

Stargazer

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About *Stargazer*

An amnesiac alien and a former slave decide the fate of the last city on Earth.

Ava is an anomaly. She has the appearance of the enemy alien race known as Stargazers, with her lavender hair and eyes, but the human capacity for love and forgiveness. Any other captured Stargazer would have been executed, but not her—defying long held notions of who the invaders of Earth really are. Julius Pallas, the leader of Sanctuary—an outright dictatorship, encased in a dome to keep out Stargazers and the human Resistance—has been absent from the adoration of his pious citizens ever since her capture—as she's being held in a doctor-ridden mega-facility known as the Corporation.

Ava has amnesia—not knowing who she is or where she came from. She rejects that she's a Stargazer, but she isn't entirely human either, with the strength to crush a man's bones. The key to everything lies with Pallas, who orders her torture and imprisonment inside the Corporation. When the two finally meet, Ava will discover her true identity, her connection to him, and why he's been alone for a millennium without her. Now that he thinks he has her back, he'll discover how greatly she's changed, and how her destiny may just ruin his murderous empire.

Chapter 1
Chapter 2
Chapter 3
Chapter 4
Chapter 5
Chapter 6
Chapter 7
Chapter 8
Chapter 9
Chapter 10
Chapter 11
Chapter 12

Chapter 13
Chapter 14
Chapter 15
Chapter 16
About the Author

Chapter 1

My head was on a metal ring. I thought I was naked, lying on a cold, hard table, but I was covered with a thin, white gown. But for all the warmth it provided, I might as well have been naked. Goosebumps sprang up on my arms. I was shivering. My teeth were chattering. The room was bright with a white light—too bright. Another light—yellow—hovered above my head. It was just out of my line of vision so my eyes didn't hurt from the bright illumination. I didn't understand all the lights. Why?

I heard footsteps. Who could they be? What are they looking for? I wanted to get up and flee, but my body felt like it was paralyzed. I couldn't even move my big toe. I couldn't speak. But I could hear. The footsteps, like boots, were heavy—loud. I could hear heels too—*click-clacking*—like what a woman would wear. And then there were softer-soled shoes that would have barely registered if I hadn't been trying so hard to listen—to understand where I was and what I was doing here.

I could see but nothing from what is above my head... very little to see at my sides too; the bright lights and the white walls were my only clues. It was still a mystery. The room was very large. The ceiling was high.

I heard the footsteps come closer. It sounded like a stampede. I was shivering more and more. It was so cold—so very cold.

“Can she hear us?”

The voice was distant, yet close; it was confusing. But the voice was a woman—however that didn't calm me. She didn't sound warm. She was clinical... unfeeling—dangerous.

“Yes. She's afraid.”

The voice was male—caring. Yes, I was afraid. But why wasn't he helping me? Surely, he could see that I was in pain, cold, shivering, upset, unmovable, and barely covered. I wanted to scream for help, to plead at the top of my lungs, to yell and yell and yell until my voice gave out. I wanted them to cover their ears as if I had personally wounded them. I wanted someone to let me go, for I wasn't worth having, screaming and screaming like a maniac.

“Afraid?”

The woman sounded unsure, confused. Why wouldn't I be afraid? She would too if she couldn't move, freezing, with possibly dozens of people staring at her half-covered body. Who was this woman to doubt my feelings? Was she blind? Could she not recognize fear?

"I'm surprised as well. We didn't expect this."

The man was surprised? And who's "we?" More importantly—who am I? Why was it a shock I wasn't supposed to be afraid? I racked my brain, thinking, thinking, thinking back over how I could have possibly gotten into this painfully bright room with strangers. As I thought, I remembered nothing—absolutely nothing. I didn't even know my name. I began to shiver again, but not from the cold. I was afraid, yes, of the people, of the room, but I was more terrified of not knowing—not knowing who I was.

"She's having a seizure."

The voice was male but unknown. His voice was deep but not frightening. I didn't know if he was a doctor, but my tremors were not the result of a medical condition. I was shivering from absolute terror; the terror of not knowing—anything.

I heard the rapid steps of the heels across the floor—*click-clack—click-clack—click-clack*. No! Not her! I wanted anyone but her! I didn't know her, but she scared me so much.

"Step aside!"

It was the soft-spoken man from earlier. Yes, he was the one I wanted. He would take care of me. The *click-clacking* stopped. I felt a warm hand on my arm. I knew it was him and not her. She would have been ice cold—just like her unfeeling heart. I shifted my eyes to the right. Then I quickly shut them—that was the direction to the yellow hovering light above my head. I wanted to open my eyes again, to see him—yes! I saw the facial outline of a man's features—but the light hurt too much. The light went off. He must have sensed my pain. My eyelids flew up and I beheld the man looking down upon me.

"Don't touch her!" yelled the woman. "She's dangerous!"

I was dangerous? How could I be? I couldn't move, and I had no idea who I was.

"What about a little compassion?"

The young man—tall with brown hair parted to one side, neat, wearing a white lab coat—had looked up and was staring at someone. I shifted my eyes to the left and that was when I saw her. She was in the distance but closer than the others in the room who still seemed to be wary of me. Her hair was platinum blond and she wore a red dress with red heels. She looked so out of

place in that white room. She was wringing her hands together with blood red nails. Her perfume was making me nauseous. It was too... flowery. I had been afraid of her, but as she stood there, looking nervous, she seemed rather weak.

Her fists clenched. "You want me to have...compassion?"

She spat the word out like it was poison on her tongue. Her nostrils flared. Her eyebrows lifted. Now she seemed quite the menace I had thought her to be.

"They're not all bad," said the man softly.

The woman's arms shot down, almost glued to her sides. Her fists were still clenched. Blood was quickly rushing to her fingertips.

"Not all bad?" she repeated, struggling to pronounce each word. She lifted up one hand and pointed to the young man. "We brought you in because you have experience with these"—she waved her hand at me with a disgusted look—"things."

She called me a thing. I wasn't a *thing*. I was a human being. I knew *that* while lying there on that cold table. But I didn't know why I knew I was human if I couldn't remember anything else. I was aware. I believed that I was like the rest of the people in the room. Yes, I was humanoid, but only the young doctor felt like my true kin. He was soft and gentle. His warm hand on my arm sent flames of heat all throughout my body. I reacted to him not only as a friendly companion, but as a female would react to a male. He made me feel safe and I wanted him to embrace me as his own.

From that, I knew I was right to think of myself as human, but what did the others think I was? Especially the "Red Woman" as I dubbed her. What was her purpose? What was her agenda? What would she do if the nice doctor abandoned me and left me alone?

"I've only experimented on the dead. Dr. Hinder was the expert on...live specimens."

I wanted to jerk my arm away from his grasp, but I couldn't move. Who was this man? I thought he was my savior, but he was just as bad as the Red Woman. He experimented on corpses. And this Dr. Hinder, whoever he was, experimented on people while they were still alive. Where was this frightening doctor? Is he nearby? Am I about to be...dissected?

I was surprised at my level of understanding. I could identify, analyze, and extrapolate. I was not totally brain dead as to the world around me. The only malfunction I suffered was my lack of memory. Who was I? After that was answered, everything else would make sense.

The Red Woman placed her hands on her wide hips. “Dr. Hinder is dead. *You* are the primary physician in this facility. He was your mentor. Surely, you learned *something* from him.”

The man looked sympathetically at me. He had blue eyes like sapphires. It was calming like the water in the ocean. I remembered that. I remembered the water—swimming, diving, and the watching the sun set on the horizon. I was very happy, but I wasn’t alone. Someone was there with me, but they were just a shadow in the water. But I was safe with this person; I loved this person. I felt my insides heating up, reacting to the doctor’s eyes, and my lost love. Where was he? Did he know that I was here? What couldn’t I see his face? What was his name?

“I learned *everything* from him,” said the doctor, interrupting my worried thoughts.

I noticed the doctor was defending himself and Dr. Hinder. His voice had a bit of an edge to it. I was glad he was standing up to the Red Woman, even though I was terribly afraid he was going to cut me open and study my organs.

The Red Woman took two steps forward. The *click-clack* of her red heels was like a thunderous boom in my ears. I wanted to cover them, but my hands were plastered to the table. Even the doctor’s warmth didn’t melt the unseen ice covering my body. Only my eyelids could move and my eyes. I was glad for that. I could shut myself off from the world at any time. All I could do was hear and I had a plan for that. I would reminisce about the water—the waves crashing—crashing all around me—drowning out this horrible world I’d been chained to.

“Then *why* is she afraid, Dr. Goode?”

His name was Goode. That gave me hope that he was actually a *good* person—somehow his name and his character had become one.

“I-I don’t know.”

He rubbed his thumb against my skin—away from the observers. I felt like I was on fire. I thought he was trying to soothe me, to make me feel better, but I was overcome with intense affection for this man—a loving affection—as a woman would have for a man.

“Well, let’s cut it open and see.”

The voice came from far away—a man’s voice. He called me an “it.” Could he not see that I was human—female? Why was I being treated like this? What did I ever do to these people?

“I want to get a consult,” said Dr. Goode. “I’m an expert of the body, not the mind.”

I wanted to dispute that. He sensed that I was afraid. He was aware of feelings. He felt for me—or I hoped he did.

The Red Woman chuckled. That was even more frightening than her scowl.

“I know of whom you speak. He’s untrustworthy. I thought this rebelliousness was contained in the Mental Department, but it seems to be affecting Physiology as well.”

She gave Dr. Goode a knowing smirk. I didn’t understand the exchange, but I wanted to jump up and hit her. I didn’t like that she was smiling in any way at Dr. Goode. I felt like he was mine.

Dr. Goode ignored her comment about his conduct.

“If Dr. Valier is such a problem, the Corporation would have seen to his dismissal.”

“Do you find fault with the Corporation’s guidelines?”

“There is not fault. *You* are though, at fault, by your earlier statement. You bemoaned the fact that Dr. Valier was untrustworthy which means you are in disagreement with President Pallas.”

The others in the room gasped.

The Red Woman’s face actually turned red. “I am *not* in disagreement, doctor. I am loyal to the Corporation, unlike some people.”

Her eyes shifted to me. I didn’t understand.

“Dr. Valier is loyal to Pallas, as am I,” said Dr. Goode. “Our last evaluation was three days ago. We passed with flying colors.”

“Others have cheated the system,” she pointed out with a smirk.

“Yes, they have,” he agreed, “but a day didn’t pass before they were found out and duly punished.”

I shivered at the word “punished.” I ran through a list of mental images: belts, whips, chains, chains with spikes at the end, and beatings—clenched fists slamming into vulnerable parts of the body. I shivered again.

Dr. Goode caressed my arm with his thumb. It helped but not by much.

The Red Woman clasped her hand together, as if in prayer, and bowed her head. “Pallas, the Benevolent One.”

Everyone, including Dr. Goode, echoed her devotion. If this Pallas man condoned human experimentation, then I wanted no part of this worship service. Everyone, even Dr. Goode, were

my enemy, although, I desperately wanted him to be on my side, wondering if by staying my dissection, he was good, and not as radical as the others in the room.

“Fine,” said the Red Woman after she was done giving praise. “You can call in Dr. Valier. *But* I will be allowed in on the meeting.”

“That’ll be too many people. We need her calm.”

She took another step forward—*click-clack*. “I am the president’s liaison. I will *not* be excluded.”

I shivered again. I didn’t want her there. Dr. Goode sensed my distress and rubbed his soothing thumb against my skin.

“If Dr. Valier disagrees...” Dr. Goode trailed off.

“He will *not* disagree.”

“You may be the president’s liaison, but he is the president’s nephew. Who do you think comes first: family or the worker?”

The Red Woman gasped. I could tell that being called “worker” was upsetting. She thought of herself as something more—more special to President Pallas. I was upset too. I thought this Dr. Valier would be helpful, would delay my execution, but if he was the president’s nephew, then I couldn’t see how I could trust him. And for that matter, I didn’t see how I could trust Dr. Goode, who wanted me to see him.

“Well, if I’m a worker, then you’re a worker!”

Dr. Goode smiled. It was a nice smile. “I already knew that.”

He seemed to be throwing it back at the Red Woman that she was oblivious to her place in the Corporation. Again, she thought she was special, but she was just another worker bee in the great hive.

The Red Woman narrowed her eyes at Dr. Goode. “Medusa, locate Dr. Loren Valier.”

My eyes shifted, looking for this...Medusa—what a strange name, yet familiar—but no woman appeared. Instead, part of the wall changed near me, from white to black. It was a screen and finally, someone appeared.

“Doctor Loren Valier is located in Quadrant 9—Level 6—Floor 30—Room 310.”

It was a female voice and she did look...human. But there were tubes coming out of her head attached to machines all around her. There was a lot of flashing lights and different colors on the equipment. She seemed mechanical in her movements, as if she and the machines were

one. As I connected her name to the tubes on her head, I was vaguely aware of a woman with the same predicament. Instead the tubes were moving, and at the end they had mouths with fangs—snakes. It was a scary image so I quickly put it out of my mind. I was scared enough.

This Medusa didn't seem scary though. I was actually sad for her, if she were a human, attached to wires, hooked up to machines, spending all day and all night, looking for people.

“And *what* is he doing *there*?”

The Red Woman found Loren Valier's position to be unwelcome. I wondered if Dr. Goode and the others felt the same way.

“I will ascertain,” replied Medusa mechanically.

We all waited as she pushed different buttons with lights flashing all around her, and turning her head at different angles as if she were processing something she didn't understand.

After some very long seconds, Medusa's head became still. “I have the knowledge you seek. Doctor Loren Valier has a direct message for you.”

“Oh?”

“Go to hell.”

Dr. Goode chuckled lightly beside me. I would have laughed too, but I couldn't move my lips. I was however, laughing on the inside. I heard a few chuckles from the others, but it was quickly muted. I didn't know if it was funny what Dr. Valier said or how it was said by the mechanical search engine Medusa.

The Red Woman sighed loudly. This wasn't the first time Dr. Valier had told her off. If he really was the president's nephew then I assumed he got a lot of freeway, and that was why despite her disdain of him and his supposed disloyalty, he was still here... wherever he was. And alive—not dissected like I was sure would happen to me.

“Bring him on visual.”

“Processing,” said Medusa.

Within a few seconds, she disappeared and the screen was black.

“Lights,” commanded the Red Woman.

I thought she meant the room I was in, and I was confused if she wanted more lights on. I couldn't fathom how hurtful that would be to my eyes. But she wasn't talking about my large holding cell. The black screen lit up to show a room, smaller than mine, cozy, like someone's bedroom. The lights she mentioned were the lights to the room. There was a bed in the center of

the room and on it was a man; his chest was bare with a white sheet that was covering the rest of his body; and a woman with only her red hair visible as she lay on her side. I was starting to piece everything together. No wonder he didn't want to be disturbed.

“Outrageous!” The Red Woman yelled. “He’s in bed with some...tramp...only blocks away from the president’s statue!” She held her hands over her heart. “What a sacrilege!”

Dr. Goode chuckled beside me again. Although he demonstrated obedience to President Pallas earlier, it seemed that it was just for show. At least that was what I thought. If he was truly horrified, he would be reacting the same way as the Red Woman. The others were silent. They didn't seem to be judging Dr. Valier for his...actions.

Dr. Valier moaned, grumbled, and then his eyes opened. He looked to his left, and it was like he was looking straight at me.

He smiled and sat up. His white bed sheet was doing a poor job of covering him and it wasn't like he was trying to be indiscreet.

“Madam Secretary, what do I owe this wonderful honor?”

I liked the doctor. He was young like Dr. Goode, but had wild, blond hair that he didn't try to tame.

The Red Woman stepped aside and I came into full view.

“Dr. Goode has requested your consultation on an anomaly.”

She was calling me being afraid, “an anomaly?” I wasn't the one who was strange. This whole place was. This whole situation was.

Dr. Valier furrowed his brow at me but that was all. He didn't seem afraid of me or sickened by me. He was...curious.

He looked away from me and smiled. “Hey, John, how are things over there?”

“Tense,” Dr. Goode answered with a smile.

So, his name was John—John Goode. It sounded like a nice name—of someone who was caring. I didn't know what to make of Loren Valier. He was half-naked like me—except that he seemed to have enjoyed his time better.

“I need your help,” continued John, “if you're not too busy.”

“No, I'm good. I've been asleep for far too long anyway. Besides, the senator's daughter needs to get home.”

The Red Woman gasped. “Oh, my goodness; I can’t believe it! You have Senator Noon’s daughter in...”

Dr. Valier smiled. “In bed—Madam Secretary—so don’t be such a prude. I heard you were wild”—he winked—“back in the day.”

I scanned the Red Woman. She was probably in her forties. Dr. Valier looked young like John not even near twenty. I didn’t know a lot, but I found it odd that two young men—boys even—would be doctors. Of course, I knew very little of this place. Maybe there were a lot of smart people—gifted children. I started to wonder about my childhood—if I were gifted and if I had parents who loved me. But I stopped wondering. It was too sad to not remember anything about my past.

“That’s enough!” The Red Woman stomped her high heel against the buffed white floor. The sound echoed. “Get dressed and come over here at once!”

Dr. Valier quickly rose and his sheet almost fell, but he snatched it up in time. The camera or I’m assuming Medusa, panned up, towards his face. He was very handsome in a wild sort of way, not reserved like John.

He smiled at the whole room. “Don’t start without me.”

The screen went black and I expected Medusa to reappear, but she didn’t, and the wall resumed its bright white feature.

I was scared. Dr. Valier seemed like he could be a nice man, but he’d said: “Don’t start without me.” What did that mean? John said that Dr. Valier was being called in for my mind, not my body.

Terror gripped me.

They weren’t experimenting on my body.

They were experimenting on my mind.

Chapter 2

I tried to struggle, to move, but it was all in vain. Only my eyelids would work and I used them fiercely as I blinked rapidly at John, pleading for him to understand my fear.

He furrowed his brow, staring at me.

“What? What is it?” asked the Red Woman, as her heels *click-clacked* two paces closer.

I could hear the others shuffling forward, taking slow steps, curious, but still afraid of me. I didn’t know why they should fear me. Obviously, John didn’t, as he held my arm gently with his hand, and with this other, cupped my cheek. It felt so good to be touched in that way—it brought back memories of being embraced by that shadowy figure who I couldn’t distinguish. It frustrated me, but not as much as not knowing who I was.

“I don’t believe it,” he said.

“What?!” asked the Red Woman, frustrated.

“She’s using Morse code.”

I let my mind run wild, remembering what “Morse code” was. When I found the information I was seeking, I couldn’t believe it. Morse code was used as a signaling language. If I could speak, I wouldn’t need it, but I assumed I had found a way to communicate with John. Although, I didn’t know what my rapid eye blinks were saying to him. I stopped, afraid.

“No, please,” he urged with a nice smile. “Talk to me.”

It was nice to hear him say that. He wanted me to communicate with him; he wanted to know about me. Maybe if everyone knew that I wasn’t a threat, they wouldn’t try to kill me, as I feared they would. This place didn’t seem to be a wonderland of dreams and wish fulfillments.

So, I kept blinking, although, I didn’t know what I was doing. Basically, I was trying to plead for help.

When I stopped, he looked up at the Red Woman. “She’s says she’s scared. She’s scared of Dr. Valier. She thinks he’s going to experiment on her brain like I’m going to experiment on her body.”

John looked back down at me and shook his head. “No, no, my dear, I’m not going to hurt you.”

The Red Woman *click-clacked* closer; her perfume was making me sick.

“Don’t talk to it so... nicely! And how do you know Morse code?”

“My dad was a sailor before the war.”

I blinked furiously again.

“What? What is she saying?”

“She wants to know which war.”

Everyone was silent. I shifted my eyes from John to the Red Woman, back and forth, waiting for one of them to explain. I knew the Red Woman was the least likely person to divulge, but I was hoping John would tell me about this war I had no knowledge of.

“She’s tricking you,” said the Red Woman assuredly. “She knows very well *which* war.”

I blinked furiously again, although, I had no idea how to convey in Morse code everything I wanted to say. It was another mystery of who I was.

“Well, she’s a chatterbox. What did she say this time?”

John drew his hand away from my face. I felt so cold. But he kept his hand on my arm, caressing me.

“She doesn’t know anything about a war. She woke up in this room and doesn’t know anything about herself or where she came from.”

“Well, she obviously knows English or can you Dr. Goode speak proficient Stellar unlike the staff in our Linguistics Department?”

“No, she knows English.”

The others gasped.

“Out, out!” The Red Woman fussed at them. “I can’t have you all gasping when every bit of intelligence is let out. Besides, this is a top secret matter now, and you all don’t belong here.”

The others began to shuffle out with their boots and shoes and heels making loud sounds against the floor. I heard a door slide open and then close.

I was afraid with only John and the Red Woman in the room. I wasn’t afraid of John, but with fewer witnesses, I was fearful that she would do something and blame me. Why not? I was after all, the *enemy*. I wondered what Stellar meant. My brain processed the word and the result was “star.” How would I know how to speak “star?” What does that even mean?

The Red Woman *click-clacked* until she was right next to me. I started to tremble again and John rubbed his thumb back and forth over my arm.

“What are you doing?” she asked, eyeing his affection.

“I’m soothing her,” he explained. “She’s scared, remember?”

“If you weren’t personally recommended by Dr. Hinder and the only physician in this whole department that knew the ins and outs of these things, I’d recommend you for exile.”

“Why exile? Why not imprisonment or a public execution? We haven’t had one of those in nearly a week.”

“You speak like they do—the rebels. Of course, it only seems natural given your brother was their top commander.” She smiled wickedly. “He died most painfully, I was told.”

John tightened his grip around my arm and I tried to jerk away, but I couldn’t move, although he wasn’t hurting me. He was mad, furious at her. I didn’t blame him, even though I had no idea what they were talking about.

“I speak like my brother because of the wisdom of our father. He taught us to be kind and loving.”

The Red Woman gripped the side of my table, obviously holding herself back from hitting John.

“You have only one father, Dr. Goode, and his name is President Julius Pallas. And he blessed you by allowing you to live in the Sanctuary instead of seeing your head chopped off at the guillotine. I’ve never understood why. Can you enlighten me?”

“He hasn’t told you?”

“No.”

“Then he doesn’t want you to know.”

“I know everything.”

“No, you don’t.”

She snarled like some wild animal and I thought she was going to hit him, but then the door in the distance slid open. The Red Woman took two steps back, retreating.

“Oh, it’s you. It’s about time you arrived.” She waved at me. “Figure this out.”

Dr. Loren Valier approached with a wary smile. His blond hair was brushed back and he wore casual clothes under a white lab coat. He had an ID tag clipped to the pocket. I looked over at John and noticed his was turned around. I didn’t know if that was by accident or he didn’t want anyone to know who he was.

John gave Dr. Valier a friendly pat on his back.

“Thanks for coming over.”

“No problem, so, when was she brought in?”

“Two days ago,” replied the Red Woman.

I couldn’t believe I’d been here for two days. What were they doing to me for *two* days?
“She was handled nicely,” he remarked with a sensuous smile.

“There was no struggle,” noted the Red Woman. “She was unconscious when the Retrieval Squad found her.”

She went back to calling me “she.” But that didn’t stop my hatred of her.

“How many were captured during the raid?”

“Several,” she replied, deliberately trying to be cryptic. “She was left alone, unprotected.”

“They left her to be captured?”

I scanned Dr. Valier’s eyes. They were green like emeralds and it brought back memories of running through green forests. I was happy as I ran with that shadow again, who had been swimming with me in the vast ocean. Who was he? Why couldn’t I see his face? Did I receive a blow to the head and was imagining someone who didn’t exist? It was possible—my head did ache, but I didn’t know if it was from some injury or the multitude of blinding lights in the large room.

The Red Woman smirked at John. “The enemy was nowhere to be found, but they are a traitorous race like the rebels.”

John turned away from her and said to Dr. Valier, “Loren, she’s incredible. She speaks English.”

Dr. Valier walked around John and approached me, leaning down, unafraid, but not as compassionate.

“I thought she was in restraints. How is she speaking?”

“Morse code,” replied the Red Woman. “Dr. Goode just so happens to be an expert in that too.”

Dr. Valier smiled at John, but said nothing.

“Although,” she continued, “he is an imbecile at reading the mind.”

“And that’s where I come in?” asked Dr. Valier.

“I hope so.”

John laid his free hand on Dr. Valier’s arm. “She’s scared, Loren. She thinks you’re going to experiment on her.”

Dr. Valier noticed John’s other hand on my arm.

“May I?” he asked.

John seemed reluctant to let me go and I didn’t want him to, but eventually, his hand slid away from my arm and suddenly, I felt very cold.

“She’s trembles a lot,” John noted. “She’s scared.”

“And cold,” added Dr. Valier, scanning me from head to toe. “Let’s get her a blanket.” He laid his hand on my arm, but not in the same spot where John had been. “It’s okay. I’m not going to hurt you,” he said softly.

And I believed him. He seemed very trusting or at least I hoped so. I was so confused, so vulnerable to even the gentlest touch. If a snake had wound its body around my arm, I’d love its affection, until its strong muscles cracked and crushed every bone, betraying me—but also snickering at why I had been so gullible to believe anyone could possibly love me.

John rushed off and came back a few seconds later with a blanket—a warm, blue blanket; he gently laid it over my body making me feel instantly better, despite my surroundings and lack of knowledge.

“See?” said Dr. Valier, pointing to my eyes. “I can tell she feels better.”

I blinked to John and he smiled. “She says she does feel better.”

“Well, isn’t that just great,” the Red Woman said sarcastically.

Dr. Valier began caressing my arm like John had but it didn’t feel the same. It wasn’t bad, but I was used to John. He was my original comforter and the only one I could really talk to. I noticed John looking at Dr. Valier’s motions with a furrowed brow. He came closer to me, his hand stretched out, like he wanted to touch me, but didn’t. Dr. Valier stopped caressing me and John resumed his hand on my arm. I felt better.

“A change,” said Dr. Valier with a raised eyebrow.

“What change?” asked John.

“When I touched her, she didn’t seem like she hated it, but when *you* touched her, I noticed a change in her eyes.” He leaned down. “What beautiful eyes you have.”

“All the Stargazers have lavender eyes,” said the Red Woman with dismissal.

I noticed hers was a dark brown. I wasn’t sure, but I thought she was jealous of me. And what was a Stargazer?

“And hair to match,” commented Dr. Valier, as he touched a strand far from my scalp.

I blinked at John in confusion.

He furrowed his brow. “She’s confused by her appearance. She wants to know if there are other humans with lavender eyes and hair.”

The Red Woman came closer. “*You*,” she said, staring at me, “are *not* human.”

I couldn’t help it and began to cry. Tears, never ending tears, were falling from my eyes. I didn’t want to cry, to seem weak, but I was so vulnerable, so confused that I exploded like a waterfall, as if a dam had broken, and I could finally express my depression.

“Damn you!” yelled John. He walked quickly around my table and in front of the Red Woman. “You’re upsetting her.”

He placed his hand on my other arm, rubbing my skin with his thumb. At the same time, Dr. Valier resumed where he had been touching me. It was odd; I had these two handsome young doctors touching me, worrying over me, while the Red Woman was forced in the background, murmuring angrily.

“She is extraordinary,” said Dr. Valier. “She looks like a Stargazer, but acts like a human. You did a scan when she arrived?” he asked John.

It seemed that everyone wanted to forget about the Red Woman, huffing and puffing in the corner of the room. She was fixed in my mind, as was this talk about Stargazers and humans. Why were they talking about me in this way?

“Of course,” replied John. “The Stargazers mimic the human body incredibly well, except that they have inherited differences; the most notable are the lavender eyes and hair.”

“I wonder what their planet looks like,” mused Dr. Valier. “I bet it’s beautiful.”

The *click-clacking* came closer. “I can’t believe you two are gushing over this... thing! You’ve seen female Stargazers. What’s the difference?”

John looked down at me with a warm smile. “She’s special.”

“That’s your professional medical diagnosis?” she asked nastily.

“She may look like them, but she speaks English. How does she know our language and enough of it to speak rapidly as if she’s known it all her life?”

“It’s good you know Morse code, John, but how does she know? Again, she’s a special mystery,” remarked Dr. Valier with a half smile.

“I’ll have to be close to her so I can translate what she’s saying.”

“No, let’s just take off her restraints,” Dr. Valier suggested.

“You will do no such thing!” yelled the Red Woman. “She’s lethal!”

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