,” he went on, his gaze suddenly boring into me. “I know you wanted to meet someone, and now you are probably annoyed that you don’t have the time.”

My cheeks heated and I shook my head, but it was pointless. He remembered how we met. We both did.

“What about you?” I asked. “I mean, you were looking for someone too.”

He nodded, not looking nearly as embarrassed as I felt.

“Yes, I do want someone in my life. A partner, a lover and of course, someone to be a parent to my children.”

I took a sip of wine, trying to school my features. Hope was such a ridiculous emotion, especially when the man had given me no indication that he was interested in more.

“What about their mother?” I asked gently. “Is she not around?”

Hyacinth shook his head at once.

“We papilionoidean are different than humans. Females produce eggs yearly and leave them amongst the leaves of the tallest trees to be fertilized. Any male papilionoidean who desires to have children fertilizes the egg and then guards and raises the children. We seek mates when we choose, but it is unrelated to child-rearing.”

I stared with wide eyes, trying to imagine it.

“Wow.”

He chuckled.

“I know. It is very different. Truthfully, I have no idea who their mothers were, but could probably identify them by scent if we met.”

“I see.”

I turned to my food, knowing I should use this Segway for my other questions.

“So,” I said after a couple bites. “Did you do something to me back there when you touched me? You made me calm down or something, right? Is that what you do at the hospital?”

I could barely force myself to look up at Hyacinth, and when I did, he was frowning deeply.

“I do calm people down at the hospital,” he began slowly. “When they are very anxious and panicking, I douse them in my calming pheromone. I do the same to put people to sleep for procedures.”

I looked down, disappointed. So, I was right.

“But today, I did no such thing. I only touched you because you seemed so tense.”

My gaze shot up to him in disbelief.

“But at the door...”

“The door?” he asked, his frown deepening. “Ah. Yes, I do leave a welcoming powder there.”

Shit, that actually made sense, but...

“But—I felt so—so good?—”

I clapped a hand over my mouth, realizing what was happening.

He hadn’t done anything to me. He’d just touched me. And it had made me so freaking happy and distracted that I was accusing him of drugging me.

Suddenly, his chair scraped across the tiles as he stood and a moment later, he knelt next to my chair, suddenly taking my hands in his own.

“Marco, I give you my word I did not do anything to you today. I want you to be comfortable here in this house, and with me. Please, believe me.”

Shit.

He looked so damn earnest that I completely believed him. He was the most gentlemanly guy I’d ever met. He was like a freaking dream. Hell, he even had the glittering wings to make the whole situation more surreal. There was no way he would do anything like that to me. He was far too loving and kind.

Crouching in front of me like this, holding my hands in his, our faces so close and those gorgeous pale blue eyes searching mine, I was overtaken by that same good feeling. Without thinking, I leaned forward, closing the distance between us and capturing his lips against mine.

For a moment, time stopped.

His lips were as warm as his hands and they were so soft, so full, that I moaned.

The sound of my voice in the quiet room sent reality shooting straight back into me like a bullet.

I pulled back with a gasp.

“Shit. I’m so sorry.”

Hyacinth looked shocked. He opened his mouth but I cut him off, panic rising.

“I know I’m just here for the kids. I’m sorry. I just—I don’t know what I was thinking.”

I was on my feet, stumbling back toward the door as quickly as I could.

“Marco—”

“It won’t happen again,” I promised and practically ran.

It wasn’t until I got to my room and shut the door behind me that I could breathe again.

Fuck, I was such an idiot. Aside from being nice to me, Hyacinth had never shown any indication of being interested in me.

He hadn’t even kissed me back.

I was crushed.

Chapter Six

HYACINTH

I sat there, stunned for a full minute before I was suddenly on my feet.

How had Marco gotten it so wrong ? I wondered. He hadn't even given me a moment to return the sweet kiss. The quick brush of his lips was still tingling against mine.

It was my fault, I realized. I had asked him to work here and I had never made it clear that something more could possibly be on the cards. For some reason, I had thought it would happen naturally if there was anything there. Now I knew that would never happen. Not with Marco holding back, all the while assuming that I didn't want him the way that I so very much did.

I walked up the stairs, my heart racing. It wasn't often that I had to put myself beyond my comfort zone. At work, yes, but not when it came to personal matters. To a certain degree, I controlled every aspect of my life.

It was time to take the reins again, even if it made my wings jitter with nerves.

Outside of Marco's door, I stopped. For a moment I wondered if I should just walk in, but he had already accused me of doing something he hadn't wanted once today and I didn't want him to think of me as that type of man ever again.

Reaching up, I knocked gently. Inside, there was a shocked gasp and then silence.

I waited, but he didn't come to the door. He wasn't planning on answering me, was he?

"Marco?" I asked quietly. "May I come in to talk?"

"Um..."

There was a long silence.

"There's nothing to talk about," he finally said. Even through the door, I could hear his voice trembling.

Cursing silently, I looked up and down the hallway to Azalea's room and then the nursery. I didn't want to wake them by standing here and saying what I wanted to in the open.

Biting my lip, I reached for the doorknob. To my relief, the door wasn't locked.

Marco was sitting on his bed looking defeated before I even said anything.

"I won't come in if you insist," I said. "But know that I want to speak to you and I will whether it is right now or the next time we are alone together."

Sighing, he shook his head.

"It's fine. Come in. Let's get this over with."

I paused.

"Get this over with?" I repeated. "That is the very last thing I want. In fact, I am hoping that there might be something between us that can last."

Marco stared for so long, that I closed the door and came to sit next to him on the bed before he managed to blink a couple of times, shake his head and give me an incredulous look.

“Hyacinth,” he said slowly. “What...”

“I am still new to this planet,” I said gently, taking his hands in my own once more. He allowed me and that gave me the courage to continue. “From what I saw, humans move very slowly. I spoke to people on the dating app we met on for weeks before even getting to speak to them and then from what I understand, you are lucky to even get a date.”

Marco bit his lip.

“That is basically online dating in a nutshell,” he agreed. “But it’s not always like that. If people are really interested, they move a lot faster than that.”

“I see that now.”

He looked down at our joined hands, his cheeks darkening to that pretty pink as they often did.

“So are you trying to tell me that you are interested? Or am I about to make a fool of myself again?”

“Does this answer your question?” I asked, and leaned into him, tilting his chin up so that I could reach his lips properly.

This time, the touch of his lips sent a shock of butterflies into my stomach, followed by heat that filled my blood stream.

As my lips moved against his, tasting sweetness that was quickly morphing into lust, he made that noise again. Again, the unconscious moan made him freeze and pull back, but this time, he didn't go far.

“Are we now going too fast for human dating?” I asked gently. I didn't want to pull away yet. I wanted more and Marco did too. The scent of his lust was flowing over me, taking my own desires up even higher. But there was a hearty amount of nerves mixed in too and I couldn't ignore that.

His hand tightened in the front of my shirt, keeping me where I was, close enough to brush our lips together while we spoke.

“Honestly, I would take anything you'd be down to give me right now.”

He opened his palm, pressing it against my hard chest, his gaze darkening as he looked down at me.

“Keep kissing me?”

His breathless words held so much desire in them, that without thinking, I took him in my arms, molding our lips together again as I pressed him back onto the mattress.

He moaned again as I landed over him, pushing him down with my weight, but his fingers tangled into my hair, keeping me where I was, tight against him, his tongue delving into my mouth, teeth nipping as desires grew.

Our groins pressed together through our clothes, and although I'd never been with a human, I knew what it entailed and my mouth nearly watered at the idea of getting this experience with Marco of all people. The sweetest, sexiest man I had met yet. Someone I instinctively wanted to shower with positivity and support and love, while he seemed strong enough to lean on too.

Unable to take it any longer, I pulled back, panting.

Marco knew where I was going, his hands tugged at my shirt until I unbuttoned it and managed to get it off, barely ruffling my wings in the process despite my desperation.

Marco started to frantically pull his clothes off and I hastily kicked my pants off before climbing back on top of him, straddling his thighs.

I'd almost been too desperate to get back to it to even look at what I was getting. Creamy olive skin, soft human flesh, every part of Marco was sensuous and delicious, right down to his hard cock and tight balls.

I reached down, stroking the dark hair at the base, reveling in the texture.

He was breathing hard, his eyes hungry as he looked me over.

"Wow," he whispered, his hands stroking my thighs as he looked up at me adoringly. "A normal dick."

I blinked, looking down at my hard length, dark blue with blood, shimmery liquid already glittering on the top, and then looked up at Marco who was beet red.

"I mean it's perfect. So sexy. But honestly, I would have taken anything you had down there. I really like you if that wasn't clear."

Grinning, I bent down, capturing his lips against mine again.

"Is it perfect enough to fuck you with?" I gasped against his lips and he arched up, rolling his hips against mine with a gasp.

"Oh my god, please don't tease."

I gripped his hips, letting him frot against me because it felt too good to stop.

“I am in no way teasing,” I growled. “I want you.”

He made a desperate noise and nodded eagerly.

“Hyacinth,” he gasped. “Fuck me.”

He legs went around my waist and he lifted his hips, rubbing his hole against my tip, making us both groan.

Trembling, I reached down, slicking his entrance with my slick until he was gasping and shaking, his hole flexing for me.

As much as I wanted to press it right in, I knew that humans were different, so I forced my hips back and reached down, pushing a finger into him.

He gasped and held still, his lips parting in pleasure and eyes closed while I stroked him from the inside.

He was too out of it by now to do much other than cling to me and I loved that sign that I was giving him such pleasure. My lips landed on his neck, kissing and sucking and nipping his delicious skin while I slid another finger inside.

There was little resistance and my cock leaked in jealousy.

I couldn't take it much more, so I pulled my fingers out and gripped my length, lining it up to carefully press inside.

Marco came back to life with a full body shudder and a ragged gasp. His hands tightened into my back in fists, his heels digging into my thighs.

“Oh, fuck,” he groaned.

“Is it too much?” I asked, but he shook his head before I was even done the question, suddenly gripping my face to kiss me again, his lips and tongue desperate for me.

“Feels so good,” he gasped and started to move, trying to take me in deeper.

His desperation for more destroyed my reserve. With a shudder, I bent into him and started to fuck him harder, canting my hips and thrusting so hard that the bed was hitting the wall. With every thrust we both cried out, unable to keep it in as the overwhelming pleasure and passion took us over. Finally the pleasure was too much, escalating beyond what I could contain. I lost all rhythm and control, gasping and grunting as my hips dig into Marco’s thighs, cock impaling him as I came.

It was so intense that it seemed to go on forever, nothing but waves of pleasure shaking through me and the distant, desperate sounds Marco was making under me as he reached between us and frantically pulled at his cock until he too was arching and gasping as he came.

We lay together just like that for a long time, chests rising and falling against each other as we slowly caught our breaths, reality returning.

Marco’s room was a little bit cold so I pulled the covers up around us as best I could without moving too much and then chuckled in the silence.

“It sounds like somehow we didn’t wake the kids,” I said. “We’ll have to be a bit more careful next time.”

“Next time?” Marco repeated sleepily. “Wow... this feels like a dream.”

I lifted onto my elbows to look down at him. He looked so relaxed and satisfied and

pride surged through me.

I bent, kissed his sweet, pliant lips.

His arms tightened around my shoulders.

“This wasn’t a hook up, right?” he asked. “So you don’t have to leave.”

I shook my head.

“No Marco,” I promised. “I’m staying right here.”

He nodded, a happy smile flittering across his face that pulled at my heart strings.

When he fell asleep, I gently pulled my cock free, even though it felt so nice inside his welcoming warmth.

He sighed, but didn’t wake up even when I climbed from the bed.

I was only gone long enough to find a towel to wipe us clean with. I took my time cleaning his unblemished skin and when I was done and crawling back into his arms he sighed and shook his head, half awake.

“Yup, definitely dreaming.”

I smiled and tucked him under my chin, determined to make all his dreams reality from now on.

“Wow, walks really do work,” Azalea proclaimed loudly.

Marco jumped like he’d been electrocuted and nearly dropped her lunch bag.

“Why do you say that?” he asked.

“Because you’re way less stressed today,” she said, smiling. “I can tell.”

I bit my lip, trying not to laugh at the way that Marco went beet red. His gaze flew to mine and he shook his head, turning back to packing her school lunch.

“Hush now, time to go. Both of you.”

“Me too?” I demanded, trying not to laugh as he practically pushed us from the room.

“Mm hm. I can tell you’re enjoying yourself a little too much.”

I laughed and he gave me a push, holding back a smile. At the last second, I couldn’t resist catching him by the elbow and pulling him in for a quick kiss.

He stiffened and glanced around at the kids, looking shocked before covering it with a smile for Azalea’s sake.

“Have a good day, Hun,” he said, patting her.

He gave me a curious look and then went back to the other two.

On our walk, Azalea was quiet for a minute before the questions began.

“Are you in love with Marco?” she asked.

I considered.

“Possibly. I think I’m starting to be.”

She looked up at me, her expression guarded.

“Does that mean he’s going to be my other daddy?”

I shrugged.

“It’s still early to tell, but maybe he will someday... would that be okay with you?”

She took her time thinking about it before answering honestly.

“I like Marco,” she said firmly. “I guess it would be nice.”

I hadn’t realized how much her stamp of approval meant to me, but a tension I hadn’t known was there eased within me.

“I’m so glad,” I said and bent to hug her before she ran off to her friends.

When I got home, Marco was sitting in the living room, quietly helping Iris with a puzzle because Aster had fallen asleep in his arms.

Just like that first day, watching them together did something to me. It made my insides feel warm and fuzzy and complete.

I walked over and sat down next to him without a word, putting an arm around his shoulders. He leaned into me, letting his head rest on my shoulder for a minute before speaking.

“I’m surprised you’re being so open in front of the kids already,” he said.

“When you know, you know,” I said simply.

Marco pulled back far enough to look at me. For a long time, he searched my face and then he smiled.

“Yeah,” he said softly. “You do, don’t you?”

It was all the confirmation that I needed that Marco felt the same way that I did.

For the first time, my heart and home felt full and complete. This was my family now and I believed for the rest of our lives.

Page 7

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Marco

Six months later...

I heard Hyacinth coming down the stairs and even six months of being together did nothing to quell the butterflies in my stomach as he neared.

In fact, the more time I spent with him, the more my love grew. The more I got to know him and understand him, the deeper my appreciation went.

When he entered the kitchen, I was just taking the basket out of the steamer, so I didn't turn around.

He waited until it was on the counter to wrap his arms around my waist and hold me close to his chest.

"God, you smell good," I told him, shutting my eyes and leaning back into his warmth. "As always."

He chuckled.

"And whatever culinary masterpiece you've cooked up smells incredible," he said, releasing me to peak.

I slapped his hand away from the lid and pointed to his seat at the table.

"It's a surprise, go sit down."

Chuckling, he followed my order and sat down patiently while I made sure it looked like it had been cooked properly.

“Why are you so nervous?” he asked. “I’m sure it will be amazing.”

I swallowed, not answering until I brought the food to the table to place it between us.

“Do you remember the first time we ever spoke?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said, smiling warmly. “You looked so nervous and so beautiful. I couldn’t take my eyes off of you.”

I blushed, remembering the way I’d stared when he’d opened the front door. I hadn’t noticed him looking at me the same way, but I didn’t doubt it now. Hyacinth had left no room for doubt in my mind. He adored me the same way that I adored him.

“Not that time,” I finally said. “On Alien Mates, when we were first texting.”

His eyes widened.

“Yes,” he said slowly.

“Well, I said I’d cook you your favorite meal, but it was something I had never heard of before.”

He frowned.

“You didn’t find a papilionoidean recipe somehow, did you? Surely they don’t even have the ingredients here.”

“Not exactly,” I said, shaking my head. “But I found something that sounded similar.”

Finally, I lifted the lid, exposing the meal for our at home date night.

“It’s something called Lo Mai Gai,” I said. “It’s a Chinese recipe. Rice and mushrooms and chestnuts wrapped in a lotus leaf... Of course, it might taste nothing like your papilionoidean dish.”

His species name was still a mouthful, but I’d been practicing saying it and now could manage without embarrassing myself.

He shook his head and reached for one, looking like he had no words. I took one as well and waited for him to unwrap the rice and take the first bite.

When he did, his eyes drifted shut in appreciation.

Relief filled me. I’d wanted this to be special but to my shock, when he opened his eyes, tears glistened over the pale blue.

“Hyacinth...”

He shook his head, swallowing another bite before speaking.

“You know,” he finally said. “I had no idea how many memories could be stored in a familiar taste.”

Emotion overwhelmed me too, on his behalf. I wanted so badly to make him as happy as he and his beautiful family had made me.

“I know you miss your home and I just—I wanted this to be special for you.”

“I can tell,” he whispered. “It’s amazing.”

He devoured the food and to my surprise, I quite liked it too. By the end, Hyacinth

had a huge smile on his face and an even bigger hug to engulf me in.

He kissed my cheek and nuzzled me, clearly not planning to let me go for the rest of the night, not that I minded.

“Maybe I can take you home for a visit. It’s a long trip, but I would love for you to see where I come from, and it would be good for the kids to understand their heritage.”

I put my arms around his waist, holding him tightly, my fingers brushing up and down his silky wings, making him shiver.

“That sounds amazing.”

“Really? You would go?”

“Of course,” I laughed. “I would go anywhere with you.”

He took a breath and held me a little bit tighter.

“I don’t think I could love you more,” he informed me. “Thank you for everything.”

I shook my head in wonder. I had been welcomed into this family with open arms and I didn’t know how I had ever gotten so lucky.

“I love you,” I whispered. “Always.”

“And forever,” he added, kissing my cheek. “How did I ever get so lucky?”

I chuckled.

“What is it?”

I shook my head.

“Oh nothing, we’re just on the same page without having to say a word. As usual. That’s just us.”

He smiled.

“It is, isn’t it?”

END