

The *Questrial* is a smelly, corrupt pile of shit that suffocates its victims. At least that's Bronwyn's--informally known as Bryony's--perception of it. She's sure the upper decks are nice, but captives don't exactly get to see the clean, sparkly, nicely put together side of the ship. Instead, they get stuck with a smelly, gray, little room all of their own where they're expected to rot and are lucky if they get more than a few items of food tossed their way. Bryony sighs, leaning against the wall as she groans to herself. She wants nothing more than to get off this ship.

She shouldn't even be on it in the first place. She was accompanying her mom and her brother on a shipment run when their ship was tracked down by the *almighty Questrial* and boarded and ransacked. They took the three passengers on it and shoved them here, before locking them into their smelly little gray rooms, forcing them to call it home. To make matters worse, Bryony can't even communicate with her family. She has no idea where her mom and brother are, or even if they're ok. She hopes they are. She tries to convince herself of it, because it is one of the only ways of keeping herself sane as the months keep drawing by. Not only is she somewhat starved, continuously dehydrated, and exceptionally bored, a month or so into captivity she realized that the reasons thing smelled so bad... well, she doesn't want to get into it, but let's just say the *Questrial* doesn't exactly make sufficient hygiene a priority for their prisoners.

She sighs, returning to a round of *count the colors, how many times can I throw this pebble at the wall*, and best guesses on how it will take for something to change, whether it be herself finally dying from lack of vitamin d or some sort of miracle to end the boredom

---extra points for creativity on that one. Right now, her top scores on the three were: one, because *there was literally only one color in the room*--excluding her tattered clothes, but even those consisted of mostly gray hues--, one thousand six hundred seventy two, and wait for it: *somehow the ship gets invaded by aliens that are really just living embodiments of pleasant kid cartoon characters that want to become your friends and take you back home and place a spell on the universe that cures universal hunger, dehydration, disease, war, and crime, and thus prevents you from ever being captured again and then you are exceptionally grateful and in debt but they insist that your wellbeing is what brings them the most happiness, so you are obligated to live out the rest of your life in harmony and happiness in eternal peace in order to fulfill that thanks.* It probably goes without saying, but that one wins purely for points in creativity, not in realisticness. If *that* was how the game was played, well, that would mean the highest scoring answer would be *never*.

Bryony lets the pointless little game distract her for a little while longer, as it's her only mode of entertainment--and one of the best ways to keep her from dwelling on her inevitable overlooming fate or on the whereabouts or the wellbeing of her family. She switches between various things, going back to the guessing game as she stares at the gray wall. Yup. *Terribly predictable.* She's probably going to be staring at the gray walls for the rest of her life. And that stupid pebble. *Ugh, I shouldn't call it stupid. It's managed to save me a few times. Thanks pebble.*

*Anndddddd now I'm talking to inanimate objects. Is this how it's going to be for the rest of my life? Gray, pebbles, and the obnoxiousness of a terribly awful predictable imprisonment? Just gray after gray day*

after day and that one, miniscule, tiny pebble is going to be the only thing I see before I die and my whole life will have been wasted away rotting away in a prison that never change-----

WHY IS THAT GRAY LIGHT NOW RED?!

"BREACH! BREACH! BREACH!" An alarm goes off. The terrible screeching sign echoes throughout the ship and Bryony covers her ears. She knows she said she wanted change, and this is surely a yearned for kind of excitement, but wouldn't exactly have been her first choice. What is going on?!

All of the sudden she hears footsteps and someone takes down the holographic gray wall, revealing even more gray, except this time it's bars. As Bryony's eyes adjust to the light in the hallway, she's able to make out a girl in a navy space suit using one of her weapons to cut away some of the bars.

"Come on!" She calls to Bryony.

"What is happening?!" Bryony shouts. The navy suited girl shakes her head and waves for Bryony to come out.

"You've got to get going! I'm rescuing you. I took out the rest of the ship!" Bryony really wants to ask exactly what *that* means, but instead focuses her energy on solidifying her escape. She steps over the bars and the girl points her in one of the directions, giving her some instructions.

"Wait! My family is still on here! We have to get to them!" The girl pauses for a moment before nodding, but then someone from the ship's crew jumps in front of her and the girl shouts at Bryony to go. "My family!" Bryony protests and the girl promises,

"I'll get to them. But right now you need to get off the ship! I need you out of the way so I can take care of this guy!" The girl instructs,

blocking a strike from the woman's weapon. Bryony hesitates, refusing to leave her loved ones behind, but she knows that if she doesn't leave now she may lose the opportunity to come back. So, she takes off, following the directions given to her, discovering herself in a storage room. She gasps as she sees a window. *A window.* Oh, how she's missed those. She runs up to it and gazes outside at the stars. They must be in a space storage facility. Perhaps they were docked and that's how the girl breached the ship?

*what do I do now?*

"Hello!" Bryony jumps and quickly turns around to see another girl in a green suit behind her. "I'm Indigo. You?"

"Uh..." Bryony trails off. It's been a while since she's had to introduce herself. "Bryony," she eventually says.

"You look awful," Indigo notifies her.

"Gee, thanks," Bryony rolls her eyes.

"That's fine. As soon as my friend finishes capturing your ship, you'll be free to get yourself cleaned up. We can drop you off wherever you're going, and then we'll be on our way. And we don't take prisoners. You know, the *Questrial* was such a promising name. But then I had to go and do a deep dive and what do you know, they're criminals! Luckily, we've reported them to the authorities. And the best part? WE GET THE SHIP!" Indigo squeals. "We can turn the name into something good. *The Questrial*. Doesn't it have a cool ring to it? It's perfect! Plus, I'm going on a quest."

"Uh... yeah. But, um, we?"

"Sorry, I'm just excited. Oh, I meant my friend and I. Unless you want to join us, but I'd figured you'd want to go back to Cobalt."

"Well, yeah---how did you know I lived there?"

"It has it in your file," Indigo answers, as if it's obvious. "Gee, she's taking a while," Indigo comments, looking back toward the *Questria*. "I wish I could go help her but my combat skills are minimal, and she's the proper authority assistant, or whatever she said she was called. And she's covering for me, so revealing myself would not be wise. Still, your family is still on there and I think I could find a cloak in here somewhere." Bryony watches wide-eyed as Indigo tries to find a way to disguise herself. She's incredibly honored that she wants to help, but if she doesn't know how to fight, that's probably not a good idea. Luckily, the navy suited girl comes back before Bryony's forced to talk Indigo out of it.

Panting, she stops in front of them, catching her breath.

"Yay! You did it!" Indigo praises, but Bryony is too focused on the absence of some key people to celebrate.

"I'm sorry," the girl breathes as Bryony's about to ask where her family is. "A few of them got away. I don't know many it was, but I think perhaps all of the ones left managed to load your family onto a subship and escaped. I'm sorry, I didn't know where they were---I was trying to find them, I checked every cell I could find..." Bryony stares blankly at the girl before exclaiming,

"YOU INVADED THE SHIP AND COULDN'T EVEN SAVE THEM?! WHAT DID YOU EVEN DO TO THE CREW MEMBERS?!"

"I reported them," the girl answers calmly. "The majority of them were captured and sent off on a ship to higher authorities. I didn't have enough time to call my people for back up." Bryony curls her hands into fists and gears up to continue yelling, but instead begins to cry.

"Don't worry, Bry, I've got a plan," Indigo tells her confidently.

"Remember? we have the ship now! They had to abandon so fast, there may still be some information on their files to find your family! It isn't the fastest or ideal way to save them, but we can still do it." Bryony nods, grateful for the news. It's just *they were so close*.

"I'm Aegean," the navy-suited girl says gently. "We'll get your family back, alright?"

"Yeah," Bryony agrees, wiping the tears from her eyes. "It'll be nice to finally see the *non-gray* part of the ship," she jokes, managing a small laugh.

"Ok, what are we waiting for! I came here to get on a ship and I've already had to delay a few hours! I am tired of waiting," Indigo expresses, jogging onto the ship.

"You can have the nicest room" Aegean promises. "I saw how crappy that cell of yours was."

"I'd rather have the one with the nicest *bathroom*," Bryony voices, walking next to Aegean as they enter onto the ship. It feels so counterintuitive; every nerve inside is telling her to run back off the ship to safety. But she isn't going to save her family if she gives into that fear. Plus, she's living for the irony of being the captive turned co-captain. *Don't worry Mom and Lev, I'm coming.*