

Monday
August 21st, 2028
14:16 hours (PST)

“Well, I should get to my dorm assignment. You want to meet in the mess hall at 1500 hours?” Nathaniel asked her.

His sister looked down at her watch, then up at the clock on the wall, then back at her watch with a look of confusion on her face. “What is 1500 hours?”

“It’s 3 o’clock. Do you want to meet in the mess hall at 3 o’clock?” he elaborated.

“That gives me about 45 minutes. Okay, I’ll see you then,” she said.

“Okay. See ya,” he said, hurrying away.

He honestly didn’t realize how quickly he’d walked away until he stopped, turned and took a look back. His sister was still standing down, staring down at her paper with a look of confusion on her face. Part of him wanted to go back, to help her find her way. After all, that’s what good big/little brothers did, right? As much as he wanted to, he chose against it. They weren’t kids anymore, they were adults. They weren’t playing around anymore, this was their chosen careers. When he was younger, it was easy to take the blame for *who picked flowers out of mom’s garden* or *who ate all the ice cream*. That was kid stuff, but this was the big leagues.

I can’t baby her anymore, he thought to himself. It wasn’t as though she required a lot of his attention, though. In spite of her flaws, and he could think of quite a few, Estella Enrile was thoughtful, capable and intelligent. Allbeit a bit annoying at times, but he never questioned her ability to handle herself in any situation. But of course, the over protective brother in him was enough to make him look back at her with a quick smile. Part of it was relief that it looked as though she was going to find her own way, but mostly pride that she’d done it without him. It was the confirmation he needed to know his youngest sister, his partner, would be fine.

As he turned to walk away, he inadvertently bumped into someone else. He stumbled back, and in the confusion, fell over. Nathaniel quickly made it back to his feet, dusting himself off. “Sorry about that, it’s my first day and I’m just sort of...” he was interrupted quickly.

The *individual* he’d bumped into was every bit of seven feet tall with dark green, scaly skin. He was very muscular, which was obvious even under the standard SPD uniform. A quick glance at the insignia on his uniform indicated he was a 4th year cadet, probably waiting assignment to the B Squad to be a power ranger. *This guy could be a power ranger*, Nathaniel thought to himself.

“Watch where you go, newbie,” he said in a stern voice.

Nathaniel leaned slightly, noticing that this *individual* was with a group of friends, or at the very least classmates. Nathaniel understood all too well what was happening.

“I get it, you’re with your friends and you want to seem cool. Lets pick on the new kid, right? That sounds like fun, doesn’t it? Lets knock his books out his hands. Oh wait, he doesn’t have any books, so how about we pick the biggest guy in our group to bump into him? That’ll be a laugh, right?” he asked them, purposely sounding as condescending as he could.

The classmates chuckled, but the larger of the group didn’t seem very amused. “You make fun of Garr?” he snarled at him.

“Garr? Whats a Garr?” he paused. “Oh, is that your name? *Garr*,” he said in a gravelly tone. “Yeah, that’s a strong name. Listen, as I said, it’s my first day so I’m a little mixed up. I apologize. Now, if could point me to Cranston Hall, I would appreciate it,” he said calmly.

Garr’s response was to grab Nathaniel by the shoulder, shoving him up against the wall. “No one tells Garr what to do,” he snapped.

“Garr,” he said as calmly as he could. “I get it, you want to look tough. I’m fine with that, but you need to put me down and walk away right now, or I will embarrass in front of the people you seem so eager to impress,” Nathaniel warned him. Warning in the sense that Nathaniel was trained as a third degree black belt. And while Triforian Jui Jitsu was his strong suit, he also dabbled in Aikido and kickboxing. He’d been practicing his grandfather’s ancient tiger fighting style since he was 2 years old, so despite the height, weight and strength advantage Garr seemed to have, Nathaniel wasn’t worried. But while he wasn’t concerned about it at all, he also wasn’t about to let himself be disrespected on his first day, and would take whatever lengths necessary to defend himself.

“Garr squish tiny newbie like bug!” Garr responded.

Nathaniel let out a sigh, anticipating the phone call to his mother. *After they pick him up off the ground and stop the bleeding, they’re going to call her and she’s going to come up here and be like ‘just because you can beat people up doesn’t mean you should’ or ‘this is not why I taught you our families fighting style, Nathaniel’. This is not at all how I wanted my first day to go*, he thought to himself.

Before Garr could make a move, or have it countered, depending on one’s perspective, an older adult came from around the corner.

"Whats going on here?" the man asked. His voice was in no way intimidating, but judging by the reactions of Garr and the other students, Nathaniel surmised that they were backing down as more of a show of respect.

Garr lowered Nathaniel to the floor and took a step back.

"Nothing. Garr just saying hello to newbies," Garr said in an apologetic tone. It was clearly a lie, but the sentiment was there. Garr didn't want to upset this guy. It was almost admirable.

"Well the next time I catch you saying hello like that, you're going to spend your weekend detangling the weeds over the hydroponics bay. You get me?"

"Garr get you, Boom. Sorry," he said, almost scurrying away.

The older man turned to Nathaniel, getting a good look at him. "You okay, cadet?" he asked him.

"Yes, sir. I'm alright, sir. Nothing I can't handle,"

"Well don't let guys like Garr push you around. He's a good kid, he means well, but... you know how Anurians can be," he mentioned.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know where you're going?" Boom asked.

"Can you point me towards Cranston Hall, sir?" he inquired.

"No problemo, cadet. You want to go right out the building here, through the promenade and then a quick right. You can't miss it, it's mostly blue so it sticks out like a sore thumb," he told him.

"Thank you, sir," Nathaniel said, with a slight smirk on his face, walked away.

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Nathaniel arrived at his dorm assignment a few minutes later, and was pleasantly surprised at the amount of room it had. There were four beds total, a bunk bed on other side, and a walk in closet that was more than enough room for his things, but his roommate's belongings as well. His silver suitcase and small travel bag was near the bed on the right, and a small note with his

name on it was on the bottom bunk. With no regard to personal preference, he walked over to the bed he was assigned, sat down, then leaned back, allowing his head to fall back and hit the pillow.

“You must be Carson, the new cadet,” he heard a voice say.

It was enough to get Nathaniel to open his eyes and sit up to get a good look at one of his potential roommates. Judging by the number of beds in the room, he was set to have two other roommates.

The first of them, however, Nathaniel was convinced was going to be the least unusual of the group. A quick once over and he was able to determine that it was a humanoid male; the typical two arms, two legs, a head, nothing out of the ordinary. The only difference he could point out was that he had short, green hair and a jewel in the middle of his forehead.

“Yeah. Nathaniel Enrile,” he said politely, standing up and extending his hand to him.

“There is no english word that translates my correctly from Xybrian, so just call me Pascal,” he introduced, obliging his hand.

“You don’t see very many Xybrians in the city these days,” Nathaniel brought up.

“Our people were brought to this planet to serve as labor from the Anurian race, but SPD put a stop that quickly. The Anurians weren’t happy about their labor force being taken from them and withdrew from the Interplanetary treaty. A lot of Anurians left and took their Xbrians with them. There aren’t many of us who stayed,” he explained. “Maybe a few hundred or so of us are still here.”

“Well, I’m glad you’re here,” he said cheerfully.

“Would you like to put your belongings away, or organize your closet for you, sir?” Pascal asked him.

“What? No, I can handle it.”

“It wouldn’t be a bother, sir.”

“Okay, it’s okay, and you don’t have to call me sir. I’m a cadet, first year,” he glanced at the insignia on Pascal’s uniform. “Just like you. You’re not my slave, you’re my room mate.”

“Xybrian’s are conditioned to serve, that’s all. Please don’t take offense or anything, but we believe that lightening the burdens of others is the best possible gift to give, and only by relieving them of their burdens can we earn our way to the Elysium Fields after death,” he explained.

“Elysium Fields?”

Pascal reached into his shirt, pulling out a small medal madeline, showing it to Nathaniel. It was a small, green jewel of some kind, much like the one on Pascal’s forehead. “Our people believe that when you die, if you have served well and lightened the burdens of others with all your heart, you will be allowed to remain in Elysium Fields, where everyone is without the burdens of life and you’re feel to live how you wish,” Pascal told him.

Nathaniel could have easily pointed out the many flaws in the statement. How there is no scientific evidence for a soul, that in an age of modern technology there was no room for such... superstition, but it was obvious that these beliefs meant a great deal to Pascal. *Besides, just because we can’t prove the human soul exists doesn’t mean Xybrian’s don’t have souls,* he thought to himself.

“So who lightens *your* burdens?”

“My only burden is the desire to serve. It’s easy to look at our race as the pushovers of the galaxy, I know, but we have good hearts and our intentions are well meaning,” he elaborated.

“Well, other than letting me copy off your Astrometrics homework, there won’t be much for me to help you with ,” Nathaniel joked.

“So you and I... are friends?” he asked.

“Of course we are, Pascal,” he said, putting his hand on Pascal’s shoulder.

“I must write home and tells the elders of this at once. Great pride and joy will befall my village for what I have accomplished here today,” he said eagerly, rushing over to his belongings in search of his tablet.

Nathaniel couldn’t help but crack a smile. “You go ahead and do that, buddy. I’m going to go meet my sister in the mess hall. When you’re done, you’re welcome to join us,” he said.

“It would be an honor, Nathaniel Carson,” Pascal said proudly.

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Nathaniel arrived in the mess hall a few moments later, getting a good look around the room as he searched for his sister. Learning about other races in text books was one thing, and maybe

bumping into the occasional non-terrestrial being while out shopping was another, but nothing had prepared him for the level of diversity he'd seen since coming to SPD. He'd already run into several different races, all of them with the same goal; to become power rangers. There were so many different cultures, all of them with different beliefs, all of them with their own way of looking at the world. While he was excited to be at SPD, he was equally as excited to learn as much as he could about each race.

He spotted his sister sitting at a table in a far corner along with another girl. He grabbed the bottom of his uniform jacket, pulling it down slightly, then made his way over to them.

"Hey sis," he said, extending a fist to her.

They knocked fists three times, then pulled back, wiggling their fingers and mimicking an explosion sound.

"Whats shakin, bacon?" she asked.

"Settled into my dorm okay. I'm ready to start training tomorrow," he said.

"This my roommate DeVika Monroe. Monroe, this is my brother, Nathaniel Carson," she introduced.

Nathaniel nodded at her slightly as he sat down. "You're Ameanzian, aren't you? From the Ameanza Cluster," he brought up.

"I am, good eye."

"Its nice to know one of us did the academy reading over the summer," he said, turning to his sister slightly.

"Hey, I did the reading. I just thought it was boring and stopped about halfway through..." she paused. "Okay, after the fourth page, but it was all boring and stupid," she confessed.

"It was to prepare you for all the difference races you're going to meet here," he mentioned.

"It won't help you, rookie. That guide is good, but outdated. By the time you got it, there were at least 60 other species who joined SPD. There's nothing in there about the Anurians, or the Myrithians, or the CaAn race. It's a waste of time," DeVika told him.

"If you learned something, it wasn't a waste," he said.

“We’ll see how long that attitude lasts in a place like this. You’ll be lucky to survive by the skin of your teeth, assuming human teeth have skin. SPD will chew you up and spit you out like it was nothing,” she said.

“That isn’t true, we’re here to be trained to be...”

“What? A power ranger? Don’t tell me you’re that naive. Over 1500 cadets joined SPD today, and that’s *just* today. At any given moment that are about 2500 cadets, but people drop out along the way. The 2027 graduating class only had 150 members, out of 1500. And even then, none of them are power rangers yet. You’re training to be a glorified beat cop, that’s it. You think they have 150 morphers just laying around?” DeVika explained.

“But my mom was...”

“Let me guess, your mommy was a power ranger, right? You think that means squat here? I watched Jason Scott’s kid flunk out of the academy in his second year. Jason is one of the most legendary rangers of all time, but even his kid couldn’t cut it. So if the kid of the original red ranger failed, what makes you think that because your mom was a Lightspeed ranger or from Operation Overdrive that you have a chance?”

“You gotta have a little bit of faith,” Ella said cheerfully.

“And it helps if you’re good at what you do. If I make it, I’ll make it on my own merit. If I fail, I’ll do that on my own, too,” her brother added.

“I’ve seen cadets come and go, you’ll be no different,” she told them.

“We’ll see, won’t we?” Nathaniel sighed.