

THE ESLITES

Prequel

By CM Doportó

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For my Dad,

thank you for sharing your love of Sci-Fi with me.

I miss you.

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Prequel

“I won’t let them take you. I won’t.” Bryce released my hand and his fingers glided out of my reach. I didn’t want to let go, but I had no choice. The pain behind his hazel brown eyes said everything to me. That he was willing to fight for me, the love of his life. But everyone knew resistance meant one thing—death for us all. We had all witnessed it and experienced it before, losing a relative or a friend.

“Don’t worry. I won’t let them touch me.” I swallowed hard and put on my bravest face. I refused to show weakness.

“Do as they say and they won’t hurt you.” My dad put his hand on my shoulder and leaned over and kissed me on the forehead.

“I know.”

Dad didn’t show or express much emotion, but this one time, I really wanted him to hold me and tell me not to be afraid. I couldn’t understand why he easily accepted this government order, which mandated that every female between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five go for testing. Married, single, mother or not, no one had a choice. It bewildered me that our government actually formed an alliance with these Eslites.

My mom cupped her trembling hands around my face. Tears streamed down her cheeks and I could see the worry etched in her face.

“Don’t cry, Mom. I’ll be back. Many girls have returned home to their families unharmed.”

“I pray you don’t pass their test and they don’t need you. I...I don’t want to lose you.”

Tears clung to my lower lashes and I blinked them away. “I love you, Mom.”

“I love you too, baby.” She hugged me and I didn’t want her to let go.

My little brother, Matt, pulled on my shirt. I breathed a sigh of relief. Any longer and I knew I would break down. I eased out of Mom’s hug and knelt down next to Matt. He jumped into my arms and we held each other. Neither one of us spoke a word. More than anything, I wanted to tell him how much I would miss him but I couldn’t. If I did, I knew I wouldn’t be able to stop the tears. I sucked in a deep breath. *Mays are strong leaders. We never show weakness.* After a few seconds, I pried his hands off of my neck and stood up.

“Take care of Mom and Dad. You’re in charge now.”

“I will. Be careful and show ’em who’s boss.” He gave me a thumbs-up.

I gave him a wink and then turned one last time to Bryce.

“Don’t resist or challenge them. Just do as they say and you’ll be home before you know it.” Bryce knew me all too well. Stubborn, hardheaded and a rebel. Truthfully, fear plagued me, but I hid it. Deep down, something told me I wouldn’t return.

“What if I do pass their test? You know they can’t be tricked, or so I’ve heard.”

“Have some faith, Miranda. Everything will work out.”

I leaped into his arms. “I love you, Bryce.”

Holding me close, he whispered, “I love you too and I always will, no matter what happens. And don’t you ever forget it.” He leaned forward and kissed me deeply. My eyes closed and I responded willingly, kissing him with everything I felt for him. The world spun around us and my soul connected to his. I forgot that my parents were right next to us. Being sixteen, I’d never kissed Bryce in front of them. But I didn’t care. This might be the last time I saw him.

“It is time,” a man announced. His voice echoed against the buildings making the hairs on the back of my neck rise up.

Bryce's lips seized their embrace with mine. I opened my eyes and smiled, leaving him with a happy impression. I allowed my mind to capture every detail of him, from his dark wavy brown hair to the flat mole, right above his square chin. I wanted to remember every part of him.

"See you soon."

"See you, *my little red hot*." He slid his finger down the bridge of my nose and dotted the tip, like he did every time we said 'bye. I didn't always like it when he called me that but for some reason it didn't bother me this time. In fact, I kind of liked it.

I gave him a quick peck on the lips and told my family 'bye. Standing tall, I swung my duffle bag onto my shoulder and walked toward the green and silver hovercraft. I didn't look back because I had to be brave and tough for what lay ahead of me.

Everyone in the town square embraced their loved ones, refusing to let go. It was obvious they hoped and prayed for the same thing as my parents, that their girls wouldn't make the cut and could return home.

Several girls stood in line before me, waiting to board the aircraft. No one talked, all fearing the worst. We had limited information, only knowing that we were headed to a facility somewhere in West Virginia. Being in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, meant the flight wouldn't be too long.

"Name and social security number please." A young guy with dark brown hair and bangs that swept to the side of his forehead greeted me. He stared at me with mesmerizing blue eyes that made me forget my own name.

"Umm... Miranda Mays, 589-97-1028." I broke away from his mind-numbing gaze and studied him. The Eslites blended in quite well, looking and acting for the most part, like any other human being. The only notable differences included their gift of being highly intelligent,

physically fit, and more technically advanced. Kind of like a super human, only from another planet.

“Nice to meet you, Miranda. I’m Reve.”

I let out a low, “Hi,” trying to keep my thoughts from running rampant.

Using a touch screen tablet, he entered my information. I caught him checking me out but instead of looking away, he gave me a devilish smile that caused my body to tingle all over.

He held up a pen device to my eyes. “Don’t move, please.”

“Ookay.” I couldn’t move if I wanted to. I wasn’t sure if these Eslites had some type of mind controlling power but a part of me wanted to get to know him. Learn more about him. Explore him thoroughly. Brush my fingers through his soft layered hair. *Wake up, Miranda!* It took all my willpower and strength to gain control of my reckless thoughts. What was wrong with me? I only had eyes for Bryce. No one else.

I kept my eyes focused on the tip of the instrument as a low beam light scanned each of them painlessly.

He lowered the pen. “Thank you.”

I quickly looked down, not wanting to get sucked back into his hypnotic trance. The word ‘Confirmed’ illuminated on the screen, next to my name. “You may enter and sit wherever you like.” His voice purred into my ear.

I shook off the chills that ran down the left side of my body and stepped onto the aircraft. I hoped and prayed not all of the Eslites were so hot. Maybe this might not be so bad after all. *What!* I had to be crazy for thinking that. This was absolutely horrible.

I searched through the cabin and of all the girls aboard, I knew none of them. A few rows back, I spotted a window seat and made my way to it. A large muscular man, armed with a gun and other tactical equipment, stepped out in front of me.

“I’ll take your luggage.” His deep, dry voice felt more like a command than a helpful suggestion.

My shoulders caved in and the strap of my duffle bag dropped into his large hand. My voice squeaked out a, “Thank you.”

I took a seat in the black leather chair and fastened the harness over my body. Inside, I felt every bone rattle but I tried to relax. I needed to clear my mind and not think about anything other than failing the test and coming home. The harder I tried, the more difficult it proved to be. After several attempts, I gave up and observed my new surroundings.

The hovercraft resembled the cabin of an airplane, except the seats extended horizontally instead of vertically. A long narrow window on each side of the aircraft gave a full view of outside. The smoke gray color scheme and shiny chrome accents made it feel dark like the depths of outer space. Heights didn’t bother me and I never got motion sickness, so flying in this foreign aircraft didn’t intimidate me. Not knowing what to expect once I arrived is what inundated my mind.

“Miranda? Miranda Mays?” A familiar voice called out.

I saw Kate Bosch, a high school friend, stumbling her way to the empty seat next to me. “Hey, Kate, sit down.” I let out a big sigh. I wouldn’t be among complete strangers after all.

Her tousled blonde hair hung in her face and she breathed heavily. “I didn’t know they called you for this round, too.”

“Yeah, we got the call last week.”

“I’m so scared. I don’t want to give my eggs to these freaks and I sure—”

I clamped my hand over her mouth. “Shhh. Don’t say too much. It’s best to keep quiet.”

She nodded and I dropped my hand.

I looked around to see if any of the guards heard Kate. The sobs and cries from several girls drowned out her whining voice. Tears filled her light blue eyes and I saw the desperation embedded deep within them.

“I know, I’m scared too,” I whispered.

She leaned against me, clinging to my side for support. “I’m freakin’ out, Miranda. I don’t know what to do.”

I put my arm around her and hugged her. “We will get through this.”

Thirty minutes later, we landed on a military base near Martinsburg, West Virginia. A shuttle took us to our destination. Peering through the window I saw three large black and silver cylinder-shaped buildings that stood several stories tall. The sun’s rays reflected off the building making them glow like a bright LED light bulb. Never had I seen buildings with such a unique shape.

Kate and I stepped out of the shuttle and waited with the other girls. A breeze fluttered through my hair, giving me an eerie feeling up and down my back. Holding on to the cross around my neck, I said a quick prayer. Only God could help me now. A guard motioned for us to follow him. I sucked in a deep breath and let it out slowly. *Mays are strong leaders. We never show weakness.* My legs trembled with each step as I walked toward one of the buildings. No

matter how hard I tried to be brave, I couldn't ignore the fear and worry circulating through my blood.

The guard led us inside one of the futuristic structures which resembled another world, possibly theirs. Large TV screens dominated the walls and weird animal like robots zipped around us. It felt like I was in a scene at Stark Expo. I waited to see if Iron Man himself might greet us.

"Oh my God... this place is unbelievable," I muttered to Kate.

Kate nodded but didn't speak a word. Her mouth hung open and her eyes bulged, taking in her surroundings. Monochromatic colors of black and silver covered the building from the ceiling to the floor. Modern furnishings from black marble tables, to black leather chairs, and black carpet with accents of silver filled the facility.

"Wow. This is freaky." Kate covered her mouth as a group of men wearing all black walked by us.

"I know. Cult like," I whispered back.

They took us to our own private room, the size of a college dormitory. A drab gray painted the walls and black modular furniture with chrome accents filled the room. If it weren't for the ceiling to floor window that took up the entire length of the room, I would have thought they had us in a dungeon. Kate's room shared a bathroom with mine, making us suite mates.

I walked over to the twin bed covered in black cotton bedding and put my duffle bag down. I noticed an electronic tablet on the bedside table. I picked it up and a four dimensional holographic image popped up. A beautiful lady with dark hair pulled back in a bun and light green eyes smiled as if she could see me. Only her face showed and I didn't know if she was real or a computer generated image.

“Hello, Miranda Mays. Welcome to Nidus.” The monotone voice with an electronic tone told me she had to be fake. “We have prepared an interactive video for you, providing a tour of the facility and reviewing the tests you will be required to take. I’m your personal assistant, Shilo. I can help you with anything you need. I’m available twenty-four hours a day for your convenience.”

For the next hour, I learned about all the testing required of my body, mind, and spirit, to determine if I would be chosen as an egg donor for the Eslite race. Not a single female existed among them and they wanted humans to help save them. I prayed that I wouldn’t meet their high quality of standards, and that after the end of the week, I would be home and in Bryce’s arms.

Seven months later, I found myself thinking back to the day I had entered Nidus. Why did I have to excel at every skills test, pass every genetic test, and ace every intelligence test? Kate had passed them too, although not at the same level as me. They’d labeled me a superior donor, according to their standards.

Regardless of having an elite status, I had limited privileges, like everyone else. They allowed us to send digital messages to our family and friends a few times a week. It kept me sane because I didn’t know if I would ever return home. I missed my family, but most of all, I missed Bryce. Every time I read his messages, I closed my eyes and his perfect face appeared. It gave me hope and kept my faith strong.

Shilo popped up from my electronic tablet, interrupting my reminiscing. “Please be prepared to go to the Adelpia Lab at sixteen-hundred hours.”

I went to my wardrobe and pulled out the special uniform created for the lab. Even though they all looked the same, the Eslites required certain uniforms for certain events. I put on the required outfit and stood in front of the mirror. My long wavy auburn hair and green eyes contrasted brightly against the black uniform.

“Hey, can I come in?” Kate peeked out from the bathroom.

“Yeah, come on in...just getting dressed.”

“You got the message too?”

“Yep,” I said, turning around and holding out my arms.

Kate plopped down on my bed. “I’m so tired of wearing these black scrubs. I need color, for cryin’ out loud.”

“I know, tell me about it.” I slipped on the designated black ballerina shoes.

“I’m glad these pants have an elastic waist. I’m so bloated all the time and I’ve gained at least fifteen pounds with all these stupid hormones they make me take. You’re lucky you haven’t gained any weight.” Kate let out a heavy sigh and pouted.

I felt bad for her and the other girls that had gained weight too. I was fortunate that had not happened to me. “I guess, but that’s because I don’t have to take the hormones. Once you get off of them, you’ll lose the weight. ”

“Well, they suck. I’m hungry all the time and moody.” She looked up at the glass eye fixed on the ceiling in the center of the room and stuck out her tongue.

“Kate, that’s not going to help.”

“I don’t care. I’m tired of feeling like a prisoner. I’m sick of these eyes watching our every move. They give me the creeps. I bet there’s an eye hidden in the bathroom. I haven’t found it yet, but I know it’s there.”

“I’ve searched and can’t find it either. Some perv is probably watching us get undressed and taking a shower.” I shuddered, knowing that men watched us through these eyes since the only females present at Nidus, besides the six-thousand donors, were computer generated.

“Freaks.” Kate flipped off the eye this time. “I hope this won’t take long. I have a test tomorrow and I need to study. What do you think they will want us to do today?” Kate walked over to the food requestor and punched in a code. Instantly, the unit delivered a package of string cheese. Nifty and convenient.

“Who knows? But I have to go to work after dinner, so I need to get my homework done too.” We all attended the on-campus school and contributed to the Nidus community based upon our skills. I got the pleasure of working in the technology lab, testing out scanning and tracking equipment they developed. The *only* thing I looked forward to besides the cozy cafeteria with gourmet type food.

A short chime sounded from my digital tablet, altering us to be ready to go.

“See ya in a sec.” Kate shoved the rest of the cheese in her mouth and sprinted to her room.

The door to my room slid open sideways and a guard waited outside for me. I followed Kate and eight other girls down the cold and dark corridor to a set of elevators. We went several floors down to the Adelpia Lab.

We entered the dimly lit viewing room, in front of the main lab area, and took a seat on a long black bench against the wall. We waited for the opaque glass doors to open.

“What’s taking so long? I think we’ve been sitting here for at least ten minutes now.”

Kate crossed her arms and let out a long sigh.

I looked around. “I don’t know. We never wait this long.” Since we didn’t have our electronic tablets and the guards didn’t answer any of our questions, we had no choice but to wait. A minute later, the glass doors opened and an electronic arm moved ten incubators with fetuses a few feet in front of us. Each one marked with a number. Mine was Eslite 2790.

We heard a door open and turned to look. Dimas, head master of Nidus, entered the room.

“Oh no,” Kate cried out under her breath. She retracted her body against the wall.

“Crap.” I let my head hit the back of the wall. Dimas didn’t make many appearances, but when he did, all hell broke loose.

“This is preposterous. I want answers and I want them now!” He shook his fist in the air while walking to the center of the room.

Dr. Ridus, the head physician from the med center, scurried behind him. “We are doing all we can. The research doesn’t make sense. We are 99.99% compatible with this race. I’m not—”

“Don’t give me excuses. Make sense of it and figure this out or we all die.” Dimas placed his hands on the doctor’s shoulders. We all watched in terror, not knowing what to expect.

The doctor pushed his glasses closer to his face. His hand and voice trembled. “Yes, sir. I understand. We will do a thorough analysis on these dead fetuses before we try again. The good news is they survived for sixteen weeks.”

Several girls gasped and I had to think about what he said.

“Did he say dead?” I leaned over and whispered to Kate.

“Yes, I think so.”

“Wow. So this makes batch three now.”

Kate shook her head. “I don’t think I can take much more.”

“Me either.”

Dimas dug his fingers into the doctor’s collarbone. “I don’t want to hear the word *try*. Just do it! Figure it out!” Dr. Ridus’ eyes narrowed and he let out a shrilling yelp, falling down to his knees. Dimas released his grip. The doctor eased himself up from the floor and straightened out his black lab coat. Dimas started to walk off then spun around and with one quick blow, backhanded the doctor. “You’re worthless to me.”

The doctor flew back and collided with incubator. The glass encasing leaned to the right and knocked the one next to it over. One by one the incubators fell over in a domino effect until the entire row came crashing down to the floor. Glass shattered and the artificial wombs broke open causing the thick pinkish fluid to spew out on to the floor. Dead fetuses washed out from their incubators, still attached to their synthetic umbilical cord.

Screams and yells echoed off the walls. Some of the girls rushed over to embrace their artificial creation, while others hid their face from the site.

“Oh, my God,” I blurted out. Fluid flowed toward my feet and I jerked them away before the slimy liquid touched them.

“On no, what do we do?” Kate jumped up on top of the bench. She tugged at my sleeve. “Miranda...I’m scared. What if they kill us?”

I stared at the lifeless fetus. For whatever reason, no tears formed. Not because I didn’t have any regard for life, but because I didn’t feel anything for this fetus. I didn’t know or love the father of Eslite 2790. How could I create a child with him? A shudder went through me and

my stomach twisted into a pit of nausea. I closed my eyes, unable to look at the gruesome sight any longer.

“Silence! Guards, take them to their chambers,” Dimas ordered.

I opened my eyes at the sound of his gut-wrenching voice. He made his way over toward me and I turned my head, trying to avoid him. I wanted nothing to do with him.

Dimas grabbed me by my arms and stood me on my feet. “Miranda.” He shook me, demanding my full attention. I didn’t want to look at him. *Mays never show weakness.* I lifted my head and allowed my eyes to meet his.

“You and your friends better pray this next round works. Otherwise, you will meet your creator and so will everyone else in this world.”

I didn’t back down. “If you kill us, what hope will you have of saving your race? None.”

His nostrils flared and his eyes darkened until they glowed with fire and rage. I held my breath for a second. I could tell my words, the words of truth, hit him right to the core. I relished in pleasure, knowing it perturbed him.

Before he spoke, I continued. “We die, you die. We all die. No one wins. Then you will go and meet your creator, whoever that is.”

He raised his hand, threatening to slap my face. I gritted my teeth and puffed out my cheeks, ready to endure the strike. But it didn’t come.

He lowered his hand and pulled me up to his face. “You have no idea who my creator is.”

“No, I don’t and—”

“No, Miranda, it’s not worth it,” Kate called out as a guard dragged her out of the laboratory.

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