

**Bourne**  
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## This is Not a Letter

by Mia Sundby

The carcass of the craft lies like a gutted creature of prey amidst the broken bodies of the trees and the spores kicked up from the crash. She sits in the shadow of its metal frame, half-hanging out into the twilight-limned forest, lit up by bizarre, twisting fungal-like structures.

The occasional puff of spores is pushed --like a gunshot in slow-motion-- into the heavy, damp air. The spores float, iridescent, like Christmas lights suspended by invisible hands. Nel watches them, half-wondering and half-resigned; they're likely toxic but the air-filtration equipment was destroyed in the crash. She can't do anything about the spores, except wait to see if they kill her.

With a sigh, Nel rubs at her temple with a dirt-ingrained hand, and lifts the recording piece to her lips.

"I'd start this the way we're told to in training, but... The days here are strange. To tell you the truth, I don't know what day it is. I don't know how long I've been here." She eyes the shadows of the forest, the looming shapes of the impossibly tall trees. It's jarring to think that until recently, all she and the others saw was endless sky, the void of Space --dark, still, but teeming with the possibility of life--, and now she can hardly recall a time before the sight of treetops.

She clicks the recording piece. "Jing and Kai were killed upon landing." Her voice is flat.

The memory of dragging their corpses from the craft, digging them graves in this alien place, laying them to rest as best she could, is still raw.

"The engineering team and Doctor Rief were trapped in the engine room, and died there. I've already described the events that led to the crash, so I won't rehash them, but they died trying to save us. The rest of the tech team disappeared in the Breach --that's what we called the hole that showed up in the wall. We don't know where it led, but it took them and closed up before we could get them out."

A cacophony of screams, bellowed for help, hammering on the other side of the door... She had tried to get through, but something had been blocking the doors, stopping them from opening. When they had finally broken the doors down, the entire team was... gone.

Nel shakes herself, turning back to the recorder.

"This isn't a good report," she mumbles. Her mind catches on a phrase Jing had often quoted, from some ancient piece of literature on an old Human planet. Turning it over, she mumbles into the static of the recorder. "This is not a letter, but... But my arms about you for a brief moment."

The words hang in the damp, spore-filled air for a moment, a glimmer of something more familiar in this foreign place. Nel's lips twist into something like a smile.

Then the chattering starts.