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The Beige Planet on the Edge of a Galaxy

by Mia Sundby

"It looks like a butthole."

"It is not a butthole."

"How do you know?"

"How do I know what?"

"That it's not a butthole?"

Minah gritted her teeth, staring out of the space ship window. The window bugged outwards like the eye of a titan insect, tinted slightly green. When the ship soared through astral clouds, the glass lit up like magic dust. As they looked out onto the face of the beige planet they were approaching, however, the green tint to the window lent it a slightly sickly colour.

"Because why would a planet have a butthole, Vryx?"

Vryx shrugged, or did what passed for a shrug amongst Thri-kreen. Thri-kreen were, to put it in terms which were horrifically politically incorrect, giant bug people. Vryx would have been best likened to a bug on Minah's homeworld, an insect commonly known as a Drakefly. His metallic, half-scaled skin was an iridescent blue, his eyes large and sticking out to either side of his narrow face were a slightly deeper indigo, and his mandibles were small and dark at the base of his thin head. The rest of his body was tall and skinny, with a slightly hunched back around where his top shoulders were. One of his three pairs of arms were crossed over his half-open fur-lined, sleeveless jacket, whilst his

second pair fiddled with a small metal puzzle device, and the third hung limply at his sides, fingers twitching.

His mandibles clicked irritably. "Well if it's not a butthole," he continued, "what is it?"

Rolling her eyes, Minah turned her attention once again to the giant hole on the planet's surface. It seemed to yawn into the very core of the small world, like a never-ending sinkhole. It hadn't been visible from the planet's atmosphere, but now they were nearly landing, it seemed impossible that they hadn't noticed it earlier. Eyes narrowing, she leaned closer to the window, only stopping when her breath fogged up the glass.

"I don't know..." she murmured, "Maybe it's a space port? Inside a tunnel?"

Vryx made a dubious clicking noise. "Then why haven't we received a signal from them?"

Minah's skin prickled at that. Theirs was a small ship, boasting just enough room for ten crew and enough spare space for five passengers in a pinch. Oftentimes, they went unnoticed in big space ports. Still, they usually got picked up by at least one robot or spell set to monitor any newcomers, even in the busiest of ports. Here they were, out in the middle of nowhere, in a galaxy so far flung from Central Space that their navigation system hadn't even registered a name for it, and no one had noticed them. It was... odd.

Minah's mouth was dry as she replied, "Maybe their space port doesn't have a signalling system set up." She could hear the doubt in her own voice.

Vryx' mandibles shivered together.

Minah crossed her arms, shoving her hands into the crooks of her elbows.

"Well, regardless, we need new air. And that means we need to land--"

"There's a worm in the butthole."

She frowned up at the Thri-kreen. "What?"

"There is a worm. In the butthole."

"For stars' sakes, Vryx, it's not a fucking--"

"WORM!!!"

The shout echoed throughout the entire ship, rattling off of the metal walls, ricocheting off the bubbled windows, as the Captain amplified her voice to reach the crew.

Spinning around, Minah turned in time to see a worm half the size of the planet burst out of the giant sinkhole. Its skin was pale and fleshy, its eyes non-existent, and its rows of teeth were endless. Panic was a vulture inside her body, trying to get out, pecking and flapping wildly at her, as the monster leapt towards the incoming ship.

Vryx shoved her back from the windows just as the ship spun out of control.