

**Two Weeks In**  
**Beatrix Stone**

“What happened to the file I asked for?”

“You mean the notes from yesterday’s summit?”

“Yes, I mean the notes from yesterday’s summit.” Sam pushed back his eyebrows into his temples, letting his palm come to rest over his mouth as he cracked a halfhearted smile and nod.

“Right here.” Ella held out the thin rod, clicking it open to project the notes. Sam straightened up and took the rod.

“Thank you. She wants me in her office, right?” Ella raised her eyebrows and nodded.

“If by ‘she,’ you mean Leslie, then yes. What did you do?” Sam breathed deep, hands coming to rest on his hips.

“Nothing good, not that I would know.” Ella gave him a pat on the shoulder and a pursed lips smile as she walked past him towards her desk.

With a crash the door across the room of desks was flung wide.

“Samuel!”

“Nothing good,” he muttered, beginning to weave towards the office.

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Dianne blinked the fog from her vision to resume squinting at the holo-screen before her. The words seemed jumbled, a sordid smoothie of the mediocre writing with end-of-the-week tiredness poured into her barely lucid mind. It was weird. These pages that had felt so good as they were typed last night now seemed like the clunky scrawl of a three-year old’s kindergarten story assignment. She chugged the last of her lukewarm coffee, almost slamming the mug down.

“You look...terrible.”

Dianne looked up to see Alex leaning against her door frame. She let out a dry laugh.

“You look terrible,” she shot back. Alex raised an eyebrow and plopped down on the couch, propping her feet up on the chair across from Dianne’s desk.

“Here all night?”

“Obviously.”

“Come up with anything?”

“Nothing worth discussing.”

“If you say so,” Alex said. “She wants you in there by the way.” Dianne froze, eyes wide.

“Well, you might have led with that!” She grabbed her files and pulled down the hologram, shoving them all haphazardly into her pocket. Alex stood, laughing.

“You really need to calm down about her; She likes you.”

“Yeah, that will definitely help when I show up late during my second week.”

Alex almost pointed out that it was *everyone’s* second week but bit her tongue. Her eyes followed Dianne through the maze of offices, looking every bit as frightened and nervous as a kindergartener on the first day of school. She let out a small sigh, checking the time on the small projector around her wrist. She swiped left, scrolling through the timetable for the rest of the day. Everyone seemed to be in such a rush- either unpacking or wading through the mounds of prep work before the Opening Address to the Nation- a sort of “what-the-hecks-going-on” evaluation to kick off to the Prime Minister’s six year term. Alex knew

as well as any that if they didn't make a good first impression there's no way they survive the third year Midterm Recast- the re-election to either keep on going or start all over with a new PM. This was why it was weird- Alex, the deputy communications director to the newly elected Prime Minister Nadia, had nothing to do with only four weeks to prep the most important speech of this year.

That's what landed her in a meeting with the Committee of Florists for the Furthering of Lunar Mining.

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"Samuel, Samuel...how're you doing?" Leslie sat back in her chair, hands clasped and elbows resting on the metal arms. Sam almost flinched. "Just great, Les. Second week is going well." Leslie gave a small, "hem." Sam sighed. "It is, going well?" He said apprehensively.

"Maybe for you, but not for me. Not after your stunt on the Parliamentary Voices Broadcast last night." Sam sat down, squaring his shoulders.

"And what would that be?"

"Oh, nothing, just you going onto the most widely broadcast government information frequency in the country and saying that the Prime Minister said something she most certainly did not." Sam leaned forward sharply.

"I'm sorry, I did what now?"

Leslie sat forward too, elbows resting on her desk and eye's piercing into his.

"You, yesterday, on a broadcast to every politically intrigued citizen of this great nation, said that Prime Minister Nadia had every intention of rerouting further government funds for the colony on Mercury." Sam sat back, glancing uncomfortably away.

"We don't have a colony on Mercury." Leslie smiled, leaning back again.

"No, we don't. And yet now there are fifty reporters in my press room so," she inhaled and nodded her head, "*passionate* about knowing exactly where this money is coming from, and why, without any prompting for the Council of Extra-Terrestrial Operations, Prime Minister Nadia has decided to start her own colony on a planet long deemed a useless wasteland."

"I meant Mars!"

"Obviously."

"Can't you just...fix it?" Leslie sighed, pressing her keyboard projector and beginning to type.

"I always do, Samuel, I always do."

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"So, as you can see, it is clearly in the best interest of the future of this country for Prime Minister Nadia to show full-hearted support for the Florists for the Furthering of Lunar Mining." Alex blinked, eyes wide.

"Wow," She wrinkled her eyebrows. "Well...wow." The small blond-haired man before her smiled.

"Wow indeed, Ms. Barrtel. So," He folded his hands in front of him, "will you be turning it into legislation?" Alex blanched.

“Turning it into legislation?” The man donned a concerned expression.

“Well, of course! The calcium on the moon is clearly the perfect solution to the bad flowering seasons of both this year and the last, therefore we simply must act! Besides, given that we already have all the necessary vessels for travel, it would cost us a mere 10 billion dollars for a round trip!”

“And where, exactly, are we getting this money from?” The man frowned.

“I went over this in my slides- the money could easily be taken from the broader Interstellar Transportation budget.”

“But this isn’t a transportation issue.”

“I know it seems like it isn’t, however, it is technically using transportation to move the calcium and mining equipment. Once the materials have been moved there to begin mining, I’m sure a new budget can be allocated to fund the project!”

“A new budget?”

“Yes?” The man seemed increasingly losing confidence. Squaring his shoulders he spoke, “So you’ll be turning it into legislation?”

“Well...no.”

“But, but...it simply must be done!” Looking apologetic, Alex sighed.

“I’m sorry, really. I value flowers as much as you do,” (unlikely), “but it simply isn’t a necessity for government funding.” She checked her wrist, barely looking at the time. “Look, I have to go, but you have a good one!” She quickly left before he could form words from the distraught stutter on his lips. She shook her head. The things people believe in...huh.

She walked through the busy hallway, weaving through people and their projected work alike. She was so caught up in her thoughts she barely registered someone trying to get her attention.

“Hey, Earth to Alex!” She turned sharply, coming nose-to-nose with Margaret Smith.

“Oh, hey Margaret, didn’t see you there! Where have you been all day?”

“Tied up at Youth Assembly. The under twenty five’s election is coming up fast.”

“Things must be pretty crazy up on the Zepplin.”

“You have no idea. The legislature was docked up in Red Deer for hearings on the economic viability of small cities as aerial export points by the Committee for North American Solar Systems and it got back last night. Anyway, I have a meeting with the Head of the Committee for Bill O6-3712-”

“That’s the car flightpath colour coding, right?”

“Ya, it should be a short meeting- the Intergenerational Reps Committee only has a couple amendments.” Margaret checked her wrist. “Gotta go! See you later!”

“See ya!”

Alex went back to weaving through the crowd, passing through the winding hallways and glass overhead bridges. She was looking through her pockets as she walked to check for a mint when she nearly bumped into Ella.

“Oh, Ella, hi!”

“Alex! You’re actually just the person I was looking for. She wants you in there in ten.”

“Got it, thanks!” Alex hooked a hard left at the end of the bridge, coming to a stop in front of the large antique wood doors of Prime Minister Nadia’s office.

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Leslie, Sam, Alex, Margaret and Dianne all stood in an awkward semi-circle around the desk, the silence almost palpable apart from the odd creak of the aged floor as the five nervously shifted.

“So...” Alex started.

“So...” Sam coughed. “How’s everyone’s day going?” With a bang the doors swung open, and Prime Minister Nadia entered hastily, files projected all around her as she signed and typed and voice-commanded them complete. She sat at the desk, only nodding in acknowledgment of the other people in the room.

“Hello, Madame Prime Minister.” She looked up, surveying the assembled.

“Hello to you as well.” She folded her hands in front of her. “I know you all haven’t known me for all that long, but I assure you I know you. I selected each of you for your given position because I know that you are not only skilled people, but hard workers. You’ve all had two weeks here, so, as of today, what have you done?”

Sam smiled, “I had an appearance on the Parliamentary Voices Broadcast.” Leslie almost laughed.

“I cleaned up the aftermath of his appearance,” she said, smiling.

“I had a meeting with one of the weirder participants in the government.” Nadia raised an eyebrow. “How much are you willing to spend on starting a calcium mine on the moon?” There was a general cocking of eyebrows and shaking of heads.

“I spent the morning being interrogated by teenagers, then got the Intergenerational Rep’s amendment approved,” Margaret added.

“I was working on your speech all day, as you know, Madame Prime Minister.” Nadia smiled.

“I know, thank you. Maybe you should try working on being less nervous for tomorrow.” Dianne gave a small smile and nodded. “Sounds to me like you’ve all had quite the day. But that’s not important. We’re going to have plenty of ‘quite-the’ days, and plenty more worse ones. For now, though, we have work to do. Speeches to write, appearances to go to, lobbyists to meet, amendments to review...” She paused, considering the people before her and nodding. “So; what’s next?”