

Chapter 1

"Ditz From Above"

The bronzed female floated helplessly, lost after a long chase. Space debris from small meteor rocks to asteroids drifted about in every direction within a large radius. Flight navigation was awkward at best, and being the way she was the nebula only left a darkened mask to surround her every which way she looked. The star light was too far to get to any of those stars... Then she did see one she could make. The longer she stayed the more likely she would be tracked. Her suit was beginning to annoy her with repeated reminders of imminent failure. The scantily armored female gave an exasperated sigh as the star light outlined her slender, golden-skinned body, and the metallic blues with brilliant whites of her armor. If it could be even called armor, what with how little of it there was. With her sight set on her destination, she propelled herself forward with a burst of intense power, quickly becoming engulfed in light as she shot through into a white hole.

What seemed like only seconds after she began, with a spark of light and the seemingly distant sound of an explosion she broke out of the tunnel turbulently as her suit almost gave out. Light blue locks of hair weightlessly drifted with the lack of gravity as they were caught by the solar light, shimmering with radiance. The stars luminance took its hold and began its work, imbuing a subtle energizing effect over her body which in return supplied power to bring her thrusters back online. The female gave a deep sigh of relief now that she had been provided with minimal, but workable, conditions. Still, even with the modest renewal, it wasn't much, only enough to sustain her for the time it took to get to a habitable planet. She was running on nothing but reserves and she knew that when she finally retracted her armor it would be a long while until she could reactivate it. She'd likely blown something in there. Not being an engineer, naturally she had no idea what it could be. Luckily for her the suit she donned was state of the art and self-repairing, but as with all things it would take time. All she could tell was a blinking light in the corner of the display which popped up within her goggles indicating, in the simplest of ways, that something was royally screwed. Flashing red usually meant bad, she at least knew that much.

And even if she wasn't technically minded in any regards, she still had enough common sense to discern that flying for much longer was a lost cause. Every movement that she made caused violent vibrations to play up and down her wings. It wasn't comfortable in the least, and the suit wasn't reacting too well to her controls as she tried guiding it. Concentration wasn't a strong point for her, which was going to be problematic since the suit was largely controlled through a biomechanical link with her mind. The task of landing seemed a daunting one at best and to boot, she still hadn't even mastered the basic mechanics of a normal landing. The memory of her last attempt came to mind, with her head in the dirt and her legs splayed in the air, so what hope did she have of making it out of a crash landing alive?

The tanned skin girl grunted as her eyes locked to a nearby sphere, which looked like an adequate place for her suit to conduct self repairs. Although she still definitely did not have a good feeling about her chances, she gritted her teeth, blasting off towards it jerkily.

-Entering Orbit, re-entry protocols offline, insufficient power- she faintly heard letting her arms span like an eagle gliding midflight.

Angling herself downwards as best as she could, she let gravity take over and begin to pull her in. Her body turned around, leaving her back towards the planet. The blues of her eyes cast their gaze into the black backdrop of infinite space, with the stars pitted against it. Glittering energy trailed behind her, sparking off of her wings, seeming almost celestial or ethereal. Despite the beauty, this was no time for self admiration.

-Reaching critical shielding limits.- Hissing she cried out, "Shut up you pile of junk I know, I know, duh...I'm not a mor...a mor...er...whatever that word is..." She then sighed before admitting defeat. "Maybe...I am...just a tiny itsy bitsy bit." Then she blinked her eyes and shook her head. "Naw... what am I saying, I'm fuck-tastic awesome," she gloated half heartedly. Raising her arm she tapped her glove a few times.

-Denied, power levels insufficient for re-entry shielding.- She huffed and closed her eyes.

The female could only hope that the standard shielding would hold, though it wasn't designed for this. It mainly sustained atmosphere but could take some damage, but in earnest she hoped the heat of re-entry wouldn't overpower it. The reds mixed with the blues as an inferno engulfed her. This was it, she was going in. Heavy vibrations took hold of her dainty frame and began shaking her to the core. The noise around her amplified with horrific crackling. She drew closer to the planet surface, hoping that her luck would hold out.

-Fatal damage to user imminent.- The damage was redistributed to her suit as parts of the metal areas began to fragment away or crack. Streams of sparkling energy tore away and vaporized, leaving trails like star dust behind.

-Heavy damage being sustained now to weaponry.-

Soon enough the fires gave way as her sight cleared. Turning around again, she quickly faced down. A frown came to her face in the midst of her despair, and in a sudden moment of clarity she felt certain that death was close. Her suit was not reacting to her thoughts well enough, and without power it was almost useless. In an ideal situation it should have reacted like an extension of her body, but now it was sluggish, and the damage she was sustaining wasn't helping matters any.

-Brace for landing, brake thrusters at 0.57% power-

With no power, she had none of her secondary battle abilities to blast out a counter fire to slow her down. Observantly, the girl was quick enough to eye a small lake down below. She smiled along with lady luck. She could see it ahead, surrounded by trees that stood tall like towering giants, with those dark greens being highlighted by the orange light of the sun. The sight was enough to make her forget her current situation, her mind distracted by the divine beauty of it all.

Snapping back to reality, the continued warnings from her suit brought her thoughts back to the danger she was facing. The crash landing could still break her neck if she hit the water's surface at this velocity. However, there was little she could do about it at this point. All she could do was hope...

-o-O-o-

Finally some time to myself, Jasmine thought. She set her little personal shuttle down on the ground, powering off the engines and opening up the canopy. Climbing out, she hopped down onto the grass and took a deep breath of the fresh, rich air. With a happy bounce in her step, she walked off, leaving her craft behind to slowly climb through the grassy heights of the swaying upland meadow. The green grass was very tall, almost brushing up against her rear as she walked. She relished the moment, treading slowly as the soft surface tickled the soles of her paws. It had been quite long week, and she was glad to be able to get away for a little bit. There had been so much to do, and no time to think about relaxing with the hassle of relocation, among other things.

The mouse girl's ears twitched as she heard the sounds of nature, the chirping of birds and the breeze rustling the nearby trees. The setting summer sun burned down brightly on her glossy gray fur as she hiked. The heat raised a slight sweat, drawing a few gnats to buzz around her elegant figure and muzzle. She waved them away with her hand, then smiled as she waved her long, thin tail. Even with the bugs, it made a pleasant contrast with the bustle of the big cities she'd become so accustomed to growing up.

Jasmine hadn't grown up on this planet. As a child, she'd been brought up several solar systems away, nurtured by two loving parents who had been wealthy enough to provide her with an upbringing that left her wanting for nothing. They'd even indulged her enough to allow her to develop a very expensive, technical hobby. Jasmine had built the very shuttle she'd flown out here, putting it together from parts she'd purchased with birthday money, her allowance, and anything she could save from summer jobs she'd had during high school. She turned around once she was halfway up the hill she was climbing, looking down at the shuttle. Shaped like bird, it had a long, thick body that tapered back from the front. The wings were attached near the nose of the craft, sweeping back about halfway down the length of the ship. Set into the rear of the shuttle were two engines, powerful ones that let her go as fast as she could ever want to. It was her baby and a source of considerable pride.

Turning back to face uphill, the mouse girl hitched up her backpack and ambled her way along, absentmindedly bending over to pluck at the odd wildflower that tickled her fancy. Those tender blooms sprouted up here and there, sparsely, with varying colors scattered about. She remarked to herself again on the heat, thinking that she would have done better to wear different clothes. She had on long pants and a white sweater, comfortable but a little thick for summer wear, but then again Jasmine always wore stuff like this. Jasmine was short and curvy, with an ample bust that occasionally drew stares from men. She didn't like being stared at, so she typically dressed in a conservative fashion to minimize things. At least she didn't have to worry about that out here, but once classes at the university started up, she was sure that guys would be all over her again.

"Oh, well....," Jasmine sighed, rolling her brown eyes and brushing a hand back through her short, dark

chestnut hair. “Not much I can do about that, I guess. At least I won’t be staying in the dorms. Glad mom and dad agreed to rent that house for me.” While she was at university on this planet, she was staying in a small two-story home not far away from where she was right now. Outside the limits of the city, she was secluded enough that she felt cozy and at home, and of course she had plenty of space to tinker around with her shuttle. She was such a gearhead that nobody would have guessed she was studying geology.

That was part of the reason that she had come out here to take a break from the unpacking, even though that was mostly done anyway. She’d heard that one could find some interesting types of rocks out in the woods around the city, and although she was sure that she’d be out here with her class eventually, she wanted to have a look around for herself first, a heads up so to speak.

All of a sudden, Jasmine was startled by a series of loud, thundering booms that sounded like they were coming from above her. Looking up, the sun glared on her glasses, and she squinted to see through the shimmering light. Her eyes then widened out of shock as she saw a streak of light crossing the sky. Flaming and sparking, it looked like a meteor was hurtling towards the planet’s surface. A small one, but a meteor nonetheless. Jasmine’s heart started to pound in excitement. Who would have thought that she’d get to see something like this in her very first week on this planet? It looked like the meteor was going to come down very close to where she was standing.

As she watched, the streak of light grew closer to the ground. As it descended, the mouse girl frowned. She might have been imagining things, but it almost looked to her like it was...slowing down? Just a little, but it still seemed to be decreasing speed. Even so, it was going pretty fast. Those noises she’d heard before must have been sonic booms as the meteor pierced the planet’s atmosphere.

Picking up the pace the mouse ran up the taxing incline, hurrying up to the top of the hill. Once she got to the top, where the view was better, she wasted no time swiping her camera from her backpack and tossing the leather bag aside. The mouse began snapping away, aware of the danger that if it exploded on impact that she could be hit by fragments, but it didn’t warrant her retreat. This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to capture something amazing.

Jasmine followed what she thought was a meteor through the camera lens as it descended, taking picture after picture. Her eyes were glued to it as she followed the flaming trail until it passed out of sight behind the treetops. Seconds later there was a huge crashing boom, much louder than the ones before, and it was immediately followed by a massive tremor that made Jasmine lose her balance and fall right on her butt.

“Ow! Geez...” Jasmine winced, reaching back and rubbing her rump before getting shakily to her feet. She shook her head and rubbed her large ears, which were still ringing from the sound of the impact. “That hurt...But wow! It came down right behind those trees!” As she looked towards where the meteor must have landed, she saw a column of dust and smoke rising into the air. “I gotta go check that out!”

Jasmine started off towards the trees, walking quickly at first but then speeding up into a jog as the excitement started to take her over. Her excitement enabled her to run faster than she might have been able to, normally. She was just too eager to see what had landed. Keeping herself in a relatively straight

direction, she ran through the trees, breathing hard but not slowing. The scent of burning wood mixed with the dank musk of wet lake moss took her senses in a putrid stench. As she finally reached a clearing in the trees, she beheld a small lake surrounding by pebble-filled shores. She could see the columns of smoke up ahead, and on the far shore Jasmine could see a small crater just on the edge of the water.

“Wow...,” she breathed, her heart pounding as she took in the sight. This was like something out of one of her textbooks, or from some nature documentary. “Well, fortune favors the bold!” Reaching down to her feet, she tapped a small switch on the sides of each of her boots, triggering a small humming noise. Confidently, she stepped out onto the surface of the lake. The dainty mouse wobbled for just a few seconds until she got used to the feeling of hovering over the water, and then rushed across the lake to the far side. A giddy smile brushed across the gray mouse’s face with her pink tail excitedly swirling as she made ground, or water even. The crater was just in front of her now coming quickly into view as she skimmed across the water to a slower pace.

Eagerly, Jasmine walked closer, her long tail whipping back and forth still with anticipation. She’d read about meteors and seen them in museums, but she’d never gotten to see one up close, so soon after crashing to the ground from space. When she got up to the crater, she stepped right to the edge, looking into it.

“Wh-...What the heck?”

Her eyes went wide again as she saw what was inside the crater. Instead of a lumpy, charred piece of rock, which was what one would expect to see in an impact crater, there was something else entirely. Bronze-skinned, blue-haired, and very lithe in appearance, there was a young girl at the bottom of the crater, but not an ordinary girl. She looked human-ish, which wasn’t normal for this side of the galaxy, and she was nearly naked apart from some metallic blue material that was covering her torso, her lower legs, and the space between her legs. Her sparsely clothed appearance made Jasmine’s face warm in embarrassment, despite the curiosity she felt at seeing her. Attached to the girl’s body was some sort of suit, cracked and blackened here and there, that almost looked like wings but clearly only partially there if they were that, and a propulsion system. Impossible? Space travel without a ship, without pressure from a cabin or suit...

Intrigued, even with the hint of fear that she felt, Jasmine stepped down into the crater and half-slid on her rear to the bottom, where the girl was. Now that she was close to her, the mouse girl was amazed to see that, despite the sorry state of the metal suit she was wearing, the girl’s body itself didn’t seem damaged at all beyond a few scrapes and bruises. Even more amazing, from the rise and fall of her shoulders it looked like she was breathing. She also looked fairly wet, and Jasmine realized that she must have skipped off the surface of the water a couple of times during the course of the crash. The girl was lying facedown, so Jasmine took one of her shoulders and lifted, rolling her over. Once she got a look at her face, Jasmine realized that she was probably about the same age as her.

“How are you not dead?” the gray mouse murmured, her heart pounding. There was no way this girl couldn’t be the meteor that she’d seen fall to the planet’s surface, as crazy as that sounded. She looked her over, finding nothing more alarming than the few minor injuries she’d noticed before. Reaching for the girl’s face, she patted it gently with one furred hand. “Hey...uh...can you wake up?” When she didn’t get a

response, she swatted her cheek a little more forcefully. “Hey, come on! Wake up!”

With a groan, the girl’s head twitched and her lips parted. For the first time, Jasmine noticed that they seemed to be painted the same vibrant blue color as her hair and metallic suit. Abruptly, almost appearing to be in a reflex action, the bronze-skinned girl shot to her feet. In what would have been a comically clueless fashion if the situation hadn’t been so bizarre, she lifted a finger to her face, tapping it along her bottom lip. The strange girl seemed to be pondering something for a while, until finally she opened her mouth.

“I am awesome, no one could survive what I did, a-huh, totally!” she chattered, a cheerful tone to her voice. “I’m the best thing since sex!” A second later, her expression changed and she tilted her head to one side, looking up as though she was deep in thought. “Well...errr...maybe not sex...Nuh-uh...Just those mega powerful orgasms, yup.” Then she tottered to one side, falling back. Jasmine managed to quickly catch her, though whatever it was she was wearing made her fairly heavy.

“Better than...what?” Jasmine asked her. She couldn’t believe what she was hearing from this girl. She’d just survived an atmospheric re-entry without a ship, and she’d crashed into the ground at full speed, and she was prattling on about something like that? “Are you alright? And what are you, anyway?”

The girl’s eyes fluttered, and she looked at Jasmine with a faint grin on her face. “Ugh...Wh-Whoopsie..Missed the darn...water...dummy...” Then she went still again, although she was still breathing deeply and regularly. She seemed to have passed out again. A few bleeps were heard from the armor or suit, whatever it was. Parts of it began hovering off her skin an inch or so, then more pieces fragmented away. Little by little all the metallic blues and whites tore away from her body, forming into a neat tiny backpack complete with a couple of blinking lights, which settled itself onto the ground next to them.

Missed the...water? Jasmine thought, bemused by the girl’s mutterings. *It’s pretty clear you hit it at least a few times, but I think missing the water should be the least of your worries right now, you weird ditz...* Really, she was amazed that she could speak at all, or move for that matter. *Well...I can’t just leave her out here. I’d better call my shuttle for extraction. Whoever she is, she needs some help.* The furred female looked over her body, then looked away in embarrassment again. *And some clothes.*

Standing back up, Jasmine pulled out a see through card shaped remote key, almost as thin as a piece of card with a touch screen. Her thumb moved across it making multiple commands. It only took a few seconds till she felt a down rush of wind which caused her wavy hair and clothes to flutter as a beam locked onto her and the blue haired girl for extraction.

-o-O-o-

Through the darkness, sounds fell on the alien girl’s ears. She drifted awake, slowly, as she had taken quite a beating in the crash, after all. Eventually she could discern a gentle chirping, broken up by the soft rustling of trees. Squinting, she opened her eyes, letting them focus. From what she could see around her, she was in a room which was well-lit by lights as well as moonlight coming through an open window.

Looking out of the window, she could see the branches of trees outside. She clearly wasn't in space any longer, and she wasn't in the pond she had been aiming for...but where was she? Naturally, her particularly quirky mind took her curving off into left field.

"Oh, the pussy bandits got me!" she cursed. Then she thought about it for a minute, and how her pussy felt decidedly unravished. "Well...I guess not...Although that would be fun." Then confusion struck. "Where am I?" She sat up, seeing that she was in a strange but comfortable bed which extended out from the side of the wall. Looking down she noticed she was covered in something she'd never worn before: real clothes. The sensation was unique, silky, and comfortable. Since her goggles had the ability to create holographic images around her body, to replicate the visual effect of clothes, real fabric had little practicality for her. Still the feeling was odd. She plucked at the clothes with two fingers, feeling the slippery material on her skin. They seemed to be pajamas of some sort, made of a thick, but soft and satiny, material.

Slowly, she looked around the room she was in. From what she could tell, it was a bedroom of some sort, but it was a little different from the typical bedroom. Apart from the window, there was also a door on one wall. The girl looked over the bed she was lying in, and realized that it wasn't exactly a bed. It was more like a well-padded couch, although she was covered in a cozy, warm blanket. Above the couch was a frame that had a bar of some sort attached to it, with little white lights spaced evenly along its length. The bar extended crosswise over the couch, and it seemed to be capable of moving along a track on the frame. At her feet was a screen which had data scrolling down it, next to a two-dimensional image that she recognized as a rough approximation of herself. The rest of the room was fairly unremarkable, with some hover-chairs placed about the floor and globe lights hanging from the ceiling. There was no other furniture, and the room had a sterile, sparse kind of feel about it, although it did seem homey somehow.

"Ah, you're awake!" a voice said to her right. The girl looked over to see someone sitting in a chair that she hadn't noticed before. "I've taken care of your little scratches and run a bio-scan for ruptures, fractures, breaks, and nerve tissues. It was a basic scan, but it looks like you're quite lucky and there wasn't any serious damage." The speaker was a mouse girl, and she was tapping away at a three-dimensional image hovering in the air in front of her. It seemed to be a more complex version of the data which was on the screen at the foot of the couch. "I'm Jasmine. What's your name?"

"MechaChick, Class One Alpha, Mark Z, and why didn't you take me to the ghost-special?" she asked, giving Jasmine a peculiar look as she pulled back the blanket and folded her legs out from the couch. "Or am I already in the ghost-special?"

"Uh..." Jasmine was taken aback by the girl's response, and she had been expecting a name which was a little more...normal. The answer she'd been given seemed more like a name that would be given to a machine. She'd have to select something for her, as she couldn't just call her MechaChick Class One Alpha Mark Z. "That's...kind of a mouthful. Do you mind if I shorten it a little? Like...Mecha, or...or how about Z?" She mulled that around a bit. "Yeah, I think Z will do nicely. And there's no need to fret, you're at my house." Jasmine tilted her head to one side. "But, uh, what's a 'ghost-special'?"

"The, er, place they fix people?" the blue-haired girl asked with urgency as she wracked her brain for the

word, but this one seemed right to her anyway.

For a minute, Jasmine was still as confused as could be, but then she had a flash of inspiration. “Do you mean hospital?” That earned an enthusiastic nod from her guest.

“Yes that thing!” Z said cheerfully. “A-yup, that’s what I said, the ghost-special!”

Smiling indulgently, the mouse girl nodded as well. “Er...okay, but there wasn’t any need to take you to the hospital. I just put you in the Auto-Med.” She gestured to the couch-and-frame system that Z was in, wagging her long tail. “It’s quicker for people in this solar system to use the Auto-Med because hospitals are a little scarce, and it’s a legal requirement to have one in every household. It falls under the health and safety regulations. If a crisis occurs and someone is critically injured, then a few hours in the Auto-Med deals with it. It repairs cells, various kinds of tissue damage, and injuries. Up to a point, anyway. It eliminates the need for hospitals and is a lot cheaper in the long run. I thought everyone knew that.”

For some reason, Z seemed upset at Jasmine’s answer. “Well, you should have taken me there anyway!” she huffed.

“Were you even listening to me?” Jasmine asked, adjusting her glasses on her nose as she cocked an eye at the other woman. “Why would I take you all the way to a hospital when it was faster and cheaper to use the Auto-Med?”

“Silly, there’s doctors at a hospital, and I love doctors, and I could have said I hurt my pussy, then they could check it out, what else are hospitals for?” Z looked at Jasmine like she was stupid. Then she got what she thought was a fantastic idea, and she put her hands between her legs, cupping them around her groin and making a face like she was in pain. “Oh...wait...ouch ouch ouch! It really hurts, oooh, ouch! Want to check it out and rub it better?”

Jasmine’s brown eyes went as wide as dinner plates. “What the...Are you serious?”

“Yeah, why?”

“Nevermind...,” Jasmine said, looking away, embarrassed. This conversation was straying into an area she was very uncomfortable with. Being brought up in a traditional sort of way, she wasn’t all that approving of same-sex relations. Compared to some people her age, in fact, she might be considered homophobic. As long as gay people weren’t open about it, she was fine, but it made her feel awkward when they spoke candidly about their orientation. Her parents had been rather vocal about their disapproval of that sort of lifestyle, and it had made an impression on Jasmine while she was growing up. “No, I don’t want to. That’s...weird. What are you, some kind of lesbian?”

“I’m not weird, I’m amazing,” Z protested. “And what’s a les...les...that word you used?”

“Lesbian. It means a girl who likes other...Why are you making me explain this stuff right now? Are you pulling my leg?”

“Why would I pull your leg? I mean if it’s a fetish of yours, why didn’t you say so? I can do that.”

“Huh?” Jasmine blinked, and then she shook her head emphatically, her large ears flapping a bit. “No, no, no, I don’t want that at all!” Feeling like the conversation was getting out of control, she tried to redirect it. “So, I saw you come down from the sky. Where are you from?”

“Hmm? Oh, somewhere, not sure. But not here.” Z hummed a little distracted-sounding tune. She kind of liked Jasmine, even if she seemed a little too serious. “Oh, by the way, have you got a domo-mo-mo-jiggy-with-it? They’re so amazing!”

Jasmine was completely at a loss now. “I probably shouldn’t ask this, but a what?” She gave Z a skeptical look, wondering what was going to come out from between the girl’s blue-colored lips this time.

“Oh you put it inside, and it does lotsa fun stuff!” Z bounced on the couch a bit, feeling herself grow excited thinking about it. “Like zoooooom, oooo, and that kind of thing?”

“Zoom, and ooooo?” As before in the conversation, Jasmine was completely lost. “You mean some kind of entertainment device for indoor use?”

“No, for in my pussy! Duh!”

“Oh, for God’s sake!” Jasmine exclaimed. She covered her face with one hand, losing a little bit of her control in her exasperation with the girl. “Yes, I do, and no, you can’t see it! Gah, quit it with your pussy obsession, you little nympho!”

“I’m sowwy,” Z said plaintively. She slumped a little where she sat, looking down at her lap. As usual, she had let her mind bounce around like a ping-pong ball, and it seemed to have had the usual consequences. Whenever she opened her mouth, she couldn’t seem to stop letting every little thought in her head come out.

Jasmine sighed as she got control of herself again. “No I’m sorry,” she said. “I shouldn’t have shouted. You’re probably still shaken from that crash. You’re probably just not thinking with a clear mind.” She dismissed the holographic projection and got up from her chair. “I’m going to make some food. Want some?”

“Oh, no,” Z said, perking back up. “I don’t eat food. My body doesn’t obsor...abs...That word where it takes solid stuff.” She paused, then got an eager look on her face. “I would like a banana, though.”

“I thought you said you didn’t eat food?” the mouse girl asked.

“Nope, I need it for my...” She was cut short as Jasmine covered her mouth, leaning into her with quite a menacing look in her eyes.

“You say pussy again, and I’ll kill you,” Jasmine threatened, slowly removing her hand.

“It’s for my,” she started again, but then she stopped as the mouse gave her another look. “For my...hmmm...For my wet banana rack!” The tanned girl’s face spread in a cheesy grin of triumph.

The crash didn’t kill her, but I think I might before the end of the night... the mouse thought, and simply gave a huff before storming off. This was definitely going to be a long night.

-o-O-o-

Having found her momentary relief in the kitchen, Jasmine took a deep breath and let it out in a sigh, closing the door behind her. She walked over to the food preparation counter, lost in thought about how this mysterious Z seemed to be capable of interstellar travel, if she even had come from afar. Judging by how vacant and all over the place she seemed, she might have just made it up. Even so, it wouldn’t explain how she could have survived a crash like what the mouse girl had witnessed. There was technology in parts of the galaxy that allowed for personal shielding but nothing able to withstand that kind of landing. For interstellar travel, she would have needed to at least have a phasing drive, and considering that even the phase drive on her own small vessel was bigger than Z herself, it seemed impossible that could be the case.

Jasmine moved towards the beverage materializer, a section of the counter that operated by hand motions to produce drinks. Waving her hand over the flat metal surface, she called up a holographic screen and selected her favorite hot drink, a coffee with added sweetener. As the device began processing her request, she racked her brain for the answers to Z’s origins. Mostly she thought that the blue-haired girl had knocked a few screws loose from the impact of her crash, but there had to be a logical explanation for her arrival on the planet. For the life of her, though, Jasmine could not figure it out just now.

A moment later her coffee appeared, and Jasmine next went to her food replicator and produced a few colored cubes, three inches to each side. Softish with a bit of bite to them, they weren’t exactly what one would consider food, but rather were concentrated nutritional supplements. Flavorful but generally uninteresting, they were comparable to flavored protein bars that one could buy in a fitness store or commercial gym’s snack bar. If it had been time for a real meal, she could have requested actual food, but this was just fine as a little something to nibble on for right now, especially since Z apparently didn’t need to eat. With her coffee and the snack cubes in hand, she walked back up to the room where she had left Z.

“I know you said you didn’t need food, but I brought something anyway, just in...,” Jasmine said, coming through the doorway. She stopped, looking inside the room at the sight that greeted her. Z was sitting up on

the Auto-Med couch, her legs swinging back and forth as she gazed with rapt attention at three orbs of what looked like water which were hovering in the air. This was especially confusing, considering that there wasn't any source of water in the room, not even a replicator.

Then Jasmine noticed something on Z's lap, and after staring for a few minutes she realized that the girl had on her lap the strange backpack that her armor had packed up into automatically, back at the crash site. That was even more amazing, since Jasmine had placed that downstairs in her workshop for further examination. The equipment had been thoroughly waterlogged from Z's glancing impact with the lake's surface, and Jasmine had meant to empty it out before taking a look at it. At least she knew now where the water must have come from.

"What the heck..." The mouse girl took a few steps forward, her long tail flicking about in annoyance. "Why the heck are you messing around with water in my bedroom? We're not outdoors! You could damage something!"

Z looked up. "Where's my banana?" she huffed, appearing to be quite upset at the lack of fruit. "Gimme, gimme, doofus. This is my wet banana rack, you dodo." She gave Jasmine a mean stare.

"You were actually serious about that?" Jasmine asked, incredulously. "Is this another 'ghost-special' thing? By 'banana rack', do you mean backpack?" She shook her head, feeling the headache she'd been working on earlier start to return. "Nevermind, I don't care. And where did you get it? It wasn't here a moment ago."

"Silly, silly!" Z said, giggling as she apparently forgot her irritation from just moments ago. "I called for it, and it came to me, duh! I'm super-mega-awesome like that!" The tanned girl waved her arms, sending the water orbs higher above her head and starting them circling around each other.

Jasmine watched the three orbs, which seemed to spiral with faint colors as they circled around in the air. The colors were projecting from the backpack on Z's lap. Though she'd been initially angry at the girl for messing around with water indoors, she seemed to be handling the stuff pretty easily. Even so, Jasmine worried about stuff she didn't understand, and from what she'd seen of Z's backpack earlier it was definitely completely foreign to her. She moved closer to Z and spoke out loud to the room, calling up her holographic assistant. "Omega Fox, run a scan for danger, materials, and functions of that backpack...thing."

A few minutes later, a buzzing sound came from all directions as an automated, digital-sounding voice answered. "Scan complete. Danger level: medium to high. Caution advised due to unknown poly-alloys. Device is otherwise composed of various carbon-based alloys. Unknown functionality of device."

"Define unknown poly-alloys."

"Undiscovered elements, unknown in database, new discovery," the assistant said. "Further analysis is required."

Z appeared to be half listening to the assistant, but then her eyes locked on the coffee and nutritional cubes that Jasmine was carrying. Appearing excited, Z stuck her hand out and pointed to one of the blocks. Out of curiosity the mouse humored her to see what would happen, not feeling too threatened by this, at least. She held out one hand with one of the cubes in it, giving it to Z.

“Thankies!” Z said, drawing the block back and tossing it up between the floating orbs. “Wooo! Now I can play!” Before their eyes the shape of the block shifted. The warping food supplement took on various shapes of some kinds of creatures unknown to Jasmine. Z seemed to be completely entertained by it, as she clapped her hands together. “Yay, a kaga-o-saurus!” The block took on the shape of some sort of reptilian creature with six legs and a long, thick tail. Then it shifted again to another shape. “A mematar!” This time, the block took the appearance of a four-legged tiger-like animal, with long pointed ears and a short bobbed tail. Z looked overjoyed by her little game. Even Jasmine had to admit it that her antics were quite entertaining.

Then something else caught Jasmine’s attention. As her eyes were drawn back to the orbs, the mouse girl noticed some kind of tiny writing around one of the balls. “Omega Fox, lock onto the balls. Magnify and translate.” Moments later, her holographic assistant projected an enhanced view of one of the balls in the air in front of Jasmine. She could see that there were definitely words there, although it was in a language that she didn’t recognize.

“Unknown origin,” the assistant reported to her. It beeped several times, working on her request. “Translation possible. One moment.” It beeped a few more times, and after about ten minutes of work the assistant spoke again. “Translation complete: ‘Warning! This product is only suitable for children aged 6 months. The baby’s feeding aid should only be used whilst the baby is supervised.’ End of translation.”

“Okay, thank you,” Jasmine said. She looked back to Z, unable to restrain a laugh. *So it’s an alien baby’s feeding aid that makes food into entertaining shapes to capture the younglings attention to make feeding fun*, she thought as she snickered a little more. “Z, where did that come from?”

“Oh this? Hmm...I got it from some random plant I landed on.”

“You mean planet?”

“Same thing, both green in places,” Z said with her usual scatterbrained logic. “And yeah I crashed there, too. Still got to learn how to not get hurt on landings.” She waved her hands, and the water vanished, with the food cube returning to its normal shape and plopping down on the floor. Stretching her arms, Z yawned before laying herself back down on the couch.

Her curiosity about Z’s origins returning, Jasmine sat down with her coffee and munched on her own cube for a moment or two. “So...how did you actually fly here, Z?” she asked between bites. “Did you have some kind of ship? How did you initiate a phase jump?”

“Ship?” Z asked, sounding confused. “Huh? Phase what?”

“Okay, then how did you get here?” she rephrased, trying to make things a little simpler for Z. Clearly she didn’t understand much about spaceship mechanics or spaceflight in general, which seemed odd for someone who had come from outer space.

“Oh that?” Z asked. She nodded several times, and gave Jasmine a look like the answer must have been obvious. “I just got my banana rack and placed it into dimensional shift mode, and then things went kapow! Pretty light show and poof! I came through the whitesyhole. Here I am, simple, yes?”

“Surrrrrrre, honey,” the mouse girl said, nodding. *As if. That doesn’t make any sense at all.* “And uh...whitesyhole? You mean a white hole, like a wormhole or something?”

“Yes same thing, why are you repeating?” Z frowned, her blue-colored lips pressing together tightly. “Are you trying to play some kinda game? I don’t like playing games with people unless it involves getting naked. Ooh! Are we gonna play strip poker?” She sat up excitedly, looking up and down Jasmine’s body.

Jasmine’s eyes widened and she felt her face flush again. “No, we most certainly are not! I’m *not* getting naked in front of you!” She felt a funny sort of feeling at the way that Z was eying her, almost as though the other girl was appraising her looks. The mouse girl felt the sudden desire to cover herself up, even though she was fully clothed. Z was looking at her much the same way that a lot of guys often did. She wondered for a moment if the alien lass thought she was attractive, but she quickly pushed that thought out of her head. “A-Anyway, would you mind if I took a look at your backpack later tonight? I wanna figure out how it works, and maybe I can fix the parts that broke in your crash.”

“Nope, go ahead. And if it blows up, no biggie. I’ll freeload here.”

Nodding, Jasmine reached out and took the backpack from Z, but then she paused. “You’ll what?”

“Yup, you brought me here so I’m allowed now!” Z said cheerfully. “Anyway, you look lonely so why not? Nobody else living here, right? I got no money but you look loaded so it’s okay. Thanks for letting me stay!”

“W-Wait,” Jasmine stammered, completely taken aback by this new development. “I didn’t agree on anything. I don’t...I mean, I didn’t...”

“You agree on everything? That’s great, thanks!” The blue-haired girl sat up again, clapping her hands together with a gleeful look on her face. “Thanks a bunch for letting me live here while you fix my banana rack!”

“Wait, that’s not what I said...”

“Really? I can have your bed, too? Whoa, that’s really nice of you, Jazzy, yay!”

“Cut it out! And don’t call me Jazzy, my name is Jasmine!”

“Ayep, sure thing, Jazzy Jasmine!”

For the love of... Jasmine covered her face with one hand, her forgotten coffee resting on her knee in the other. *I’m going to be on the Duralian news for manslaughter tomorrow if she keeps this up...*