

*The PPC is not my creation; that honor goes to Jay and Acacia. Animorphs belongs to K.A. Applegate. Alex and Farilan belong to me.*

<Hm.> Farilan stepped back from her work, her eyes narrowed in the Andalite approximation of a frown. <Hmmm.>

"Hm?" Alex said, though he sounded like he was only paying partial attention. "Whassamatter?"

Farilan gestured at the parts spread out before her. <I was wondering if you could assist me with this... I believe it was called "marvel technology"?>

"Oh, yeah, the uncanon gadgets we got from that Iron Man replacement earlier today," Alex said, still not looking up from his own work. "And by we, I mean some team in Crossovers. So, what've you got?"

<It would appear my arms are not strong enough to hold these parts together while I work.> She glanced at Alex. <You—?>

"Nah, you can do it," Alex said, sitting down in the swivel chair behind him and kicking his feet up, careful to avoid whatever he'd been working on. He whistled and Zeke perked his head up at the noise before flying over to the workbench. Alex pulled open a drawer and pointed at a mouldy boot, and Zeke grabbed it in his claws before carrying it over to Farilan and attempting to drop it in her hands. She fumbled and dropped it on the floor.

<You should know perfectly well by now that Andalites do *not* play catch,> she sniffed, kneeling to retrieve it, holding it by two fingers and wrinkling her nose. <What is this?>

"That would be a disguised D.O.R.K.S.," Alex said, whistling for Zeke again and holding out his arm. The fire-lizard chirped and flew over to perch on his shoulder. "If you feel around a little, you should notice it's actually a cube with buttons under that disguise. You're gonna want to hit the first button on the top left, then the middle button on the third row, and then..."

Farilan did as he instructed, then yelped and fell over when she found herself with only two legs and no tail to balance.

"Oops!" Alex jumped up and hurried over to her, holding out a hand. "Are you okay?"

Farilan, now looking like nothing less than a very severe librarian, swatted his hand away and gave him a death glare. Suddenly, she tilted her head to the side and very slowly opened her mouth.

Alex grinned. "Yeah, you need to use your mouth to talk now. Go on, try it."

"Ffff—" Farilan stopped and frowned again. "Aaaaaa. Lllll. La. La. Lalalala."

Alex couldn't help it; he snorted into his hands. Farilan made a strange huffing noise through her nose. "Th," Alex said, showing her how to make the noise with his tongue.

“Th,” Farilan repeated. “Thaa... theee, thi, thi. Sh. Shhh. Thish. This iss f... very straaange.”

“You think this is strange, just wait until you try food.”

Farilan glowered at him. “I do not need your hoo—*human* sustenance. I simply rekwar—*require* the use of stronger appendiches. Appendages. How in the *world* do you ever get ff—things done? Mouth-sounds are so impractical.” She stood slowly, swaying slightly until she grabbed hold of her workbench for support.

Alex hurried back to his own bench and rolled his swivel chair over to her. “Here,” he said. “Sit in this.”

Looking like she’d swallowed a lemon, Farilan sat. “Thank you,” she said reluctantly.

“You’re welcome,” Alex said, bending over the twisted brass wires he’d been working on.

Farilan would have muttered something rude under her breath had she been accustomed to such things. As it was, she just snorted and set to work, silently marveling at how much stronger human hands were compared to an Andalite’s. Still, how in the world was one supposed to get used to this body? Two legs and no tail to speak of was a terrible design. If Ilraen ever stopped by DoSAT, she would have to ask him what he thought of the whole business. Unless she dropped by to ask him first... no, she couldn’t do that. That would make it look like she’d actually enjoyed his company, which she most certainly did not.

Then again, he and Iskillion were the only other Andalites in Headquarters, at least as far as she knew, and the latter simply wasn’t interested in discussing the finer details of engineering. Ilraen, on the other hand, had shown definite interest in her work.

Yes, she decided, she would have to pay Ilraen another visit. But *only* because of that.

She flexed her fingers and sat back, frowning both at her work and at the unfamiliar sensation. Sitting in chairs just felt *weird*, there was no other word for it. But on the other hand, the strong, dextrous... well, *hands* of a human were certainly... handy.

Ah, a pun. Several, actually. How amusing.

Farilan felt the corners of her mouth turn up and a hand immediately went up to feel it. Very strange indeed. She glanced up and noted Alex had procured another chair from elsewhere, and was busily working on whatever it was he’d been building over the last few days. He’d been rather cagey about the whole thing and it was making her suspicious, but whenever she asked what he was building, he would just reply that it was a present for his sister.

Perhaps she should bring a diagram of a working CAD for Ilraen to study. Farilan frowned at the idea. No, that was a silly idea, no need to encourage the boy. But perhaps when she came by to ask him about his take on human forms, she could give him a few pointers.

She sat back and frowned again at the strange device she'd been working on. She was 99% certain it was a weapon of some sort, and she didn't trust it not to explode on her, now that it was suddenly lit up and humming. Time to call in the meat shield.

"Technician Dives, I have determined I require your assista—what are you doing?" Farilan said, wobbling slightly as she came over to Alex's workbench.

He scrambled to hide his oh-so-secret project in a drawer, slammed it shut, and put his back against it. "Nothing," he said, failing miserably to look innocent.

Farilan gave him the stink-eye, but decided not to press it. "As I was saying, I require your assistance in repairing this particular item," she said, making a vague gesture in the direction of her own bench.

"Sure, whatcha need?" Alex said, scooting his chair over and peering at it. "Oh, yeah, okay, I think what you'll want to do is this..."

She listened patiently while Alex walked her through how to repair what turned out to be a bizarrely over-the-top plasma bazooka. That done, he begged off, saying he needed to take his lunch break before he starved to death. She waited until he was gone before going over to his workbench and opening the drawer, pulling out... a baby mobile?

It looked unfinished, with several detached parts lying scattered in the drawer as well, but it contained a crescent moon, several stars and planets surrounded by rings, and a stylized sun. The whole thing was rather lovely, made of expertly cut and welded brass that caught the light when she turned it.

"Oh yeah, almost forgot—" Alex ducked back into the workshop and Farilan froze when she was caught red-handed. Zeke let out a long screech of alarm and darted out of sight. Alex stared at her before rushing over, snatching the unfinished mobile away, and stuffing it back in the drawer. "Don't tell anybody about this," he said anxiously.

Farilan snorted. "Why would I?"

"Just... it's personal. Please."

"I give you the word of an Andalite that I will not divulge your terribly embarrassing secret of some twisted wires and metal stars."

Alex bit back a sarcastic reply about how the Andalites weren't exactly known for being creatures of their word; the last thing he needed now was to get on Farilan's bad side. "Thanks." He grabbed his ID card off the workbench and slipped it into his pocket before turning to go. When he reached the doors, he looked back. "Remember: Not a word."

Farilan rolled her eyes. "Yes, of course. Now go consume your human sustenance."